

Celtic Fiddle

Tutor

BOOK 1
Modules 1 to 3

Compiled and taught by Barb Bycroft
(Fiddler with Twisty Willow
Celtic Band)



Celtic Fiddle Tutor

BOOK 1

MODULES:

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. MUSIC NOTATION**
- 3. GETTING STARTED**

Book 2 comprises sets of tunes and notes on style, technique and ornamentation

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Celtic Fiddle Tutor

MODULE: GETTING STARTED

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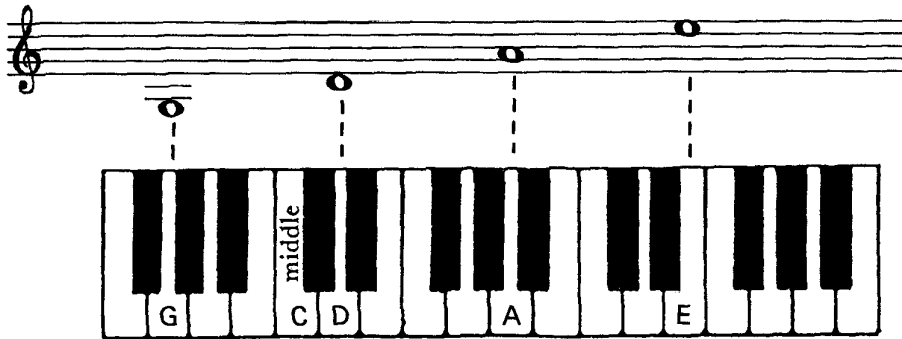


Where you see this symbol, it indicates the track on the Celtic Fiddle Tutor Green CD that plays the adjacent exercise or tune.

(It is assumed that your playing equipment is running at the correct speed. If not, the notes as you hear them will not be in 'concert pitch')

The usual way however is first to tune the A string to the correct pitch, which you can obtain from a tuning fork, or another instrument such as melodeon, tin whistle, etc. When the A has been done, tune the D to a fifth below A, and G to a fifth below D. The E string is then tuned to a fifth above A.

You can also tune to the four strings of another fiddle, which is in tune, or directly to the four notes G D A E on a piano.



If you are still in difficulty, get your teacher or another fiddle-player to tune for you.

PLAYING THE FIDDLE

Now that the fiddle is in tune, and you are confident and relaxed in holding the fiddle and bow, it is time to learn how to play.

Place the middle of the bow on the A string (A is the second from the right) so that it touches the string mid-way between the bridge and the end of the fingerboard. The bow should be parallel to the bridge, and always remain so when playing.





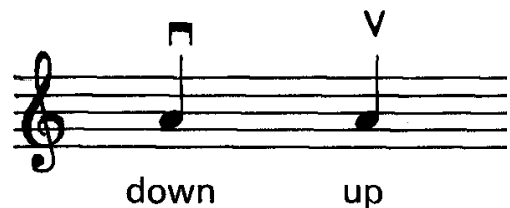
Now draw the bow firmly across the string to produce as smooth a sound as possible. With long bow strokes move the bow downward and upward in turn.



BOWING

When the nut of the bow is moving away from the fiddle, the bow-stroke is called a DOWN-BOW, and when the bow moves in the opposite direction, it is called an UP-BOW.

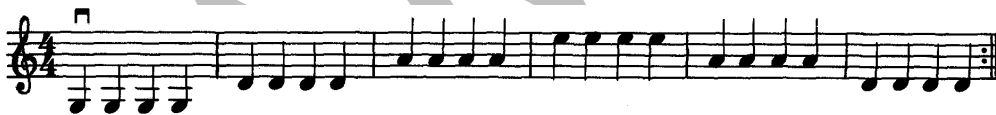
These are indicated by the signs  and .



Continue to play with alternate up and down bows while ensuring that the bow remains parallel to the bridge:

- It is very helpful to stand in front of a mirror and watch yourself bowing, thus making it easy to see that the bow is parallel to the bridge.
- Good bowing technique is very important, and it is worthwhile spending time and effort in getting it right.
- While the wrist and fingers play a major part, it is primarily the forearm which controls bow Movement.
- Think of the forearm as pulling the wrist, fingers and bow alternately up and down.
- If the sound you are producing seems weak, press a little on the stick with the first finger to produce a fuller, louder sound. This use of the first finger contributes significantly to creating some of the unique characteristics of fiddle-playing -but more of that later.
- To bow on the open D and G strings, raise the whole right arm, and lower the arm to play E.

Play the following 4 exercises with long bows. Count (aloud) if it helps to keep in time. Recall that the dots at the double-bar line indicate a repeat.



BLACKBERRY AND APPLE

- Play the notes in the rhythm pattern – **black-ber-ry-and-a-pple**
- Use short bow strokes
- When you are confident on E string, play this pattern also on the other strings
- DO NOT lift the bow off between changing strings
- Note: you will now be aware that there is a specific arm position for each string – so you do not catch an unwanted string (sometimes however we deliberately play 2 strings at the same time! This is called double stopping – more later).



A RIDDLE ON OPEN STRINGS

D. A. & E. Strings Folk Song

Pupil Count: 1 2 3 4

Teacher

Two systems of musical notation. The first system has a Pupil part (treble clef, 4/4 time) and a Teacher part (treble clef, 4/4 time, key signature of two sharps). The Pupil part has a 'Count: 1 2 3 4' and a 'V' (bowing) mark above the first measure. The second system continues the Pupil and Teacher parts. The Pupil part has 'V' and 'D D' (double stops) markings above it.

USE OF THE BOW

Review:

When fiddling, the majority of technical problems lie in the use of the bow.

- Tone production and phrasing are controlled totally by the bow.
- How you hold the bow determines your control of all parts of the bow.
- You have most control and biting attack at the nut.
- Use of the whole bow is crucial in slow or medium tempo tunes that have a singing, melodic line.
- When you draw the bow, it should remain parallel to the bridge.
- The distance of the bow from the bridge determines the intensity of the sound (eg. Away from the bridge = mellow lighter sound; midway = medium volume; close = rich, intense, brighter sound).

Three factors that control tone production:

- **Speed of bow stroke**
- **Pressure of bow on the string**
- **Point at which the bow contacts the string**

To gain control over a wide range of tone colours, experiment with these factors and vary them to suit your ear and the tone that suits the tune.



MORE TUNES IN G MAJOR - ONE SHARP (F#)

SIEGE OF ENNIS

Musical notation for 'Siege of Ennis' in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is written in a simple, folk-like style with eighth and sixteenth notes.

RODDY McCORLEY



Musical notation for 'Bog in the Valley' in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is written in a simple, folk-like style with eighth and sixteenth notes.

BOG IN THE VALLEY



Musical notation for 'Bog in the Valley' in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. This block contains three staves of music, continuing the melody from the previous block. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature.