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Track 1

The CD that accompanies this book can make learning with the book easier and more enjoyable. The symbol shown above will appear next to every example that is on the CD. Use the CD to help insure that you are capturing the feel of the examples, interpreting the rhythms correctly, and so on. The track numbers below the symbols correspond directly to the examples on that page. Track 1 will help you tune your guitar to this CD.

About the Author

Lou Manzi is the author of *Beginning Fingerstyle Guitar* and *Fingerstyle Guitar Technique Builder* and is co-author of *Intermediate Fingerstyle Guitar*, all published by Alfred and the National Guitar Workshop. He began his musical career in 1974 and has been on the faculty of the National Guitar Workshop since 1984. He has performed extensively in folk and blues styles and currently teaches at Wesleyan University and the Tabor Community Arts Center in Guilford, Connecticut.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Andrew Leonard for his help and to Thomas Bazzolo for making a great guitar. Also, thanks to Nat and Dave and everyone at Workshop Arts, Alfred and the National Guitar Workshop for the opportunities they have given me over the years.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my mom and to Dorothy, my favorite tambourine and kazoo players.

PHOTO • DEBRA LAUDANO



Introduction

This book is a collection of fingerpicking patterns that will hopefully be a resource, and a source of inspiration, for any guitarist, regardless of style. Since you have picked up this book, you probably already know how exciting and expressive fingerstyle guitar can be. Fingerstyle guitar is not really a style of music; rather it is an approach to guitar that transcends any one particular style. Many acoustic singer/songwriters, and folk, blues and country players play fingerstyle guitar. Many jazz players also “comp” chords and improvise picking with their fingers, rather than a pick. Of course, fingerstyle technique is also the basis of most contemporary acoustic instrumental playing. Diverse guitarists from Leadbelly to Eric Clapton, Merle Travis to Mark Knopfler and Elizabeth Cotton to Joe Pass have used fingerstyle techniques to create their original music.

One of the most definitive aspects of fingerstyle guitar is the use of *picking patterns*. This is especially true for singer/songwriters and folk/country players. Also, many of our leading acoustic instrumentalists, such as Leo Kottke and Adrian Legg, have used picking patterns as starting points for their innovative and melodic pieces. In fact, it would be difficult to think of an acoustic singer/guitarist or instrumentalist in folk, blues or country style who does not incorporate picking patterns into their music.

This book is appropriate for guitarists of any style or level. Beginners should start with the classic patterns from each chapter and move on to other examples as they progress. Intermediate players will add interesting variations and entirely new patterns to their fingerstyle vocabulary. Even advanced players will find sequences that are new to them in this collection.

WHY FINGERSTYLE PATTERNS ARE USEFUL

They will give you a multitude of options for accompanying songs.

You may want to learn a song by one of your favorite artists. Perhaps you have been able to “figure out” the chords by listening to the recording or you may learn the chords from a songbook. If the song was originally recorded using a fingerpicking pattern, you will probably find that pattern or something very close to it, in this book. Even when a song is not originally played fingerstyle, you can be creative and find a pattern that may match the style and rhythmic feel of the recording. Even piano-based pieces, such as Simon and Garfunkel’s *Bridge Over Troubled Water* or Sarah MacLachlan’s *Angel* can work in a fingerstyle setting.

They are useful as technique exercises for fingerstyle players.

Jazz guitarists practice a multitude of scales, modes and chord voicings. Since fingerstyle players use many picking patterns, it is valuable to practice both common and new patterns as exercises. They will help you develop strength, flexibility, speed and independence in the picking fingers.

They can help you create original songs and instrumental pieces.

Even well-worn chord progressions sound fresh with new and interesting patterns. Improvise with your favorite fingerpicking patterns and see what develops.

The patterns in this encyclopedia are grouped according to type, time signature and special characteristics, such as the inclusion of an alternating bass, syncopation or double stops. A sample piece is provided at the end of each section to suggest some ideas for practical application, and to provide further inspiration. Use the book in any order and in any way that you like. Have fun!

How to Use This Book

For this book, we have adopted the classical guitar tradition of using the Spanish terms for the right-hand fingers:

p (*pulgar*) = thumb
i (*indice*) = index
m (*medio*) = middle
a (*anular*) = ring

Be sure to pay attention to the fingering for each exercise. In general, *i* plays the 3rd string, *m* plays the 2nd, *a* plays the 1st and *p* moves between the three lower (bass) strings. This basic fingering rule changes for the alternating bass patterns where the *a* finger is not used as much.

There are some terms you should know before you start learning new fingerpicking patterns.

