

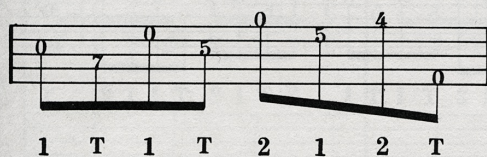
The Melodic Style

The melodic style is a relatively recent bluegrass technique. It was popularized in the early 1960s by Boston-born Bill Keith who decided that it was entirely possible to play fiddle tunes note for note on the banjo. His renditions of *Devil's Dream*, *Sailor's Hornpipe* and *Blackberry Blossom* demonstrated this and within a short time droves of northern-urban-middle-class banjo pickers were abandoning their Scruggs licks for the hot new scales and baroque acrobatics of the melodic (or "Keith") style. This posed a threat to the conservative bluegrass establishment which wanted the banjo mummified in a state of Scruggsification. As evolution would have it, however, progress marched on and today the melodic style is *the* other way to pick.

For all of its flashy techniques the melodic style is actually rather simple. Try this:



In those two tones you have the essence of the whole style—alternating strings (many of them open) to produce note for note melodies. The following G scale will give you a more graphic demonstration.



Just for comparison here's the same scale in Reno style:



Again, you can plainly see the melodic reliance on alternating strings to produce a smooth flowing sound. To get this alternation the focus is shifted from the first four or five frets—the site of most Scruggs licks—to the area between the fourth and seventh frets. The Reno style gets the same notes lower down the neck by doubling and quadrupling up on single strings. In the process it creates a more percussive sound. Notice, also, that the melodic style employs all three fingers of the right hand as opposed to just thumb and index for Reno. It's important to remember that this isn't a case of one style being better than the other. Rather, it's a question of taste. Each has its advantages. It is a fact that if you want to play a fiddle tune note for note from beginning to end it's infinitely easier to use the melodic style. At the same time, there are many licks which are much more appropriate when rendered Renoically.

Now we're going to expand your grasp of melodic technique with the following exercises. In addition to preparing you for the rest of this section, many of these make nice licks in themselves.

4 5 0 5 0 7 0
T 2 1 2 T 1 T 1

7 5 0 5 0 5 0 5 0 7 0
T 2 T 1 2 1 2 T 1 T 1 T 1

5 0 5 5 0 5 0 0 5 0 7 0
T 1 T 1 2 T 1 2 T 1 T 2 T

0 4 0 7 0 7 5 0 7 0 5 5 5 0 5 0 0 5 0 7 0
1 T 1 2 T 1 T 1 2 T 1 2 T 1 T 1 2 T 1 2 T 1 T 2 T

9 10 5 0 5 0 7 0 x x x x
2 1 T 1 2 T 1 T 1

9 10 7 4 5 0 5 0 7 0
T 2 1 T 2 T 2 1 2 T 1 T 1

We're going to finish off now with six fiddle tunes. Although these are most obviously what the melodic style is all about, keep in mind the fact that melodics can be integrated into a Scruggs flow with fantastic results. So experiment on your own and see what you can come up with.

Devil's Dream

Capo on 2nd fret:
actual Key of A

Traditional
in the style of
Bill Keith

Part A

G **Am**

T 1 T 2 T 1 T 2 T 1 T 2 1 2 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 2 1 2
 T 1 T 2 T 1 T 2 T 1 T 2 1 2 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 2 1 2

G **Am** **D** **G**

T 1 T 2 T 1 T 2 T 1 T 2 1 2 T 1 T 1 2 T 1 2 T 1 T 1 2 T 1 2
 T 1 T 2 T 1 T 2 T 1 T 2 1 2 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 2 1 2 T 2

Part B

G **Am**

1 2 T 2 1 2 T 2 1 2 T 2 1 2 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 2 T 2 1 2 T
 1 2 T 2 1 2 T 2 1 2 T 2 1 2 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 2 1 2

G **Am** **D** **G**

1 2 T 2 1 2 T 2 1 2 T 2 1 2 T 1 T 1 2 T 1 T 1 2 T 1 T 1 T
 1 2 T 2 1 2 T 2 1 2 T 2 1 2 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 2 1 2 T

Arkansas Traveller

Key of D

Part A

Chords: D G A D E

T 2 1 2 1 T 1 2 1 T 1 T 2 1 T 2 1 T 2 1 2 1 T 2

Chords: A D G A D

1 2 1 T 1 T 1 T 2 1 T 2 1 T 1 2 1 T 1 T 2 T 1 T

Chords: G 1.A D 2.A D

2 T 2 T 1 2 T 1 T 1 T 1 T T T 1 T 1 T 1 T

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Part B.

