

## Tuning the Banjo

Open G Tuning: gDGBD

1. Begin by tuning your first string to a D note. You can find a D on a pitch pipe, an electronic tuner, or another musical instrument. If you have access to a guitar, your D note will be found on the guitar's second string played at the third fret. The other strings can now be tuned relative to the first.
2. Second string should be a B. Fret the second string at the third fret, and tune it until it matches the first string played open.
3. The third string should be a G. Fret the third string at the fourth fret, and tune it until it matches the second string played open.
4. The fourth string should be a D. Fret the fourth string at the fifth fret, and tune it until it matches the third string played open.
5. The fifth string should be a G. Fret the first string at the fifth fret, and tune the fifth string to that note.

*Tip: Whenever you are tuning a string, make sure you sound the string with your right hand before you start turning a peg with your left.*

### Other common banjo tunings:

G Modal: gDGCD

Double C: gCGCD

\*Open A: aEAC#E

\*A Modal: aEADE

\*Double D: aDADE

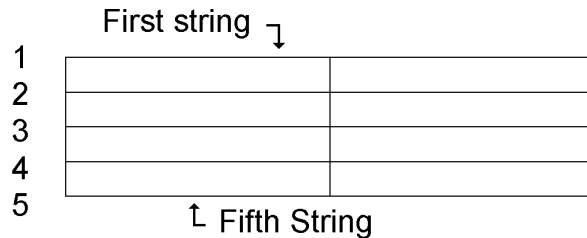


\* Transitions can also be accomplished with the use of a capo at the second fret and then retuning the fifth string up to A.

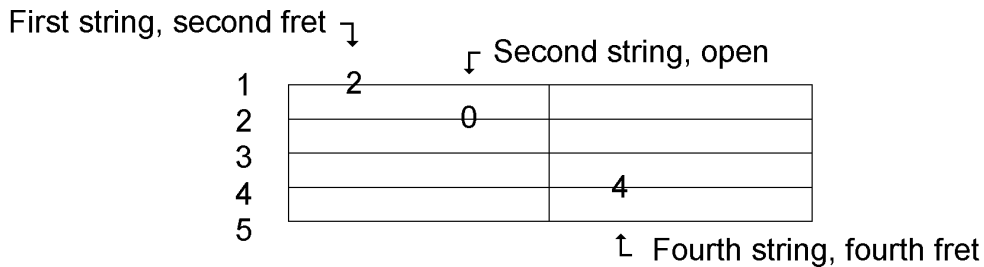
## Reading the Tablature

Banjo players use a system called “tablature” as a means of documenting tunes.

The five lines of the tablature represent the five strings of your banjo. The first string is at the top and the fifth string is at the bottom.

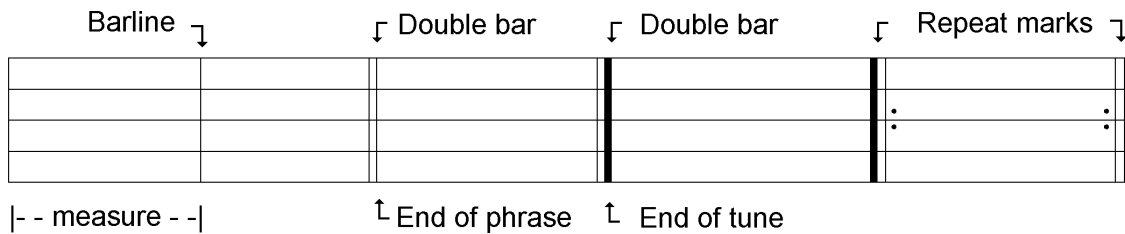


A number on a string will represent the fret you play on that string. A “2” on the first string means you play the first string at the second fret. A “0” on a string means you play that string open, or unfretted.



A vertical line drawn through the staff is called a *barline*. The strong or down beat will fall on the note immediately following a barline. The space between two barlines is called a *measure*.

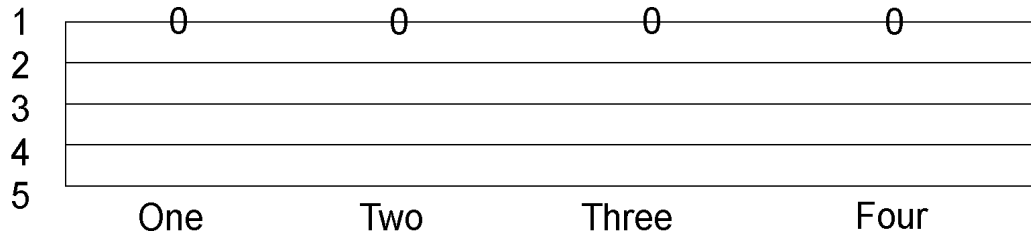
The completion of a musical phrase or sentence is indicated by a *double bar* - two light vertical lines. The end of a composition is indicated by a double bar, consisting of one light line and one heavy line. Dotted double bars, called *repeat marks*, indicate that the phrase should be repeated.



