

Nancy's Bluegrass Fiddle Jam Camp Notes

1. Basic Fiddle Technique
2. Learning Bluegrass Songs
3. Learning Fiddle Tunes
4. Improvisation Skills
5. Hot Fiddling
6. Playing at a Jam
7. Playing in a Band

1. Basic Fiddle Technique

Holding the fiddle - left hand:

3 points of contact = Side of thumb, Bone of hand, Fingertip

Keep the extra fingers down

Use gravity - hang your hand from the neck

Maintain similar posture so it feels the same each time

Holding the bow - right hand:

Thumb across from middle finger

Bend your thumb

Pinky on the top of the stick

Bow Equation:

Sound is function of Weight + Speed + Distance from Bridge

Scales:

You need to know where the notes are on the fiddle. Learn your scales! Play them all in 1st position (since that's where you will play most of the time), then learn them in other positions.

[See scale handout from books](#)

Chords:

Take your scale and play every other note. Those notes make a chord. You need to know where to find the chord notes on the fiddle. Play 2 of them together, and it's a double stop. Play then sequentially, and it's an "arpeggio".

You will need to know where the chord notes are in order to play backup, and to learn how to use licks (the lick has to fit the chord)

[See chords handout from books](#)

Warm-ups

Use scales and patterns with different bowings to warm up.
Play these with a metronome or a backup recording.

Fiddle Technique

Bowings for fiddle - [see handout](#)

Kickoffs - [see handout](#)

Tags - [see handout](#)

2. Learning Bluegrass Songs

To learn bluegrass songs, you will need to LISTEN to bluegrass songs - over and over and over - then you will need to PLAY ALONG with bluegrass songs - over and over and over. Get the melody, figure out the chord changes, then practice "soloing" over the song.

1. Pick out the melody BY EAR. Listen to the song over and over until you know how it goes. One by one, pick the primary melody notes out on the fiddle. Keep looping sections of the song, hearing it in your head, and finding it on the fiddle, until you have it. There is no substitute for this.

Once you know a song by ear, test yourself by playing it in a different key. That's how you'll know if it's just memorized, or if you really "know" it.

WARNING: Do not try to memorize songs from a page of sheet music. Do not use sheet music at a jam, or on stage. If you don't know the song well enough to play it by ear, then you don't know the song well enough to play it. Keep listening to it, and picking the notes out on the fiddle, until you can hear it in your head, and play it on the fiddle. You'll never "get" fiddling if you can't play by ear - there's no way to "write" how fiddlers really play. I wasted years trying to learn fiddle from written notes. It just doesn't work.

If you must read the notes from a book, record yourself as you read it - then shut the book and learn it by ear from your recording. It's good to play the song in short segments, so it's easier to learn how it goes.

2. After you know the melody and can play it by ear, figure out the chord changes. Listen first for WHEN the chords change, then try to figure out which chord they are playing. By "they" I mean the recording, or the folks you are jamming with.

Hint - typically in bluegrass the palette of chord changes that are used is small. The most common chords you'll find in most bluegrass songs are the I, IV, and V chords. These are the major chords built on the 1st, 4th, and 5th notes of the scale.

[See handout on construction of I, IV, and V chords](#)

Another hint - if you are playing with live people, you can watch the other instruments to see (with your eyes) when they change chords. The guitar shapes are pretty easy to read for most keys, so you can tell what chord they are playing by reading their finger placement on the fretboard.

To make sure you have the changes right, try playing the roots of the chord along the recording. Once you have that right, play the 1st three scale notes, then the 1st five scale notes, then the triad. If you have a favorite lick or pattern, play it every time the chord changes. It will sound dumb, but it's an exercise and you are playing with a recording or a beginner jam, so who cares.

Next, you can use your knowledge of the chords to practice your backup techniques. Practice playing chops on the OFF BEATS. [See handout on backup](#)

When you know the melody, and you know the chord changes, you are ready to take a solo. A solo, or "break" in a bluegrass song is your chance to play something while the singer drinks their beer. Improv is covered later, but think of this as your chance to play your version of the melody, embellished in a bluegrass style. Bluegrass style means - making the rhythm more interesting, adding slides and leading tones, playing double stops, throwing in hot licks, etc.

[Play along with some bluegrass songs \(with cheater sheet music - just as a way to take it home with you\).](#)

You can choose to come up with one version of the song that you always play, or you can "improvise" and make it up on the spot. Note - if you can't come up with something decent by taking your time and figuring it out, you probably won't do any better on the fly. SO - my suggestion is to start out by working out some breaks. There will be plenty of time for "free improv" on songs you don't know, and for when you get totally lost. When you are bored with what you can come up with on your own, you can study (aka steal) breaks off recordings. This is great for learning bluegrass style. A few tips: stay within your limits of technique, get a program or recorder that lets you slow down the song, learn it in short loops.

3. Learning Fiddle Tunes

In order to learn fiddle tunes you need to LISTEN to fiddle tunes - over and over and over - then you will need to PLAY ALONG with the BACKUP for fiddle tunes - over and over and over.

Notice that this is a little different. With the singing tunes, you don't need "backup" practice recordings - because you can practice your melody and chord changes and crazy improv right over the top of the singer. But with fiddle tunes, you need the lead player gone so you can hear what you're doing.

The most efficient way to learn fiddle tunes is from another player. Have them show you how it goes, where their fingers go, how they bow, etc. in short segments. This way it really gets into your brain, your ears, and your fingers.

If nobody can stand helping you in this way, you can use instructional recordings. Professional recordings are usually way too fast - so don't try to pick out the notes to a fiddle tune unless you have a program or recorder that can slow it way down.

The Steve Kauffman 4-hour bluegrass workout is my FAVORITE. He gives you the sheet music (which you should never use), the chord changes (which you really don't need because you can HEAR the chord changes, he plays the melody once with the backup, then it's the backup alone for 2 more times. Then he does it all again 2x faster.

[Go over example fiddle tunes with Kauffman book and CD](#)

WARNING - fiddle tunes are very personal. There are simple versions, and an infinite number of variations, with no limit to the complexity or virtuosity. You can make these variations up on your own, or study (aka steal) other fiddle players' breaks. Some fiddlers are quick enough to improvise new variations to fiddle tunes on the fly - but most of us work out one or two variations and hold on for dear life - they usually go FAST.

There are numerous transcriptions of fiddle tunes - mainly contest style. These are fun, and can be the source material for hot licks - but they don't teach you much beyond that. I use them like etudes, and never really play anything I learned (aka memorized) from a book in a jam or on stage - mainly because the other players "screw me up" and I get lost - then I end up making up total garbage.

[See example of contest tunes](#)

Fiddle tunes are good for warm-ups, and for speed drills.

Some ways to play faster are:

- Make sure you really know it slow
- Use tiny amounts of bow
- Use dotted rhythms to practice playing 2 quick notes, and 1 long note to regroup
- Use different bowing patterns to trick yourself

If something is technically too hard for you, here is how you can tackle it.

First, SLOW IT DOWN

Second, TAKE IT IN SMALLER PIECES

Third, CHANGE IT SO IT'S EASIER

4. Improvisational Skills

Learning to improvise is something that requires a combination of structure, and wild abandon. When you get that balance right, you are good to go.

I will start with a warning.

WARNING!!! Improv does not mean "making up random garbage." Often intermediate players will just go nuts playing whatever, and calling it "improv." No no no. It has to make SENSE. It has to SAY SOMETHING. You would never give a speech and just start making up words - you have to use the established language, you have to use phrases, you have to be making a POINT.

Here is the structure I use for my bluegrass playing.

First - start with the melody. Play the melody note for note, exactly how the singer does it (slides, inflection, rhythm, everything.) This requires you to KNOW the melody. If you can't play the melody by ear, you are not ready to improvise on that song.

Second - make up new variations for the rhythm - "rag" out the rhythm, but leave everything else exactly as it is in the melody.

Third - add some upper and lower neighbor tones to the melody, or some short embellishments (like turns in classical music).

Fourth - play off the chord. Usually for fiddle that means adding some double stops, but it can mean simple patterns, or harmonizing the melody.

Fifth - add some flashy hot licks that fit the chords - tastefully, of course. A good way to start is with a nice tag, then add a lick or two over the last half of the break. Do not run patterns over the whole song, and do not use the same pattern over each chord - unless it's just an exercise to see if you CAN run the patterns that way (which is a good way to learn the chords).

Put it all together, and you can have an infinite number of variations, all that make sense and follow the melody, and fit into the chord structure, and include whatever level of virtuosity you want.

If you listen to a lot of fiddlers, you will hear the melody buried into a very ornate embellishment. If you listen to a lot of beginning jammers, you will hear a lot of random garbage, and they will call it "improv."

WARNING:

Lots of beginning jammers focus on the chord changes instead of the melody. They get all caught up trying to play something over the "changes" - but in bluegrass, the changes are often identical from one song to the next. Soloing over the changes gets really boring really fast. If you can't tell what song it is from your break, then your break is no good.

HINT - the melody always fits the chord changes. SO, if you focus on embellishing the melody, you don't even have to worry about what chord you're on, or when it's going to change to the next chord.

One friend of mine used to compare soloing to finding his way through a town. You have to know the town or else you are lost. You can go the same way each time, or you can figure out how the town is laid out so you don't always have to go the exact same way. When you know the town you can go down different streets and still get where you're going. If you don't know the town, you are lost.

Many beginner and intermediate players just don't know very many songs. So, in a jam you end up having to "wing it." Other beginning jammers will encourage you to play random improv - but in the long run, you will need to LEARN THE SONGS in order to really play them and improvise nice solos.

5. Hot Fiddling

I mentioned above that improv is like giving a speech. You can write your speech and memorize it, and say the same words like an actor in a play - and as long as you practice it to the point where nothing can throw you off, and you're sure it will always be in that same key (which it never will be - every singer gets to pick the key for their voice), and with that exact form, and at a playable speed, you'll sound great. After people have heard your break a few times, they might be on to you - you're not improvising - but who cares? You still sound like a hot fiddler. You'll probably have to "work out" your breaks to fiddle tunes, due to the speed. Luckily, these are usually in a given key and stay there (unless the banjo forgets their capo).

Another option for soloing on the easier songs (again, like a speech) is to know your subject, have an idea of the point you want to make, and speak the words as they come to you, like a conversation. Just like when you are speaking, you will rely on some automatic phrases that you can use while you are formulating your next idea, you know? These little clichés or fillers actually end up making it sound very bluegrass, know what I mean? The thing about it is, part of the language includes these clichés, and they really help you - sort of put it into phrases and - sort of keep you on track. Again, if you use the same ones too much, they will start to make people sick - but it's good practice to see how many times you can use a certain lick or cliché. It's also good practice to try to not use the same lick or cliché more than one time in a jam or a show or a practice session.

OK - having said all that, there is a way to learn how to put licks and clichés into your playing.

First, there is the concept of the moveable "shape" lick. This means you can use the same lick in different keys, just by playing the same shape on a different string, or by moving it to a different position up the neck. E.g. the A major scale starting on the G string can become a B major scale if you shift your 1st finger up to the B. Any lick that uses the notes from the A scale can become a B lick by shifting your first finger up to B.

Second, you can create sets of patterns or licks that fit a certain shape and that follow common chord progressions found in bluegrass songs. Try to make it interesting, but keep it simple at first.

Third, you can practice these sets of patterns or licks in any key - so it won't matter what key the singer picks, because it's a moveable shape.

In order to be tasteful, you still need to respect the melody - always - no matter how much you want to sound like a hot fiddler.

Here is my approach to breaking the lick barrier:

A - play the melody (embellished if you like), then add a well-rehearsed tag at the end. Luckily the tag always falls on the I chord, which is the same as the key of the song. Use the same tag for every song, in every key, until it is automatic.

B - figure out (or learn from a recording) a short lick that fits over the I chord. Play the melody, and substitute the lick every time the I chord happens in the song. Next, transpose that lick and use it every time the IV chord happens, then every time the V chord happens. Lots of this will sound dumb, but it's an exercise. Pay attention to times when it works, and times when it doesn't. Finally, use the lick as a filler to the melody, the same way you would throw in a fill after the singer finishes a phrase. Don't forget to play your tag!

C - figure out (or learn from a recording) a set of shape patterns that follow the chord progression of the SECOND HALF of the break. Play the melody (embellished if you like, with tasteful short clichés) for the first half of the break. For the 2nd half of the break, throw in your well-rehearsed set of patterns that you know will fit the changes, and end it with your awesome tag. The added benefit of using licks only in the 2nd half is that you only have to worry about the chord progression for the 2nd half. Lots and lots of bluegrass songs have exactly the same chord progression for the 2nd half, even though their first halves are different.

To really make this work, you should:

- Make a catalog of the bluegrass songs you know (especially the songs you actually PLAY with a band and at jams) - with the 2nd half progressions, and the shape patterns that work well on those songs.
- Make a practice CD for yourself that runs through the progressions at different speeds and in different keys (like Jazz play-along books)
- Make a compilation CD of recorded bluegrass artists playing songs that follow those progressions.
- Keep creating new sets of shape patterns and licks that work over the common progressions of the songs in your collection (especially the songs you actually PLAY)

Show a demonstration of this approach

6. Playing at a Jam

The best way to prepare yourself for playing at jams is to play along with your CD collection. If you can spare $\frac{1}{2}$ hour of TV time, pick one CD to practice with every night for a week. Don't pick anything crazy hard - like Allison Krauss or Chris Thiele - start with the early stuff (even if it's scratchy) - Bill Monroe, Stanley Brothers, Flatt and Scruggs. If you study bluegrass from the beginning forward, your technique and ideas will develop in parallel with the development of the genre. You will hear things start out very melody based and "worked out," then becoming more hot with licks, then more improvisational.

