

Clawhammer Techniques and Arrangements for 10 Jigs



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By David Brooks

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Characteristics of Jigs

Playing jigs in clawhammer style can be a challenge since the normal clawhammer stroke doesn't work so well. In fact, one well-known teacher advised me to just strum the chords rather attempt to play the melody. Clawhammer can play a jig melody, however, by making the right adjustments to your stroke. It starts with understanding the jig rhythm.

Jigs use 6/8 time. There are 6 beats in each measure with the eighth notes getting one beat each. In practice, however, it is easier to think of there being two pulses in a measure made up of 3 eighth notes on each beat:

1-2-3 2-2-3

A different clawhammer stroke is called for with a jig. I use a downstroke on the first and third beats and on the fourth and sixth beats. The middle beat, if it is sounded, will be done with a left-hand lick (hammer-on or pull-off) or with a drop thumb. In the exercise that follows, the downstrokes are noted with the letter *m*, hammer-ons will be indicated by an *h*, pull-offs will be indicated by a *p*, and a drop thumb will be noted with a *t*.

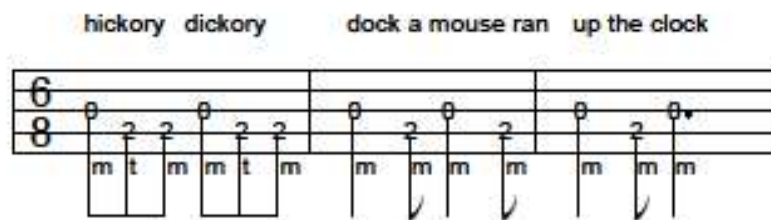
A measure may also be populated with a quarter note paired with an eighth note. This combination adds a bit of syncopation to the rhythm. The quarter note counts for 2 eighth-note beats, and the eighth note adds the 3rd beat:

1 & 3 & 1 & 3

Ken Perlman offers a handy way to think about 6/8 time using the nursery rhyme, "Hickory Dickory Dock."

6 eighth notes in a measure will sound like – "Hickory Dickory"

1 quarter note (beats 1 and 2) paired with an eighth note (beat 3) will sound like – "... Dock a Mouse Ran Up the Clock."



In the last measure of the above example, the dotted half note associated with “clock” has the value of 3 eighth-note beats – 2 beats for the half note and 1 beat added by the dot.

The following exercises may help you get a feel for the rhythm of a jig while exploring the left-hand and right-hand techniques for playing jigs successfully.

The following ten tabs for frequently played jigs (at least at Louisville contra dances) will help you apply this “jig stroke” to some actual tunes. Some of the tabs are fairly easy (e.g., “Kesh Jig” and “Out on the Ocean”). Others may require more time. But all are within your reach with practice.

Jig Exercises

Key of G - gDGBD
Tab by David Brooks

Quarter and eighth notes

[illegible]

Using hammer-ons

[illegible]

