

## 01. Choosing a Banjo

Banjos come in various models and sizes for various uses and personal preferences. Before purchasing a banjo a few decisions should be made that include the type of music to play, the banjo tone and the banjo size.

**Banjo Ukulele** – A small ukulele sized 4 string banjo usually played and a tuned as a ukulele. Due to it's small size it is very high-pitched. It is also known as a “Banjo Uke”.

**Tenor banjo** – A short neck length 4 string banjo that was commonly played in early 1900's orchestras and in homes. Because of its tuning it has a strong rhythm “punch” sound for rhythm and melody picking. Many Dixieland and trad jazz bands prefer the tenor banjo because of its punch and uplifting tonal quality. The tenor has an uplifting sound that cuts through nicely. Tenor, plectrum or guitar tuning can be used with the corresponding strings. Some banjoists prefer this model because of its shorter neck and its easier to transport.

**Plectrum banjo** – A full neck length that is the same as the guitar. This 4 or 6 string banjo can be tuned and played as a guitar (Chicago tuning) or use plectrum banjo tuning. The plectrum banjo much like a guitar and has a variety of tones that depends on where on the neck it is played but it does lack the crispness of a tenor banjo. This banjo is also preferred by trad jazz bands because of its mellower tones and is very nice for blues. The baritone ukulele can also be guitar or plectrum tuned.

**Bluegrass banjo** - Same as the plectrum with an added 5<sup>th</sup> string. This banjo is usually picked using multiple individual “finger picks”. It can use plectrum or bluegrass “D” tuning. or can be played the same as the 4-string plectrum by simply removing the 5<sup>th</sup> string. The main difference between a plectrum banjo is the 5-string banjo neck is wider than the 4-string plectrum neck to accommodate the additional 5<sup>th</sup> string. A 5-string bridge and tailpiece used.

### Note:

The banjo club has banjos available to borrow with a returnable deposit and option to purchase. Beginners might consider this club service before investing in an expensive instrument. Most beginners start with inexpensive instruments and upgrade to more expensive banjos as their skills improve.