

The Banjovie Playing Instructions

CONGRATULATIONS

On your recent Banjovie purchase. The Banjovie is the perfect beginner's banjo and an ideal practice and travel banjo. It's tough, versatile and adaptable for kids and adults. Available fully assembled or in kit form, The Banjovie is fun for everyone!

Tuning Your Banjovie

Your Banjovie has a shorter scale than a full sized banjo and so should be tuned higher than a full sized banjo. The most popular tuning for the Banjovie is the open C tuning. **The notes are 5th-C, 4th-G, 3rd-C, 2nd-E 1st-G.** This is the same as if you had a capo at the 5th fret of a full sized banjo. (You may tune the banjovie down to standard G, but it loses some of its crisp, bright tone. see step 8 below) An electronic tuner makes tuning easy, but here's how to tune the Banjovie to itself.

1. Start with a note on the 4th string that is clear and pleasant sounding to your ear. If tuning to a guitar, match your 4th string to the guitar's 3rd string.
2. Fret the **4th string at the fifth fret** (between the 4th and 5th frets) and compare its sound with the banjo's **open 3rd string**. Tune up the third string to the same note.
3. Similarly, fret the tuned **3rd string, this time at the 4th fret** and tune the open 2nd string to it.
4. Fret the **2nd string at the 3rd fret** and tune the open 1st string to it.
5. Finally play the **1st string at the 5th fret** and tune the 5th string to it.
6. Now repeat the procedure at least once more because the bridge moves during initial tuning stages.
7. Re-checking your tuning is something you will do whenever you pick up your Banjovie in order to keep it sounding its best.

Alternate Tunings

8. If you want to tune your banjovie down as far as an open G tuning as on a full sized banjo, get a heavier set of banjo strings to use. For example, a good heavy set would include, from 1st to 5th .012, .014, .020w, .026w .012. Custom string sets are available from Nechville Musical Products for \$5 per set, postpaid.

Playing your Banjovie

The first thing you should learn with your banjovie are the basic **chords**.

Chords are a bunch of notes that sound good together. Since the banjo is tuned to a chord, it sounds nice just strumming across all its open strings. The actual chord that you hear when you strum the open strings of your Banjovie depends upon which notes you actually tune to. If you used the C tuning of C, G, C, E, G, You are playing a C chord. If you tuned by ear, your open strings may produce a C# or Bb or some other chord.

Whatever the actual tuning, let's call the open (non-fretted) chord that you

hear a "G" because that is the chord produced by the full sized banjo that most players use. Then you can use the same chord positions and sheet music as on a big banjo. It will just be higher pitched.

Common Chords Based on "G" Tuning

G Chord
(Actual C)

D	G	B	D

C Chord
(Actual F)

D	G	B	D
		I	
M			R

D7 Chord
(Actual G7)

D	G	B	D
		I	
	M		

(All open strings)

Consult your banjo instruction booklet for a more complete listing of chords and playing tips.

Playing with Other Instruments

You'll soon discover that if you are actually in a higher tuning such as "C", and you have memorized the chords names as shown on the preceding page, you or your accompanist will have to make some adjustments in order to read music from the same chart. The simplest solution when playing with another banjo or guitar is to have your friend **put a capo on the fifth fret** (when banjovie is actually tuned to C). He then can play his familiar chord positions.

Another approach to playing together is to **transpose** the music if reading from the same chord chart. The chart below gives several common chords and tells you which chords

are actually being played when you form “G” position Chords in “C” tuning. Follow this chart to transpose music so you and your friend can play the same music.

EXAMPLE 1: If the music says to start a song in G, the open “G” chord you strum on the Banjovie is actually a C chord. Your accompanist would look at the chart and **Transpose** to the Key of C. When you Play a ”C” your friend will play an F, and so on.

EXAMPLE 2: The song starts with a G chord and you realize that the banjovie is actually playing a C. By viewing the chart, you can transpose the actual G chord to a Banjovie “D” chord. When the music says D you play an “A” and so on

Banjovie Transposition Chart

G Position Chord	Actual Chord
G	C
C	F
D	G
A	D
B	E
E	A
F	Bb

EXAMPLE 3:

The music says to play an F# minor. Since the transposition chart says an actual F is a banjovie “C”, then an actual F#minor is a Banjovie “C# Minor”.

