

Chopping Introduction:

The Big Beat on 3! The Traveling Beat on 2 and 4!

In modern fiddling accompaniment we sometimes use a percussion-like sound called a “chop.” The loud chop is represented here by an “x” note. The chop is always placed on a down-bow stroke. Straighten your bow-hand thumb. This is the only time it should ever be straight. Your fingers will absorb the stroke now, instead of the thumb. Pick up the bow and bring your index finger towards you, so that the stick is a little more diagonal – the tip a little more towards your left ear. Bring the bow down in that diagonal position landing very near the frog of the bow. You don’t want to hear an actual pitch, so you are not letting the string vibrate. The down bow chop should “stick” to the string (because the weight of your hand is now digging into the string) and make an additional little sound when you let it up on the upbow. If you have problems at first, just play all of the notes as written with normal bow strokes.

There are two main rhythmic placements for the chop. The first is the big beat, on beat 3. I have notated the percussive chop sound with an x instead of a regular note-head.

The Big Beat on 3 Chop

Big Beat Pattern 1 **Big Beat Pattern 1 with subdivisions**

The notation shows two examples of the Big Beat on 3 Chop. The first, 'Big Beat Pattern 1', consists of two measures in 4/4 time. The first measure has a whole rest on beat 1, a quarter rest on beat 2, and a quarter note with an 'x' on beat 3. The second measure has a whole rest on beat 1, a quarter rest on beat 2, and a quarter note with an 'x' on beat 3. The second example, 'Big Beat Pattern 1 with subdivisions', shows the same pattern but with the quarter notes on beats 1, 2, and 3 subdivided into eighth notes. Above the notes are bowing directions: 'V' for down-bow and 'V' for up-bow. The 'x' note is a down-bow chop.

You can use the Beat 3 Chop in combination with any of the subdivided notes. Here are two variations:

Big Beat Pattern 1a **Big Beat Pattern 1b**

Two variations of the Big Beat on 3 Chop. 'Big Beat Pattern 1a' shows a quarter note on beat 1, a quarter note with an 'x' on beat 2, and a quarter note on beat 3. 'Big Beat Pattern 1b' shows a quarter note on beat 1, a quarter note with an 'x' on beat 2, and a quarter note on beat 3. Both patterns have subdivided eighth notes on beats 1 and 2. Bowing directions 'V' and 'V' are indicated above the notes.

You can create your own patterns. Just make sure that the notes on the beat are down bow, the notes off the beat are up bow, and the chop is on beat 3.

Traveling Beat on 2 and 4 Chop

The second main rhythmic placement for the chop is on quarter notes 2 and 4 of the measure. This off-beat pattern is performing the function of the mandolin chop in bluegrass or the high-hat cymbal in jazz, it keeps the time moving ahead.

Traveling Beat Pattern 1 **Traveling Beat Pattern 1 with subdivisions**

Two examples of the Traveling Beat on 2 and 4 Chop. The first, 'Traveling Beat Pattern 1', consists of two measures in 4/4 time. The first measure has a quarter rest on beat 1, a quarter note with an 'x' on beat 2, a quarter rest on beat 3, and a quarter note with an 'x' on beat 4. The second measure has a quarter rest on beat 1, a quarter note with an 'x' on beat 2, a quarter rest on beat 3, and a quarter note with an 'x' on beat 4. The second example, 'Traveling Beat Pattern 1 with subdivisions', shows the same pattern but with the quarter notes on beats 2 and 4 subdivided into eighth notes. Bowing directions 'V' and 'V' are indicated above the notes.

You can use the Beat 2 and 4 Chop in combination with any of the subdivided eighth-notes and rests. Here are a couple of variations:

Traveling Beat 1a **Traveling Beat 1b**

Two variations of the Traveling Beat on 2 and 4 Chop. 'Traveling Beat 1a' shows a quarter note on beat 1, a quarter note with an 'x' on beat 2, a quarter note on beat 3, and a quarter note with an 'x' on beat 4. 'Traveling Beat 1b' shows a quarter note on beat 1, a quarter note with an 'x' on beat 2, a quarter note on beat 3, and a quarter note with an 'x' on beat 4. Both patterns have subdivided eighth notes on beats 1 and 3. Bowing directions 'V' and 'V' are indicated above the notes.

You can create any rhythmic patterns you like. Just keep the chop on the second and fourth quarter-note beats of the measure.