Arpeggio The notes of a chord played one at a time.
Bass The lowest notes of our patterns, on the 4th, 5th or 6th strings.
Root The note that names a chord (the root of a C chord is C). The root is usually played on the first beat of the measure, usually as a *bass*.
Alternate Bass A note in the *bass* that is not the root.
Alternating Bass Steady quarter notes, on the lower strings, moving from the *root* to an *alternate bass* in the chord. *Travis picking* (page 29) is the most common example of an alternating bass pattern. Usually played at a quick *tempo* (speed).
Downbeats and Upbeats When you tap your foot to music, you tap the downbeats (the 1, 2, 3, 4). The upbeats are the second part of the beat, the “&” (and) as in 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &. In a $\frac{1}{4}$ bar of steady eighth notes, the first of each pair of eighths is on the downbeat and the second is on the upbeat.

Although all of the patterns in this book are useful, some are more common than others. These can be thought of as “classic” and should be part of every fingerstylist’s basic vocabulary. Learn these patterns before any others. Each of these examples are marked with this logo:



Go through each chapter and practice all of the examples. Do them one at a time until you are comfortable with each. Start each one slowly and increase speed gradually. Each pattern is introduced with the same chord progression: G-C-D-G. Some of the examples include a D/F^\sharp instead of a root position D chord. This is because it provides a more appropriate bass pattern for the context. If this chord is too difficult for you, substitute an open A string for the F^\sharp .

Two fingerings for D/F^\sharp

	D/F^\sharp	OR	D/F^\sharp
	T x 0 1 3 2		1 x 0 2 4 3
1			
2	●		●
3			●
4			
5			

T = Left Thumb

The D/F^\sharp is a *slash chord*. The symbol to the left of the slash indicates the chord; the letter to the right of the slash indicates the bass note. Slash chords are often used when the bass note is something other than the root, or especially when the bass note is not a chord tone.

Practice each pattern and then apply the patterns to other chord progressions or songs. Some pieces will sound good with one pattern throughout. More often, a combination of similar patterns, or variations, will be best. Try different patterns in different sections of the piece. Invent new patterns by changing the strings or rhythms of the examples. Add bass notes or remove bass notes. A slight variation can change the character or “feel” of a pattern.

Getting Started

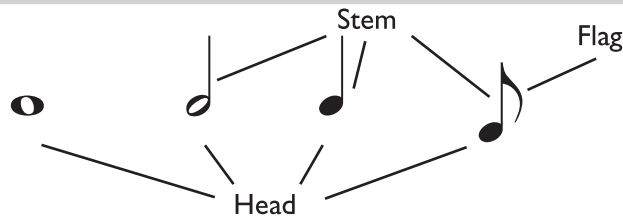
MUSIC NOTATION

Learning to read music on guitar is easy if you apply yourself and have some patience. You may not be able to rip through the Bach lute suites right away, but you'll get the basics covered quickly, and if you stick with it, you'll eventually be reading through more difficult pieces.

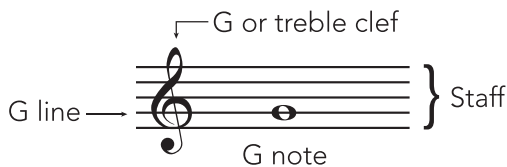
PITCH


NOTES

Music is written by placing notes on a *staff*. Notes appear various ways.

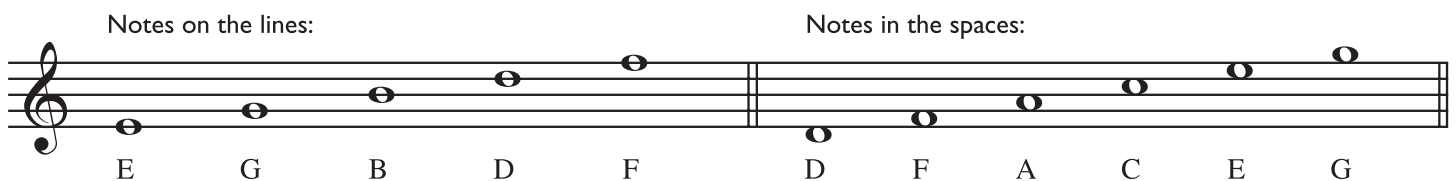


THE STAFF AND CLEF



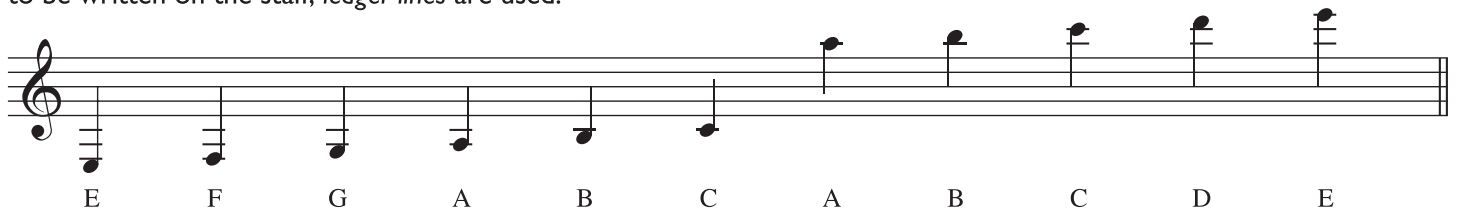
The staff has five lines and four spaces which are read from left to right. At the beginning of the staff is a *clef*. The clef dictates what notes correspond to a particular line or space on the staff. Guitar music is written in *treble clef*  which is sometimes called the *G clef*. The ending curl of the clef encircles the G line on the staff.

