Learn the guitar

with

guitar pro

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Fundamentals

The guitar

Chapter 1

Introduction

Is it really necessary to introduce such an instrument as the guitar?

It is everywhere, alive in every musical style, in all kinds of hands. It is now omnipresent in the music world.

Here are the various forms the instrument has taken.

The Classical Guitar

Standard type of strings: 3 metal-wound strings, and 3 nylon strings.

Photo 1

1 Headstock
2 Neck
3 Rosette
4 Soundboard
5 Bridge

Photo 1b

6 Tuning pegs
7 Nut
8 Fingerboard
9 Fret

As the name indicates, this type of guitar is played in classical music – but also in flamenco, Cuban music, salsa, folk songs, pop music, and many other genres.

The Folk Guitar

Standard type of strings: 4 metal-wound strings, and 2 steel strings.

Photo 2

This type of guitar is very commonly used to accompany singing.

However, other sub-types of the folk guitar are associated each to their own style – such as gipsy jazz, the blues, country, or rock music, for instance.

The Electric Guitar

Standard type of strings used: 3 wound strings, and 3 steel strings.

1 Pickups

2 Tremolo bar

3 Volume and tone knobs

4 Pickup selector

Photo 3

The electric guitar is a widely used instrument.

You will find it in rock music, jazz, the blues, country music, metal rock, reggae, singing, and many other musical styles and genres.

Holding position for each type of guitar

It is essential to achieve a good posture when you play, your progress will depend on it.

Your muscles and joints move and evolve throughout your musical evolution. You can develop muscle inflammation or bone aches if you hold the instrument improperly. The trick is to sit in a relaxed manner that is in harmony with the rest of your body.

Classical guitar

This is not the most comfortable position. Nevertheless, it will enable you to get round all the demands of the classical style.

Your right hand shaped as a pear, slightly bend your wrist, keeping your shoulders relaxed.

As your left hand's thumb pushes against the middle of the back of the neck, slightly bend your fingers, and slacken your elbow and shoulder.

By elevating your left leg with a foot stool, you will be able to hold your instrument higher so you can move your left arm as freely as possible.

Folk guitar

This first folk position is similar to the classical position, but this time you sit your guitar on your right leg. A foot stool will be very useful if you wish to elevate your guitar, once again to make it easier to move your left arm. Your left hand should be relaxed, with its thumb placed against the middle of the back of the neck.

Another option consists in doing without the foot stool by crossing your right leg over your left leg.
Your left foot lies flat on the floor. Be careful, though, for even though this is a convenient alternative, your pelvis can get unhinged.

☞ In these two positions, you will rest your right arm on the side of the guitar, like a pendulum. The main techniques used here are strumming and sweep picking (see chapter on “The Hands”). Rest the bend of your elbow on the edge of your instrument.

Electric guitar

This position is identical to the folk one. Do not place your guitar directly against your body, or your shoulders will be pushed back and you could suffer from unnecessary tensions. Push the neck of your guitar slightly forward in order to free your left arm.

Playing the guitar in a standing position requires particular attention. Avoid holding the instrument too low, or your playing technique will be weakened. You should adjust your strap at the level of your pelvis. Slacken your shoulders.

A bit of history

Historians consider that the guitar as we know it was born in the second half of the 19th century, from a Spanish instrument-maker, Antonio de Torres. That guitar, which benefited from a fan bracing pattern, a wider body and a deeper sound range, was revolutionary.

Francisco Tarrégan, a Spanish virtuoso, largely contributed to the popularity of this new instrument.

The evolution of the guitar doesn't end there, however. In the early 20th century, new woods, the craft of instrument makers, and the advances in industry, made it possible for the guitar to go electric.

Leo Fender, Rickenbacker, and Gibson were the pioneers of the electric guitar, and are still known today as the names of some of the greatest instrument brands.

Today, thanks to the use of sound-modeling guitars and amplifiers, we can witness a new evolution of the guitar. Some will even go as far as using the term "revolution."

Tunings

There are different methods for tuning a guitar:

- with a tuning fork;
- with a digital tuner (available in Guitar Pro);
- or just using your ear.

This last technique is not the easiest, nor the most efficient one.

☞ It is extremely important that your instrument be tuned properly, so it can resonate in harmony – which will not be the case if one or several strings aren't correctly adjusted. Tuning must become daily practice, which requires only little time if one uses a digital tuner.

Standard tuning

Each string here is separated by a five-semitone interval (a perfect fourth). (See chapter on "The scales.")

Open tunings

Certain styles of music, such as the blues, sometimes require a different type of tuning. Such tuning techniques make it possible to obtain a chord (see chapter "The Chords") simply by playing the strings open, i.e. without pressing any of the strings with your left-hand fingers.

Open G

Open D

Open E

Open A

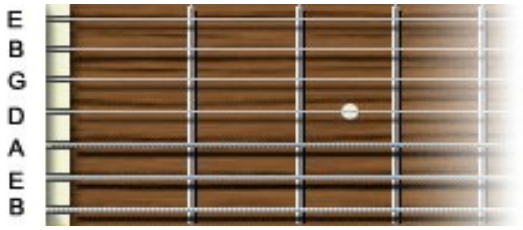
Open C

Metal tunings

This type of tuning allows you to play with strings whose harmonic range is lowered, relative to the standard tuning.

Eb tuning: standard flattened by a half step

D tuning: one whole step down



Standard 7 strings

☞ Being perfectly acquainted with standard tuning is essential. Open tunings are merely specific ways of using the instrument, depending on certain music parts or styles.

The notes on the guitar

The neck of the guitar is divided in length with thin metal strips called the frets, which show you where to place your fingers to play the notes. You should always press the string immediately to the left of any given fret with the tip of your finger, to get a neatly sounding note.
Depending on the type of guitar – classical, folk, or electric – the number of frets is not the same.

As far as musical notation is concerned, musicians of different origins will commonly use the international Helmholtz pitch notation – which is different, say, from the traditional French notation – so they can understand each other,.

French and international notations						
LA	SI	DO	RE	MI	FA	SOL
A	B	C	D	E	F	G

The notes are separated from each other according to harmony. Each separation is called an interval, and its value is calculated in terms of TONES. A tone (or step) is made up of two diatonic semitones (half-steps).

☞ The term diatonic here means that the semitones are found between two notes bearing different names.
Bear in mind that some notes are separated by an interval of only one semitone, or half-step:

E		F		B		C
	½ tone				½ tone	

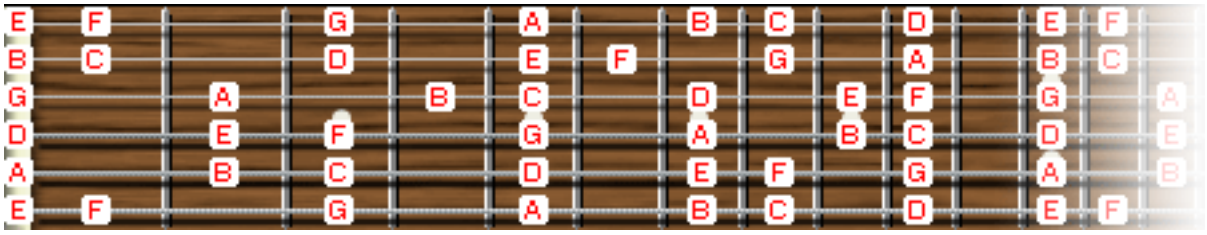
This will be developed in the chapter on “The Scales.”

Each fret on the guitar’s neck corresponds to a harmonic value of a half-step. To determine the position of the notes on the fretboard, therefore, one needs only count the frets on any given string starting from the open note.

A mnemonic trick to find the notes	
1 tone higher	Skip a fret
½ tone higher	Next fret

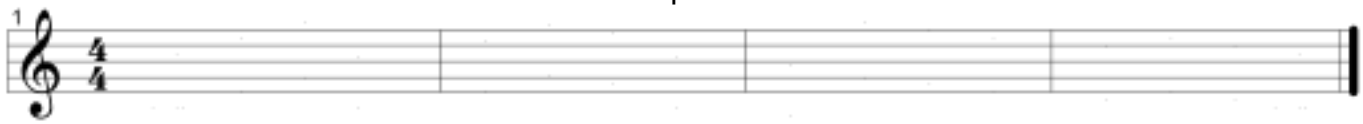
☞ In order to understand the theory before moving on to practice, we recommend memorizing the fingerboard below. In this way, you will lose no time once the instrument is in your hands.

III V VII IX XII

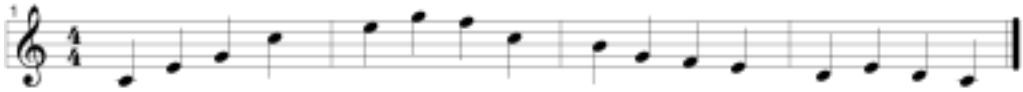


The notes on the staff

A staff is a set of five horizontal lines and four spaces.



On this are written notes which represent the duration and harmonic pitch of each sound. The notes can be placed over the lines as well as in the spaces between the lines, on the basic staff, as well as on extra lines drawn above and/or below it.



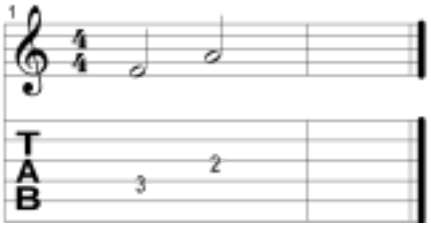
To the left of this staff, you can notice the treble clef as well as the 4/4 time signature of the piece. (See the chapter on “The elements of a score.”)

Tablatures

Guitarists have the possibility to read and write music using two different means: notes on a staff (or staves), or tablatures. The latter form of music notation is very popular, thanks to its simplicity and the emergence of writing in current music styles, such as rock n' roll and heavy metal.

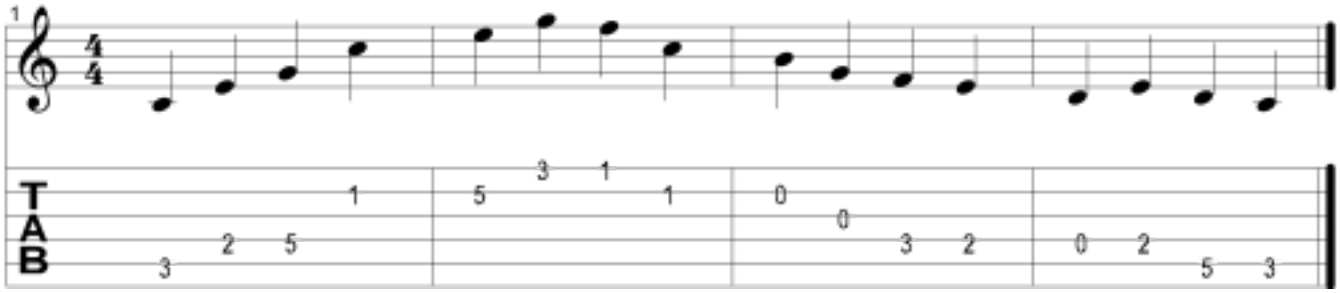
A tablature is composed of 6 lines which represent the six strings of the guitar. The bottom line stands for the low E string, the line just above corresponds to the A string, and so on up to the top line, which represents the high E string.

Numbers will be written on those lines, and will correspond to the frets where you need to place your fingers.



In this example, you are supposed to play the note that is on the third fret on the D string, and then the note on the second fret, G string.

Depending on who has written the score, the tablatures may or may not include indications of rhythm.



☞ Tablatures offer a solution to the complexity of writing scores. They make it truly possible to write and play your own scores quickly. The possibility of reading music, however, should not depend solely on the instrument you have chosen. Indeed, how will you play on the guitar a saxophone part that you like, if you cannot read the notes written for that instrument, and which will not appear in tablature form?

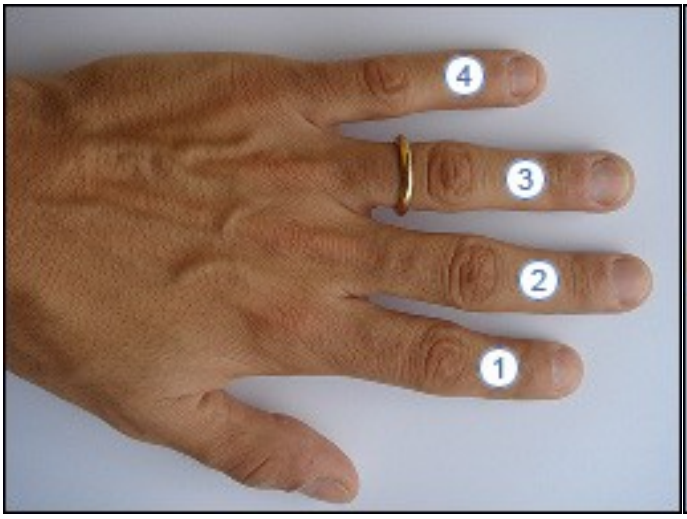
The Hands

Chapter 2

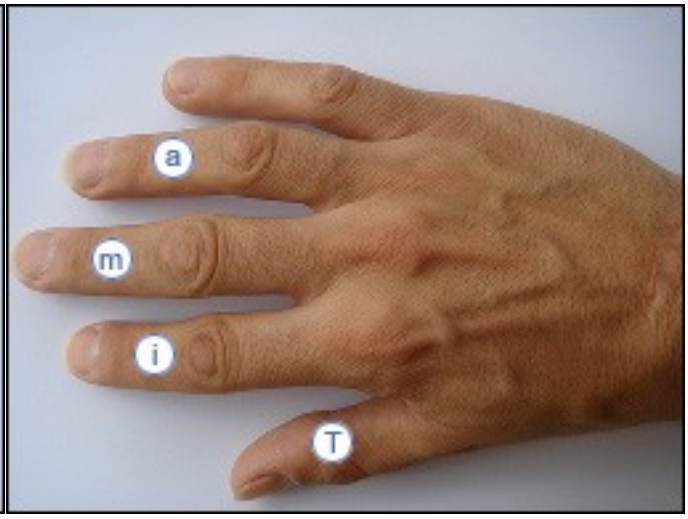
Introduction

Your hands are the link between your body and your guitar. For that reason, most guitar players take excellent care of theirs.

Each finger is identified on the score by a number (left hand) or a letter (right hand: t - thumb; i - index finger; m - middle finger; a – ring finger).
The right-hand fingers are usually indicated with initials that come from Spanish:
p - pulgar; i - indice; m - medio; a - anular.

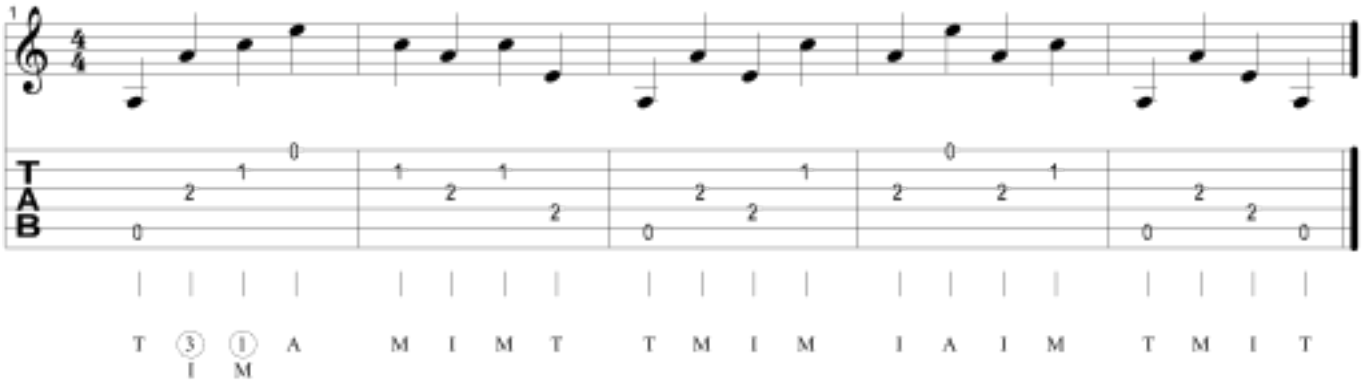


Left hand



Right hand

Exercise 1



This exercise above will give you the opportunity to familiarize yourself with fingering notation.

☞ You should always define the musical basics before you try out a score, especially if it is a complex one.

The nails

Your right-hand nails have a great impact on the quality of the sound you will get using various playing techniques, such as finger-picking, bossa-nova, and many others.

They can produce a very precise, sharp sound, unlike the fleshy fingertips which tend to yield a rather flat type of sound.

Your nails don’t have to be much longer than your fingers.

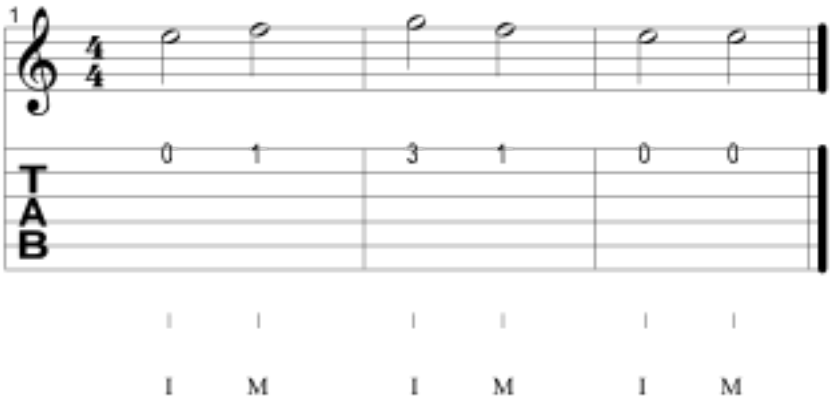
As for your left hand, very short-cut nails will let you press the strings properly with the tip of every finger.

The “rest-stroke” technique

The rest-stroke is a technique by which you let the finger plucking a string rest on the immediate upper string afterwards.

It is used to produce a louder sound or to play a leading theme. This type of playing is exclusively used on guitars fitted with nylon strings – classical guitars, therefore.

Exercise 2



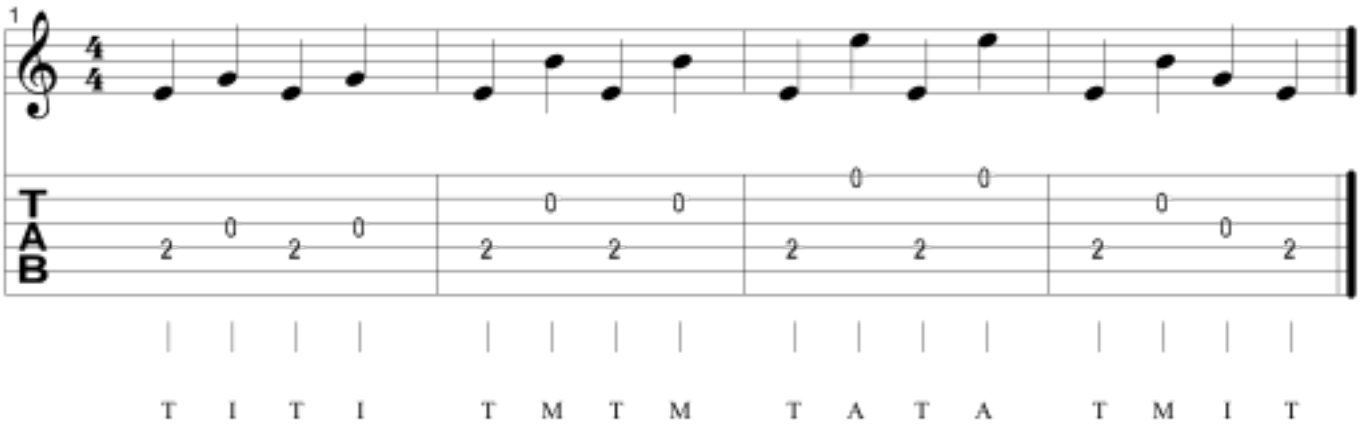
The right-hand finger used on the E string then comes to rest on the B string.

The “free-stroke” technique

A “free-stroke” consists in playing a string and then raising your finger slightly so that it touches no other string.

It is used when playing arpeggios or chords. This technique is well suited for classical as well as folk guitars.

Exercise 3



Plucking the strings this way produces a very gentle sound, and your movement ought to be relaxed. Your hand and wrist do not move, only the fingers do.

Rhythm and accompaniment

Playing rhythm

While a note indicates the pitch of a sound, its duration is expressed by means of different values. Each beat can be divided into various rhythmic values whose durations are more or less important.

The main rhythmic values are the whole note (or semibreve), the half note (or minim), the quarter note (or crotchet), the eighth note (or quaver), and the sixteenth note (or semiquaver). (See chapter on “Rhythm.”)

Accompanying

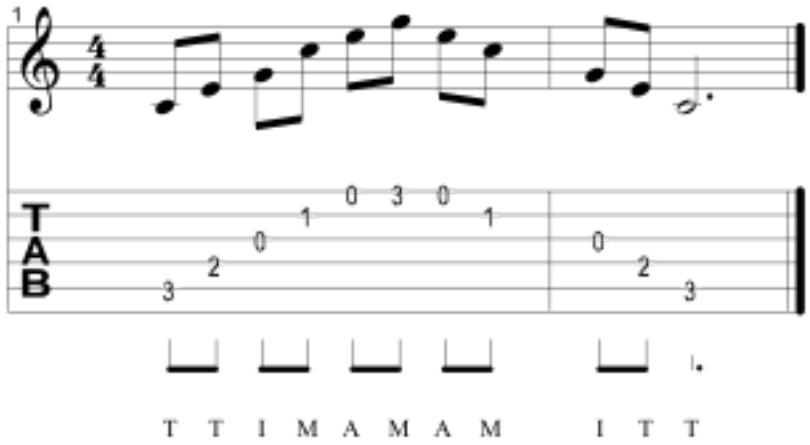
With a guitar, one can accompany a melody, a singer, or a soloist.

Accompaniment is a very common way of playing the guitar. It is characterized by arpeggio, chords, or finger-picking (see Chapter 7 on “Techniques”).

Playing arpeggios

An arpeggio consists in a chord broken up so that each note is played successively.

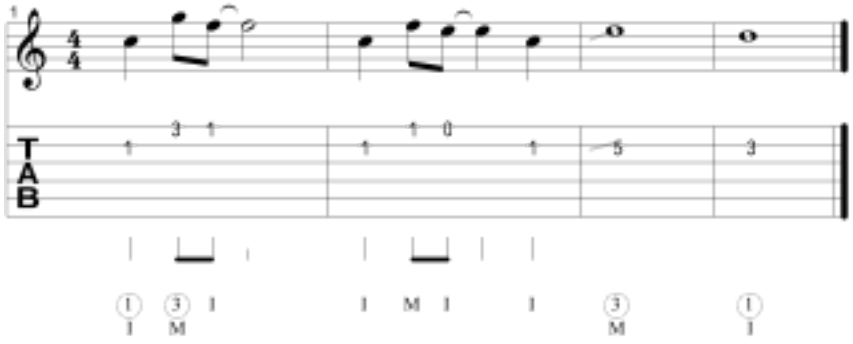
Exercise 4



Playing themes

What is meant by “theme” is the main melody of a tune. That melody can be sung or played on an instrument.

Exercise 5



Playing solos

The part of a song when a musician comes forth to play more prominently is called a solo. It is a part that often lasts from 8 up to 32 (sometimes up to 64) bars.

When soloing, a musician will use all the elements of theory related to the key in which the tune is written – scales and arpeggios, for instance.

The Plectrum, or Pick

Chapter 3

Introduction

This little object was originally used by mandolin players, and they now exist in a huge variety of types and shapes.

A plectrum will provide an incomparably brighter attack on the string, and enable you to play with a swiftness that is difficult to achieve with your fingers.

Holding the plectrum

Bending your index finger, rest the pick on the side of the first joint. Place your thumb on top of it.

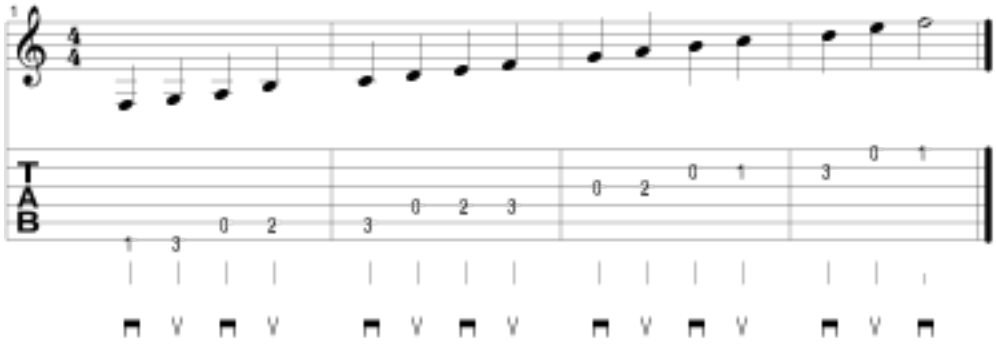
☞ Do not hold the pick too tightly, or the sounds you get may be too harsh. You must feel the pick slightly loose between your fingers.

Notation

On a music score, the strokes given by a pick are indicated with simple signs.

- A little open square indicates a down stroke, i.e. away from your body.
- An arrow pointing down indicates a pick stroke upward (an upstroke).

Exercise



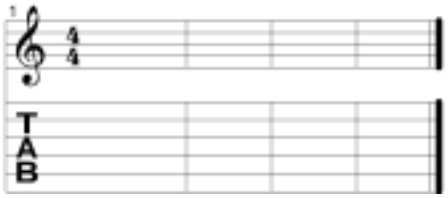
Your right hand should be in line with your arm. Your wrist should be flexible while your arm remains still.

☞ Do not strain your muscles. Relaxing is the key to progression.

The Elements of a Score

Chapter 4

The bars

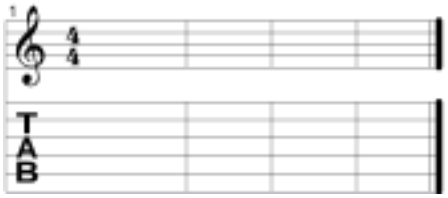


On a score, some vertical lines called bar lines delimit the areas, or bars, within which the notes are written.

These bars have the same time-length throughout the score.

Their duration is indicated relatively to a basic value: the beat.

The clef

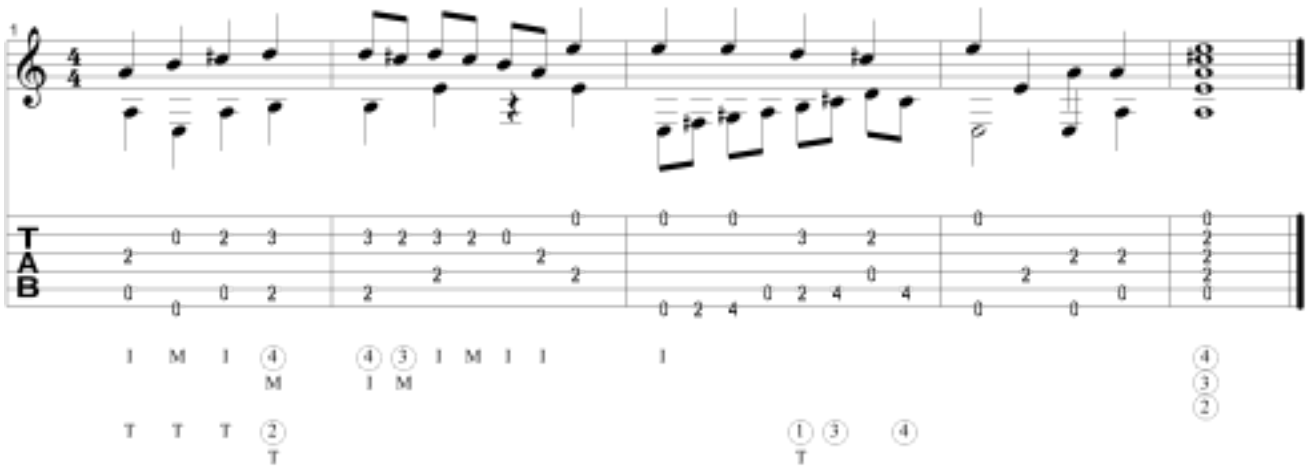


The first symbol you notice on the left-hand side of the score is called the clef. It is used as a reference for placing the notes on the staff.