Play along with a new CD every week. Practice picking out the melody, figuring out the chord changes, playing breaks, and doing various backup on each song. Listen to what the fiddle player is doing on the recording, and imitate them.

Here's some famous jazz instruction:
IMITATE, INTEGRATE, INNOVATE

At first you will learn by imitating other fiddle players. After you've figured out what they are doing enough times, you'll start to see how to do it yourself. Then, you can create your own voice and move your music beyond. You can't create your own voice until you've done your homework.

After you know a few songs, go to a beginner jam. Play nice, quiet backup with good rhythm (chops on the OFF BEATs). Do not cover up the singer - ever. If it's a song you can play the melody to, take a break when it's your turn. If you can't play the melody, let them know you want to "pass." Write down the songs that come up, and try to find recordings of them. I personally recommend the [Bluegrass Album Band Volumes 1 - 6](#) for a good starter collection. Again, stay away from Bela Fleck tunes until you have the basics down.

Keep going to jams, keep playing along with recordings, and you will notice that the same songs often come up. Learn those standards, and learn to improvise or fake it on the new ones that come up.

7. Playing in a Band

Playing in a band is very similar to playing at jams, except that you get to have "do-overs," you figure out ahead who does what, and you keep working on the same songs until you get them right. This is the way to really learn to play bluegrass. Hopefully your band introduces new songs, or writes their own songs, so you can keep building your repertoire and learning new things. Starting a band with other beginners is a really great way to improve FAST.

In a band you will want to make up arrangements for the songs. Figure out who is going to play fills after the singer finishes a phrase, who is taking a break after which verse, and exactly what kind of backup everyone should be playing. You always want to do the thing that will contribute the MOST to the overall sound of the band. In general, the fiddle has the most flexibility as far as backup. Fiddles can play chops, rhythmic patterns, long bows, harmony parts, whatever. Basic rules - don't ever cover up the singer; chop only if nobody else is chopping; keep the time; follow the changes. Practice improvising, or playing your worked out breaks. Try out new licks, or new backup ideas. Record the rehearsals, and practice on your own.

Go to see other bands perform live, and see what they do. It's good to see other amateur bands, to see what makes them "amateur." What's missing? What are they doing that could be done better? Apply that to your own playing.

Lesson 32

Understanding Keys and Scales

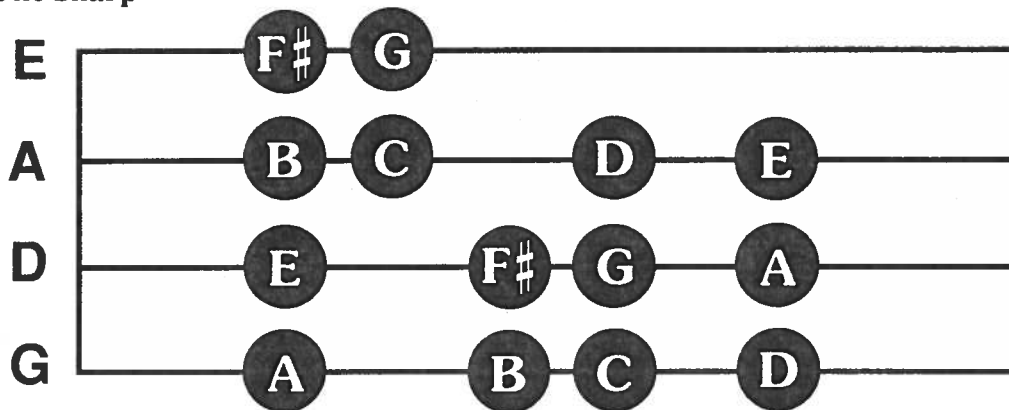
It is very important to know the key in which you are playing and how to play that scale. In written music, the key is determined by the number of sharps or flats. The sharps and flats dictate where the fingers are placed on each string. By learning the finger positions in each key and its scale, you will know where to place your fingers before you begin playing a tune.

The following scales are accompanied by diagrams showing how the fingers are placed on the strings. The diagrams show the finger patterns for all notes in first position for each key. The written scales start and end on the note which is the name of the scale, so all of the notes on the diagram may not be used in practicing the scale.

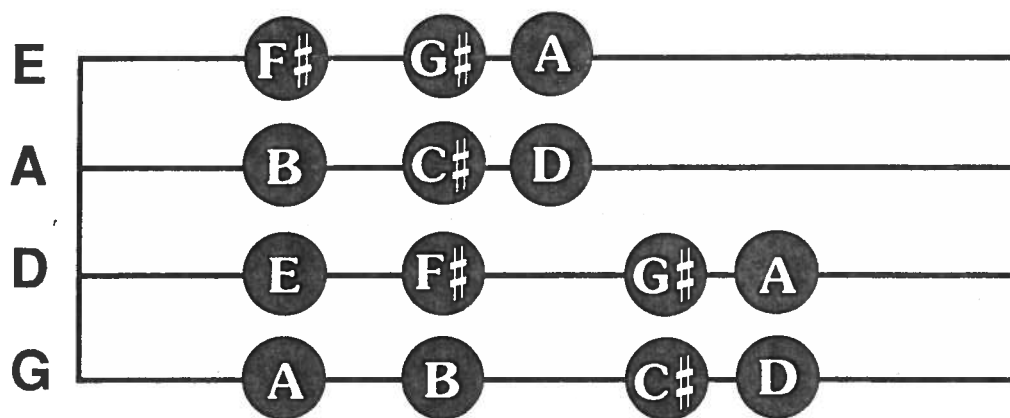
Take note of the key signature (the sharps and flats) so you will recognize the key. Practice the scales slowly, concentrating on being exactly in tune. Each of these scales should be memorized. Both the fourth finger and the open string should be practiced in the scales. They are interchangeable unless there is a flat or sharp for the pitch. In these exceptions the fourth finger is marked Hi or Lo.

This lesson should act as a reference in learning these few basic keys and scales. For a thorough source on keys, scales, fingerings, and chords, see *Mel Bay's Fiddling Handbook*.

Key of G - One Sharp

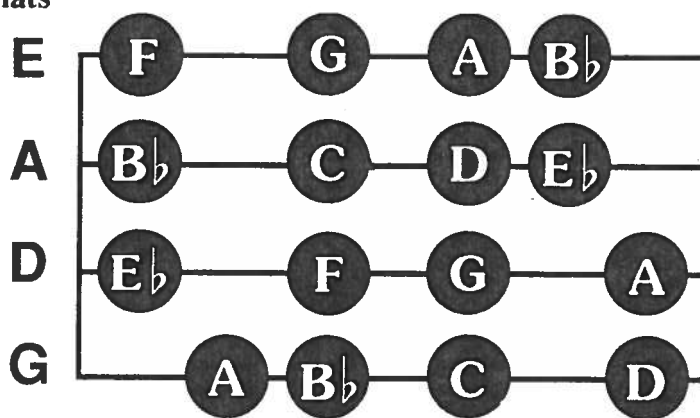


Key of A - Three Sharps



Ascending scale: A1, B2, C#3, D4, E5, F#5, G#5, A6. Descending scale: A6, G#5, F#5, E5, D4, C#3, B2, A1.

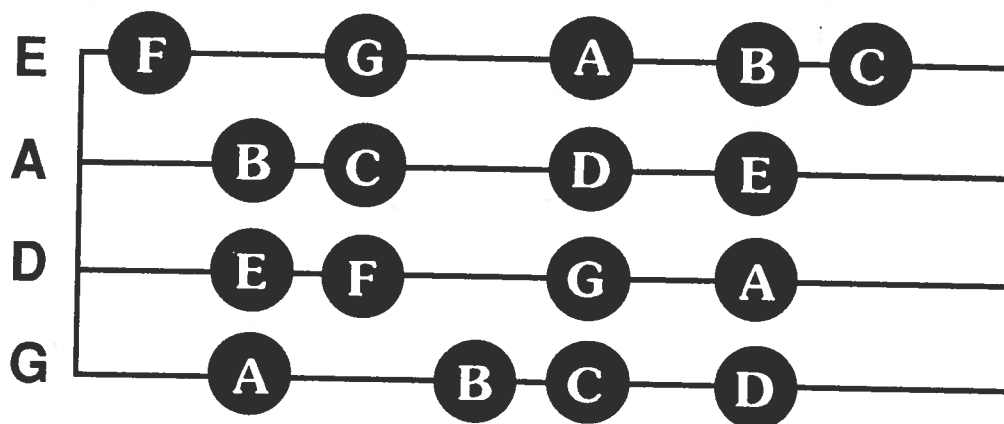
Key of B Flat - Two Flats



Ascending scale: Bb1, C2, D2, Eb3, F3, G3, A3, Bb4. Descending scale: Bb4, A3, G3, F3, Eb3, D2, C2, Bb1.

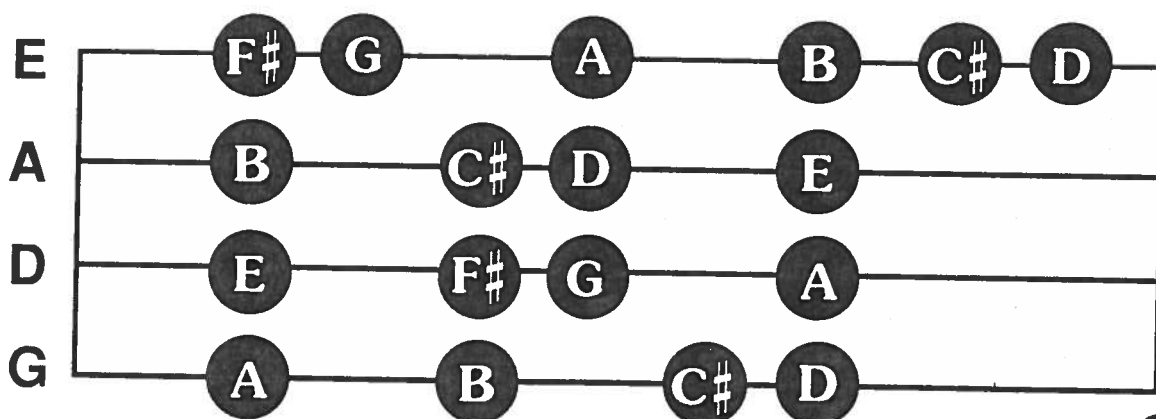
Key of C - No Flats or Sharps

In playing the C scale on the E string, the fourth finger can be stretched or extended to reach the high C.