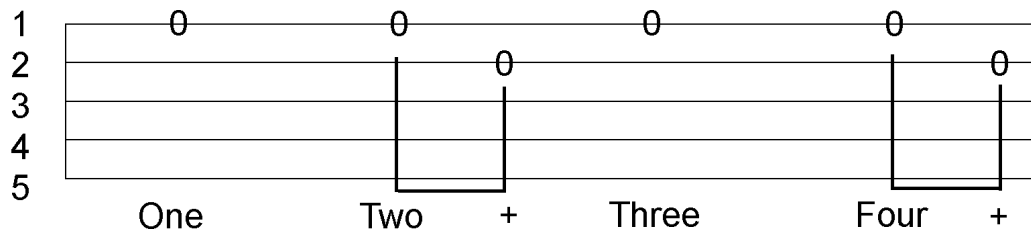
## Rhythm

Maintaining a strict tempo is essential to playing together. The rhythm of the tunes demonstrated here will be divided into measures containing four “beats” or “counts”. With practice, your internal “clock” will develop to maintain a steady beat. Tapping your foot will also help to maintain a consistent tempo.

Each single note in the tablature will get a single count. We will count each measure with four steady beats.... One, two, three, four.



If two notes are attached, they will be counted with “and”. The beats will be divided evenly.

