



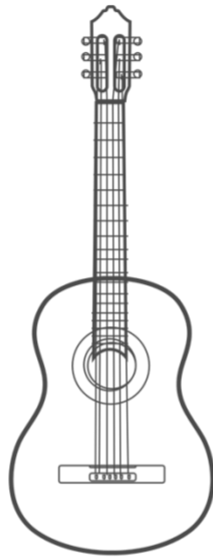
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AUDIO DOWNLOADS

ZERO TO GUITAR FINGERPICKER IN 30 DAYS

FROM COMPLETE BEGINNER TO
GUITAR FINGERPICKER IN 30 DAYS
IN JUST 15 MINS PER DAY

by **Patrick O'Malley**



Course Syllabus

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Section 1 – Getting Started

This section ensures you have everything you need to be effective in this course. By the end of this section, you will be able to play the six most common chords and change between these chords. You will be able to read guitar tablature and chord charts. I provide helpful links to help you string your guitar & tune it.

Feel free to skip any lessons in this section that you don't need. For example, if you can play common chords but can't yet read guitar tablature, then you could skip the chords lesson and go straight to the guitar tab primer.

Section 2 – Fingerpicking Basics

We start fingerpicking in this section, beginning with the background on how fingerpicking works and which fingers play which strings. We learn two different fingerpicking notations and learn some fingerpicking patterns, initially over 1 chord and then over several chords.

Section 3 – The Thumb

The real magic of fingerpicking is playing multiple guitar parts on one guitar. We require the thumb does the work of the bass player and the fingers play some nice melodies at the same time.

By the end of this section, you'll be able to play alternating bass and walking bass examples, and another set of fingerpicking patterns.

Section 4 – The Fingers

Building on our thumb technique from the previous section, we add a melodic component using the fingers. By the end of this section, you'll be able to play more advanced patterns using the fingers of the right hand. You will learn pinching, play fingerpicking sequences of different length & learn a formula for writing your own fingerpicking patterns.

Section 5 – Advanced Techniques

The final section of the course builds on all these thumb and finger lessons we have taken and technique we have mastered. By the end of this section, you'll be able to play advanced fingerpicking patterns like Travis Picking and Clawhammer.

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Author

Patrick O'Malley is an acoustic fingerstyle guitarist and teacher who has been playing and teaching guitar for 20 years.



Over 25,000 students have taken his Zero to Fingerpicker in 30 days course for beginner guitarists.

Patrick believes that fingerpicking is the best way to learn guitar and improve quickly as a guitarist.

Listen to his guitar playing in the band [Resin](#) or visit his site for learning guitar at <http://learnfingerpicking.com>

Bonuses

You can now download a set of bonuses that come with the purchase of this book.

You will find some PDFs with tabs from the course that you can use to see full page transcriptions of the more complex pieces.

You will also find audio files for the exercises – each exercise has a fast (120 b.p.m.) and a slow (80 b.p.m.) version so that you can play along.



BONUS MP3s



BONUS PDFs

Access your bonus file download by [clicking here](https://bit.ly/intermediate-bonus) (or visit <https://bit.ly/intermediate-bonus>)

Online Course

You can also find an online course that covers the material in this course and one of the massive benefits of registering for the course is that you can see each exercise played by me in the videos.

The course features high-definition videos, professionally shot with 3 camera views so that you can see close-ups of what my left hand & right hand are doing.

This enables you to really grasp what I am playing and follow along. I also talk through the essence of what we are trying to learn and provide some encouraging words for when exercises become challenging.



You can sign up to the course now [with this link](#) to receive a 60% discount, reducing the course price from \$99 to \$40 for readers of this book.



If reading the print version of this book, get a discount at <https://bit.ly/intermediate-discount>

How to use this course

If you already play guitar a bit - say you already know a few chords - then you may be able to skip much of section 1. In this case, skim quickly through and begin with section 2.

Apart from that, go from lesson to lesson. If you found the lesson difficult, then after a couple of days move on to the next lesson and you can move back and forward a bit between lessons.

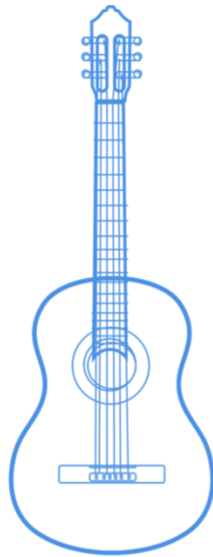
You'll notice that most lessons begin with "what to do if the last exercise was difficult". I break that lesson exercise down into easier sub-exercises that you can build up to get where you want to go.

I have a website at www.learnfingerpicking.com that has some great resources, free lessons and a beginner fingerpicker course. This eBook is completely standalone but if you want to have videos that show me playing each exercise in this PDF, you can find that there.

Here are the only 2 things you need to remember to be successful:

play at least 15 minutes each day

have fun (i.e. don't get stuck and frustrated, moving on to the next lesson is ok!)



Section 1

Getting Started

1.1 – Some Beginner Resources

There are a few things that you need before you get started:

Have a guitar

Be able to string up your guitar

Be able to tune your guitar

The chances are that you already have a guitar if you are taking this course. But if you do not, (or if you are thinking of a little upgrade) then check out some of the options [here](#)

If you have an old guitar and you need to buy strings, then it's probably good to get a light set of strings or "11 gauge strings" for your acoustic. You need to be able to put strings on your guitar so if you can't do it yet, then bite the bullet and try. The worst that can happen is that you break a string. This is ok! - it's the only way to learn how to change strings. Always buy two or three packs of strings at a time so that breaking a string doesn't stop you from playing for too long!

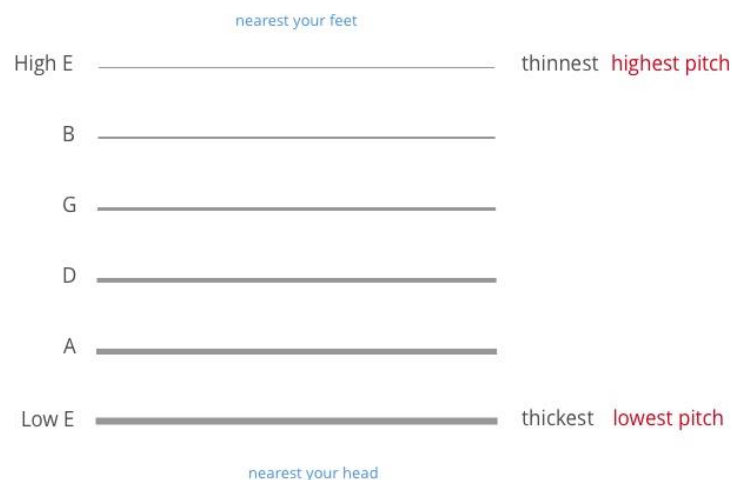
This is a great [YouTube video](#) if you need guidance on how to put strings on your guitar

For tuning your guitar, there is a [good guide here](#)

1.2 String Names

Look down at the guitar on your lap. The string nearest your head, which you will notice is the thickest string also has the most bass sound. It is an E note. We call this the 6th string for the rest of the book.

The next string (the next thickest and next nearest your head) is the A string which we call the 5th string. Then we have the D string (which we call the 4th string), G string (3rd string), B string (2nd string) and then the thinnest string (furthest from your head) is another E note which we call the 1st string.



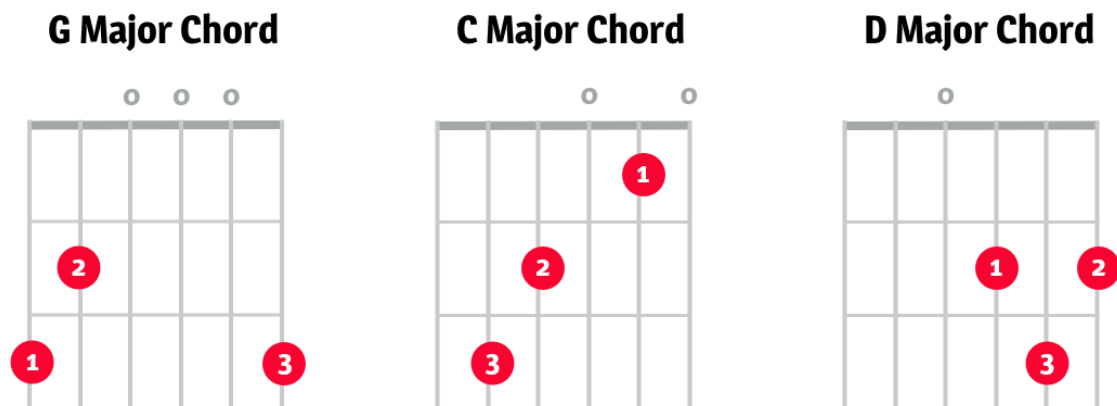
You will notice two strings are E notes (6th string and 1st string) but if you play them both you will hear that one is quite bass-sounding (the low E) and one is very high pitched (the high E). It's worth saying that when we say **low** here, we mean the tonality of the note (and not where the string physically is on the guitar).

If you can remember the phrase “Eat Apples Daily Grow Big Ears” then that mnemonic will help you remember EADGBE, the strings in order.

1.3 – Three Chords

The first 3 chords we learn are G major, C major and D major.

Have a look at the chord charts below and we'll learn these three chords in no time! The number in the red circle is the finger (left hand finger) to use. The low E (thickest) string is on the left and the high E (thinnest) string is on the right.



For the G Major chord:

Place the (left hand) second finger on the low E (thickest) string at the 3rd fret.

Place the (left hand) index finger on the A string (string below) at the 2nd fret.

Place the (left hand) third finger on the high E (thinnest) string at the 3rd fret.

Strum all six strings and you get a G chord. Make sure to take your time and play each note individually to make sure they all sound nice and clean.

For the C Major chord:

Place the (left hand) third finger on the A string (5th string) at the 3rd fret.

Place the (left hand) second finger on the D string (4th string) at the 2nd fret.

Place the (left hand) index finger on the B string (2nd string) at the 1st fret.

This time, you only strum the five highest (thinnest) strings with the right hand - the low E or thickest string you don't need to play.

For the D Major chord:

Place the (left hand) index finger on the G string (3rd) at the 2nd fret

Place the (left hand) third finger on the B string (2nd) at the 3rd fret

Place the (left hand) second finger on the high E string (1st) at the 2nd fret

Now, strum the four high (thinnest) strings with the right hand (not the two thickest strings).

1.4 – Another Three Chords

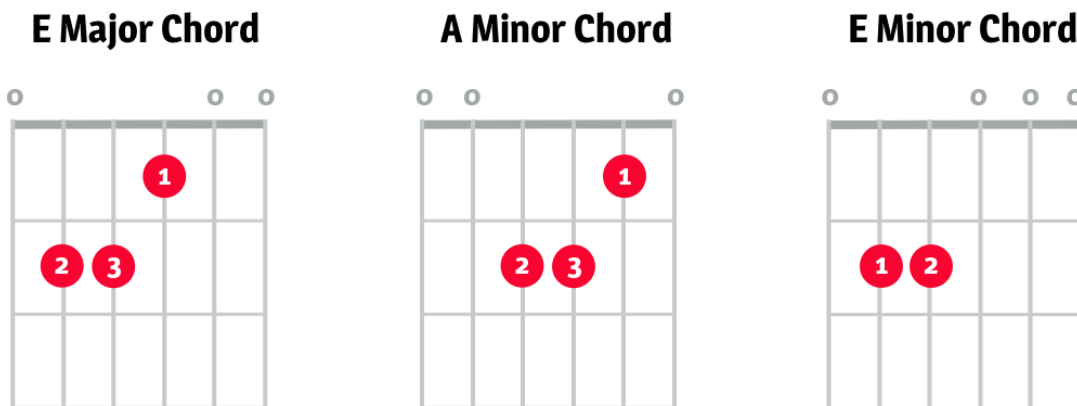
While playing those 3 chords in the last lesson, here is some advice! Do take your time and play each chord slowly. Playing individual notes of the chord is the way to know if you make a mistake. Listen for any bad or wrong notes and then correct (by taking a good look at what the left hand is actually fretting!).

We learned three more chords in this lesson: A minor, E and E minor.

Note that we write A minor as “Am” and E minor as “Em”.

You can play everything in section 1 and section 2 with just the first 3 chords (G, C and D), so it is ok if you want to read this lesson to have a quick look at these chords but to decide not to learn them just yet – instead to focus on learning just the G, C and D and finishing section 1 and section 2 first. If you are a complete beginner, that is the best way to move forward. But the choice is yours; you can learn all 6 chords now if you want to.

Have a look at the charts below. Remember when you look at a chord chart, the number in the black circle is the finger (left hand finger) to use. The low E or thickest string is on the left and the high E or thinnest string is on the right.



E Major chord

Place the (left hand) second finger on the A string (5th string) at the 2nd fret.

Place the (left hand) third finger on the D string (4th) also at the 2nd fret.

Place the (left hand) index finger on G string (3rd) at the 1st fret.

Then play all six strings and you get a E chord. Make sure to take your time and play each note individually to make sure they all sound nice and clean.

E Minor chord

Fret the E major chord and remove the index finger off the fretboard and you have E minor! You have the 5th string and the 4th string both fretted at the 2nd fret. The 3rd string is open (or not fretted). Strum all six strings.

A Minor chord

Note this is very similar to the E chord – same shape but on different strings.

Place the (left hand) second finger on the D string (4th) at the 2nd fret.

Place the (left hand) third finger on the G string (3rd) also at the 2nd fret.

Place the (left hand) index finger on B string (2nd) at the 1st fret.

