



Bell and Mouthpiece

How to fashion the top and tail of a plastic didgeridoo

Fashioning the mouthpiece will make for comfortable playing and the bell will augment the sound of your plastic didgeridoo and widening the bell will raise the volume.

Mouthpiece

When it comes to fashioning a mouthpiece there are two main approaches - use the plastic pipe to create an integral mouthpiece, or alternatively a mouthpiece can be added.

Well, there is a third option - leave it as it is - just smooth off the edge and play as is. Functional and plenty good enough, however I found the plastic dug into my skin after a short time playing and become quite uncomfortable.

All in one mouthpiece

To make a mouthpiece using the plastic of the didgeridoo, you will need a flat, smooth, hard and heat resistant surface such as a ceramic tile.

Heat the plastic up around the end. Be carefull here as it is very easy to heat the plastic to much and it will start to burn and melt. If the mouthpiece for the didgeridoo is not heated consistently it will be uneven when finished.

Once the plastic is soft enough, press the end of the pipe onto the tile - Voila! Once the plastic is cool you can try it out for comfort. A light and fine grade sanding will remove any ridges or bumps.

The mouthpiece can be made larger using the technique outlined below. By creating a slight flaring of the didgeridoo, when you fashion the mouthpiece it will have a larger diameter.

Making and adapting a mouthpiece



If you use 32mm waste pipe then you will find all manner of attachments available as used in everyday plumbing. One of these attachments is a reducer and is used to, er, reduce a wider bored pipe to fit a smaller bored pipe. Most commonly the next size up from 32mm is 40mm. As these pipes are designed to have running water through them, they have rubber seals to help make them watertight.

Place the reducer over the end with the rubber seal inside. Pushing the pipe tight onto the seal squashes it and forces a rim round the edge creating a comfortable, removable and washable mouthpiece.

Other methods can be used to make a mouthpiece such as milliput, epoxy resin, beeswax. The techniques are pretty much the same as making wooden didgeridoos (see the section on 'How to Make a Wooden Didgeridoo' and 'Care and repair' for further info). Personally I don't use them with plastic as it takes to long and can come

off easily as plastic is difficult to get things to stick to. If you do stick something to the surface of the plastic didgeridoo ensure you have scratched/sanded the surface first to provide a key.

Bell

I have tried several different techniques to make the bell flare out with plastic didgeridoos, and pretty much most of them didn't work. I tried to think of a way to make a form that the plastic could go over and get stuck. When I started out I had grand ideas of making bells on didgeridoo all sorts of different shapes but as my experiments went wrong I settled on flaring the bell out any which way!

I did some research on the net and found the following technique on a couple of websites - Rob Mantz and - so full credit and thanks to them.

For this technique you will need a wine bottle - longer sleeker curved neck not the tighter curved necked bottles, WD40/GT85 or similar (this helps to prevent the plastic sticking to the glass.

Heat the plastic up on the bottom part of the didgeridoo. Be carefull because if the plastic is to warm it will kink or crease making the bell lopsided - and there is no way to get rid of it once done. Pipes with thicker walls have a greater scope for being enlarged. Here again I have found waste pipe to be the most versatile as the plastic used in other pipes such as drainpipes is to brittle and is difficult to work (safely).

Once the plastic is warm enough, place it over the top of the wine bottle and press down. Keep the bottle held securely 'cos this is where it will go wonky! Don't press to hard or the plastic may kink, crease or fold.

Don't try (unless you want this effect) and enlarge the bell to much in one go. Enlarge it over several attempts and do it gradually otherwise the plastic has a tendency to split at its weakest (and warmest point).

Changing the shape of the bell will alter the sound as well as the look of the didgeridoo. At each stage play the didgeridoo to hear what it sounds like as I have often found that in trying to make something just that little bit bigger, better, it has gone wrong and got worse.

Ultimately you will end up with a flared bell on the didgeridoo. Any edges can be sanded down to remove them.

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