In our example, the clef is a treble clef, used to write for the guitar as well as for the violin, the right hand of the piano, and many other instruments.

For instruments with a lower harmonic range, one uses the bass clef. Such is the case, for example, for the bass guitar, the cello, and the left hand of the piano.

The time signature



Immediately to the right of the clef is the time signature. It determines the structure and duration of the bars that follow it.

4 The top number gives the number of values that make up a bar.

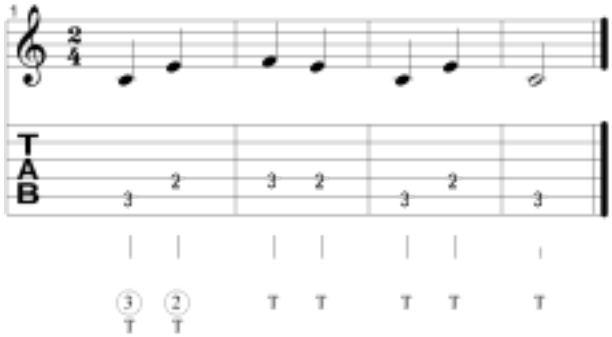
4 The bottom number indicates the time length of these values.

By convention, the basic value is the whole note, since its duration equals that of a whole 4/4 bar. Its value is represented by the number 1. It is also called semibreve in the British system. We will be mostly using the American system of reference here, for simplicity's sake.

Every other duration is represented by a fraction of the whole note.

Symbol	Name	Value	Equivalence
	Whole note (Semibreve)	1	1 whole 4/4 bar
	Half note (Minim)	2	1/2 whole note
	Quarter note (crotchet)	4	1/4 whole note
	Eighth note (quaver)	8	1/8 whole note
	Sixteenth note (semiquaver)	16	1/16 whole note

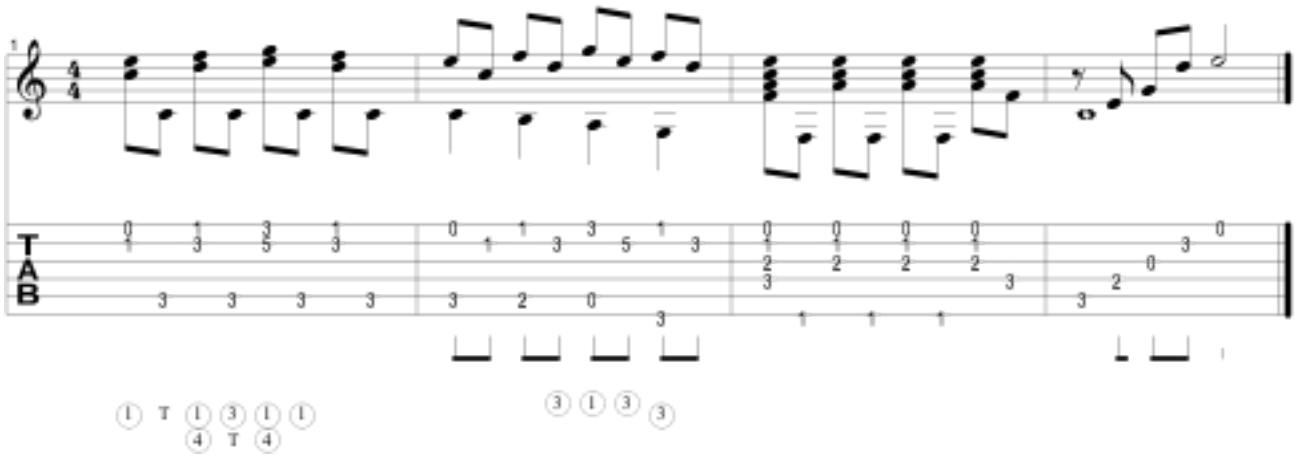
2/4 ("two four time") bars



The top number indicates two values; the bottom one indicates that those values are quarter notes. This is a "two four time" bar.

2/4 = 2 quarter notes in a bar.

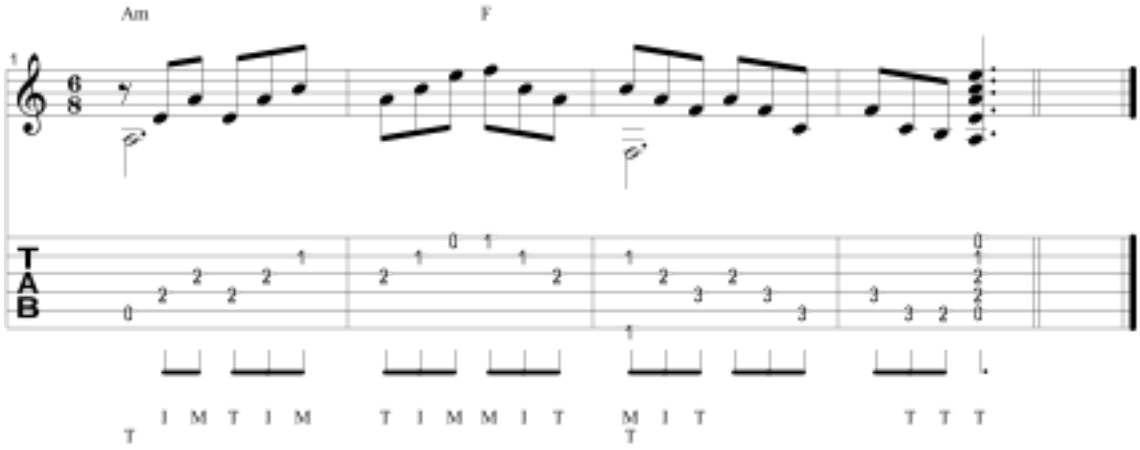
4/4 (“common time”) bars



We now have the means to understand that this bar contains four quarter-note beats.

4/4 = 4 quarters (quarter notes) in a bar.

6/8 (“six eight time”) bars



6/8 = 6 eighths (eighth notes) in a bar.

Musical symbols

Music is written in a very precise manner. That is why there are a great number of symbols that are designed to provide the staff with musical expression.

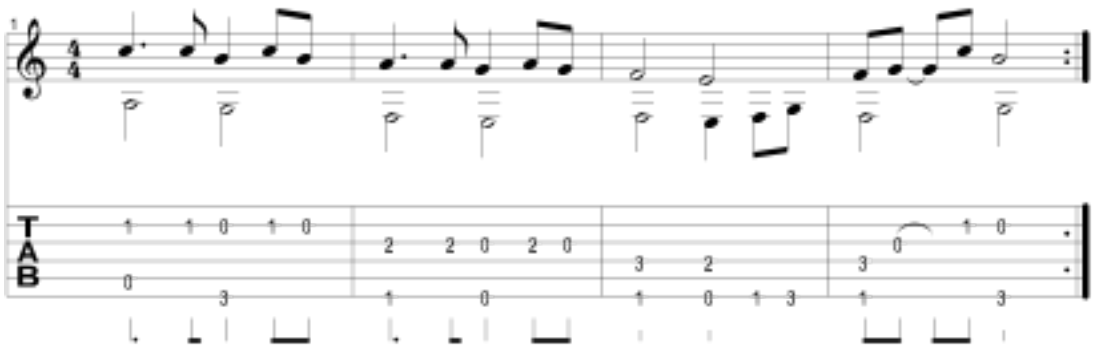
There also exist some “practical” symbols, whose role is to make it easier to browse a score.

Repeat signs

The repeat sign indicates that a theme is to be played more than once.

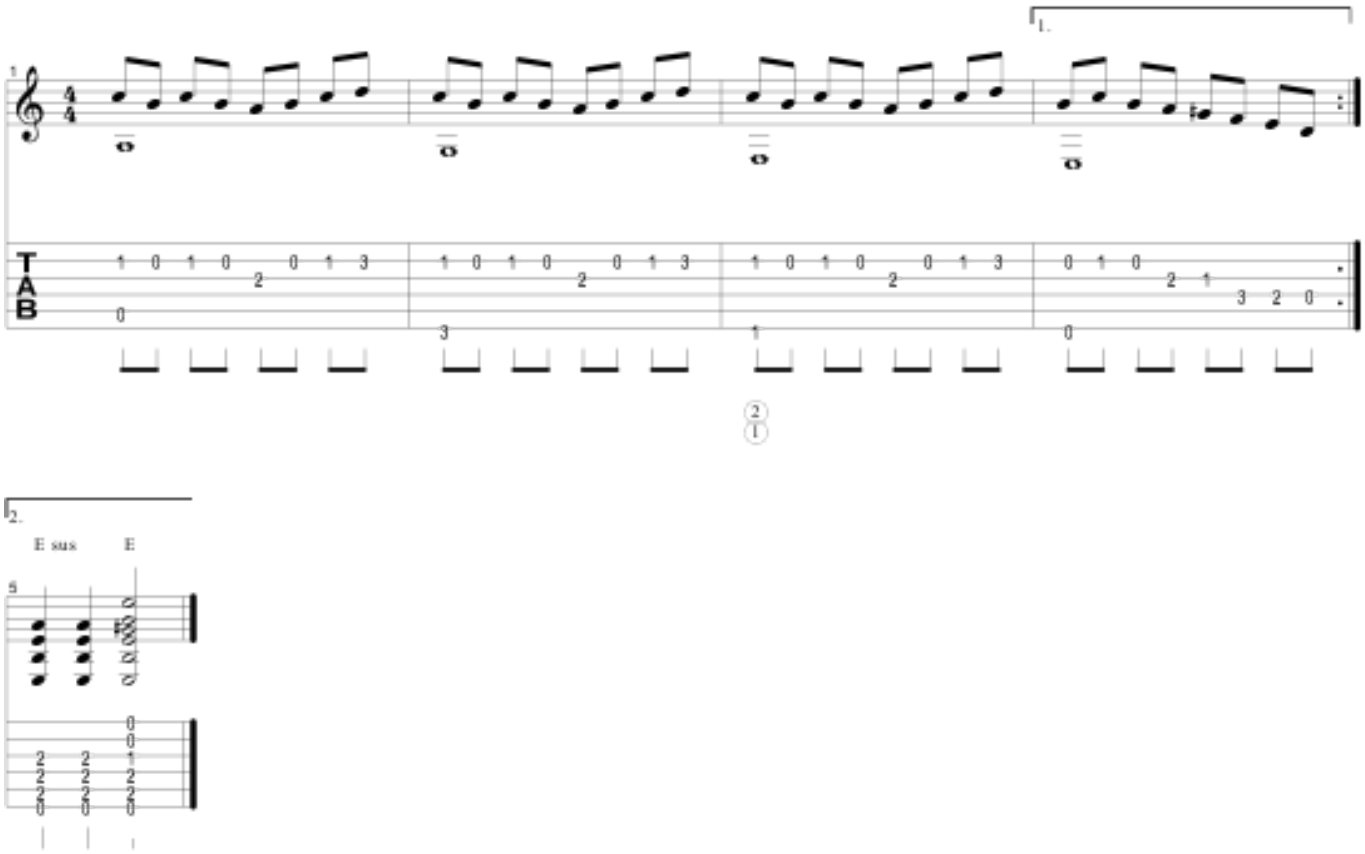
In order to avoid writing the same passage twice, for example, one uses various types of repeat marks.

The right repeat sign



The two dots followed by a double bar line send the player back to the beginning of the score, or of the part if this sign is placed much further down.

Volta brackets (1st and 2nd endings)



These brackets appear at the end of a part, and their use is fairly simple.

The first time you play the part, you must read the staff down to the repeat sign which then sends you back to the beginning of that part – in our example, to the first bar.

The second time you play the part, you are to skip bracket 1 and directly read the second ending.

In other words, in this example, you are supposed to play the bars in the following sequence: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 5.

There are very many symbols used in writing music. We will present new ones regularly, in particular when we examine various music styles (See the chapter with our “Study Pieces”).

Rhythm

Chapter 5

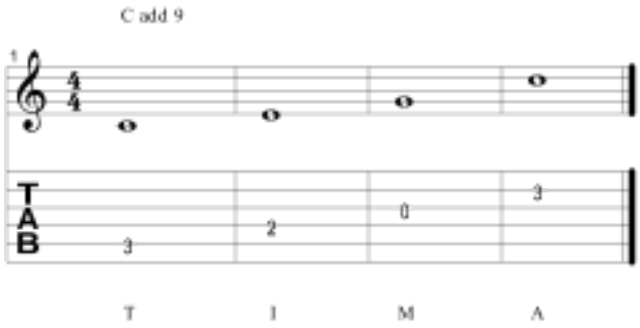
Introduction

On a staff, or score, the time length, or duration of a note is defined in terms of rhythm.

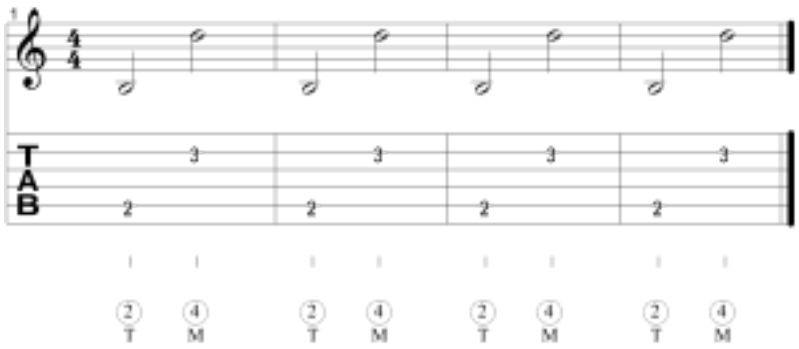
Before you fully master rhythm, you need to understand what each rhythmic segment is about. Only then will you apply it to the instrument.

There are seven main types of notes.

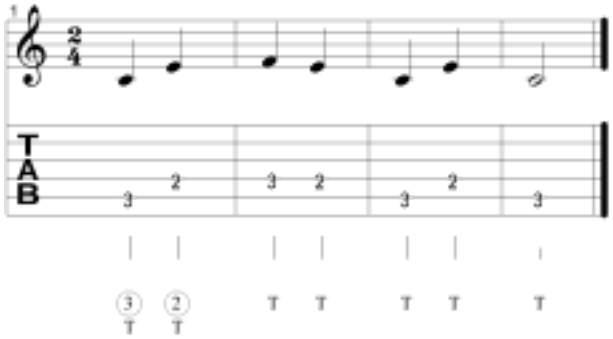
Whole notes (semibreves)



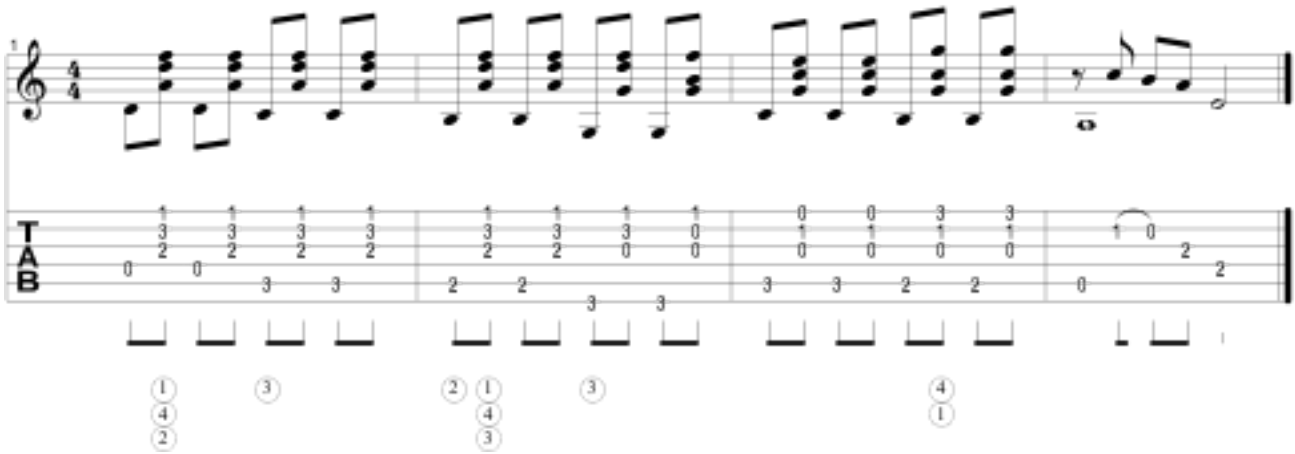
Half notes (minims)



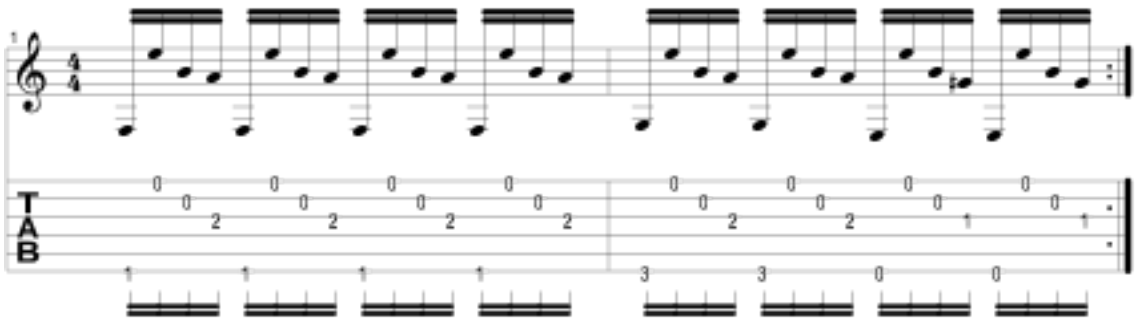
Quarter notes (crotchets)



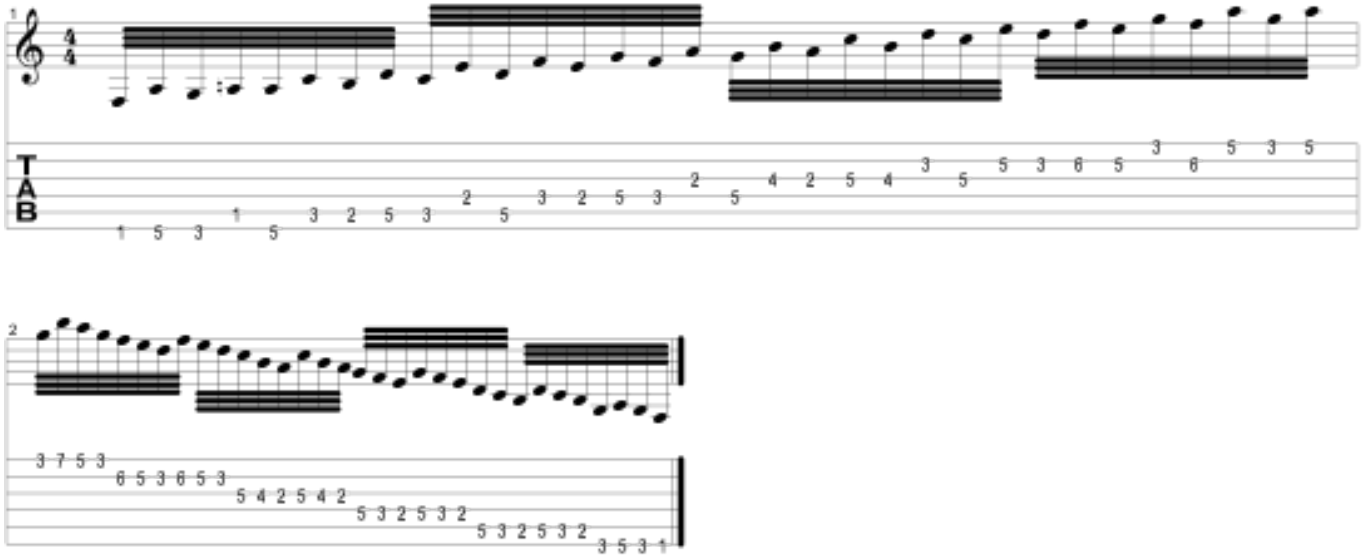
Eighth notes (quavers)



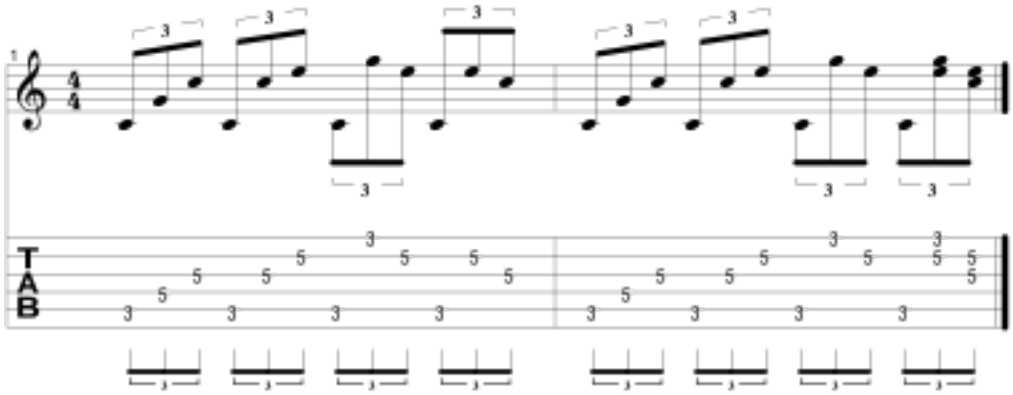
Sixteenth notes (semiquavers)



Thirty-second notes (demisemiquavers)



Triplets



All seven figures (from whole to thirty-second, to triplets) can be counted individually.

Usually, the quarter-note beat is taken as the basic rhythmic figure. An eighth note is therefore viewed as half (1/2) a beat and a sixteenth note as a quarter (1/4) of a beat.

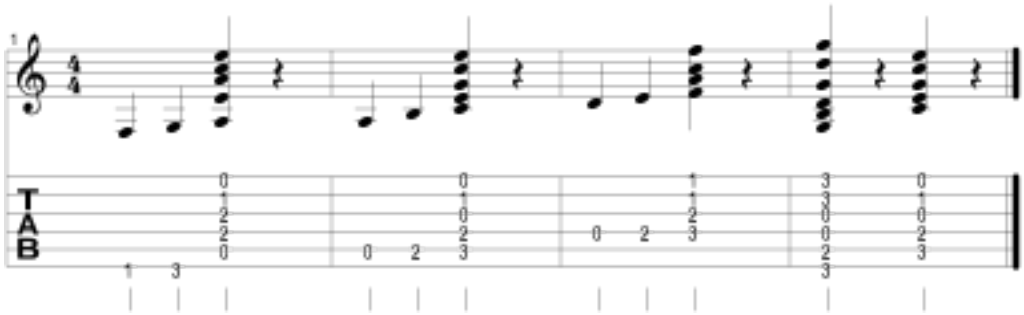
Rests and corresponding notations

A musician needs to be told by the score when not to play. To that purpose, a specific kind of music notation is called the rests.

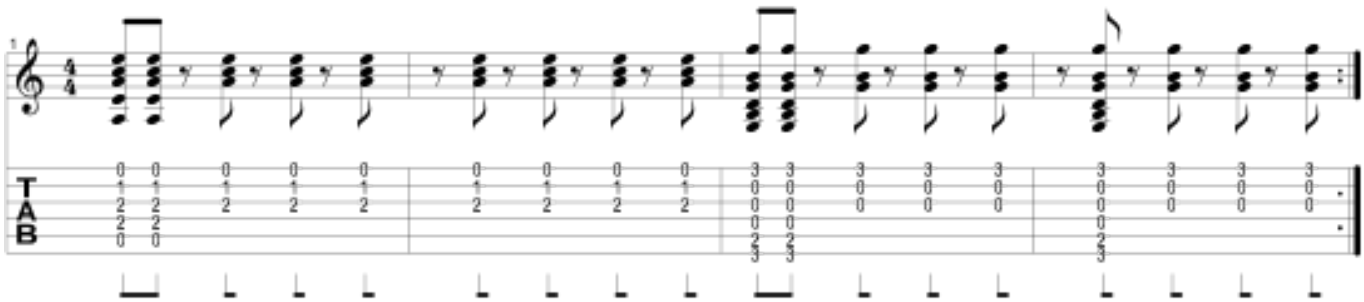
A rest does not produce any sound, but its duration is counted in the bar in which it appears.

Thus, for each rhythmic figure we have just seen, there exists a counterpart notation for a rest.

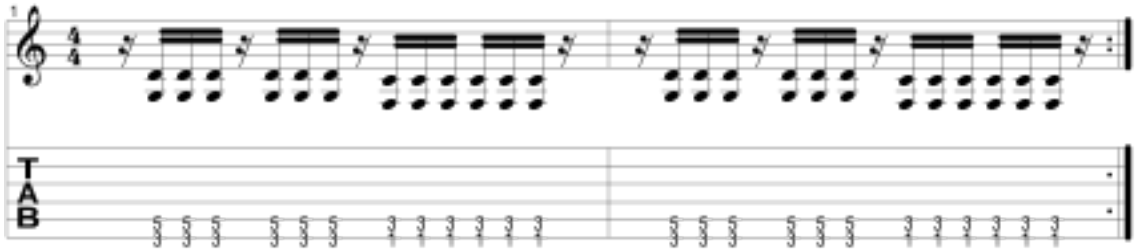
Corresponding to the quarter note is the quarter rest (or crotchet rest):



To the eighth note corresponds the eighth rest (or quaver rest):



To the sixteenth note corresponds the sixteenth rest (or semiquaver rest):



The Scales

Chapter 6

Definition

A scale is a sequence of ascending or descending notes proceeding by a specified scheme of intervals.

The distance between two successive notes is called a SCALE STEP, or TONE.

DO		RE		MI		FA		SOL		LA		SI		DO
	1		1		½		1		1		1		½	

A tone is made up of two SEMITONES, or HALF STEPS. Most natural notes are a whole step apart, and we need to be able to name the notes that appear in between two natural notes.

Two particular symbols make it possible to obtain such notes, either by heightening the pitch of any natural note, or by lowering it by a semitone: the sharp and the flat signs.

Symbole	Nom	Effet
♯	Sharp sign	Heightens the note by a half step
♭	Flat sign	Lowers the note by a half step

C		D		E	F		G		A		B	C
	C#		D#			F#		G#		A#		
	Db		Eb			Gb		Ab		Bb		

Patterns

The major scale

C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
	1	1	½	1	1	1	½

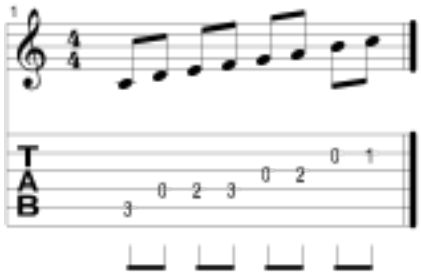
The harmonic scale here, i.e. the spaces between the notes, cannot be modified. Each note within it corresponds to a scale degree.

Here the first scale degree is a C – it is the tonal center, or tonic of the scale. What we have is thus a C major scale.

To obtain the other major scales, start from any given tonic, and go up the scale following the pattern above.

In other words, the major scale separates the third and fourth degree and then the seventh and eighth degree by only a half step.

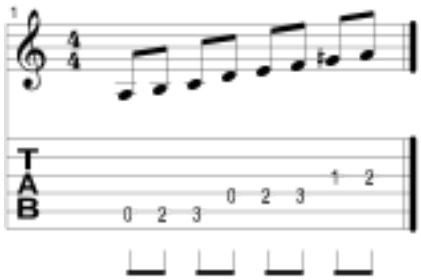
Those notes (E – F, and B – C) are separated by a natural half step.



This pattern above can be played on a limited area of the fingerboard with the notes of the C major scale.
You can find every scale pattern on any part of the guitar's neck in the Guitar Pro interface.

The minor scale

A	B	C	D	E	F	G#	A
	1	½	1	1	½	1 + ½	½



Relative scales

Two scales are said to be relative when they share the same key signature, one being major while the other is minor.

For instance, the C major scale is the relative major of the A minor scale.

The so-called relative minor scale is therefore situated 3 semitones below its corresponding major scale.
There are a few variants of the minor scale. It can appear, for instance, as natural minor, or as blues minor.

The blues scale

A C D D# E G

1 + ½ 1 ½ ½ 1 + ½

This scale is widely used by guitar players, and is not limited anymore to the style after which it is named. It is extremely present in modern music.

Intervals

An interval is composed of the sum of the steps and half steps that lie between two notes.

The third: C E

2 steps

Two intervals can bear the same name (here: a “third”) while being composed differently; they will then be qualified differently.

Major third: C E

2 tones (4 half steps)

Minor third: C Eb

1 tone + ½ (3 half steps)

Qualifying intervals

Qualifying an interval means indicating its quality. It can be:

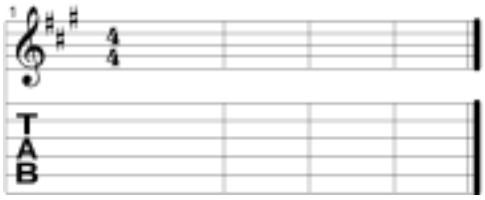
- Major (M)
- Minor (m)
- Perfect (P)

A minor interval is a major diminished by a ½ step (semitone).
If a minor interval is further diminished by a ½ step, it is then called diminished.

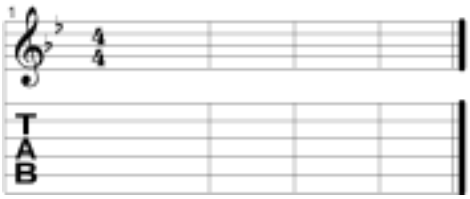
The key signature

The key signature is a series of sharp or flat symbols placed on the staff, otherwise called accidentals, which determine the tonality in which the score is written.

These accidentals appear with the clef at the beginning of every staff.



Here the key signature is composed of three sharps.



Here it indicates two flats.

The key signature determines the tonality of a piece of music. The accidentals it determines are meant to be respected throughout the score.

A natural symbol, however, can be used to cancel an accidental determined by the signature, for the length of a bar.

The order of accidentals

There is a set order for accidentals to appear in the key signature.

Order for sharps						
♯	F#	C#	G#	D#	A#	E#	B#

Order for flats						
♭	Bb	Eb	Ab	Db	Gb	Cb	Fb

Finding out the key of a score

We have two references at our disposal to determine in which tonality, or key, a piece is written:

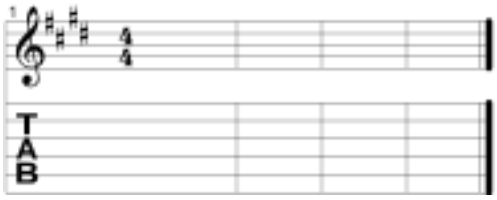
- The key signature
- The ending note or chord

The key signature

You will be able to determine the key of a score by following these two rules:

The key signature rules		
♯	Sharp key	Last sharp + ½ step = key
♭	Flat key	Second-to-last flat = key

Example with a sharp key:



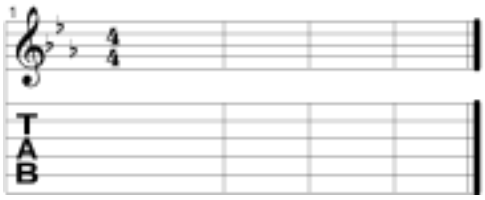
This signature comprises four sharps: F# C# G# D#

The last sharp is D#, the key is therefore:

D# + ½ step = E

This score is thus cast in the key of E major.

Example with a flat key:



This signature comprises three flats: Bb Eb Ab

Therefore:

Eb (second-to-last flat) = key (Eb Major)

The ending note or chord

The final note or chord of a score is an important element to determine the key.

If the final chord of the score does correspond to what you have determined from the key signature, then the key is confirmed.

However, the ending note or chord may also correspond to the relative key, which then makes the relative the score's key.

Improvisation

Improvising means playing a non-written part in a spontaneous manner.

The content of an improvisation may be composed of any scales, arpeggios, intervals, and chords which are comprised in the general key of the piece on which one is improvising.

The keys to improvisation

Improvisation mobilizes every element a guitarist has at his/her disposal to play:

- Theoretical background;
- Iinstrumental technique;
- Rhythm;
- Knowing your material surroundings.

However, improvising implies much more than what a mere written explanation can offer. The musician is expected to open up and express his/her musical sensitivity through a personal approach.

☞ Beyond listening, one appreciates music based on one's personal feelings, and not just by referring to purely intellectual and theoretical judgments.

Progressing

Before you start improvising, there are a few ground rules to follow:

- Determining the key of a song;
- Being familiar with the scale patterns, arpeggios, and chords that are related to it;
- Thinking about the piece in terms of style.

☞ Whatever you choose as material for learning ought to be suited to your level as a guitar player.

☞ Start familiarizing yourself with improvising on a simple kind of musical support – such as for example a piece or a song with only five or six chords and two main parts.

The Chords

Chapter 7

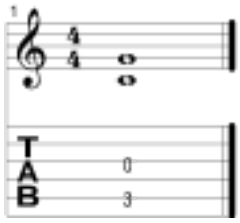
Definition

A chord is a series of notes written on the same vertical line, and all played at the same time.

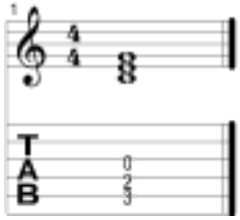
A perfect chord is one which is made of three basic sounds or notes. Thanks to how it is designed, the guitar makes it possible for us to locate the basic notes on the neck in any given order.

On this instrument, a same note can appear several times in a chord pattern.

Between the first note in a chord (the root note) and the next one, the interval is that which is called the third.



Between the first and the third note, the interval is a fifth.



The three notes played together produce a chord.

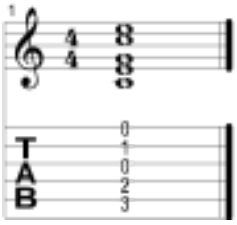
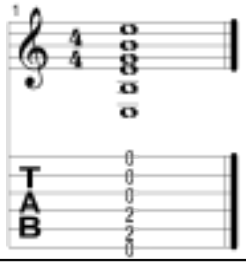
The nature of chords

Major or minor?

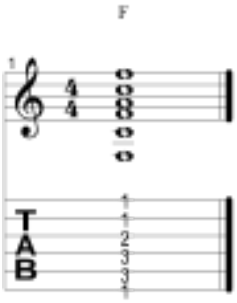
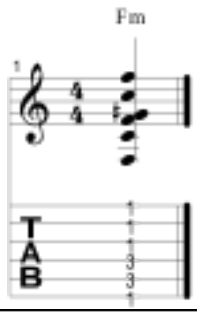
To determine the nature of a chord, we are going to have to count the number of steps and half steps between the root note and its third note.

Major chords: | Root note | 2 tones | Third of chord |

Minor chords: | Root note | 1 tone + ½ | Third of chord |

Example of a major chord	Example of a minor chord
	

By use of sharp or flat accidentals, any major chord can be turned into a minor, and vice versa.

F Major	F minor
	

Using chords

Chords can be used in various ways.

- **Strumming full strokes**

Every note is played at once, most of the time with the plectrum alternating down-strokes and upstrokes.

- **Arpeggio**

Each note is played one after the other. The left hand remains steady, to let the sound ring freely

- **Half-chords**

A chord can use 6 strings at the most. However, without moving your left hand, you can let your right hand focus, say, of the last three or four strings only.

Those three playing techniques are not the only ones. Let your creativity roam free to blend them together or come up with new ones.

Chord structures

It is essential to fully understand the structure and the position of your fingers for each chord – the pattern of a chord on the fingerboard.

Indeed, whenever a chord is built on a root note on the low E or A string, its pattern can be moved up or down, and will remain the same whichever fret you play it on. This rule applies to all chords.

☞ The following rules applying to all chords, whatever their root notes, we will simply replace each note by a number corresponding to its position in the chord. For instance, number 1 stands for the root, while number 3 is the third of the chord.

Major chords

If a chord is major, you don't need to indicate its nature.

For example, in the case of C Major, one simply writes: C.

1 | **2 steps** | **3** | **1 step+ ½** | **5**

Root note on the lower E string

Root note on the A string

Root note on the D string

Minor chords (m)

Whenever a chord is minor, you need to indicate its nature.

For example, for a C minor, one writes: Cm.

1 | 1 step + ½ | **3b** | 2 steps | **5** |

Root note on the E string

Root note on the A string

Root note on the D string

Seventh chords, or dominant seventh chords (7)

The seventh of chord is a note that can also be major or minor, depending on its position relative to the eighth, or octave.

If the seventh is minor, it is just written as “7”; if it is major, then one notes it “7M.”

1		3		5		7m		8ve
	2 steps		1 step + ½				1 step	

7th minor :	Seventh	Octave
	1 step	

7th Major :	Seventh	Octave
	½ step	

Root note on the E string

Root note on the A string

Root note on the D string

Minor seventh chords (m7)

1 | 1 step + ½ | 3 | 2 steps | 5 | 7m | 1 step | 8ve

Root note on the E string

Root note on the A string

Root note on the D string

Major seventh chords (7M)

1 | 2 steps | 3 | 1 step + ½ | 5 | 7m | ½ step | 8ve |

Root note on the E string

Root note on the A string

Root note on the D string

The minor seventh flat fifth chord (m75b)

1		3		5		7m		8ve
	1 step + ½		1 step + ½				1 step	

Root note on the E string

Root note on the A string

Root note on the D string

There are of course far more chord patterns than those we have presented here. Those are the main ones, however, and they will enable you to accompany most modern songs.

Accompanying with style

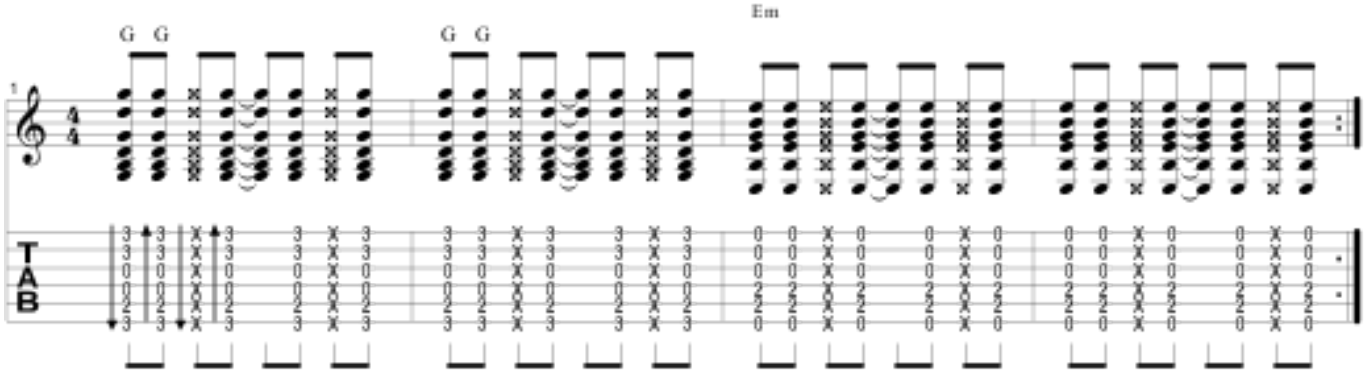
Folk style

The folk guitar is most commonly used to accompany singers.

You need to make sure you are playing an acoustic guitar with steel strings and that you are using a soft enough pick. Your arm should follow a regular pendulum swing.

On the down swing (down stroke), play the first eighth note of every beat, while playing the second eighth note of the beat on the upswing (upstroke).

Exercise 1



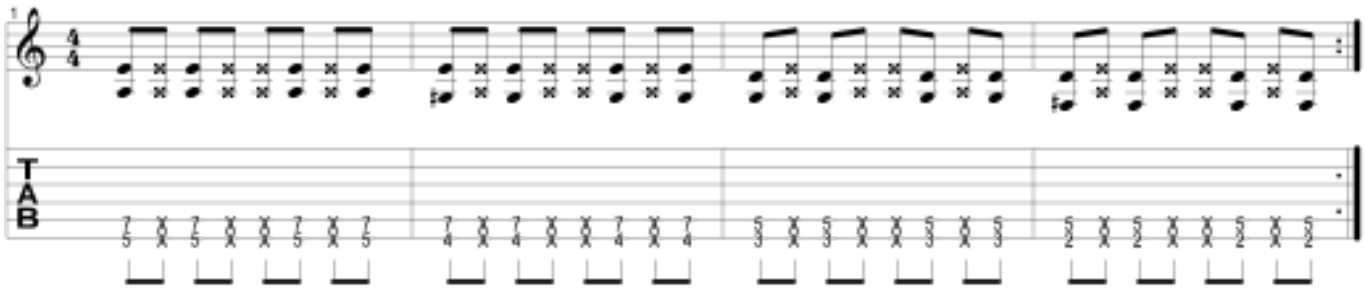
Rock style

You will often see a guitarist play rhythm on a folk guitar while other overdriven guitars provide the track with its rock spirit. This mix of styles is very common in modern music.

The approach here is purely rock n' roll. We refer to a technique that we will develop further in the next chapter: palm muting.

To slightly muffle the notes you are playing, gently rest the meat of your right hand on the strings before you play them.

Exercise 2

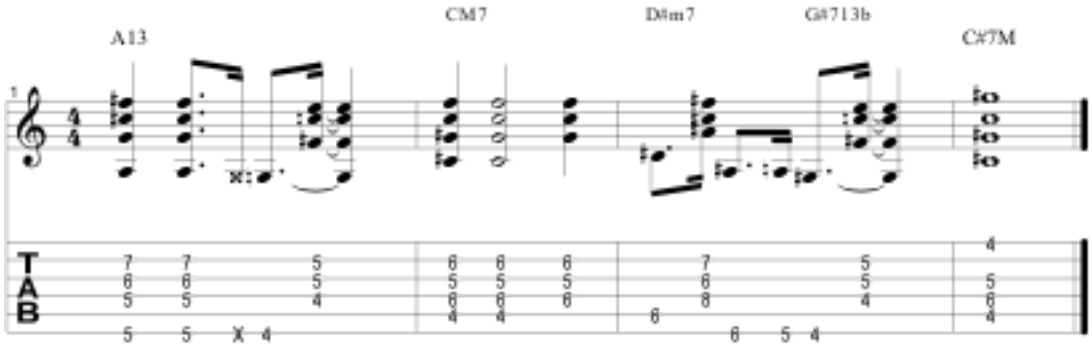


Jazz

Jazz-style accompaniment resorts to more complex rhythm patterns than the other music styles we have seen.

In this exercise, the chords ought to be played without a pick.

Exercise 3

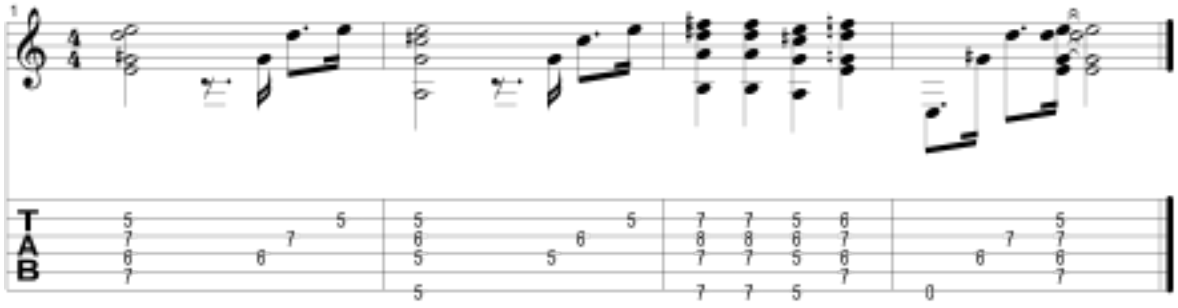


Blues

The blues, just like jazz, makes abundant use of the seventh chords.

On the following score, the style is traditional. Take your time to properly place the fingers of your left hand.

Exercise 4

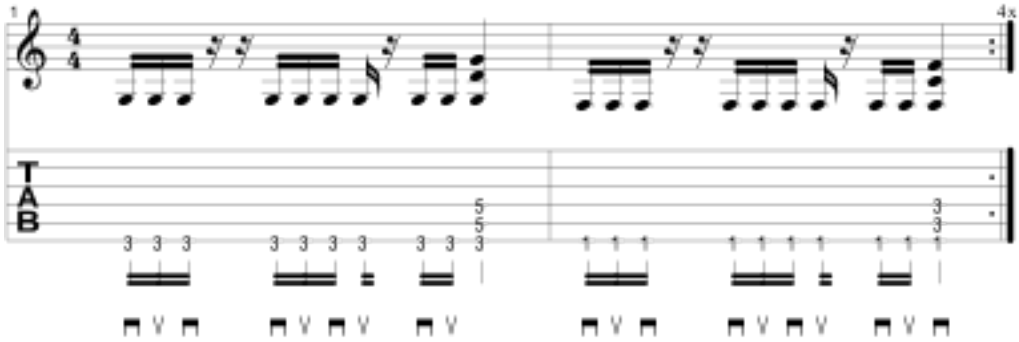


Metal

Heavy metal, just like rock n' roll, is a style in which the chords are reduced to a fifth interval.

Pay attention to the pick strokes.

Exercise 5



☞ No music exercise can be summed up on a staff. It takes a long time to explore musical cultures. Listen to all kinds of music, and let yourself be inspired by them. Your playing techniques will benefit from it.

Techniques

Chapter 8

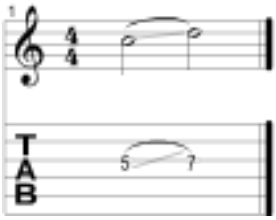
Definition

As a guitar player, you need to acquire a theoretical and harmonic background, but you also need to grasp and eventually master the various technical aspects of the instrument.

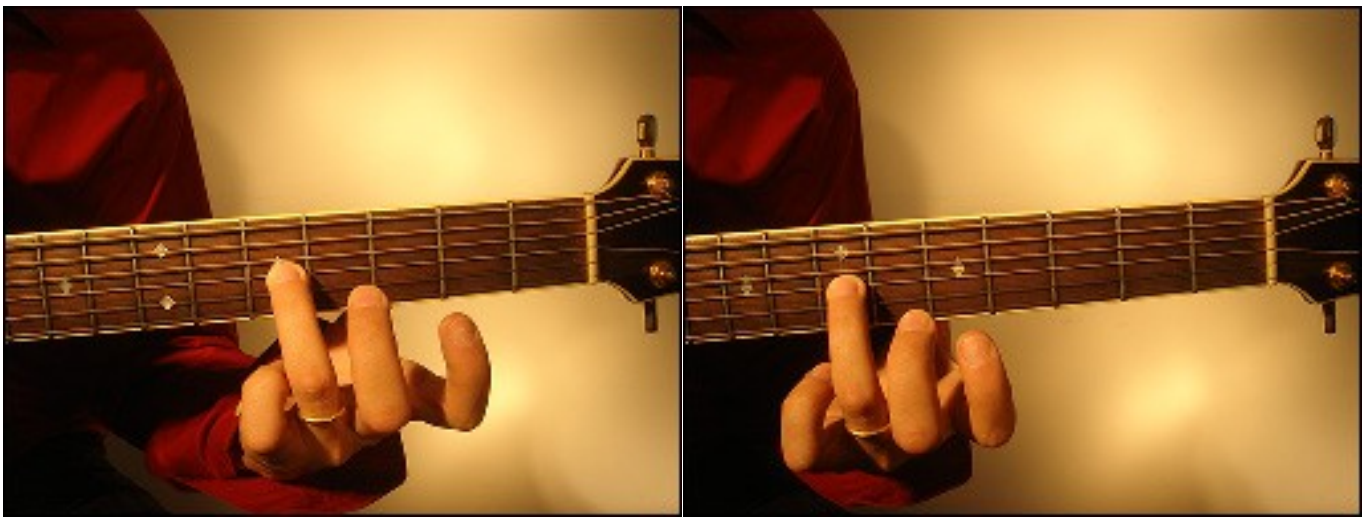
The following techniques will help you develop fingering skill and flexibility.

☞ Only work on one technical difficulty at a time.

Sliding

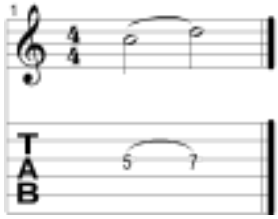


Play a note, then slide up or down to the next note.



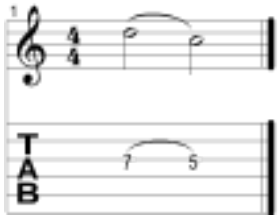
There is no fundamental rule about using this technique. It makes your playing more fluid and pleasant to hear. It is used in every guitar style.

Hammer-on



In a sequence of two notes, the second one will be hit by a finger from your left hand. This second note will not be struck by the pick. On a score, this technique is represented by a linking line.

Pull-off



The pull-off is the exact opposite of the hammer-on. This time, pick the string to attack the first note, and then pull down your left-hand finger until it slips off the string, thus essentially plucking the string to make the second note ring.

☞ Be careful not to pull too hard on the string when you pull off, or you may alter the accuracy of the note.

Bend

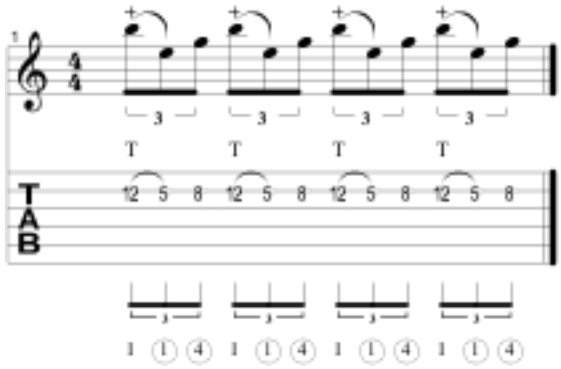
This is THE paramount technique for guitarists. It is used almost constantly, and in every music style. Doing it well, however, is not easy.

Play a note, then push the string up (or down), till you get a higher note. Usually the bend doesn't go higher than a step and a half.
Your hand should swivel round with your wrist, and the pressing finger should be firm and tense. No finger should move, as it is the movement of your hand and wrist which produces the bend.

☞ The targeted note must be harmonically accurate. For a start, just practice your bend by heightening the note by only a half step.

Tapping

This technique consists in using your right hand to tap notes on the neck, and then doing a hammer-on with your left hand on the same string you have tapped.



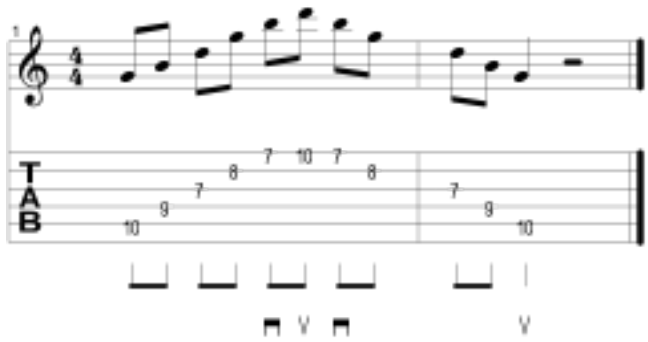
First, position your left hand so you can anticipate the second note.

Play the first note by tapping your right-hand index fingertip on the string. Pull off your finger with a slight pull on the string, so the second note rings. Then do a hammer-on with your left-hand finger.

☞ It is the right hand resting on the edge of the neck which gives stability to this movement. You can also use a pick instead of a finger to tap the string.

Sweep picking

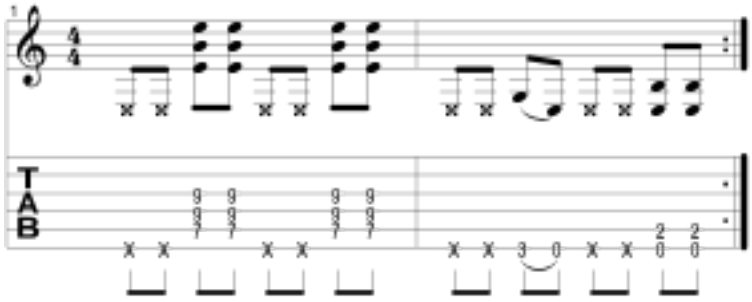
This means sweeping the strings with your pick. Most of the time here, you will use chord arpeggios as harmonic basis for picking. It really consists in sweeping the strings with your pick.



The key to this technique lies in synchronizing your two hands. While sweep picking the notes, take out your left-hand fingers one after the other to let the position develop itself.

☞ The plectrum plays a very important part in sweep picking. As you pick down the pick must rest on the next string after each note you play. It should not attack each note – it is the movement of the hand downward which makes the notes ring, one after the other.

Muffled notes – palm muting

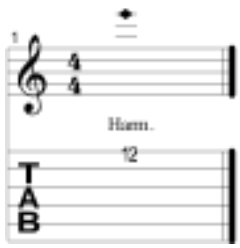


To muffle the notes, play with the meat of your right hand against the ends of the strings over the bridge. The sound you get should then be chunkier, softer.

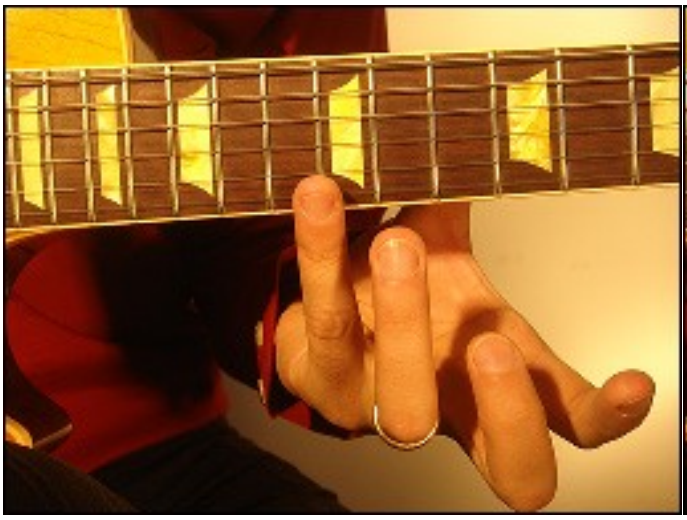
☞ This technique is used for rhythmic accompaniment, for solos, as well as for playing melodies, as it enables you to control the length of the notes.

Open-string (or natural) harmonics

Harmonics are very high-pitched notes that you obtain by touching the strings lightly. They can be found all over the fingerboard, but only on certain frets do they ring out easily. Frets 5, 7, 12 and 24 are where natural harmonics are the easiest to play.



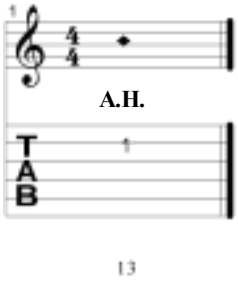
With your left hand, lay a finger on a string without pressing on it, exactly over a fret. Play the note, and take out your finger off – the harmonic rings.



Fretted harmonics

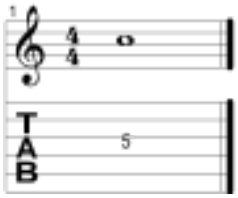
Every note along the fingerboard can be played as a fretted harmonic.

On the classical guitar: “artificial” harmonics



Place one of your left-hand fingers on the note you wish to play. Then place the index of your right hand on the fret corresponding to the same note but a whole octave higher – that is, 12 frets higher on the same string. Pluck the string with your right-hand middle finger; the note rings.

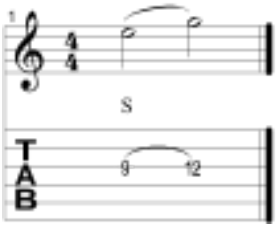
On the electric guitar: “pinched” harmonics



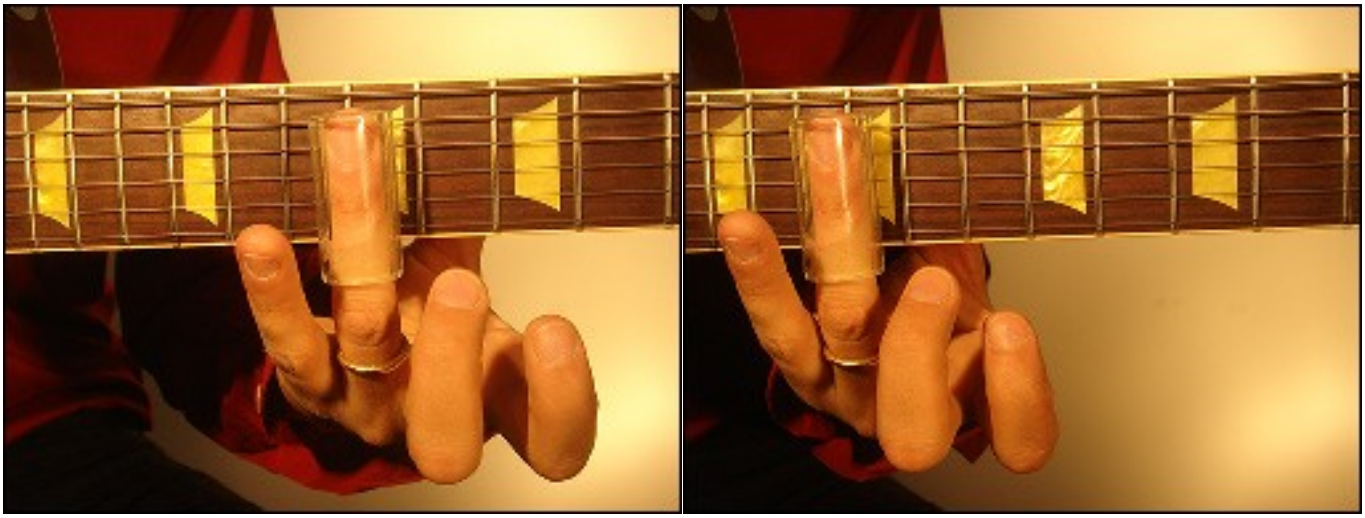
Hold your pick slanted, so you can play the note and then brush it with the flesh of your right-hand thumb. The whole thing is done in one movement.

Bottleneck, or slide guitar

The bottleneck is a little hollow tube made of glass, copper, or steel. It is particularly used by blues musicians.

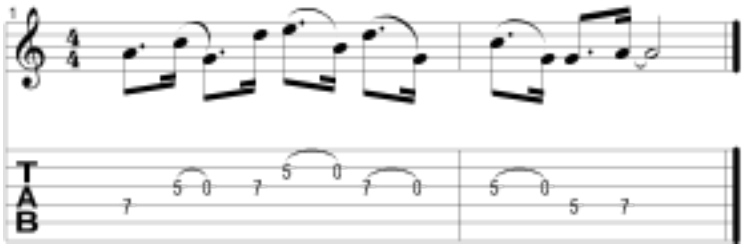


Place the bottleneck of the third finger (ring-finger) or on the little finger of your left hand.
Lay the bottleneck on the fret corresponding to the note you wish to play, and then slide it to the next note. The string must not touch the fingerboard.



☞ Pluck the note with your right-hand fingers, while muffling the strings you are not playing. You will find it easier to use the bottleneck if you play with an open tuning, such as G or D (see Chapter 1).

Open strings

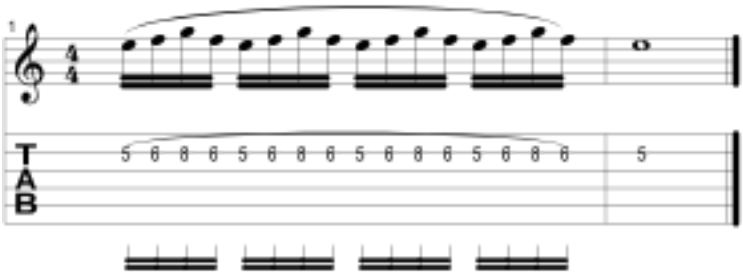


The goal here is to play a melody or a solo by using open strings. This technique comes in addition to the hammer--on and the pull-off.

Legato

So far we have only looked at short sequences of two notes played successively. With the legato technique, we are now going to be able to play a higher number of notes.

Associating hammer-ons and pull-offs makes it possible for the musician to play faster phrases.

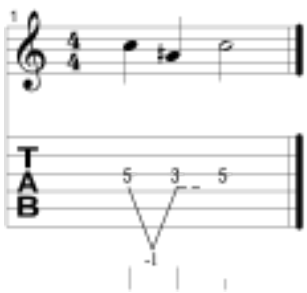


The right hand merely muffles the strings that are not played.

Vibratos

The tremolo bar

Some models of electric guitars are equipped with a rotating bridge which gives you the possibility, by using a metal bar, to affect the pitch of the notes you play.



Left-hand vibrato

To embellish certain notes, you can use the left-hand vibrato technique.

Place your finger on the string, and roll it swiftly from left to right parallel to the guitar's neck (following a forward-to-backward movement).

This first type of vibrato is used on classical (nylon strings) and folk (steel strings) guitars.

On an electric guitar, place your finger on the string, and shift it up and down on the fingerboard (up-to-down movement).

The capo

A song that uses a simple chord with open strings can be more difficult to play if you wish to raise the pitch of the whole piece altogether.

The capo makes it possible to change the key of a song without changing your way of playing it.

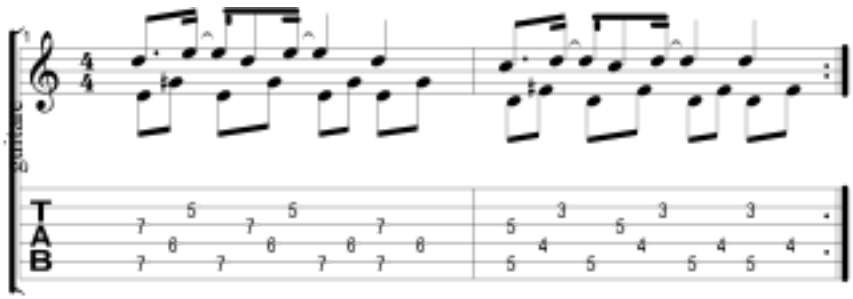
Capo second fret

Place the capo just before the fret you wish, and view it as the new nut next to the headstock.

Just play using the chord patterns of the original piece.

Fingerpicking

Fingerpicking consists in playing steady “alternating bass” patterns with your thumb, while playing another melodic part with your other fingers on the high strings of the guitar.



This technique is used a lot by blues and country musicians.

Applying the techniques

Chapter 9

Introduction

Since the techniques on the guitar are so many, it is advisable to approach them one by one.

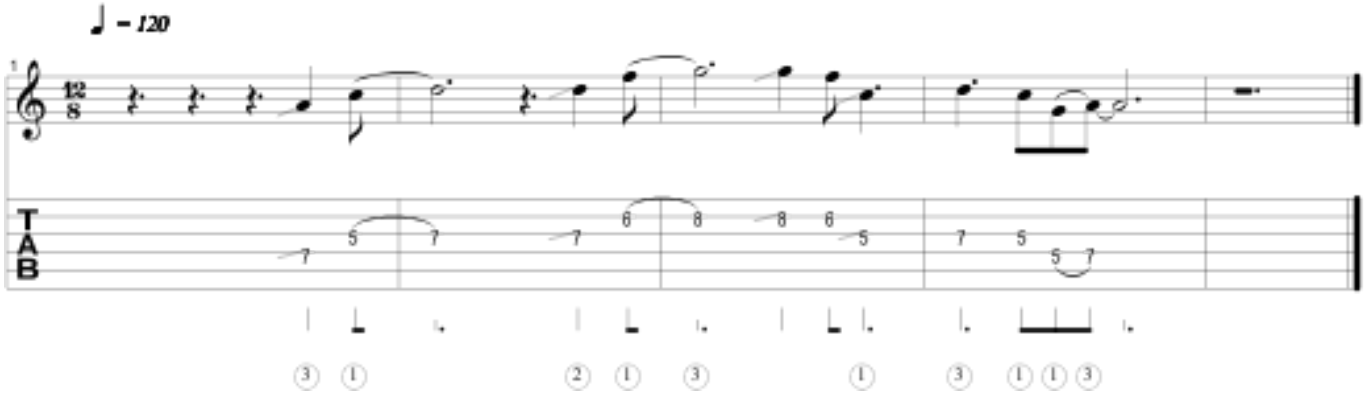
The techniques we are going to look at are not necessarily attached to any particular style, and can be used as you please, or as you feel.

To ensure steady progress for yourself, practice each exercise slowly. Then only speed it up to eventually get to the tempo indicated for the exercise, and to a result that sounds convincing.

Patience and time are the grounds on which you will lay the foundation of solid playing techniques. Acquiring those techniques is essential to set you on your way to musical maturity.

Sliding

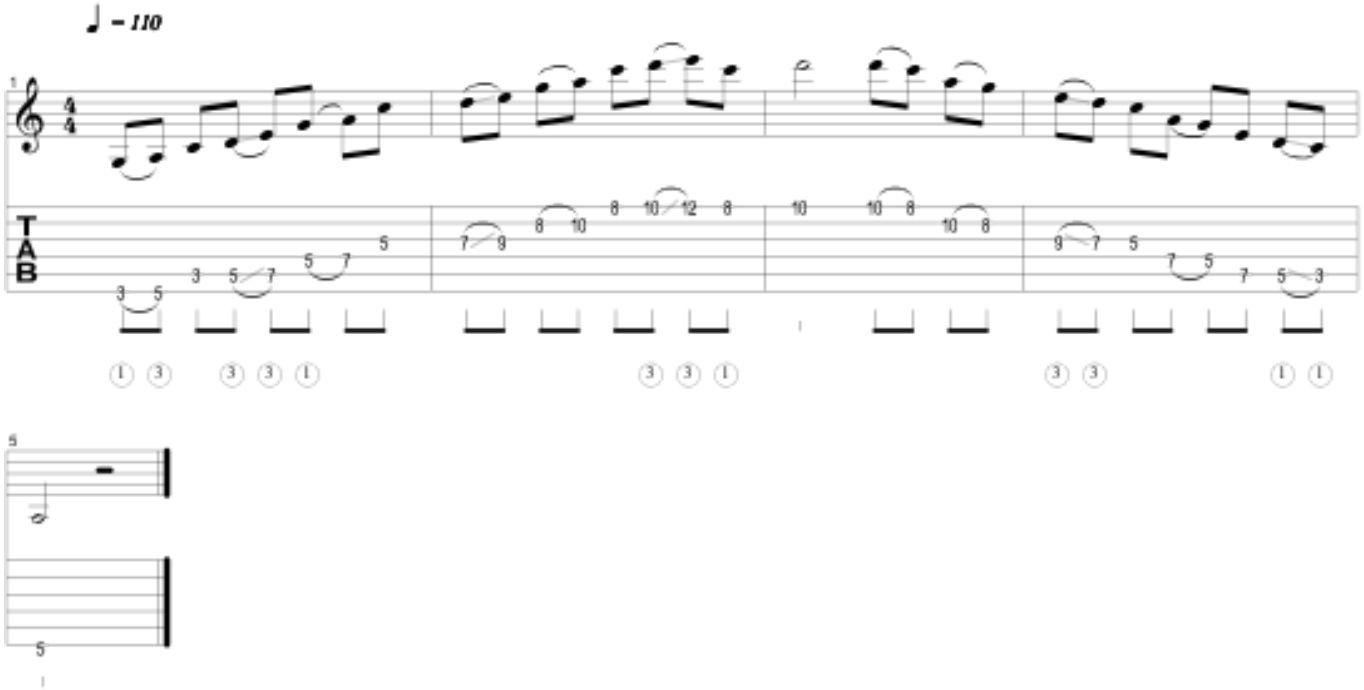
Exercise 1



This phrase is written on a 12/8 time signature. The basic beat corresponds to a dotted quarter note – that is to say, there are three eighth notes in a beat. A quarter note, therefore, equals 2/3 of a beat.

Make sure you play a precise rhythm, based on the information above. Below the staff are indications for left-hand fingering.

Exercise 2

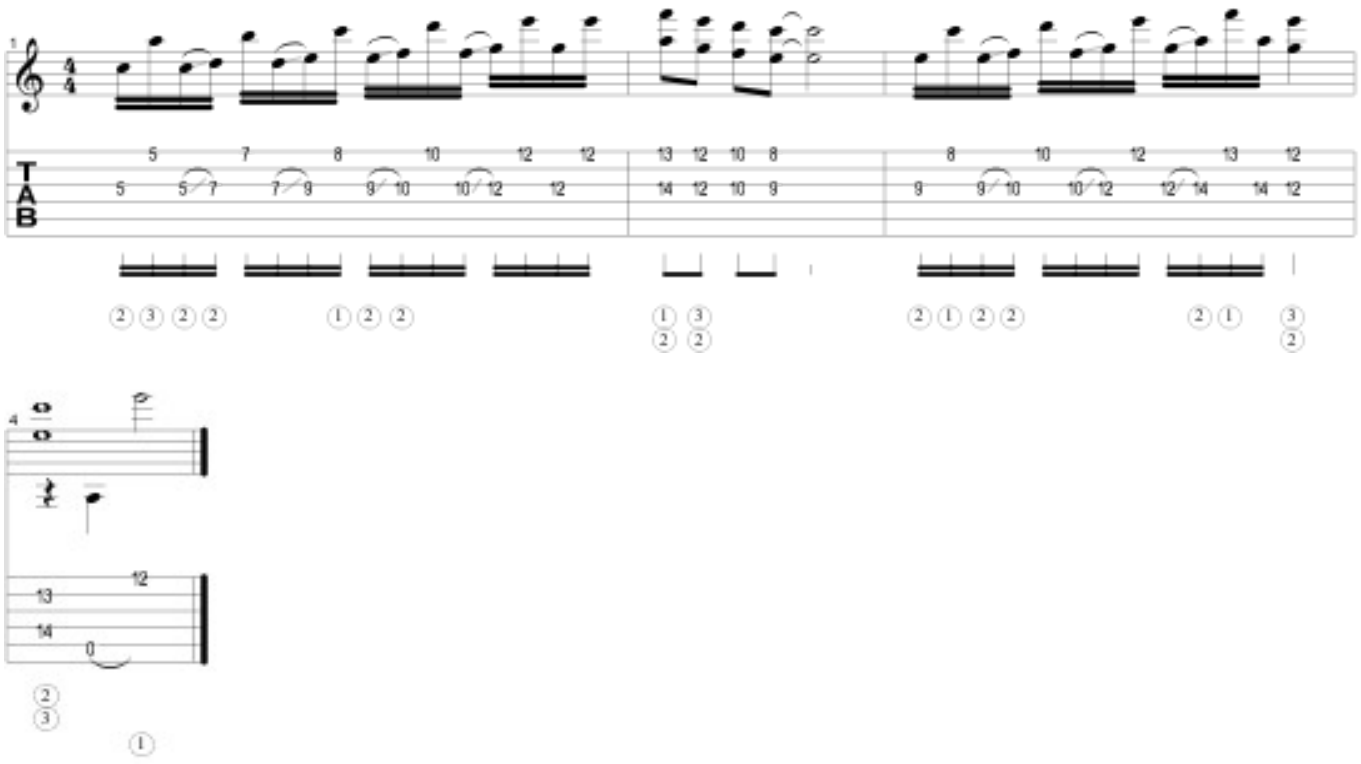


A bottleneck can be useful to play shift slides.

A shift slide means playing while shifting positions on the guitar's neck. Guitarists resort to it profusely, as it makes it possible, for example, to play a scale from a very low starting note up to a very high final note.

Make sure you do play the ties as they are indicated.

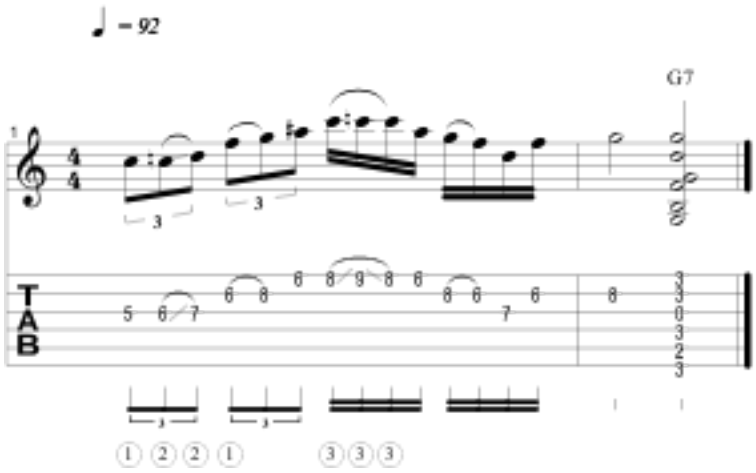
Exercise 3



This phrase uses a sixth interval, producing a sound effect that is very appreciated by blues and country musicians.

Practice slowly to fully grasp the logic behind the shifting notes. It is strongly recommended to use the left-hand fingering indications.

Exercise 4

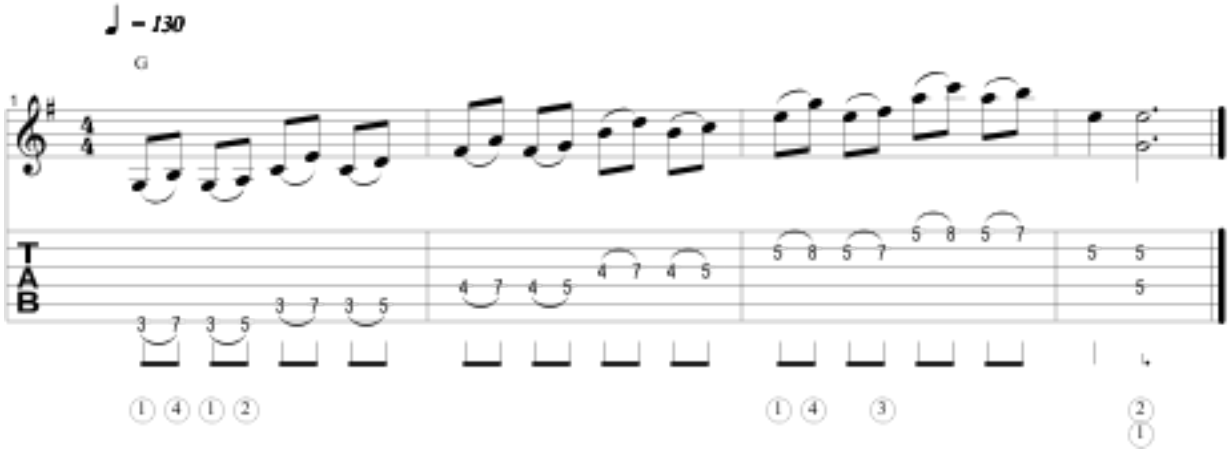


The blues scale is widely used in blues and rock music. It is fairly easy to make it sound good.

This phrase begins with two sets of triplets, that is, three notes per beat. Mind the way the triplets then give way to sixteenth notes. This rhythmical change is tricky. You need to play it neatly.

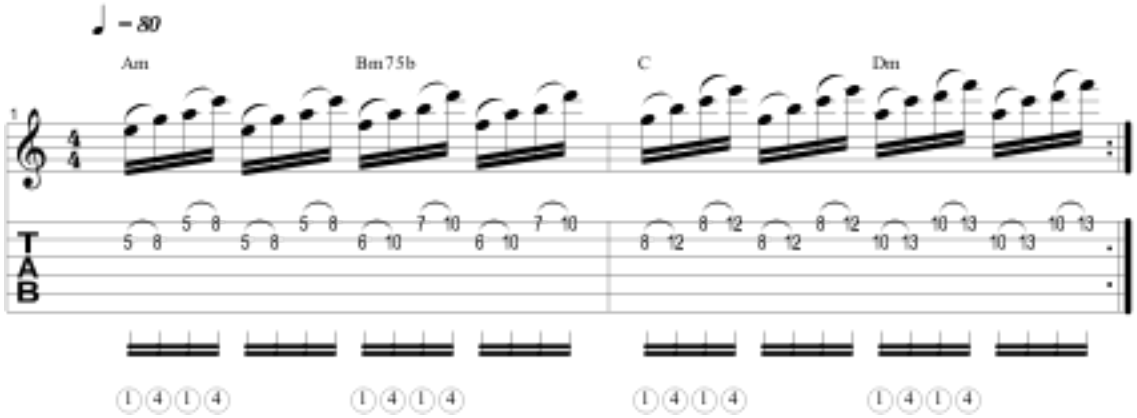
Hammer-on

Exercise 5



This is played over a G Major scale, and the way in which positions shift here is somewhat unconventional. To make it sound good, you need to hold your instrument and your body perfectly, with your left-hand thumb placed exactly against the middle of the neck. Do not overdo it, watch out for useless tensions.

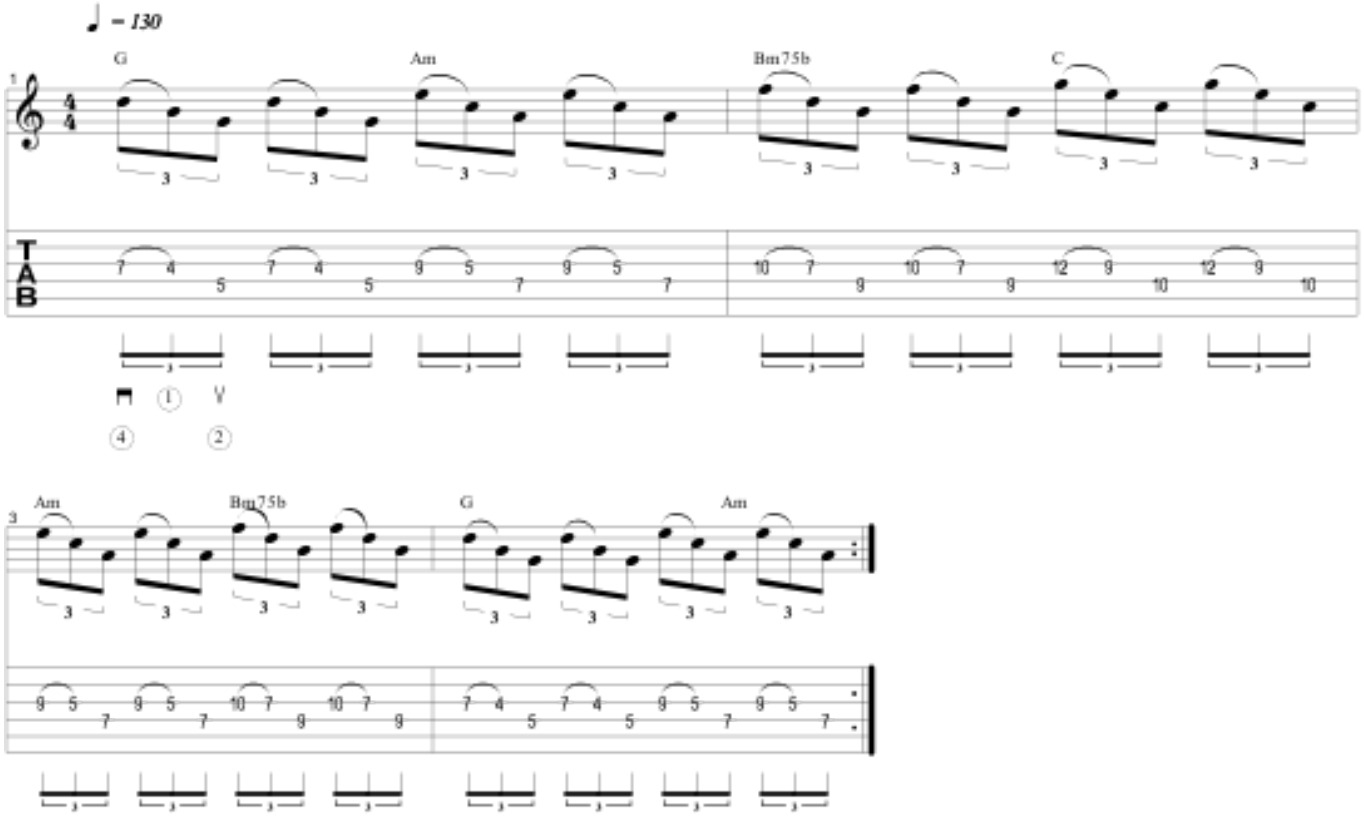
Exercise 6



The little finger of your left hand is the most difficult one to articulate. It is still very important to take it into account, for you will need it later to play complex musical phrases. Make sure you shift positions as neatly as possible.

Pull-off

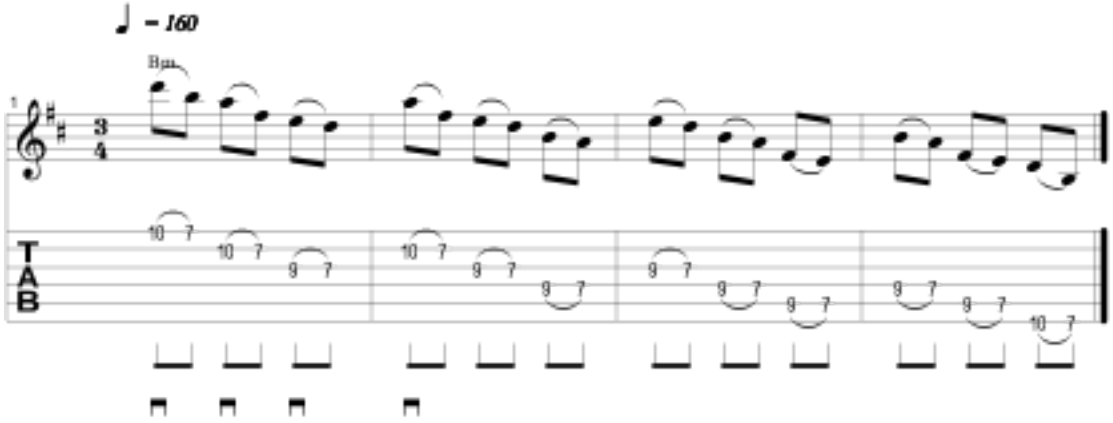
Exercise 7



We have already introduced this technique as being the opposite of the hammer-on. Pick the first of the two linked notes, and then pull down your left-hand finger until it slips off the string. Your left-hand finger ends up playing the string again and making the next note ring.

Don’t forget the triplet rhythmic pattern. You should make no sound when you change positions. Don’t strain it.

Exercise 8

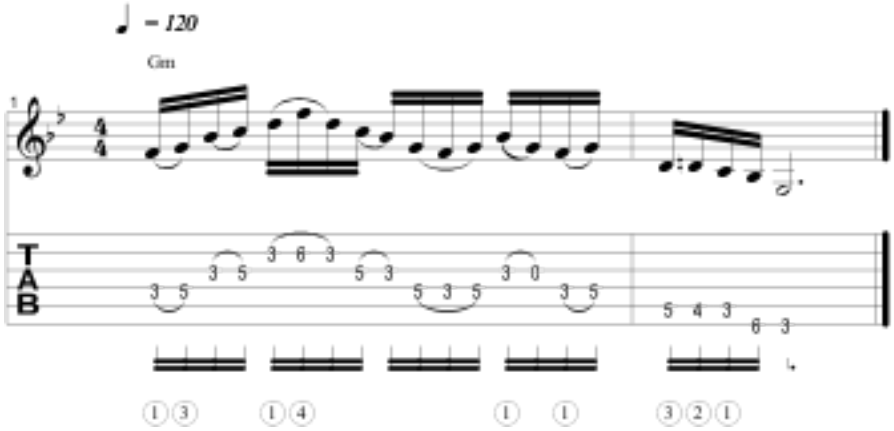


You can also approach the guitar in a very logical manner. The sounds can be thought of as notes, as positions, or as geometrical patterns. This phrase is based on such a pattern.

Three strings per bar, with a string shift on each bar. You should particularly practice obtaining even sounds. The string shift should be as discreet as possible.