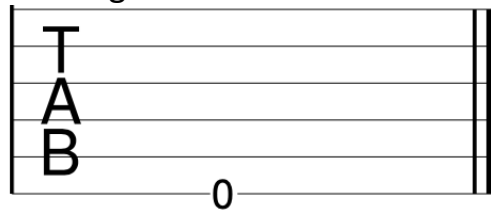
Try changing between E and A minor.

You'll notice the shape is the same and you're just moving it "down a string" and it's a great change to start with.

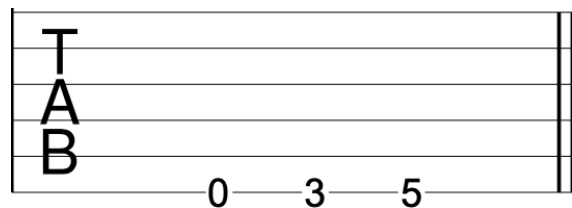
1.5 – Reading Guitar Tablature

Guitar Tablature (or guitar tab) is a way of notating music for guitar. It is not quite reading “sheet music” like our piano-playing friends, it is a little bit easier but still takes a little getting used to. We’ll start by playing a melody on one string. Then we will add other strings. Then we will look at how chords are written in tab.

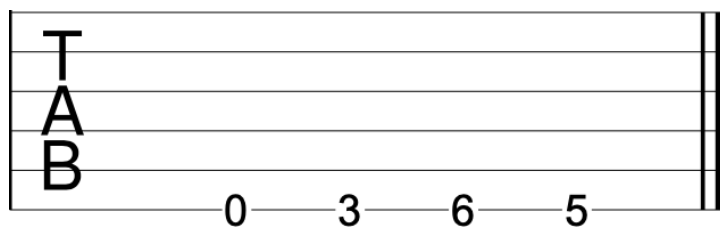
So we’ll start by looking at playing one note – the 6th string (low E). This is just playing an open string so don’t fret anything with your left hand – just play the thickest string on your guitar and let it ring. Note if you are not fretting a string, then we call that an open string and it is denoted in tab as a ‘0’.



Now if we play that same string (the low E string) three times: first as an open string, then at the 3rd and 5th fret, it would have guitar tab that looks like this



If we play the same string low E four times – first open, then 3rd fret, then 6th fret then 5th fret, it would look like this.



Finally if we play both patterns above, then add a few more notes on the low E string *open, 3rd fret, 5th fret, 3rd fret, open* - you are playing a line similar to Smoke on the Water by Deep Purple.



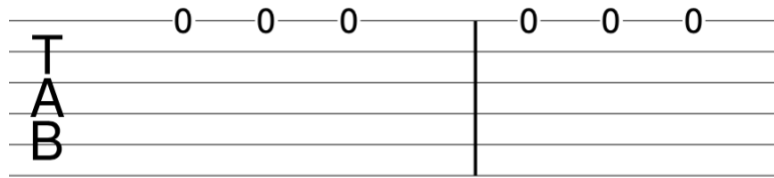
You probably know this riff! Google it if you are not familiar with it. Then play the riff and play this tab until you feel comfortable reading the tab and playing the riff.

Congratulations – you have followed tab to play a song on one string!

Notes on Several Strings

So now let's play the 1st string (high E / thinnest string) three times open.

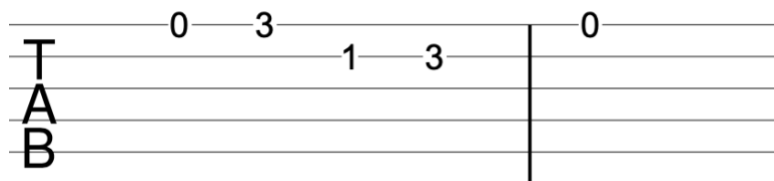
Repeat.



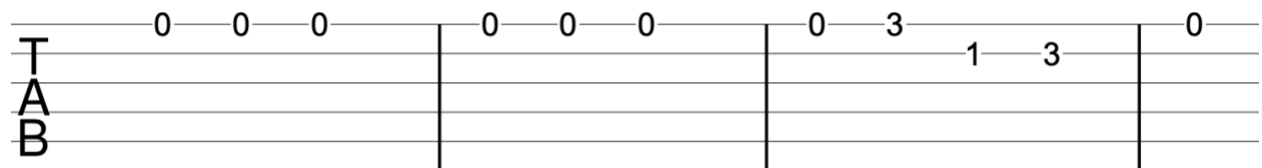
And now play the high E string open, then at the third fret.

And now the 2nd string (B string) at the first fret then third fret.

And finish by playing the 1st string (high E) open.



Congratulations. You have just played Jingle Bells – but really this is really cool because this is reading tab on two strings!

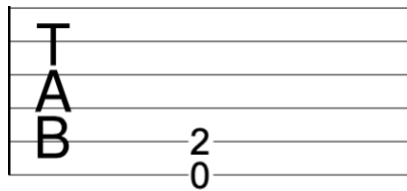


Playing Notes at the Same Time

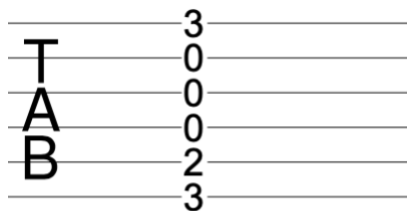
Up until now, we have played notes sequentially, meaning one then the next one after that.

But what if we want to play two notes at the same time?

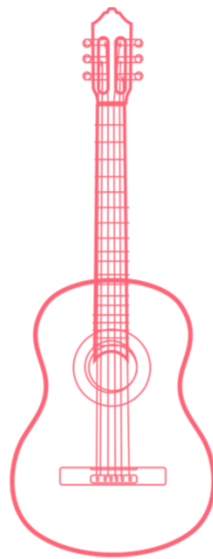
Well if we play the 6th string (low E) open and the 5th string (A) at the second fret – at the same time – then it looks like this



And if we wanted to show a G chord using tab, it would look like this.



Remember from the last section how to play a G chord. We fret the 6 string (or low E or thickest string) at the 3rd fret. Then we play the 5th string (A string) at the second fret. The 4th and 3rd strings (D and A) are open. Then we play the 6th string (the high E or thinnest string).



Section 2

The Basics

2.1 – The Big Rule

The key to fingerpicking guitar is the right hand – so this is where we begin! We begin by learning *the Big Rule* – which determines which right-hand finger plays which string.

For the next few lessons, we will typically just fret one chord for the entire lesson. For this lesson, we will just fret the G chord with our left hand.

What is The Big Rule?

When you play guitar, you use two hands – the right hand frets chords or individual notes and the left hand hits the strings. When you play a chord, you strum all the strings at once. But when you fingerpick, each finger will hit individual strings.

In playing guitar with the fingers, there is one big rule:

- **The thumb** plays the bottom three strings (the bass strings which are the 6th, 5th & 4th strings) and it has ownership for any notes played on those three strings (the ones nearest your head) and the other three fingers play one string each! If there is a note on the 6th, 5th or 4th string, the thumb must play it!
- **The index finger** always plays the G string or 3rd string.
- **The middle finger** always plays the B string or 2nd string.
- **The ring finger** always plays the high E string or 1st string.

It sounds simple. It is simple! However, it will take a little bit of practice for those fingers to obey. In particular, in a rush to play what the brain is telling it, some students end up playing with one finger – because it is easier. Here is a great exercise if you notice that happening.

One Finger Per String Exercise – Open Strings

What we will do now is play a G chord.

- The bass note is on the sixth string (low E string). Let's play that four times with the thumb (T)
- The G string is played by the index finger – let's play that four times
- The B string is played by the middle finger – let's play that four times.
- The high E string is played by the ring finger – let's play that four times.

It is really nice to play each of these notes four times. Because when you do so, it gives your mind some time to play and also to think about ‘am I using the right finger there?’.

So as a beginner, play this exercise a few times. If you think it’s really super easy, then try to speed it up. But the goal is to use the correct finger, rather than speed.

One Finger Per String Exercise – G chord

Now we fret the G chord with the left hand.

And we are going to leave it there for the rest of this lesson so once you have it fretted, your left hand has nothing more to do.

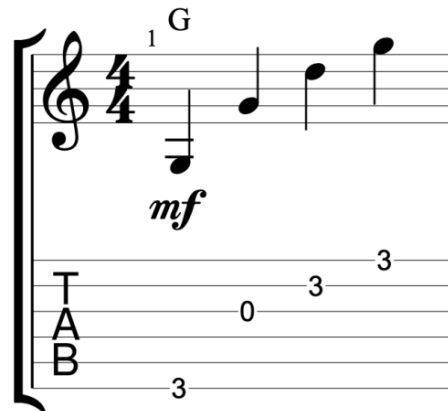
And then we do the same thing as before with the picking hand.

First play the thick string (6th) four times, then the third, second and first strings – each four times.

It looks like this:

Our First Pattern – T123

Let's play the same thing – but playing each string once now.

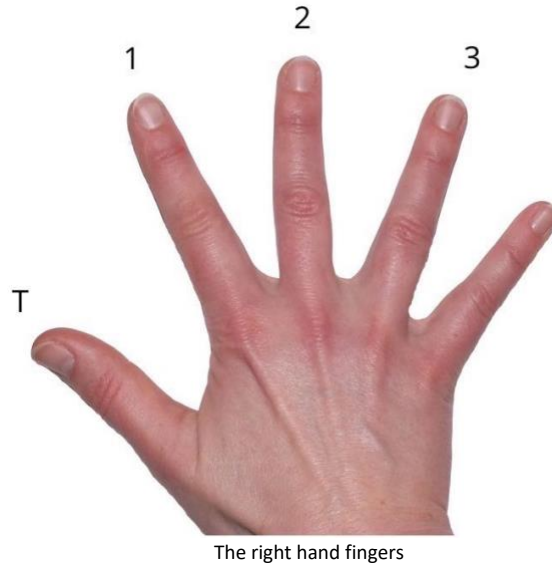


If you look at the fingers of the right hand (the picking hand) and you describe the order in which they play notes, you might describe it as “thumb, index finger, middle finger, ring finger”.

You could also describe it as “thumb, first finger, second finger, third finger” of the right hand and as a shorthand, we will refer to that as “thumb 1-2-3” or T123.

Note that this refers to which right hand finger you use. As the thumb covers three strings according to the Big Rule, you might also add which string the thumb is going to play. So you could describe the pattern above as T123 where the thumb plays the 6th string.

It is important to note that if I say T123 that I mean thumb, first **finger**, second **finger** and third **finger** – not thumb, first *string*, second *string*, third *string*.



The right hand fingers

It's worth taking a moment here to reflect on this notation – because we'll use it for the rest of the course.

We know from the Big Rule which string each *finger* will play.

As an example, the first finger (index finger) will always play the third string or G string.

Because of this, it is possible to not talk about which strings and just which fingers. You do need to decide with any given pattern which of three strings the *thumb* will play (but I will always tell you).

Once you know the finger pattern (and which note for the thumb), then you by default know which strings to play. This will become obvious as we go if it isn't right now.

Note our focus is not on speed; rather we focus on using the correct fingers of the right hand and having a nice clean note! That's the most important thing.

Assignment

Play this pattern (exercise 2) for a few minutes until you are comfortable with it. Feel free to stick with just the G chord.

But try something new also with the right hand. Experiment! Do something different! Maybe it is to play the notes backwards (from highest E to the low E). Or maybe you play each note twice? Maybe you skip a note?

You could even try this pattern with other chords - you might notice it sounds great with other chords and sometimes not. Any idea why? We'll explain it in lesson 2, but it's worth thinking about...

2.2 – Fingerpicking over Two Chords

Last Assignment

So how did playing your first pattern go? Did you experiment a bit and try some new permutations? If you did, was that fun? Here's a question - when you started playing with other variations, did you keep using the designated right hand fingers per string? If so, awesome.

I often hear students describe that started off playing each string with the right fingers initially, but then one finger may take over and tried to play all the strings . So for example, maybe the index finger tries to play all the strings!

This might be the easiest way to play something today but the problem is that if we want to play something complex or start to speed up, it's going to be impossible. So it's important that during the first week, we pay particular attention to using the Big Rule of which finger play which strings. Even at a really slow speed (like super slow!) if you are using the correct right hand fingers and thumb to hit the appropriate string, then I am happy.

If it was challenging to keep the right finger hitting each string, go back and play exercise 1 again. That will iron that out for you, guaranteed! Play exercise 1 for a while and then go back to exercise 2 and see that the right fingers are being used!

The image shows a musical score for a fingerpicking exercise in 4/4 time. The top staff is in treble clef and contains four measures of music, each starting with a measure number (1, 2, 3, 4). Measure 1 has a dynamic marking of *mf* and contains four eighth notes, each beamed to a pair of strings (1-2, 3-4, 5-4, 3-2). Measure 2 contains four eighth notes on strings 2, 3, 4, and 5. Measure 3 contains four eighth notes on strings 3, 4, 5, and 6. Measure 4 contains four eighth notes on strings 4, 5, 6, and 7. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature with six lines labeled T, A, B, and three empty lines. It contains four measures of fret numbers (0s) corresponding to the strings played in the top staff: Measure 1 (0 on strings 1-2, 3-4, 5-4, 3-2), Measure 2 (0 on strings 2, 3, 4, 5), Measure 3 (0 on strings 3, 4, 5, 6), and Measure 4 (0 on strings 4, 5, 6, 7).

Using a Metronome

A metronome is a fantastic practice tool. A metronome is just a tool that plays a solid beat, and our goal is to play along with one. I suggest that you buy one. Any metronome will do. I recommend buying one - it will be huge for your progress.

