

Play the Hammer Dulcimer

From

Square One

*Learn to play
the EZ way!*

by

Peggy
Carter

Favorite Irish Jigs
& Reels
Old Time Tunes



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Peggy Carter

Peggy Carter is a singer and multi-instrumentalist who writes and arranges music for the Hammer Dulcimer. In 1990 she won the Texas State Hammer Dulcimer Championship and Southern Regional Championship. She has been included in the performance roster of "Young Audiences Of Houston" and "Texas Commission For The Arts."

She has performed for schools, churches, community events, fairs and festivals across the US and abroad and has produced 6 CDs and authored 11 books of lessons and arrangements for dulcimer and for singers which have been published by four publishers. Peggy's musical styles include Celtic music, Victorian music, Christian, Gospel and Old-Time Fiddle Tunes. She is in demand for weddings, receptions, open houses, private parties, Senior Residences, Church socials and Worship music.

Do You Really Want to Play Hammer Dulcimer?

Most sources agree that the hammer dulcimer is ancient in its heritage. It is a multi-stringed instrument, played by striking the strings with small, wooden "hammers." It is probably an ancient ancestor of the piano.

The hammer dulcimer probably came into Ireland with early immigrants from Europe. It is especially suitable for Irish jigs, reels and hornpipes with its lightly tripping melodies and harmonies.... unlike the fiddle which has become the most popular instrument in an Irish Pub Session. The hammer dulcimer has found its way into many modern Irish sessions.

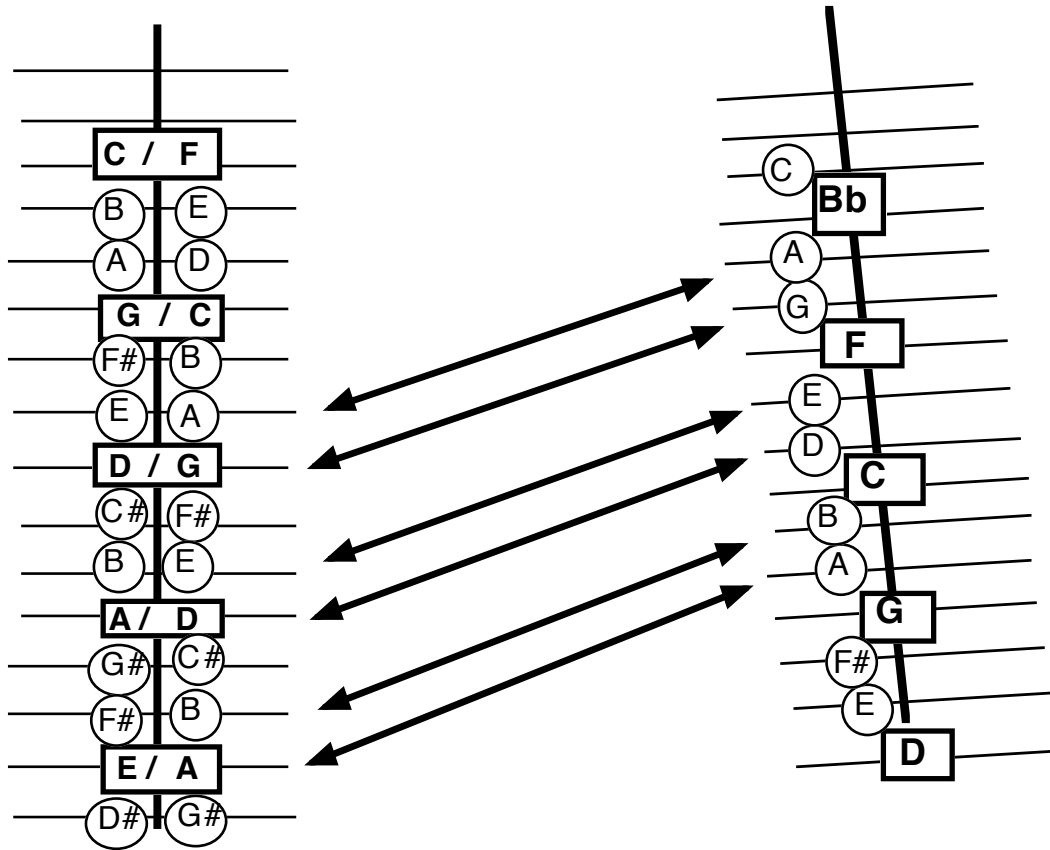
The recent popularity of this instrument is understandable. Although the expanse of strings may appear confusing to the player at first, you will soon discover that the strings are arranged in a very logical (yes, even mathematical) order. This makes it easy to pick out simple tunes. Then as you progress you will soon realize that simple chord patterns and embellishments are also quite logical and mathematical. The hammer dulcimer lends itself to very creative improvisation, and is very satisfying whether used for solo performance, jamming with other musicians, or simply playing alone.

Keep in mind ... whether you are experienced on other, or if this is your first venture into the field of music, that ANY musical notation is only useful as it enables a player to produce music from a chosen instrument. The "Number" system (written above the standard notation) is presented here to help you accomplish the purpose of learning a tune and playing for your own satisfaction.

You will start here with "Square One" and learn, step by step, to create music with the hammer dulcimer. Whether you like your music quiet, or rowdy, I hope you find tunes in these pages that you will enjoy alone, or with friends!

Before Starting

Look at the string chart below it shows the string names for a full size dulcimer. Notice that there are several places where the same pitch can be played in more than one place. There are more than the six with arrows below.



In the tunes that follow on these pages, note names are given to help less experience players find the strings more quickly. There are also suggestions as to which hand to use for the most efficient hammering sequence.

A short line OVER the note name, or the L or R (left or right hand) indicates that the note should be played on the LEFT side of the TREBLE BRIDGE. A line UNDER the note name, or the L or R, indicates that the note should be played on the BASS BRIDGE. NO LINE over or under the note name or L and R indicates that the note should be played on the RIGHT TREBLE BRIDGE.