Using pull-offs

All eighth notes

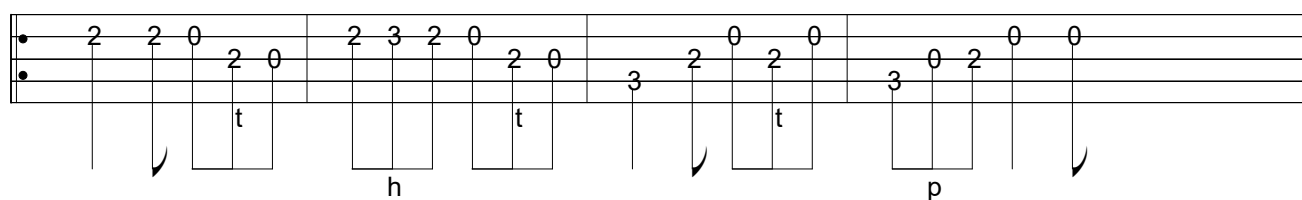
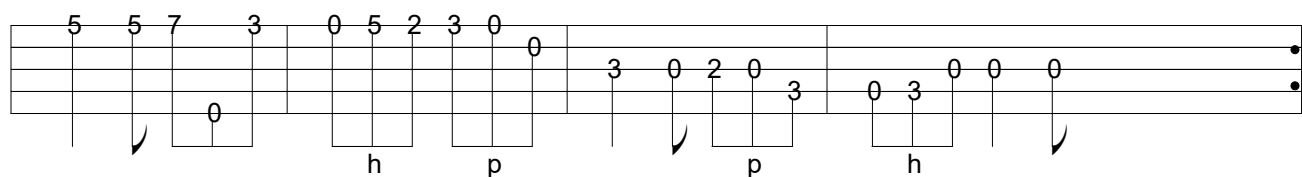
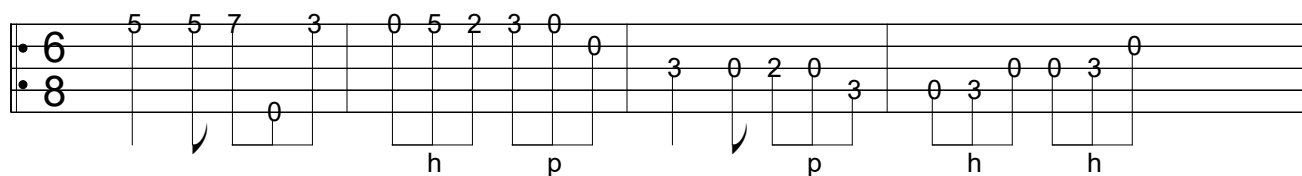
Diagram illustrating a sequence of pulses on a 4-line bus. The pulses are labeled 'h' and occur at intervals of 2 units. The sequence is: h (0-2), h (2-3), h (3-5), h (5-7), h (7-9), h (9-11), h (11-13), h (13-15).

Drop thumb

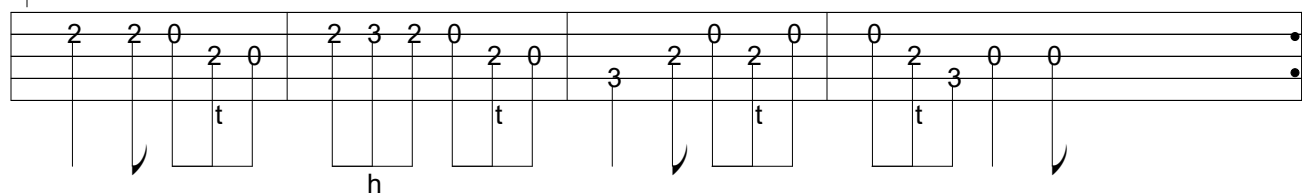
A diagram showing a 4x4 grid of cells. The top row contains the numbers 0, 0, 0, 0. The second row contains the numbers 0, 2, 0, 2. The third row contains the numbers 0, 0, 0, 0. The bottom row contains the numbers 0, 2, 0, 2. Below the grid, there are four vertical lines corresponding to the columns. The first line has a 't' below it. The second line has a 't' below it. The third line has a 't' below it. The fourth line has a 't' below it.

Cliffs of Moher

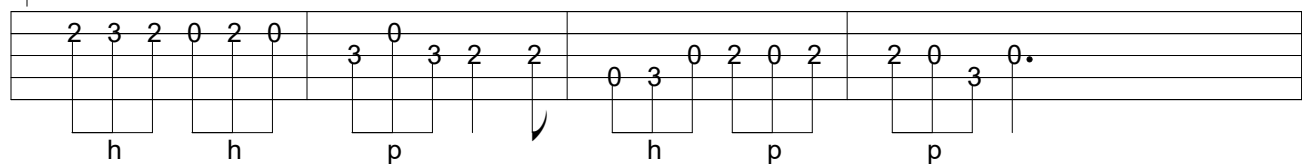
Key of Am - gDGCD (capo 2)
Tab by David Brooks



