



# Junior Hoedowner

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Fiddle Contest Advice from Amy Booher (This was so valuable two years ago. It is good advice and worth repeating.)

**Amy Booher** offers the following advice for "young" or "old." Here are a few tips she offers to kids who would like to participate in a fiddle contest:

**1. Know the required number of tunes** that you will need to have prepared, and have them all memorized well in advance of the contest day (this is 4 tunes for PeeWee - hoedown, waltz, tune of choice, + one hoedown in case of a tie, and 7 tunes for all other divisions - two full rounds plus the extra hoedown for a tiebreaker). Please note that a lot of folks don't consider that extra tune in case of a tie, but if you've ever had to play a tiebreaker, believe me - there is no time to wonder if you're prepared or not! Also, it is very important to have a second round ready, even if you don't think you'll need it. Lots of kids get stuck worrying about the second round once they've made it, instead of celebrating that they are in the top 5!

**2. Memorize, memorize, memorize!** Know your songs very well, then play them some more! Play your tunes slowly, concentrating on playing in tune, and with the correct timing. Pay close attention to the bowing of the tunes, since the bow has so much influence on all aspects of fiddling. I like to practice with a recording of someone playing the guitar (a "guitar track") since it makes me relax into the rhythm of the tunes (especially hoedowns). A metronome is also great for this. And of course, if you can play with a live guitar player, that's the best option. Memorize the exact way you will play the parts of each song, and make sure to time your whole round to ensure that you won't go over four minutes!

**3. If possible, "practice" performing in front of as many people as you can.** This will help you pre-

pare for your nerves at the contest. A great place to start is for extended family, at your school, or in church. The Old Time Fiddlers have monthly jams that you can attend, and gather experience playing in front of people. Remember, the more you play in front of a crowd, the easier it gets! I still get nervous, but I have played in front of so many people that I know even when I'm nervous that I will make it through. A couple of tips that help me with nerves are: 1) Slightly face your guitar player when you are on stage - this is more natural than facing directly out to the crowd; 2) Look at your fiddle while you are playing, instead of letting your eyes wander - no matter where you are, your fiddle is always going to look the same, like an old trusted friend; 3) Before I start my first song, I play a note into the microphone just to see what it's going to sound like. You can do this while the announcer is reading your tune sheet, and the judges won't hear it. These things always helps me to feel more relaxed on stage!

**4. On the day of the contest, get as much rest as possible.** Eat a good breakfast, and bring snacks and water to the contest. Arrive with plenty of time, and find your back-up as soon as possible. Remember that it's really hard for the back-up players to make time to practice with everyone multiple times, so respect their time and be prepared to go through your round with them as soon as it's convenient for them. Most of all, enjoy your time at the competition - visit with your pals, and support your friends by watching each other play. Have a great time!

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**Tune of the month** is from an old cassette tape - circa 1985. Sunny San Juan featuring Bunky McFee. The following is on our web along with Bunky playing the tune - two times. Bunky says, "The name of that tune was Sunny San Juan. I picked that tune up 65 years ago at the Renton House Ranch in Southern Arizona. And 'a we picked cotton during the day and then we would sit around the campfire at night and make music and 'a four of the tallest Texans I have ever seen sang that song and played it and 'a I picked it up and played it. I liked it . I hope you do, too."

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Notation by Alice Holt, based on  
Bunky McFee and Wayne Holmes

### Sunny San Juan

The musical score for "Sunny San Juan" is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of 32 measures across eight staves. The melody is simple and folk-like, featuring a mix of quarter, eighth, and half notes. The first staff contains measures 1-4, the second 5-8, the third 9-12, the fourth 13-16, the fifth 17-20, the sixth 21-24, the seventh 25-28, and the eighth 29-32. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the final measure.