You are encouraged to experiment with hammering sequences to play smoothly through each phrase. Its important to do it the same way every time to develop muscle memory, which can help you out in a jam (pun intended). Hopefully these suggestions will help you get off to a get start.

Keep on hammering!!

Understanding The Stringboard

The most important point of reference on your dulcimer is the “**D**” **position marker** which is the lowest treble marker on the 12/11, or the 2nd position marker on the 15/14. The illustrations and numbering system used in the following pages will refer to the 12/11 student dulcimer, naming that string pair as “string number two” since it is the 2nd string pair from the bottom of the 12/11 student dulcimer. *(The strings on the 15/14 dulcimer which are below these strings are not referred to in the illustrations and numbering system of this series of beginner lessons.)*

The bottom string-pair on the 12/11 dulcimer *(the string-pair BELOW the bottom position marker)* is referred as “string number one” and are tuned respectively... on the right side of the bridge the pair of strings is tuned to **C#** *(that would be 1/2 step above middle “C” on the piano)*, and on the left side of the treble bridge the string-pair is tuned to “**G#**” *(that is, 5 scale steps higher, or 5 1/2 scale steps above Middle “C” on the piano)*.

The strings **ON the position marker** are tuned respectively...on the right side of the treble bridge the string-pair is tuned to “**D**” (one step above middle C on the piano) and on the left side the string is tuned to “**A**” a fifth higher (that is, 5 scale steps higher, or six scale tones above middle “C”).

Remember: The picture illustrations and the “numbering system” in this book **START WITH THE LOW “G” .ON THE BASS BRIDGE**, (4 scale steps **BELOW** Middle “C” on the piano) and with Low “**C#**” (on the **RIGHT**) and “**G#**” (on the **LEFT**) on the **TREBLE BRIDGE**. The illustrations and the “number system” can be used successfully with any dulcimer that is 11/12 or larger.

Learning to read **STANDARD NOTATION** is helpful in learning to play or sing music. It enables the musician to learn an unfamiliar tune without hearing it first. Standard notation uses a series of “dots” on a staff of “lines and spaces” to indicate not only a specific (unmovable) pitch, but also indicates the rhythmic sequence. The difference in reading notation to play the piano and in learning tunes on the hammer dulcimer, is that on the piano each pitch that is notated can be played on **ONLY ONE** key on the piano. The same pitch can be played on two, and sometimes three different strings on the dulcimer, and some of them can be played on only **ONE** string...so it gets a little complicated.

The numbering system and the illustrations will be helpful not only for those who are learning to play the hammer dulcimer as their first venture into the beautiful world of music, but it will be just as helpful for musicians who already read notation to learn how to quickly find the indicated pitches on the the dulcimer stringboard.

Go through the “**FIRST STEPS**” which are intended to help beginners learn to use a combination of notation, a numbering system, and illustrations to start at **SQUARE ONE** and learn to make beautiful music on the hammer dulcimer. Use the **LESSON OUTLINE** as a guide to lead you through the sequential pages, and if all else fails, call me and ask for help.

Peggy Carter, call 281-370-9495 or visit:

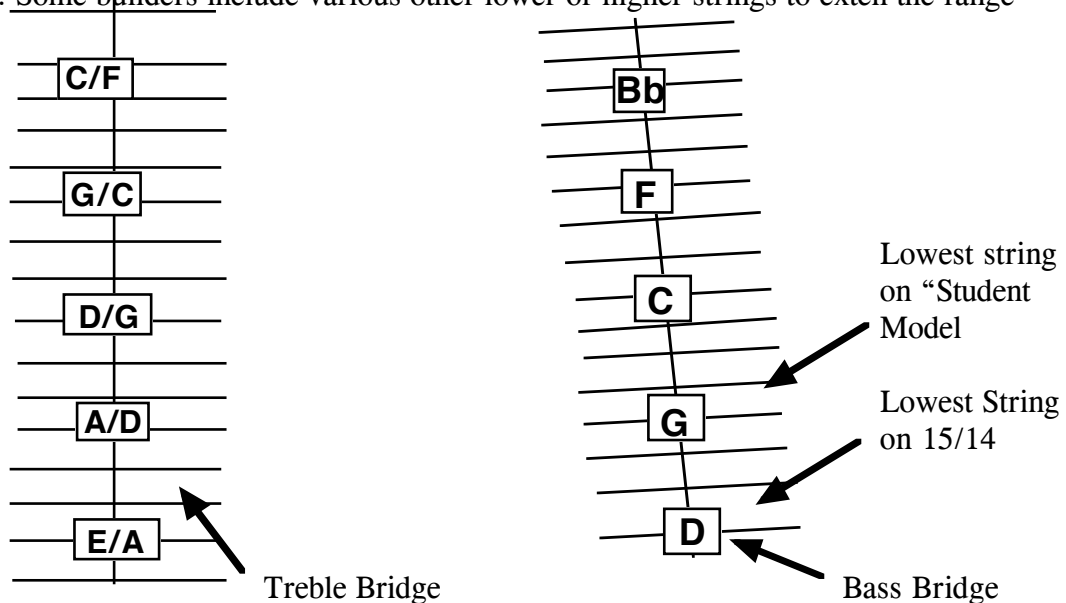
www.peggycartermusic.com

Taking The First Step

“Square One” is written for the understanding of someone with very little experience playing any musical instrument. It is hoped that you will find a system of standard notation combined with a “Numbering System” which will help you accomplish the purpose of learning the tunes. Someone who reads music fluently may still have difficulty at first...trying to figure out where the strings are that correspond to the notation on the staff. For this reason, the “number system” presented here may help.

