

Clogging Shoes and Taps

While hard-soled shoes, loose clothing, and lots of room are the only clogging essentials, you may well find that tap equipped footwear will help you progress more rapidly. Shoe repair shops or dancing apparel stores are likely sources of taps. Most cloggers now use a particular type of double tap, known as Jingle taps because of the noise they make. In fact most use a specific brand "Stevens Stompers". This gives clogging its unique loud jingling sound. There are two types of Stevens Stompers, Normal and Buck Taps. The buck taps have an extra piece of metal to protect the toe during buck steps. I like the latter because they make more sound while protecting the tips of the toes.

Clogging taps generally come in three sizes: Men's, Women's, and Children's. You want to order the correct tap size for your shoe (your taps should cover most of the heel and toe areas) or it may not feel right when you dance..

Nail on or glue on taps can be purchased. Nail ons can be economically attached to non-rubber sole shoes by boot makers. Get them to use better nails or tacks than the ones that come with the taps. Glue on taps are a little more work, but at least then you can never have the embarrassment of nails working out and damaging floors. Nails usually work out slowly, so provided you get into a routine of inspecting them after **every** use, and have the tools to tighten the nails from time to time, there is usually no problem. However nail heads, or complete nails sometimes snap off or come out without warning, and even if they land away from you, other dancers may inadvertently grind them into the floor unless you spot them and act quickly to pick them up. Properly glued on taps stay on just as long as nail on ones - both fall off eventually. In fact gluing on nail on taps, without the nails, is the best as glue in the nail holes gives extra strength.

In general, I recommend white tap shoes, as black shoes cannot easily be seen under many stage performance conditions.

Local sources for taps and shoes are somewhat limited.

The shoe repair shop at Burlington Coat Factory, Stone Drive, has medium Steven's Stomper taps (women's) in stock which they will install for \$22.00. If you have your own taps, they will install them for \$5.00. Buck taps are \$3.00 more and would have to be ordered.

Johnny's Shoe Store on south Eastman Road reportedly stocks all Steven's Stomper taps which they will sell and install for \$18.50.

Chris's Department Store, 148 E. Jackson Street, Gate City, VA. Sells Steven's Stompers Shoes. Tutus, Taps & All That Jazz, Jonesboro, sell DanceClass Clogging shoes and Steven's Stompers -- \$50.00 for the shoes, \$18.00 for buck-style taps. They will size your foot, but will probably have to order them.

Studio One, 2601 Fort Henry Drive, has a few pair of women's tap shoes (Capezio and Leo) for \$60.00/pair.

A few good places to purchase shoes and taps online are:

<http://www.stevens-clogging.com/> Shoes and taps \$47-\$63 Women's & Men's

<http://stores.ebay.com/anythingssportsga> Shoes and taps \$25-\$50 Women's only

Search <http://www.ebay.com/> for "clogging shoes" or "tap shoes".

<http://www.carlsclogging.com/> Shoes and taps \$63 Women's & Men's

The best way to glue on taps:

(It is not as hard as this blow by blow description makes it out to be - but it can be messy)

- Preferably use glue on taps
- Roughen the inside of the tap surface (We use a high speed electric drill with a grinding disc attached)
- Place small stickers over the two rivets to avoid glue jamming the rivets. Glue on taps come with stickers, but these should be cut down in size a bit. (Envelope address label paper is OK to make stickers for the nail on variety of taps if they are being glued on. Paper is not needed over the nail holes but glue that oozes through must be cleaned up.)
- Position the taps as near to the ends of the shoes as practical. Sports shoes curve up at the ends, so the taps have to be set back almost on the flat for best surface to surface match.
- "Shoe Goo" is less messy than contact adhesive, and now that we have used it for a time we have found it is even stronger than contact adhesives like liquid nails. It is much easier to apply and sets quickly. Apply enough to fill the inside of the tap, and fill in any deep tread on sports shoes. It dries quickly but is best to wait 24hrs for full strength.
- If you use "Liquid Nails" contact adhesive:
One small handyman tube is the right amount for two sets of shoes, so find others also gluing on taps, as a tube that has been open can lose its effectiveness within a week, even with the lid tightly on. Contact adhesives work by initially applying a layer to the taps and separately a layer to the

shoes, allowing these to become almost dry. Then by squeezing them together, the contact adhesive sticks to itself, thus completing the bond.

Apply the glue by rubbing it into the surfaces of the taps to remove air bubbles, and ensure it has properly wet the surfaces. The back of the tap is filled with glue and the surface flattened to match the surface of the shoes. If there are deep treads on the shoes these will need filling too at this time, otherwise do not put glue on the shoes yet. On the tap it may take several days to be dry enough to attach to the shoe depending on the weather. (the instructions say 15 minutes, but assumes only a thin layer of glue). When the glue is getting like putty and the surface is dry I give it a few fittings onto the shoe to get the surface of the glue to match the surface curve of the shoe. I then let it dry completely for as many days as I can wait.

If the taps are stuck on before the glue is dry enough, it may never dry and will squirt out onto the dance floor, in an embarrassing moment, the first time you stomp hard in your shoes.

If the tread on the shoes is not deep the glue on the shoe will dry much faster than on the taps, so apply it later than on the taps. If the shoe is flat go to the next step then apply glue to the shoe.

Once the glue inside the back of the tap and any glue in deep treads on the shoe, are completely set, apply a thin layer of glue to the taps and the shoe, wait 15 minutes or so until they are reasonably dry to the touch, then stick them together

The time to remove excess glue around the edges (or coming through any nail holes) or glue spilt onto the face of the shoe is at this time when it is rubbery, **not** when it is wet and smeary, and not when it has set rock hard.

If possible allow several days for the glue to completely harden before dancing on it. (the instructions say only 24Hrs) If the glue inadvertently dries too completely before contact is made (provided the glue was patted flat while drying so the shoe and tap surfaces match), a thin layer of additional glue can be applied to both surfaces, requiring only 15 minutes before squeezing together.

When contact adhesive glued taps (eventually) fall off, leave the old glue on, and use the above thin layer, 15 minutes drying approach. Often on rubber soles the tap slowly peels free over a couple of years. When bad enough, holding the gap open and applying a squirt of liquid nails usually fixes the problem.

Clogging Floors

One reasonable cost option for a home practice floor: MDF [Medium Density Fibreboard] comes in 1/2" sheets, and can be cut to size with normal tools (just like plywood), but it is hard and smooth and doesn't splinter. (But don't get it wet because it swells.) MDF is available through most lumber yards (Lowes), and is priced comparably to plywood sheets. A full 4x8x1/2 sheet is very heavy; a half-sheet (4x4) is sufficient size for a practice area. Don't buy masonite -- it is NOT the same thing as MDF, although some people might tell you that it is. If you have a piece of foam carpet pad, place this under the fibreboard to give it a little resiliency.

Wood floors are great to dance on but beware of the concrete floor covered with wooden tiles - dancing on a concrete floor for any length of time can really hurt knees and ankles. An uncovered concrete floor is likewise hard on your legs and pretty abrasive to steel taps.

Another possible solution is a desk-chair protector that you can get from Office Depot for \$15-20. Be sure to get the correct one that installs over either a hard floor or carpeting.