

How to Hold the Banjo

The rim or body of the instrument rests on the right thigh, with the neck elevated to an angle of about 45 degrees, when the banjo will practically balance itself without any assistance from either hand. The neck rests easily against the third joint of the first finger, or more properly, just above it, with the left thumb coming loosely against the opposite side so that the tip is about level with the edge of the fingerboard. The right forearm hangs easily over the upper edge or rim of the instrument, touching it at a point about half way between the wrist and elbow joints, thus allowing the wrist to curve gracefully downward towards the strings.

How to Hold the Pick or Plectrum

The pick (which should be rather pointed and not too large) is laid across the first finger, between the tip and the first joint, but nearer the joint, while the ball of the thumb drops easily against it to hold it in place. The first joint of the thumb must not curve outwards, but must be flattened down so that the pick will always be exactly parallel to the strings as it strikes them. The pick must never be gripped any tighter than is absolutely necessary to keep it in place.

How to Make the Strokes

The down stroke is made by raising the pick to a point about two or three inches above the string and then suddenly dropping the hand with a little "throw" which carries the pick across one string and allows it to rest against the next one. This resting of the pick against the next string is a very important part of the down stroke and must always be watched. When the pick strikes against the string it is only the extreme tip which is allowed to touch the string. The *up* stroke (which is only used in playing the tremolo and notes which are too rapid to be played with down strokes), is made by bringing the hand up with a sudden jerk from its resting place against the next higher string, again allowing only the extreme tip or point to touch the string.

In making the up stroke it is important that the pick be brought up as far above the string as the point from which it started in making the down stroke. The habit should be formed from the start, of making every stroke both energetic and as long as the time will allow, since this develops a style and sureness in the right hand movement which can be gained in no other way.