

Bowing Patterns for Reels

OLD TIME SHUFFLE - USE ONLY RARELY



You wouldn't want to use the Shuffle pattern for a Celtic tune (unless for some reason you're trying to make it sound like an old time tune). The pattern emulates the "Long short-short, Long short-short" of the claw-hammer banjo.

PAIRED - AVOID THIS!



No matter how you may try, this bowing will just never sound danceable.

CROSS



This is a very common bowing to all styles of fiddle playing. But if you use too many of these slurs in succession the effect will sound overly "swinging"—even corny. The little slur at the end of a phrase is terrific.

DIRECTION CORRECTION



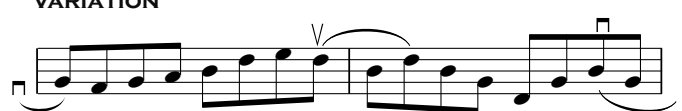
Whenever there is a quarter-note, the succeeding bowing will feel upside down unless a slur is played which reverses the bow direction. This is a very typical example of "correcting" the direction and sounds great, but of course there are other bowings that some fiddlers use to accomplish the same goal.

3-NOTE PUSH/PULL



3-note slurs are ideal. When you start *on* a beat (ex: the first slur), lay hard into the first note and ease off the following two notes. When you start on the "&" of a beat (ex: the second slur), barely touch the first note and lay hard into the second. This helps bring out the back-beat rhythm.

VARIATION



This example of pushing the down-bow and pulling the up-bow puts the 3-note slurs in different places. In particular, the up-bow shown here is a wonderful and very common variation of cross-bowing.

BANANA PEEL



One of the coolest bowings of all. You can emphasize the back-beat by laying hard into, a) the 3rd note of the first slur shown here; or, b) the 2nd note of the second slur. The pattern is also nifty in that it all fits neatly into one measure of music.

SHETLAND



Not at all exclusive to Shetland fiddle style, nearly every genre makes use of this very "groovy" bowing. What's great about it is that it really pounds away hard at the back-beat. What's not so great is that the swift down-bow tends to cause the up-bow to recoil too early making the overall effect jerky. Make sure to give the down-bow as much length as possible, almost as if you're playing it as a dotted eighth-note followed by a sixteenth.

Scottish versus Irish

Scottish fiddlers often use some of the same bowings as Irish fiddlers, but as a rule Scottish fiddle style uses more single-note playing and fewer slurs. This is largely due to the nature of the tunes themselves. Repeated string crossings and frequent arpeggios, which abound in Scottish tunes (ex. 1) require shorter, chunkier bow strokes; whereas the linear, scale-like contour of many Irish tunes (ex. 2) invite the use of a more drawn out bow stroke.

EX. 1 PRETTY PEG - SCOTTISH



EX. 2 SILVER SPIRE - IRISH

