

The 7 Most Common Mistakes of Banjo Players! + The Banjo Secret!

“A step-by-step guide for every beginning banjo player”

by: Ryan Crist

1. Skimping on Your Banjo

Go, run out the door and buy the best banjo you can afford, now! Since you've obviously decided to learn how to play the banjo you must jump in with both feet without looking back. This is a race that I want you to win!

Playing a good banjo is a night and day difference from playing a cheap piece of junk. I will admit banjos can be pricey but you'd be surprised at how well they hold their value.

You will learn quicker and play better on a high quality instrument opposed to a dime store pan flute. It really does matter! Remember, heavier is usually better and Gibson is the best.

2. Savoring Your Strings

Don't leave your strings on your banjo for months on end. It's not about who dies with the oldest grimeiest set of strings. I recommend that you change your strings once for every 8 hours of picking time, if not before.

You should buy them buy the box, not the set. It will be much cheaper in the long run and easier for you to change them if you have 10 more sets of strings sitting on the table right behind them.

3. Going Alone

You can teach yourself banjo but it will probably take twice as long, if not more, and there's a good chance that you'll opt out before you reach your destination.

It just tends to work better whether you get yourself an [online banjo teacher](#) or start taking lessons in your local music store.

4. Flimsy Picking

Here's the rule: Stay away from flimsy picks. When your selecting some picks you should get several different kinds so that you can pick and choose to find your favorites.

This will give you a good feel for what you like and give you a taste of good and bad sounds simply due to picks.

My favorites are Golden Gate and Dunlop thumb picks. I also use the Propik finger picks from fqms.com.

5. Failing to Listen

Listen to the band and compliment it. It's not about the band complimenting the banjo.

If you're playing your banjo in a band then your goal is to make the band the best it can be by leading. You will walk weak players from one chord to the next, input strong backup chords and vamping, encourage the dynamics (knowing when to play soft vs. loud) etc... Picture yourself as an invisible leader. Subtly leading without being noticed is the kindest compliment of a banjo picker.

Many pro players got their best licks from listening to albums, rewinding them, and listening again. If you can hear it you can eventually learn how to play it. Be patient, the good licks take time, but you have to listen closely to catch them.

6. Falling for the Myths

It's time to stop focusing on the naysayers. There is no such thing as you're too old to learn the banjo. Anyone at any age can most certainly learn to pick a tune on the banjo. You may not be the guy on youtube that broke the Guinness Book of World Records for picking speed but frankly he's not that good anyway.

You will often hear "don't hold your hand like that". Please don't listen. You hold your hand how it's comfortable for you (flat, cupped, angled, whatever).

The main goal is to keep one finger, any finger, anchored to the head and keep your palm off of the bridge. Other than this, it's pretty cut and dry. You don't have to cramp and contort your picking hand to sound like Scruggs, don't even try it!

You're also going to hear that a Grenada or a gold inlay banjo is the best. Not true, there are many awesome sounding banjos and in my opinion some of the parts banjos that are pieced together sound the best. You listen to your ear and make the judgement for yourself.

7. Fear of Failure

This is the killer! In some form or another we all have a fear of failing. Some of us have a fear of frailing..., never mind.

It's going to take a mouth full of courage to get up in front of a crowd or a friend and play your first full banjo tune from beginning to end. I remember when I did it at the North Oak Mall in Kansas City Mo. It was horrible! I played Salt Creek and probably missed over half of the notes and rolls that I had practiced so hard to perfect.

I really didn't have any intention of ever playing in front of a crowd again, but I did. That's the key. You have to keep trying, even when it's bad. You can't sound any worse than I did when I started.

So "have no fear" grab your banjo and start a band, or just go out into the living room and play a tune for your spouse, your parents, or your old dog. I'm telling you, they'll love it and you'll have a ton of fun in the process.

p.s. send me an email and let me know how it turns out.

The Banjo SECRET!

There are two basic fundamentals of playing the banjo. Here they are:

1. Play the Melody.
2. Focus on Your Timing.

You have to keep these two basic principles in mind with every song and with every roll. If you miss the melody or have horrible timing then your music will not be heard.

Steady timing will inject the rhythm which inherently starts the foot tapping. There's nothing better than to see a crowd light up and start rocking in their seats simply because you have undeniable good timing.

The melody is what grips the emotions of your listeners. If the rhythm and the melody is clearly expressed then your listeners, and you, will savor the experience.

Melody plus timing equals extreme banjo power, and that's what you'll have when you focus on the basics!

Enjoy the banjo. I'm so proud to be a part of your banjo experience. I hope you learn a great deal from our website and have a lot of fun in the process. If you're interested in getting our weekly instructional banjo videos then [click here](#) to get started.

See you at banjoexpert.com.

Thanks,
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