

BOWING

Much of the feeling of a fiddle tune comes from the way it is bowed. The drive of a hoedown and the cheerful lilt of an Irish jig depend, at least in part, on the fiddler's choice of bowing patterns. Even within a given musical tradition, such as bluegrass, each fiddler gradually develops his own style of bowing, which is often quite distinctive and recognizable.

The easiest bowing for a reel, or any other tune in 2/4 or 4/4 time, is the back and forth SAW STROKE. Most fiddlers use approximately the top third of the bow, attacking each note equally.



Another common bowing technique is the NASHVILLE SHUFFLE, consisting of a long bow stroke followed by two short ones, repeated over and over. Both the Nashville shuffle and the saw stroke let you begin each measure on a downbow, which emphasizes the beat and helps you to keep track of time.



A technique which emphasizes the beat and also gives a flowing quality to the notes is the 1-3-1-3 division of a measure.



When the downbow is displaced to the offbeat, this pattern becomes the GEORGIA SHUFFLE.



Some fiddlers use the 3-3-1-1 pattern a lot:



One special bowing pattern is called the ORANGE BLOSSOM SPECIAL (OBS) SHUFFLE, since it is used in that tune. A saw stroke is used, but in a unique string-crossing pattern. There is a special notation for the OBS shuffle, which has 16 notes in it.