Here are the notes on the staff using the G clef:



Ledger Lines

The higher a note appears on the staff, the higher it sounds. When a note is too high or too low to be written on the staff, *ledger lines* are used.

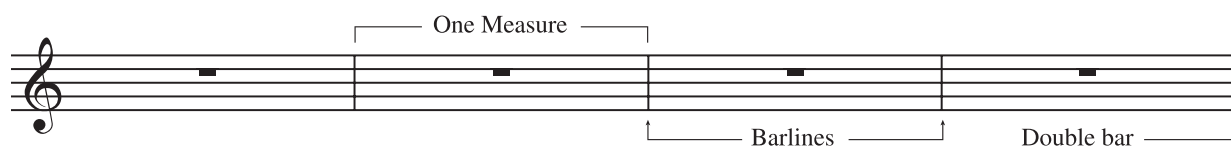


Guitar music is traditionally written one octave higher than it actually sounds. This allows us to write and read music on one clef, instead of using two clefs as with keyboard instruments.

TIME

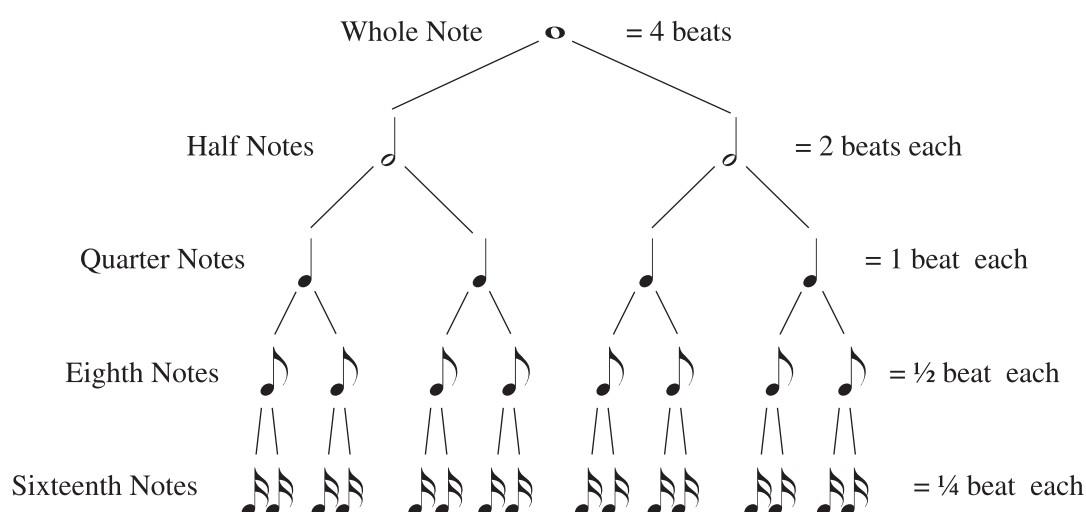
MEASURES AND BAR LINES

The staff is divided by vertical lines called *bar lines*. The space between two bar lines is called a *measure*. Measures divide music into groups of *beats*. A beat is an equal division of time. Beats are the basic pulse behind music. A *double bar* marks the end of a section or example.



NOTE VALUES

As you know, the location of a note relative to the staff tells us its pitch (how high or how low it is). The duration, or value, is indicated by its shape.



TIME SIGNATURES

Every piece of music has numbers at the beginning that tell us how to count time. The top number represents the number of beats per measure. The bottom number represents the type of note receiving one count.

$\frac{4}{4}$ ← 4 beats per measure
 $\frac{4}{4}$ ← Quarter note ♩ = one beat


$\frac{3}{4}$ ← 3 beats per measure
 $\frac{4}{4}$ ← Quarter note ♩ = one beat


$\frac{6}{8}$ ← 6 beats per measure
 $\frac{8}{8}$ ← Eighth note ♪ = one beat


Sometimes a **C** is written in place of $\frac{4}{4}$.
 This is called *common time*.


REST VALUES


Every note value has a corresponding rest. A rest indicates silence. A whole rest indicates four beats of silence, a half rest is two beats of silence, etc.

Whole rest
 = 4 beats

Half rest
 = 2 beats

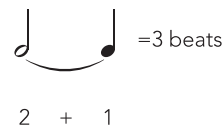
Quarter rest
 = 1 beat

Eighth rest
 = 1/2 beat

Sixteenth rest
 = 1/4 beat

TIES

When notes are tied, the second note is not struck. Rather, its value is added to that of the first note. So, a half note tied to a quarter note would equal three beats.