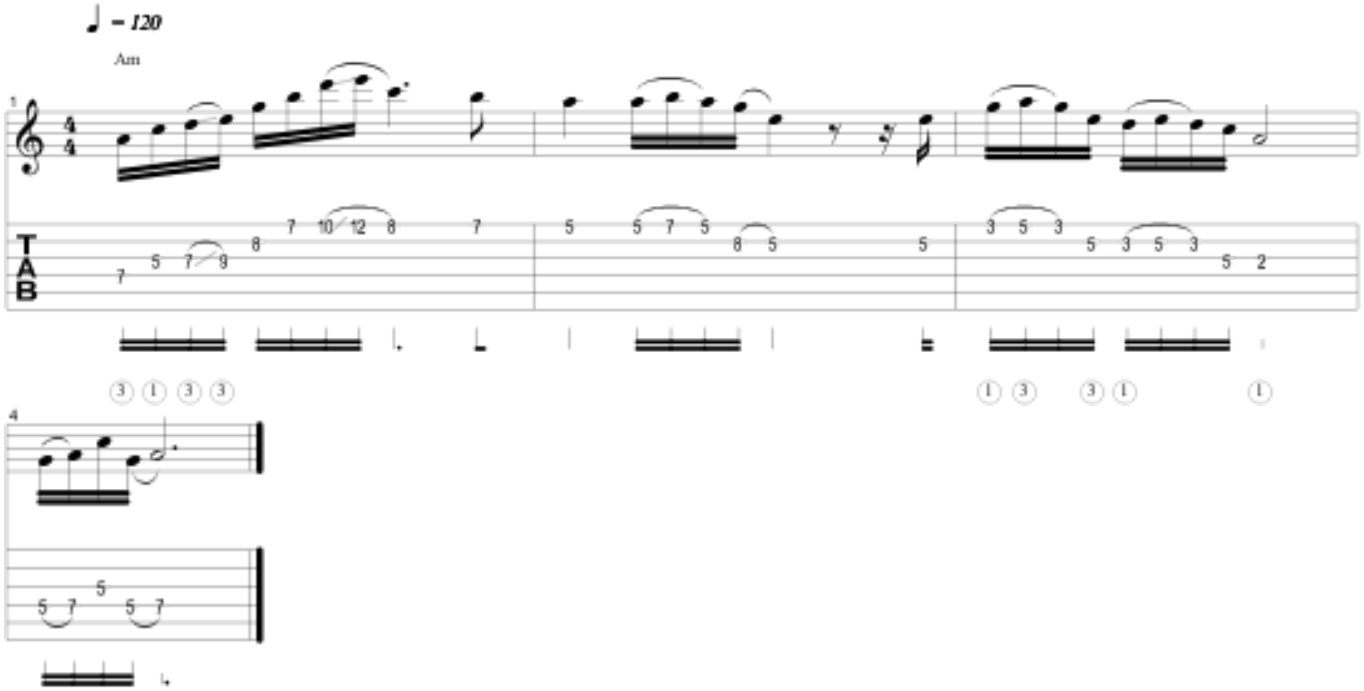
Mixing hammer-ons and pull-offs

Exercise 9



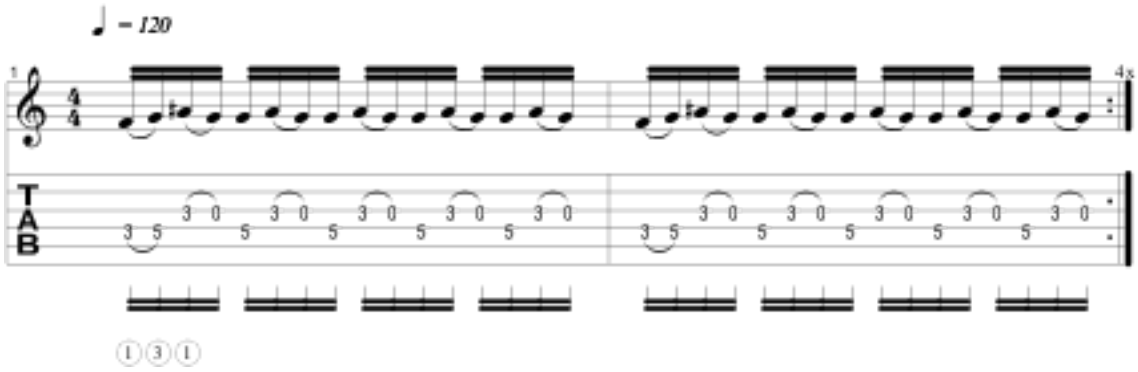
Practice very slowly before you progressively reach the tempo indicated here. Increase the speed of the metronome depending on how you manage the exercise. Play the rhythm and ties as they are written. You should be able to play the notes smoothly, in a relaxed manner.

Exercise 10



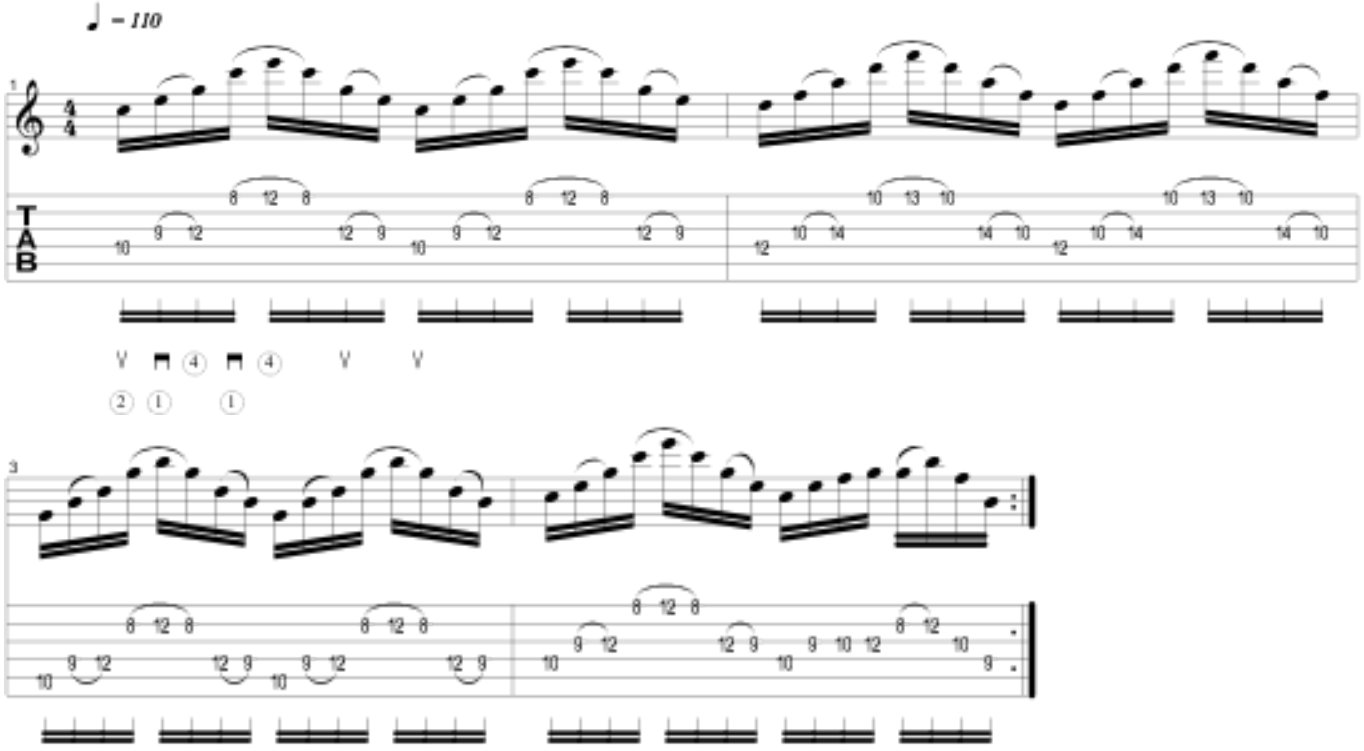
This phrase links together various techniques and rhythmic patterns. What makes it difficult is respecting the tempo indicated. It is crucial that you understand how the pattern goes here. Take your time reading the score before you start playing.

Exercise 11



Practice this phrase slowly to understand how the cycle goes. The G note (fifth fret, D string) is one you can muffle with your right hand. Your left-hand finger playing it doesn't have to move. Be careful not to touch the next string.

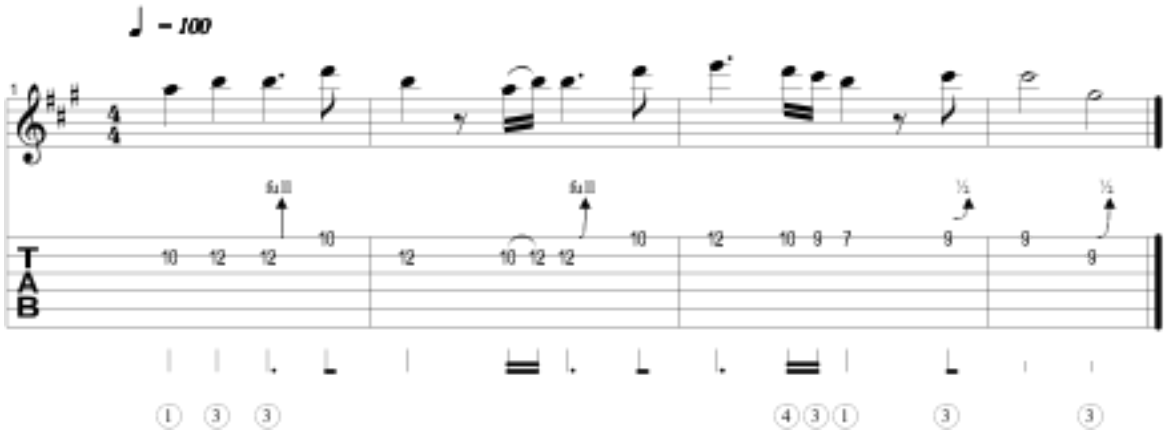
Exercise 12



The difficulty here lies in skipping the B string while maintaining a regular tempo and a neat sound. Don't move your left hand if you don't have to – remember that the fingers ought to do the work here, not the whole hand. Later on, this phrase can be played without tied notes, with up-and-down strokes of the right hand.

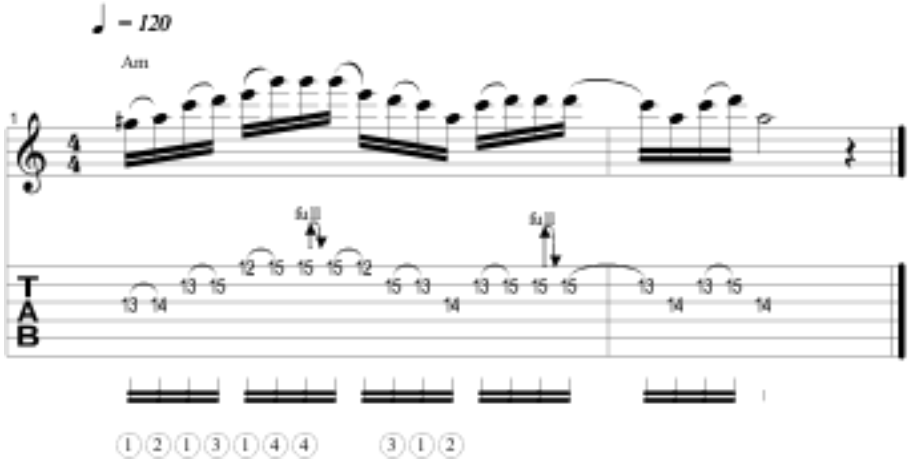
Bend

Exercise 13



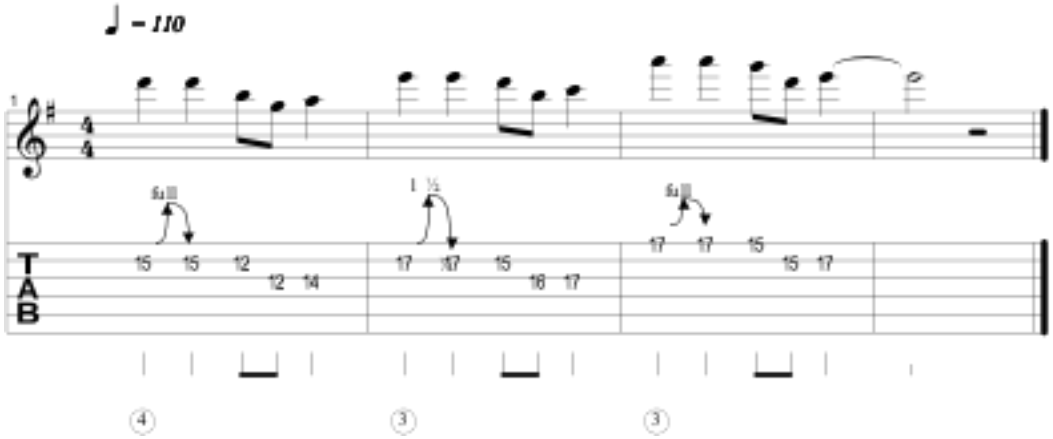
A bend has to be very accurate for the final result to sound good. To do it properly, use your left hand as a kind of lever, giving it a pendulum swing. The finger pressing on the note needs to remain still and stiff. Practice this technique after you have carefully listened to the target note. Rhythm is very important – watch out for dotted notes.

Exercise 14



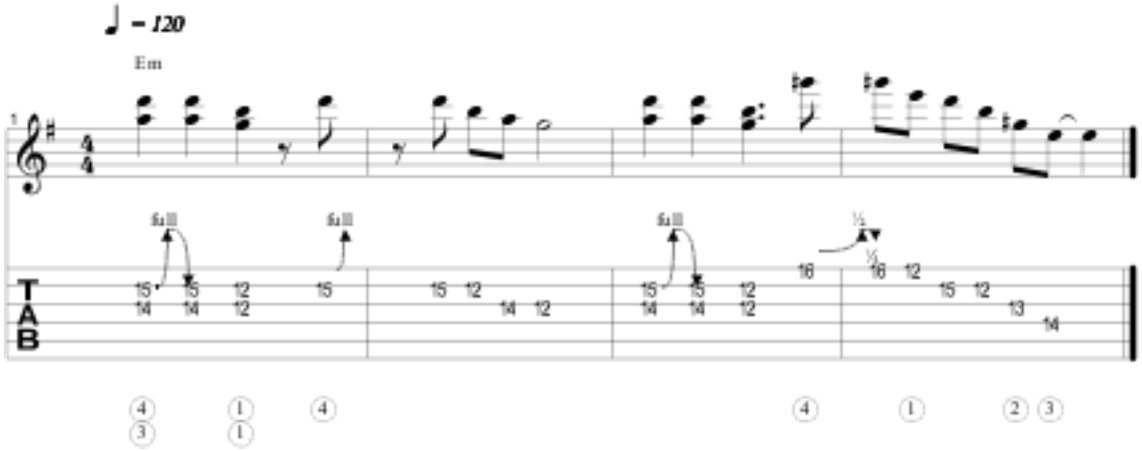
The bend here is very swift. It is the same technique, but the difficulty lies in keeping to the time with a pattern here composed of sixteenth notes. It is strongly recommended that you use the fingering indicated below the staff.

Exercise 15



You can play a bend with various fingers. The first one here is played with the little finger, while the second and the last ones are played with the ring finger. How you choose a finger depends on the position of the notes on the neck. Not following certain rules about fingering patterns would slow down your progression. Keep your left hand relaxed.

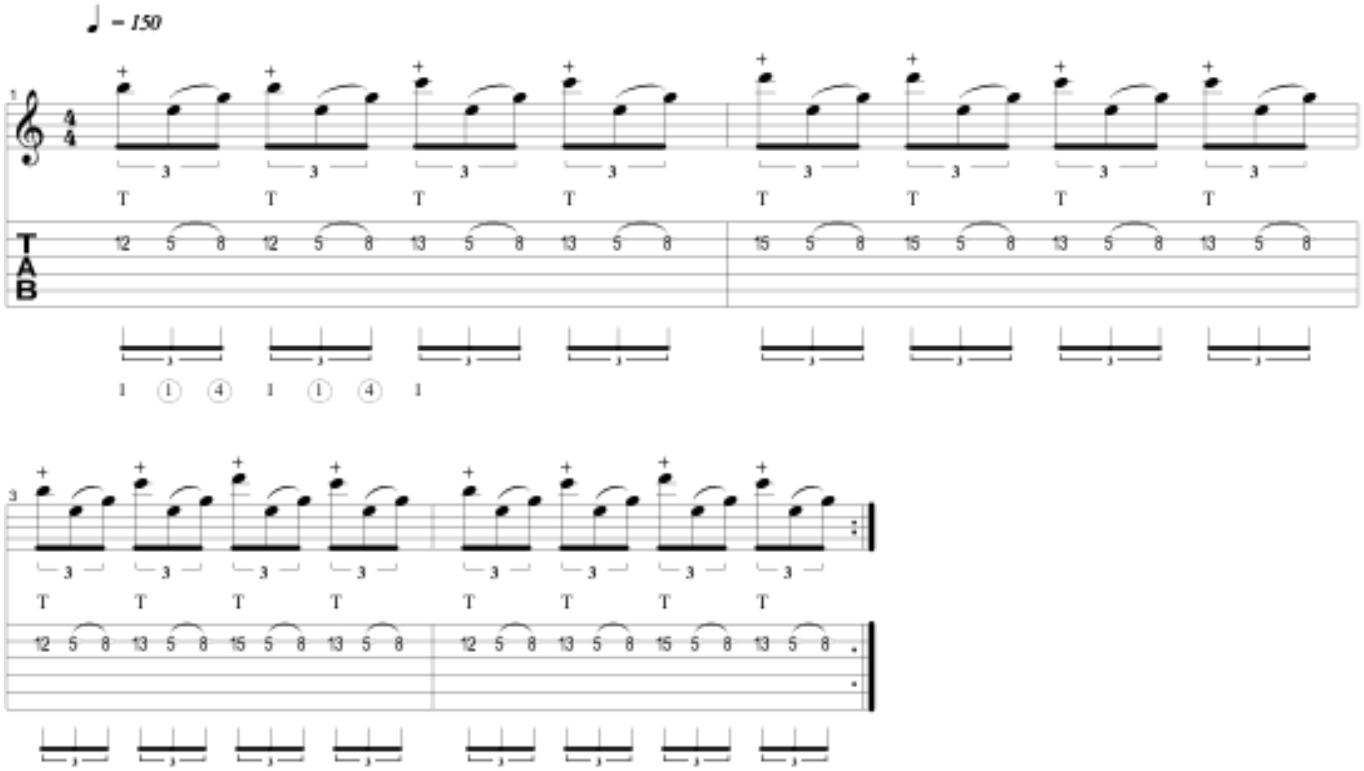
Exercise 16



This is a particular case. You need to play a bend on two notes at the same time (unison bend). Place the first three fingers on the G string to help the ring finger achieve the bend. With your right hand, pick only two strings. Practice this bend on its own before you play the whole exercise. The last bend only has a half-step harmonic value – be accurate.

Tapping

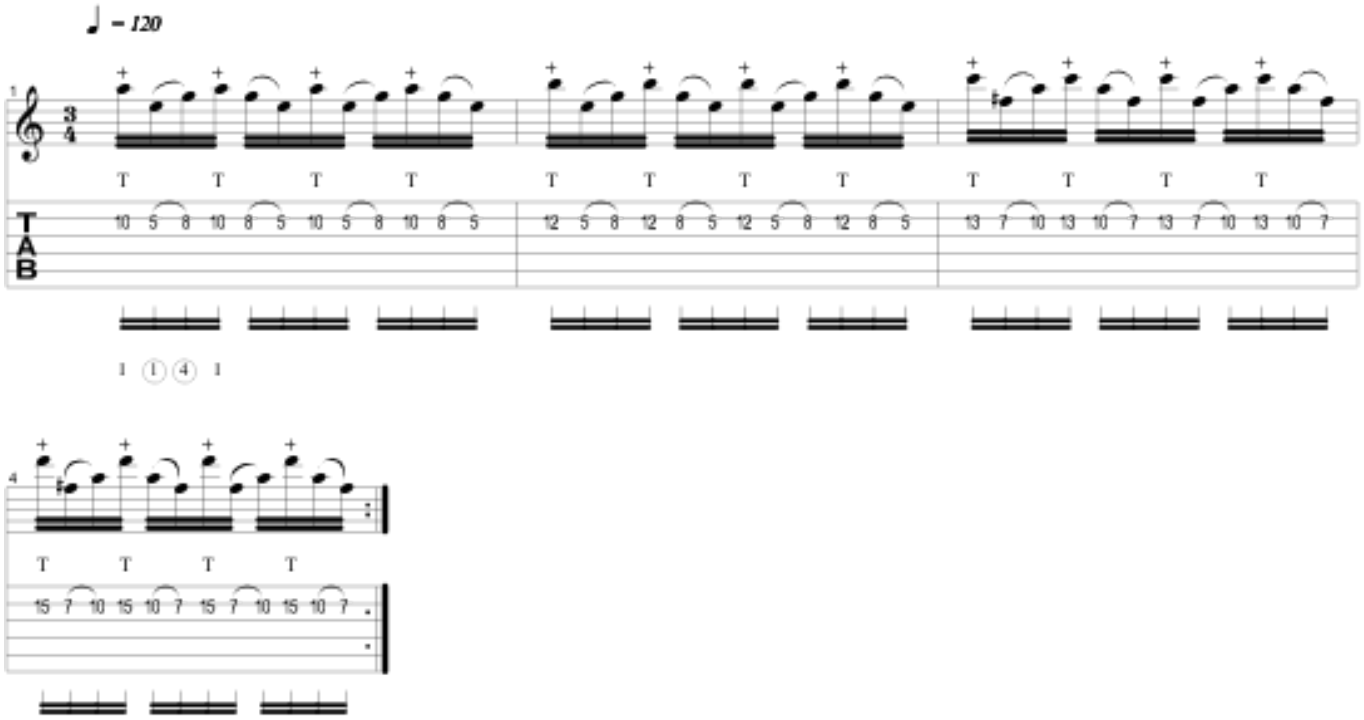
Exercise 17



This technique is often used in the middle of a solo. What is tricky is keeping the pick between your fingers to be able to use it again quickly afterwards. Use the index or middle finger of your right hand to tap the notes.

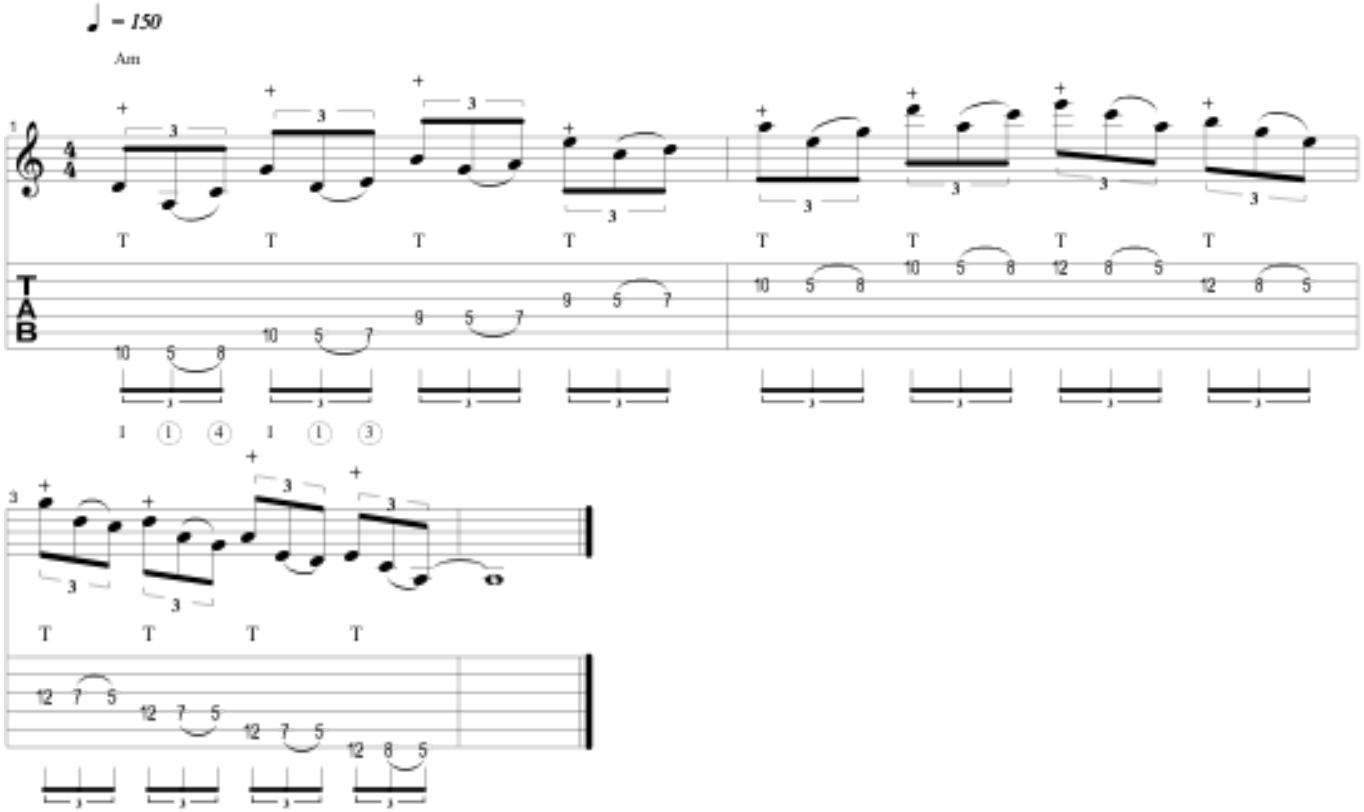
If you play using your middle finger, you can keep holding the pick without moving it. Use the finger you feel comfortable with. The only finger moving is the one tapping, the rest of the hand remains still.

Exercise 18



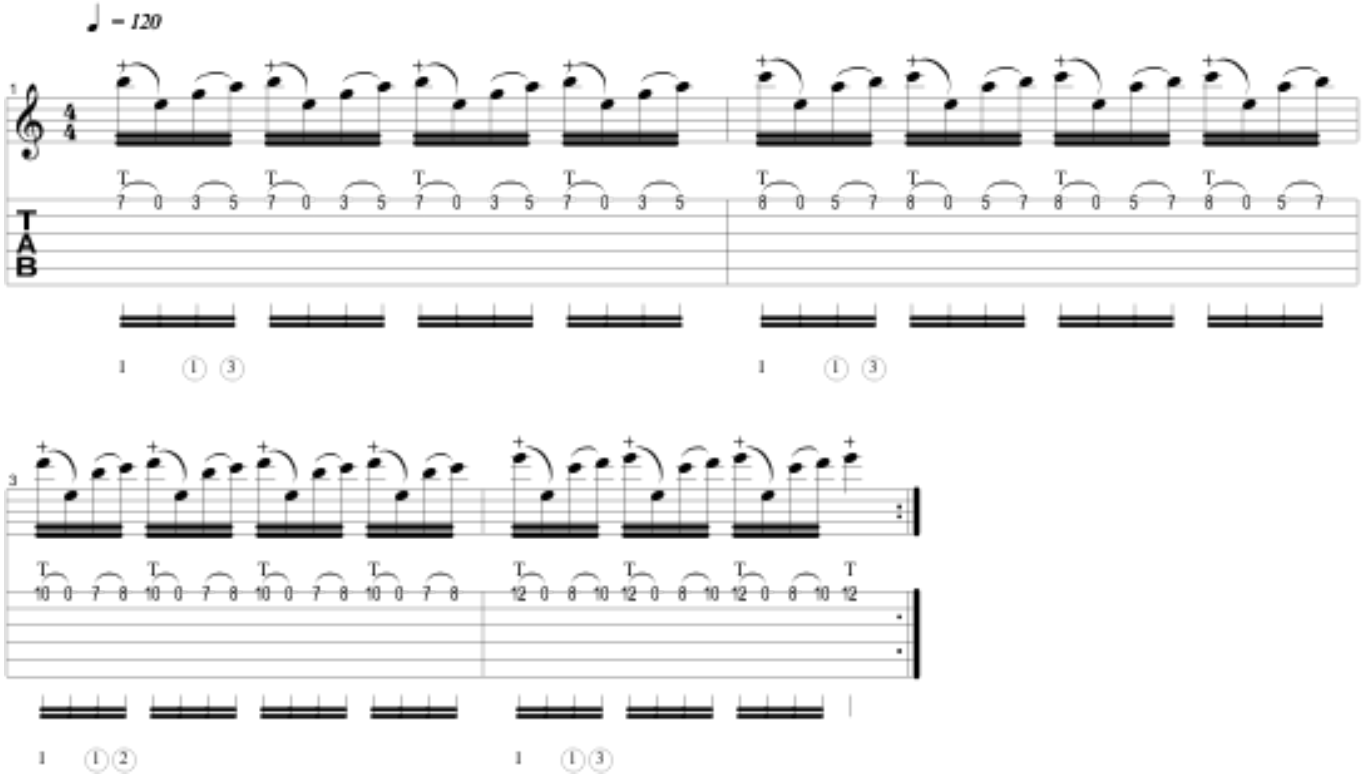
The possibilities offered by tapping are infinite. Here, after each note tapped by the right-hand finger, the left hand alternately plays hammer-ons and pull-offs. You should first slowly repeat the moves a lot before you can achieve high playing speed.