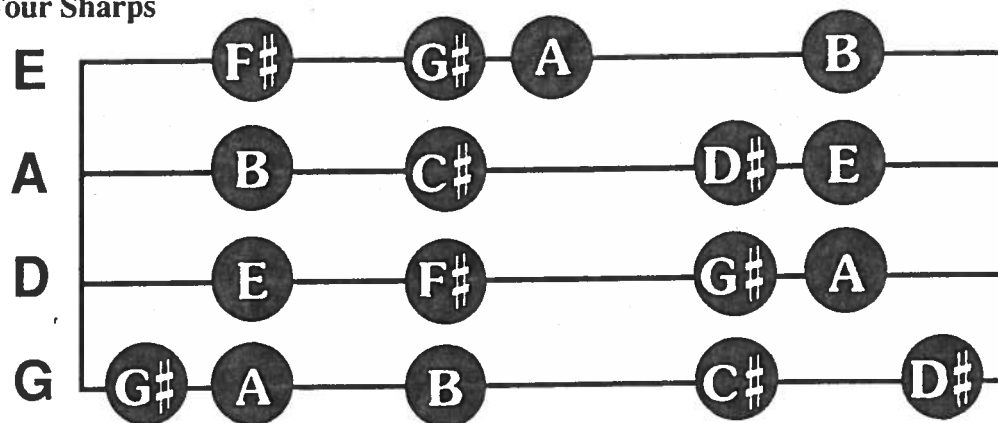


Key of D - Two Sharps

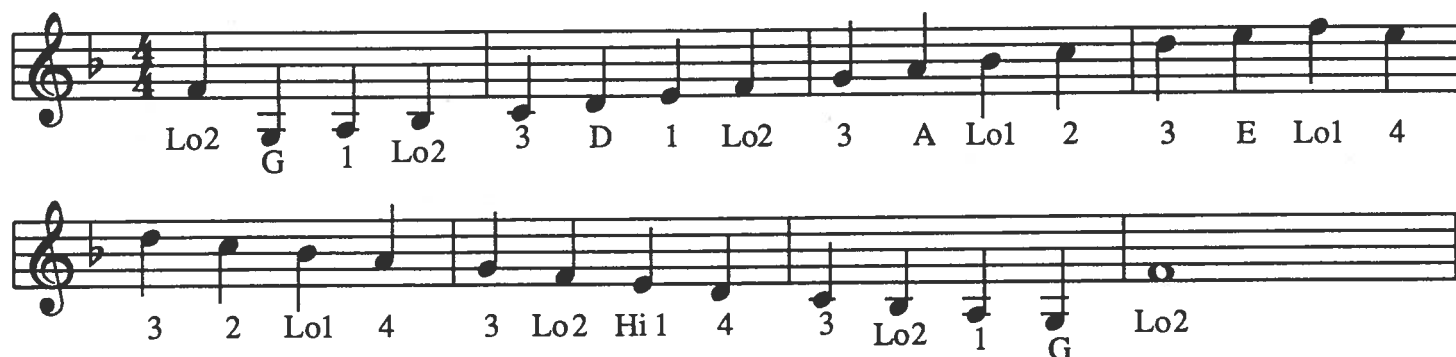
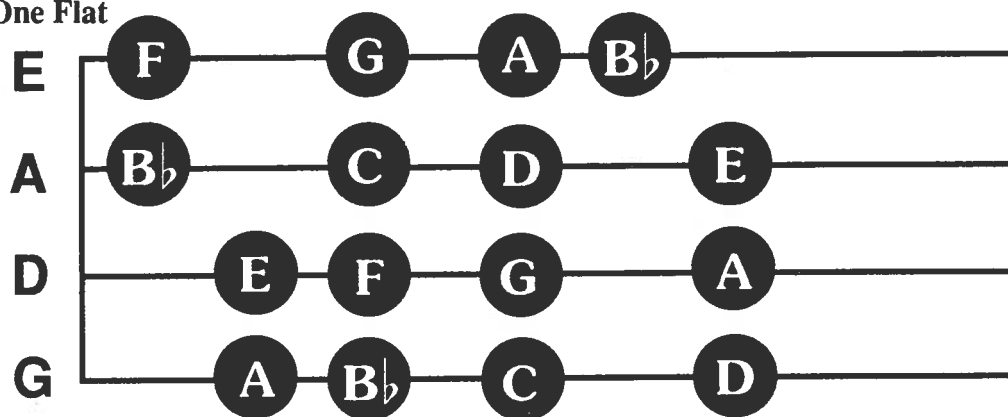
Play the D scale on the E string involves a shift. To do this, move the entire hand up the string, placing the first finger where the third finger is usually positioned. Leave the fingers on the string as you go up the scale.



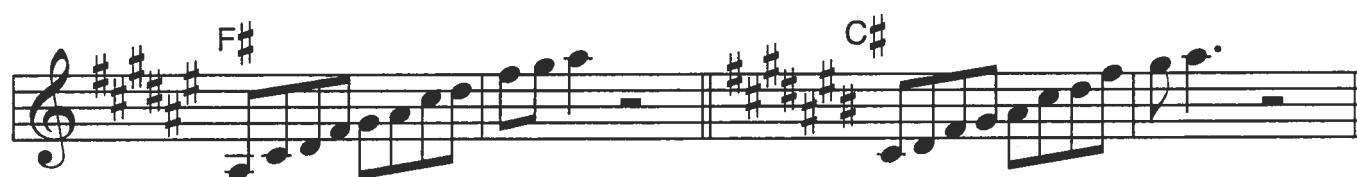
Key of E - Four Sharps



Key of F - One Flat



Appendix I First Position Major Pentatonic Scales



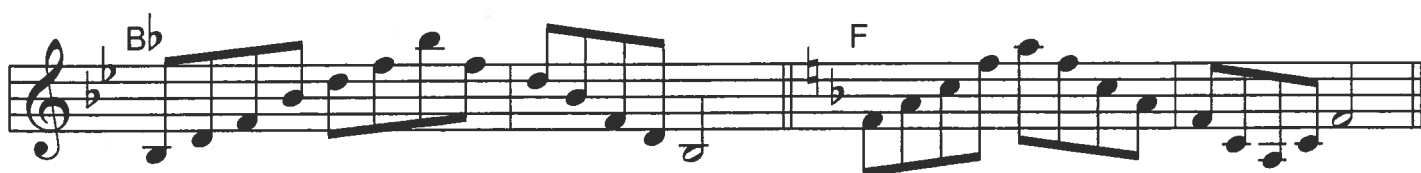
Appendix II First Position Major Scales



Appendix II First Position Major Scales (con't)



Appendix III First Position Major Arpeggios



Appendix IV Chords and How They Work

In these examples, the G major scale will be assigned these numbers:

G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C	D	E
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

In this appendix, we will work with four chord families: Major, Minor, Dominant, and Altered. This is a partial list of common chord types. It is by no means complete. I have indicated some of the more common swing chords.

Major - Consists of the first, third and fifth note of the major scale (in the key of G: G B D). Other major chord types start with 1, 3, 5 and then add other notes.

6th 1 3 5 6 Very common in Swing

Major 7 1 3 5 7

Major 9 1 3 5 7 9

Minor - Consists of the first, flatted third and fifth note of the scale. In G: G B \flat D. Other minor chord types are formed when other notes are added to the 1 \flat 3 5 triad.

Minor 6 1 \flat 3 5 6

Minor 7 1 \flat 3 5 \flat 7

Minor 9 1 \flat 3 5 \flat 7 9

Dominant - Consists of the basic major triad plus the flatted 7. This basic dominant chord is often called a "seventh." Other examples are:

7th 1 3 5 \flat 7 Common in Swing

9th 1 3 5 \flat 7 9 Common in Swing

11th 1 3 5 \flat 7 9 11

Altered - Included in this category are:

Diminished 1 \flat 3 \flat 5 $\flat\flat$ 7 Used in Swing

Augmented 1 3 #5 Used in Swing

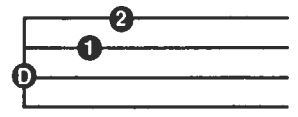
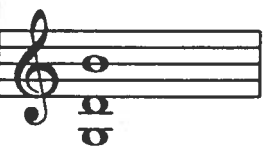
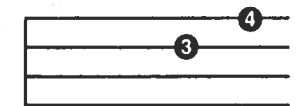
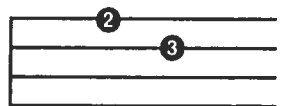
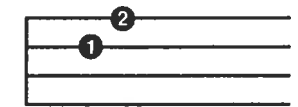
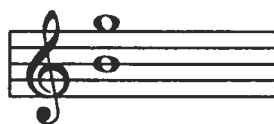
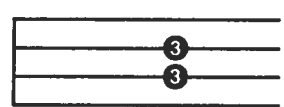
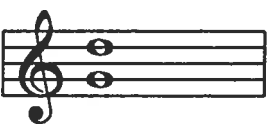
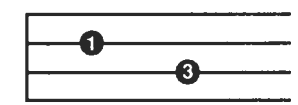
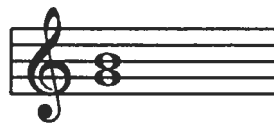
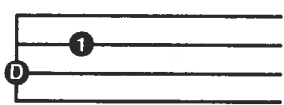
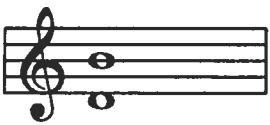
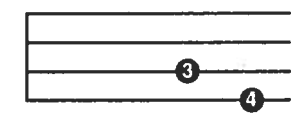
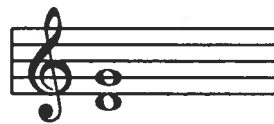
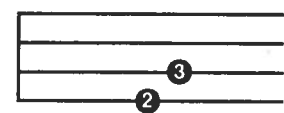
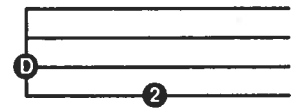
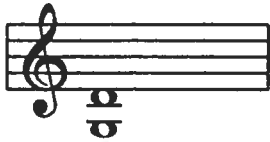
Augmented 7th 1 3 #5 \flat 7 Used in Swing

Suspended 4 1 4 5

Suspended 2 1 2 5

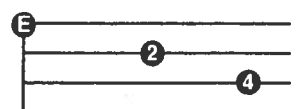
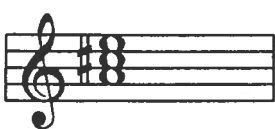
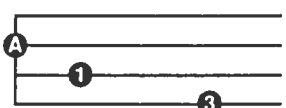
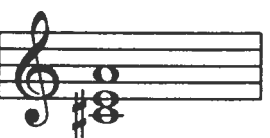
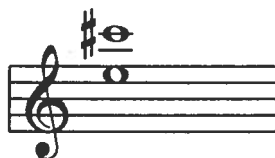
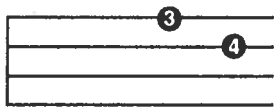
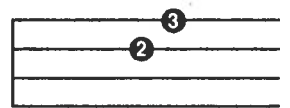
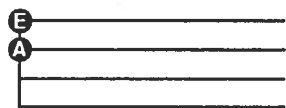
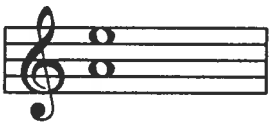
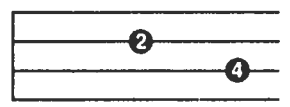
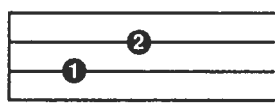
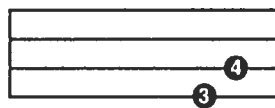
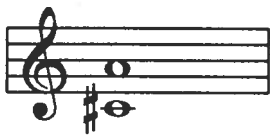
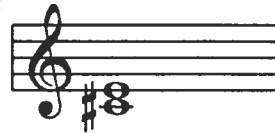
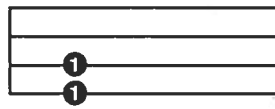
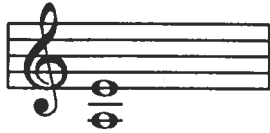
The G Chord

The notes in the G chord are G, B and D.



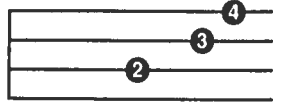
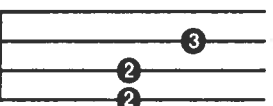
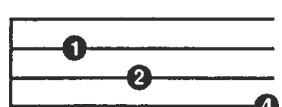
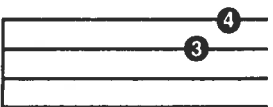
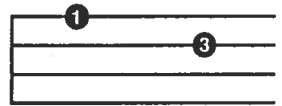
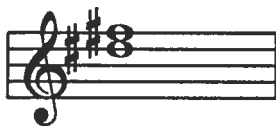
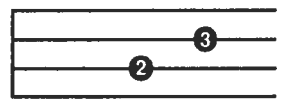
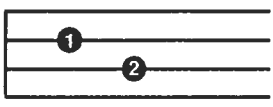
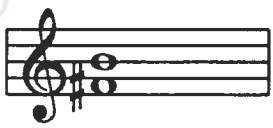
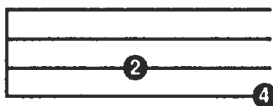
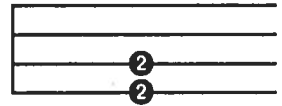
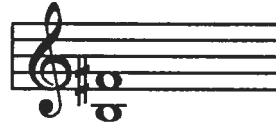
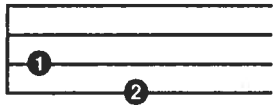
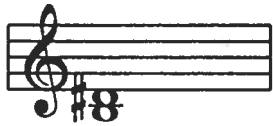
The A Chord

The notes in the A chord are A, C# and E.



