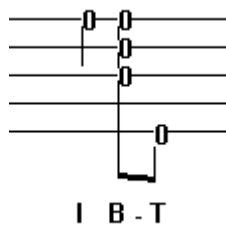


Old Time Banjo / Clawhammer Lesson #1

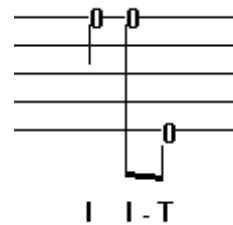
A. Introduction to Clawhammer Banjo

The clawhammer style of old time banjo playing is essentially the same as frailing – with some differences. It's really just a logical progression of the same rhythm and technique you've already learned. The main difference is that the brushed chord usually played after the melody note is substituted for a single note. Remember too, all the strings (except the thumb of course) are picked down.

Thus this:



becomes this:

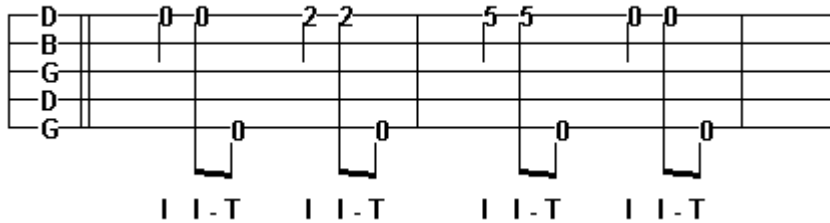


The rhythm is *exactly* the same, and the fifth string is rung as usual. However, instead of brushing a full chord with all the fingers, it is the index finger alone that strikes a single string in a downward motion. Note the "**I I-T**" (indicating index index-thumb) under the clawhammer tab on the right, rather than the usual "**I B-T**" (index brush-thumb) as on the left.

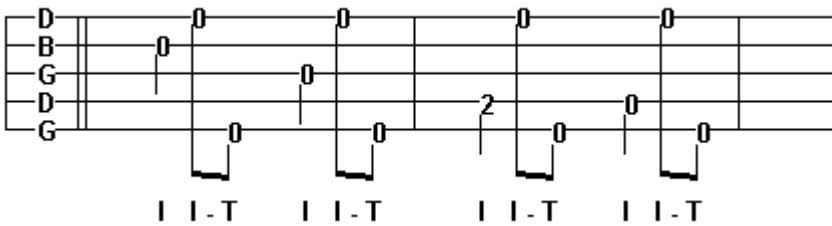
B. Basic Clawhammer Progressions

Practice these simple clawhammer progressions to get the idea until you're comfortable with all the moves.

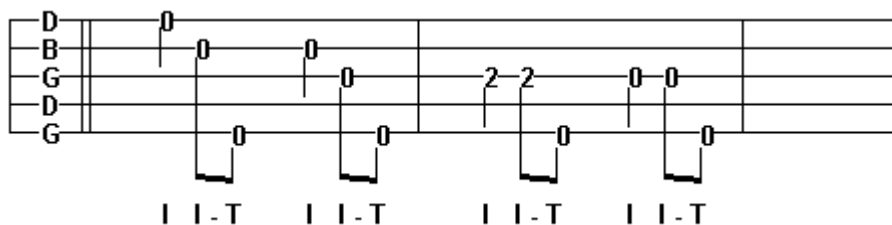
In this first one, practice the basic "index index-thumb" motion all on the first string:



Next, try it with the inner strings, with the index finger moving back to the first string each time, then thumbing the fifth string as usual:

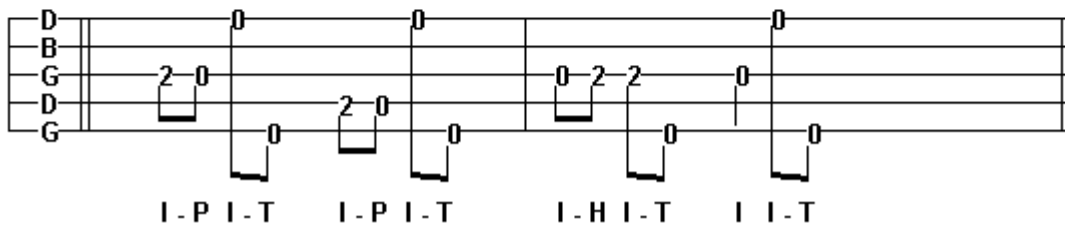
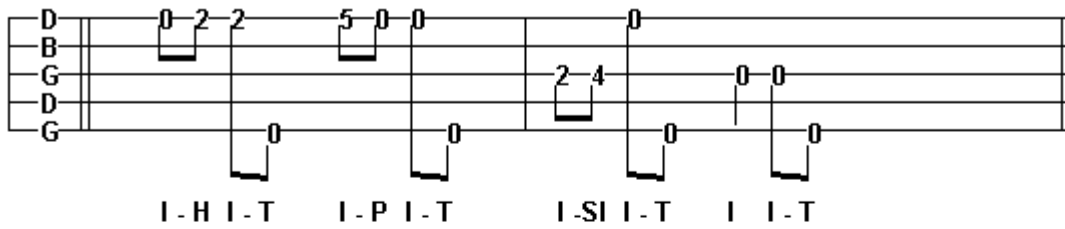


Finally, try these where the index moves away from picking the first string only. Don't forget to *always* sound the thumb as usual!



