

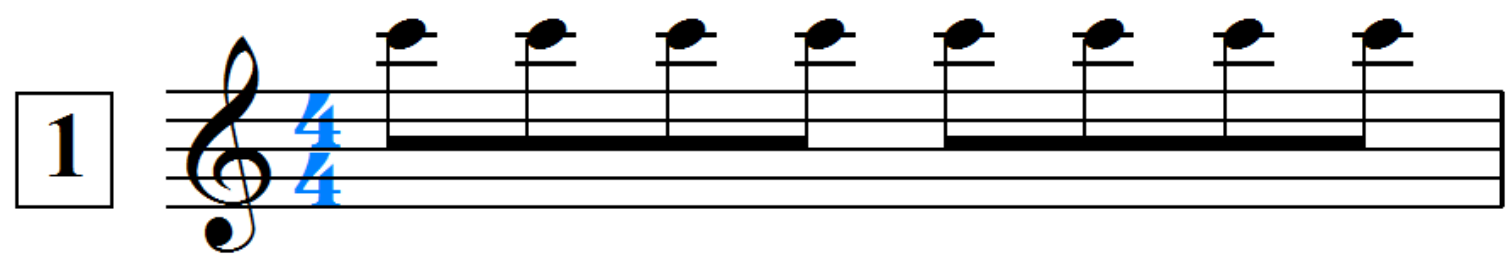

Chrille's Tremolo Section

For Amelia & Joe Tebalt

In Example 1 you can see typical bars of a tenor banjo, in which you can use the tremolo perfectly. General you should use the tremolo only for half or whole notes. If it is a slow song you can use the tremolo for quarter notes, too.


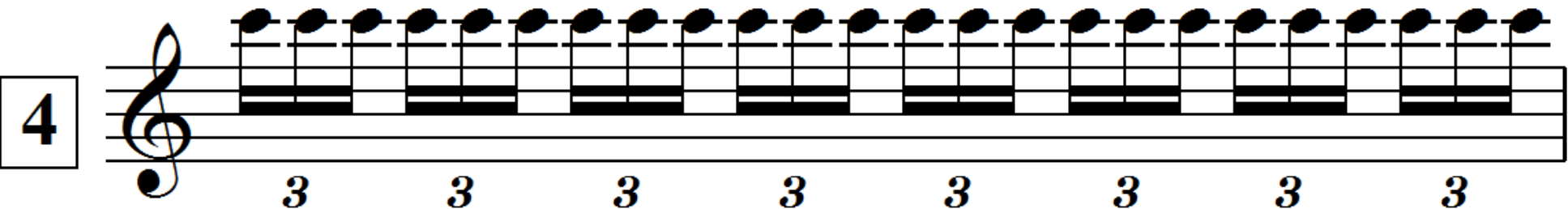
The Tremolo is a technique to hold a tone. The tenor banjo and other acoustic instruments as well have not sustain like a piano or an accordion, so it is necessary to multiply the tone.

Tremolo Styles

1  2 

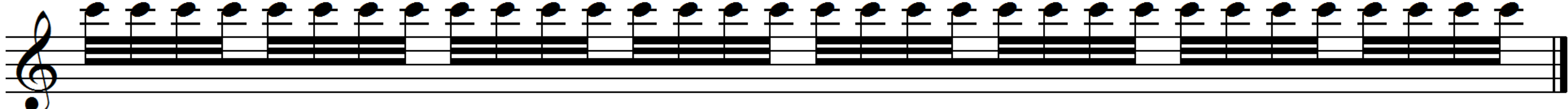
Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 1 & a 2 & a 3 & a 4 & a

Tap your foot: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

3  4 

1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a 1 e f & a b 2 e f & a b 3 e f & a b 4 e f & a b