I use a Snark Metronome because it costs around \$20 and has different volumes which is great if you want to be able to practice sometimes a bit more loud and sometimes more softly if there are other people you don't want to disturb. There's also free online metronomes that you can use. They will work fine today if you don't have a physical metronome, but it means you need to turn it on and off at your computer or laptop and I prefer to be able to press a physical button.

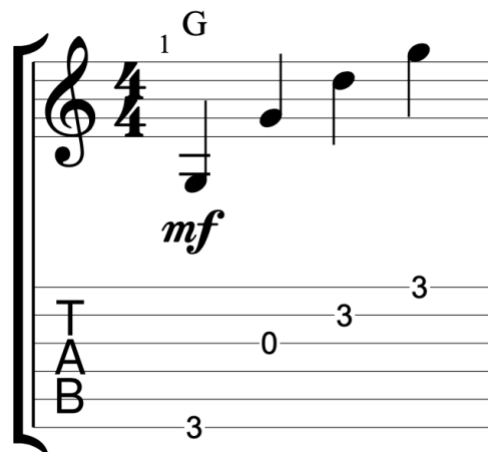
Here is a link to a free online metronome - <https://www.metronomeonline.com/legacy>

Playing Exercise 2 with a Metronome

Set a metronome to 40 beats per minute (or b.p.m)

Fret a G chord.

Play one note for each hit on the metronome



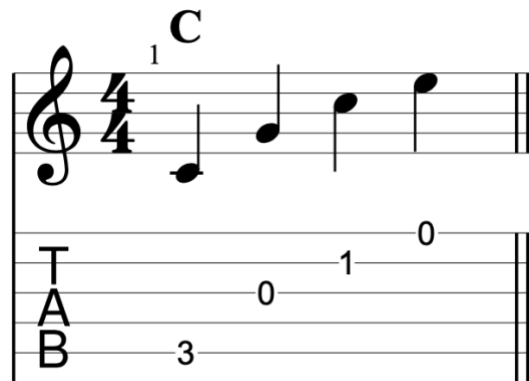
How did that feel? If it was too hard you can slow the metronome down even more. Or if it was too easy then you can speed it up! But for now, you just want to use the right fingers of the right hand and make a good connection. Speed will come in time!

Please don't skip this exercise. Playing slowly to a metronome and then increasing temp is an important training to play accurately in time. Play along at 60 bpm. It should sound pretty nice and we're using the right fingers of the right hand and it's a great start to building our fingerpicking technique, which will get pretty complex - but it all starts here.

Another Pattern

Now we play a similar pattern - playing the C chord with our left hand.

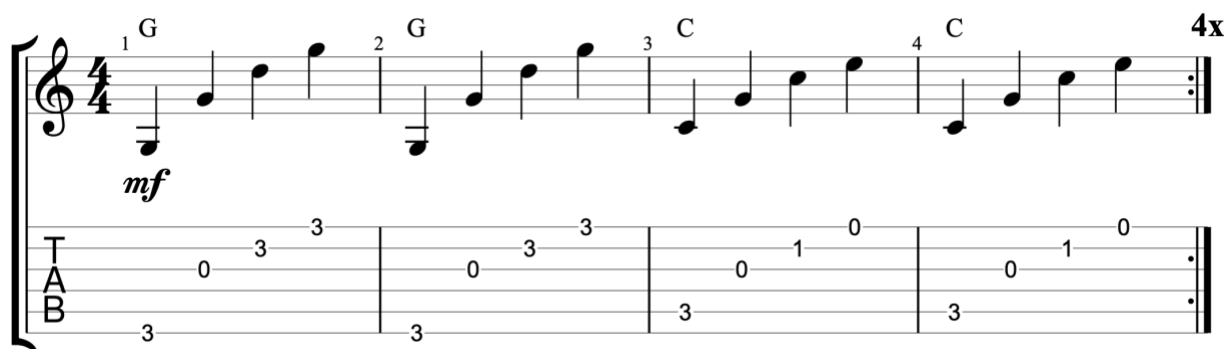
Note the only difference is that the thumb hits a bass note on the 5th string.



Start slowly and make sure the right fingers are hitting the right strings.

Assignment 2

Your exercise is to play the G pattern above followed by the C pattern, If you know the chords well already, then your job is to think about the fingers of the right hand - are they sticking to the right strings? Is the thumb hitting the 6th string for the G bass note and the 5th string for the C bass note?



If you are completely new to guitar, then don't worry about this being difficult. It's great practice and I'm going to give you a great tip for how to change chords quickly

in the next section. But don't go there yet! Spend 10-15 minutes trying to change chords and using the right fingers of the picking hand (left hand).

2.3 – Other Patterns over 2 Chords

Last Assignment

I'm so excited to see you do that last exercise:

- We have two chords
- We are changing between them
- We are fingerpicking each chord
- We are using the thumb to play different bass notes on each chord

What if you found that hard, your fingers wouldn't behave themselves and it was just tough to play it the way you wanted? Don't get frustrated! It's going to take some time. You can't just pick up the guitar and do everything, but I've three helpful tips and routines so that nobody gets left behind.

Assignment Help 1 - Big Rule Exercise

First question, did you stick to the Big Rule? If one finger started to play each string (instead of one per string) we play the exercise below, which we saw in the previous lesson. This will help here.

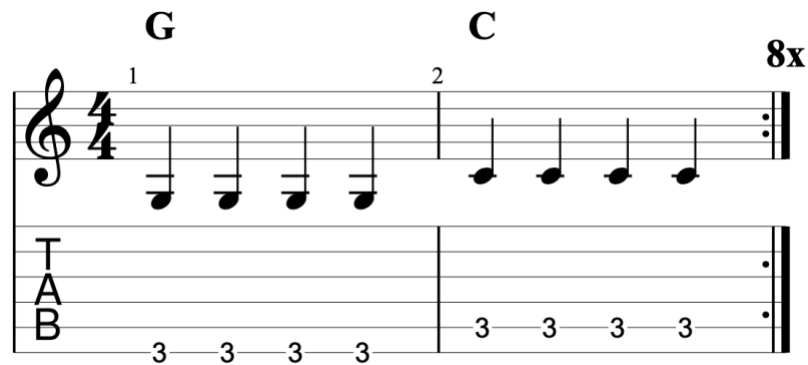
The image shows a musical exercise in 4/4 time, consisting of four measures. The first measure is marked *mf* and contains four eighth notes on the 6th string (G2). The second measure contains four eighth notes on the 5th string (C3). The third measure contains four eighth notes on the 4th string (F2). The fourth measure contains four eighth notes on the 3rd string (G1). The sequence is repeated 4 times, indicated by a '4x' at the end. Below the staff is a TAB line with fret numbers: 0 0 0 0 for the first measure, 0 0 0 0 for the second, 0 0 0 0 for the third, and 0 0 0 0 for the fourth.

Assignment Help 2 - Thumb String Changing Exercise

How was it to play different bass notes with the thumb? We had one bass note on the 6th string and one bass note on the 5th string. If it was hard to master, I suggest the following exercise.

Play your G chord with the left hand and then just hit the 6th string four times (with the right hand thumb). Then play your C chord and just hit the 5th string four times (with the right hand thumb). And repeat. Eventually the thumb should get used to the distance between the strings and like any practice - eventually it becomes

second nature. You could be having a conversation with somebody and doing this! But in the early days, it takes some attention and conscious practice.

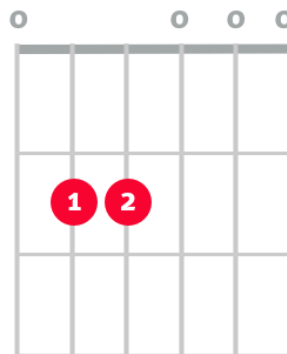


Assignment Help 3 - Easier Chord Changing Options

Third question, what if the changing of chords was too hard? Maybe once the chord was fretted, you were doing great. You could fingerpick away, and you could use the Big Rule and it was all fine. But when it came time to get to the C chord, it took a long time to get those fingers in place. Here's a little exercise in case the chord changing was hard.

If we look at an Em chord chart, it looks like this.

E Minor Chord



Play the 6th string then 3rd, 2nd, 1st strings of the Em chord & notice that all of those strings are string that the left hand does not fret (they are called open strings for this chord).

What that means is that if you take your whole left hand away from the guitar and play the 6th, 3rd, 2nd, 1st strings (the left hand is not used at all) it sounds the same as when you are fretting the Em chord.

So that gives us a really easy exercise. Play the G chord and do our last exercise and then take the left hand off the guitar (slightly off the fretboard) and play and then put the G chord back on with the left hand).

Up & Down Exercise in G

Our exercises so far have been in one direction - ascending.

What I mean by that is that we started at the thumb and then each note was higher in pitch. Play them again and hum along and you'll see what I mean

We now add 2 notes. Play the bass note on the 6th string with your thumb. If we look at the right hand, play the 6th string with the thumb, then index, middle, ring, middle, index.

You could write that (right-hand) pattern like this: T-1-2-3-2-1

Now what you are playing looks like this:

G

TAB: 0 3 3 0

Now we can try that in C. Note that the bass note for C is on the 5th string (you might remember that from the last section)

C

TAB: 0 1 0 1

If you put those last two together, you get this

G C

TAB: 0 3 3 0 | 0 3 3 0 | 0 1 0 1 | 0 1 0 1

4x

Assignment 3

This exercise above is your exercise for today.

But I want you to mess around with it. Honestly, the best way to master music is to learn something and then do as many different things with that as you can.

Play it with happy thoughts in your mind. Now play it with a sad feel.

Can you play it using different chords? Maybe get your Em in there, or your easy Em (taking the left hand off the guitar altogether).

Play with different permutations of G, C and Em and anything else you can think of. There are no right things to do, apart from enjoying yourself!

2.4 – The Backwards Pattern

Last Assignment

Let's have another look at the last exercise.

- You are really fingerpicking now - you have G, C and Em
- You are using different fingerpicking patterns
- You are playing the thumb on different bass notes

1 2 3 4

G C

4x

T
A
B

0 3 3 0 0 3 3 0 0 1 0 1 0 0 1 1 0

3 3 3 3

Challenge

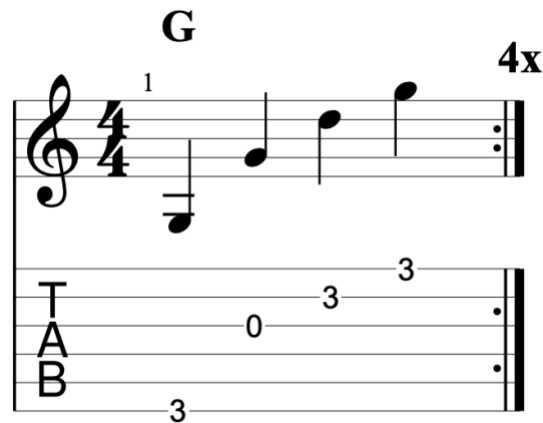
If the exercise went really well, increase the tempo on your metronome (maybe to 70 b.p.m) and try to play it a little faster! Play each note cleanly and play to the beat – that's the key. This is such a good exercise at this time.

If the exercise was tough, set the tempo to something slower. Play at a really slow speed but using the correct fingers of the right hand (our Big Rule) and in time with that (slow) metronome beat. If it's taking some time to master, don't worry, it will come eventually.

A New Pattern - The Backwards Pattern

Recall the T123 pattern - one of the first we looked at. Here the thumb plays the 6th string (as we know now is the default bass note we play for our G chord with the thumb). And then we play index, middle, ring fingers.

We write this as T-1-2-3 (Thumb of right hand, first finger of right hand, second finger of right hand, third finger of right hand)



Now play those same four notes, but in a different order.



We write this as T-3-2-1.

(Thumb of right hand, third finger of right hand, second finger of right hand, first finger of right hand).

I love this pattern I use it myself a lot. It sounds so musical, with the bass followed by three notes that decrease in pitch.

I would advise just to play this for 2-3 minutes to get used to the feel of it.

Now play a T321 with a C chord. Notice the bass of the C chord (which we play with the thumb of the right hand) is on 5th string.

Musical notation for a T321 pattern in C major. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of two measures. The first measure is labeled '1' and the second measure is labeled '2'. The pattern is repeated 4 times, indicated by '4x' at the end. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature of 4/4. The notes in the first measure are C4 (open), E4 (first fret), G4 (second fret), and C5 (third fret). The notes in the second measure are C4 (open), E4 (first fret), G4 (second fret), and C5 (third fret). The bass line is indicated by 'T', 'A', and 'B' on the left, with fret numbers 0, 1, and 3 respectively for the first measure, and 0, 1, and 3 for the second measure.

Now do the same pattern in E minor (written Em). The bass of Em is the low E string (the 6th string). The easy version of Em is when the left hand doesn't play anything.

Musical notation for a T321 pattern in E minor. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of two measures. The first measure is labeled '1' and the second measure is labeled '2'. The pattern is repeated 4 times, indicated by '4x' at the end. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature of 4/4. The notes in the first measure are E4 (open), G4 (second fret), B4 (third fret), and E5 (fourth fret). The notes in the second measure are E4 (open), G4 (second fret), B4 (third fret), and E5 (fourth fret). The bass line is indicated by 'T', 'A', and 'B' on the left, with fret numbers 0, 0, and 0 respectively for the first measure, and 0, 0, and 0 for the second measure.

Assignment

Play the T321 for at least 15 minutes.

