

Contents at a Glance

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Part I: The Amazing Five-String Banjo</i>	9
Chapter 1: First Steps: Banjo Basics	11
Chapter 2: Meet Your Banjo	27
Chapter 3: Playing by the Rules: Not Enough Theory to Hurt.....	53
<i>Part II: Let's Pick! The Basic Ingredients</i>	71
Chapter 4: Getting Right with the Right Hand	73
Chapter 5: Sliding, Hammering, and Pulling: Adding the Left Hand	99
Chapter 6: Working Up Your First Tunes: Clawhammer and Bluegrass	125
<i>Part III: Playing Styles Past, Present, and Future</i>	143
Chapter 7: Playing Historical Styles: African, Minstrel, and Classic Banjo	145
Chapter 8: Playing Three-Finger Styles: Scruggs, Melodic, and Single String.....	157
<i>Part IV: Buyer's Guide, Care and Feeding, and More ...</i>	189
Chapter 9: Finding Your Banjo Bliss: A Buyer's Guide.....	191
Chapter 10: Getting the Right Stuff: Banjo Gear	221
Chapter 11: Taking Care of Your Baby: String Changing & Basic Maintenance.....	249
Chapter 12: Networking into Banjo Culture	267
<i>Part V: The Part of Tens</i>	283
Chapter 13: Ten Tips to Make Practicing More Fun.....	285
Chapter 14: Ten Banjo Players You Need to Hear	291
<i>Part VI: Appendixes</i>	297
Appendix A: Banjo Chords and Notes	299
Appendix B: About the CD	305
<i>Wiley Publishing, Inc. End-User License Agreement</i>	313
<i>Index</i>	315

Table of Contents

***Introduction*..... 1**

About This Book.....	1
Conventions Used in This Book	3
What You're Not to Read.....	4
Foolish Assumptions	4
How This Book Is Organized.....	4
Part I: The Amazing Five-String Banjo	5
Part II: Let's Pick! The Basic Ingredients	5
Part III: Playing Styles Past, Present, and Future.....	5
Part IV: Buyer's Guide, Care and Feeding, and More	6
Part V: The Part of Tens.....	6
Part VI: Appendixes.....	6
Icons Used in This Book.....	6
Where to Go from Here.....	7

***Part 1: The Amazing Five-String Banjo* 9**

Chapter 1: First Steps: Banjo Basics 11

Getting into Banjo	11
Loving that amazing sound	12
Becoming a true believer	12
Identifying Different Kinds of Banjos.....	13
Five-string banjo: The subject of the book.....	13
Tenor and plectrum banjos: Look for another book.....	14
Knowing the Parts of a Banjo	16
Looking at the neck.....	17
Checking out the pot.....	20
Picking up string vibrations	21
Becoming a Banjo Player.....	22
Making wise purchase choices	22
Tuning and holding your banjo	23
Fretting chords with the left hand.....	23
Playing authentic right- and left-hand patterns.....	23
Practicing some real tunes.....	24
Making music with others in jam sessions	24
Meeting other banjo lovers	24
Keeping your banjo sounding great	25

Chapter 2: Meet Your Banjo 27

Talking Banjo Talk	27
Positioning Body and Banjo.....	29
Strapping on your banjo.....	29
Sitting down to play	33
Standing with your banjo	34
Fretting with the Left Hand	35
Tuning Up.....	37
G tuning: Getting your strings in order.....	38
Relative tuning: Tuning the banjo to itself	39
Reference tuning: Getting a little outside help	41
Checking Out Chord Diagrams	47
Reading a chord diagram	47
Interpreting up-the-neck chord diagrams	48
Fingering G, D7, and C Chords.....	49
The G chord: Real easy.....	50
The D7 chord: A little harder.....	50
The C chord: More challenging still	50

Chapter 3: Playing by the Rules: Not Enough Theory to Hurt 53

Breaking Down the Parts of a Song.....	54
Rhythm: Catching the beat	54
Chord progressions: Playing your first songs.....	58
Reading Tablature	62
Finding notes.....	62
Tracking down the rhythm.....	64
Playing Pinch Patterns	65
Being a Great Team Player.....	67
Lead playing: Shining the spotlight on yourself.....	68
Backup playing: Allowing others to stand out.....	69

Part II: Let's Pick! The Basic Ingredients 71**Chapter 4: Getting Right with the Right Hand 73**

Clawhammer and Bluegrass: Down-Picking and Up-Picking	73
Clawhammer Right-Hand Basics	74
Finding a good right-hand position.....	75
Playing your first clawhammer notes	77
Using clawhammer banjo as accompaniment	82
Bluegrass Right-Hand Basics	83
Choosing and fitting thumbpicks and fingerpicks	84
Acquiring a good right-hand position.....	89

Playing roll patterns.....	93
Using bluegrass rolls as accompaniment.....	96
Chapter 5: Sliding, Hammering, and Pulling: Adding the Left Hand . . .	99
Slipping into the Slide.....	100
Getting down the slide: The basics	100
Trying 3rd-string slides.....	101
Undertaking 4th-string slides.....	102
Focusing on 1st-string slides.....	103
Nailing the Hammer-On	104
Playing open-string hammer-ons.....	104
Giving fretted hammer-ons a chance.....	105
Pulling Off the Pull-Off	107
Digging into open-string pull-offs	107
Mastering fretted pull-offs.....	108
Sizing up special clawhammer pull-offs	110
Bending the Chokes	111
Playing the Foggy Mountain choke	111
Experimenting with choke variations	112
Putting Your Hands Together	113
Making sure your clawhammer right-hand is ready	114
Double-checking your bluegrass right-hand skills.....	114
Joining forces: Using both hands in clawhammer banjo.....	115
Keeping both hands busy in bluegrass banjo.....	120
Chapter 6: Working Up Your First Tunes: Clawhammer and Bluegrass	125
Finding the Melody	126
Starting with the scale	126
Trying out a tune (or two).....	130
Making Melody with Style	132
Starting with the right hand.....	132
Adding the left hand.....	135
Tackling a Few More Tunes.....	138
 <i>Part III: Playing Styles Past, Present, and Future</i>	<i>143</i>
Chapter 7: Playing Historical Styles: African, Minstrel, and Classic Banjo	145
African-American Banjo Roots	145
Converging Cultures: The World of Minstrel Banjo	147
Uncovering the historical background.....	147
Getting into minstrel banjo	149