The stringboard of the modern hammer dulcimer has become more-or-less standardized with two bridges, BASS and TREBLE the BASS BRIDGE is on the RIGHT side of the instrument and the strings on the right side of that bridge are not tuned, but are “dead” because they do not fit into the harmonic system utilized on this instrument. Any further explanation would require a lesson in physics, which I am not prepared to give! The TREBLE BRIDGE is just a little to the left of middle, and divides the strings at the exact harmonic point to produce a sound on either side...exactly a 5th apart (5 scale steps).

A small student dulcimer usually has eleven (11) bass string pairs and twelve (12) treble string pairs, giving it a two and a half octave range. This size is usually referred to as the “12/11 size. The next larger size has three additional lower string pairs on the bass bridge and three additional lower string pairs on the treble bridge making it a “15/14” dulcimer with a full three octave range. Some builders include various other lower or higher strings to extend the range



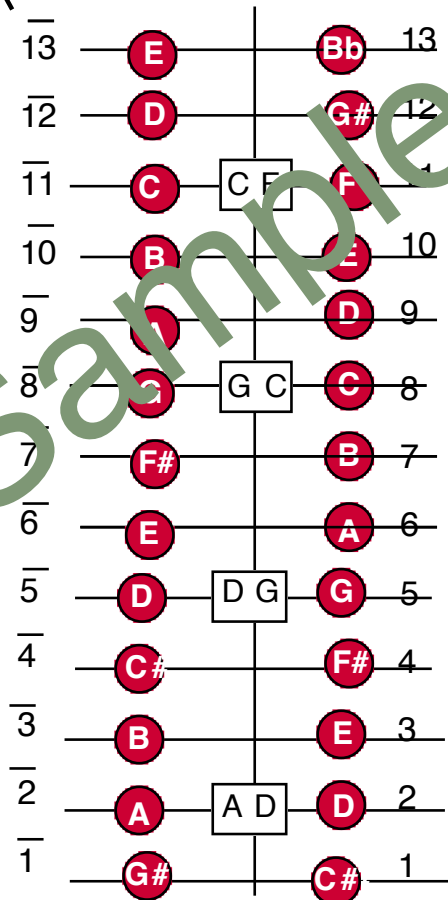
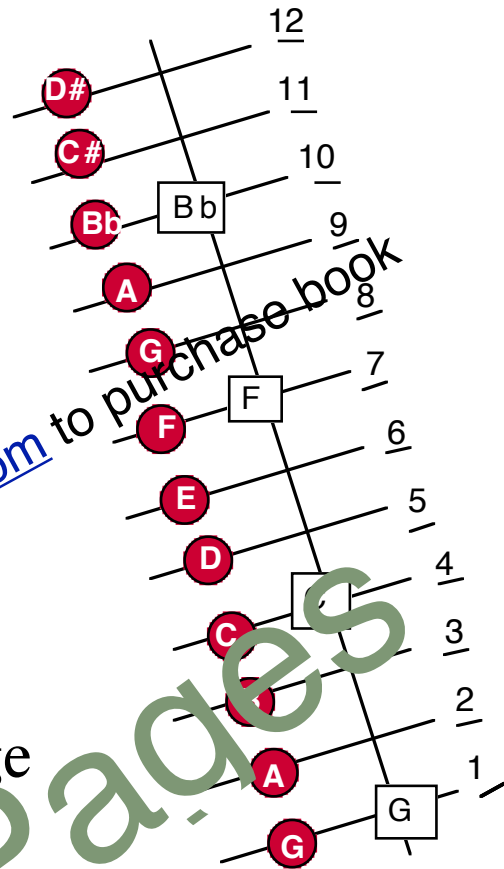
Use The “Position Markers” as Guideposts or “Land Marks”

Find the lowest “Position Marker” on the BASS bridge of your dulcimer. On the 12/11 dulcimer this string pair will be tuned to G (below middle C). On the 15/14 dulcimer this string pair will be tuned to low D (below middle C). In the “Numbering System” and picture illustrations on the following pages, the lowest BASS bridge position marker will refer to the lowest position marker of the 12/11 “Student” dulcimer.

Notes on the Bass Bridge



Notes on the Treble Bridge
 Email on wety: peggy Carter77@gmail.com
 in its entirety.



You will use the numbers to help locate the notes you read from the staff and know which string to strike.

You will see numbers over the notation...the strings are numbered from the bottom to the top. A line under the note indicates that the string is on the BASS bridge. A line over the note indicates that the string is on the LEFT TREBLE bridge. No line below or above the number indicates that the string is on the RIGHT TREBLE bridge.

Reading Notation for HD

Notation for BASS Bridge

Musical notation for Bass Bridge in C major, measures 1-12. The notes are: 1 G, 2 A, 3 B, 4 C, 5 D, 6 E, 7 F, 8 G, 9 A, 10 B \flat , 11 C, 12 D.

Notation for RIGHT TREBLE Bridge

Musical notation for Right Treble Bridge in D major, measures 4-12. The notes are: 4 D \sharp , 5 E, 6 F \sharp , 7 G, 8 A, 9 B, 10 C, 11 D, 12 E, 13 F, 14 G.

Notation for LEFT TREBLE Bridge

Musical notation for Left Treble Bridge in D major, measures 7-12. The notes are: 7 D \sharp , 8 E, 9 F \sharp , 10 G, 11 A, 12 B, 13 C, 14 D.

Alternate notes, on some HDs

Musical notation for alternate notes, measures 10-13. The notes are: 10 C \sharp , 11 D \sharp , 12 E, 13 F \sharp , 14 G, 15 D, 16 D \sharp .

