

Tips for Learning By Ear (From a Lesson Video)

By Casey Henry

Before sitting down to learn a song, listen to it a *minimum* of five times. (It is typically played through at the beginning and the end of the lesson.) Listening to it every day for a week is even better. You should aim to be able to hum it in your head while going about your daily activities.

Sit down in front of the video, banjo in hand, and learn the first lick. Maybe not even the whole lick. Maybe the first *roll*. Pause the video. Practice the first roll/lick until you have it down fairly smoothly and you don't have to stop and think in the middle. Loop it many times.

Play the video and learn the second lick. (Or the second roll. Whatever the next bit is.) Pause the video. Practice this lick until you've got it down. Loop it many times. Listen to the instructor put the two licks together, then pause the video and put them together yourself. Practice the two licks together until you're comfortable with them. Loop them BOTH many time.

Learn the third lick. Pause video. Practice this lick. Listen to the instructor put these three licks together. Pause video. Practice putting all three together yourself. (Are you getting the picture?)

If, when you add on the second lick, you forget the first one, STOP and REVIEW the first lick. Maybe your brain is full and you should take a break and come back tomorrow. (It only takes about 10 minutes of learning new material to fill up a beginner's brain. Seriously!) Make sure you can put those two licks together *and play them through without having to stop and think* before you add on any more!

Continue this way through the entire song. Remember, if you start forgetting it, you're trying to learn too much at once. Let it sink in for a while (a few days, maybe a week) and then come back to it.

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