Discovering drop-C tuning	149
Mastering minstrel technique.....	150
Trying some minstrel tunes	150
Branching Out With Classic Banjo	152
Understanding classic banjo technique	153
Introducing yourself to the classics	154

Chapter 8: Playing Three-Finger Styles: Scruggs, Melodic, and Single String157

Playing Scruggs-Style Banjo.....	158
Flowing with the rolls.....	158
Making your music hot with some licks	161
Progressing to Scruggs-style songs.....	167
Making Music with Melodic Banjo	169
Discovering how to play melodic scales	170
Getting a feel for melodic-banjo songs	173
Playing Single-String Banjo	176
Using the right hand	176
Taking a crack at single-string scales.....	178
Exercising single-string techniques in songs	182
Combining Three-Finger Techniques.....	186

Part IV: Buyer's Guide, Care and Feeding, and More 189

Chapter 9: Finding Your Banjo Bliss: A Buyer's Guide191

Establishing Your Banjo Boundaries	191
Making the Leap: Resonator or Open-back?.....	192
Pumping up the volume: Resonator banjos.....	193
Going the old-time way: Open-back banjos.....	195
Finding a Great Beginner's Banjo	196
Knowing what's in the pot.....	196
Getting good string action.....	197
Finding bridge height	199
Measuring string spacing	200
Checking the tuners	200
Taking the plunge	203
Stepping Up to a Better Banjo	204
Budgeting for a quality banjo	205
Knowing a quality banjo when you see it.....	206
Plugging in: Electric banjos	212
Going vintage	215

Finding the Right Music Store216
 Buying from an acoustic specialty store217
 Buying online218
 Getting you started: A banjo store directory.....218

Chapter 10: Getting the Right Stuff: Banjo Gear221

Picking Up the Stuff You Really Need221
 Cases: Becoming King of the Road.....222
 Strings: You can't pick without 'em.....227
 Picks: Giving your fingers playing power230
 Straps: Take a load off!.....231
 Capos: Playing easily in different keys231
 The 5th-string capo and spikes: Going along for the ride235
 Electronic tuners: Getting by with a little help.....236
 Collecting More Cool Tools to Help Your Playing238
 Metronomes and drum machines238
 Your computer and the banjo.....241
 Swapping Out Parts to Make Your Banjo Sound Better243
 Bridges243
 Heads244
 Tailpieces.....245
 "D" tuners246

Chapter 11: Taking Care of Your Baby: String Changing & Basic Maintenance249

Replacing Banjo Strings.....250
 Deciding when your strings need a changin'250
 Changing strings 1 through 4: A step-by-step guide251
 Replacing the 5th string257
 Setting the Bridge.....258
 Discovering harmonics.....258
 Using harmonics to set the bridge.....259
 Adjusting Head Tension260
 Relating head tension to banjo tone.....260
 Tightening the head261
 Keeping Your Banjo Looking Its Best.....264
 Knowing When to Consult a Professional266

Chapter 12: Networking into Banjo Culture267

Taking Private Lessons268
 Overcoming lesson anxiety268
 Finding just the right teacher269

Playing Music with Others	271
Finding a good jam	272
Getting ready for a jam session	273
Joining in a jam	274
Observing good jamming etiquette	275
Attending Workshops and Camps.....	276
Workshops: Fine-tuning your techniques.....	277
Banjo, bluegrass, and old-time camps:	
Rubbing elbows with the pros	278
Heading to a Bluegrass Festival	280
Discovering what festivals are all about	280
Finding a festival that's right for you.....	282

***Part V: The Part of Tens*283**

Chapter 13: Ten Tips to Make Practicing More Fun285

Listen Actively	285
Set Goals.....	286
Practice Regularly	286
Warm Up	287
Use Tablature Sparingly	287
Get the Right Hand First.....	288
Gradually Increase Your Speed	288
Take Songs One Measure at a Time	289
Play the Right Repertoire.....	290
Keep Track of Your Progress	290

Chapter 14: Ten Banjo Players You Need to Hear291

Earl Scruggs (b. 1924).....	291
Pete Seeger (b. 1919).....	292
Béla Fleck (b. 1958).....	292
Tommy Jarrell (1901–1985).....	292
Bill Keith (b. 1939).....	293
Mike Seeger (b. 1933).....	293
Uncle Dave Macon (1870–1952).....	293
J. D. Crowe (b. 1937)	294
Don Reno (1927–1984).....	294
Sylvester (Vess) Ossman (1868–1923).....	294
Alison Brown (b. 1962).....	295
Tony Trischka (b. 1949).....	295
Other Banjo Players You Should Hear.....	295

<i>Part VI: Appendixes</i>	297
Appendix A: Banjo Chords and Notes	299
Chords	299
Notes on the Banjo in G Tuning.....	302
Appendix B: About the CD	305
Relating the Text to the CD	305
System Requirements	305
Audio CD players	305
Computer CD-ROM drives	306
Using the CD	306
The Tracks on the CD	307
Troubleshooting.....	311
 <i>Wiley Publishing, Inc. End-User License Agreement</i>	313
 <i>Index</i>	315