Bass bridge

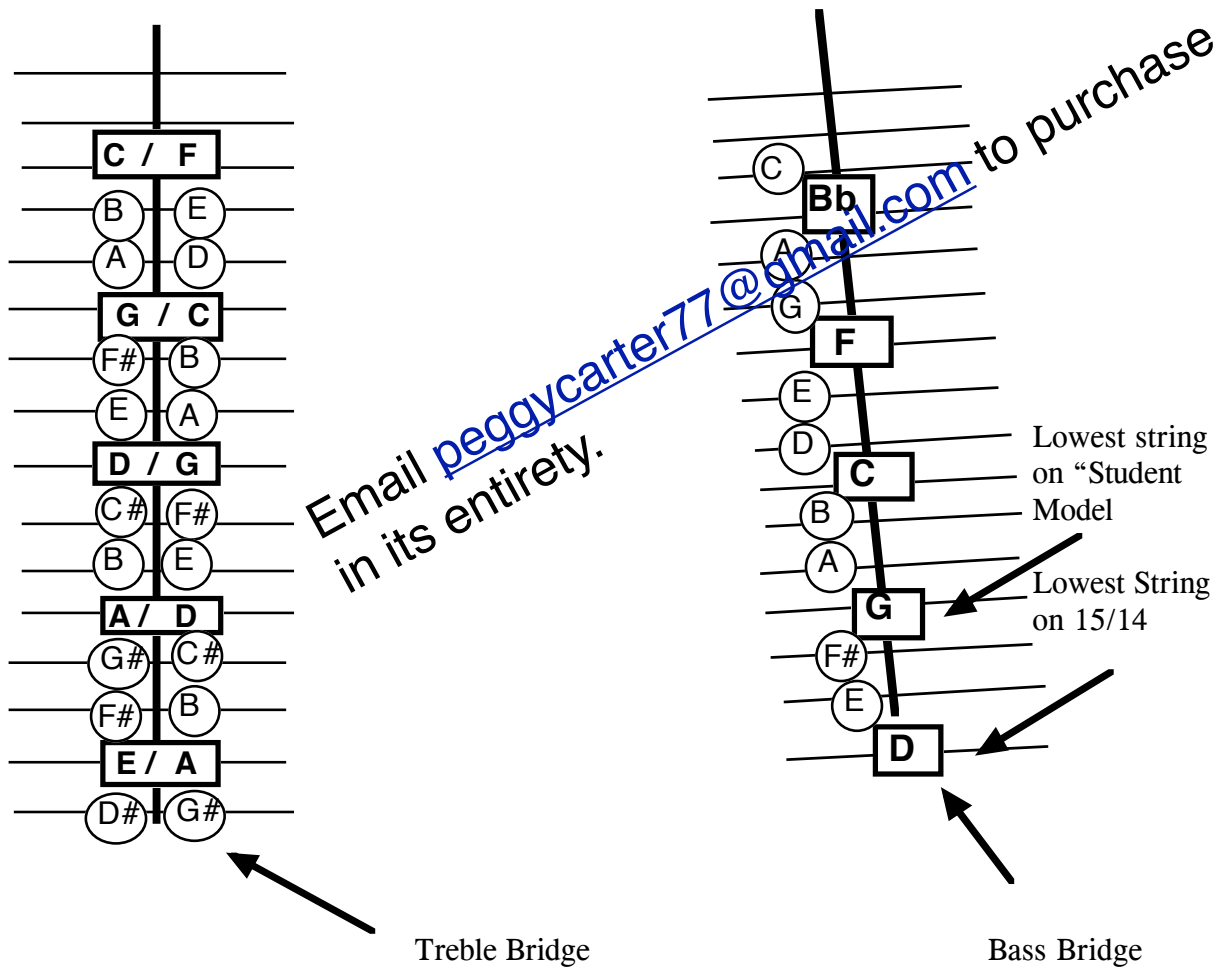
Right Treble bridge

Left Treble bridge

Sample Pages
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The Next Steps

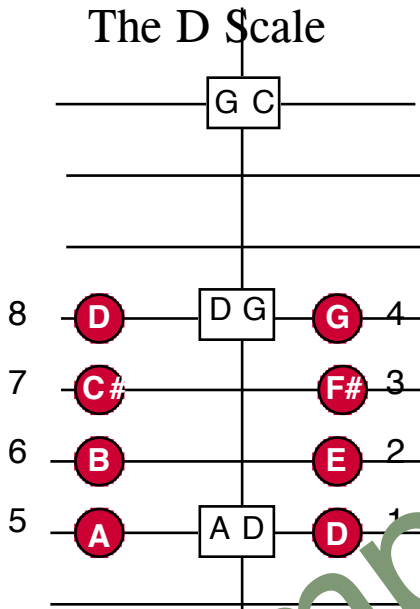
The stringboard of the modern hammer dulcimer has become more-or-less standardized with two bridges, BASS and TREBLE the BASS BRIDGE is on the RIGHT side of the instrument and the strings on the right side of that bridge are not tuned, but are “dead” because they do not fit into the harmonic system utilized on this instrument. A small student dulcimer usually has eleven (11) bass string pairs and twelve (12) treble string pairs, giving it a two and a half octave range. This size is usually referred to as the “12/11 size. The next larger size has three additional lower string pairs on the bass bridge and three additional lower string pairs on the treble bridge making it a “15/14” dulcimer with a full three octave range. Some builders include various other lower or higher strings to exten the range, or include additional bridges to allow the strings to be tuned to sharps or flats, producing a limited chromatic scale.



Use The “Position Markers” as Guideposts or “Land Marks”

Find the lowest “Position Marker” on the BASS bridge of your dulcimer. On the 12/11 dulcimer this string pair will be tuned to G (below middle C). On the 15/14 dulcimer this string pair will be tuned to low D (below middle C). In the Chart above the lowest BASS bridge position marker is a low D below middle C. The following two pages show the notation for these pitches.

