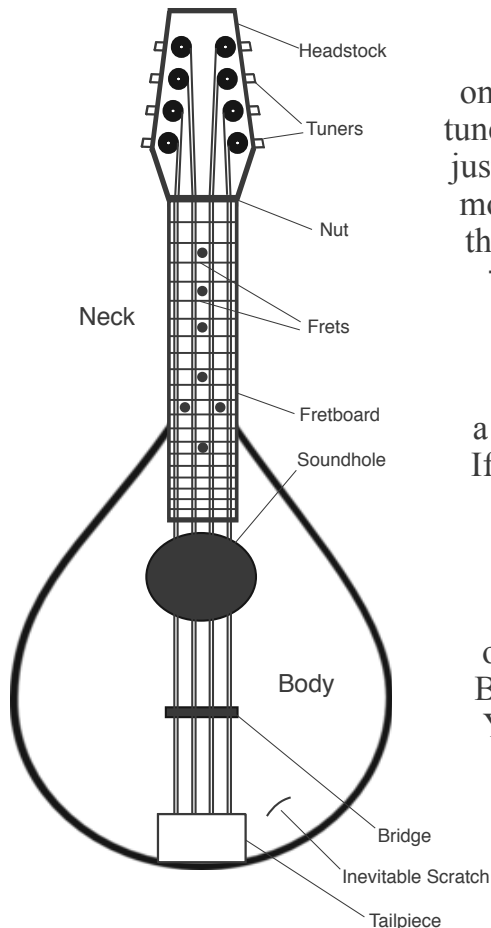


How Do We Start?

If you're reading this book, you probably already have a mandolin. If you don't, there are several body styles to choose from. You probably **don't** want the European **bowback** style (tater-bug); perhaps you know, or can imagine, what that looks like.

Mainly there are the **F-style** and the **A-style** body types. The "F" in F-style stands for "Florentine" and refers to a scroll on the upper side of the body (farthest from the floor) where you can tie a strap. The A-style is teardrop-shaped, depicted below. Both styles can have either a single oval **soundhole** or two F-shaped soundholes similar to a violin. (You would think, as I did, that F-style meant **F-holes**, but no.)

I shan't be drawn into a discussion as to which style sounds or plays "better." It's probably more dependent on the level of craftsmanship than anything else. I say, pick the one you like the look of and can afford. And don't go too cheap.



General layout of the instrument. There are 8 strings on the mandolin, but it's really 4 pairs of strings, and each pair is tuned in **unison**, meaning that they are identical in pitch and sound just the same. The strings are attached to the **tuning pegs** that are mounted on the **headstock**. The strings ride over the **nut**, where they are held in place by grooves, travel down the **neck** over the **fretboard** that bears the **frets**, pass over the **soundhole**, ride over the **bridge** (more grooves) and attach at the **tailpiece**.

Holding the mandolin. If you are right-handed and playing a normally-strung instrument, rest the body on your right thigh. If you are left-handed, you have a decision to make. You might want to flip it over and tune it in reverse, or you might want to adapt to the right-handed approach.

The practical reason to adapt is that the vast majority of mandolins found in the wild are tuned for the right-handed. But there's no other reason not to have your mandolin restrung. You'll just need to read the Chord Diagrams as mirror images.

Anyway, we'll be assuming **right-handed** playing.

Rest the instrument on the appropriate thigh (one of yours), supporting the body with your picking/strumming arm, but keeping your wrist free to pivot back and forth. You can rest your forearm lightly on the top of the mandolin just behind the bridge. Try a strap, but slung around your **neck**, instead of over just your right shoulder.