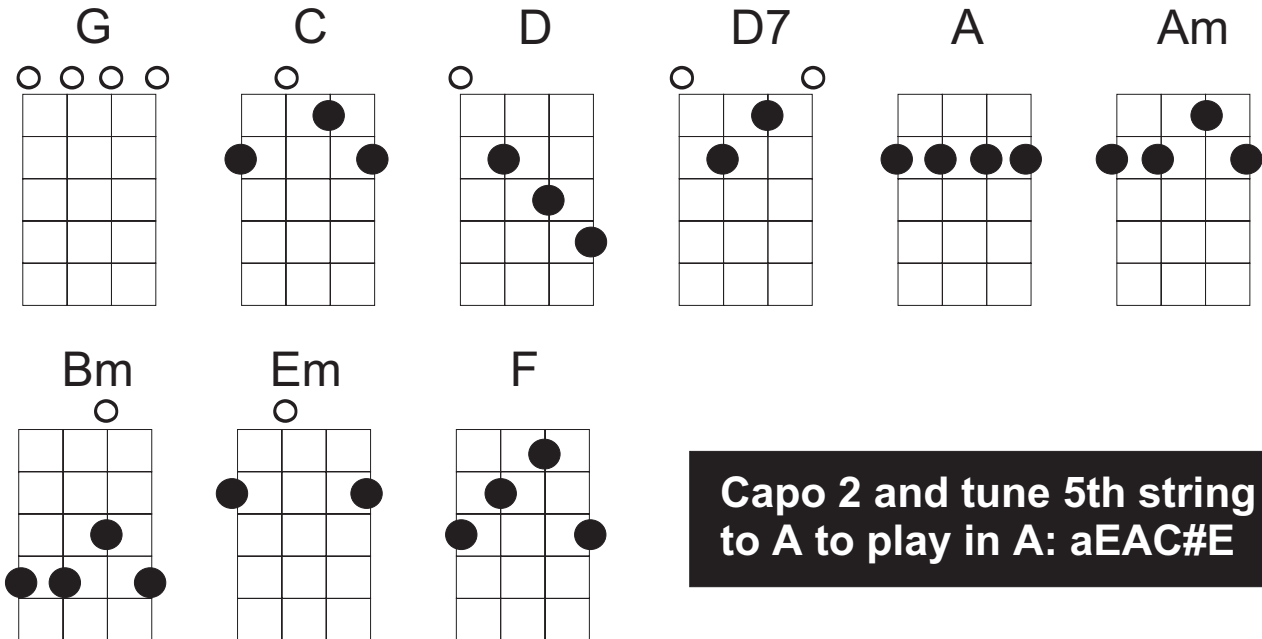


## The Clawhammer Lick

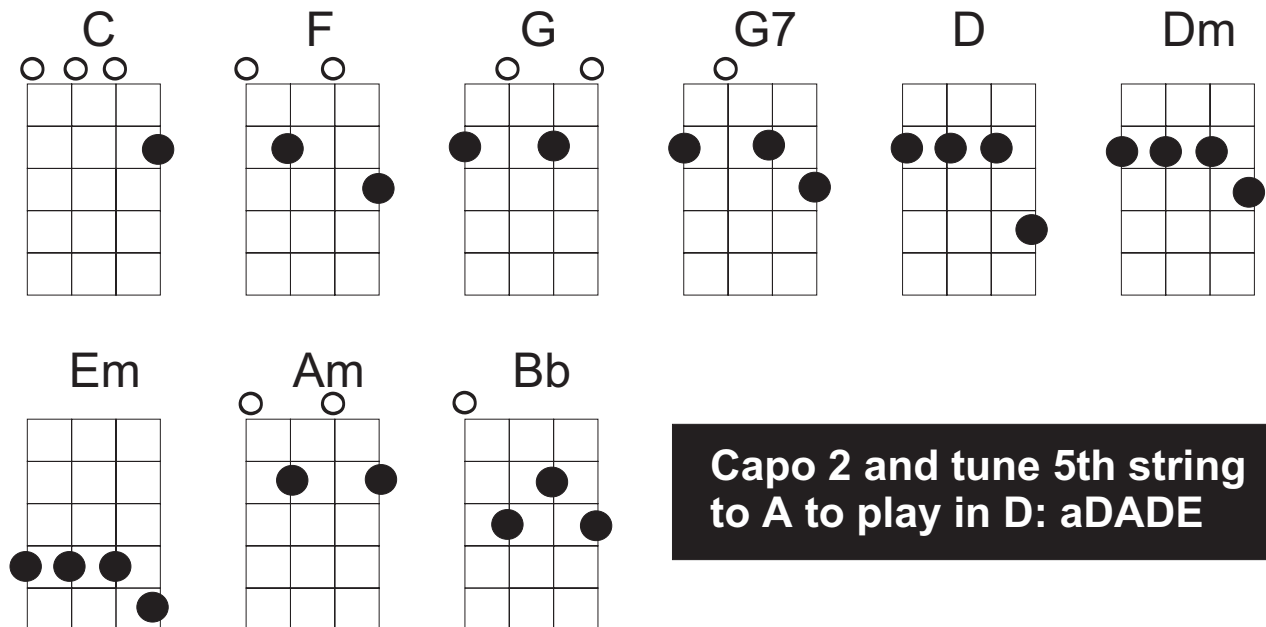
Basically, this is a downpick banjo style where the player uses the back of one finger and the thumb on the right hand to strum and sound the notes of the banjo.

1. With your right hand clenched up like a claw, strike down on the first string with the nail of your middle (or index) finger. With your hand still in motion, your right thumb will come firmly to rest on the fifth string. This will stop the downward motion of your hand. Your thumb will slightly depress the fifth string as it comes to rest on it, but it will not sound the string yet. This is the melody.
2. Now you will lift up your right hand and brush down on the first, second, and third strings of the banjo with the nails of your middle and ring fingers. Again your thumb will come to rest on the fifth string, as it did above. This is often called the “brush”.
3. Finally, your thumb will sound the fifth string.

## Chords for Open G Tuning: gDGBD



## Chords for Double C Tuning: gCGCD

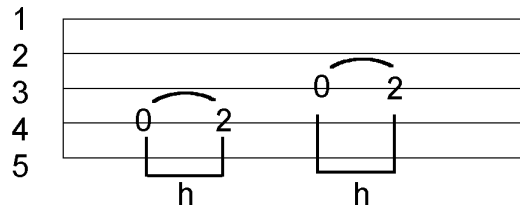


When making chords, your fingers should land on all the strings at the same time, rather than one finger at a time.

## Left Hand Techniques

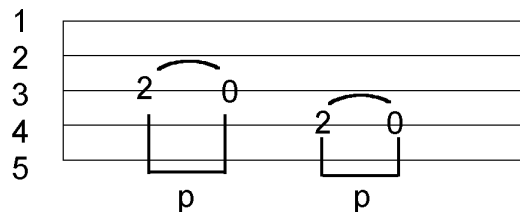
### Hammer-On:

1. Play the fourth string open.
2. With the middle finger on your left hand, come down hard (or “hammer”) on the fourth string at the second fret. You should land on the string hard enough to make a clear tone.



### Pull-Off:

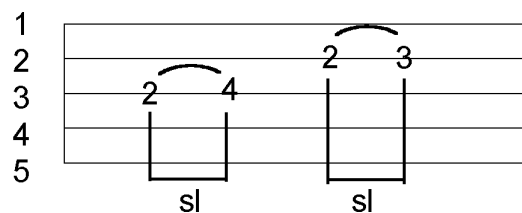
1. Fret the first string at the second fret with the middle finger of your left hand.
2. Pull your finger off that fretted note to produce another note.



When playing the hammer-on and pull-off, you will actually be playing one note with your right hand and one with your left. The string or fret of the hammer-on will change from song to song, but the idea remains the same.