Exercise 19



This is a scale played tapping, three notes per string. You need to be smooth and discreet as you shift strings. Make sure you link the notes in time.

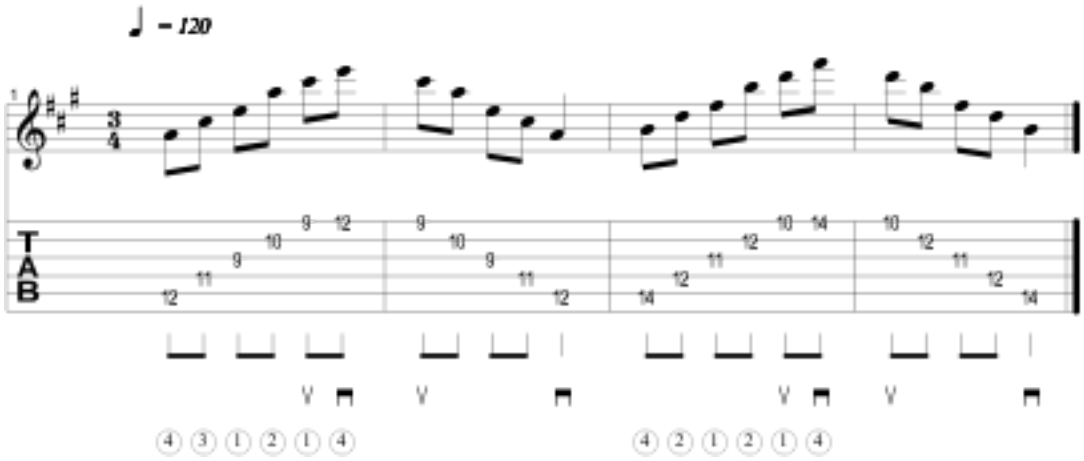
Exercise 20



You can make a basic phrase sound differently if you use an open string while tapping. Try and play every note evenly. Don’t overdo it; the whole thing ought to sound clear.

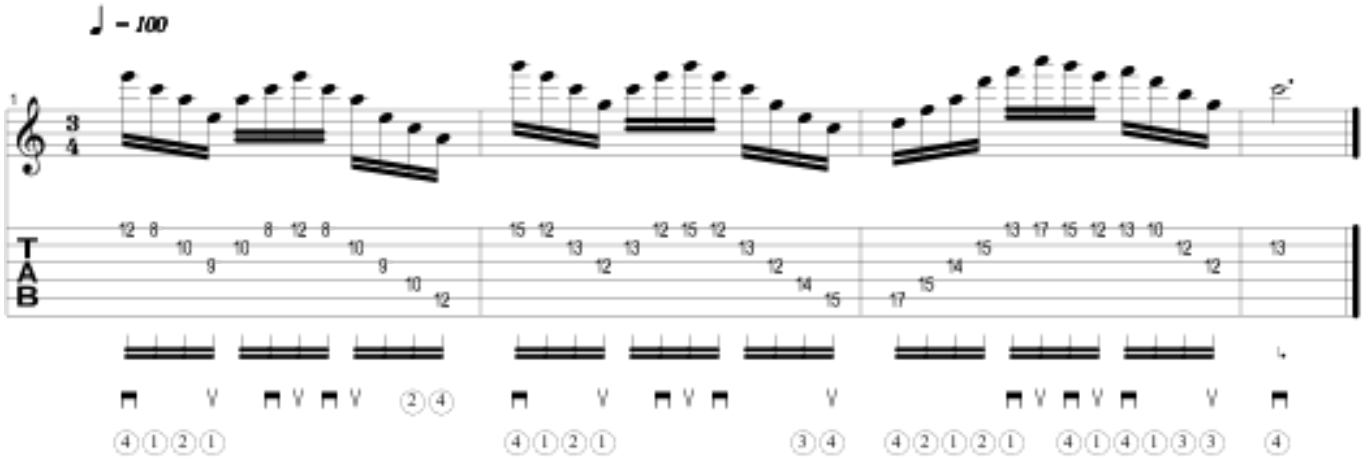
Sweep picking

Exercise 21



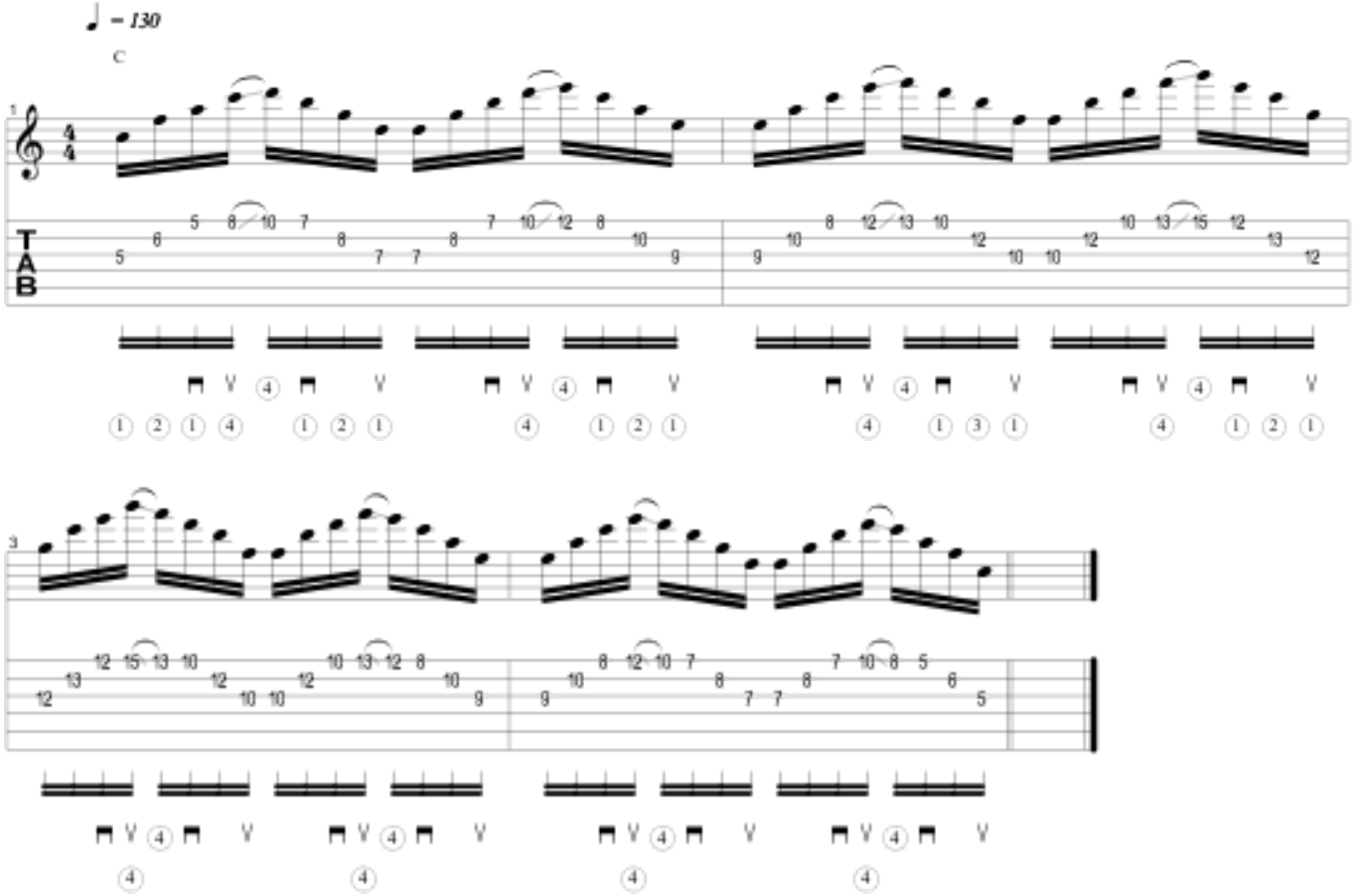
This technique means sweeping over the chords with your right hand. It gives you the possibility to play arpeggio at high speed. Your right hand should be quite loose as you play. Do not attack any string going down or going up, just let the pick follow your movement.

Exercise 22



The most difficult thing about sweep picking is playing neatly. The right hand must regularly muffle the notes played, so they are linked in a relaxed manner. There is almost no attack on the part of the plectrum. This technique demands careful, slow repetitions before you can increase speed.

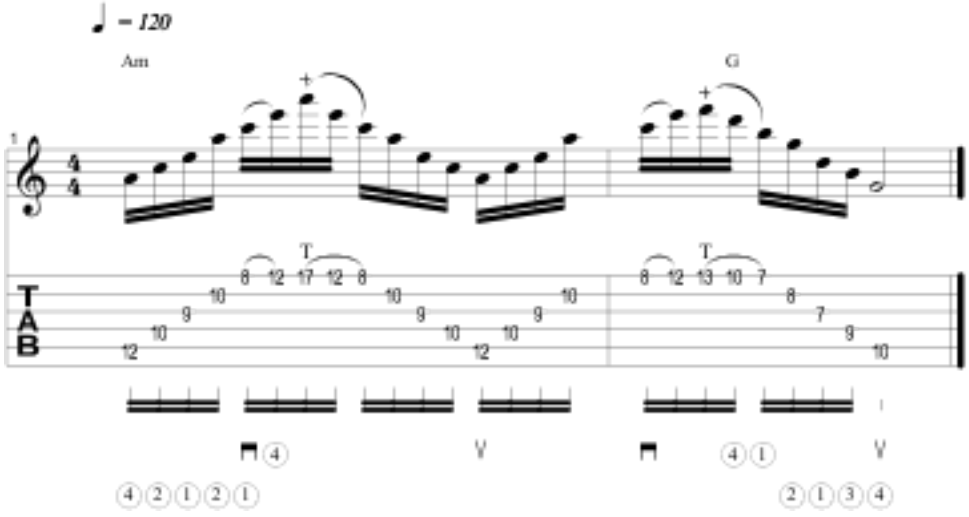
Exercise 23



Here, your position changes with a slide. You need to anticipate the next position and stretch out your fingers accordingly. If your fingers are ready by the time you get to the next position, you will gain much in speed. Keep in time.

Sweep picking and tapping

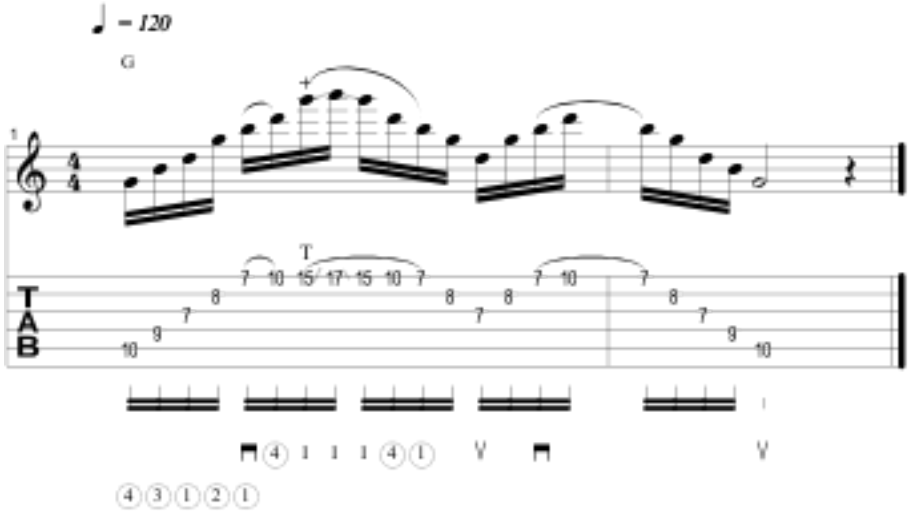
Exercise 24



To play this phrase, place your pick as close as you can to the note you are going to tap. Then, once it is tapped, go back to your initial position. This phrase ought to sound very fluid. Don't strain it.

Sweep picking, tapping and sliding

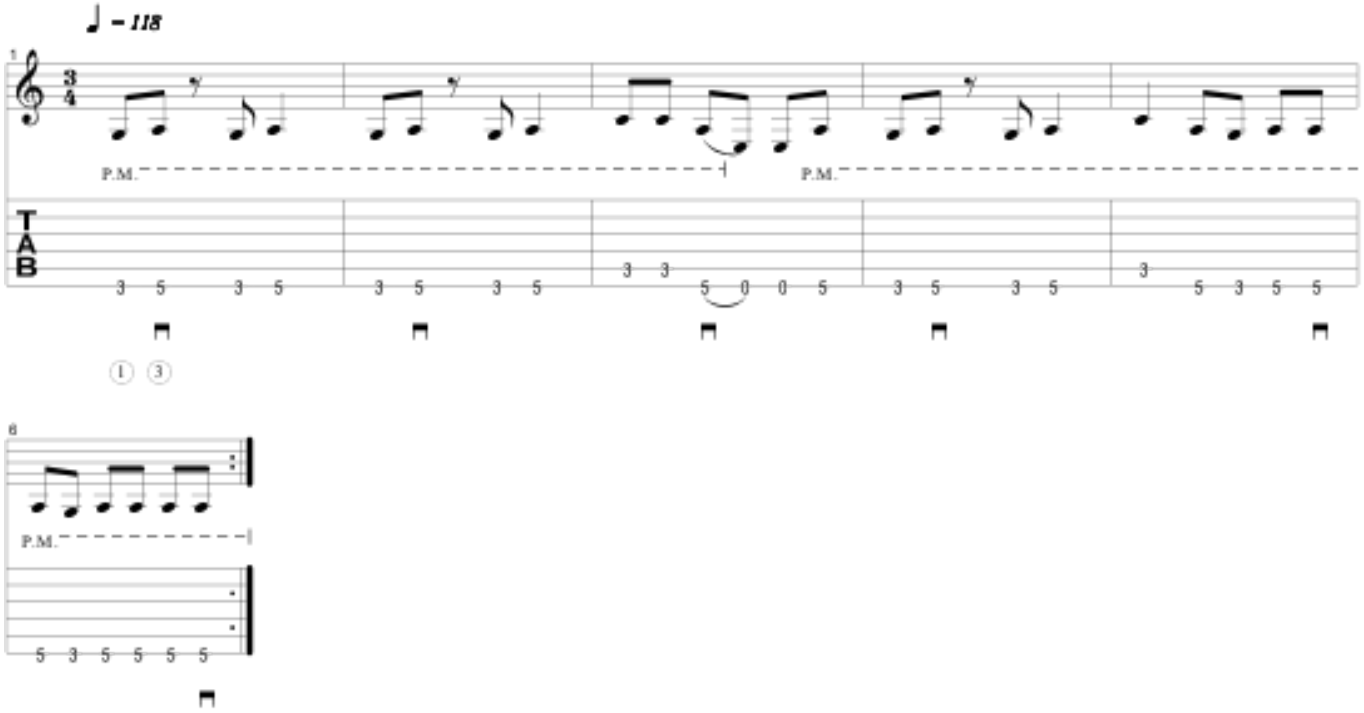
Exercise 25



This phrase is similar to the one before, and requires a right-hand slide with a tapping motion. To do so, hit the note as indicated, slide to the next note and back, ending with a down sweeping motion. It is important that this phrase be played very neatly, but that is not easy to do. Take your time to get your hands to achieve a neat movement.

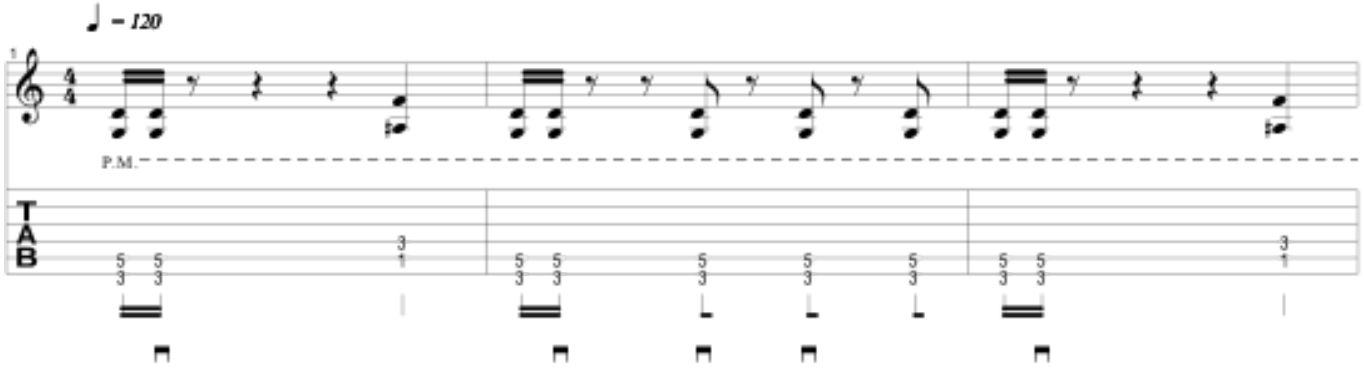
Palm mute

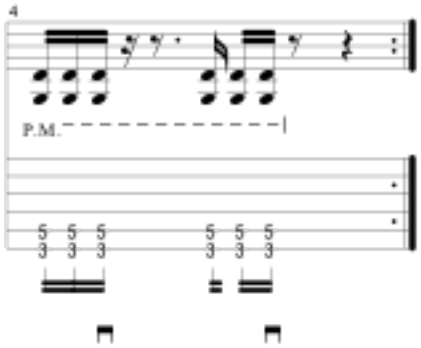
Exercise 26



This is simple rhythm, in stiff writing, but the way you play it differs from the notation. Indeed, when you muffle a note with your right hand, its time length becomes hard to measure. A muffled note ought not to sound dryly; it is better if it does resonate. The result here will all depend on the manner in which you hold your right hand against the bridge.

Exercise 27

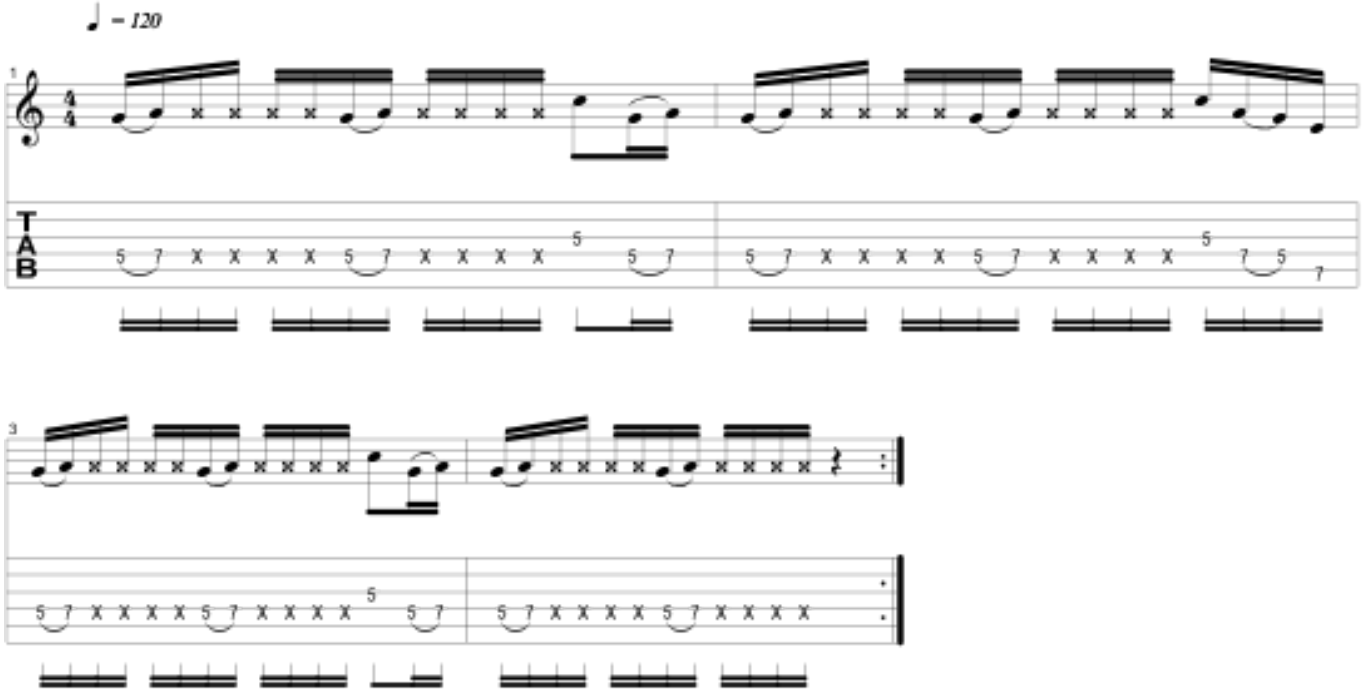




Play every pick stroke downward. Pay attention to the rhythm and muffled chords.

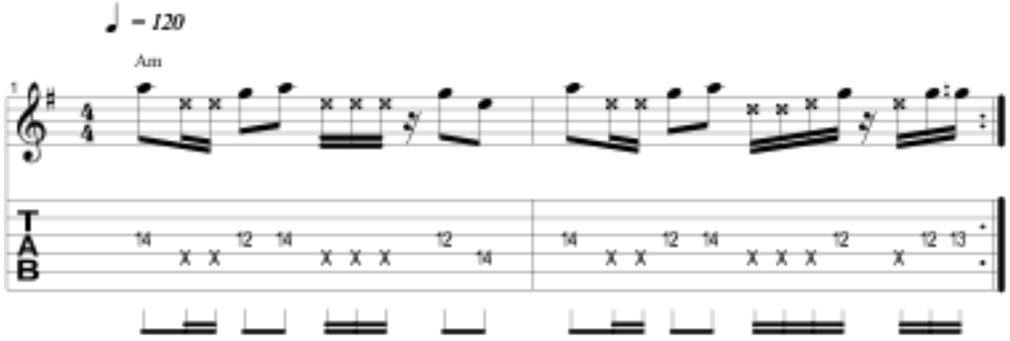
Muffled strings

Exercise 28



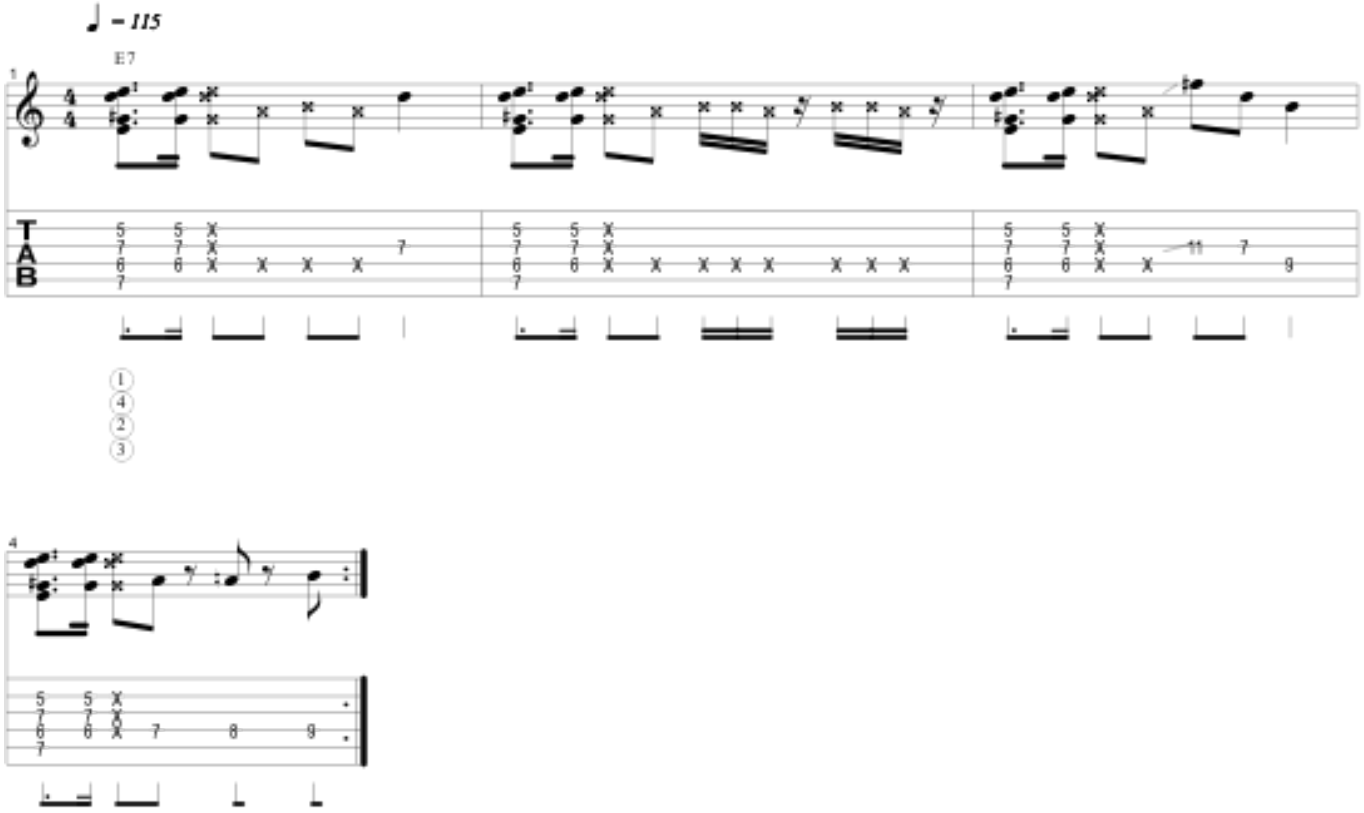
This technique is very often used in guitar playing. It consists in playing some notes while muting others intermittently. To do so, you need to lift the palm of your right hand a little so as to let ring only the notes that you do not wish to mute.

Exercise 29



This is a different pattern using palm muting, which implies playing the muted notes on a different string.

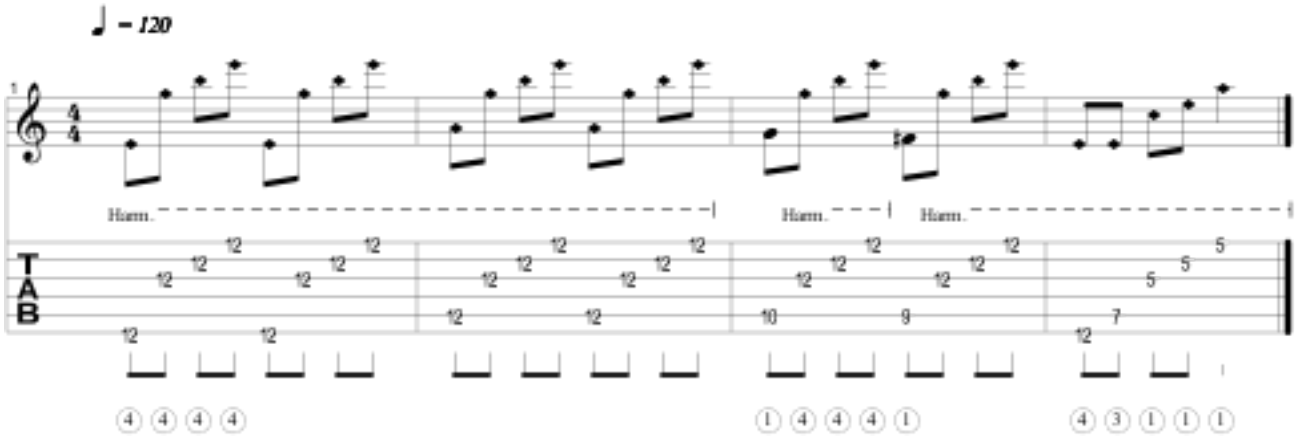
Exercise 30



The chord here is a “bluesy” position of a Seventh chord. Its sound goes well with the rhythm & blues spirit of the phrase. Use the correct left-hand fingering pattern. Mind your rhythm.

