

“Stop-Pickin’” is a specialty effect that you can produce with your right hand. A favorite with rock ‘n’ rollers, it is done by muting the strings with the palm of your right hand immediately after the stroke. Or, you can pick or strum with your upper wrist resting very lightly on the strings by the bridge. You’ll find the effect of this stop-picking technique sounds like a Johnny Cash intro.

Slide, Bottleneck, and Steel-Guitar Styles

The slide, bottleneck and steel-guitar styles are three related ways of coming up with customized dulcimer sound. Since notes can be produced anywhere along the fretboard without depressing the strings to the frets, the sounds are quite unusual.

A bottleneck is a bottleneck. Cut it off near the top of the bottle, and be careful to leave enough room so that the glass will extend beyond the tip of whatever finger you use. Usually the middle or ring finger of the left hand is inserted into the bottleneck, from the top. For safety, we also suggest smoothing the sharp edge with a file and some emery paper.

Play notes by trailing the bottleneck behind the melody line itself. If the bottleneck is on your ring finger, your “lead fingers” (index and middle) can fret notes as usual, and the bottleneck provides a sliding chord sound when moved across the strings.

The slide method employs basically the same technique. The difference is that a metal bar—the slide—is held in the crook of the left hand between the ring and little fingers. Your lead fingers continue to fret notes as with the bottleneck method; however, you may find that you achieve more control with this independently held metal bar.

The same metal bar can be used for steel-guitar style playing. The difference is that in this method, the bar does all the fretting, and no lead fingers are used. Hold it any way that is comfortable in your left hand. You may find that your homemade bottleneck