The D Box



Play the D Scale:

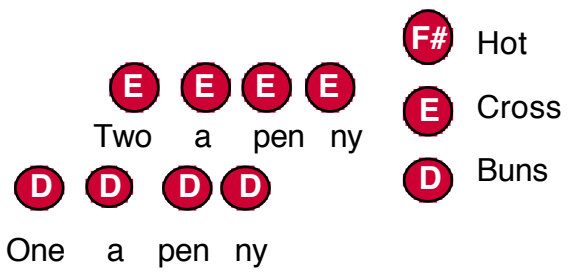
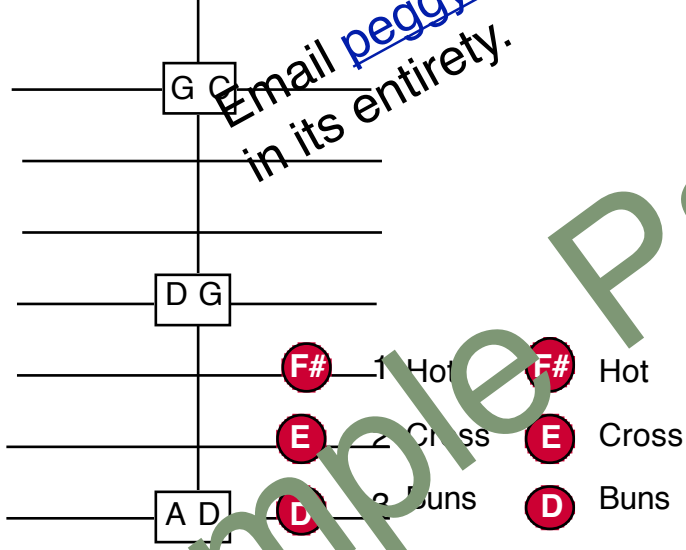
- Start on **D** (1)
- then play **E** (2)
- F#** (3)
- G** (4)

on the RIGHT side of TREBLE BRIDGE

Cross over to LEFT SIDE and play

- (5)
- B** (6)
- C#** (7)
- D** (8)

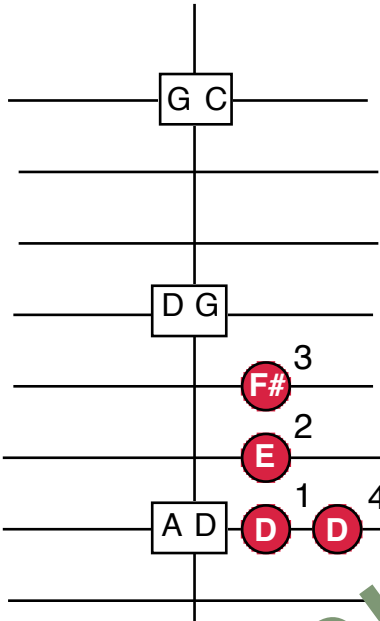
Hot Cross Buns



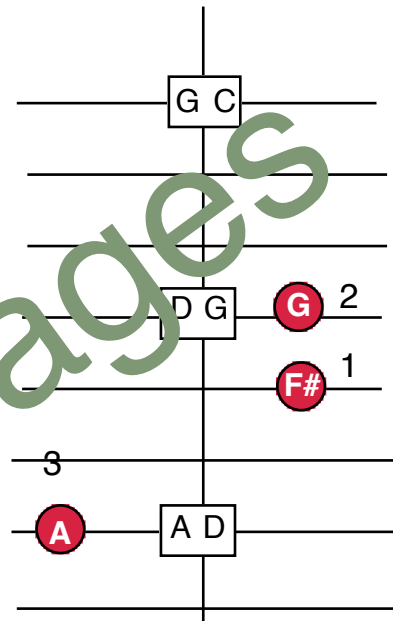
Play these notes for Hot Cross Buns

F# - E - D - - F# - E - D - - D D D D E E E E F# - E - D

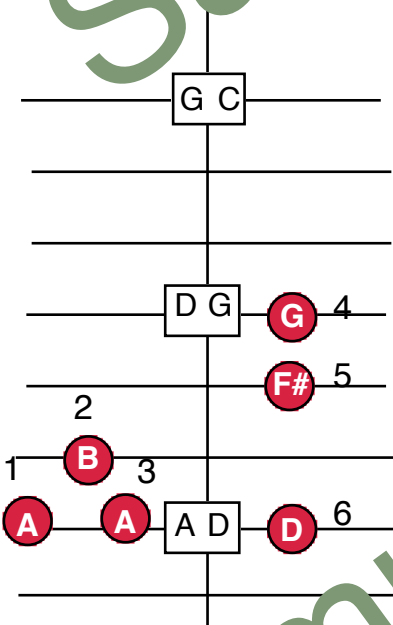
Brother John



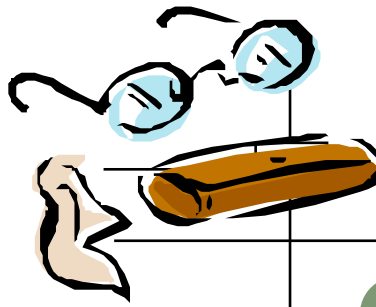
Play this frame 2 times.
Are You Sleeping?
Are You Sleeping?



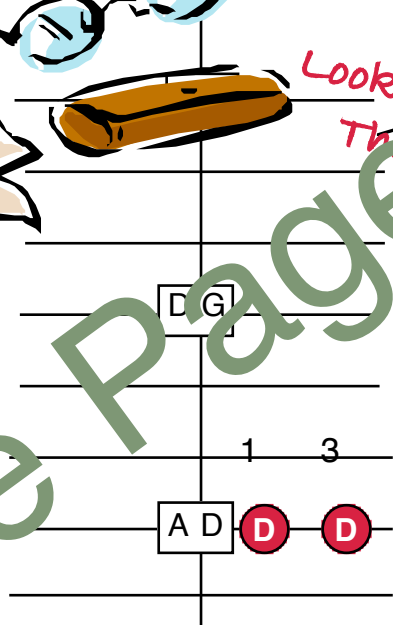
Play this frame 2 times.
Brother John.
Brother John.