1st Ending



2nd Ending



Connaughtman's Rambles

Key of D - gCGCD (capo 2)
Tab by David Brooks

A Part

D G D G

6 8

m t p h m

D G D Em D 1st Ending Bm 2nd Ending Bm

4 0 0 0 2 0 2 0 2 3 4 0 0 4 0 0 2 2 2 0 5

t p t m m m t m m t

B Part

D G D G D A7

4 7 4 5 2 0 0 0 0 5 4 7 4 5 2 0 0 0 5

p p p

D G D Em D 1st Ending Bm 2nd Ending Bm

4 7 4 5 2 0 0 0 0 2 3 4 0 0 4 0 0 2 2 2 5

0 p p m t h t t t

Kesh Jig

Key of G - gDGBD
Tab by David Brooks

Part A

G D7 G D7

6 8

0 0 0 2 0 2 2 2 4 2 0 0 5 0 0 2 0 0 0 2

h h p p p t

G D7 G 1st Ending D7 G 2nd Ending D7 G

0 0 0 2 0 2 2 2 4 2 0 0 5 0 0 2 0 4 0 0 2 0 4 0 0

h h p p p p

Part B

G C G Am D7

0 0 0 0 0 2 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 2 2 2 0 2

t t t p

G C G C D7 1st Ending G 2nd Ending G

0 0 0 0 2 2 0 0 5 5 7 7 9 7 4 5 9 7 4 5

t t 0 p p

Ending - Alt A Ending - Alt B

9 7 7 8 0 9 7 8 0

Morrison's Jig

Tab by David Brooks
Key of Em - gDGBD

A Part

Em D Em G D

6 0 0 | 2 2 2 4 0 | 2 2 0 2 0 2 0

8 2 2 | 2 2 2 4 0 | 2 2 0 2 0 2 0

m t m m t m m m

Em Em D G D G D

0 0 | 2 2 2 4 0 | 0 0 4 5 2 | 0 2 0 4 0

2 2 | 2 2 2 4 0 | 0 0 4 5 2 | 0 2 0 4 0

t h m t m m m

B Part

Em G D G D

0 5 5 4 5 5 | 7 5 4 5 0 | 0 5 5 4 5 5 | 4 7 5 4 5 0

0 5 5 4 5 5 | 7 5 4 5 0 | 0 5 5 4 5 5 | 4 7 5 4 5 0

m m t m m m t m m m t m m m t m

h h h

Em G D G D

0 5 5 4 5 5 | 7 5 4 4 5 4 5 0 | 2 0 2 0 4 0

0 5 5 4 5 5 | 7 5 4 4 5 4 5 0 | 2 0 2 0 4 0

m m t m m m m m t m m t m m m m

h p

Em G D G D