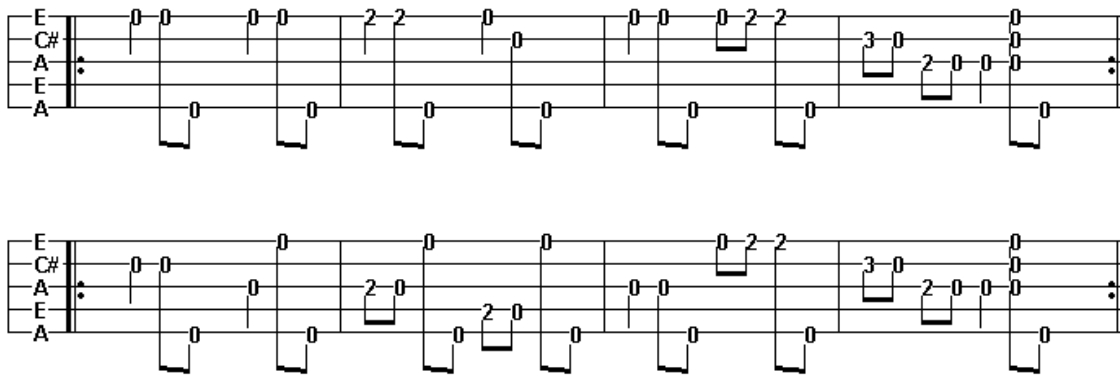
C. Adding Left Hand Techniques

As you can begin to see, the clawhammer method really opens up the number of possibilities available to us to play more melody notes in the tune. This will grow even further in the next lesson when we learn double thumbing. Of course, hammer-ons, pull-offs, and slides can be thrown in also to the basic clawhammer technique. Practice these progressions to get the hang of it.



D. Sourwood Mountain

One of the first old time banjo tunes I ever learned. In the Open A tuning (Open G capoed at the 2nd fret). To show that everything we've learned in the past still gets incorporated, note the chord brushed in the last measure of each part that gives a nice full sound to the end of the phrase.

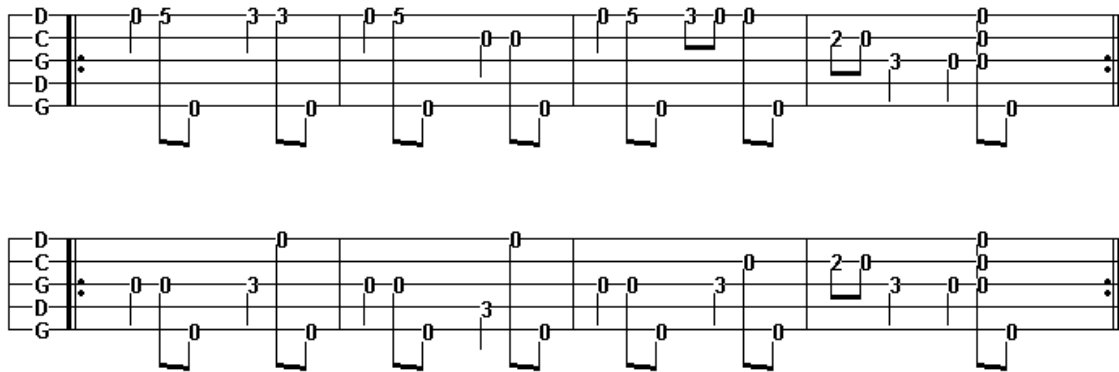


Chicken's crow'in on Sourwood mountain,
Hey ho diddle-um-a-day.
So many eggs that you can't count 'em,
Hey ho diddle-um-a-day.

Ducks in the mill pond, geese in the ocean,
Hey ho diddle-um-a-day.
Love's in all people when they take the notion,
Hey ho diddle-um-a-day.

E. Cluck Old Hen

Another very fine old time tune and one open to a lot of experimentation and fun. Try throwing in pull-offs and hammer-ons wherever you think they might fit in and sound good. This will make a simple tune sound especially full and more interesting. Remember, as Duke Ellington said: "If it sounds good, it is good"! In the Mountain Minor G tuning – but you can try it in A as well with a capo at the 2nd fret.



My old hen's a good old hen, she lays eggs for the railroad men.
Sometimes one, sometimes two, sometimes enough for the whole darn crew.

Cluck old hen, cluck and squall, ain't laid an egg since late last fall.
Cluck old hen, cluck all day, ain't laid an egg since late last May.

My old hen's a good old hen, she lays eggs for the government men.
Sometimes eight, sometimes ten, that's enough eggs for the government men.

Cluck old hen, cluck all night, next time she cackles it's chicken delight.
Cluck old hen, cluck when I tell ya, cluck old hen or I'm a'gonna sell ya.