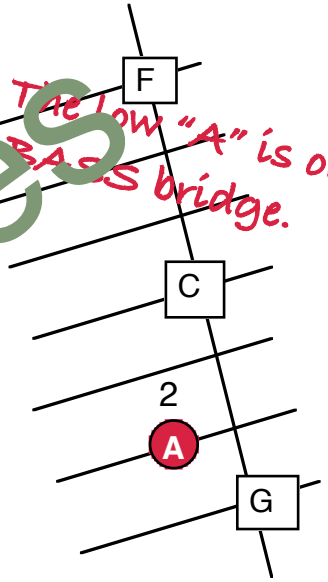
Play this frame 2 times.
Morning bells are ringing!
Morning Bells are ringing!



*Look! The low "A" is on
The BAS bridge.*



Play this frame 2 times.
Ding Dong Ding!
Ding Dong Ding!



First Steps in Reading Music

The chart on the preceding page illustrates the dulcimer string-board and the names of the strings.
The next page shows the numbering system that can be used to locate the notes on the dulcimer.

D Scale:

Dulcimer

2 3 4 5 2 3 4 5 5 4 3 2 5 4 3 2

D E F# G A B C# D D C B A G F# E D

D Arpeggio

5 2 4 2 5 2 4 2

D F# A D A F# D

G Scale:

9 5 6 7 5 6 7 8 8 7 6 8 7 6 5

G A B C D E F# G G F# E D C B A G

G Arpeggio

13 5 7 5 8 8 5 7 5

G B D G D B G

Rhythms on D & A

D/A D/A D/A D/A D A D A D A D A

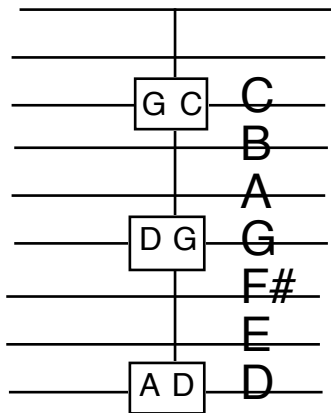
Count: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

D D D D A A A A D D A A D A D/A

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

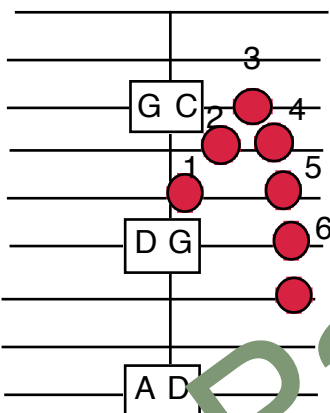
Old Joe Clark

Frame 1



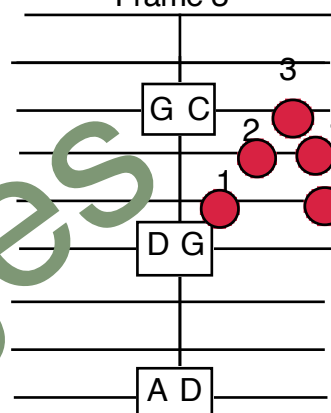
Play the strings on the right side of the treble bridge.... D up to C.

Frame 2



Old Joe Clark he had a mule

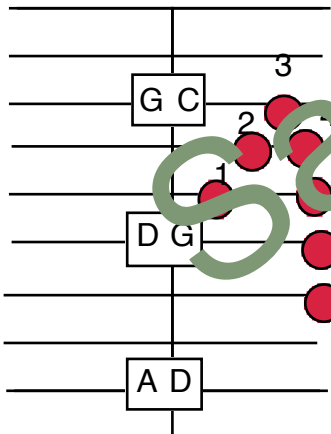
Frame 3



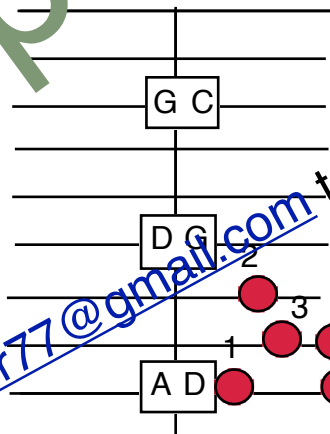
Name was Morgan Brown

This entire song is on the right side of the treble bridge

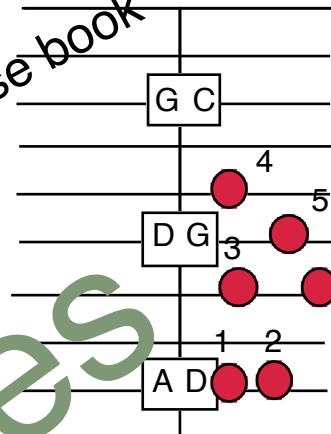
Frame 4



Frame 5



Frame 6

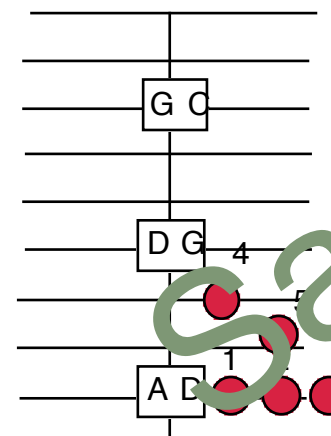


Every tooth in that mule's head
in its entirety.

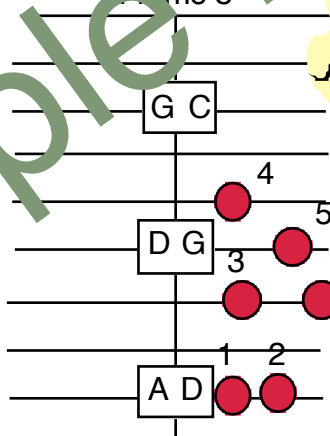
W'z 14 inches round.