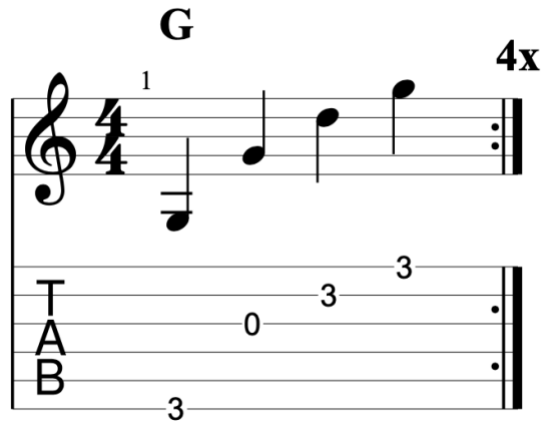
Your exercise is to vary the chords as much as you can. One example could be this: Do the pattern in G twice then C twice then Em once then C once (for example).

It's fine if you just want to change between G and C for now. But if you want to mess around with other chords and the length of time you spend in each chord, I think that would be fun!

2.5 – The PIMA Notation

For this lesson, we will focus a little bit on theory. This is just to take a little bit of a break from learning new patterns.

In the past we have played something like this and we have used the notation for the right hand as T-1-2-3 (thumb, then index, middle, ring of the right hand):



A Little Spanish

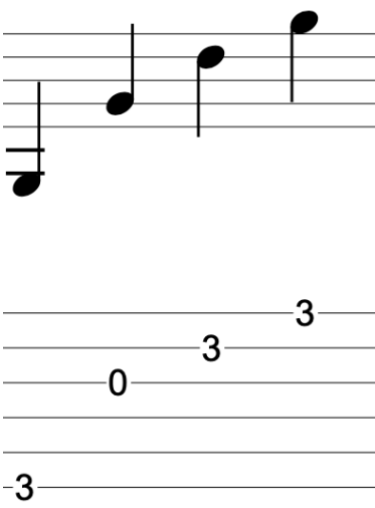
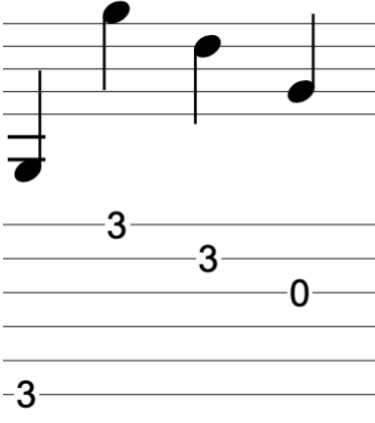
Another way to describe this is a PIMA notation.

In Spanish:

- Pulgar = Thumb
- Indecio = Index
- Medio = Middle
- Anular = Ring

So if you translated “thumb, index finger, middle finger, ring finger” into Spanish, you would get “Pulgar, Indecio, Medio, Anular”. And because the origins of fingerpicking are from that part of the world, that is now a well used standard.

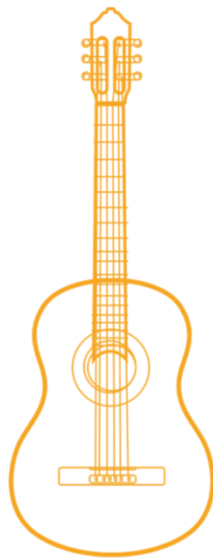
Two PIMA Examples

TAB	NUMBER SYSTEM	PIMA SYSTEM
	T-1-2-3	P-I-M-A
	T-3-2-1	P-A-M-I

The second example is what we played in our last exercise. We called this a T321 pattern at the time – but we could have called this right-hand pattern *P-A-M-I* if we wanted.

Either way, they both describe the same order of strings you hit with right hand fingers.

I'm now going to return to our T123 notation for our next section. Why? Because students find it easier to follow! But it's always good to be aware of what other musical sources will use.



Section 3

The Thumb

3.1 – Alternating Bass Notes

When first listening to guitar, I found it magical when I wondered how many guitar players were playing on a record to find out there was only one. I couldn't believe it. I was so excited. It made me want to learn guitar, to play guitar.

To achieve this as a guitarist, you must get the thumb playing baselines & the fingers playing melody lines so that they are almost independent of each other.

We begin with the thumb. How does the thumb choose which notes to play? How do you make it sound like you are playing a bass line at the same time as you are playing all these other notes? Let's find out.

Alternating Bass On A G Chord

The best way to create thumb "independence" is to start with two notes. Fret a G chord with the left hand. Then play two notes with the right-hand thumb: the 6th string then the 5th string!

This results in a bass line like this:

The image shows musical notation for a G chord bass line. The top staff is a treble clef in 4/4 time, with a 'G' above it. It contains four quarter notes: G2 (6th string, open), F#2 (5th string, 1st fret), E2 (4th string, 2nd fret), and D2 (3rd string, 3rd fret). The bottom staff is a guitar tablature with 'T A B' (Treble, Alto, Bass) labels on the left. It shows the same sequence of notes with fret numbers: 0, 1, 2, 3. The strings are numbered 1 to 6 from top to bottom. The notation includes a '1' above the first note, a '3' below the first note, and a '3' below the last note. A double bar line with a repeat sign is at the end of the staff.

And then I am going to fill in the notes and play T123 (where T = thumb on 6th string) and then T123 (where T = thumb on the 5th string)

G

8x

Now you hear the bass alternating between the note on the 6th string and 5th string (this is called alternating bass).

You just fret a G chord and let the thumb do the work and it sounds great!

Exercise

Play this for 10-15 minutes.

If you have another 15 minutes, then take another chord and then let the thumb play two notes and see how it sounds! Em and C would be good choices!

Try to figure out an alternating bass pattern that you can play on it and see how it sounds..

3.2 – Alternating Bass with more chords

Last Exercise - A Two Step Approach

How did you get on with the last exercise?

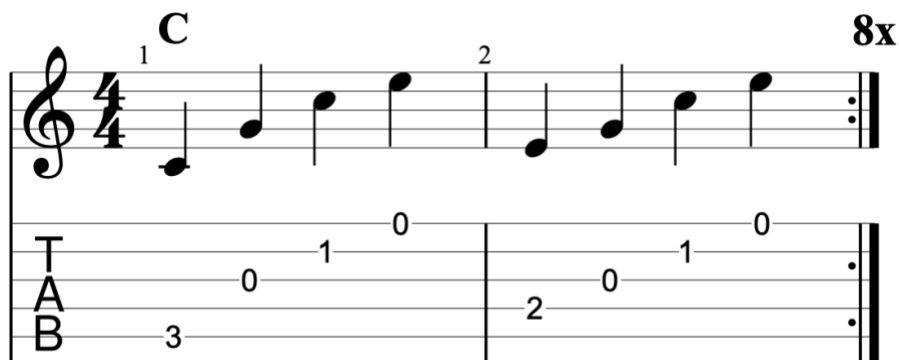
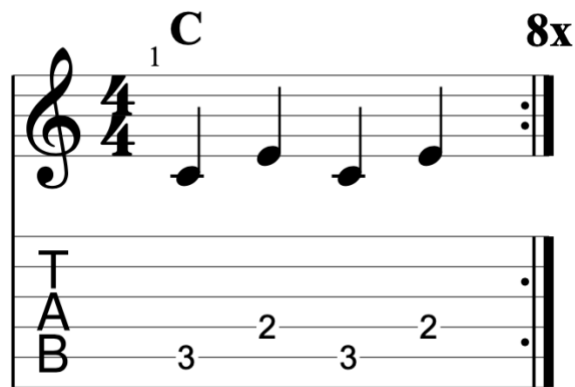
It may have been a challenge but stick with it!

The best way to approach this exercise is:

- 1) Play two bass notes
- 2) Adding the notes with the fingers (filling it in)

Let's apply that technique now with a C chord and then an Em chord

Alternate Bass in C



Alternate Bass with E Minor

Play the Em chord with the right hand.

Em **8x**

1

TAB

0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2

And then I fill in with the fingers (doing a 1-2-3 or index-middle-ring finger picking)

Em **8x**

1 2

TAB

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Three Patterns

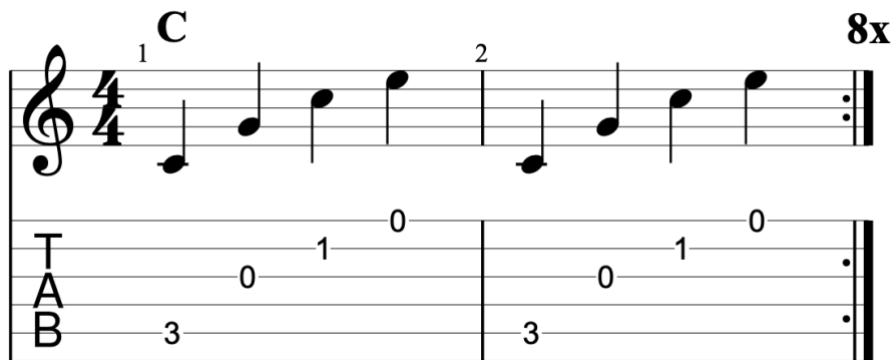
So there are three patterns I would like to share with you to get you playing bass notes on different strings each time. The best way to get familiar is just to play them.

The first one is on a **D chord**.

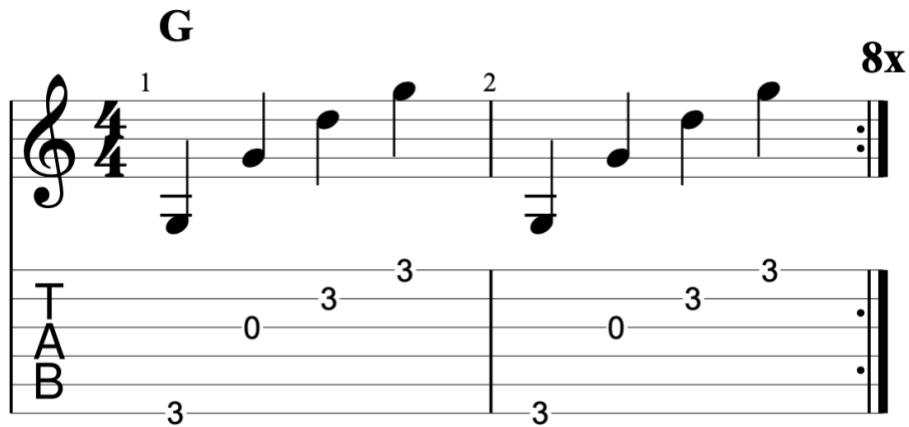
The bass note here is on the 4th string which the thumb will play (because the thumb always plays our bass notes!) and we get a T123



The second one is on a **C chord**. The bass note here is on the 5th string and we play T123 T123



The third one is on a **G chord**. The bass note here is on the 6th string and we play T123T123



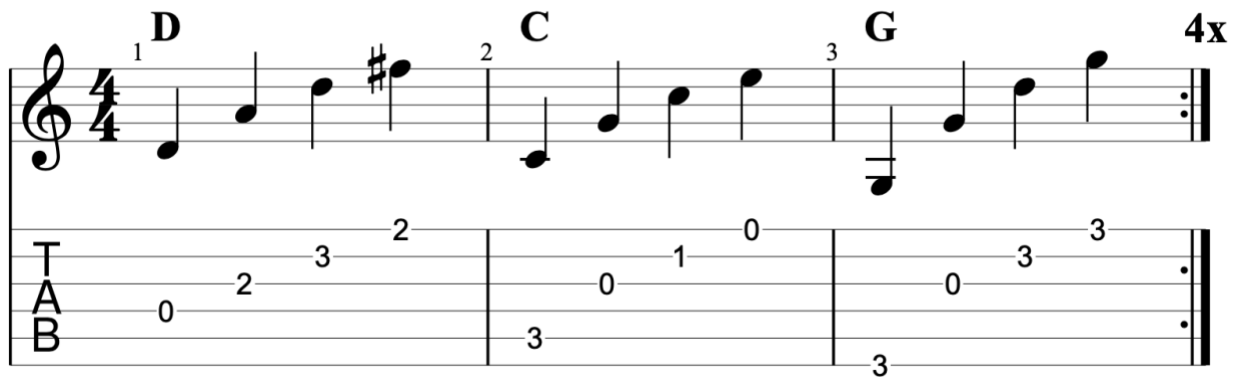
You might notice that these three patterns are very similar.

They are the same apart from the bass notes - which was on the 4th string for D pattern, 5th string for C pattern and 6th string for G pattern.

Exercise

Your exercise for today is to play these three patterns back to back (i.e one after another)

It is going to sound like this.



Assignment

Try playing T123 using 2 chords that have a 6th string bass.

Playing T123 over E and G would be one example of this.

As a bonus, try changing from E to A with a T123.

Note that the thumb plays the 6th string bass over E and a 5th string bass over A!

3.3 – Goes Both Ways

Last Exercise

Our assignment was to play the T123 pattern over E and G (both 6th note bass chords)

The image shows a musical exercise in 4/4 time. The top staff is in treble clef. The first measure is labeled '1 E' and contains a bass line (E2), a sharp sign, and a melodic line (F#4, G4, A4). The second measure is labeled '2 G' and contains a bass line (G2), a sharp sign, and a melodic line (A4, B4, C5). The exercise is repeated four times, indicated by '4x' at the end. Below the staff is a guitar TAB. The first measure has fret numbers 1, 0, 0 on the strings. The second measure has fret numbers 0, 3, 3. The TAB is repeated four times.

E to A with T123

We have a 6th string bass note on E and a 5th string bass note on A
Putting those together, we get this:

The image shows a musical exercise in 4/4 time, similar to the previous one. The top staff is in treble clef. The first measure is labeled '1 E' and contains a bass line (E2), a sharp sign, and a melodic line (F#4, G4, A4). The second measure is labeled '2 A' and contains a bass line (A2), a sharp sign, and a melodic line (B4, C5, D5). The exercise is repeated four times, indicated by '4x' at the end. Below the staff is a guitar TAB. The first measure has fret numbers 1, 0, 0 on the strings. The second measure has fret numbers 2, 2, 0. The TAB is repeated four times.

