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★ ★ ★ ★ CHORDS & FIDDLE BOWING ★ ★ ★ ★

The chord names shown represent only one way of harmonizing these tunes. Some guitar players may have different ideas; that's just part of breakdown fiddle playing.

The chord progressions used by several guitar players for standard breakdowns is almost a jazz concept. For an eight-bar phrase, it would look like this:

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The first staff contains measures 1 through 4, and the second staff contains measures 5 through 8. Above each measure, a chord name is written. The chords are: A, A7, D, D#dim, A6, Cdim, Bm7, E7 in the first staff; and A, A7, D, D#dim, A6, Cdim, E7, A in the second staff. The notes in the staves are represented by diagonal slashes, indicating that the specific notes are not the focus, but the chord changes are.

Again, the chords shown here are only suggestions, not necessarily indicating the way they must be played. Every fiddler has his own concept of how the breakdowns should sound and may want to use different chords from those shown. This practice is perfectly acceptable.

Songs that will fit the progression above are "Grey Eagle," "Sally Goodin'," "Uncle Jim," "Sally Johnson" (transpose the progression to G and use for the standard part of the song), "Leather Britches," and "Bill Cheatham." There are many others also.

Playing the Swinging Texas Fiddle should not be a "tied down" thing, but should allow both fiddler and accompanist to use their imagination. The fiddle bowing can also be different from what is shown. Most of the contest players prefer to use a lot of single-note bow strokes. When using this method try to start each measure with a down stroke, and accent very slightly each down stroke of the bow. Of course, you may have to use slurs not shown here to make your bowing come out right. If you are after the old-fashioned hoedown sound, you can use the double-shuffle type of bowing on most of the fast songs. It is all a matter of choice. Double shuffle is bowed like this:

The image shows a single staff of musical notation in 4/4 time. It consists of eight eighth notes, grouped into four pairs. Above each pair of eighth notes is a 'v' mark, indicating a bow stroke. This represents a double-shuffle bowing pattern.

Sally Johnson

NC. G C G D7

5 G C D7 G

9 G C G D7

13 G C D7 G

17 G C G Em

21 G C D7 G

25 G C G Em

29 G C D7 G

33 G C G D7

37 G C D7 G

41 G C G Em

Grey Eagle

NC. A D 3 pos. A 1 pos. E7 3 pos.

5 A 1 pos. D 3 pos. E7 1 pos. 1. A

8 2. A A D A

12 E7 A D E7

16 1. A 3 2. A 3 A D

19 A E7 A

22 D E7 A A

26 D A E7

29 A D E7 A



In 1970, country music legend Merle Haggard (1937-2016) released an album called *A Tribute to the Best Damn Fiddle Player in the World (Or, My Salute to Bob Wills)*. It was one of Haggard's proudest achievements – he'd spent four intensive months learning to play the instrument.

A few years later, "Hag" invited veteran mandolin and fiddle player Tiny Moore (1920-1987) to join his band. Tiny had played in Bob Wills' Texas Playboys in the late 1940s. "Swinging Texas Fiddle playing probably started with Bob Wills in the 1920s," Moore explains. On Haggard's band bus, the two listened incessantly to the old Wills tunes, determined to master them on the fiddle. If they hit a snag, Tiny would write down the melody to make it easier to learn.

"I got to thinking that there probably are a lot of people who can read music and might like to learn some of these songs and styles," Haggard stated. "That is the reason for this book."

Swinging Texas Fiddlin' was first published in 1982, but has been out-of-print for many years. This new edition contains all the old tunes, as well as Tiny Moore's commentary, found in the original publication. It is a must-have for any player who wants to study traditional and modern breakdown and hoedown fiddling.



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