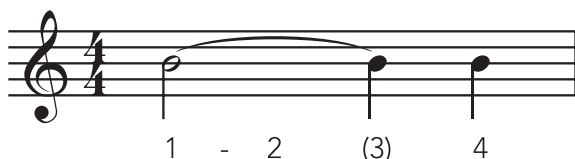
Notice the numbers under the staff in these examples. They indicate how to count. Both of these examples are in $\frac{4}{4}$ time, so we count four beats in each measure. When there are eighth notes, which are only $\frac{1}{2}$ beat, we count "&" ("and") to show the division of the beats into two parts. When a counting number is in parentheses, a note is being held rather than struck.

Ties are a convenient way to notate notes that begin off the beat (on an "&").



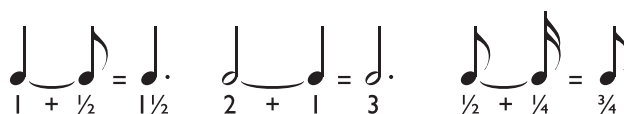
Consecutive eighth notes are beamed together.

See Page 9.

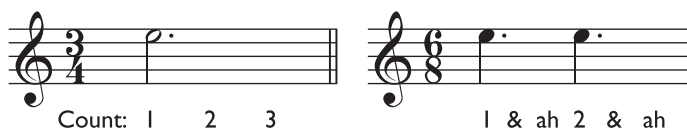


DOTS

A dot increases the length of a note by one half of its original value. For instance, a half note equals two beats. Half of its value is one beat (a quarter note). So a dotted half note equals three beats ($2 + 1 = 3$). A dotted half note is equal to a half note tied to a quarter note.



Dotted notes are especially important when the time signature is $\frac{3}{4}$ time, because the longest note value that will fit in a measure is a dotted half note. Also, dotted notes are very important in $\frac{6}{8}$ time, because not only is a dotted half note the longest possible note value, but a dotted quarter note is exactly half of a measure (counted 1 & ah 2 & ah).



TRIPLETS

A triplet is a group of three notes that divides a beat (or beats) into three equal parts.

Eighth-Note Triplet
(evenly divides one beat)

Quarter-Note Triplet
(evenly divides two beats)

BEAMING

Notes that are less than one beat in duration are often beamed together. Notice the counting numbers: since there are four sixteenth notes in a beat, they are counted “1 e & ah 2 e & ah,” etc.

Beamed eighth notes

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

Beamed sixteenth notes

1 e & ah 2 e & ah

SWING EIGHTHS

In the blues and jazz styles, eighth notes are usually not played exactly as notated. Rather, they are interpreted in a “swing” style. This makes a pair of eighth notes sound like the first and last notes of a triplet.

Swing Eighths

Sound like this...

...but look like this.

1 (&) ah 2 (&) ah 1 ah 2 ah

REPEAT SIGNS

These signs are used to indicate that music should be repeated.

Go back to the beginning and play these measures one more time.

Play the music between these signs twice.

Playing by the Numbers, or Understanding Tablature

Tablature is an alternative method of notation used for guitar and other fretted instruments. Forms of it have been in use since before the Renaissance. When reading tablature we read fret numbers which tell us exactly where to place our fingers on the neck. Tablature, when combined with standard notation, provides the most complete system for communicating the many possibilities in guitar playing.

In this TAB system, **rhythm** is not notated. For that, you will have to refer to the standard notation. Six lines are used to indicate the six strings of the guitar. The **top line** is the high E string (the string closest to the floor) and the **bottom line** is the low E string. **Numbers** are placed on the strings to indicate **frets**. If there is a "0," play that string open.

Fingerings are sometimes included in TAB. You will find them just under the bottom line. A "1" indicates your left index finger. A "4" indicates your left pinkie.

In the following example, the first note is played with the first finger on the first fret. The next note is played with the second finger on the second fret, the third finger plays the third fret, and the fourth finger plays the fourth fret.

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The notes are G2 (first fret), A2 (second fret), B2 (third fret), and C3 (fourth fret). Below the staff is a guitar tablature with six lines labeled T (top), A, and B (bottom). The fret numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are placed on the B string. Fingerings 1, 2, 3, and 4 are written below the bottom line of the tablature.

A **tie** in the music is indicated in TAB by placing the tied note in parentheses.

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The notes are G2 (first fret), A2 (second fret), B2 (third fret), and C3 (fourth fret). The notes A2 and B2 are tied together. Below the staff is a guitar tablature with six lines labeled T (top), A, and B (bottom). The fret numbers 10, (10), 12, and (12) are placed on the B string. Fingerings 1 and 3 are written below the bottom line of the tablature.

