

## One String Exercises for Tenor Banjo, by Ron Hinkle

I have been asked if the one-string exercises would work for tenor. The answer is “yes, but. . .” Of course, the *technique* will work but the *exercise* will be quite different because of the different tuning.

I have chosen to concentrate on the plectrum banjo (to maximize my potential on at least one instrument), which of course I’m more familiar with and thus more *fluent* with. I do play the tenor also however, and am actually editing the Emile Grimshaw tenor method book for the *Clifford Essex Music Co. Ltd*; it will be finished within the next few months. The tenor and plectrum are quite different; I am finding that exploring those *differences* enhances my understanding of each one. I highly recommend learning the other if you only play one of them; this would be essential if your goal is to “master” the four-string banjo. This exercise for example; I didn’t realize how different it would be until I sat down to write it out. Here is the interesting result.

First off, you will need to open and read the plectrum version (<https://www.banjosnob.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/One-String.pdf>), because there’s a bunch of good stuff there that I’m not going to repeat, plus it explains the general premise of this exercise. Read the text and get the gist of the exercise, then come back to this one.

I modified the original lick slightly to make it better fit our purposes for the tenor. You must play all of these *exactly* as shown in the TAB, otherwise the whole point is lost. I have also shown the fingering you will use for everything in the first two bars.

Whereas on the plectrum, this lick—played *vertically* across the fretboard—follows the shape of the Triad, the tuning of the tenor (entirely in 5ths), forces you to play *horizontally* with some pretty large jumps between strings. So not only do you get the individual string action, but you also hop between strings. This may seem daunting at first, but of course that’s the whole point of an “exercise!” Play it however slowly you need to to learn it, then work up the speed.

The individual string parts (#2) work just like the plectrum, but then the exercise takes on a whole different effect. #1 starts on the lowest (centered on the 4<sup>th</sup> string/4<sup>th</sup> fret E), and ends on the highest (1<sup>st</sup> string/15<sup>th</sup> fret C). Play that now:

#2 of course is the individual strings. Most players never play single-string beyond the 5<sup>th</sup> fret. The best way to get to know *all* of your strings is of course to use them! This exercise gives you a reason to do so. Play #2 now:

#3 and #4 show two different ways to “connect” the entire lick across all four strings. Compare these with #1, which stays as long as possible on the lower frets before going up; there is more than one way to skin a cat!

You should memorize these, then start working on speed. Being able to quickly and accurately skip multiple frets (and multiple strings) is a valuable skill that will really open up the possibilities for you. You will quickly see a pattern with this one; that pattern will be seen over and over again in your studies.

Let me talk for a moment about “music reading”; if you allow the complex look of the notation in this exercise to scare you away from trying this, then you have little hope of ever advancing. I know this because *I* would have been scared away not too many years ago! I struggled with real advancement until I finally swallowed the pill of music reading. Take a moment to figure it out, using the TAB; it will lead the way and allow you play *without* reading skills, and eventually lead you to read. Crutch? It is a legitimate notation method that actually predates standard notation as we know it, so I don’t consider it to be one. But in the final analysis, who cares? If it makes *learning easier*, then *show me some more crutches!* As with everything I do, if this totally bamboozles you, contact me; I would be overjoyed for the opportunity to walk you through it, note by note.

