

10 TOP TIPS FOR PLAYING THE MELODEON - PAUL SCOURFIELD

1. Think about how you hold the instrument. The right hand side should be kept steady as it is easier to play the instrument when it's not moving about!!! This can be more easily achieved using two straps or by bracing the instrument with your knee if sitting down. It is better not to brace the right end using your hand or thumb (ie only using 1 strap) as the pressure required to stop the instrument moving makes it more difficult to play the tune accurately.
2. Resting your thumb on the edge of the keyboard makes it easier to move up and down the keyboard and to reach notes.
3. Use minimal pressure on the bellows. The melodeon is a naturally loud instrument (as any fiddle player will tell you!!) and you don't need to press the bellows hard. Playing more gently requires less effort and makes it easier to play faster and more complicated tunes.
4. Investigate playing notes on the opposite treble row to the key you are playing in to make the tune easier to play. The same note can often be played in opposite directions on opposite rows. Runs of notes can be more easily played by crossing rows for alternate notes, which avoids having to change bellow direction. You may also need to do this to allow you to play the appropriate bass chord
5. Play around with basses other than those associated with the key you are playing in (see notes of explanation below). For example B, A, E and D from the "D key basses" can all be used when playing in the key of G, and G, D and C from the "G key basses" used when playing in D.
6. Play different rhythms with the bass other than the traditional om-pah om-pah bass, using either the notes or the chords of the bass pairs(see notes of explanation below).
7. Use drones as a bass variation, ie play one bass chord for a whole section of the tune. This is easiest to do using the two D bass notes in the key of D or by simply holding down the C bass note when in the key of G (eg for Speed the Plough).
8. Play around with combining the bass note from one pair with the bass chord from another (see notes of explanation below). eg G note + C chord, D note + C chord, B note + D chord, A note + C chord, G note + D chord.
9. Think about arrangements for tunes, playing a different variation each time round, for example by varying the bass you use.
eg: 1st: Bass C Drone
2nd: Play normal om-pah bass using bass notes associated with the key of tune (see notes of explanation below)
3rd: Play more unusual basses in set associated with the key other than that of the tune
4th: A: No bass, B: single note bass
5th: Play it funky!!!
10. Drink two pints of beer before playing - it relaxes the brain and the fingers!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Words of explanation : In the notes above describing the bass end of the instrument, the bass "note" is the lower positioned, deeper sounding note of the bass pair, the "chord" being the upper positioned button. The bass pairs are often associated with a particular treble row. On a two row D/G instrument, the two bottom bass pairs are linked to the inner treble row in the key of G major. The two top bass pairs are linked to the outer treble row which is in the key of D major.