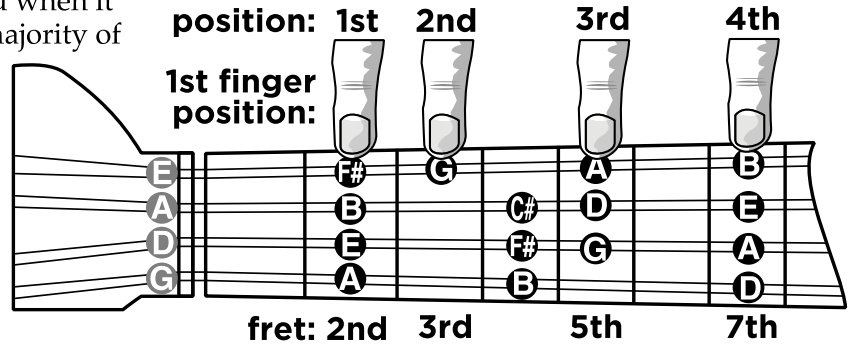


Playing in Positions 1

WHEN PEOPLE talk about “playing in positions” they mean playing notes which require your hand position to change, moving further up the fretboard; hence it’s also known as “playing up the neck”. Many mandolinists never do this, and when it comes to folk music, the vast majority of it doesn’t need it.

The positions are numbered, and the best way of thinking about it is where your first finger is on the E string. In the key of D major, for example, normally your

first finger is on the 2nd fret, or *1st position*. In *2nd position* it goes to the 3rd fret, and in *3rd position* the 5th fret, and so on. The most common change is from first position to third.



Getting to Third Position

Ex.1a is a great exercise I got from my colleague, the superb mandolin player Simon Mayor. First play two notes, E and A four times normally. Then play the same notes, but use your first finger to play the A note. You have just moved up to third position. Repeat the exercise in reverse and you’re moving from 3rd position back to first position. Note that you move from one position to another when an open string is played.

Ex.1a

Ex.1b is a similar exercise, but this time you’re going from G to A. The first time you do it, use your standard fingering: 2nd finger on G, 3rd finger on A; then you use 2nd finger on G, and 1st finger on A - that’s you now in 3rd position. This is useful for when you can’t use an open string to change positions. Try playing the scale exercises below, which will give you practice at this manoeuver.

Ex.1b

3rd Position Scale Exercises

Ex.2a

Ex.2b - all 3rd position