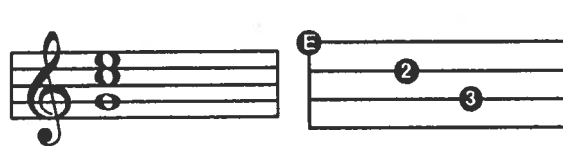
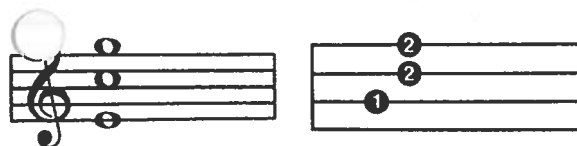
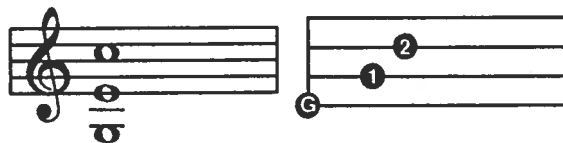
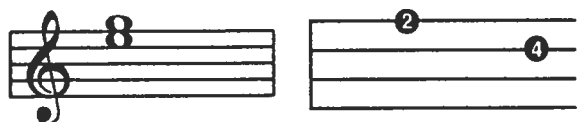
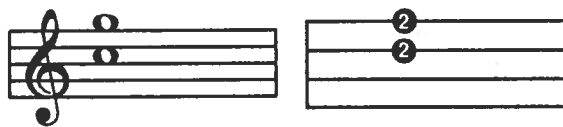
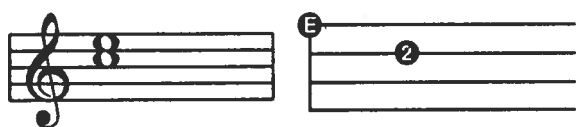
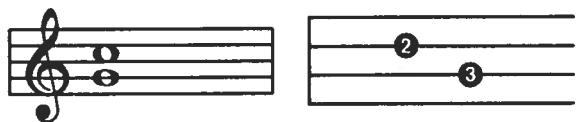
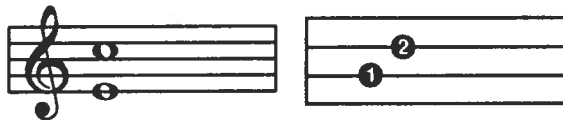
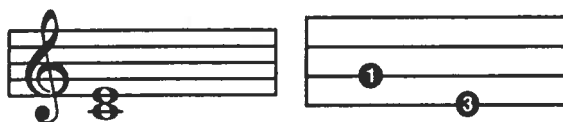
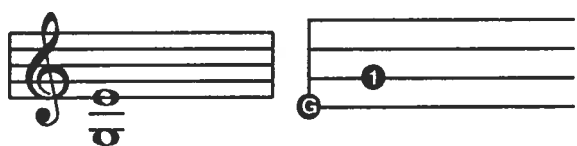
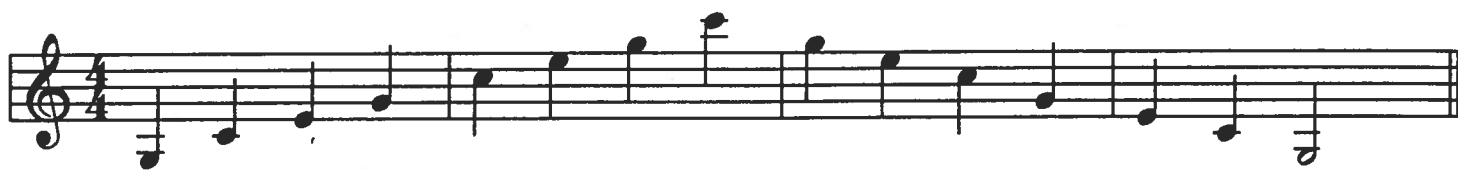
The B Chord

The notes in the B chord are B, D# and F#.



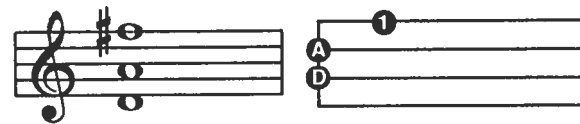
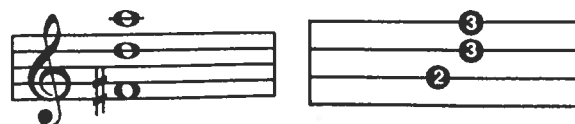
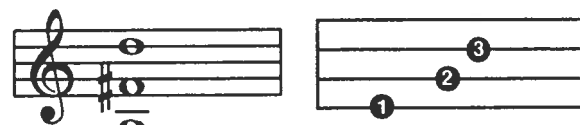
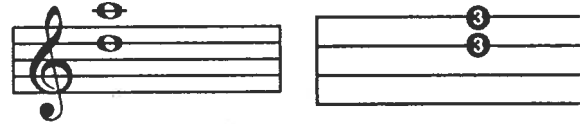
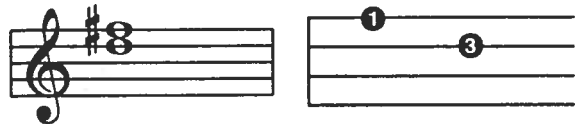
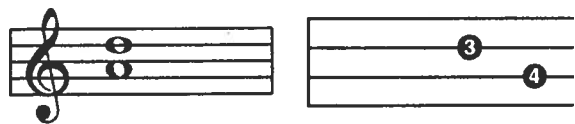
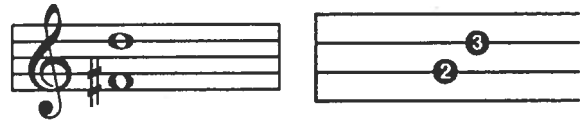
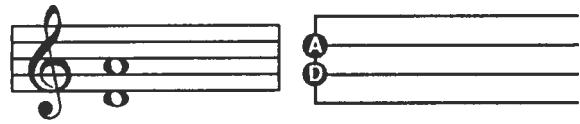
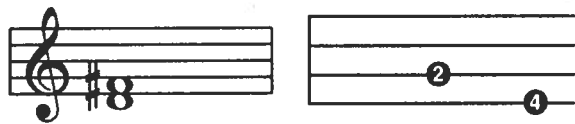
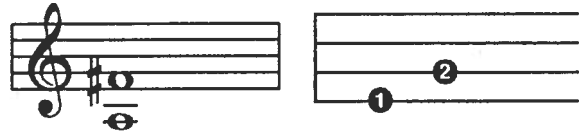
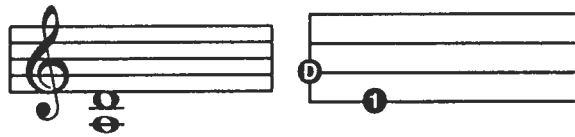
The C Chord

The notes in the C chord are C, E and G.



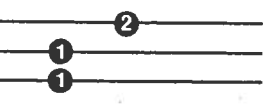
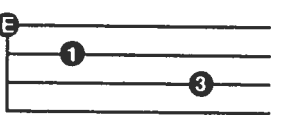
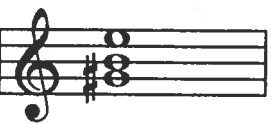
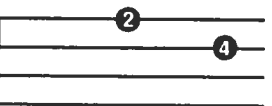
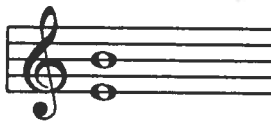
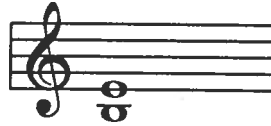
The D Chord

The notes in the D chord are D, F# and A.



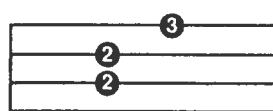
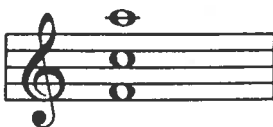
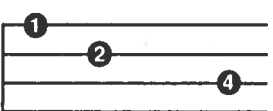
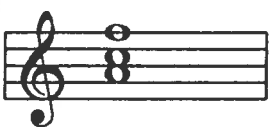
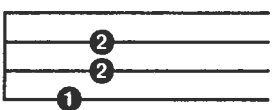
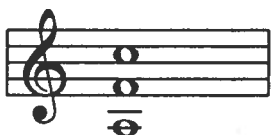
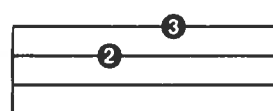
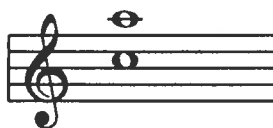
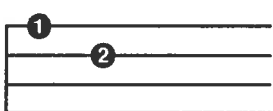
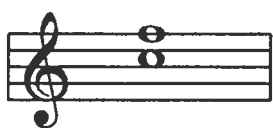
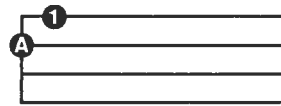
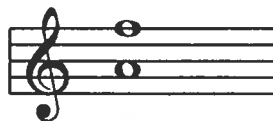
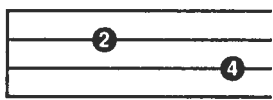
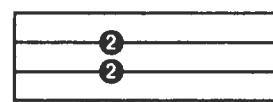
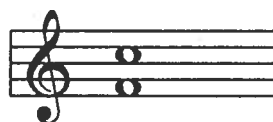
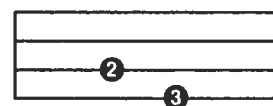
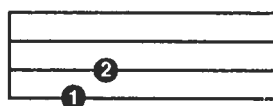
The E Chord

The notes in the E chord are E, G# and B.



The F Chord

The notes in the F chord are F, A and C.



Phrasing with the Bow

Since bluegrass is such a highly expressive and improvisatory type of music, one's bowing should be flexible enough to accommodate many different types of phrases. The most basic kind of phrasing used in bluegrass involves playing the melody of a song in a vocal manner, with some degree of ornamentation. Peter Rowan (who played guitar and sang lead with Bill Monroe in the '60s) said some interesting things about the relationship of singing and fiddle playing in an interview with Pete Wernick of *Country Cookin'*: "To me, bluegrass singing is like fiddle playing. It's like a few short words and a long held out thing, you know, like 'It was in the spriiiiing, one sunny daaaaaay'—a short bust of a few notes and then a long held-out thing, 'Sweetheart of miiiiine' When Bill [Monroe] teaches fiddle parts and stuff, he sings them, he teaches the fiddle part from sort of like a singing orientation. It's like these short little scales, up to a certain note, the note held and the next melody line coming in after that."

Another kind of phrasing that occurs often in bluegrass is the kind used in playing a driving fiddle tune, or instrumental. Both old-timey fiddlers and classical violinists often have difficulty in getting that element of drive in their playing, and I think the problem lies in their use of symmetrical, or predetermined bowings. Where an old-timey fiddler might play an eighth note passage bowed like this:



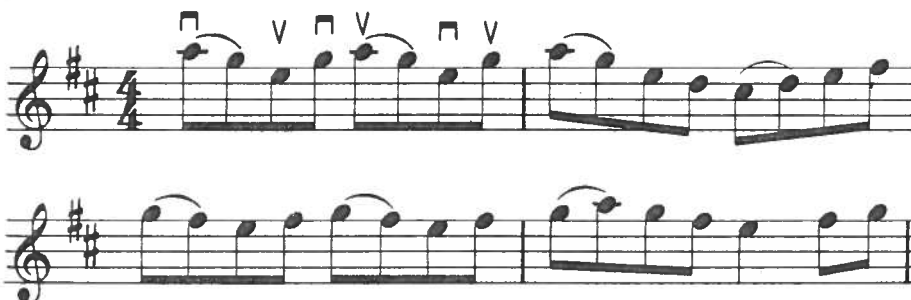
or a classical violinist like this:

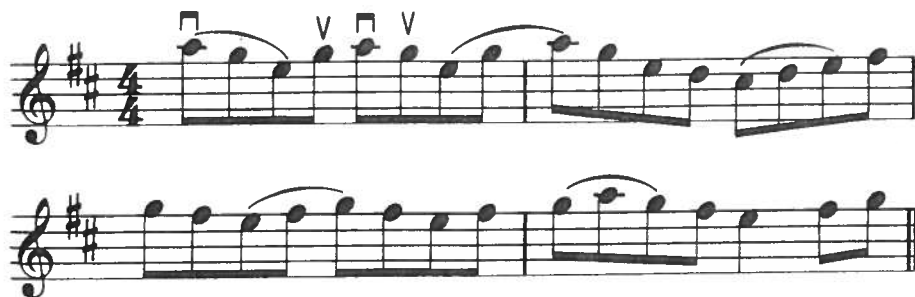


The bluegrass fiddler would probably play it as here, with the number of notes slurred changing constantly:

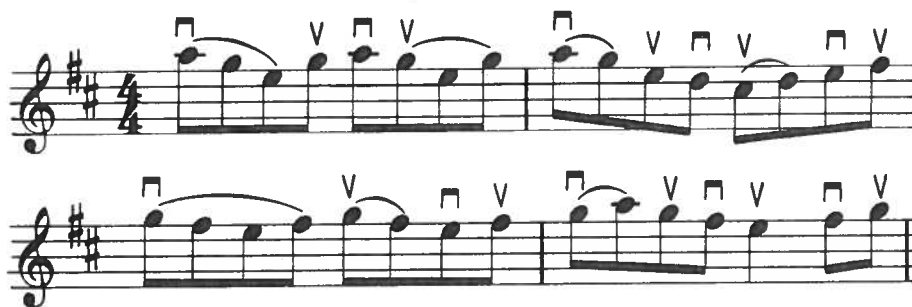


To familiarize yourself with this approach, I would suggest taking a fiddle tune and varying the bowing in as many ways as you can. For example, try the first few bars of *June Apple* with a straight shuffle bowing (two notes slurred, two notes separate):





Finally, try it with a combination of different bowings:



It's a good idea, in any driving tune, to keep pressure on the bow at the moment of bow change as this will sustain the sound.

The Left Hand

Probably the most important left-hand technique in bluegrass fiddling is the slide. Sliding into certain notes helps create the bluesy sound so desirable in this music; some players, like Vassar Clements and Scotty Stoneman, slide so often that it becomes the major identifying factor in their sound. Blues are an important element in bluegrass, but since they're completely absent from classical music, the violinist often has difficulty getting used to sliding as an expressive device. The best remedy for this is just to listen to the playing of the great bluesy fiddlers until that sound seems natural to you.

It seems that the interval into which fiddlers most often slide is the third of the chord (C# in the key of A, D# in B, etc.). The third is the interval that controls whether a chord is major or minor, and sliding creates an ambiguity that our ears identify as bluesy. As an example of this, play the passage below as written, without slides:



Now try the same passage, sliding into the third from a half-step below:



You can see that the slide gives this passage a bluegrassy flavor that was absent previously.

Bowing

There are several bowing patterns commonly used by fiddlers. The most basic is called the “saw stroke” and consists of a separate bow stroke for each note.