FINGERSTYLE NOTATION

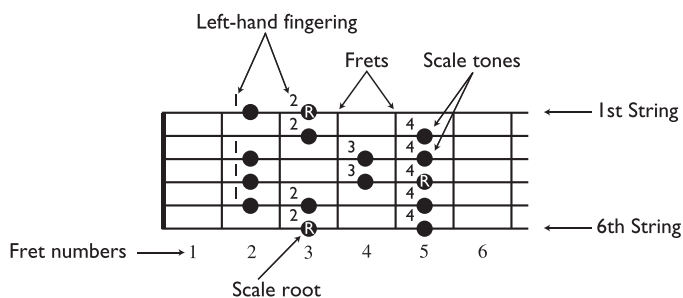
The standard rule in notation is that notes on the middle line of the staff or higher have their stems descending, and lower notes have their stems ascending. This won't work in lots of fingerstyle music, since it often involves playing more than one line at a time. In order to clearly separate the bass line when there is more than one line, we must borrow from classical guitar notation: we use descending stems for all notes played by the thumb, and ascending stems for all other pitches. This is an easy way to show two or more simultaneous melodic lines.

Standard Notation Fingerstyle Notation

The image shows two musical notations side-by-side. The left side is 'Standard Notation' in a 4/4 time signature, featuring a treble clef staff with a melody and a bass clef staff with a bass line. The right side is 'Fingerstyle Notation', which uses a single staff with notes and stems indicating which hand plays each note (thumb 'm', index 'i', middle 'm', ring 'i'). Below the staff is a guitar tablature with strings labeled T, A, and B, and fret numbers for each string.

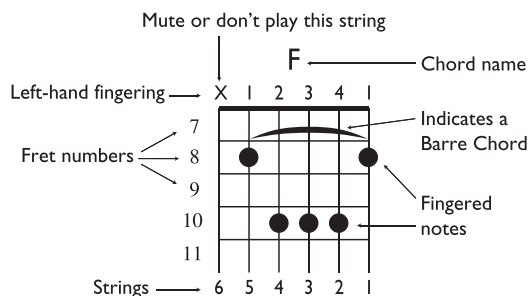
SCALE DIAGRAMS

The top line of a scale diagram represents the 1st (highest) string of the guitar, and the bottom line the 6th. The vertical lines represent frets, which are numbered at the bottom of the diagram.



CHORD DIAGRAMS

Chord diagrams are similar to scale diagrams, except they are oriented vertically instead of horizontally. Vertical lines represent strings, and horizontal lines represent frets. The frets are numbered to the left of the diagram.



TECHNIQUE

This book was written primarily for the beginning, or less experienced fingerstyle player. If this describes you, don't skip over the material in this first chapter. You may be very tempted to jump ahead to the musical selections and patterns that are in the following chapters, but it's best to resist this temptation. Even if you have been playing for a while, it would be a good idea to check over this material as a review.

The ideas in this chapter are important because they will help you to develop good habits and correct playing techniques. Playing with the proper technique will enable you to take your playing to more advanced levels without having to correct bad habits. To express yourself through a good control of dynamics and tone, you'll need to have a firm foundation in the basic mechanics of how to play your instrument. This section will help you build that foundation.

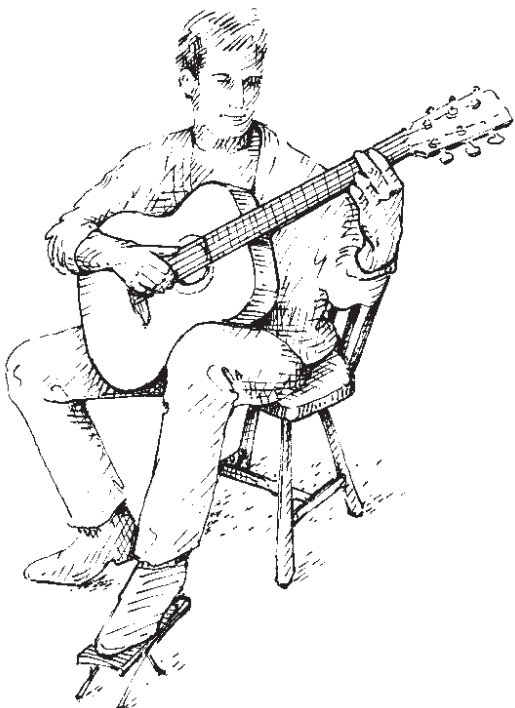
PLAYING POSITION

Many people start playing without giving much thought to how to hold their instrument. For example, many people sit with the guitar resting on the right leg with the neck horizontal to the floor. This forces a severe bend in the left wrist and a bad angle for the right hand.

Since I've seen many players suffering from guitar-related stress injuries, I advise you to try the following positions which are more "user friendly." It is important to play in a manner that is comfortable and offers easy access to the guitar. Move the guitar until it fits you, don't stretch awkwardly to try and reach the guitar.

