

BOWEN'S  
MASTER METHOD FOR  
PLECTRUM BANJO

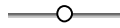


Wm. D. BOWEN

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## Preface



Through my years of travel as a banjoist I have learned that many persons desirous of taking up the study of the banjo are not within reach of a competent instructor, and have to depend to a large extent upon self- instruction. It is this knowledge that has prompted me to write this book. The "SELF-INSTRUCTOR" for plectrum banjo.

Although I strongly advise studying under a competent teacher, if it is at all possible, the student who has to be content with self-instruction will find this book invaluable.

Through my years of experience as a teacher and performer I have become familiar with the requirements of the beginners and this work embraces all of the points that I, through personal experience have found to be of benefit to the pupil and player. I have gone through this work very carefully, thoroughly explaining and marking every exercise and solo, so that the prospective player can immediately take up the study of the instrument and with a little serious thought and study coupled with practice and perseverance, can acquire a thorough knowledge of the rudiments of music and of the instrument from the very beginning.

The student who has gone through this work systematically, mastered these studies and profited by all other advice given, will have a good solid foundation upon which to build and with faithful perseverance should become a fine player.

It has been my aim to make this book valuable to both pupil and teacher.

WM. D. BOWEN

## How to Hold the Banjo.

Sit upright, rest the rim, or resonator, on the right thigh, pressing the upper part lightly against the body with the fore-arm; the fore-arm resting on the rim acts as a support in keeping the banjo steady.

Crossing the right leg over the left seems to be the most natural position; a rest about five or six inches high under the right foot also makes an easy and comfortable playing position. The neck is held between the first finger and thumb of the left hand, the fingers curved so the tips can be used in pressing the strings.

## The Pick And How To Hold It

The pick (which should be of genuine tortoise shell) is held between the first finger and thumb of the right hand. Do not hold it too firm. Holding It lightly with a free wrist much can be accomplished in a very short time.

Fig. I, is a sketch showing the exact size and shape of the pick I personally prefer.

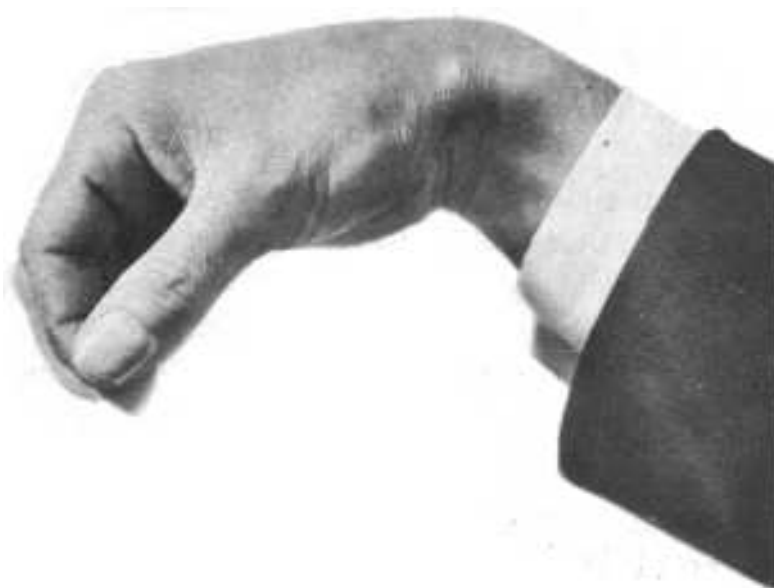


Fig. I.

Fig. II, shows the position of the pick on the first finger to be almost parallel.



Fig. III, shows the correct position of holding the pick and the arching of the wrist which enables you to acquire a free hand and wrist motion.



## How To Use The Pick.

Pick the strings about two inches from the bridge at right angle, using about one-eighth inch bite. Avoid getting a raspy tone.

Do not use too stiff a pick, one with a little give to it will be more suitable to begin with.

Do not attempt to play with the hand in a straight line with the fore-arm. The wrist must be arched.

I have often been asked "do you consider it improper to rest the little finger of the right hand on the banjo head?" My answer to this query is "NO". I do not consider it improper, in fact I quite approve of it. I invariably rest the back of the nail of the little finger on the head except in STROKE PLAYING of three or four note chords, when I would say "by all means do not touch the head".

The little finger is curved so that the back of the nail merely touches and glides over the head. The nail, being of a smooth surface will not retard the picking, it also acts as a guide to the accuracy of the depth or the bite of the pick on the strings, which is very important. For instance, if the bite of the pick on one note is one-eighth inch and one-quarter inch on another the tones produced are not going to be uniform.

Never raise the fingers higher than necessary while playing.

Never use the thumb on the finger-board.

## The Barré And Positions.

Positions and Barrés are governed by the first finger, that is to say when the first finger is at the first fret on one string only, it is called the 1st Position - Second fret 2nd Position, etc.

When the first finger engages two or more strings at the same fret it is termed Barré.

In making the Barré always place the thumb directly under the first finger, except in cases where there is a long stretch to be made, it is advisable to place the thumb in advance of the first finger (by advance I mean nearer the rim of the banjo).