EXAMPLE 4:

You want to play “Foggy Mountain Breakdown” on the Banjovie just like you’d play it on a bigger banjo and you want the band to play along. Since “Foggy” is in the key of G simply ask them to transpose the song to the key of C. So for them the “Eminor” would be an A minor and the “D” would be a G.

Styles of Music to Play on Your Banjovie

The open -back Banjovie is ideal for **Old-Time frailing** or **Clawhammer Style** playing. This form of music originated in the Appalachian hills and is quite popular currently. This method is a combination of hitting individual melody and fifth string notes along with rhythmic strumming. Clawhammer is normally played **without** picks and produces a percussive rhythmic texture to music.

Bluegrass is perhaps the most common music to play on a five string banjo. It is played with metal picks on the right hand index and middle fingers and a plastic pick on the thumb. Using picks will give the Banjovie its loudest and brightest tone. You will enjoy the peppy sound of Bluegrass coming from your Banjovie. Bluegrass is played with the 3-finger method of hitting individual notes arranged in patterns called **rolls**. 3-finger rolls are played with the right hand while the left hand frets individual strings or holds down chord positions. Rapid successions of 3-finger Bluegrass rolls makes an exciting addition to any music.

Jazz is a broad term I will use to describe a growing role the 5-string banjo is playing in modern acoustic (and electric) music. The 4-string banjo is primarily a Dixieland or Swing-Jazz instrument, but the 5 string is becoming a powerful musical force through the original music and influence of creative stars like **Bela Fleck** and **Alison Brown** and others. This form of music is highly diverse and incorporates pieces of other styles, but largely relies on single note melodies played expressively. Like Bluegrass playing, this style makes use of the 3-finger method with picks. Most players strive for the level of freedom and expression that is possible though Jazz, but it is essential to master the basics of chords, rolls, scales and single-string techniques first.

Good luck with your banjovie playing adventures, You have chosen an instrument that will give you countless hours of fun and musical

Specifications

- Head- 8 inch Fiberskin (replacements available from Nechville)
- Length -26"
- Weight 1 pound 2 ounces
- Neck- Hard Rock Maple
- Scale Length- 16"
- Fret Wire- Dunlop # 6200
- String Gages- 1st- .011, 2nd- .013, 3rd- .018 wound, 4th- .024 w, 5th- .011
- Nut Spacing- 9/32" between strings
- Bridge Spacing- 13/32" between strings 1 5/8 "overall

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BANJOVIE ASSEMBLY

If you have purchased an un-assembled Banjovie, please follow the directions carefully for the best results.

Parts Included in Kit

- 1 - 4-post strip tuners
- 1 - Single 5th String tuner
- 6 - small screws for tuners
- 1 - Tailpiece pad.
- 1 - Set of Strings
- 1 - 9 1/2" Dowel Rod
- 1 - Fiberskin, head/rim assembly
- 1 - Neck
- 1 - Nut
- 1 - Bridge
- 3 - Small fret spikes for 5th string
- 12- Frets 1 3/4" long
- 1- Instruction Booklet
- Pearlloid dots

Tools and Supplies Needed

- Small Phillips screwdriver
- Sandpaper
- Finishing supplies
- Medium thick instant glue
- Wire cutter
- Metal file
- Small hammer
- 1/4" pearl dots (optional)
- Sharp 3 cornered file or fine saw
- Wood putty or sawdust filler

Install Dot Inlays

Pearl or Pearlloid Inlay This step can be most easily done using ready made 1/4" pearl dots included in your kit. If you are planning to color the fingerboard, do so first. You'll later have to apply another coat of color after dots are installed and sanded. First fill the hole with thick, (not runny) superglue and press dot into place. Avoid getting superglue on your skin by using something other than your finger to hold it in place while it dries. To speed the process, you may use accelerator for instant curing. Dots should rise above the surface of the wood. Sand dots flush with fingerboard using medium or fine sandpaper on a hard flat surface or belt sander.

