

Using these accented first beats, choosing and spacing them appropriately, makes a melody out of such small phrases. Each melody has different requirements. If the melody has notes longer than one set of triplets some of the first beats may have to be completely unaccented so as to bring out the accented ones. Or perhaps, if reaching for a melody string with the left hand fingers you are obliged to leave your chord position, you will have to underemphasize beats 2 and 3, which might clash otherwise. In other words, there is much variation of stress in the right hand stroke as well as positions in the left hand, in adapting this technique to a given melody.

Below is an example of how the stroke may fit into a melody. The opening phrase of "Pretty Saro" is given, with the banjo rhythm immediately below. Below each beat is the number of the string to be played and below each set of triplets is the left hand position which will govern that set. Notice that only the beats coinciding with melody notes are accented and remember also that you are using a capo and therefore counting your chord position up from the capo bar, not the nut.

Diagram illustrating the opening phrase of "Pretty Saro" in D major, showing the melody, string, and left-hand positions.

Melody: D (4/4), G (4/4), A (4/4), B (4/4), C (4/4), D (4/4), E (4/4), F# (4/4), G (4/4), A (4/4), B (4/4), C (4/4), D (4/4).

String: 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5.

Left-hand Position: (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2).

Diagram illustrating the opening phrase of "Pretty Saro" in D major, showing the melody, string, and left-hand positions.

Melody: D (4/4), G (4/4), A (4/4), B (4/4), C (4/4), D (4/4), E (4/4), F# (4/4), G (4/4), A (4/4), B (4/4), C (4/4), D (4/4).

String: 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5, 2 1 5.

Left-hand Position: (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2), (2).

It is not difficult to see how these principles may be expanded into making complex counter-melodies. This stroke has been dealt with at such length because it is one of the few ways in which a banjo may slip unobtrusively behind a freely sung song while yet contributing more than just a background.