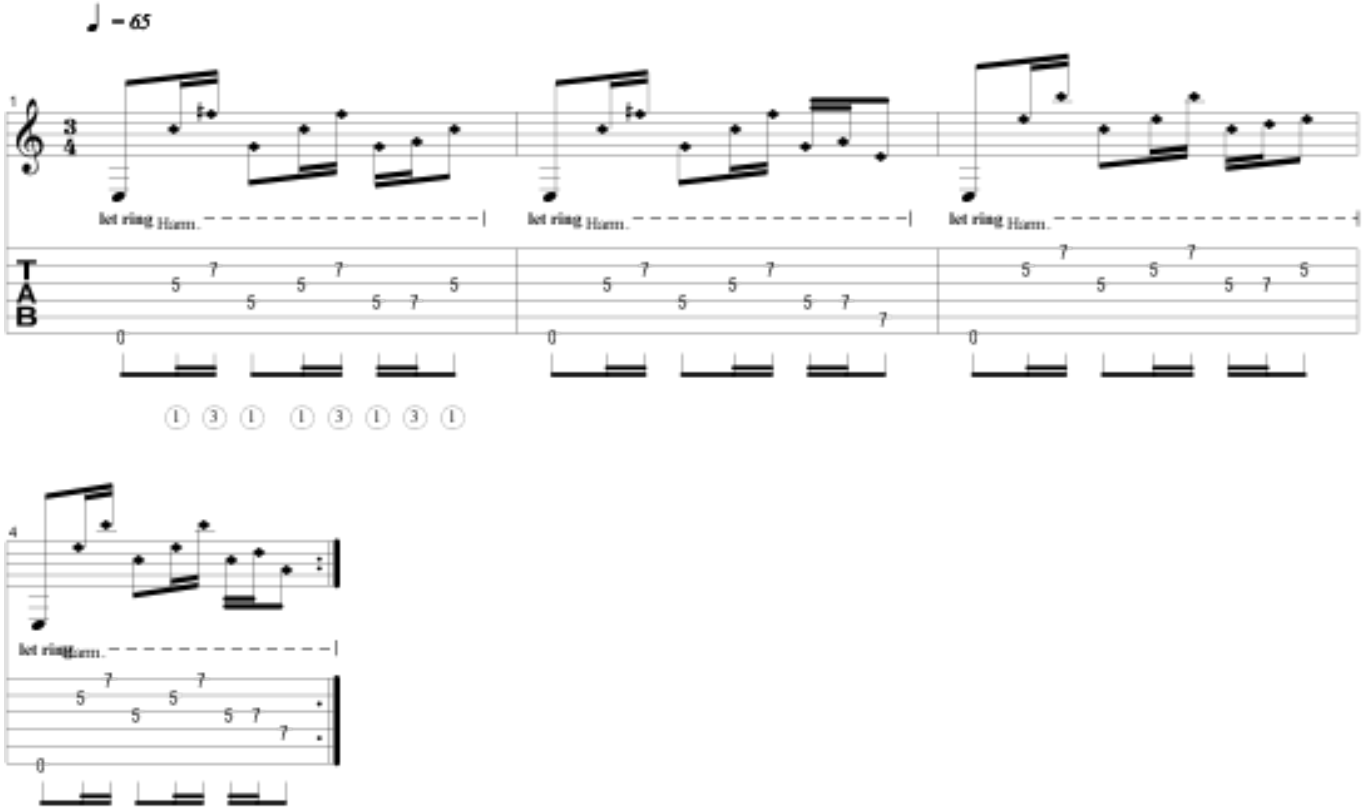
Natural harmonics

Exercise 31



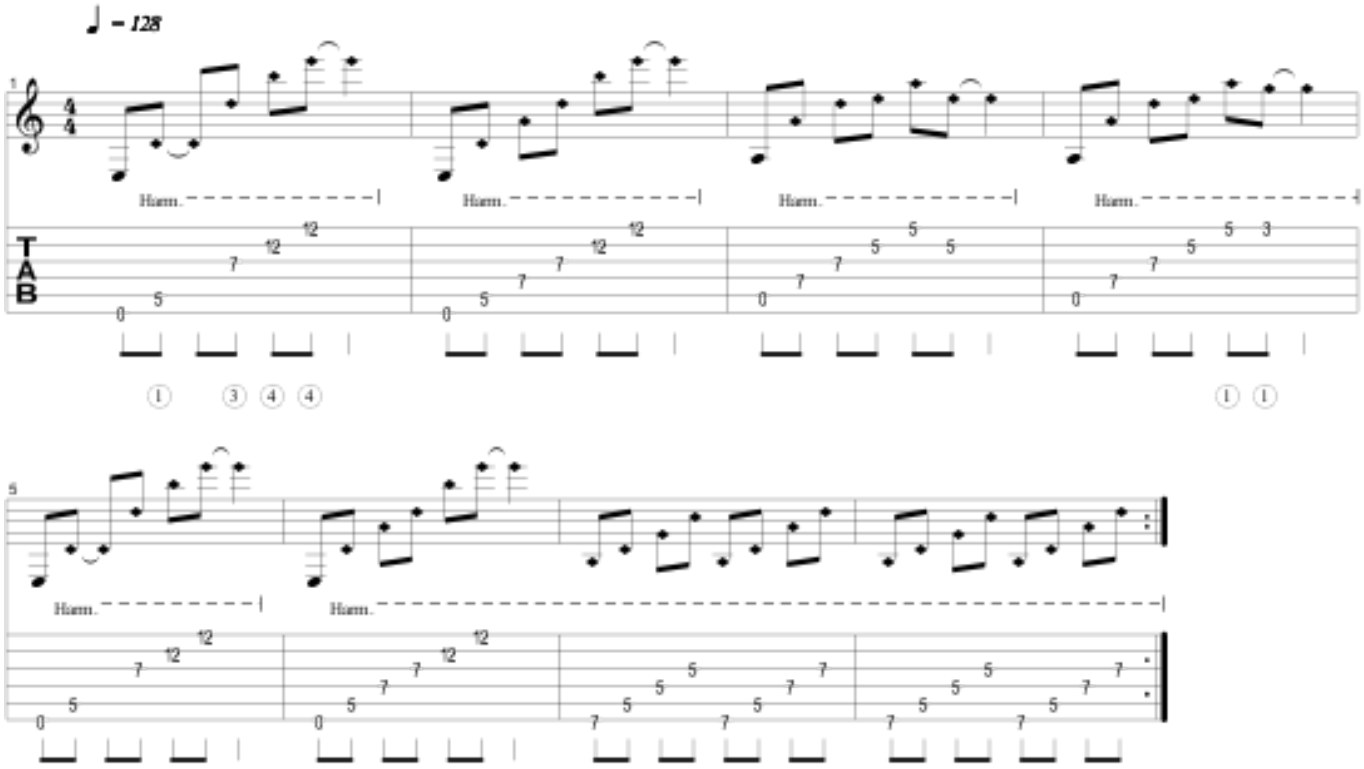
To make the harmonic ring, you need only brush the string right over the given fret. These harmonics ring out very strongly, and their uses are numerous.

Exercise 32



You can reproduce harmonics with frets all over the fingerboard. Some of them, however, are easier to ring than others. Frets 3, 5, 7 and 12, are those at which the harmonics are the easiest to find. Follow the fingering given by the score.

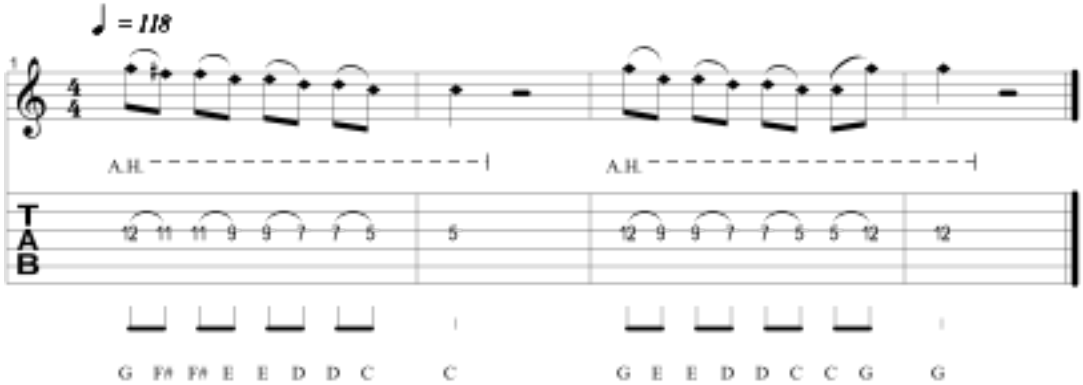
Exercise 33



This is similar to the exercise before. Make sure you let each harmonic ring.

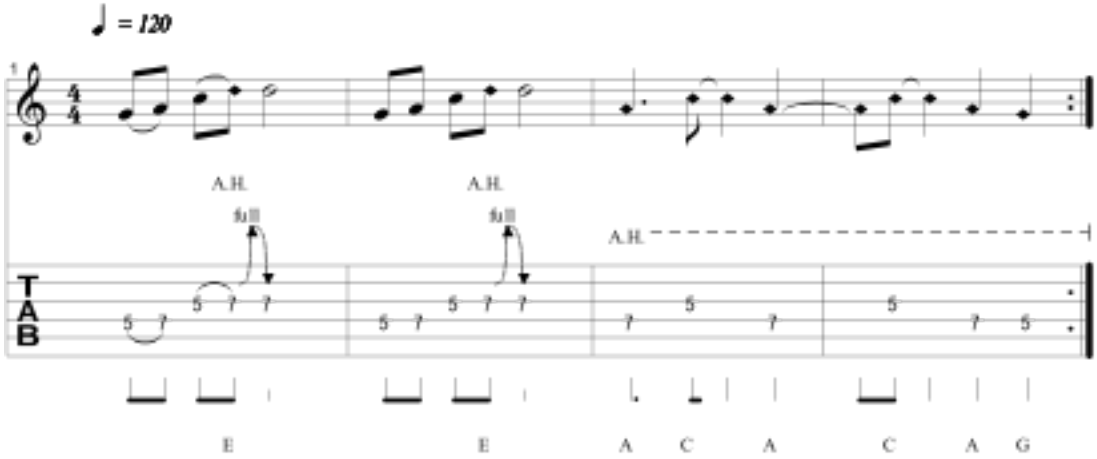
Pinched harmonics (electric guitar)

Exercise 34



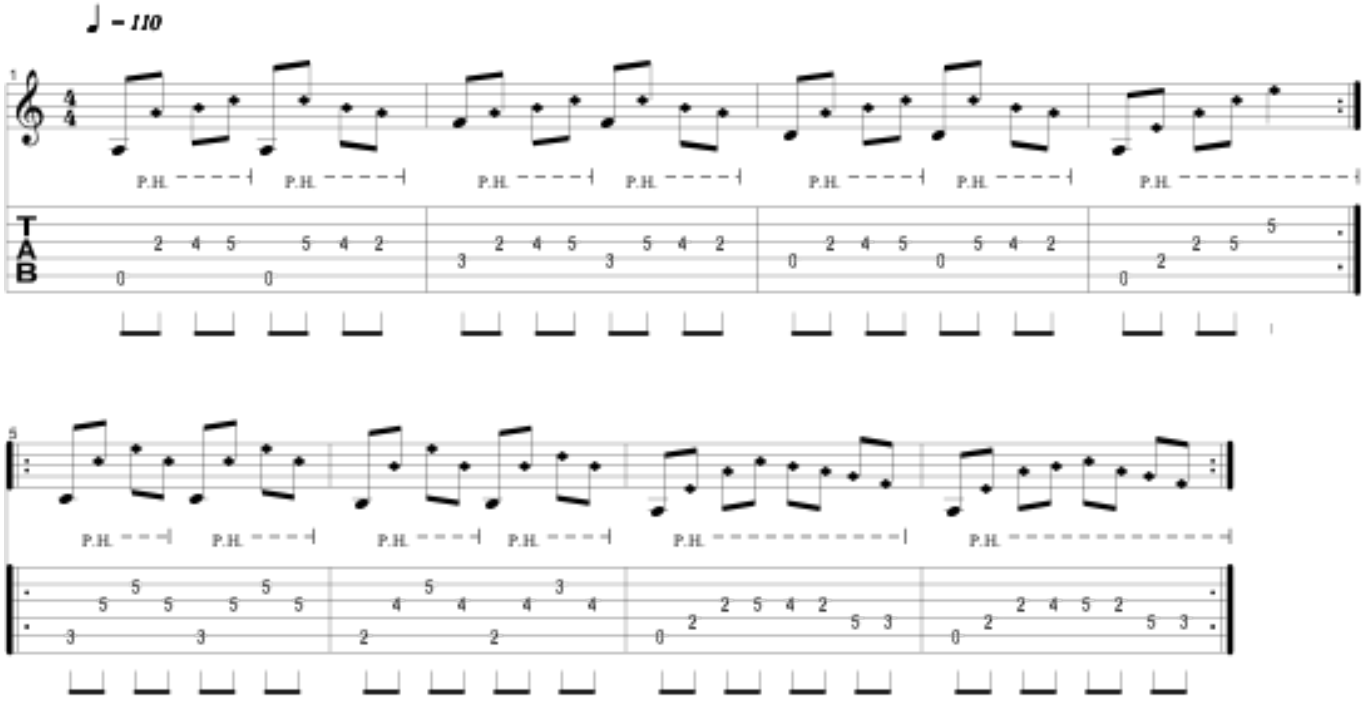
To properly let a pinched harmonic ring out on an electric guitar, you must place your right hand properly. Hold your plectrum slightly slanted. The flesh of your thumb should brush the string immediately after you have played it.

Exercise 35



Here the harmonic is played together with a bend. This technique can be used on any string. Mind the rhythm in bars 3 and 4.

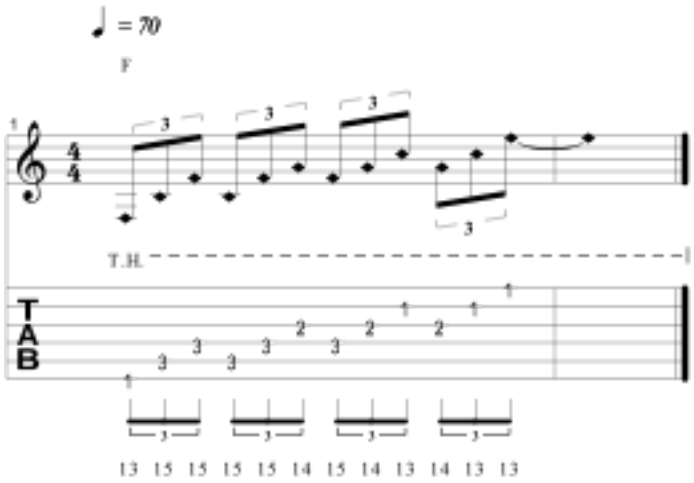
Exercise 36



To produce a fretted harmonic, lightly touch the string with a finger from your right hand over the fret located one octave above the note written on the score (see Chapter 8). You'll find this octave 12 frets higher on the string. Pluck the note with your right-hand middle finger or thumb.

Tapped harmonics

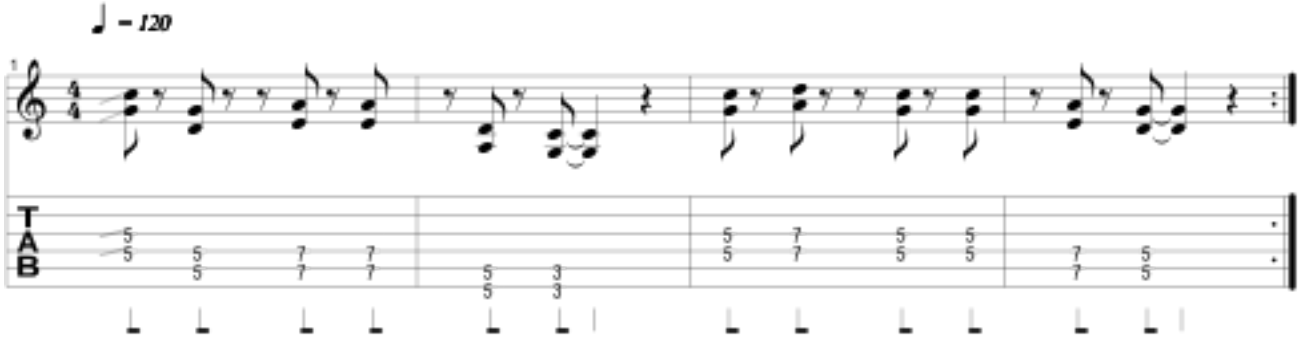
Exercise 37



Here you need to tap your finger on the fret situated at the octave relative to the note. For example, the octave of F – 1st fret, E string – is found on fret 13, same string.
Accordingly, you will tap on the thirteenth fret while pressing with your left-hand finger on fret 1. Follow the same principle for the following notes.

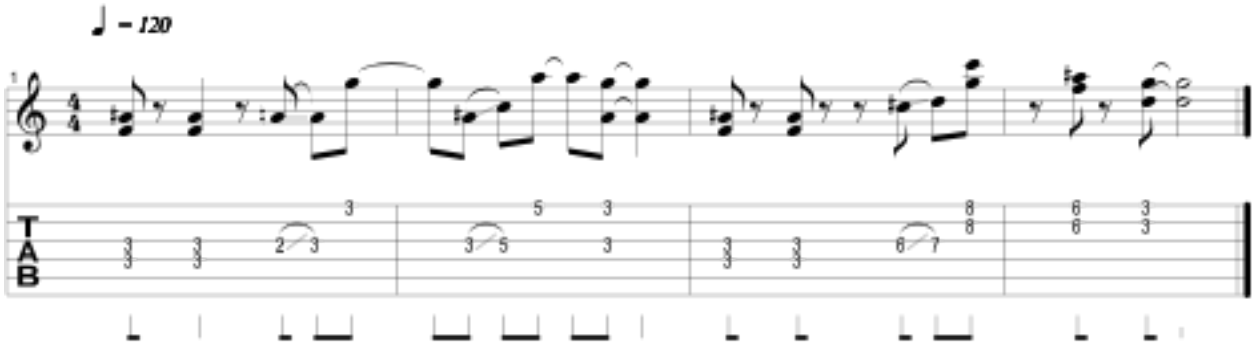
Bottleneck guitar

Exercise 38



Fit the bottleneck on you left-hand ring or little finger, whichever you prefer. Place it against the strings over the frets corresponding to the written notes, and then play the strings with your right hand. Of course, this is a very popular technique in the blues style, but it can also be used in many other genres. Here, what makes it difficult is to keep a steady tempo, particularly on silent values during which you should not be producing any sound.

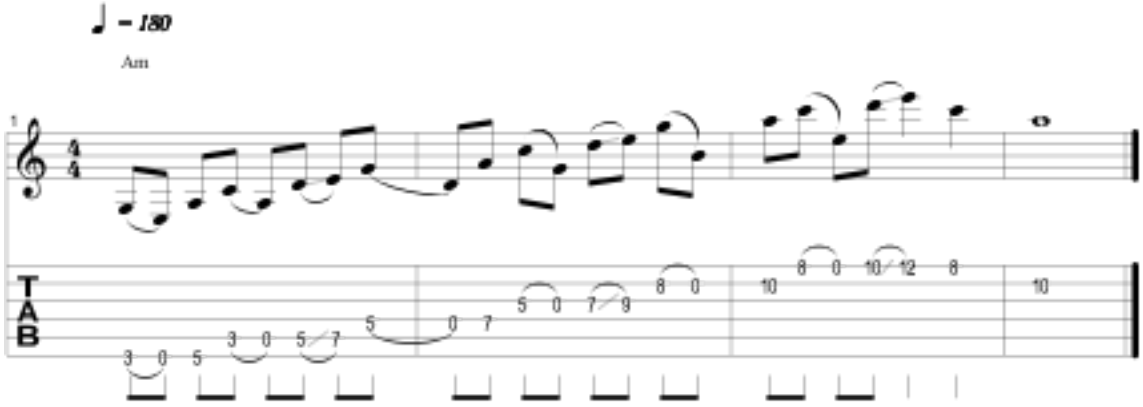
Exercise 39



There is nothing like the sound of a bottleneck sliding on strings – and for that reason it is used a lot. This phrases emphases the sliding technique. Make sure you keep in time, and that you play the rhythm as is written.

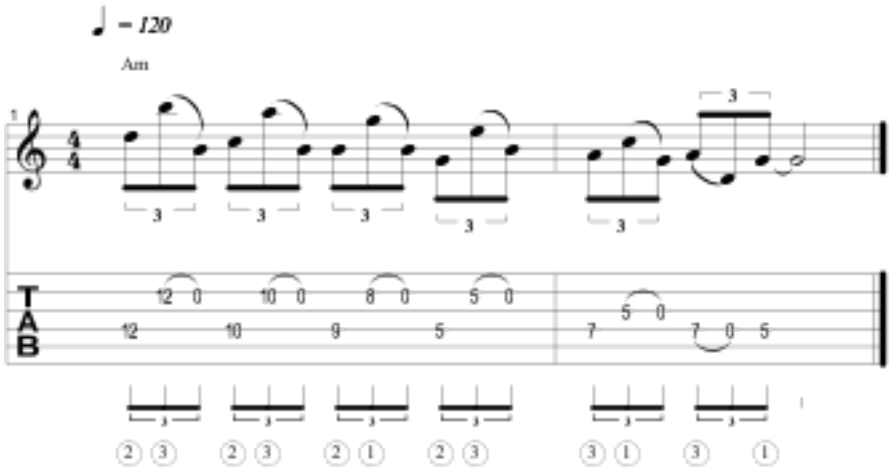
Open strings

Exercise 40



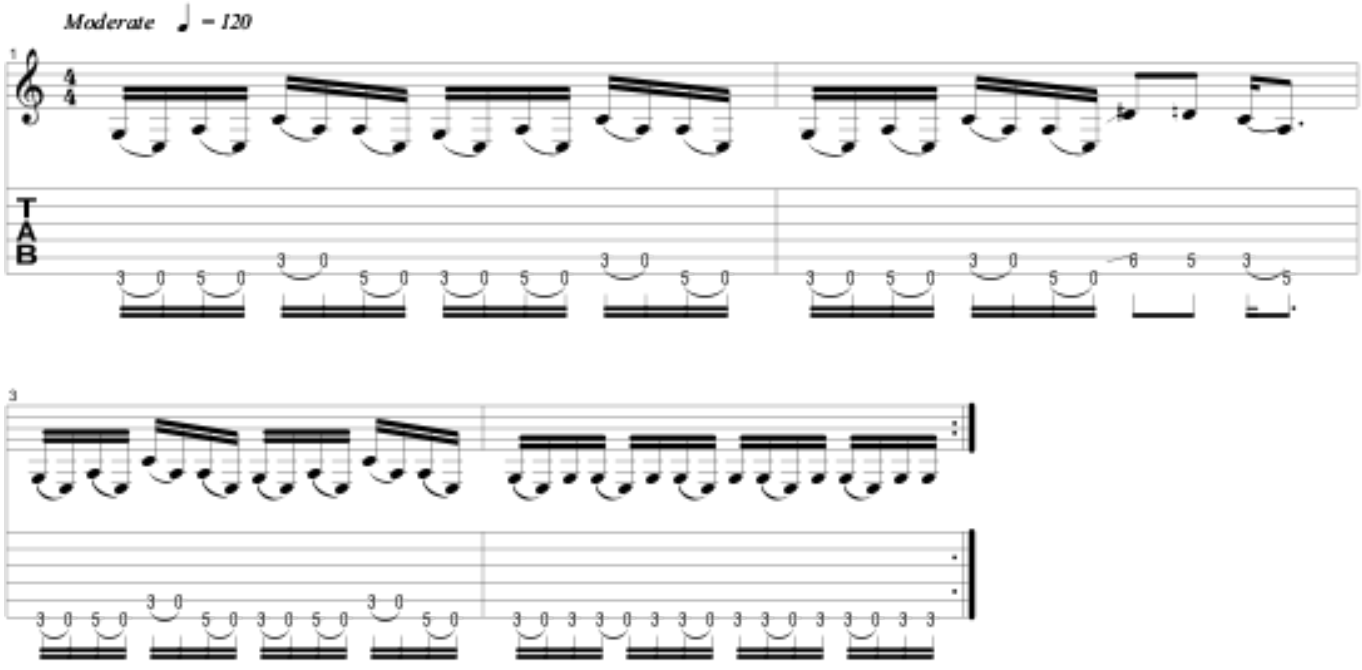
This technique consists in playing some strings open during a musical phrase. Note that none of those open strings is picked as such. Each of them is tied to the note coming before.

Exercise 41



This phrase is composed of sixth intervals, which are frequent in the blues. We recommend that you play with a pick, although many people do play this with thumb and index.

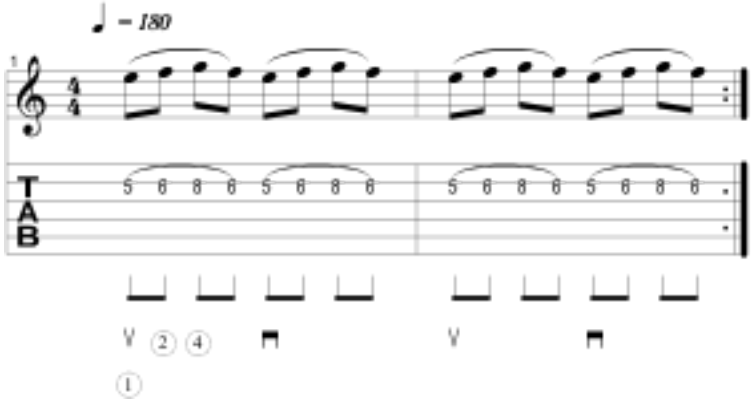
Exercise 42



This is not a difficult rhythmic pattern; each open string is tied to the one preceding it. Start practicing slowly to get a good feel for this cycle.

