

# Teach Yourself To Play Mandolin

#### **DAN FOX**

# Everything you need to know to start playing now!







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#### Macintosh

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### A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MANDOLIN

The modern mandolin developed from an earlier family of lute-like fretted instruments called mandores. Although at first there were several different types of mandolins, some having as many as eight sets of double strings, the one that is universally used today for Italian, bluegrass and classical music is the Neapolitan mandolin. This instrument can have either a flat back with f-holes (preferred by bluegrass players) or a rounded back with a round hole (preferred by those who enjoy playing Italian songs). Classical players are divided in their choices.

The mandolin has four double sets of strings, each attached to its own tuning peg. The strings are attached to a tailpiece, cross over a bridge, and then stretch over a fingerboard that usually contains 20 frets. Markers (sometimes mother-of-pearl) are set into the fingerboard to help the player find a particular fret. These markers are usually at the 3rd, 5th, 7th, 10th, 12th and 15th frets.

The mandolin was developed in Italy in the early part of the 18th century. Vivaldi's concerto for the instrument, which dates from this time, was the main theme of the 1979 film Kramer vs. Kramer. Although the concerto had been little known until this time, its use in the film made it popular and stirred up renewed interest in the mandolin as a classical instrument. Other composers who wrote for the mandolin include Handel, Grétry, Paesiello (who used it in his Barber of Seville and also wrote a concerto for it), Mozart (Don Giovanni), Beethoven (Five pieces for mandolin and piano), Verdi (Otello), Mahler (Das Lied von der Erde), and Schoenberg (Serenade).

Today there are many all-mandolin orchestras which use mandolins to play the violin parts, mandolas for the viola parts, mando-cellos for cello parts, and mando-basses for the bass parts. These orchestras play everything from symphonies to show tunes.

The popularity of the mandolin as a classical instrument and as an instrument on which to play folk songs is easily understood, but no one could have predicted how the mandolin has become such an important part of country music.

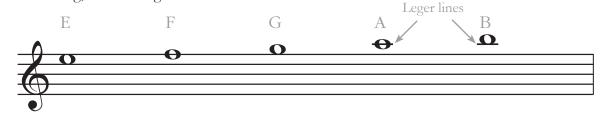
The bluegrass phenomenon started in the late 1920s with Bill Monroe, continued through the virtuosic Flatt and Scruggs, and today encompasses hundreds of groups usually featuring a mandolin, five-string banjo, fiddle, guitar and bass. There are dozens of great bluegrass mandolin players today bringing the instrument to new heights of virtuosity.

In this book you'll receive a thorough grounding in the basics of mandolin playing. Whether your interest is classical, folk, alternative rock, bluegrass or even jazz, the fundamentals of playing the instrument are the same. After completion of *Teach Yourself to Play Mandolin* you'll be ready to excel in whatever music you're interested in.

#### NAMING THE NOTES ON THE 1st STRING

Since the mandolin can play notes higher than those written on the staff, it is sometimes necessary to extend the five lines of the staff with short, temporary lines called leger lines. Leger lines are used to notate the high A and B which are played on the 1st string, the E string.

The five basic notes on the 1st string are:



Notice the use of the leger lines for the notes A and B. Also notice that the note E, which is played open on the 1st string, can also be played on the 2nd string 7th fret. The fingering number above the note will tell you whether to play it open ("o") or fingered (4).

Exercise: Practice naming the notes below.



#### PLAYING THE NOTES ON THE 1st STRING

These photos show the proper placement of the fingers for the notes on the 1st string. Remember to press hard directly behind the fret.

Important! Unlike the 2nd and 3rd strings, the 1st finger plays the note on the 1st (not the 2nd) fret.

 $\mathbf{E}$ Open (no fingers)



A



F 1st finger, 1st fret



B 4th finger, 7th fret



G 2nd finger, 3rd fret





## **16TH NOTES**

A 16th note looks like or when it stands alone. When they are written in groups of two or more, 16th notes look like this:



A 16th note is played twice as quickly as an eighth note and four times as quickly as a quarter note. In  $\frac{2}{4}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$  and  $\frac{4}{4}$  times there are four 16th notes in each beat. Count them as 1 e & uh, 2 e & uh, etc.

Always play 16th notes with alternating down- and upstrokes of the pick.

Make sure you can play the exercises on this page before attempting the tunes that follow.



### **CROSSPICKING**

**Crosspicking** refers to picking that moves from string to string. It's one of the harder things to do on the mandolin, but is a wonderful effect when you master it. Here are

two old fiddle tunes that require a lot of crosspicking. Learn them at a very slow tempo paying great attention to details such as fingering, picking, and of course, tone. Once you have mastered the basics, start increasing the tempo gradually till you can play it at about  $\rfloor = 80$  to 100.





# COMMON TIME AND CUT TIME

The symbol C used as a time signature is another way of saying  $\frac{4}{4}$  time.

The symbol  $\mathfrak{C}$  calls for "cut time." It means to play the same number of notes per measure as  $\frac{4}{4}$ , but to count only two beats to each measure. This is especially useful when the tempo gets fast enough to make counting four beats to the measure awkward. Cut time is used for fast show tunes, marches and other music meant to be played brightly. Play this famous march in cut time. Count as indicated, and keep the tempo bright ( $\frac{1}{2} = 96-120$ ).