Sitting

The position I recommend is the standard for classical guitarists, and is used by lots of fingerstyle players, too (see the drawing below). It provides good access to the instrument for both hands. Although many non-classical players would not think of sitting with the neck of the guitar elevated, as classical players do, it is interesting to notice that when the same players stand with straps attached to their guitars, they tend to end up in that position.



Elevating the neck of the guitar is particularly helpful for the left hand. This provides much easier access to the entire fingerboard. Also, both the left and right should be in comfortable and stress-free angles for playing. Sitting this way will help you do this, too.

Here are some helpful guides to find this position:

1. Rest the left foot on some kind of footstool. You can buy an adjustable guitar footstool at most music stores. Don't raise the left foot too high. The idea is to have the guitar resting on your chest about one hand's width from the base of your neck. The left thigh provides good support for the guitar, and the right thigh and chest provide stability.
2. Angle the guitar at a 45 degree angle.
3. The right forearm rests lightly on the outer rim of the guitar's body, just to the right of the bridge, and helps to keep the guitar stable.
4. The left hand should not support the neck.

Sitting this way, your right and left hands will be in optimum positions, with the left thumb centered on the neck and the left wrist straight. The knuckles and most of the left hand should be in front of the fingerboard. The right hand will be bent slightly but not severely.

Standing

Another excellent way to play is standing with a strap. In this position you can easily angle the neck up, giving your left hand good access to the fingerboard. It also allows a good position for the right hand. You can have the instrument in a “classical” style position while still keeping both feet on the floor. Many musicians feel that standing while performing gives them added stage presence. This is an added benefit of this way of playing.

No matter which position you play in, keep in mind the following guidelines:

1. Avoid any severe angles for the right or left wrists.
2. Your playing position should allow you to be relaxed yet still able to hold the guitar securely.
3. Both hands should have easy access to the guitar in a comfortable, stress free and natural manner.
4. You should move the instrument to fit your position, and not stretch awkwardly to reach the guitar.
5. If your playing position looks pleasing to your audience, they will feel that you are in control of your performance. If you look like you are struggling to play—you probably are.



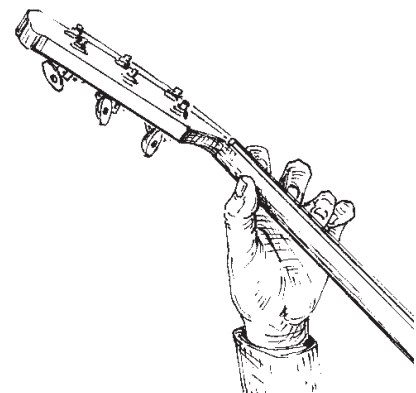
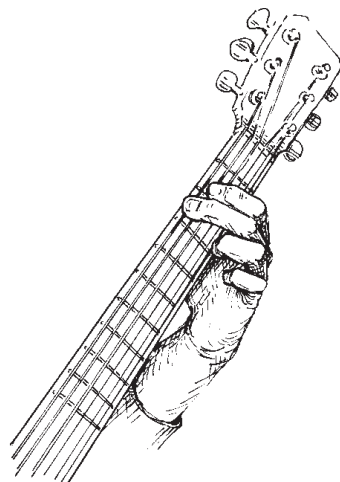
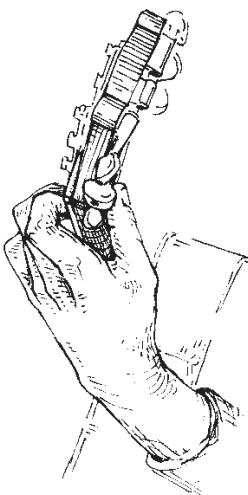
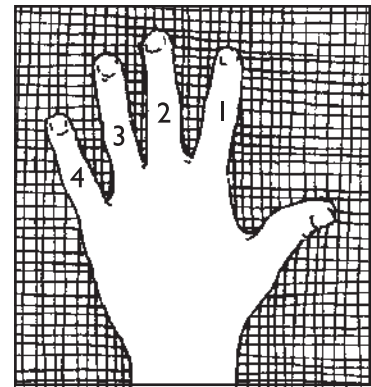
The Left Hand

The fingering numbers for the left hand are 1, 2, 3 and 4 for the index finger through the ring finger.

The thumb should rest in the center of the neck in a relaxed manner. It should be curved outward slightly in a natural way, and the first joint should never be bent towards the first finger.

The left hand fingers should be slightly curved. They should meet the fingerboard on their tips at a slight angle that is almost perpendicular to the fingerboard.

Do not over press! You don't need much pressure to fret the strings. Press firmly, but remember, the neck is not a baseball bat! Keep it light and minimize tension in the hand or arm.



