

Slur 3, Bow 1

Bowing Pattern Exercise

for intermediate fiddle

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The slur three, bow one pattern (with accents on up-beats)

Many fiddle tunes and bluegrass fiddle parts contain groups of eighth notes. One commonly used bowing for playing passages with lots of eighth notes is this one, which I call “slur three, bow one.”

This four-note pattern places three slurred notes on an up-bow, followed by one note on a down-bow. To keep the bow centered on the fiddle, the down-bow (which plays a single note) must be considerably faster than the up-bow, which covers three notes. Fiddlers take advantage of the accent provided by this faster bow stroke, and place it on the “up-beats,” or beats two and four. This adds a sense of swing or heat to the melody.

Each phrase starts with a long up-bow, which plays three notes. The single note which is played on beat two or beat four of the measure is played with the down-bow.

Practice this pattern frequently to accustom your mind and body to the sound and feel of it. When you are comfortable with it, transpose the pattern to another key and work on it in that key as well.