That sounds great.

The E to A change is one you might hear a lot in the future. If you are playing blues in the key of E, then you will use the A chord. To play a full 12 bar blues you need another chord which we haven't covered yet but worth just mentioning now that E and A are good chords together.

Let's try something new where we are going to play two bass notes over a G chord. You might remember we play this:

G

8x

Now we do it with a slight twist. And we play it like this T123 (thumb on 5th string) and **then** T123 (thumb on 6th string)

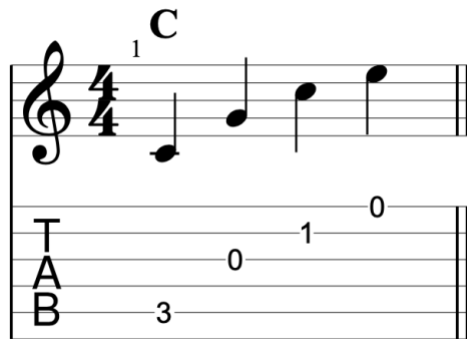
G

8x

It's quite a different sound. It's quite interesting to see what the difference when we start with a higher note and then play a lower one.

Let's take another example - Let's play a C chord.

It's a 5th string chord - the bass note is played with the thumb on the 5th string.

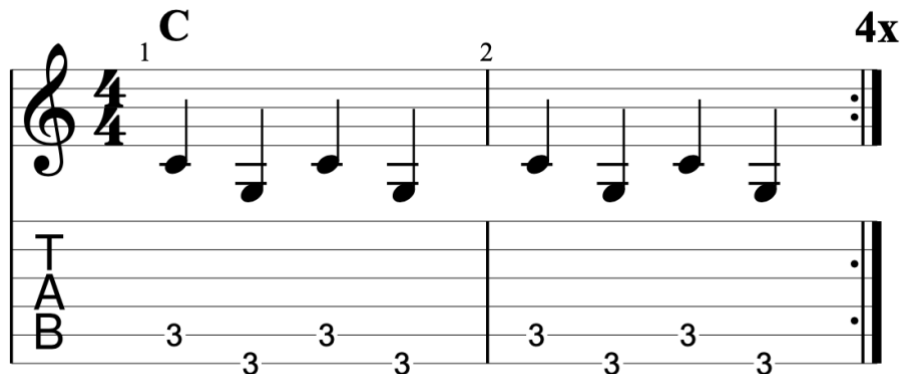


A Little Trick with the C Chord

Now we're going to do a little trick.

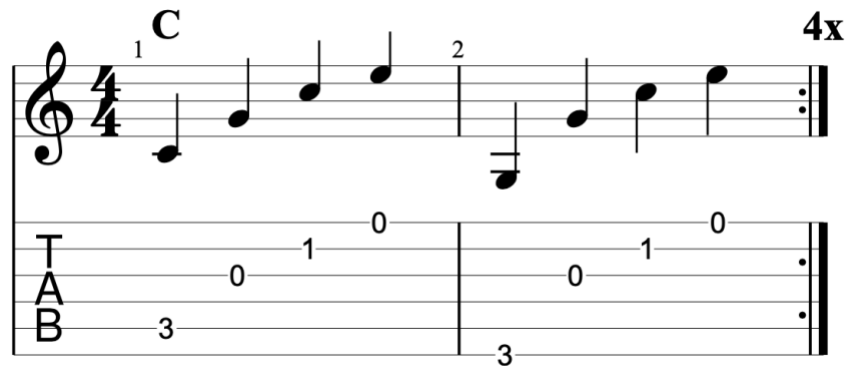
We're going to take the third finger of the left hand and move him up a string (from the 5th string to the 6 string) and keep the rest of the left hand fingers fretting the C chord and not leaving the fretboard. So the first finger and second finger stay holding down strings and the third finger moves up and down the 5th and 6th strings.

Leave the C chord fretted. Just play the thumb part of this for a minute or two.



You can probably guess what comes next - we add the 123 part.

When we do, it sounds like this.

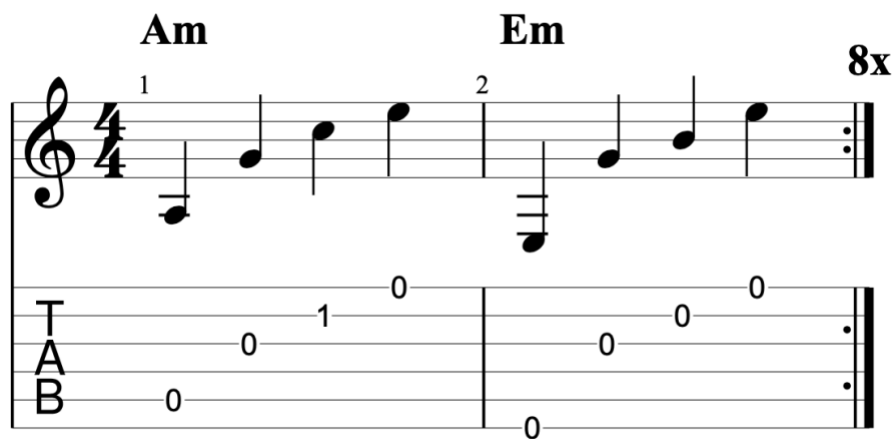


If that sounds a little bit like Simon & Garfunkel's the Boxer, that's because it is indeed more or less the pattern of that intro. It is a chord and pattern that you will hear in lots of songs.

A Pattern in A minor to E minor

We take an A minor (thumb is on the 5th string) and an E minor (thumb on 6th string)

Put those together. Sounds good!



Putting It Together

You might notice that both exercise have thumb on 5th then thumb on 6th. The first Simon & Garfunkely one and then the second which has two different chords.

Putting that together you get.

The image shows a musical score for a guitar exercise in 4/4 time. The top staff is a treble clef with a melody line. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a bass line. The melody consists of four measures, each starting with a thumb (T) on the 5th string and a bass line (B) on the 6th string. The chords are C, Am, and Em. The bass line is a simple pattern of 0, 1, 0, 3. The melody is a simple pattern of 0, 1, 0, 3. The exercise is labeled with 1, 2, 3, 4 above the measures.

This is sounding quite musical.

The thumb starting with 5th string then 6th string creates a nice effect.

Exercise

The exercise is just to play this exercise for a good 15-20 minutes

Get that thumb to feel it is hitting the right string almost automatically!

If you find it difficult, don't worry as we'll give you some help in the next section. But give it a go, and if you get the hang of it, start to play around and experiment and have fun as always...

3.4 – Walking Bass

Last Exercise

How did you get on with the last exercise?

1 C 2 Am 3 Am 4 Em

If it was challenging, I suggest isolating the bass.

Below is an example of just playing the bassline part.

Play only this for a couple of minutes – then add back in the other notes

1 C 2 Am Em 8x

This is a great tip in general as you try to master fingerpicking pieces.

Take some time to play just the thumb parts and then revert to playing it all.

Passing Notes and Walking the Bass

We will now look at adding some passing notes to our basslines

The motivation is to get more *movement* in the bassline.

A bass player typically adds some in-between notes in between the chord changes they are playing over. Now we'll do the same.

Am to C Passing Note

Here is a straight version of a bassline over Am to C

Am C 4x

1 2

T
A
B

0 0 0 0 3 3 3 3

This musical notation shows a straight bassline in 4/4 time. The first measure, labeled '1' and 'Am', contains four quarter notes: C2, C3, F3, and A3. The second measure, labeled '2' and 'C', contains four quarter notes: C3, E3, G3, and C4. The notation is repeated four times, indicated by '4x'. The bass staff shows the fret numbers: 0 0 0 0 for the first measure and 3 3 3 3 for the second measure.

Let's add an intermediate note - to give a better sense of movement.

Am C 4x

1 2

T
A
B

0 0 0 0 2 3 3 3 3

This musical notation shows a bassline with a passing note. The first measure, labeled '1' and 'Am', contains five eighth notes: C2, C3, F3, A3, and B3. The second measure, labeled '2' and 'C', contains four quarter notes: C3, E3, G3, and C4. The notation is repeated four times, indicated by '4x'. The bass staff shows the fret numbers: 0 0 0 0 2 for the first measure and 3 3 3 3 for the second measure. A green arrow points to the '2' fret in the first measure, highlighting the intermediate note B3.

Note that you do not stay on this intermediate note for very long, it is more of a passing note - on the way to where we are going. When we have a lot of movement like that in the bass, it feels like a walking bass. It feels like the bass is just walking along!

Em to G Passing Note

This is very similar to our example above – with different chords (Em and G). Here is the “straight” version.

Musical notation for the “straight” version of the Em to G transition. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff (TAB). The treble staff shows a sequence of notes: E4, G4, B4, D5 (labeled 1) and G4, B4, D5, E5 (labeled 2). The bass staff shows a sequence of notes: 0, 0, 0, 0 (labeled 1) and 3, 3, 3, 3 (labeled 2). The chords Em and G are indicated above the staves. The notation is repeated 4 times (4x).

And now here is a version with a passing bass note.

Musical notation for the Em to G transition with a passing bass note. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff (TAB). The treble staff shows a sequence of notes: E4, G4, B4, D5 (labeled 1) and G4, B4, D5, E5 (labeled 2). The bass staff shows a sequence of notes: 0, 0, 0, 0 (labeled 1) and 2, 3, 3, 3 (labeled 2). The chord G is indicated above the second measure of the bass staff. A green arrow points to the bass note 2 in the second measure. The notation is repeated 4 times (4x).

Putting it together

You can now play both of these basslines together

Musical notation for the combined basslines. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff (TAB). The treble staff shows a sequence of notes: E4, G4, B4, D5 (labeled 1) and G4, B4, D5, E5 (labeled 2) and E4, G4, B4, D5 (labeled 3) and G4, B4, D5, E5 (labeled 4). The bass staff shows a sequence of notes: 0, 0, 0, 0 (labeled 1) and 2, 3, 3, 3 (labeled 2) and 0, 0, 0, 0 (labeled 3) and 2, 3, 3, 3 (labeled 4). The chords Am, C, Em, and G are indicated above the staves. The notation is repeated 4 times (4x).

Arpeggio with Passing Note (Am to C)

Now we add the fingers to our bassline – giving us a T123 arpeggio followed by a bassline with a passing note.

Sheet music for the Am to C arpeggio with a passing note. The music is in 3/4 time. The top staff shows the melody with notes: A2 (1), B2 (2), C3 (3), D3 (4), E3, F3, G3, A3. The bottom staff shows the bassline with notes: A1 (0), B1 (0), C2 (1), D2 (0), E2 (2), F2 (3), G2 (0), A2 (1). The bassline is labeled T123. The piece ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign, marked 4x.

Let's break this down into three parts:

- T123 in A minor
- Then open, 2nd fret, 3rd fret on the 5th string (all played by the thumb)
- T123 in C

Arpeggio with Passing Note (Am to C)

Over the chords of Em and G, we have

- T123 in E minor
- Then open, 2nd fret, 3rd fret on the 6th string (all played by the thumb)
- T123 in G

Sheet music for the Em to G arpeggio with a passing note. The music is in 3/4 time. The top staff shows the melody with notes: E2 (1), F2 (2), G2 (3), A2 (4), B2, C3, D3, E3. The bottom staff shows the bassline with notes: E1 (0), F1 (0), G1 (0), A1 (2), B1 (3), C2 (0), D2 (3), E2 (0). The bassline is labeled T123. The piece ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign, marked 4x.

Exercise

Your exercise is to play the two changes:

- 1) Am to C
- 2) Em to G

And to practice putting those middle notes in.

Play both of these for 10 minutes each.

And then put the two of those changes together

The image shows two musical exercises for guitar, each with a treble clef staff and a bass staff. The first exercise is for the Am to C change. The treble staff shows a sequence of notes: 1 (A), 2 (B), 3 (C), 4 (D). The bass staff shows the corresponding fret numbers: 0, 1, 2, 3. The second exercise is for the Em to G change. The treble staff shows a sequence of notes: 5 (A), 6 (B), 7 (C), 8 (D). The bass staff shows the corresponding fret numbers: 0, 1, 2, 3. The exercises are labeled 'Am' and 'C' for the first, and 'Em' and 'G' for the second. The second exercise is marked with a repeat sign and '4x'.

A Review: Where We Are Now

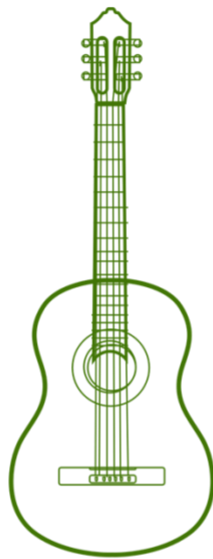
And feel good about what we are playing now.

We have gone from just fretting the chord and fingerpicking certain notes of the chord into actually playing bass notes now that are not part of the chord.

Now your thumb will play things that actually sound much more like a bass player playing.

As we try to go to that sound of two guitars playing at once - all played by you (one guitar player), then freeing up the thumb to play baselines like this is a huge part of that. I'm really excited for you to spend some time on this technique and master it.

In the next two sections, we are going to put it all together and learn two new songs that put together all of the various techniques that we have learned thus far. Can't wait to see you then.



Section 4

The Fingers

4.1 – Finger Pattern 1

In the last section, we learned many ways of using the thumb (alternate bass, passing bass notes and different bass patterns). The goal was to develop our thumb playing so that later we can play bass ideas similar to what a bass player might play.

We now focus on the other fingers of the right hand (index, middle and ring finger). Building on the thumb work we did in the last section, we can now investigate patterns that use these fingers in different ways.