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

5 

1 e f g & a b c 2 e f g & a b c 3 e f g & a b c 4 e f g & a b c

1 2 3 4

- 1 Here you can see the simplest way of the tremolo. It is just a doubling of normal quarter beats. This "tremolo" should be used in very fast tunes or to give tunes with many quarter notes an exciting touch. A tempo to start with this tremolo style would be 190 beats per minute M.M.
- 2 The trebling is one of the most used way of the tremolo technique. Alternative you can count ta-ta-ta for each quarter beat. A good tempo for this tremolo would be 150
- 3 A sixteenth note tremolo is a very tasteful way of using a tremolo, but not easy to handle. Alternatively you can count fastly one-two-three-four for each quarter beat. When you are practising this tremolo style with a metronom you should start at a tempo of 100 beats per minute M.M.
- 4 To sextuple the tremolo, is a tasteful way of this style, but a very difficult playing skill. Before you try to learn this style you should be abler to master the previous ways of the tremolo. Try a tempo of 100 beats for this one.
- 5 The 32 note tremolo is the most professional way of the tremolo. Famous banjoists like Eddy Paebody had success not only because of their clean and virtuosic way of the tremolo. A tempo to get familiar with this tremolo could be 80.

Hopefully you have noticed that you are counting in another way than your food gives accents to the beat. The tapping of your foot cannot reproduce the tremolo count theme in such a detail way. It is too fast for your food. The foot tapping should be your metronom! The counting that you are doing by speaking or mental counting should be the same what you are doing with your right hand.

The tempo of a tune determines which style of tremolo should be used. To find the most comfortable tremolo style, try to tap your foot or set the metronome to the tempo of the song. Then compare the given tempo with the suggestions of speed I have shown above. Try out the given tremolo styles until you find the one that feels comfortable, not forced or rushed.

Practise the tremolo daily and try to use the metronome or an accompaniment, which is the way I'm learning the tremolo. Keep in mind that your foot is a "body supporter" of the metronom, it is your personal "human" metronome. The real "counting" is in your mind or it is spoken quietly. I would like to remind you always to do down- and upstrokes, down- and up, down- and up... Only in this way you can develop speed and equality.

Rhythms For The Tenor Banjo

- Split Strokes -

A very nice rhythm for the tenor banjo is the so-called "Split Stroke".

The "broken" structure of the chords are not simple figures of an accompaniment. Because of their syncopated structure, the accent is on down stroke 1 +.

The orange market sequence shows, where you can find the split stroke.

15) 16) 17)

Split Strokes 15), 16) & 17) are the easiest forms of the split stroke.

It is important to play the two down strokes of the eight notes in time. Do not glide through the strings!

You should pick every down stroke for itself. Try the split stroke also in chord changes.

18) 19) 20)

The split strokes 18) - 20) are more complex forms of this rhythm. To play the split stroke you need at least a chord, which has a value of two beats.

It is better to have a break before the split stroke than after it

21) 22) 23)

Be careful with the fast two down strokes of the split strokes. Do not hesitate. In fast tempi you are easily going to glide through the strings, that is wrong, the speed level is just a training facility.

Start with a slow tempo and use the metronom; after short time you will feel very comfortable with the split stroke.

You can also combine the split stroke with other, for example, syncopated rhythms. And keep in mind that you can also play the split in a jazzy way, for example if you play the eight notes tenor.

Jazzy Rhythms - Rumba, Spanish, Oriental

In Example I we can see a typical "Lead Sheet" for the popular jazz and rumba tune "Muskrat Rumble". For the banjoist as a rhythm musician the melody of the tune is not important. We have to analyse the rhythm and the harmonies. The coloured objects are important (Red - Chords/Harmonies, Blue - Bar, yellow - Rhythmn).

Full Ensemble **Muskrat Rumble (Lead Sheet)**

Example I

The image shows three staves of musical notation for the tune "Muskrat Rumble". The first staff starts with a first-measure repeat sign and a red box containing the number '1'. Above the first staff are red chord symbols: Ab, Eb7, and Ab. The second staff has red chord symbols: Cm, G7, Cm Eb7 Ab, and Eb7. The third staff has red chord symbols: Ab, F7, Bbm, Bb7, Eb7, and Ab. The music is in 4/4 time and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and quarter notes.

