

Play the Accordion: Tips and Tricks

The accordion can be a tricky instrument to learn, but it's a lot of fun to play. Here are a few basic tips and tricks to learning to play the accordion:

Fundamentals First

The first step to learning to play the accordion is having a basic understanding of the instrument itself. Your position as a beginner is very important. Sit down on a chair and set the accordion on your left knee. Your right hand will operate the keyboard, while your left hand pumps the bellows. When you've placed the accordion in the right position, put the straps over your shoulders and adjust them if necessary. Then, slip your left hand under the strap on the button side, and adjust the strap until it feels just right.

Basses

There are a number of bass buttons on your accordion, but don't panic; you'll only be using a few of them when you first begin to play. An average accordion can actually have up to 120 bass buttons, arranged in as many as 20 columns and 6 rows. You'll come to learn that there are two bass rows and four chord rows in an accordion. The first row (closest to the bellows) is the counter bass row, denoted by underlined capitals. The second row is the fundamental row, and is marked with capital letters.

Keyboard

The keyboard is the part of the accordion that resembles a piano. The white keys on the accordion keyboard provide the notes "A" through "G", while the black keys are named after the white keys, depending on whether they are a half step higher (sharp) or lower (flat) than the adjacent white key. When learning to play the accordion, you'll first concentrate on playing the C-major scale. Begin on a "C" near the low side of the keyboard, toward your chin, and lay adjacent white keys until you get the next C an octave higher, toward the base of the keyboard.

Reading Music

Part of learning to play the accordion lies in knowing how to read the music. The melody is located on the upper staff of the printed accordion music, and the bass line is on the lower staff. Generally, the melody will be shown in treble clef, while the bass part is shown in the Bass clef. While this system may seem confusing at first, you'll later find that it really makes sense to read accordion music in this manner. Locate "C", the first note on your keyboard, and begin to follow the music. You'll realize that the melody is relatively straightforward and easy to play.

Accordions can seem like a puzzle of buttons, notes and squeezie things. But you may be surprised at how easy they can be to play. If you've ever envied those who can make sense of an accordion, go ahead and give it a shot. You'll soon be making beautiful music of your own.