Fare thee well, Old Joe Clark

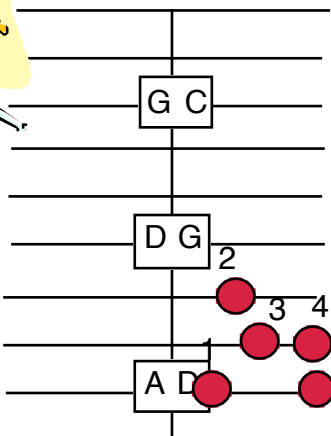
Frame 7



Frame 8



Frame 9



Fare thee well, I say!

Fare thee well, Old Joe Clark

Ain't got long to stay.

Old Joe Clark

This tune is written in the "mixolydian" mode... that is, the 7th step is a "C natural" rather than a "C-sharp."
The entire song can be played on the right side of the treble bridge.

[Frame 2 _____] [Frame 3 _____]

Old Joe Clark he had a mule. Name was Mor - gan Brown.

[Frame 4 _____] [Frame 5 _____]

Ev - ry tooth on that mule's head w's four - teen in - ches round.

[Frame 6 _____] [Frame 7 _____]

Fare thee well, Old Joe Clark! Fare thee well I say!

[Frame 8 _____] [Frame 9 _____]

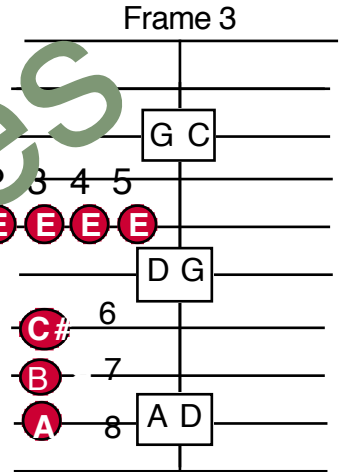
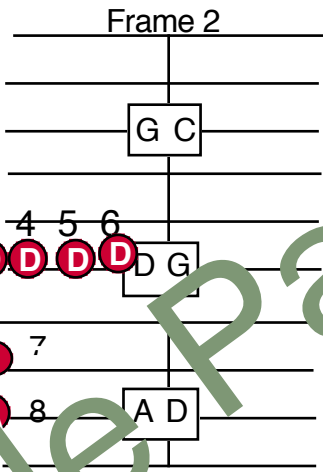
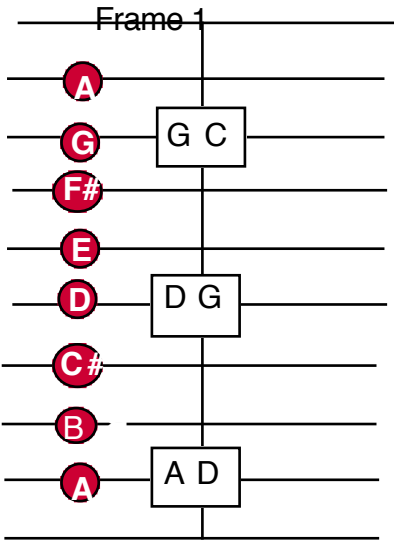
Fare thee well, Old Joe Clark! Ain't got long to stay.

The dotted 8th note, connected to a 16th note is an uneven rhythm. The dot adds half the value of the note back to the note...(that would make the note LONGER). The 16th is half as long as the full note, so its a LOT quicker than the dotted 8th.

Say, "F a r e thee well."

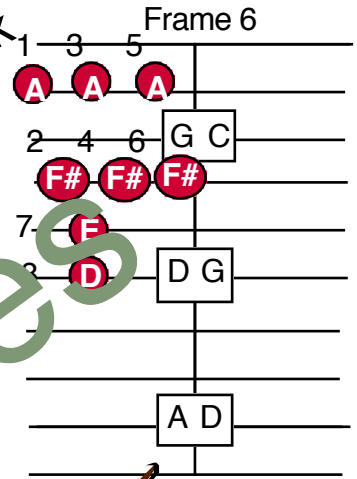
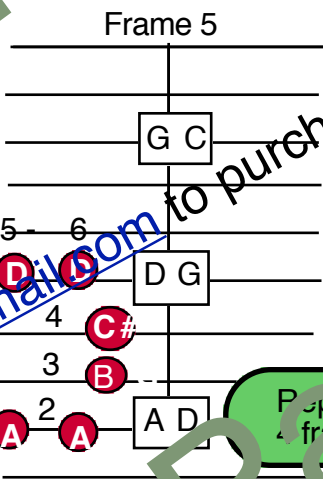
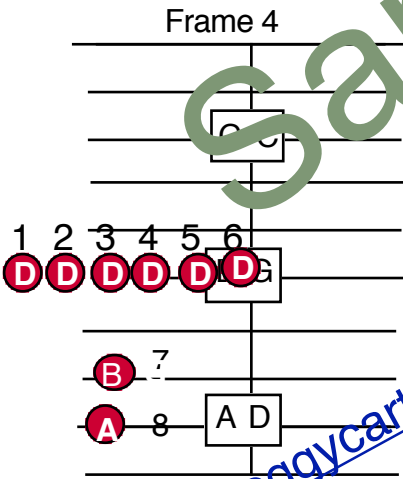
Then hammer "D - - - D - F#" in the same rhythm.