Painted Dots An alternative to inlay is simply to paint the dots your desired color and scrape or sand off any spillage when it's dry. **Note:** Use light dots with dark stain and dark dots with natural finish.

Other Options You may fill the inlay holes with holes from a paper punch and glue them in with clear glue. You might find a nice small button or a metallic sequin that would also look good. Be sure to sand top of fingerboard flat and clean before installing frets.

Install Frets and Nut

1. Tap each fret down. With a small hammer, carefully tap across the top of fret so that fret is level and down all the way.
2. Then place a small drop of instant glue at each end of the fret allowing it to seep into the fret slot under the fret **Note:** First glue along one side of neck and let it penetrate before gluing the other end of frets. Any dripping glue will be sanded or filed off later. Again pre-staining and re-staining after sanding is advised if coloring wood.
3. Next use a strong wire cutter to cut off the protruding excess fretwire.
4. Use the metal file along the length of the neck to remove sharp ends of frets. Try to file all frets simultaneously and stop after you have provided a comfortable, nice looking chamfered edge. Gently run the file across the tops of the frets to assure that they are level.
5. Find the bone colored nut and fit it into the 1/8" nut slot. It may require some sanding on a flat surface to get a good fit. When installed, the nut should stick up at least 1/16". Use a file or sanding block to make the ends and top of the nut look good. If needed, **use only a tiny drop** of glue to keep the nut from moving.

Sand and Assemble Wood Parts

1. Use fine (180 or 220) sandpaper to prepare wood for staining and/or finish coating. Make sure that frets and nut ends are flush with the edges of the neck, and there are no rough edges.
2. Glue the 5/8" dowel rod into the hole in end of neck. It should go in one inch leaving 8 1/2" remaining. **Note:** Dowel hole is pre-drilled at a 3 degree angle.
3. Use the stain and topcoat of your choice and follow manufacturer's directions. If you want your Banjovie to look great, you must take care to spend enough time during the finishing process to get a good result.
4. When dry, buff off any finish left on the frets by using steel wool or 3M Scotchbrite pads.

Install Tuners

1. Clean out any built up finish that might have built up in the holes, then insert 5 silver tuner post bushings into the 5/16" holes on the front side of the peghead. Use a block of wood and a hammer, and without excessive force make sure to tap bushings all the way down.
2. Install tuners from back of peghead and use a pointed Phillips screw driver to mount tuners to the back of the peghead. Should you need more screws, use #2 x 1/4" or 3/8" sheet metal screws.

Install Fifth String Spikes

1. Use a sharpened nail or tiny drill bit mounted in a drill or dremmel tool to make a starter hole 1/8" in from the edge of the neck approximately 3/16" behind the 5th fret. (between the 4th and 5th fret)
2. Support neck on a non-marring surface while hammering the small spike into position. **Make sure head of spike points inward** toward the strings. Pound it down leaving a space so the string fits easily under the head but is firmly held down against the 5th fret.
3. Repeat procedure if desired between the 6th and 7th frets and elsewhere as you choose for alternate 5th string tunings.

Mount Neck To Body

. Use medium superglue (or wood glue for slower dry) applied at each end of the dowel stick while twisting head into position. Make sure to get fret board parallel to the surface of the head.

Slot Bridge and Nut

Proper slotting is critical for good playability and sound, so follow these steps carefully.

1. Decide if you want regular bridge string spacing or narrow for smaller hands. Regular first string to fifth string width at the bridge is 1 -5/8" with equal distance of 13/32" between the strings. Narrow spacing would be 3/8" or less between strings with an overall width of 1 1/2" or less.
2. Carefully mark the position of the 5 string slots on the top of the bridge and use your sharp 3-cornered file to slot string grooves. In order to prevent the 1st and 5th strings from slipping out of their grooves, be sure to pay attention to the shape of these outer string grooves. The inside wall of the groove should be steep, not gradually sloped. See figures below.

