

## How to Hold the Banjo

Hold the instrument half-tilted against the right side with middle of the right fore - arm firmly pressing against the instrument just above the tail-piece. The neck of the banjo is held between the ball of the thumb and the index finger of the left hand – the finger touching the neck at a point where the finger joins the hand – the thumb underneath the fingerboard the palm of the hand not touching at all. (See Fig. 1.)

### The Right Hand

The pick or "plectrum" is held between the extreme ends of the index finger and thumb; the accompanying illustration shows correct size (Fig. 2.) the shaded portion signifies exactly which side of the pick is held lightly between the thumb and index finger – do not grasp pick tightly – do not pinch. To get the rest of the fingers in correct position, imagine you are holding a ball. (Fig. 3.) The tip of the pick moves lightly back and forth across all four strings. Always remember, however, that the wrist must be elevated about three inches and hang loosely at all times, being thoroughly relaxed and free from tension (Fig. 4.)

Fig 1



Notice where the forearm is resting on the rim of the Banjo; just left of the tail-piece.

Also note the altitude angle of the neck, it is elevated and held outward from the player.

Again note, Banjo rests on the right thigh—the crease in the trousers is opposite the center of the Banjo rim.

Fig 3

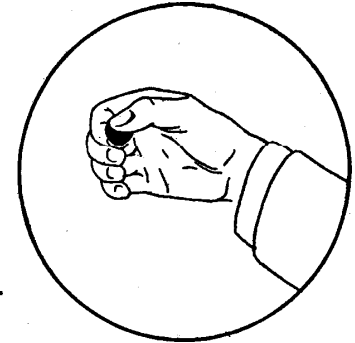
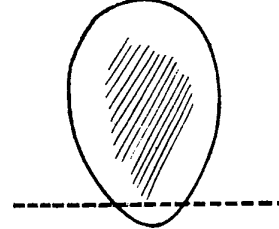


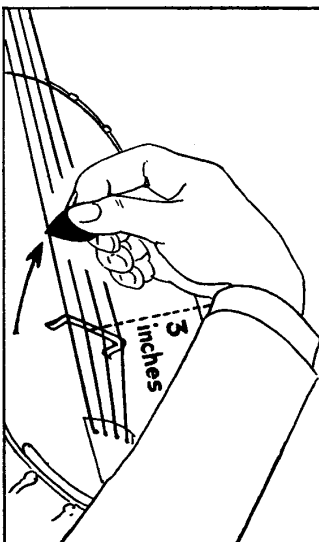
Fig. 2



Correct size of pick (plectrum) May be tortoise shell or celluloid.

Proper way to hold pick.

Fig 4



Pick the strings about 2 1/2 inches from the bridge.

The right hand, with relaxed (limber) wrist, is one of the very important points in Banjo playing. To learn how to thoroughly relax your wrist, arch same as shown in (Fig. 4.), twist wrist upward about two inches, carefully observing that the movement is by wrist only\_\_ the forearm must not be used and is therefore, comparatively, held rigid\_\_ then let the hand drop on the 4th string in a sort of "don't care" manner. After stroking the 4th string, the pick leans against the 3rd string. This manipulation produces the correct down-stroke. Lifting the hand again and repeating the operation results in a series of down-up strokes similar to a "fanning movement". Fashion this movement as that of a pendulum and the wrist bones as the pivot, remembering to keep the forearm in its original place on the rim of the instrument. When performed properly, the forearm merely rolls forward and backward on its fatty part.

The down-stroke is used most by the Banjoist, being employed to sustain quarter-notes. In single-note technique, the pick strikes the strings at a 45° angle and the body of the pick hits flat against the strings and not corner-wise. The fingernail of the little finger is allowed to drag lightly and freely on the calfskin head, acting as a gauge to permit the pick to "bite into" the strings about an eighth of an inch. (See Fig. 2)

In chord playing the pick is used in a more perpendicular manner (90°) and the fingernail does not touch the head of the Banjo.