Green Corn



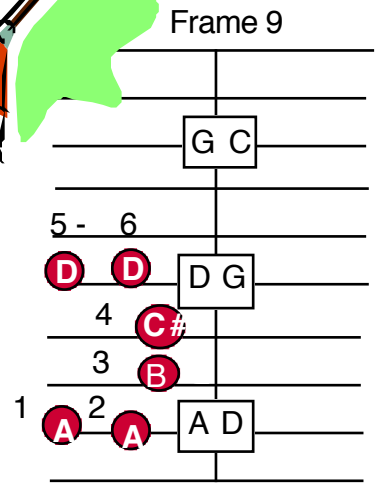
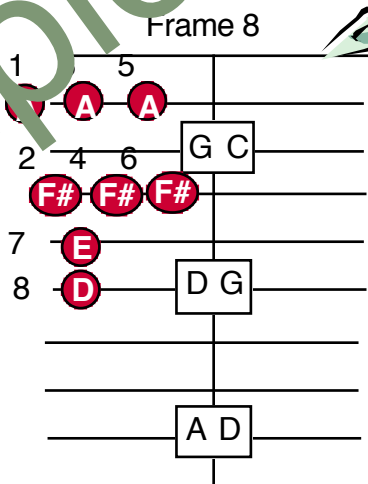
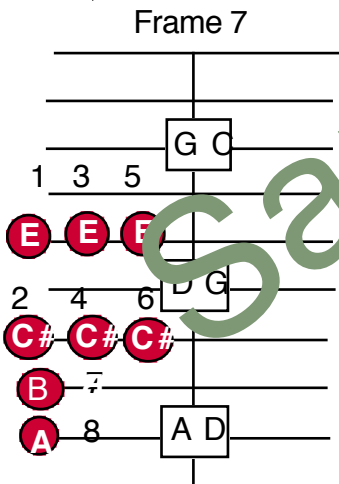
Play the strings on the left side of the treble bridge... A up to A'

This entire song is played on the left side of the treble bridge.



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Repeat last 4 frames



Green Corn

Start on the HIGH D (left side of D/G position marker). The rhythm moves along in steady "eighth notes" (except the end of the 2nd staff, and the end of the 4th staff). After you have learned the tune, work on *technique* using a left-right, *left-right sequence*. Hold the hammers loosely between the thumb and index finger, with thumb *perpendicular* to hammer shank. After the strike, let the hammer *bounce up*, then tighten your grip. The striking motion should be with fingers and wrist, NOT elbows and shoulders.

The entire piece is played on the left side of the treble bridge.

American Tune

1 D D D D D D B A E E E E E C# B A

5 D D D D D B A A A B C# D D

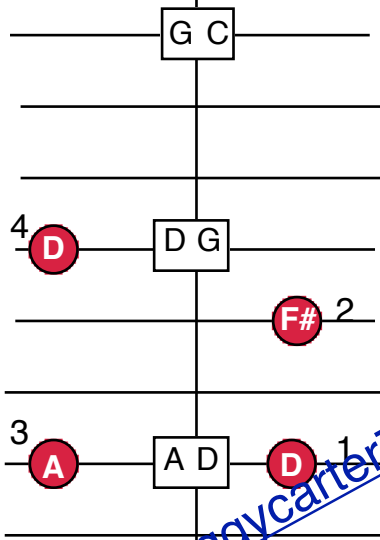
9 A F# A F# A F# F D E C# E C# E C# B A

13 A F# A F# A F# E D A A B C# D D

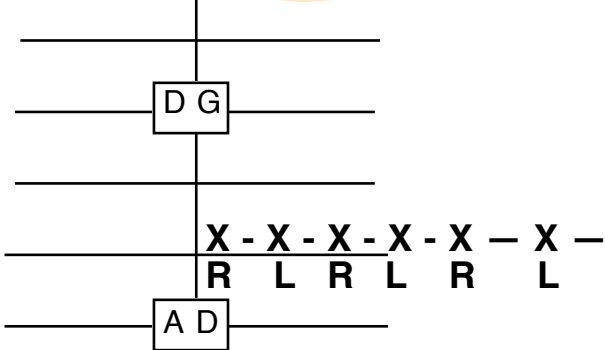
in its entirety.

Technique is Fun!

The D Arpeggio

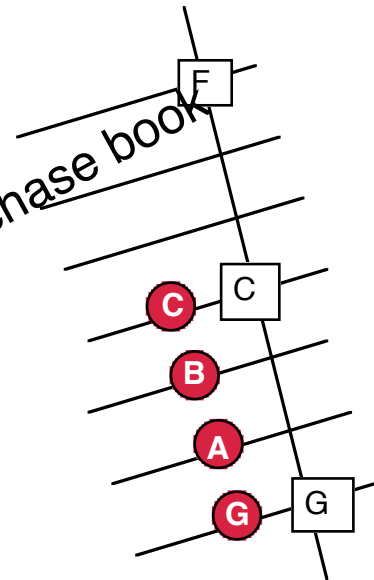


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Mississippi Sawyer

The Bass Bridge



Say, "Mississippi Sawyer!
Mississippi Sawyer!
Mississippi Sawyer!
Mississippi Sawyer!"

Now clap the rhythm of the words.

X - X - X - X - X — X —

Now

Hammer the rhythm on one string.

(choose a string - any string)

Alternate hands, starting with
RIGHT HAND

R - L - R - L - R — L —

Hold the hammers loosely, between the thumb and "pointer" finger. Let the hammer bounce up from the string. Keep a steady beat.



Tipperary, So Far Away

In The G Box

For beginning note-readers, the note names are printed beneath the notation. This lesson is not concerned with hammering patterns or R - L alternating, but rather to help you become comfortable in the "G Box." Lines above the note names indicate to play them on the LEFT Treble bridge. NO line indicates RIGHT treble bridge.

Irish Trad

* 1 G C G

5 G C G

9 G C D Em D

13 C G D

17 G C D em D

21 C G D D

25 G G C G

29 G C G G

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* Numbers at the beginning of meas. 1, 9, 17, & 25 correspond to instruction points on instructional CD.

The next page suggests harmonies which will be of interest to students that are a little more advanced.