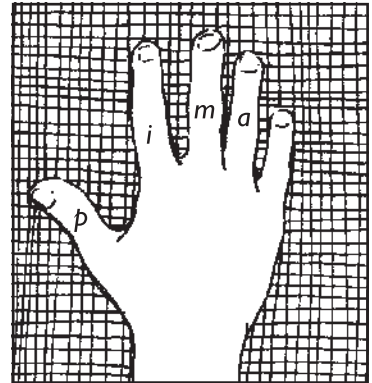
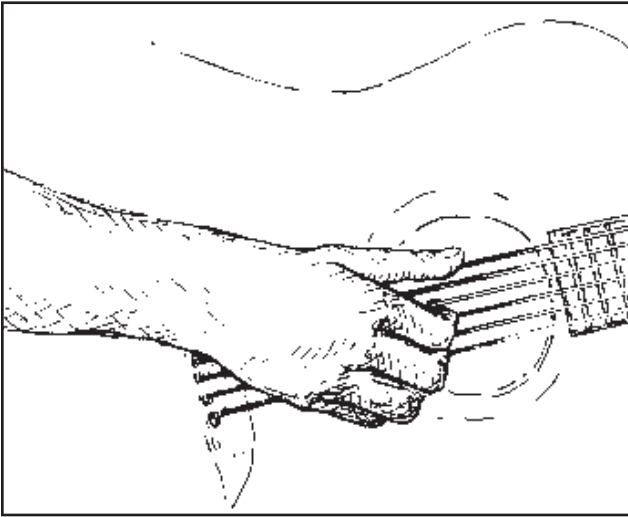
The Right Hand

It is essential that you adopt a comfortable yet effective right-hand technique. This hand is largely responsible for the tone and *dynamic* (volume) variation you will achieve. Having a good technique will give you a strong sound and help you avoid stress-related muscle problems in the future.

In labeling right-hand fingerings I have borrowed from the classical guitar tradition of using the Spanish terms: *p* for pulgar (thumb), *i* for indice (index), *m* for medio (middle) and *a* for anular (ring).

Stay relaxed and don't tense up your fingers, wrist or arm. The strings are easy to sound and you don't need much power from the right hand.

Keep your fingers and thumb in a naturally curved position. Pretend you are loosely holding a ball that is roughly two inches in diameter.



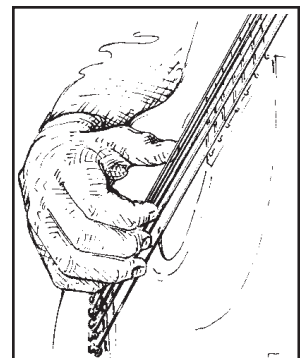
Your right hand should be comfortably aligned with your arm. The fingers will now strike the strings at about a 45 degree angle, and should make contact with the strings where the left side of the nail meets the flesh. A combination of nail and flesh will provide a big, clearly articulated sound.

When sounding the strings, the fingers are drawn firmly in without actually touching the palm. This is called *follow-through*. They strike the string, move smoothly upward toward the right hand palm, clearing the other strings, and quickly return to playing position. The fingers should move with minimal palm or hand movement.

In making your stroke, it is best if there is movement in all three finger joints. Your volume will depend on the amount of follow-through you use.

The thumb should remain loose and strike the string downward, towards the floor, with a slight movement in both joints. The point of contact should be the left side of the thumb near the nail. It should strike and quickly return to playing position.




Don't bring the thumb deep into the palm; its follow-through should bring it towards the *i* finger.