Ex. - Devil's Dream



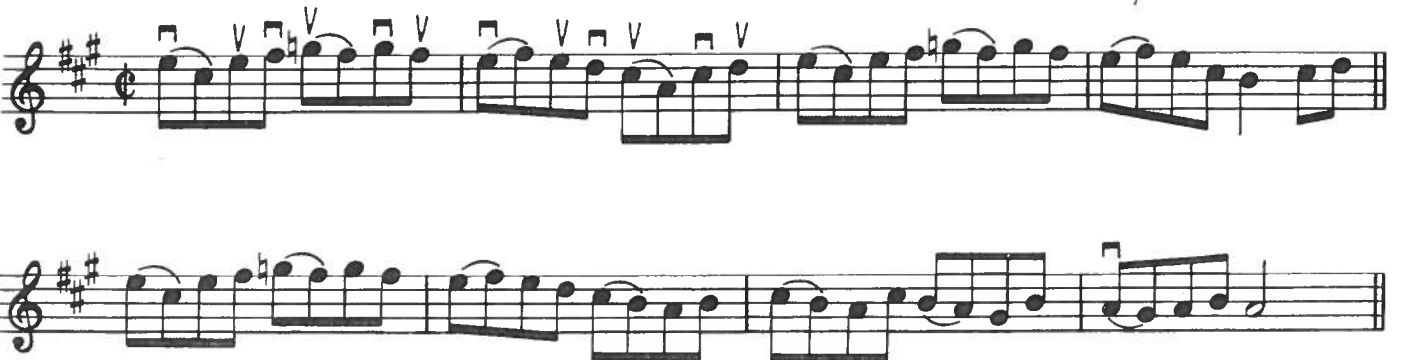
Another basic bowing pattern is called the “shuffle.” The rhythm of the “shuffle” is found in this example.

Ex. - Old Joe Clark



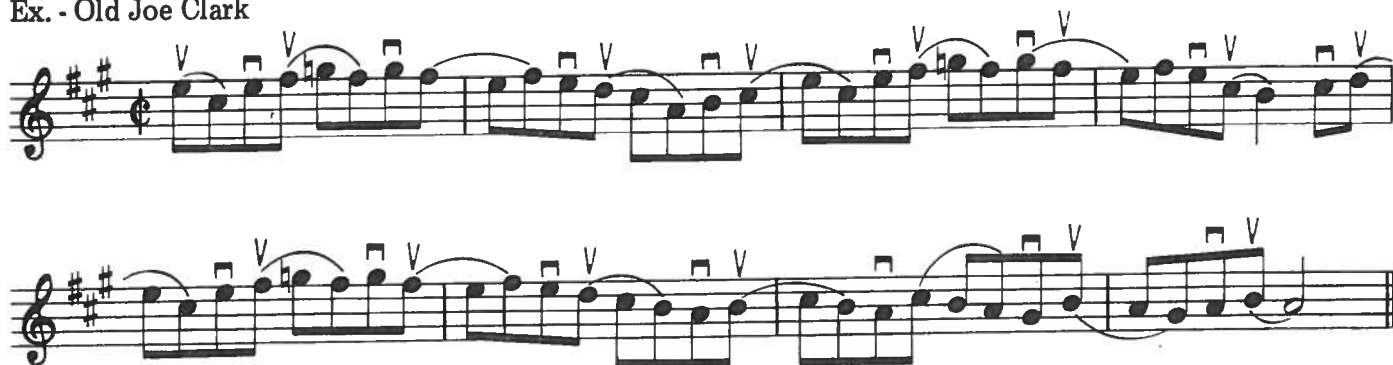
The “shuffle” is also used in moving passages by slurring the first two notes of each beat.

Ex. - Old Joe Clark



The "Georgia shuffle" is a pattern which emphasizes the offbeat by using a down bow on the offbeat and an up bow on all other notes.

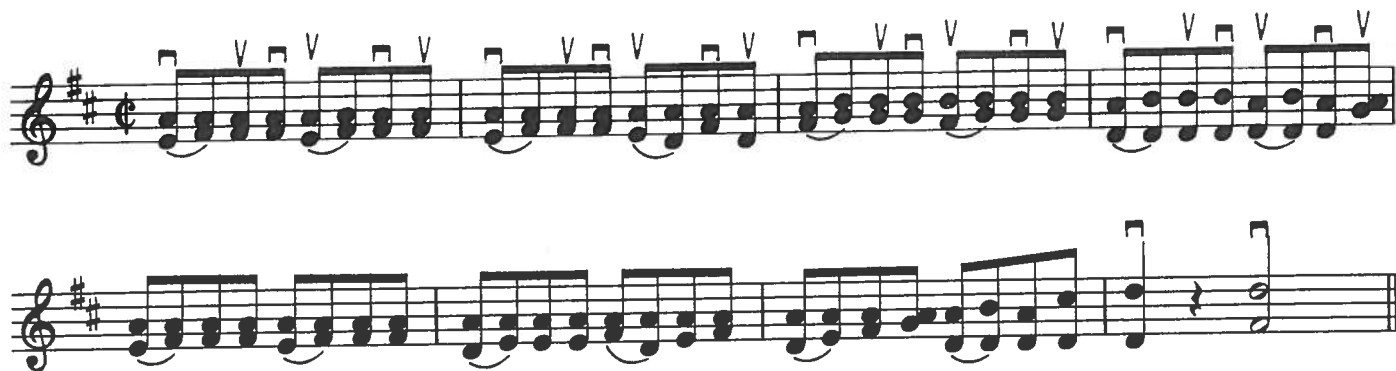
Ex. - Old Joe Clark



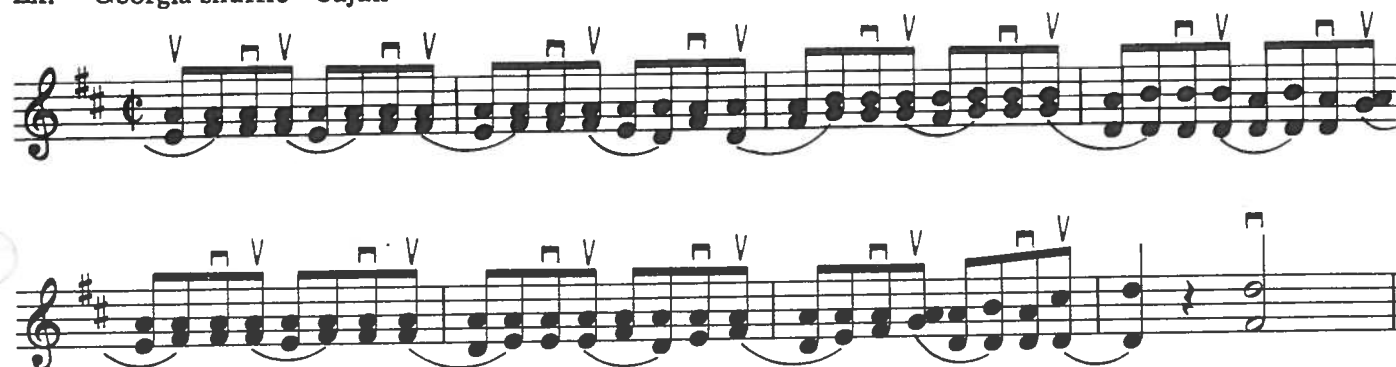
The most effective use of these bowing patterns is accomplished when they are mixed so that the phrasing and emphasis remain fresh and interesting.

Another example of the use of the "shuffle" and "Georgia shuffle" comes in Cajun style fiddling. Both shuffles create the correct feel, although the "Georgia shuffle" gives more accent to the offbeat.

Ex. - Cajun



Ex. - "Georgia shuffle" Cajun



Once again the most effective bowing for this style of playing is a combination of the two shuffles.

Double Shuffle

The double shuffle is a bowing pattern found in many show tunes. It is also incorporated into back-up fiddling by many fiddlers. The pattern is sixteen notes long and consists of five groups of three notes plus one additional note. It is played on two or more strings and is achieved by crossing over to the next higher string for the third note of each group. The final note is played on the lower string. Thus the pattern looks like this:



Begin by practicing the double shuffle slowly on two strings and work your speed up only after you are able to play it cleanly. The most common variation on the shuffle is to change the higher note on each crossing. In the key of C, a common way for this to be done is as follows:



It is also common to add the seventh (in this case, the B \flat).



Ex. - Tennessee Wagner



Down-Driven Bowing and Corrective Slurs

One of the many aspects of fiddle music that makes it so fun to play is the almost endless variations of bowing. There are as many ways to bow a tune as there are fiddlers. However, before you are set free to explore your own bowing, you should master what I call "Down-Driven Bowing."

Gravity naturally gives your down-bows a slight accent and makes up-bows slightly weaker. When playing passages of a series of eighth or sixteenth notes as "saw strokes" (one bow stroke per note), the rhythm sounds best when down-bows are on the beat notes. This is Down-Driven Bowing and it gives tunes good rhythmic drive.

Keep in mind that Down-Driven Bowing is not an end-all bow pattern. Master fiddlers mix a large number of patterns of slurs and saw strokes and often deliberately play phrases with up-driven bow strokes to create syncopation. However, I have found that students who master Down-Driven Bowing have a great foundation from which to explore a world of creative bowing. Volume 2 covers other patterns and how to make up your own bowing. A down-bow is written as a staple, ▮, and an up-bow is a .



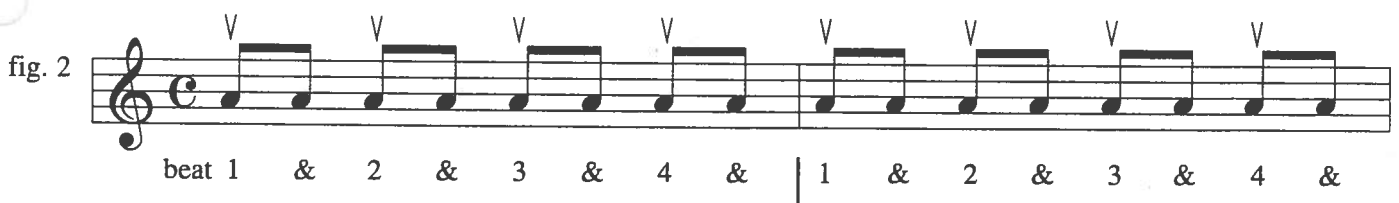
This section will teach you to use slurs to "correct" the bow's direction. It takes time to internalize the feeling of this skill and a lot of practice before it becomes automatic. Therefore, before exploring your own interpretation of bowing, memorize the bowing for each tune as written in this book. Teaching yourself to tap your foot on the beat while you play helps you to feel where to put in a corrective slur. If you are adding them correctly, you will notice that your down bows are going with your foot tap nearly all the time.

In fig. 1, the slight accent of your down-bows landing on the beat notes make a rhythm like "Da, da, Da, da, Da, da, Da, da." This has a good rhythmic drive. However, in fig. 2, the bowing is reversed and up-bows are landing on the beat making a jerky-sounding rhythm like "da, Da, da, Da, da, Da, da Da."

Down-Driven Bowing: Notice that all of the down-bows fall on beat notes.



Reversed Bowing: Here up-bows fall on the beat. This will have a jerky-sounding rhythm.



Some fiddle tunes consist exclusively of eighth notes (such as *Devil's Dream* from AFM Volume 2). If we started one of these tunes on a down-bow, our down-bows would land on the beat notes through the entire tune. However, most tunes have more rhythmic variety than this. Quarter notes mixed in with eighth notes can reverse the bow direction relative to the beat (fig. 3). There are three ways to prevent playing the phrase with reversed bowing: adding "Corrective slurs" (described below), resetting the bow (discussed on page 35), and adding extra notes (to be covered in future volumes).

Reversed Bowing: Without any slurs, the fourth beat of measure 1 and the first and second beats of measure 2 are up-bows and therefore reversed.

fig. 3

beat 1 & 2 & 3 4 & | 1 & 2 3 & 4 & | 1

Down-Driven Bowing with Corrective Slurs After Quarter Note: Here the bow direction is corrected by slurring the two eighth notes that come **after** the quarter note, thereby allowing us to play the next beat note on a down-bow.

fig. 4

beat 1 & 2 & 3 4 & | 1 & 2 3 & 4 & | 1

Down-Driven Bowing with Corrective Slurs Before Quarter Note: You may also slur the quarter note with the eighth note that comes **before** it. Both this example and the one above are common and are used in tunes in this book.

fig. 5

beat 1 & 2 & 3 4 & | 1 & 2 3 & 4 & | 1

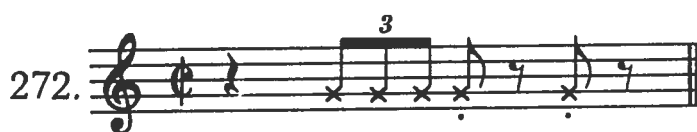
Kickoffs, Tags, and End-of-Line Fills

(Bluegrass Flotsam and Jetsam)

Kickoffs

Before forging ahead to licks that employ upper positions, I must account for an olio of fiddle miscellany. To introduce the listener (as well as other musicians), to a solo, fiddlers pick out a few notes, usually of three beats duration or less, to lead into the official beginning of the break. The notes are chosen to allow arrival on the desired downbeat note with a downstroke of the bow. The longer music examples earlier in the book illustrate this idea.

