

Banjo I – Beginner

This class is for students who have no experience on the banjo. We will start from scratch learning how to tune your instrument, how to hold the banjo, basic “clawhammer” technique, and simple tunes. Bring a working banjo and a recording device. A limited number of loaner banjos are available, please call to confirm.

Banjo II - Advanced Beginner

This class is for students who have previous experience playing the banjo, but are still beginners. We will learn a few tunes and practice using hammer-ons and pull-offs to make simple tunes start to sound like classic old-time tunes!

Banjo III – Intermediate “Grandpa Jones” Style

This class features instruction on the style and sound popularized by Grandpa Jones, taught by his son, Mark. Students should have previous experience in playing the banjo with a desire to learn the techniques and sounds that made Grandpa and Mark, world renown players.

Banjo IV – Advanced

This class is for players who are ready to start including advanced techniques in their playing. We will experiment with drop-thumb, double thumb, and more. Students should be able to play quite a few tunes up to speed, know basic chord shapes, and have experience with hammer-ons and pull-offs.

About Alanna Brewer: Former Arkansas State Banjo Finalist and the Ozark Folk Center State Park’s Female Musician of the Year for 2018, Alanna is a multi-instrumentalist and teaches banjo in Stone County’s Music Roots program.

About Duane Porterfield: Former National Mountain Dulcimer Champion and multi-instrumentalist, Duane is a veteran OFCSP performer.

About Emily Elam: Former Arkansas State Banjo Champion and current Assistant Music Director at the Ozark Folk Center State Park, Emily has years of teaching experience on both banjo and fiddle

About Mark Jones: Son of Grandpa and Ramona Jones and regular contributor to Ozark Highlands Radio, no one knows the Jones style better than Mark. He’s also got some great stories to share from his years living in Nashville and Mountain View.

Banjo I, Alanna Brewer

Getting Started

Pick up the basics of holding your instrument and producing notes with good tone. If you don't own a banjo, a limited number will be available to borrow.

Caring for Your Banjo

No matter how well you play, nothing sounds good if the banjo is out of tune. Learn to tune and care for your banjo to keep it in excellent condition.

Learning Tunes by Ear I

Tackling a tune armed with only a banjo and your ears can be intimidating – it's a lot to learn. We will break down how to learn a tune by ear, one note at a time. Learn how to match pitches your hear and discuss strategies for remembering all the notes you find.

Learning Tunes by Ear II

Did you know that in many tunes, almost half of the phrases are repeated? Once you've learned the first half, you're nearly done! Dissect a few tunes and learn how to use the tune structure to quickly learn each phrase by ear.

Building Technique I

Learn some tunes and exercises that will help you to build technique, so you can play more challenging tunes! You can use these tools to play faster and produce a cleaner tone.

Making the Most of your Practice

Practicing is more than playing the same thing over and over. Pick up tips for efficient practice methods that will help you learn more quickly.

Reading Banjo Tab

Learn to turn a sheet of numbers and lines in to a banjo tune!

Banjo II, Duane Porterfield/Emily Elam

Learning Tunes by Ear II

Did you know that in many tunes, almost half of the phrases are repeated? Once you've learned the first half, you're nearly done! Dissect a few tunes and learn how to use the tune structure to quickly learn each phrase by ear.

Following Along in a Jam

Jamming can be one of the most rewarding ways to participate in the old-time community but can be intimidating. Gain confidence in your ability to join in on tunes you don't know and get some tips for learning tunes from jams. Test your abilities in a jam following this session!

Keeping the Beat: Metronomes, Tapping Your Foot, and More

Building good timing is essential to play with other musicians. Even if you don't have the greatest sense of rhythm, there are exercises and technology that can help you get a handle on your timing.

Join us to learn how to use a metronome, tapping your feet, and backup instruments to improve your timing playing solo or with a group.

Building Technique II

Learn some tunes and exercises that will help you to build technique, so you can play more challenging tunes!

Hammer-Ons and Pull-Offs

Learn about Hammer-Ons and Pull-Offs and where to include them in your playing. A tune will be taught that includes lots of examples.

Tunes from Bookmiller Shannon

Learn tunes as played by the local legend Bookmiller Shannon, transcribed by Judy Klinkhammer.

Banjo III, Mark Jones

Grandpa Jones Style Banjo

Mark's father created a unique style of playing banjo that was built on other popular traditions and playing styles. This is a loosely structured class that covers the styles, techniques and song stylings of Grandpa Jones.

Banjo IV, Duane Porterfield/Emily Elam

Learning Tunes from a Fiddle

Learn some techniques for picking up melodies and chords from listening to a fiddle player.

Adding Style to "Easy" Tunes

Do you avoid the tunes you learned as a beginner because of the "easy version" that you play? Take your tunes to the next level by listening to other versions of these simple tunes and learning how to implement new ideas that you hear.

Tunes from Bookmiller Shannon

Learn tunes as played by the local legend Bookmiller Shannon, transcribed by Judy Klinkhammer.

Introduction to Drop-Thumb

Learn an exercise to practice drop-thumbing and discuss where to include drop-thumb in tunes you play.

Writing Banjo Tab

Learn to write down tab for tunes you already know how to play.

Learning Modern Tunes

Playing the banjo doesn't limit you to old music - learn to give new songs a unique sound by mixing genres.

Learning from Field Recordings

Poor audio quality can make learning from field recordings tough, but with a little imagination, you can learn some great tunes from scratchy audio files. Learn how to get the most from old field recordings by building your listening skills and discovering easy-to-use technology to facilitate your learning.

Contest Rules & Overview

Judy Kent will present the contest rules and explain judging criteria for prospective contestants. This is a great time to ask questions and evaluate your tune choices.