### Slide:

To do a good slide, move the fretting finger from the starting fret to the ending fret smoothly. Make sure you have a good fretting position at both the start and the end of the sequence.

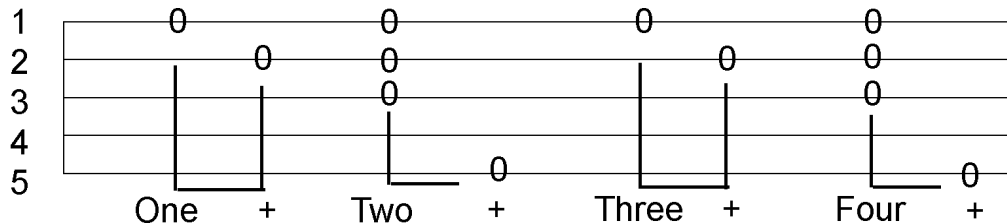


## More Advanced Techniques

### Drop Thumb:

Drop thumb simply involves playing or “dropping” your thumb to the second, third, or fourth string. The second string is most commonly used in drop thumb

1. Play the first string with a downward stroke of your middle finger, as usual.
2. Then immediately play the second string with your thumb. Practice this over and over until you can quickly drop your thumb to the second string.
3. Once you can drop your thumb with some ease, play the second and third part of your regular clawhammer lick (brush over the bottom three strings with your middle and ring fingers quickly followed by the fifth string played with the thumb.)



With practice you will become as fluid with the drop thumb as you are with the clawhammer lick. You can substitute the drop thumb for the clawhammer lick any time the melody is on the first string. You can also drop thumb on the inside strings although this will undoubtedly take a little more practice.



Ex. 5

C

Musical notation for Ex. 5, C chord. The notation consists of a single staff with four measures. Each measure contains a sequence of notes: 0 (open), 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 2 (second fret). The notes are grouped into pairs with a slur and a '2' above them. The first pair in each measure is marked with an 'h' (hammer-on) below it.

Ex. 6

D7

Musical notation for Ex. 6, D7 chord. The notation consists of a single staff with four measures. Each measure contains a sequence of notes: 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 2 (second fret), 0 (open). The notes are grouped into pairs with a slur and a '2' above them. The first pair in each measure is marked with an 'h' (hammer-on) below it.

Ex. 7

Musical notation for Ex. 7, G and D7 chords. The notation consists of a single staff with four measures. The first measure is labeled 'G' and contains notes 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2. The second measure is labeled 'D7' and contains notes 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2. The third measure is labeled 'G' and contains notes 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2. The fourth measure is labeled 'D7' and contains notes 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2. The notes are grouped into pairs with a slur and a '2' above them. The first pair in each measure is marked with an 'h' (hammer-on) below it.

Ex. 8

Musical notation for Ex. 8, G chord. The notation consists of a single staff with four measures. Each measure contains a sequence of notes: 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 0 (open), 0 (open), 1 (first fret), 0 (open), 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 0 (open), 0 (open), 1 (first fret), 0 (open), 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 0 (open), 0 (open). The notes are grouped into pairs with a slur and a '2' above them. The first pair in each measure is marked with a 'p' (piano) below it.

Ex. 9

Musical notation for Ex. 9, G chord. The notation consists of a single staff with four measures. Each measure contains a sequence of notes: 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 0 (open), 0 (open), 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 0 (open), 0 (open). The notes are grouped into pairs with a slur and a '2' above them. The first pair in each measure is marked with a 'sl' (slide) below it. The second pair in each measure is marked with a 'p' (piano) below it. The third pair in each measure is marked with an 'h' (hammer-on) below it.



# Big-Eyed Rabbit

gDGBD

Verse

G C

Yon - der comes a rab - bit How do I know Fur shin - ing

G D7 G

in the sun Shin - ing bright like gold, gold, shin - ing bright like gold

Chorus G D7 G

Big - eyed rab - bit's gone, gone, big eyed rab - bit's gone.

It's up before the morning light  
 See what the world will lend  
 Come on rabbit rise and shine  
 Time to meet your end, end  
 Time to meet your end

Chorus

It's Coney on the island  
 It's Coney on the run  
 Watch that rabbit run so fast  
 Missed him with my gun, gun  
 Missed him with my gun

Chorus

Yonder comes a rabbit  
 How do I know  
 Fur shining in the sun  
 Shining bright like gold, gold  
 Shining bright like gold

(last chorus)

Rock 'em in a weary land, land  
 Rock 'em in a weary land  
 Rock 'em in a weary land, land  
 Rock 'em in a weary land

# Old Joe Clark

Banjo Tuning: gDGBD  
Traditional Key = A  
Capo 2 - Tune 5th string to A

A

G D7

G D7 G

B D7

G D7 G