When we work with a "Lead Sheet" we have to find out the key of the tune at first. After the clef we can see accidentals. Now we have to look for the first harmony (Ab) and decide whether the tune has a jolly melody or a sad one. In this case we have a bright Caribbean jazz tune in a Ab. In the next line we have to create an overview what for harmonies are played in the tune and how long they have to be played. In a "Lead Sheet" harmonies will be played as long as another harmony is mentioned in the score. That means, that in our example the first harmony Ab rests exactly four beats. If we write all harmonies down in a spreadsheet, in which one box represents one bar, we will get Image 1.

Muskrat Ramble (SAVOYAGER'S STOMP) Edward "Kid" Ory / Ray Gilbert Dixieland - Medium - 1926

Image 1

Rumba	Ab	Eb7	-	Ab	Ab	Cm	G7	Cm / Eb7
	Ab	Eb7	-	Ab →	F7	Bbm	Bb7 / Eb7	Ab

Harmony-Sheets like Image 1 are often the only information a banjoist can use in a jazz band or in a jam session. If there are written two chords in one box, you have to play each of this chords for two beats. An Arrow behind a Chord means that you go chromatically down to the next mentioned harmony.

Now we try to arrange an hot rhythm, using the information from the lead sheet the and the harmony sheet.

Full Ensemble **Example 1**

The image shows three parts of musical notation for "Muskrat Rumble". On the left, a melody staff with a first-measure repeat sign and a red box with '1'. In the middle, a rhythm staff with a 4/4 time signature and a rhythmic pattern of eighth and quarter notes, with a count: "Zähle: Ta Ta Ta Ta-Ah- Ta Ta Ta". On the right, a "Chord" staff showing four Ab chords (labeled 1, 2, 3, 4) with orange dots on the strings. Below it, a "Rhythm & Chord" staff showing the rhythm and chord symbols combined.

Here are all Ab chords illustrated you can use on the tenor banjo. We have to decide which chord we will prefer for our tune "Mukrat Rumble". The chord should match with the pitch of the song and should be played easily.

For "Mukrat Rumble" we can take the orange chord. Now we have to combine the "Rhythm" and the chord. The rhythm has to be clapped before trying it on the banjo. Please think about the down- and upstrokes.

Arranging Solos For The Tenor Banjo

MARGIE (Conrad-Robinson-Davis 1920)

Tenor Banjo

Step 1) Check out the best octave position for the tune, which you would like to play.

For Margie we see easily that we should transpose the melody-line for an higher octave!

(Keep in mind that the tenor banjo sounds an octave higher than it's notation is written down in universal notation)

Step 2) Check out for the possibilities to harmonize the tune, e.g. if it is possible to play three-string, four-string chords, double stops or single string runs.

Analyse the lead sheet (Grille des Jazz etc.) or the best way, cope with the piano score, if it is exist and find the correct harmonies! (Notice the difference in our example between the Grille des Jazz lead sheet and the above illustrated piano score!

Start to harmonize the tune! Usually you will end with an arrangment, which includes chord-melody style and single string runs. A good and stylish mixture is important!

Collect all single notes and try to find out the chord (if you have any problems you can use programmms like Chordfinder or check out method books about music theory).

Notice, that it is not wrong to leave out notes. Sometimes it is only a question of beauty,

but in generall, for example, it is not wrong to play a simple major chord instead of a dominant seventh chord!

You can or sometimes you must keep it simple. If you check out the red harmonies you will see the difference to the Grille des Jazz notation at the top of this page.

It is sometimes an act of interpretation. You can also play the fourth bar of the chorus completely in F7. So you don't need the F+, only if you like it.