We will start with the D chord. Here is something we played in the last section. Note the thumb plays the 4th string and we have a T123 pattern. How can we make this more interesting

The image shows musical notation for a D chord pattern in 4/4 time. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#), indicating the key of D major. The pattern is labeled 'D' at the top left and '8x' at the top right. The notation consists of two measures. In the first measure, the right hand (RH) plays a sequence of notes: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), and D4 (quarter). The left hand (LH) plays a sequence of notes: D3 (half), E3 (half), F#3 (half), and D3 (half). The second measure is identical to the first. The notation is labeled 'T123' at the top left, indicating the finger pattern used for the right hand (Thumb, Index, Middle, Ring).

T213 Pattern in D

Keeping the thumb the same, we can change the order of the right-hand fingers. Let's see what it would look like if we played T213 instead (where we use the right hand thumb, right-hand middle finger, right-hand index finger then finally right-hand ring finger).

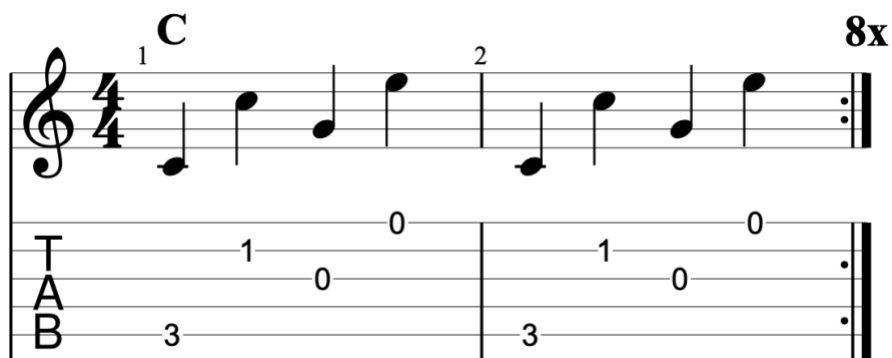


Because we have played mostly T123 patterns up until now, this example requires different muscle memory and may take some practice. But it's worth sticking with, and if you play it for a few days will become second nature and no problem at all.

T213 Pattern in C

We now adapt the T213 pattern and adapt it to a C chord.

Note the thumb playing the 5th string (as is the default for a C chord as we saw in the last section).



T213 Pattern in G

Now we adapt the T213 to a G chord.

Note the thumb playing the 6th string (as is the default for a G chord).

G

8x

Exercise

Play T213 in D, then C then G. You are going to therefore have the 4th string bass, then 5th string bass and then 6th string bass.

D C G

4x

Play this for 10-15 minutes. Feel free to try it with different chords, feel free to play it faster or slower or to even try to make it sound 'happy' or 'sad'. Play with it and make it your own and we'll examine your progress in the next section.

4.1 – Finger Pattern 2

Last Assignment

Were fingers were behaving themselves during that last assignment? It does take some time for the right hand fingers to 'open up' so if you haven't got it yet, just slow down and keep practicing!

Let us now learn a new pattern -T132.

We can play this on C, then G, then Am.

T132 in C

In C, it sounds like this. (Bass note on the 5th string for C)

Musical notation for the T132 pattern in C major. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of two measures. The first measure is labeled '1' and the second measure is labeled '2'. The pattern is repeated 8 times, indicated by '8x' at the end. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a bass line with fingerings (0, 1, 3) and a repeat sign.

T132 in G

In G, it sounds like this (Bass note on the 6th string for G)

Musical notation for the T132 pattern in G major. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of two measures. The first measure is labeled '1' and the second measure is labeled '2'. The pattern is repeated 8 times, indicated by '8x' at the end. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a bass line with fingerings (0, 3, 3) and a repeat sign.

T132 in A minor

In A minor (often written Am), it sounds like this. (Bass note on the 5th string for Am)

Am **8x**

1 2

T 0 1 0 1

A 2 2

B 0 0

Exercise

If we put all those together, it sounds like this.

Note the thumb will play bass notes on 5th string, 6th string, 5th string.

C G Am **4x**

1 2 3 4

T 0 1 3 3 0 1 0 1

A 0 0 0 0 2 2 2 2

B 3 3 0 0 0 0 0 0

Now you can hear some nice 'movement' in the melody - it is not always going 'up' and 'down' like T123 sounds. So you get a really nice feel when playing this.

Exercise

Your exercise is to play this for 15 minutes, and maybe try it also with some other chords? Or try with these chords in different order? Play this pattern until it feels comfortable and you can play it naturally.

4.1 – Finger Pattern 3

T232

We will now examine a new pattern –T232.

Here you may notice that we don't use the '1' at all. There is no rule that says we have to!

This pattern will feel comfortable if you play it a couple of days for 20 or 30 minutes!

Don't lose heart if something feels awkward. This shows that we are doing the work - we are building dexterity and flexibility. Your fingers are literally in the gym and after all this training, the future is that you'll be able to see a piece of fingerpicking music and your fingers can play it whatever it is.

T232 in D

It looks like this:

The musical notation for T232 in D major is shown. The treble staff contains the melody, and the bass staff (labeled T, A, B) shows the fingerings for the thumb, index, and middle fingers. The pattern is repeated 8 times, indicated by '8x' at the end.

T232 in A

Note the thumb plays bass is on the 5th string

A **8x**

TAB

T232 in C

Note the thumb plays bass is on the 5th string

C **8x**

TAB

T232 in G

Note the thumb plays bass is on the 6th string

G **8x**

TAB

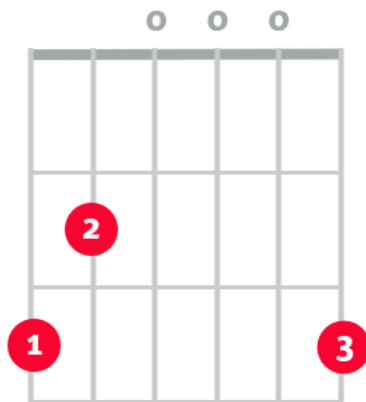
Two types of G chord

I want to point out there are different *types* of G chord (different voicings of the G chord).

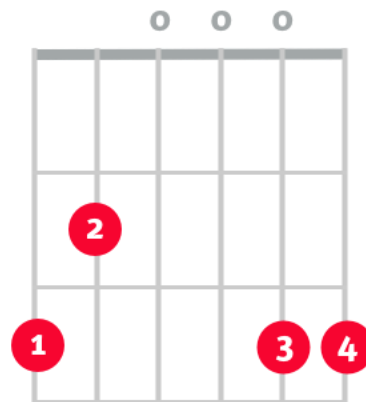
The G chord we have used up until now that had the left hand ring finger playing the 2nd string at the 3rd fret. If you just take the left hand ring finger off the fretboard (meaning the 2nd string or B string is open), then it is still a G chord!

The same pattern played with an open 5th string looks like this. Either G pattern will do. Play both and see which one you prefer.

G Major Chord

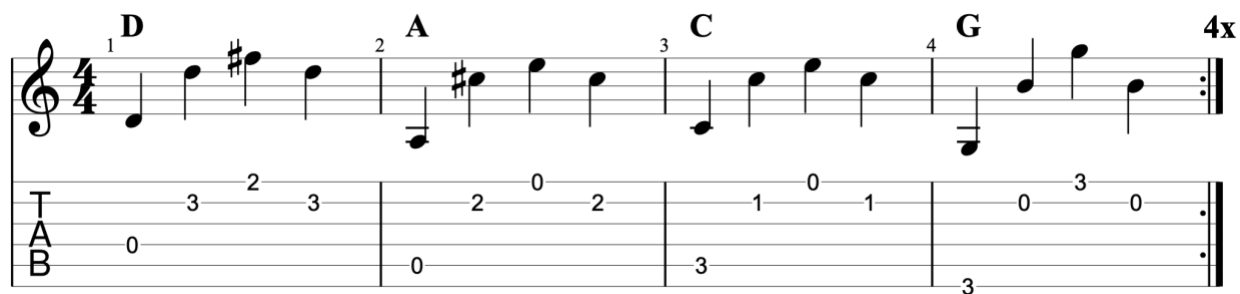


G Major Chord



Exercise

Play the four T232 patterns consecutively - so that you are playing T232 over four different chords.



Review

It's a good moment to look at how far we have come:

- We are changing between four different chords
- We are playing a T232 pattern in each
- We are playing the bass note is on different strings for each chord

Nice work. The exercise is to play this for 15-20 minutes and as always, it's a great idea to try this pattern on different chords. But make sure you master this exercise first!

4.1 – Six Note Sequences

Until now, we have played sequences or repeating patterns of notes that are four notes long. For example, T123 is a bass note played with the thumb then three notes with the fingers; four in total.

We want to expand our patterns a little bit more by experimenting with the length of the pattern. Rather than our pattern being four notes long, we want to play patterns that are six notes long.

Six Notes: T12323

Let's start with T12123.

This is a thumb playing a bass note then five notes with the fingers

Let's play it in D

D

8x

Now let's play it in C.

C

8x

We can put D and C together and see what that pattern sounds like.

The image shows a musical score for a guitar exercise. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a tablature staff. The treble staff is in 6/8 time and contains two measures. The first measure is labeled 'D' and contains a sixteenth-note pattern: D4 (finger 1), E4 (finger 2), F#4 (finger 3), G4 (finger 3), A4 (finger 2), and B4 (finger 1). The second measure is labeled 'C' and contains a similar sixteenth-note pattern: C4 (finger 2), D4 (finger 1), E4 (finger 0), F4 (finger 1), G4 (finger 1), and A4 (finger 0). The pattern is repeated four times, indicated by a '4x' at the end. The tablature staff shows the fret numbers for each note: 0, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2 for the D measure and 0, 1, 0, 1, 0, 3 for the C measure.

And it sounds really nice.

Create Your Own 6 Note Pattern

And we can create a new six note pattern by playing a bass note with the thumb then any other five notes with the fingers.

Let's have a look at T13232 for example, over the D and C chords

The image shows a musical score for a guitar exercise, similar to the one above. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a tablature staff. The treble staff is in 6/8 time and contains two measures. The first measure is labeled 'D' and contains a sixteenth-note pattern: D4 (finger 1), E4 (finger 2), F#4 (finger 3), G4 (finger 2), A4 (finger 3), and B4 (finger 2). The second measure is labeled 'C' and contains a similar sixteenth-note pattern: C4 (finger 2), D4 (finger 1), E4 (finger 0), F4 (finger 1), G4 (finger 1), and A4 (finger 0). The pattern is repeated four times, indicated by a '4x' at the end. The tablature staff shows the fret numbers for each note: 0, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2 for the D measure and 0, 1, 0, 1, 0, 3 for the C measure.

Exercise

Your exercise for today is to play this pattern in D, C and G and make sure it sounds good - nice clean notes and keep the rhythm.

4.5 – Create Your Own Fingerpicking Sequences

Last Exercise

If you tried to do the six note T-1-2-3-2-3 pattern over the chords D then C then G, it would look like this:

The image shows a musical score for a fingerpicking exercise. The top staff is in treble clef, 8/8 time, and contains four measures of music. The first measure is for a D chord (F#), the second for a C chord, the third for a G chord, and the fourth for a G chord. The notes are: D4, F#4, A4, G4, F#4, E4 in the first measure; C4, E4, G4, F4, E4, D4 in the second measure; G3, B3, D4, C4, B3, A3 in the third measure; and G3, B3, D4, C4, B3, A3 in the fourth measure. The bottom staff shows the fingerpicking pattern for each measure. The first measure has a thumb (T) on the first beat and fingers 2, 3, 2, 3 on the second, third, fourth, and fifth beats. The second measure has a thumb on the first beat and fingers 0, 1, 0, 1 on the second, third, fourth, and fifth beats. The third measure has a thumb on the first beat and fingers 3, 3, 3 on the second, third, and fourth beats. The fourth measure has a thumb on the first beat and fingers 3, 3, 3 on the second, third, and fourth beats. The exercise is repeated four times, indicated by a '4x' at the end.

Create Your Own Fingerpicking Sequences

Today I want to talk to you about something that is revolutionary for your learning, and indeed your guitar enjoyment.

I have done this with many students and it has always had a fantastic response.

I will give you a formula so you can make up your own fingerpicking patterns.

It is a simple formula.

You take your numbers 1, 2 and 3 and make a sequence of digits that is either 3, 5 or 7 digits long.

So 3-2-1 is a sequence of length three.

And 2-3-2-3-1 is a sequence of length five.

And 1-3-2-3-1-3-2 is a sequence of length seven.

Then play a thumb and then you play the pattern you have written down and then the fingers will play whatever pattern you have written down.

I highly recommend that you go and do this right now. Pause the tape and then

I am going to illustrate this by inventing my own pattern that is five long.

And I'm going to do 1-3-2-3-2 (see it is five numbers long).

So I add the thumb T-1-3-2-3-2.

And I choose a chord of Am.

Play the same fingerpicking pattern now over the chord of C

And then back to Am and putting them together you get

Assignment

- Get a pen and paper out
- Make some lists where you jumble up the numbers 1, 2 and 3
- Make it three, five or seven numbers long
- Add the thumb before the number pattern you have written down.
- Choose chords to play this pattern on. Am and C is nice. But try others too

Do this for at least two patterns.

4.6 – Pinching

Welcome back and today we are going to talk about a really cool technique called “Pinching”.

Imagine a guitar player and bass player playing in a room together. Sometimes they will be playing different notes. But *sometimes* they will also play the same note at the same time!

So if you want to get that sound of two guitars playing at once (or a guitar player and bass player playing together), then we need to be able to play a bass note and also other higher notes at the same time.

If you were to look at me playing this G chord - playing the bass note on 6th string and playing the 3rd finger, this action looks a bit like me *pinching* something.