D A D A D A

2 T 1 2 T 2 1 T 2 1 T 2 1 2 T 1 2 T 2 T 1 T 2 1

D A D A D A

2 1 T 2 1 2 T 1 2 T 1 2 T 2 1 T 2 1 T 2 1 2 T 1

D G 1.A D 2.A D

2 T 2 T 1 2 T 1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T T 1 T 1 T

Blackberry Blossom

Key of G

Part A

Chord progression: G D C G C G A D

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: D C G C G A D

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

Chord progression: G D C G C G D G

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Part B

Em

Musical notation for Part B, Em chord. It consists of two staves. The top staff has a treble clef and a repeat sign. The bottom staff has a bass clef. The notation includes fingerings (0, 2, 1, 2, 1, T) and fret numbers (2, 0, 0, 2, 0). The fret numbers are placed above the notes in the top staff and below the notes in the bottom staff.

T 2 1 2 1 T 1 T 1 2 T 2 2 1 T 1 2 T 2 1 T 1

T 1 2 T 2 1 2 1 T 2 T 1 2 1 T 1 T 1 2 T 2 T 1 2

D

Em

Musical notation for Part B, D and Em chords. It consists of two staves. The top staff has a treble clef and a repeat sign. The bottom staff has a bass clef. The notation includes fingerings (9, 10, 9, 0, 2, 1, 2, 1, T) and fret numbers (9, 10, 9, 0, 2, 0, 0, 2, 0). The fret numbers are placed above the notes in the top staff and below the notes in the bottom staff.

T 2 T 1 T 1 2 T 2 1 2 1 T 1 T 1 2 T 2 1 2

T 1 2 T 2 1 T 2 T 1 2 T 2 1 2 1 T 2 T 1 2 T 1 2

C

G

1.D

G

2.D

G

Musical notation for Part B, C, G, D, and G chords. It consists of two staves. The top staff has a treble clef and a repeat sign. The bottom staff has a bass clef. The notation includes fingerings (7, 5, 0, 1, 2, 1, T, 1, T) and fret numbers (7, 5, 0, 5, 0, 7, 0, 4, 0). The fret numbers are placed above the notes in the top staff and below the notes in the bottom staff.

T T 2 T 1 2 T 1 2 1 T 1 T 1 1 2 1 T 1

T 1 2 T 1 2 T 1 2 1 T 2 T T 2 2 1 T 2 T

Turkey in the Straw

Key of G

Part A

G

4/4

T 1 T 2 T 2 1 T 2 1 2 1 2 1 T 1 2 1 2 T 2 1 T 2 T 1 2 T 1 T 2 1

G

1. **D G** 2. **D G**

T 1 T 2 T 2 1 T 2 1 2 1 T 1 2 1 S T 2 1 T 1 2 T 2 1 T 1 2 1 2 T 2 1 T 2

Part B

G

C

1 T 1 2 T 1 2 T 1 T 1 2 T 1 2 T 1 T 1 2 T 1 2 T 1 T 1 2 T 1 2 T

G

1. **D G** 2. **D G**

2 1 2 T 2 1 2 T 2 1 2 T 2 1 T 1 2 1 2 T 2 1 T 1 2 T 2 1 T 2 1 T 2 T 2 1 T 2 1 T

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Soldier's Joy

Key of D

Part A

D

A

T 1 H T 2 T 1 T 1 T 2 T 1 2 T 2 1 T 1 H T 2 T 1 T 1 H T 2 T 1 2 T 2 1 T 1 H

D

A

1. D

2. D

T 2 T 1 T 1 T 2 T 1 2 T 2 1 2 1 2 1 T 2 1 2 T 1 2 1 T 1 T T 1 H 2 1 T 1 T 1 2 T

Part B

D

G

D

A

1 T 1 2 T 1 2 T 1 T 1 2 1 2 T 1 2 1 T 1 2 T 2 T 1 2 T 1 T 1 T 2

D

G

D

A

1. D

2. D

1 T 1 2 T 1 2 T 1 T 1 2 1 2 T 1 2 1 T 2 1 2 T 1 2 1 T 1 T 1 2 T 2 1 T 1 T