3. Suggested nut spacing is $9/32$ " between strings with overall width of $1\ 1/8$ ". If you want to spread out the strings farther, it is possible to slip the 5th string off the nut entirely and use any spacing you desire for the 4 remaining strings.

(The fifth string will be capoed at the 5th fret by the spike) **Note:** The only reason you may want the 5th string on the nut, is so you can make use of the open 5th string in alternate tunings and even possibly use a heavy string for guitar style tunings.

4. Once the nut slots are marked, make only shallow grooves for now, just to hold the strings in place. Later when the strings are on, we will deepen the nut slots precisely.

Install Strings

1. The first step in installing strings is to locate the heaviest string first. This is your 4th string. Insert the straight end of the string into the loop at the other end to form a closing loop. place the loop over the end of the wooden dowel rod and hold the string in place while you place the straight end of the string through the hole in the topmost tuner post. This is the 4th string tuner post.

The Right Way to Fasten Strings

2. Before winding or kinking the string, turn the tuner knob far enough so that the string is just beginning to wind clock-wise around the left of the tuner post, but don't tighten string at all yet.

3. Provide a little slack in the string by holding firmly with one hand to the main portion of string between the head and tuner. Then pass the end of string in a reverse "S" around tuner post. (the string exits the tuner post hole and goes left). While continuing to hold both parts of string, pass string end under the main portion. **With tension on both segments of string, remove any slack around tuner post** while kinking the end segment up and back, trapping the string between the tuner post and the main string portion. This locks the string and prevents slippage.

4. Now wind the tuner and put enough tension on the string to keep the string in the 4th string nut slot. (Don't over tighten since we still have to place the bridge under the strings.) Repeat the procedure with the next heaviest string and attach it to the 3rd string tuner post. Continue with the next size, 2nd string then the 1st.

5. The fifth string should be one of the 2 finest strings and installation is similar to the other strings, except the string winds counter clockwise around the tuner post. This whole process sounds more difficult than it actually is, and once mastered, will be a big help during your playing career.

Setting Up Your Banjovie

1. Install the bridge under the strings making sure that it **tilts back toward the dowel rod**. Place it 16” from the nut.

Slotting nut

2. With strings in place and under some tension, hold down the first string between the 2nd and 3rd frets. Carefully examine the space between the string and the top of the first fret. It is your goal to deepen the nut slots enough so that this space is reduced to just a few thousandths of an inch.

Warning: This step is critical to good tone and playability.

3. Use the 3 cornered file or fine saw blade to deepen the slots in the nut. When deepening the nut slots keep the file or saw blade tilted back so the **rear of slot is deeper than the front leading edge**. You want to have a solid, non sloppy slot so string buzz doesn't occur. Check and recheck each string the same way as in step 2 and gradually deepen slots until you notice the gap is no thicker than a piece of paper.

4. If you go too far and the string touches the first fret when checking, You should be able to repair it with nut filings mixed with superglue and carefully reslotting to a lesser depth.

Adjusting Bridge and Checking String Height.

5. First tune the first string to any clear sounding note and then check the position of the bridge by holding the string down behind the 12th fret and striking a clear note. Compare its pitch to the harmonic at the 12th fret. The harmonic note is played by lightly touching the string at the 12th fret (in the exact middle) and striking the string. Let go of the string right after striking it and you'll hear the harmonic chime. it should be exactly one octave higher than the open string and the chime should be the exact same note as the sound of the fretted 12th fret note. If fretted note is higher than harmonic chime, then move bridge toward the dowel end; if the fretted note is lower than the chime, move the bridge toward the neck slightly and recheck. Check the 4th string the same way and move bridge accordingly. You may find that when positioned properly the bridge is slanted a little back on the bass side.

6. Measure distance between the top of the 12th fret and the strings. It should be between 1/8 and 1/4”. If too high, deepen slots in the bridge. It's also possible to sand the bottom of the bridge down . If the action is too low, you can replace the bridge with a regular banjo bridge available at your music store or a replacement bridge is available free from Nechville Musical Products.

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