Let’s illustrate this in G – taking the 3212 pattern.

G

8x

Add a G bass note at the start of each bar:

G

8x

Do the same with the chord of C
This will be the same finger pattern of 3-2-1-2

C

8x

Add the C bass note (thumb plays 5th string):

C

8x

Now let's play those two patterns back to back

Musical notation for a guitar exercise in 4/4 time. The exercise consists of four measures, each with a treble clef staff and a TAB staff. Measure 1 is labeled 'G' and contains a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) on the treble staff and a triplet of zeros on the TAB staff. Measure 2 is labeled 'C' and contains a triplet of eighth notes (C4, D4, E4) on the treble staff and a triplet of zeros on the TAB staff. Measure 3 is labeled 'C' and contains a triplet of eighth notes (C4, D4, E4) on the treble staff and a triplet of zeros on the TAB staff. Measure 4 is labeled '4x' and contains a triplet of eighth notes (C4, D4, E4) on the treble staff and a triplet of zeros on the TAB staff. The exercise is repeated four times.

Review

This is a really musical example – it sounds great!

The thumb plays the 6th string over G and the 5th string over C.

We have a nice pattern of 3-2-1-2 with the fingers.

And we're adding some pinching on top of these.

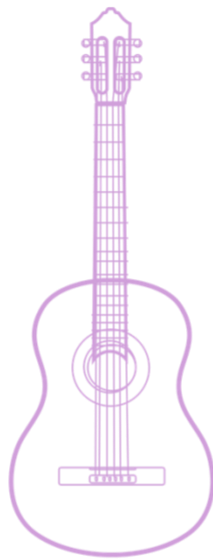
Exercise

Practice this for a while.

I also encourage you to try the same exercise but in other chords of your choice!

If you're stuck for inspiration, then what about Am and C as a suggestion?

Lots to practice, see you in the next lesson.



Section 5

Advanced Techniques

5.1 – Travis Picking

In this section, the really fun stuff begins!

Everything you have learned up until now allows us to dive into more advanced techniques such as Travis picking and the Clawhammer style.

To play these styles effectively, we begin with the thumb and focus on the steady rhythm of the thumb playing alternate bass.

A Simple Exercise

Fret a G chord and we will add layer by layer until we have a Travis picking style. For this simple pattern, the thumb plays the 6th string and the other fingers play a string each.

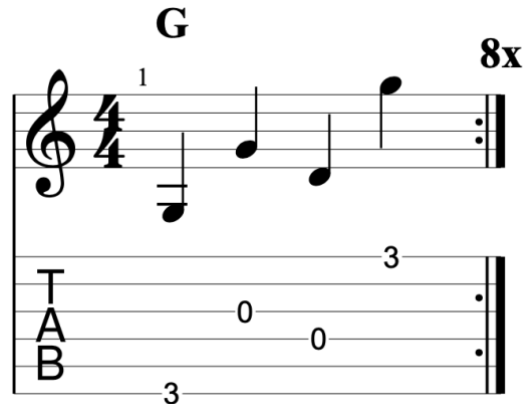


Using the Thumb Twice

Now instead of playing T123, let's use the thumb twice.

Let's play "thumb, index finger" and then "thumb, third finger" - written as T1 then T3.

The first time the thumb will play the 6th string. The second time it plays the 4th string.



Play that for a few minutes until it feels comfortable. This is a little different to what we have played in previous lessons so it will take a bit of time to feel natural.

The main difference between this and the simple exercise above is that the thumb is playing two notes out of four and therefore it must jump between the 6th string and the 4th string.

Watching The Thumb

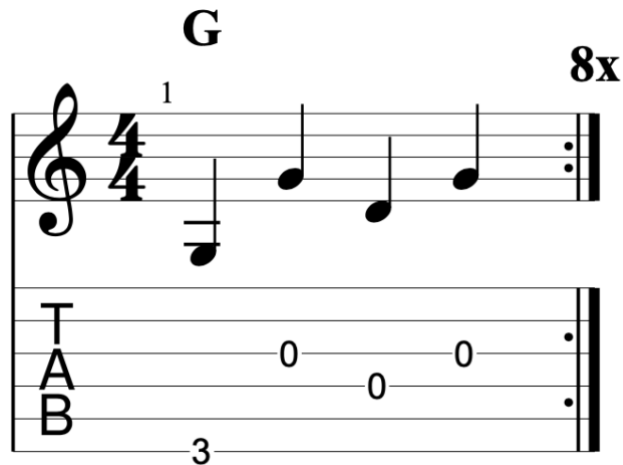
You might remember our big rule when it comes to fingerpicking: the thumb plays the lowest three strings.

Watch the thumb of the right hand move between the two bass notes as you play it for a few minutes. Actually look at it while you play! This will help speed up the ‘automation’ that we want to develop in that thumb.

Assignment

Your assignment is to play a similar piece – T1T1

The first thumb is on the 6th string and the next thumb is on the 4th string (as before).



Now, you must spend time playing this pattern.

- Sometimes you might hit into the wrong string. It doesn't matter, keep playing and slow down if you're not playing it accurately.
- Make sure you are hitting the notes cleanly.
- Make sure you are using the right fingers

Tips

First question, did you stick to the Big Rule?

If one finger started to play each string (instead of one per string), go back and check out the exercises we had to correct that.

You need to spend hours before this feels truly comfortable. Allow yourself to spend a couple of hours on these exercises if it feels good and it feels like you are making progress.

This thumb movement combined with fingers is the core of Travis picking, so it's worth the time you put in.

5.2 – The Inside Outside Pattern

Last Assignment

It is so important to get that thumb keeping constant time and playing bass notes cleanly.



If you want to make sure your timing is good, you can use a metronome.

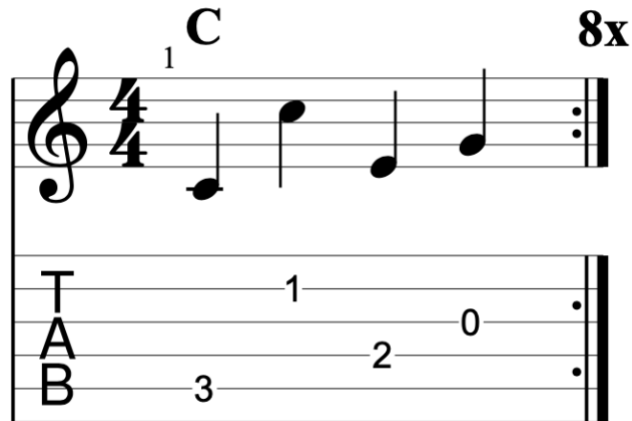
This movement of the thumb from 6th string to 4th and back - this is the movement that you need to get comfortable with and should have been doing in those last exercises.

Now we are going to learn a new pattern - the outside in pattern.

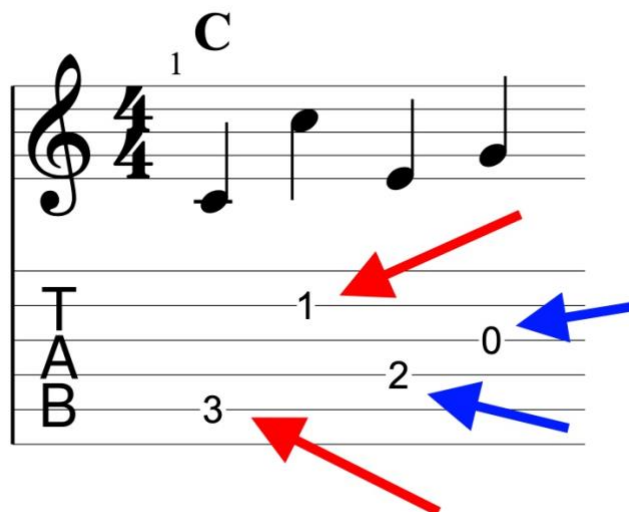
Outside-In in C

Fret a C chord with your left hand.

Now play T2T1 where the first thumb is on the 5th string and the second thumb note is on the 4th string.



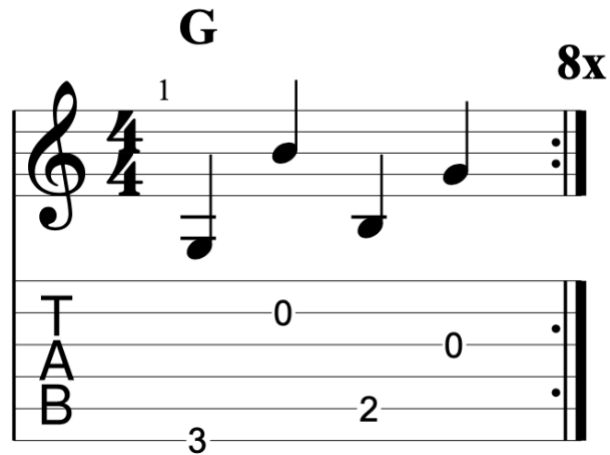
If you want to understand why this is called “outside inside”, look at what I am playing, the first two notes are on the “outside” strings (red arrows) and then the next two notes are on the two “inside” strings (blue arrows).



Outside-In in G

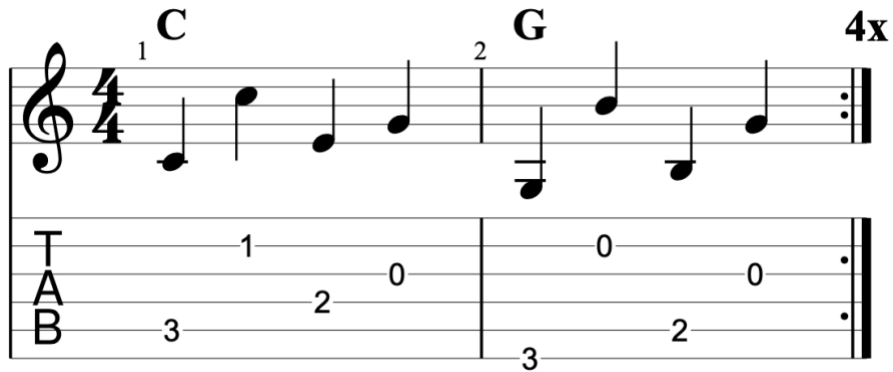
Let's play an outside-in pattern in G.

The pattern is T2T1 where the first thumb is on the 6th string and the second thumb note in on the 5th string.



Change Chord Exercise

And a good exercise is to take a pattern and change chords will doing it. So let's try this in C and then change to G.



Assignment

Your assignment has two parts.

1. Take this pattern that I have shown you in this lesson and practice it.
2. Take two new chords and apply this pattern to it.
(A good choice would be A minor, but choose any chords you like)

I do want to point out that what you are trying to get the feel of here is to get that thumb moving. Isolate the thumb part and play it on its own for a few minutes.

1 C 2 G

TAB 3 2 3 2

Then you can add all the notes to it

1 C 2 G 4x

TAB 1 2 3 0 2 3 0 2 3

5.3 – Building Up Travis Picking

Last Assignment – Inside Out picking

Let's go over the last exercise.

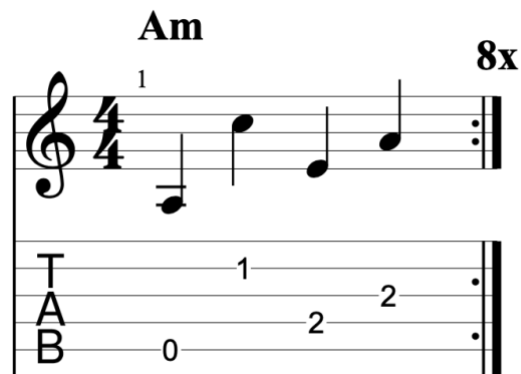
The focus is to keep a steady timing and play those bass notes accurately and smoothly.

I challenged you to apply the outside in pattern to two chords of your choice.

Let me show you an example – using A minor and C as my two chords.

For A minor (written Am), the pattern used is T2T1 (thumb, second finger, thumb first finger)

The first thumb is on the 5th string, the second thumb is on the 4th string.



If you visualize this pattern as the two outside notes (red arrows) then the two inside notes (blue arrows), then I think that helps

Am

Now that you can play it in Am, you can mix it with other chords.
Let's see what it sounds like if we change Am to C playing this pattern

Am C 4x

Back to Travis Picking in G

Let's examine the thumb actions needed to play Travis picking. Let's start in G. Fret a G chord with the left hand.

For this exercise, the thumb here actually plays all of these notes (all four notes!) We play thumb on the 6th string, then the 4th string, then the 5th string then the 4th string.

G

8x

Add a Melody Note

Now let's add one melody note. We will play it on the 3rd string (so index finger or first finger will play it) and we put it between the first and second bass note.

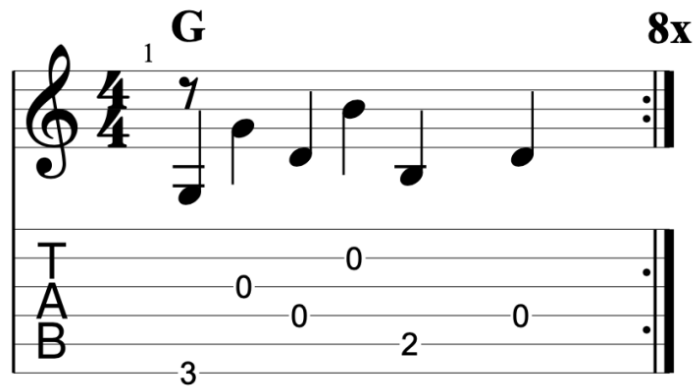
G

8x

So now we have introduced one melody note (played by one of the fingers) into our Travis playing thumb exercise.