When you start the whole tune, and set the tempo for the band, a strongly rhythmic pattern is helpful. Over the years, the lick of choice utilizes this model:



The bow strokes must be quite short, minimizing tonal qualities but stressing the tempo because of their percussiveness. Use the hair closest to the frog.

For a seemingly simple lick, it takes a lot of practice to get this just right. It is a matter of bow control. This lick is used at all speeds and some players seem to start every tune with it. Here are a slew of choices.



Introductions

The most common introduction to a fiddle tune is a four beat shuffle on the key note or a double stop consisting of the key note and another note from the tonic chord. This is often doubled or played for eight beats. This type of introduction allows the fiddler to set the tempo of a tune. Here are a few examples of this type of introduction.

Key of A



Key of D



Key of G



When a tune begins with pickup notes or notes before the downbeat, these notes are substituted for the last part of the introduction, so that the full introduction takes four beats followed by the first downbeat of the tune. Such is the case in the tunes *Soldier's Joy* and *Turkey in the Straw*.

Soldier's Joy

Turkey in the Straw



Another often used introduction consists of two short notes or two sets of double stops being struck down bow on the last two beats of a measure. Typical examples of this introduction are found in *Maiden's Prayer* and *Faded Love*.

Maiden's Prayer

Faded Love



A third type of introduction is found in tunes such as *Down Yonder* and *Bully of the Town*. There are two rhythmic variations, one beginning with a duplet and the other beginning with a triplet. This type of introduction is also used in songs such as *I'll Fly Away*.

Bully of the Town

Down Yonder

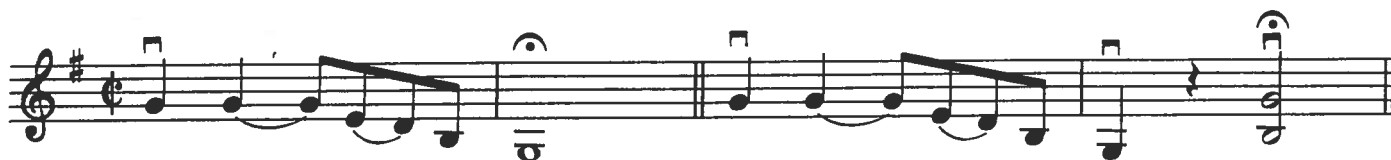


I'll Fly Away



Endings

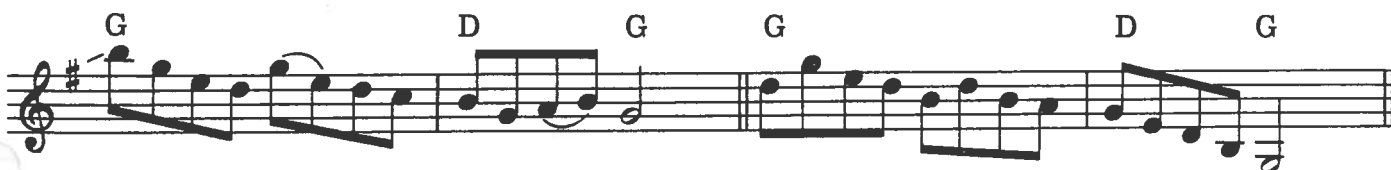
There are many standard endings or tags to fiddle tunes. The most simple ending is to hold out the last note. A common variation of this is to lift the bow following the last note of the tune, and play a long note or double stop on the next beat. The following examples from Champagne Polka demonstrate these two endings.



One of the most popular endings is the “shave and a haircut.” It is four beats long and is used as a basis for many other endings. Since it is such a standard cliché, it should be learned in all keys.



Many other common endings are based on the same chord pattern and length as the “shave and a haircut” ending. They often consist of a descending scale, although ascending scales and combinations are used. Here are two examples in each key.



Tags

At the other end of the spectrum from kickoffs are tags, musical completion maneuvers. These are analagous to a footballer's spiking of the ball in the end zone after a touchdown. These antics let the band know that the tune is ending and gives the fiddler one last moment to bask in the limelight.

One of the basic forms is



And here come the variations:



Diatonic Chords

Diatonic chords are those chords built on each degree of a particular scale (e.g., E major scale, B \flat natural minor scale, etc.) using only the notes of that scale. Such chords are said to be diatonic *to* the particular scale or key from which they are derived. For this discussion, diatonic chords will be built in intervals of 3rds (tertian harmony).

Diatonic Triads

The diatonic triads in the key of C major are those built on each note of the C major scale using only the notes of the C major scale.

Example 45

C major scale

C major diatonic triads

Each diatonic triad can be analyzed to determine its tonality (major, minor, diminished or augmented) and labeled using Roman numerals to determine the degree of the scale it is built on (i.e., II, III, IV, V, VI and VII).

Example 46

Note that the diatonic triads built on the 1st, 4th and 5th degrees of the major scale are major triads; those built on the 2nd, 3rd and 6th degrees are minor triads; and the one built on the 7th degree is a diminished triad.

Example 47

Diatonic triads (major scale)

Major triads	I, IV, V
Minor triads	II, III, VI
Diminished triad	VII

Important

In minor key harmony, the Roman numerals used to indicate the degrees of the scale on which the diatonic chords are built must include the corresponding alterations in the minor scale form, e.g., in the natural minor scale the Roman numerals used in analysis would be: I, II, \flat III, IV, V, \flat VI and \flat VII.

Exercises

1. Practice forming (writing, labeling and playing) the diatonic triads of the major scale in the 12 major keys. Use the same key order recommended for major 7th chords, page 43. (Also see HOW TO IMPROVISE: ARPEGGIO PATTERNS, page 73.)
2. Practice forming (writing, labeling and playing) the diatonic triads of the natural, harmonic and melodic minor scales in the 12 minor keys. Use the same key order recommended for minor 6 chords, page 43.

Drills

1. What (is/are) the (major, minor, diminished, augmented) triad(s) in the key of X (major, minor)?
2. What is the (I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII) triad in the key of X (major, minor)?
3. X (major, minor, diminished, augmented) triad is diatonic to what (major, minor) key(s)?

Diatonic 7th Chords (Four-Part Chords)

To form the diatonic 7th chords of any major key, add a diatonic 7th to each diatonic triad in the key. As with triads, each diatonic 7th chord's tonality and placement in the scale can be analyzed and labeled using Roman numerals.

Example 48

CΔ D-7 E-7 FΔ G7 A-7 B°

IΔ II-7 III-7 IVΔ V7 VI-7 VII°

Note that the diatonic 7th chords built on the 1st and 4th degrees of the major scale are major 7th chords; those built on the 2nd, 3rd and 6th degrees are minor 7th chords; the one built on the 5th degree is a dominant 7th chord; and the one built on the 7th degree is a minor 7 \flat 5 chord.

Example 49

Diatonic 7th chords (major scale)

Major 7	I, IV, V
Dominant 7	V
Minor 7	II, III, VI
Minor 7 \flat 5	VII

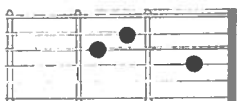
THE GUITAR CHORDS



A



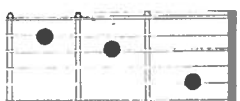
D



E



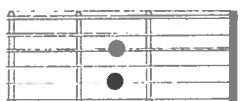
G



C



F



A7



D7



Em

band is a team effort, so was
links, team, for all your help.
ard Nelson for transcribing the
he cover photograph of Bill
; Thanks also to Norm Cohen,
tus Moser, Pete Kuykendall,
/usir, Walt Saunders, Mark V.
Eric Olson, Laura Boosinger,
, Archie Green, Jack Boosier,
n at the Memorial Library of
Bob Lindsey, Pat Wilcox, Ray
English, Kinney Rorer, Jamie
: North Carolina Division of
Asheville Area Chamber of
kway, and the John Edwards
links, team.

W.E.

Playing Backup

To my way of thinking, one of the most enjoyable things about bluegrass fiddling is getting to play backup. Here are some hints to help you avoid certain pitfalls that often present themselves in this area. *N-fiddling!*

One of the most common mistakes a fiddler can make is to overplay while backing-up. It's important to remember that you're not playing a break underneath a vocal line but rather something that will complement and respond to what the singer is doing. There are spaces in songs, at the ending of phrases, where you can come up in both volume and intensity.

In the backup to the songs presented here, I've tried to include a lot of the standard devices a fiddler might use, such as double stops, runs and other fills. For the most part, I've chosen to omit (because of its repetitiveness) the most common backup technique, and that is the famous fiddle chunk. This effect (as if you couldn't tell from its name) is a rhythmic chunking sound that's produced by hitting the bow sharply against a double or triple stop that fits into the chord being played at the time. You can play chunks in a fairly straight rhythmic pattern as here:



or in a more complex pattern:



They can be interspersed with other backup devices in medium-tempo songs or used by themselves in very up-tempo tunes. Keep in mind that smaller intervals (such as thirds) generally sound better than more open intervals (such as sixths). Also, if you play chunks right near the frog, you'll find you get a crisper, more biting attack than anywhere else on the bow.

A left-hand technique that's very effective in medium tempo and slow songs is moving double stops. An example of this technique is the first line of backup to *Live and Let Live*.

Beginning Backup Fiddle Playing



There are basically two different approaches to ensemble playing in fiddle music: unison and solo playing. Styles such as Appalachian old-time, Irish, New England and French Canadian are traditionally played in a unison style. Fiddles, banjos, mandolins, and accordions all play the melody at the same time while they are accompanied by a bass, guitar, or piano.

However, styles such as bluegrass, cajun, country, blues, and western swing usually feature one instrumentalist at a time. Everyone in the ensemble gets a solo. In this case, when not taking a solo, the fiddle's role changes to backup. This skill requires a basic knowledge of music theory, the fingerboard of the fiddle and the chord order to each of the tunes.

The tunes in the recording that accompanies this book have all been recorded with the fiddle backup in the solo style, even on tunes that are traditionally played in unison. I believe it is important to know the chords to each of the tunes you learn. Then you can jam in the unison style or the solo style. Both styles are challenging and fun.

There are many levels of understanding of backup playing. In later books, we will discuss music theory and more advanced backup techniques, and we'll learn many different double-stop combinations. For now, however, we will keep it simple. First memorize the double-stop for each chord. On the following page are examples for each chord used in this book. Then memorize the chord order for each tune. The chords are written as capital letters above the notation of the tunes in the book. Next play along with the recording and practice taking solos and playing backup. Finally, jam with other musicians.

Notice that all of the chords are played on the lower end of the fiddle's range, using the G, D and A strings. Playing double-stop in a higher range gets in the way of the soloist. For now, you don't need to concern yourself with the 7th chords, just play the root of each chord.

Bow the double-stops with either a long, smooth bow, or with "chunks." Chunks are played with sharp down-bows on the off-beat. On the recording, I alternate between long bow and chunk-style backup on every tune. Listen to the recording to hear how they are played.

A or A min Chord

E or E min Chord

D maj Chord

G maj chord

C maj chord

B or B min Chord

A or C# min chord

1 Boil 'em Cabbage Down

*This tune was first performed in minstrel shows before the American Civil War.
"Hoe cake" is bread that slaves baked on garden hoes over an open fire.*

(verses and chorus sung to A part)

1. Went up on the mountain to give my horn a blow
Thought I heard my true love say, "Yonder stands my beau"
Raccoon and a 'possum running side by side
Raccoon said to the 'possum, "Won't you be my bride?"

•chorus•

Boil 'em cabbage down boys, turn, turn the hoe cake brown
The only song that I can sing is boil 'em cabbage down

2. Raccoon up a 'simmon tree, 'possum on the ground
Raccoon said to the 'possum, "Shake them 'simmons down"
Jay bird died with the whooping cough, sparrow died with the colic
Along came a frog with a fiddle on his back,
inquiring his way to the frolic
3. Took my dog to the blacksmith's shop to have his mouth made small
He turned around a time or two, and swallowed the shop and all

Boil 'em Cabbage Down Long Bow Backup

Here is an example of how you would play backup to Boil 'em Cabbage Down in the long-bow style. When first finger plays two notes at once, make sure your finger is upright (in the mirror position), and use the tip (not the pad) of your finger to push both strings down evenly.

[A]

A D A E7

1 1 3 2 1 1

5 1 3 2 1 1

[B]

A D A E7

1 1 3 2 1 1

13 1 3 2 1 1

Boil 'em Cabbage Down "Chunk" Backup

Here is the backup to Boil 'em Cabbage Down in the "chunk" style. A chunk is a cool technique fiddlers use to play the off-beats like the high hat of a drum kit. Keep your wrist and fingers flexible on the bow hold, and drop your bow onto the string making at "tkch" sound. The best way to learn how to chunk is to sit in a jam next to a player who can chunk; watch, listen and learn.