0 5 5 4 5 5 | 7 5 4 5 0 | 0 5 5 4 5 5 | 4 7 4 0 5 4

0 5 5 4 5 5 | 7 5 4 5 0 | 0 5 5 4 5 5 | 4 7 4 0 5 4

m m t m m m t m m m t m m m t m

h h h

Em G D G D

5 5 5 4 5 0 | 5 4 5 0 | 2 0 2 0 | 0 2 0 4 0

5 5 5 4 5 0 | 5 4 5 0 | 2 0 2 0 | 0 2 0 4 0

m t m t m m m m m m m t m m m

p p

Out on the Ocean

Key of G - gDGBD
Tab by David Brooks

A Part

6 8

0 0 2 0 0 3 0 2 0 0 2 0 0 2 0 2 0 2

t h t h p

1st Ending 2nd Ending

0 0 2 0 0 3 0 2 0 0 2 0 0 0 0 2 0 0 0 0 4 0

t h t t t t h

B Part

2 2 2 0 0 2 2 2 0 0 0 0 0 4 5 4 5 0 0 2

p p p t h

1st Ending 2nd Ending

0 2 0 0 2 2 0 0 2 0 2 0 0 0 0 4 0 0 0 0 0 0

t t t t h

Road to Lisdoonvarna - Basic

Key of Em - gDGBD
Tab by David Brooks

A Part
Em

D

Em

D

Em

B Part
Em

Bm

A

Bm

Em

Bm

A

Em

Saddle the Pony

Key of G - gDGBD
Tab by David Brooks

Part A
G

h p h t t

G C D 1st Ending G 2nd Ending G

h t p t t t t

Part B
Em D

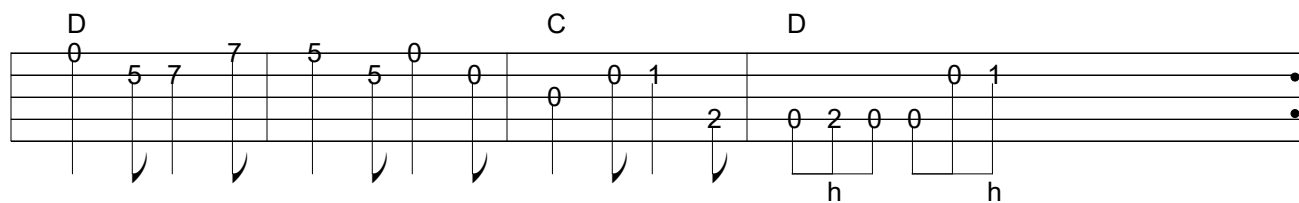
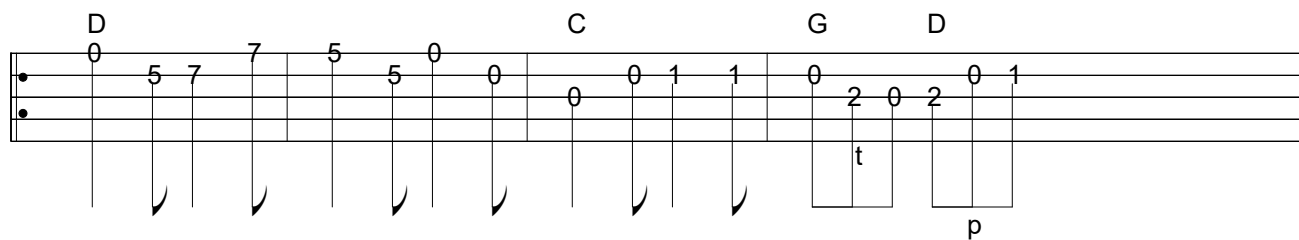
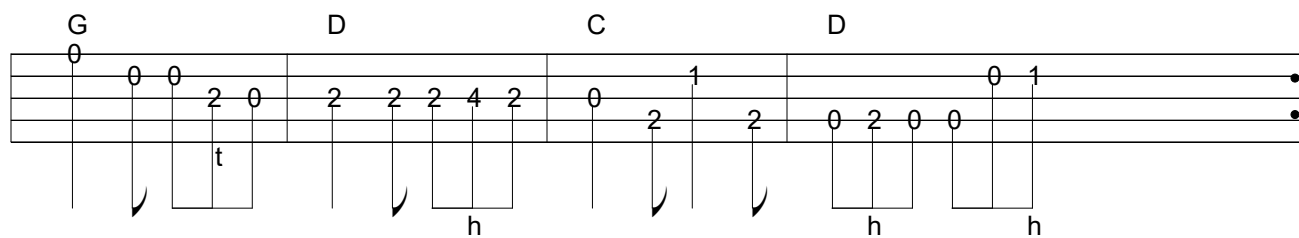
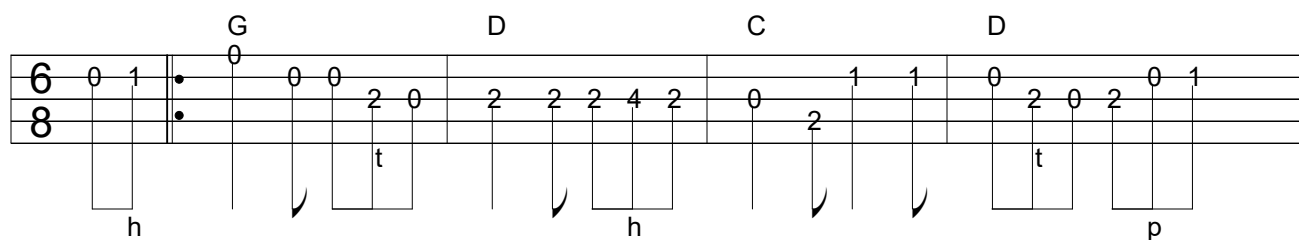
h p t p p t p

Em C D 1st Ending G 2nd Ending G

h p t p t t t t

Star Above the Garter - Jig

Key of G - gDGBD
Tab by David Brooks



Swallowtail Jig

Key of Em - gDGBD
Tab by David Brooks

A Part
Em

D

Em

D

1sr Ending
Em

2nd Ending
Em

B Part
Em

D

Em

D

1sr Ending
Em

2nd Ending
Em

Tobin's Jig

Key of D - gCGCD (capo 2)
Tab by David Brooks

Part A

D

D

A

D

A

D

Part B

D

A

D

G

A

D

A

D

A

D