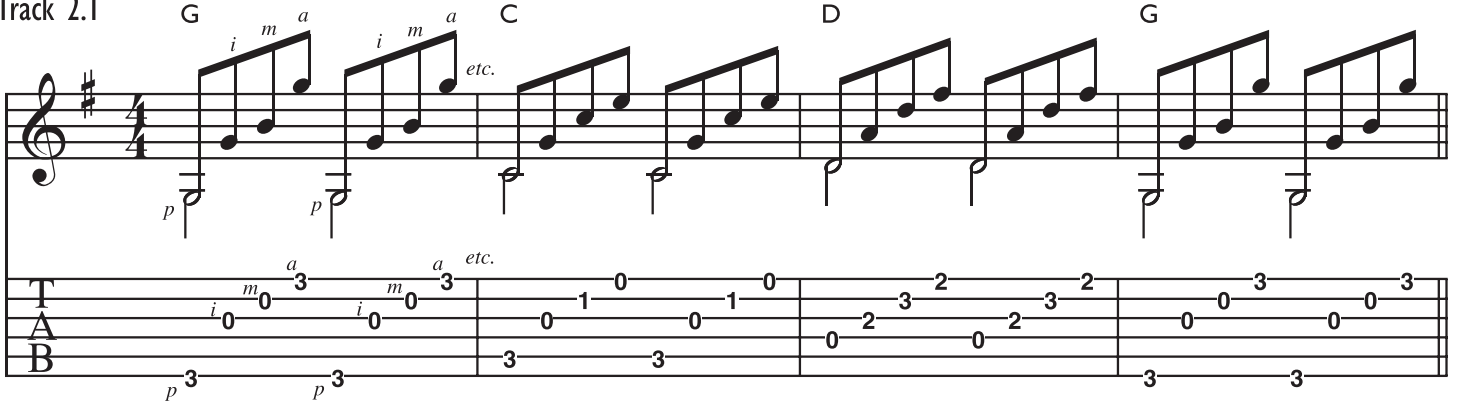
4/4 Patterns Part One

The first pattern in this chapter is the simplest of all possible $\frac{4}{4}$ fingerpicking patterns. It is composed entirely of single notes, with two bass notes in each measure. The patterns that follow it are variations on this popular arpeggio. They are most often played at a slow tempo but can also be effective at faster speeds. Each example may be used as the only pattern in a song or instrumental piece, or the variations can be combined in the same piece. Be sure to keep the eighth notes steady. Also try to balance the sound and play each string at the same volume.




In pattern #1, the bass notes, played on beats 1 and 3, are the roots of each chord.

 **Pattern 1**  CLASSIC 

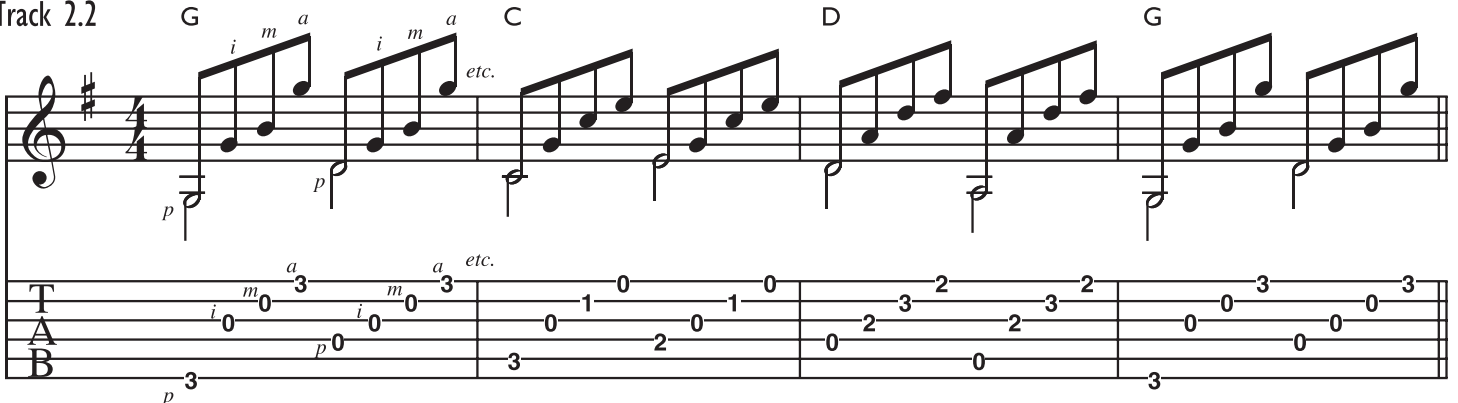
Track 2.1



Pattern 2 is identical to Pattern 1 except for the bass. Here, instead of repeating the root of each chord, the thumb moves from a root to an alternate bass. This is the most common bass style in pattern picking and is the approach taken with most of the patterns in this book. Of course, you may prefer the repeated root (Pattern 1) on some occasions. Although not as interesting as the root/alternate bass pattern, it does provide a strong sound. You should try to incorporate repeated root bass parts into the other patterns in this chapter, and throughout the book.

 **Pattern 2**  CLASSIC 

Track 2.2



4/4 Patterns Part Four

In this section, we will look at two versions (A and B) of each pattern. The first version (A) will consist of single notes with one whole note root in the bass. The second version (B) will add an alternate bass on the third beat. This creates a double stop on that beat. You can add more bass notes on beats 2 and/or 4, if you like. This is an easy way to make any finger picking pattern sound stronger and fuller. Try this technique with other patterns you have learned.

Pattern 108 is a basic and often used sequence.



Pattern 108A



Track 45.1

G C D G

i m i a i m i etc.

p

etc.

T
A
B

i 0 m 0 a 3 i 0 m 0 i 0 | *0 1 0 0 1 0* | *0 2 3 2 2 3 2* | *0 0 3 0 0*

p 3 | 3 | 0 | 3

This version of the pattern, with two bass notes, is also useful in many musical settings.



Pattern 108B

Track 45.2

G C D G

i m i a i m i etc.

p

etc.

T
A
B

i 0 m 0 a 3 i 0 m 0 i 0 | *0 1 0 0 1 0* | *0 2 3 2 2 3 2* | *0 0 3 0 0*

p 3 | 3 | 0 | 3