A



B



FORTY YEARS OF TROUBLE

(Track 12)

Troy Spencer
transcription Martin Norgaard

$\text{♩} = 118$

banjo :

18 32 7

(mandolin)

B B E

59

E B F#

62

B B B B

65

DARK HOLLOW

(Track 2)

Traditional
transcription Martin Norgaard

$\text{♩} = 111-114$

Chord symbols: C, G, F, C7

Measure numbers: 4, 8, 12, 17, 25, 30, 145

Dynamic markings: *f*, *mf*

Tempo: $\text{♩} = 111-114$

Swing feel: swing feel

Handwritten: 111, G or fa

Dark Hollow

Traditional

Medium Tempo

I'd rather be in some dark hollow Where the
sun don't ever shine than to
be here alone just knowing that you're gone would
cause me to lose my mind

I'd rather be in some dark hollow
Where the sun don't ever shine
Than to be at home knowing that you're gone
Would cause me to lose my mind

Chorus

So blow your whistle freight train
Carry me further on down the track *line*
I'm going away, I'm leaving today
I'm going but I ain't coming back

I'd rather be in some dark hollow
Where the sun don't ever shine
Than to be in some big city
In a small room with your love on my mind
Chorus

Dark Hollow

Key of D

Melody

I'd ra - ther be _____ in some _____ dark hol - low _____

Chords: D, A, D

Backup

_____ where the sun _____ re - fused _____ to shine _____

Chords: G, D

0 0
4 3

_____ than to be at home a - lone, know - in' that you're

Chord: G

gone _____ would cause me to lose _____ my mind. _____

Chords: D, A, D

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Dark Hollow

Key of D

Melody

D A D

I'd ra - ther be _____ in some _____ dark hol - low _____

Break

3

3

G D

_____ where the sun _____ re - fused _____ to shine _____

0 4

3

G

_____ than to be at home a - lone, know - in' that you're

D A D

gone _____ would cause me to lose _____ my mind. _____

All the Good Times Are Past and Gone

Key of A
Melody

A D A

All the good — times are past — and gone,

Backup

E

All the good — times — are o'er. —

A D A

All the good — times are past — and gone, lit - tle

E A

dar - lin' don't you weep — no — more. —

All the Good Times Are Past and Gone

Key of A
Melody

A D A

Break

All the good — times are past — and gone,

E

All the good — times — are o'er. —

A D A

All the good — times are past — and gone, lit - tle

E A

dar - lin' don't you weep — no — more. —

Banks of the Ohio

1144-1511

Traditional

Medium Tempo

The musical score is written on three staves in G major (one sharp). The first staff contains the melody with lyrics: 'I asked my love to take a walk Just a'. The second staff continues the melody with lyrics: 'walk a lit tle way as we walked a long we'. The third staff continues the melody with lyrics: 'talked all a bout our wed ding day'. Chord symbols (G, D, D7, C, IV) are placed above the notes. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

I asked my love to take a walk
Just a walk a little way
As we walked along we talked
All about our wedding day

And only say that you'll be mine
And our home will happy be
Down beside where the waters flow
Down on the banks of the Ohio

I held a knife close to her breast
As into my arms she pressed
She cried, "Oh, Willie, don't murder me,
I'm not prepared for eternity."

I took her by her lily white hand
Led her down where the waters stand
There I pushed her in to drown
And watched her as she floated down

I started home tween twelve and one
I cried, "My God, what have I done."
I murdered the only woman I loved
Because she would not be my bride

The very next morning about half-past four
the sheriff came knocking at my door
He said, "Young man, come with me and go
Down to the banks of the Ohio"

I'll Fly Away

Albert E. Brumley

B^b ~ B

Tempo

Some glad morn ing when this life is o ver I'll fly a way
To a home on God's ce les tial shore I'll fly a way
oh glo ry I'll fly a way when I die ha lle lu jah by and 'by I'll fly a way

Some glad morning, when this life is over
I'll fly away

To a home on God's celestial shore
I'll fly away

Chorus
I'll (fly away) fly away, Oh glory
I'll (fly away) fly away (in the morning)
When I die Hallelujah, by and by
I'll (fly away) fly away (I'll fly away)

When the shadows of this life have grown
I'll fly away
Like a bird from prison bars have flown
I'll fly away
Chorus

Just a few more weary days and then
I'll fly away
To a land where joys shall never end
I'll fly away
Chorus

*Oh how glad &
happy when
we meet*

*No more cold iron
shackles on my
feet*

Nine Pound Hammer

Traditional

Up Tempo

This 9 lb. ham - mer is a lit - tle too hea - vy for my
size bud - dy for my size Roll on
bud - dy don't you roll so slow how can I
roll when the wheels won't go

double verses
+ double chorus

- ① This nine pound hammer is a little too heavy
 + ② For my size, buddy for my size
 Cho { Roll on buddy, don't you roll too slow
 How can I roll when the wheels won't go
 ③ It's a long way to Harlan, and a long way to Hazard
 Just to get a little booze, just to get a little booze
 ④ Oh, the nine pound hammer killed John Henry
 Ain't gonna kill me, ain't gonna kill me
 ⑤ There ain't one hammer down in this tunnel
 That can ring like mine, that can ring like mine
 ⑥ Rings like silver, shines like gold
 Rings like silver, shines like gold
 And ⑦ Buddy when I'm long gone, ~~won't~~ ^{can} you make my tombstone
 Out of number nine coal, out of number nine coal
 ⑧ I'm going on the mountain, just to see my baby
 And I ain't coming back, no I ain't coming back.

Roll on buddy,
 pull your load of co
 How can I pull,
 when the wheels
 won't roll

Nine Pound Hammer

Key of G

Melody

G C

This nine pound ham - mer is a lit - tle too hea - vy,

Break

D G

— bud - dy, for — my size, bud - dy, for my size...

Progression #1

C

So roll on, bud - dy, don't you roll — too slow;

D G

for how can I roll, if the wheels don't go?

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Pretty Polly

Key of A modal

Melody

Oh, Pol - ly, pretty Pol - ly, come go a - long with me.

Break

Pol - ly, pretty Pol - ly, come go a - long with me, be-

fore we get mar - ried, some plea - sure to see.

Roll In My Sweet Baby's Arms

Traditional

Up Tempo

Ain't gon - na work on the rail road

Ain't gon - na work on the farm Gon - na

lay round this shack till the mail train comes back And

roll in my sweet ba - by's arms

I ain't gonna work on the railroad
 I ain't gonna work on the farm
 Gonna lay around this shack till the mail train comes back
 And roll in my sweet baby's arms

Chorus

Roll in my sweet baby's arms
 Roll in my sweet baby's arms
 Gonna lay around this shack till the mail train comes back
 And roll in my sweet baby's arms

Where were you last Saturday night
 While I was laying down in jail
 You were out walking the street with another man
 Wouldn't even try to go my bail

Mama was a beauty operator
 Sister could weave and spin
 Daddy's got an interest in an old cotton mill
 Watch that money roll in

I know your parents don't like me
 The run me away from you door
 If I had my life to live over again
 I wouldn't go back there no more

Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms

Key of A

Melody

A

I ain't gon - na work on the rail - road, —

Break

— ain't gon - na work on the farm. —

— I'll just lay a - round — my shack 'til the mail train gets

A **D**

back, and roll in my sweet ba - by's arms. —

E **A**

track

Will the Circle Be Unbroken

Key of D

Melody

D



Will the cir - cle be un - bro - ken by and

G

D



by, Lord, by and by. There's a bet - ter home a -

A

D



wait - in' in the sky, Lord, in the sky.

Will the Circle Be Unbroken

Key of D

Melody

D

Will, the cir - cle be un - bro - ken. By and

Break

This system contains the first two staves of the musical score. The top staff is the melody in treble clef, key of D (two sharps), and 4/4 time. It begins with a D4 quarter note, followed by a half note G4, and then a quarter note F#4. The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment, also in treble clef, key of D, and 4/4 time. It starts with a D4 quarter note, followed by a half note G4, and then a quarter note F#4. The lyrics 'Will, the cir - cle be un - bro - ken. By and' are written below the melody staff. A 'Break' instruction is placed above the piano staff.

G

D

by, Lord, by and by. _____ There's a bett - er home a-

This system contains the second and third staves of the musical score. The top staff continues the melody, starting with a G4 quarter note, followed by a half note F#4, and then a quarter note E4. The bottom staff continues the piano accompaniment, starting with a G4 quarter note, followed by a half note F#4, and then a quarter note E4. The lyrics 'by, Lord, by and by. _____ There's a bett - er home a-' are written below the melody staff.

A

wait - in' in the sky, Lord, in the sky. _____

This system contains the fourth and fifth staves of the musical score. The top staff continues the melody, starting with a D4 quarter note, followed by a half note G4, and then a quarter note F#4. The bottom staff continues the piano accompaniment, starting with a D4 quarter note, followed by a half note G4, and then a quarter note F#4. The lyrics 'wait - in' in the sky, Lord, in the sky. _____' are written below the melody staff. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above it in the piano staff.

3 Cripple Creek

This American folk song comes from the Appalachian Mountains.



(verse sung to A part, chorus sung to B)
Goin' up Cripple Creek, goin' on the run
Goin' up Cripple Creek to have some fun
Pull my britches to my knees
Wade old Cripple Creek as I please

•chorus•

Goin' up Cripple Creek goin' on the run
Goin' up Cripple Creek to have some fun
Goin' up Cripple Creek in a whirl
Goin' up Cripple Creek to see my girl



Cripple Creek

Key of A

Melody

First system of musical notation for "Cripple Creek". It consists of two staves in 2/4 time, key of A (three sharps). The top staff is labeled "Melody" and the bottom staff is labeled "Break". Chord symbols A, D, A, E, and A are placed above the first five measures of the melody.

Second system of musical notation. It continues the melody and break from the first system. Chord symbols D, A, E, and A are placed above the first four measures of the melody.

Third system of musical notation. It continues the melody and break. Chord symbols E and A are placed above the last two measures of the melody.

Fourth system of musical notation, concluding the piece. It continues the melody and break. Chord symbols E and A are placed above the last two measures of the melody. The system ends with a double bar line.

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9 Old Joe Clark

This tune was written before 1840 and is thought to be about an African-American man from Kentucky.

(verses sung to A part, chorus sung to B)

1. I used to live on the mountain top
Now I live in town
I'm staying at the big hotel
A-courting Betsy Brown
2. Old Joe Clark, he had a house
Sixteen stories high
And every story in that house
Was filled with chicken pie
3. Old Joe had a chicken coop
Sixteen stories high
And every chicken in that coop
Turned into chicken pie
4. Old Joe Clark, he had a mule
His name was Morgan Brown
And every tooth in that mule's head
Was sixteen inches 'round
5. I went down to Old Joe's house
He invited me to supper
I stubbed my toe on the table leg
And stuck my nose in the butter
6. Old Joe Clark's a mean old man
I'll tell you the reason why
He blew his nose in my corn bread
And called it pumpkin pie

•chorus•

Fare thee well, Old Joe Clark
Fare thee well, I say
Fare thee well, Old Joe Clark
I'm a-going away

Old Joe Clark

Key of A

Melody

The first system of musical notation for 'Old Joe Clark' consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Melody' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Break'. Both staves are in the key of A (two sharps) and 4/4 time. The melody starts with a whole note A, followed by a half note G, a quarter note F#, and a quarter note E. The break part starts with a quarter note A, followed by a quarter note G, a quarter note F#, and a quarter note E. The system ends with a whole note A.

The second system of musical notation continues the melody and break. The melody starts with a whole note A, followed by a half note G, a quarter note F#, and a quarter note E. The break part starts with a quarter note A, followed by a quarter note G, a quarter note F#, and a quarter note E. The system ends with a whole note A.

The third system of musical notation continues the melody and break. The melody starts with a whole note A, followed by a half note G, a quarter note F#, and a quarter note E. The break part starts with a quarter note A, followed by a quarter note G, a quarter note F#, and a quarter note E. The system ends with a whole note A.

The fourth system of musical notation continues the melody and break. The melody starts with a whole note A, followed by a half note G, a quarter note F#, and a quarter note E. The break part starts with a quarter note A, followed by a quarter note G, a quarter note F#, and a quarter note E. The system ends with a whole note A.

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6 Old Joe Clark

This tune was written before 1840 and is thought to be named after an African-American man from Kentucky. This version is more advanced than the one in Volume 1.

A
 E7 A E7
 A A B A
 G A
 E7 A A

10 Soldier's Joy

*This fiddle tune comes from the British Isles and is played throughout the world.
Soldiers called their pay day "soldier's joy."*

Musical notation for "Soldier's Joy" in D major, 2/4 time. The score is divided into four systems, each with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C).

System 1: Measures 1-4. Chords: D (above measure 1), A7 (above measure 4). Measure 1 contains a repeat sign.

System 2: Measures 5-8. Chords: D (above measure 5), G (above measure 6), A7 (above measure 7), D (above measure 8). Measures 7 and 8 are marked with "1." and "2." respectively, indicating a first and second ending.

System 3: Measures 9-12. Chords: D (above measure 9), G (above measure 10), D (above measure 11), A7 (above measure 12). Measure 9 contains a repeat sign.

System 4: Measures 13-16. Chords: D (above measure 13), G (above measure 14), D (above measure 15), A7 (above measure 16), D (above measure 17). Measure 13 contains a repeat sign.



