

Bad Drumming Days

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We all have those days when you sit down at the drums and nothing seems to be going right, the playing is sloppy, the timing is off, and it just isn't inspiring. In the past, I would usually just chalk it up to a bad day and start over the next day. Then, I started to think about the various reasons for these bad days so I can have fewer of them. Here are my thoughts on why bad drumming days happen and some things we can do about them.

PLAYING AND PRACTICING

It's helpful to take note if these bad days happen when we are *practicing* or *playing* the drums (or both). As I mention in [Stop Wasting Your Time Practicing!](#) (which I will quote throughout this article),

“There is a difference between practicing your instrument and playing your instrument. Generally, the point of practicing is to improve the things you can't play well and playing is using what you know how to do to make music.”

Some of these bad days when **practicing** happen when we forget the general purpose of practicing above. It's easy to unconsciously feel something is wrong when we are making mistakes in general, but mistakes are part of how we grow and progress. Practice sessions should not necessarily sound good.

“Having the right attitude about making mistakes when practicing will have a big effect on how fast you master your instrument.”

We also have bad days when we have unrealistic expectations about how long things should take to learn. Some things take longer than others and how long depends on the muscle memory we already have. The first time we execute something correctly, it won't be in our long-term memory yet. How long that takes has to do with, among other factors, how consistently we practice it. It could just be that we haven't worked on it consistently enough yet.

“Keep a practice journal to track your progress and to keep from getting discouraged.”

Another reason for bad days is when something we are working on sounded better yesterday/last week than it does today. That can be frustrating.

It could be because we are focused on something specific that we haven't practiced and were not focusing on previously. For example, let's take playing paradiddles. Let's say you can play them in general but have never focused on each individual stroke. Then today you focus on making sure the doubles at the end are even. That can throw you off. The doubles at the end may or may not have been fine yesterday/last week, but you weren't concentrating on them then.

Bad days when **playing** usually happen when I am thinking about or playing things that need to be addressed in practice. (See all of the tips above, in that case.)

When we have thoroughly practiced and mastered certain concepts, we won't be thrown off by most distractions while playing them.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

It may be just me, but I sometimes don't realize how much outside influences affect my drumming. Some examples of outside influences would be if you haven't eaten enough, or if you're really tired, or just having had an argument with someone. If you are noticing that these things are affecting your drumming, plan for them ahead of time. Take a snack with you or try to take a nap before you play.

Try starting your drumming session by calming yourself, focusing on your breathing to relax, and minimizing the distractions of the day.

ONE LAST THOUGHT

If you record what you're doing, you might find on play back that your bad day was not as bad as you initially thought. And if you do find that it's as bad as you thought, I hope these tips help.

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