The next step is to add another melody note.

Add a second Melody Note



The thumb is still playing 6th - 4th - 5th - 4th strings in that order.

We have the note we added above and another new note played between the 2nd and 3rd bass notes (on the second string and played with finger 2 – our middle finger).

Our pattern is T1T2TT

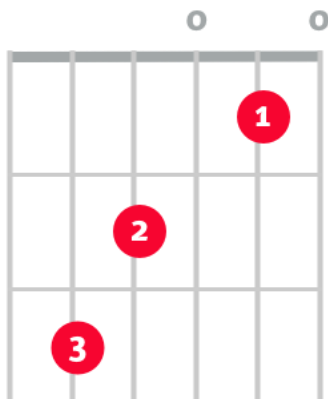
Fretting a New Type of C

I tend to fret the C chord a bit differently when playing Travis Picking style.

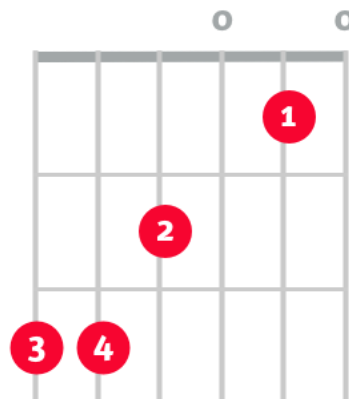
I fret the 3rd fret of the 6th string.

The reasons that I am doing that is that all 6 strings are fretted and I can pluck all 6.

C Major Chord

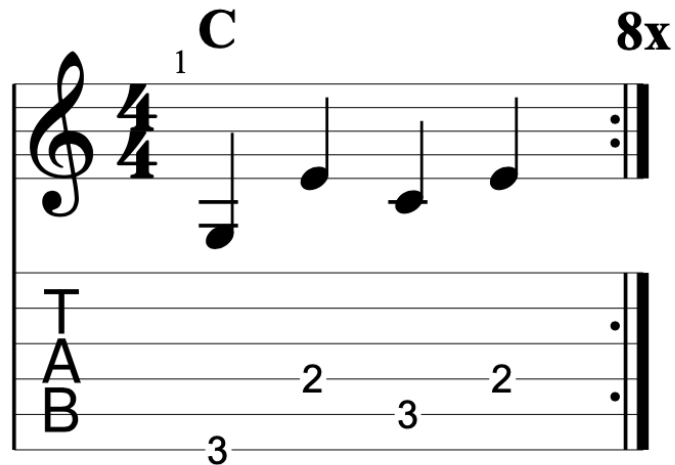


C Major Chord

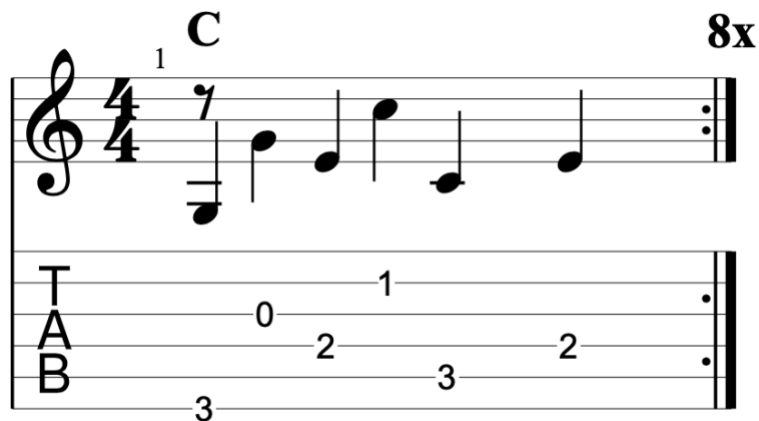


Travis Picking in C

With that fretting, I can now play a bass pattern like this with the thumb using a 6-4-5-4 pattern.



Let's add two melody notes like we did above in the example in G. (pattern of T1T2TT)



Now are Travis picking on a C chord!

Assignment

Practice both of the Travis picking patterns that we have seen in this lesson (the first had one melody note and the next one had two melody notes).

Practice them both in G and then in C.

Tips

Take this really slowly. You don't master this in 5 minutes.

There are times when your thumb will not behave! It's ok. Take a five minute break and come back to it.

This is certainly worth mastering. The road to getting there will involve some moments where it seems difficult but after a few hours, but you will get there if you stick with it. Trust me.

5.4 – Isolate & Build

Last Assignment

Travis Picking is not easy.

It may well be the most challenging thing you have tried to do on a guitar.

So do we give up if we don't get it immediately? Of course not.

This lesson recaps how to build up a travis picking pattern.

If you're finding it difficult, then go back to the bass and add a note and then another and then another.

Let's see what this looks like with a G chord.

We isolate the thumb. Let's just get a solid bassline to begin with.

Note the thumb plays the 6th - 4th - 5th - 4th strings in that order.

Let's take a scenario where I'm trying to learn this and I'm finding it really hard.

I'll just play with the thumb, just playing the bass notes.

The image shows musical notation for a G chord bassline in 4/4 time. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The notation shows a sequence of four quarter notes: G4, E4, D4, and G4. Above the first note is a '1' indicating the first finger. Above the staff is a 'G' indicating the chord. Above the last note is an '8x' indicating an eighth note repeat. The bottom staff is a tablature staff with five lines. The notes are represented by numbers: 3, 0, 2, 0. Above the first two notes are 'T' and 'A' indicating the thumb and index finger. Above the last two notes are 'B' and '0' indicating the bass finger and an open string. The tablature staff ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

And then I'll add a melody (high) note

1 **G** **8x**

T
A
B

0 0 2 0

3

And then a second melody note

1 **G** **8x**

T
A
B

0 0 2 0

3

And a third melody note

1 **G** **8x**

T
A
B

0 0 2 0

3

Summary

This is a really important and practical strategy. You isolate the thumb and add one note at a time until you have a complete fingerpicking pattern mastered.

You will use this approach for your entire guitar-playing and fingerpicking life to flip back, isolate the thumb and build as you are learning new pieces.

Exercise

Play this pattern for 15 min

Have lots of fun, take your time, be patient and I'll see you in the next lesson.

5.5 – Pinching & Travis Picking

Pinching

Blending the pinch technique with Travis picking produces a really nice effect where we play bass with the thumb and some melody notes *at the same time* as that bass note.

On & Off

If I want to pinch in G, I might play these two notes and then I ‘pinch’ and play them together.

Diagram illustrating the 'Pinching' technique in G major, 4/4 time, 8 measures. The notation shows a treble clef staff and a bass staff (TAB). The treble staff starts with a G4 note (labeled '1' above it) and a G5 note (labeled 'G' above it) played simultaneously. The bass staff shows the following fret numbers: 0 (T), 0 (A), 2 (B), 0 (T), 0 (A), 2 (B), 0 (T), 0 (A). The notation is marked with a 'G' above the first measure and an '8x' at the end, indicating 8 measures.

Because I play the melody note at the same time as the bass note, I can think of it as being “on” the bass note.

If I played a melody note in-between bass notes, then it is “off” the beat of bass notes.

Diagram illustrating the 'Pinching' technique in G major, 4/4 time, 8 measures. The notation shows a treble clef staff and a bass staff (TAB). The treble staff starts with a G4 note (labeled '1' above it) and a G5 note (labeled 'G' above it) played simultaneously. The bass staff shows the following fret numbers: 0 (T), 0 (A), 2 (B), 0 (T), 0 (A), 2 (B), 0 (T), 0 (A). The notation is marked with a 'G' above the first measure and an '8x' at the end, indicating 8 measures.

Let me play two rounds where I sometimes play it “on” the beat and sometimes I play it “off the beat”.

G

8x

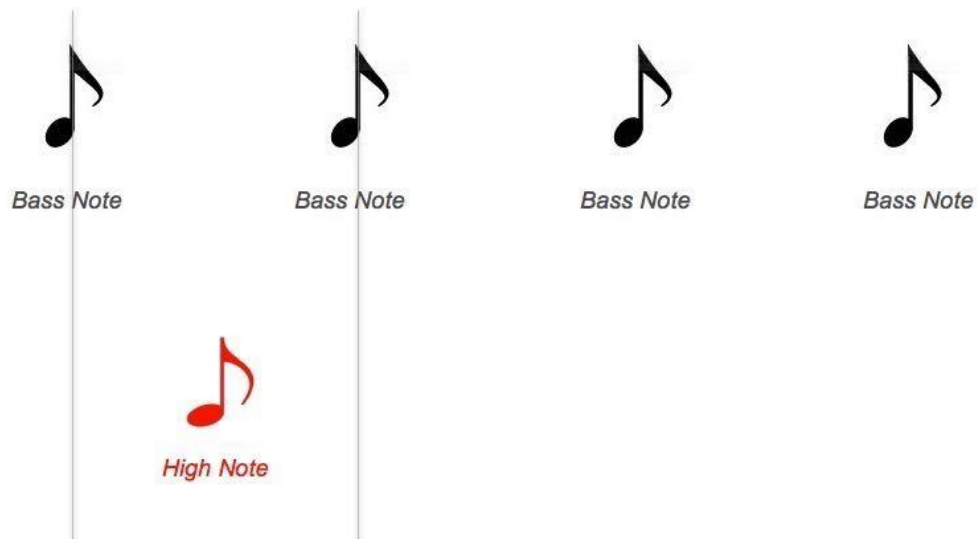
This is an important concept.

As you develop your Travis picking, you aim for a point where you can play a melody note on the beat or off the beat between any of your bass notes.

Just to illustrate further, you can think of the four bass notes as being played and then sometimes the red note below is at the same time (which we call on the beat)



And sometimes we play our four bass notes (with the thumb) and we put that high note (played with the fingers) in between two bass notes



Previous Example - Ons and Offs

Remember that when I say “On” here, I mean a high note played at the same time as a bass note, which is also known as a pinch.

Take a bass pattern of 6454 in G

1. On the first bass note, pinch the 2nd sting
2. Second bass note
3. Third bass note

And then a high note in between third and fourth bass notes on G string.

4. Then fourth bass note.

G

The image shows a musical score for a guitar exercise. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, 4/4 time, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#), indicating G major. The exercise is labeled 'G' at the top. The top staff has a melody line starting with a quarter note G4 (finger 1), followed by a quarter note A4 (finger 7), a quarter note B4 (finger 7), a quarter note A4 (finger 7), and a quarter note G4 (finger 7). The bottom staff has a bass line starting with a quarter note G2 (finger 3), followed by a quarter note D2 (finger 0), a quarter note C2 (finger 2), and a quarter note B1 (finger 0). The exercise is repeated 8 times, indicated by '8x' at the end.

Assignment.

Your exercise is to practice this pattern today.

Play it until it is comfortable, and you can play it on and off the beat.

As always, I encourage you to come up with your own pattern also.

Start with Travis bass in G, C, Am or any chord.

Add one note on the beat.

Add one note off the beat.

See if you can play it eventually without thinking too much, that it just becomes more natural after a while.

5.6 – The Clawhammer

Last Assignment

As you play these exercises, remember that you are mastering some really great techniques that you are going to enjoy for years and years. If it takes you some hours to make it sound really sweet, then stick with it.

Remember if you get stuck, go back to the thumb and use that to anchor you.

The difference between Travis Picking & Clawhammer

With the Travis fingerpicking, the pattern we played with the thumb (the bass pattern) was 6454 where we played 6th - 4th - 5th - 4th strings in that order

The clawhammer pattern, however, requires that we play a 5-4-6-4 pattern.

So our thumb will play the 5th, 4th, 6th, 4th to generate a bass pattern.
Let's try a 5-4-6-4 bass pattern with a C chord.

The image shows musical notation for a C chord exercise in 4/4 time. The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. It contains four quarter notes: C4 (middle C), E4, G4, and F4. Above the first note is a '1' and above the last note is a 'C'. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. It contains four quarter notes: E3, D3, C3, and B2. Above the first note is a 'T' and above the last note is an '8x'. The bottom staff also has fingerings: '3' under the first note, '2' under the second, '2' under the third, and '3' under the fourth. The notation is enclosed in a box with a double bar line at the end.

TRAVIS BASS	CLAWHAMMER BASS

And now we can add a high note and we'll pinch it - and play it at the same time as our first bass note. I call this 'on the beat'

It looks like this:

Now we can add a high note, this time 'off the beat'.

Play this as much as you can until it sounds goodo

Assignment

Play this as much as you can to get it down.

Play 5-4-6-4 bass on any chord.

Add a note on the beat (a pinch) and try to add one off the beat (between one of the bass notes)

Em or G are great chords to play in clawhammer style.

Thank You

Thanks for following this course, all the time and attention you have given me is much appreciated. I'm proud of you for getting this far!

The most important thing for you now is to play 15 to 20 minutes every day.

Discover other artists who are playing in this acoustic style and listen to their albums.

Sign up for the newsletter at my website www.learnfingerpicking.com because I send out practice tips and free lessons once or twice a month.

Continue learning with the intermediate book and/or course below.

Intermediate Book

If you would like to continue directly on to the next step of this learning path – then grab the Intermediate Fingerpicking guitar book (digital edition) which is complete with all audio files (fast and slow) here - <https://bit.ly/int-book>

This is the ideal next step for your development.

Intermediate Course

If you prefer an online course – where you have video materials of me playing every exercise and explaining each one, the Intermediate Fingerpicking course is perfect for you.

The course features high-definition videos, professionally shot with 3 camera views so that you can see close-ups of what my left hand & right hand are doing.



You can sign up to the course now [with this link](#) to receive a 60% discount, reducing the course price from \$99 to \$40 for readers of this book.

If reading the print version of this book, get a discount at <https://bit.ly/intermediate-discount>