7 Soldier's Joy

*"Soldier's Joy" was what English soldiers called their payday.
Fiddlers from all over Europe and North America play this tune.*

Chord symbols: D, A, G

Bowing marks: V

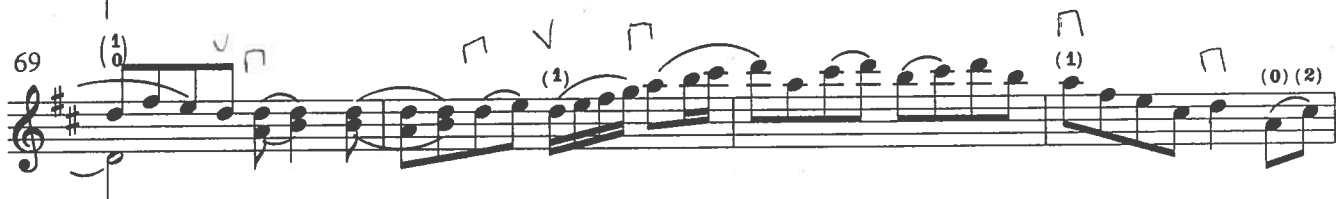
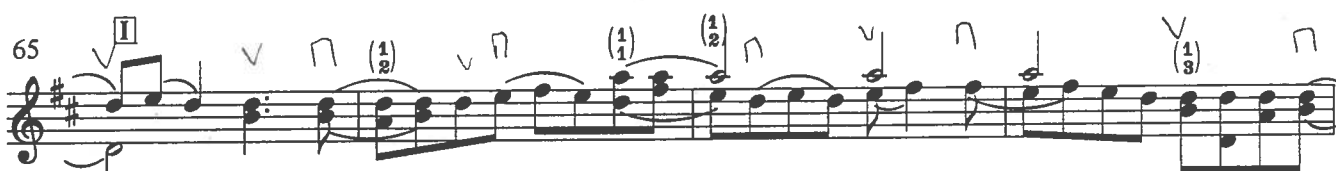
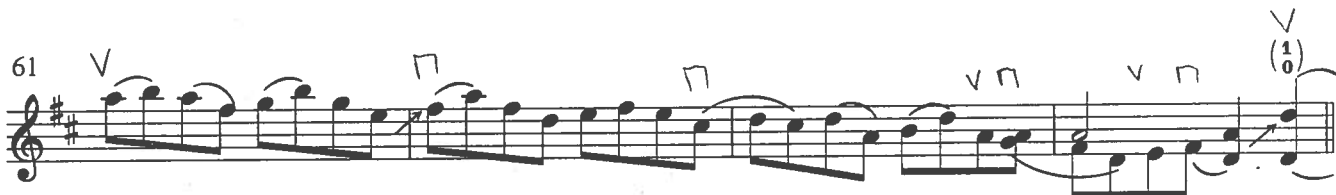
First ending: 1.

Second ending: 2.



How's Your Wrist Position?

A vertical strip of a spiral-bound notebook. The left edge shows the metal spiral binding, and the right edge shows the lined pages. The notebook is oriented vertically.



Playing Breaks

The single most important factor in taking a break is not the actual playing but rather the construction of the break, which is a mental process. No matter how well you play the fiddle, if you step up to the microphone with no idea of what you're going to play, it's not going to sound good.

There are basically two directions from which any improviser can approach his solo: melodically (horizontal) or harmonically (vertical). Although almost all improvisers use elements of both approaches, most players emphasize one over the other. In jazz, two tenor saxophone players are often cited as the leading exponents of the two schools—Lester Young, the melodic improviser, and Coleman Hawkins, the harmonic improviser. In bluegrass fiddling, one might point to Kenny Baker as an example of the melodic improviser and to Vassar Clements as the harmonic improviser.

The early bluegrass fiddlers, like Chubby Wise, were all solidly melodic in their approach. Chubby's breaks would usually consist of the melody with various ornamentations, like slides, neighboring notes and double stops. Harmonic improvisation is a relatively recent development in fiddling. In the past few years, as bluegrass absorbs more elements of jazz, a greater emphasis is being placed on instrumental virtuosity and hot licks; this is where the harmonic aspect comes into play. Rather than maintaining the shape of the melody in their breaks, modern players (like Vassar, Richard Greene or Rick Skaggs) have begun to play around the chord changes, craftily stringing licks together to move from one chord to the next.

The difference between these two approaches can best be illustrated by an example. A melodically-inclined fiddler might play the tune *Wabash Cannonball* something like this, altering the melody slightly and adding stops and slides:

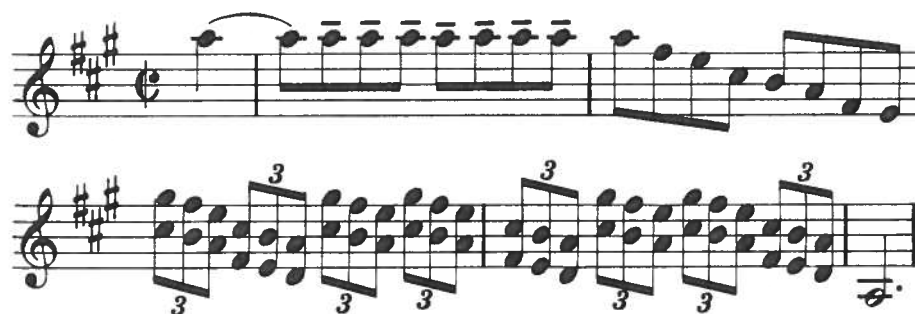


But a modern “newgrass” fiddler might play it like this, by-passing the melody altogether and playing licks that go with the chords:



It's very important that the burgeoning improviser has a firm grasp of melodic playing before attempting to run the changes. When you feel comfortable playing the melody of a tune, you can then begin to add runs or licks as you feel they are appropriate.

When constructing a break, make sure that you save something special and interesting for the end of the solo; many beginning players make the mistake of using their best licks early on in the break and then have nothing to play at the end. Benny Martin was particularly brilliant at constructing breaks that had a surprise tag. Listen, for instance, to his break on the Flatt and Scruggs song, *Your Love Is Like a Flower*, available on Rounder Special Series 05. After a fairly straight melodic beginning, Benny plays this bizarre phrase in the final four bars:



Shape Licks

Some licks or phrases form shapes or patterns on the fingerboard when they are played. Silently move your fingers through the shape 1 pattern without bowing. Notice that the 1-3 fingering remains the same throughout the lick. Try the three licks built on this shape. These licks can be played in C simply by moving over one set of strings (start lick 1 on a D note on the A string.)

Shape 2 is a lick built on a major 9 arpeggio. The chord numbers of the lick are: 3 5 7 9 1. It also acts like a surrounding figure (see Example 40.)



Track 51

Example 34: Shape Licks

Shape 1 Pattern

Lick 1

Lick 2

Lick 3

Shape 2

(Fingering)

Rhythm Variation

The Closed Position

The closed position is one in which the index finger is placed on the tonic of the key; so in the key of B it would be placed on the note B on the A string. The same is true for the keys of C and B \flat . A break which is played in a closed position can be played in any other key by simply placing the index finger on the proper note and working around it. In this way the index finger acts the way a capo would on a guitar or banjo; when used on the A string, the new key is transposed up from the key of A. The second finger plays the notes the index finger would normally play in the key of A, the third finger plays those of the second, and the fourth those of the third. So a figure such as this in the key of A:



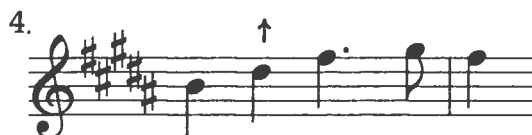
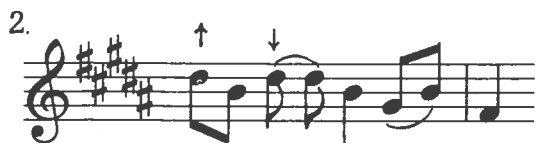
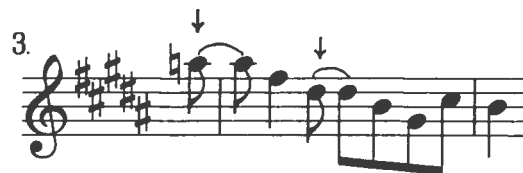
would look like this in the key of B:



Similarly, all those licks shown for the key of A can be transposed to the keys of B \flat , B, C, and D on the A string, and to E \flat , E, and F on the D string. However, you should remember that some of these keys can also employ open strings; these keys will be discussed later.

Goodbye Old Pal was recorded by Bill Monroe twice. The first time was in 1945 with the original Bluegrass Boys (Monroe, Flatt, Scruggs, Chubby Wise). On that particular recording (Harmony HL 7315) the fiddle is the only lead instrument, and the song is in the key of B. The second recording was made in 1957 and appears on a Decca album entitled *Knee Deep in Bluegrass* (Decca #8731). That particular album is interesting because Monroe was in very good voice when he recorded it. *Goodbye Old Pal* was recorded in the key of D. But the album is interesting from another point of view. Most of the fiddle work on the album is done with twin or triple fiddles, a combination Bill Monroe is very fond of, so much so that he wrote a number of fiddle tunes for two and three fiddle combinations.

The next commonly used licks might be used to good advantage in improvising a break to *Goodbye Old Pal* in the key of B.



The first of these simply moves within a B chord; it might be used to go from the dominant chord (F#) to the tonic. The second involves a double slide on the D# and moves either within the B chord or from B to F#. The third example uses a flatted seventh to heighten the bluesy effect and also employs some very effective syncopations. Example four simply moves within a B chord.

The most common lick used in the closed position is very adaptable to other keys:



It is often used to close a break. The following phrase uses this as a tag. Very often it might be desirable to begin a song with a simple four bar introduction such as this, which is just a combination of licks moving from a B chord to an F# chord and back to B, rather than to play through the whole melody.



The next two licks combined with some of those above could be put together to make a break for a song like *Rose of Old Kentucky* (Harmony HL 7290):



Licks

Most fiddlers have compiled a set of licks or short phrases that they often use in backup and solo work. An attempt has been made here to list a few of the more common licks. Although most of these licks are written in the key of G, they should be learned and used in other keys as well.

The image displays 15 musical staves, each containing a different fiddle lick in the key of G major. The licks are written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various musical symbols such as eighth notes, sixteenth notes, beamed sixteenth notes, slurs, ties, and fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4). Some licks include a 'V' mark above a note, possibly indicating a bow or breath mark. The licks are arranged in a vertical column, each on a separate staff.

Patterns

A sequence of notes which is repeated at progressively higher or lower pitches creates a pattern. Patterns are often used in fiddle tunes and provide continuity in an improvised solo.

All of the patterns here are typical ones used by fiddlers. They are all presented in the key of G except for number 7 which is in C. Each pattern should be learned in every key. Not only will this give you a great resource to draw from when soloing, it will also improve your technique.

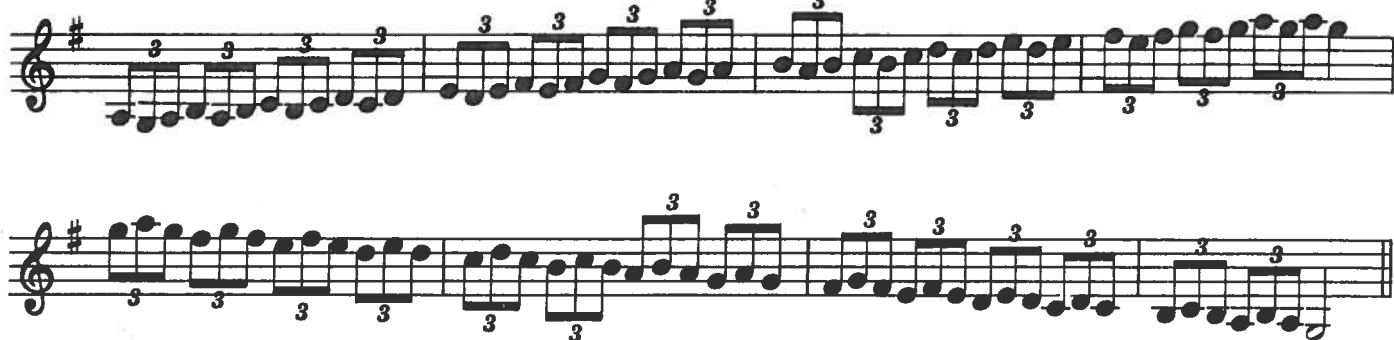
No 1



No 2



No 3



No 4



No 5



No 6



No 7 key of C



No. 8



No. 9



No. 10



A Guide to Bluegrass Style Arranging

As discussed in the Backup section of the book, bluegrass style jams differ from many other folk style jams in that rather than everyone playing the melody in unison, one person at a time plays a solo on his or her instrument. That means that when not playing a solo, musicians play backup. Below are a couple of examples of how tunes could be arranged. A jam leader can use this as a guide for getting started.

	Fiddle	Mandolin	Banjo	Guitar	Bass
1st time	Intro / Solo	Chunk	Rolls	Strum	Bass line
2nd time	Chunk	Solo	Chunk	Strum	Bass line
3rd time	Long bow	Chunk	Solo	Strum	Bass line
4th time	Chunk	Chunk	Rolls	Solo	Bass line
5th time	Solo / ending	Chunk	Rolls	Strum	Bass line

Here's another possibility:

	Fiddle	Cello	Viola	Piano	Bass
1st time	Intro / Solo	Long bow	Chunk	Back up	Bass line
2nd time	Chunk	Solo	Long bow	Back up	Bass line
3rd time	Long bow	Chunk	Solo	Back up	Bass line
4th time	Chunk	Slap	Long bow	Solo	Bass line
5th time	Solo / ending	Solo / ending	Solo / ending	Back up	Bass line