

fancy yourself fiddling?



Starting Out on Fiddle3.

By Sean Kenan, 2008.



Above: Keep L.H. fingers clear of open strings.

Left Hand Technique

Can you play two strings without the fleshy bit of one finger interfering with the string underneath? You will need to create a clear tunnel underneath the playing finger so the string underneath is 'alive'. This is most important for double stopping or chordal playing and also will allow you to use 'crossbowing' where the bow circles back and forth between two strings.



Exercises: Top: Keep your fingers down after the notes have been played. The numbers refer to L.H. fingers and the line next to the number indicates how long the finger is held down. The open 'A' string should sound clearly while the fingers are down.

Lower example: This is a little easier as the open 'D' string is on the other side of the tunnel.

Q. Can I use one finger to play across two strings?

Yes. This is called the barré and is most useful as it frees up the other fingers to be used for other tasks.

Q. How do I check I am playing in tune?

Check often with open strings! When you play a fingered note that corresponds to an open string, that is a G, D, A or E note, play the open string to check your finger's location. These notes will be either an octave apart or in unison when the 4th finger is used in first position.

Also try playing a scale slowly, checking your pitch with an electronic tuner. This takes lots of patience and you will find that as little as a millimetre can change the pitch. A slight roll forwards or backwards of the fingertip can bring you to the correct pitch. Of course the fiddle must be perfectly in tune to make this worthwhile. The fiddle actually resonates when it is played in tune especially with octaves, thirds and fifth intervals.



Exercises above: The numbers refer to the L.H. fingers and the zero indicates an open string. These exercises include both the barré and fourth finger unison notes played alongside open string notes to check intonation or pitch.

Sean Kenan runs the Fancy Yourself Fiddling music school in Melbourne and also publishes Australia's unique monthly newsletter the Fiddle News. Tune downloads, quotes and Fiddle News archives are available online at www.seanken.com