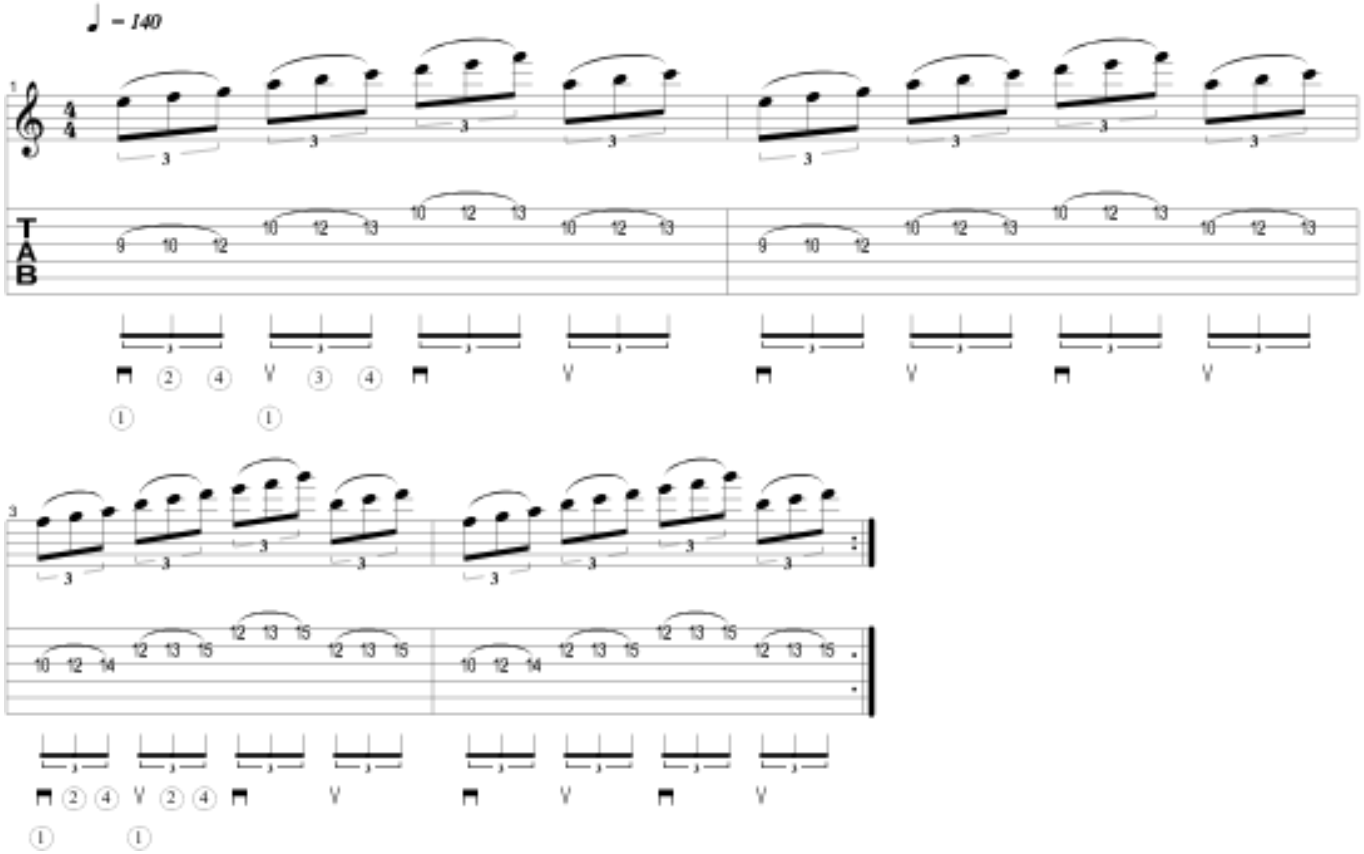
Legato

Exercise 43



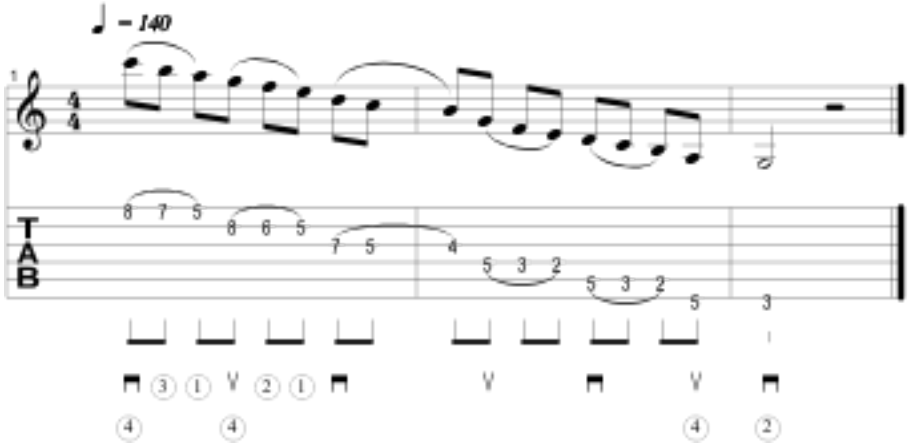
For each tie, only the first note in the pair is played. The hammer-ons and the pull-offs you do with your left hand are what makes every note ring. Make sure you play slow at first, and that every note rings properly. What will make it more difficult afterwards will be trying to get all the notes to sound evenly. Don't increase your speed too soon.

Exercise 44



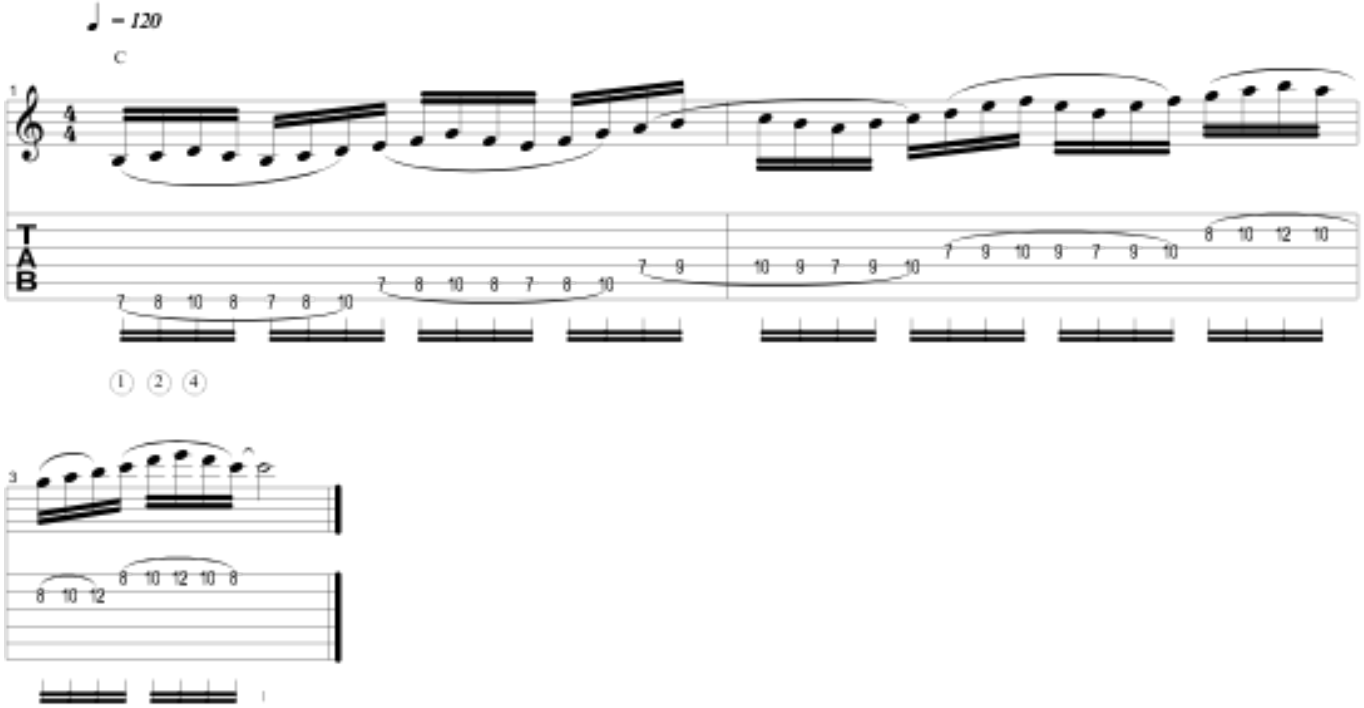
The legato here is played three notes on every string. Shift strings as lightly as possible, and keep you pick strokes as discreet as you can. Increase your speed little by little until you reach the tempo indicated above.

Exercise 45



This is a descending scale played legato. As with the preceding ones, you should play this as a flowing phrase. Work on speed by increasing the beat on your metronome depending on your progress.

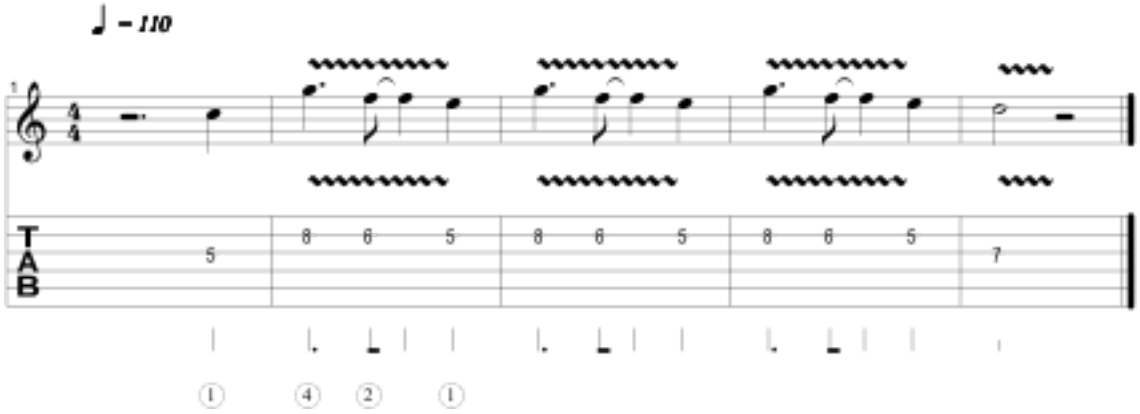
Exercise 46



In this ascending scale, the legato is longer than in the preceding exercise. It is very important that your right arm and shoulder be relaxed for you to be able to play at faster speeds.

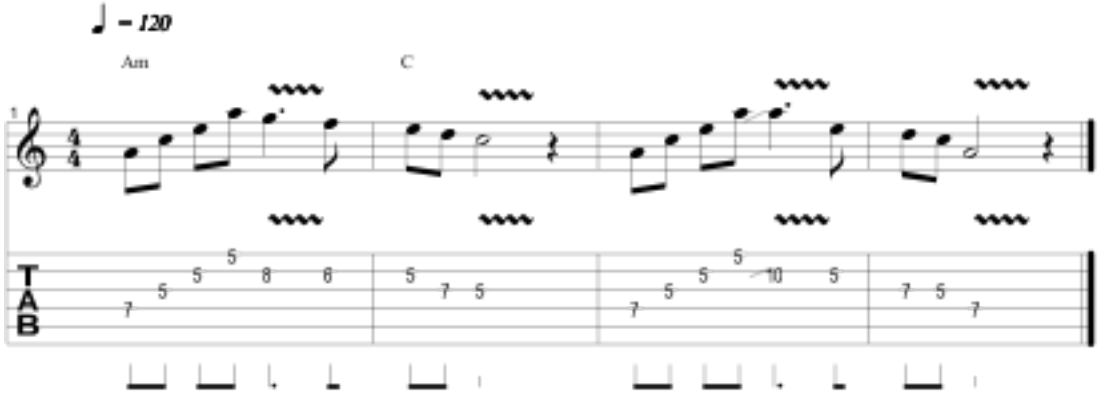
Left-hand vibrato

Exercise 47



Your left hand should be moving parallel to the guitar's neck. The finger playing the vibrating note should be rolling by the fret without sliding. The speed of a vibrato effect is related to the tempo and spirit of the score.

Exercise 48

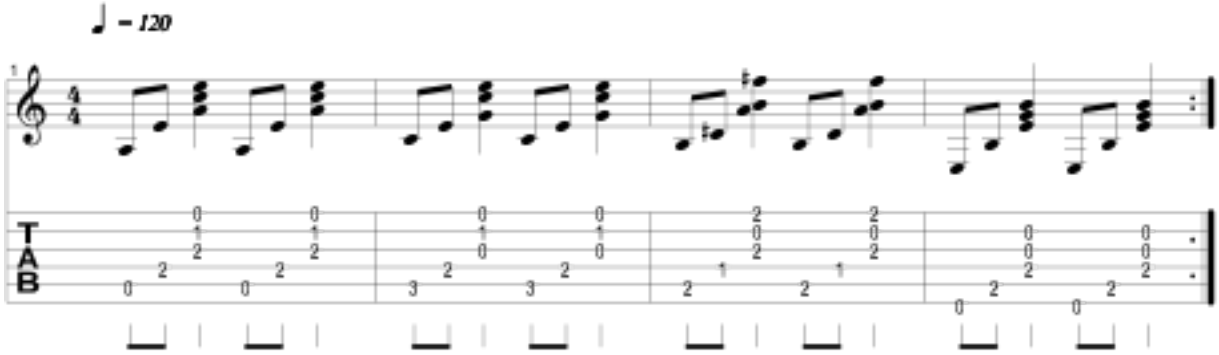


This phrase is in line with the preceding one. Make sure you play the first eighth notes neatly. Slightly muffle notes using your left hand.

Using the capo

Exercise 49

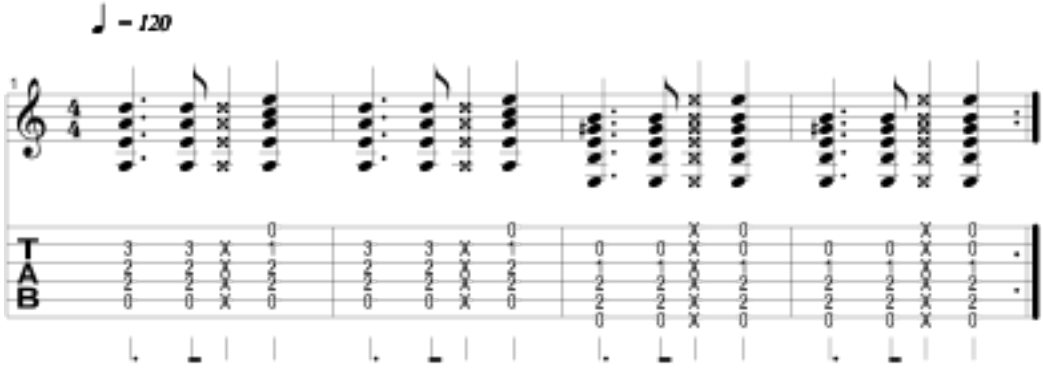
Capo 5th fret



A capo is very useful to quickly transpose a score. Nevertheless, it does require a little practice. Move the capo up the neck, and play the score again. Don't hesitate to choose extreme positions for your capo (such as the 12th or 15th fret).

Exercise 50

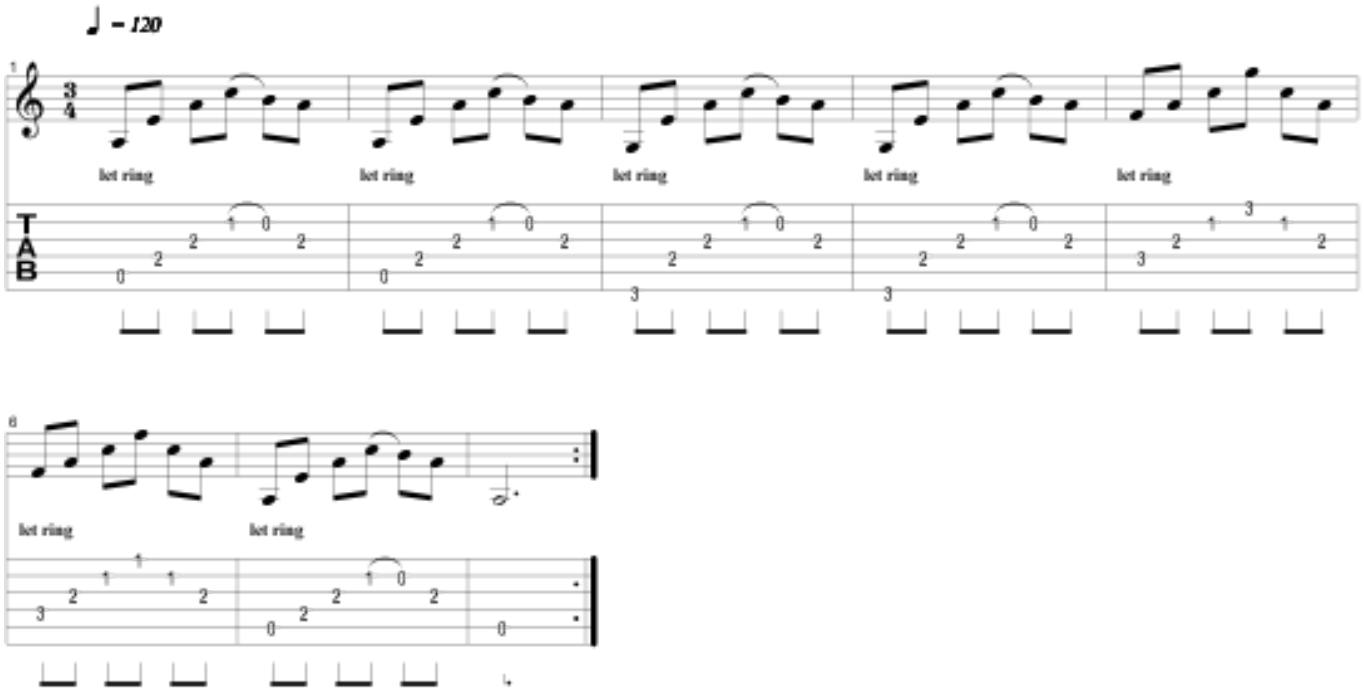
Capo 7th fret



To play this, make sure you follow the rhythm and the silent values. Don't hesitate to replace the chords to come up with your own score.

Exercise 51

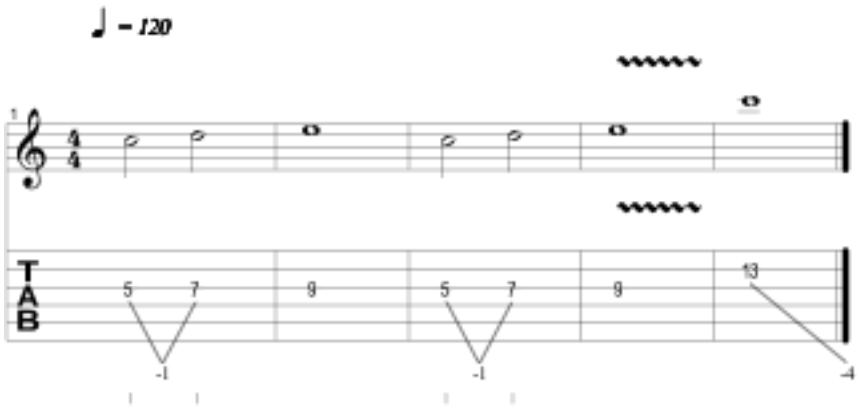
Capo 3rd fret



The chord positions here are fairly simple. The tied note should be played in a relaxed manner. Move the capo to another fret, and play this part again.

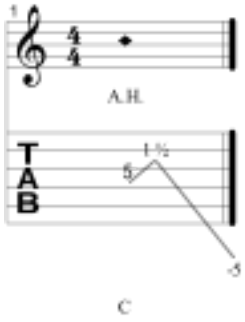
The tremolo bar

Exercise 52



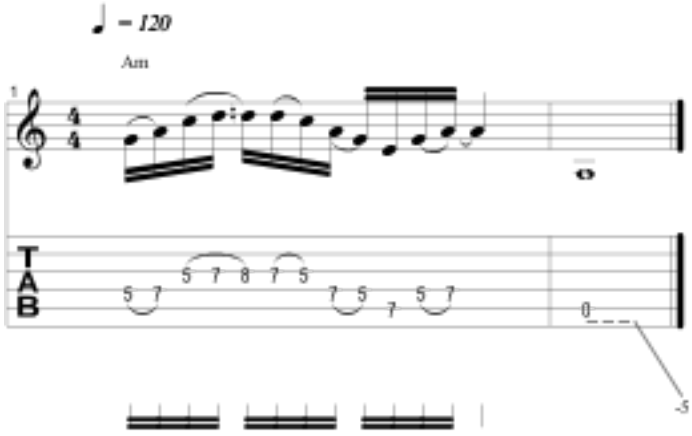
Hold the tremolo bar with your right-hand ring finger. That way, you will be able to keep playing notes with the plectrum. Such tailpieces as the Floyd Rose Locking Tremolo® enable you to pull the arm backwards, which raises the pitch of the note you're playing. Standard or vintage vibrato tailpieces only let you push on the arm down, which lowers the note.

Exercise 53



Play a natural harmonic, and then affect the note by using the tremolo arm of your guitar. The effect you get is called a Dive Bomb, as it sounds like a bomb dropped from a plane.

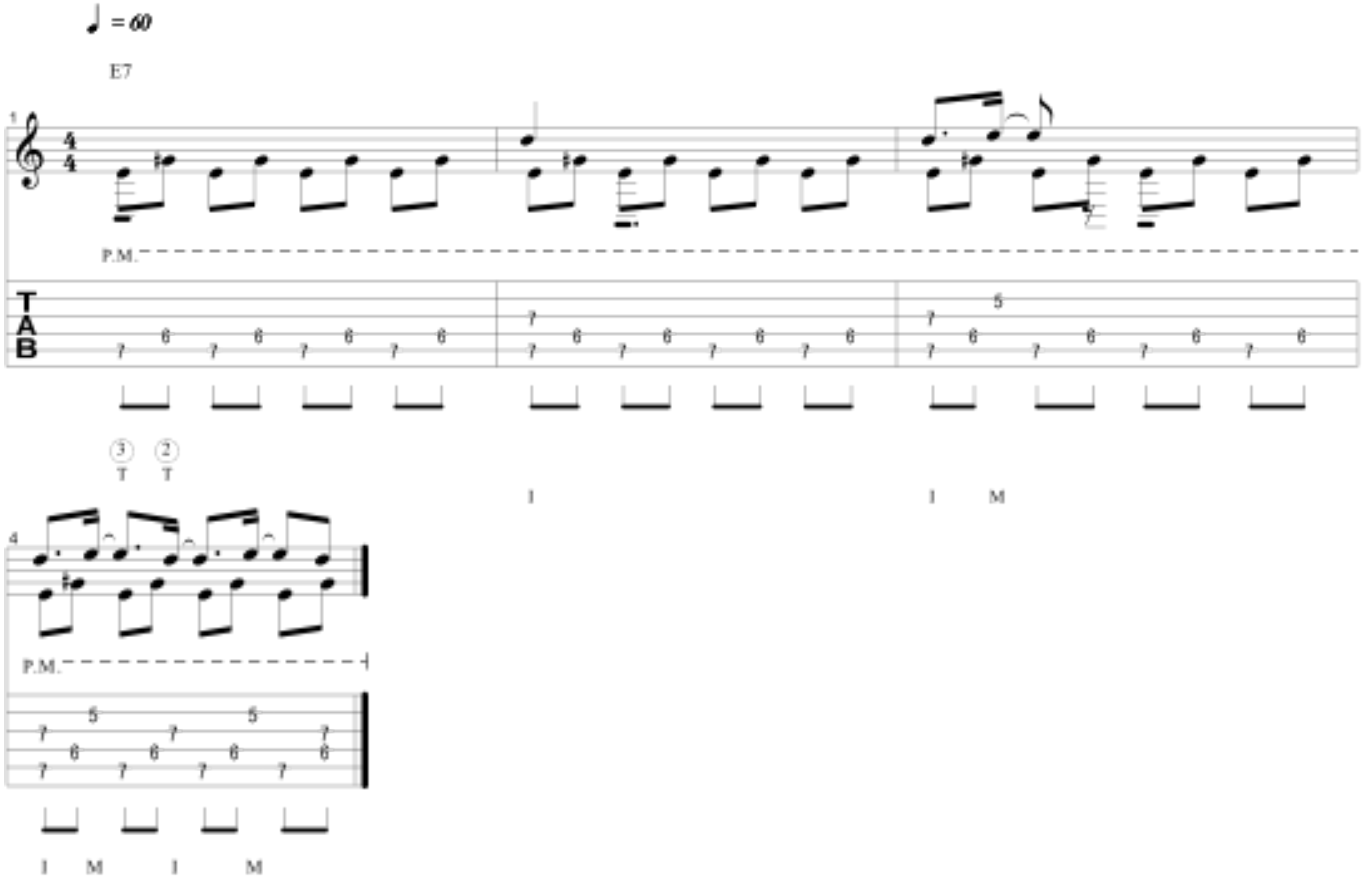
Exercise 54



This phrase will train you to grab the tremolo arm as quickly as possible. You will then be able to open up the range of your options when you play solo.

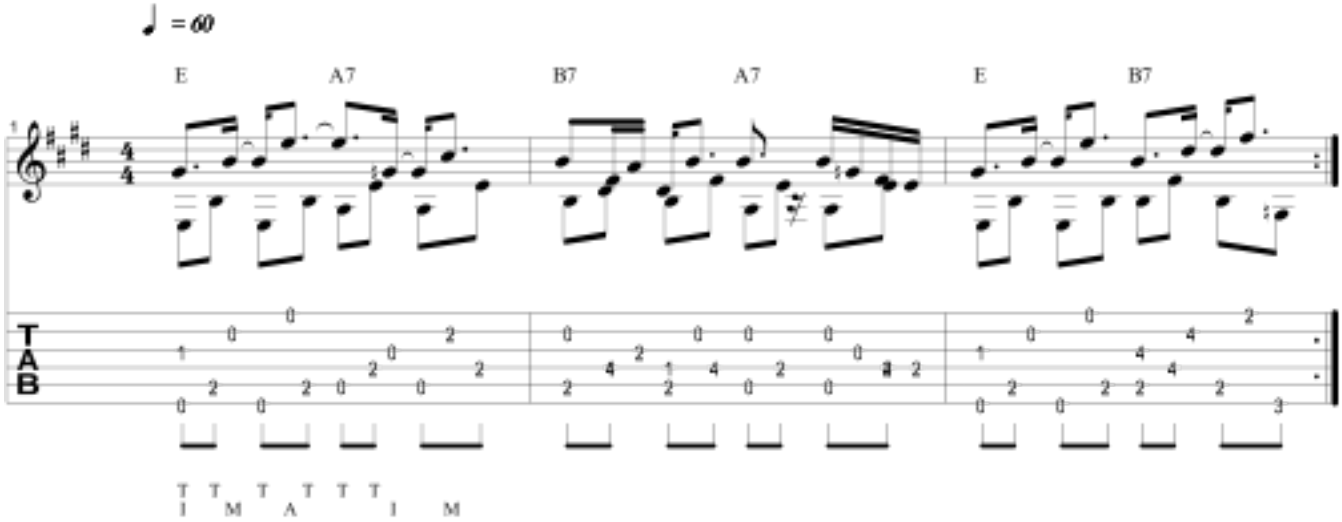
Finger-picking

Exercise 55



Fingerpicking parts are written as two parts on the score, but are played together. The thumb plays the bass notes, and the index, middle, and ring finger the high notes. The exercise above will get you to practice both parts little by little.

Exercise 56



This is a more complex example of fingerpicking. Do follow the fingering and rhythm as indicated. Practice slowly to get a good feel for the way the notes are written.

Unabridged Study Pieces

Classique

10 Studies

The classical repertoire for the guitar is rich and wide. It is generally characterized by a gentle, melodic playing manner.

It is also popular. Besides, it is interesting to note that such a playing style as fingerpicking, so common today in folk music, finds its roots in the classical playing technique.

Content

This piece is presented here in three versions: A, B and C.

They are all based on the same musical fundamentals, but some technical evolution will appear from one version to the next.

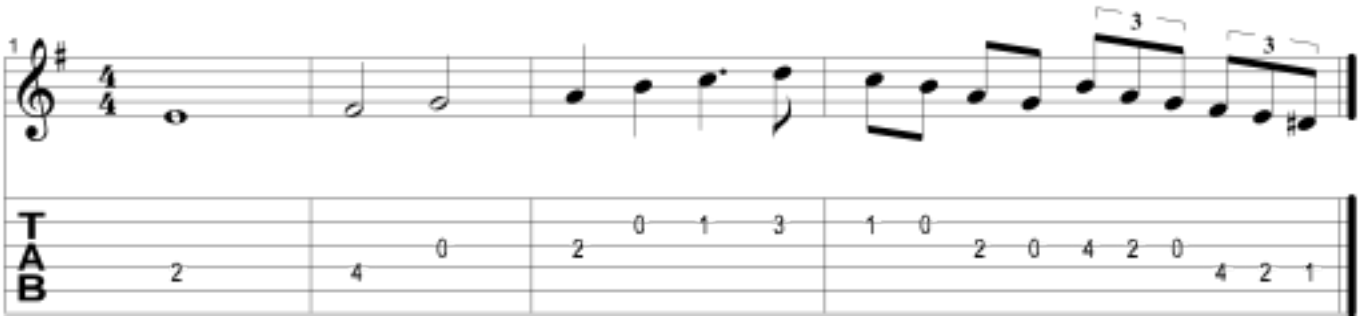
In other words, and to put it more synthetically:

- Part A corresponds to level 1;
- Part B corresponds to level 2;
- Part C corresponds to level 3.

☞ Do not cut corners; take your time to move on slowly.

Rhythmic patterns

Whole note Half note Quarter, dotted quarter note Eighth notes Triplets



Particular technical points

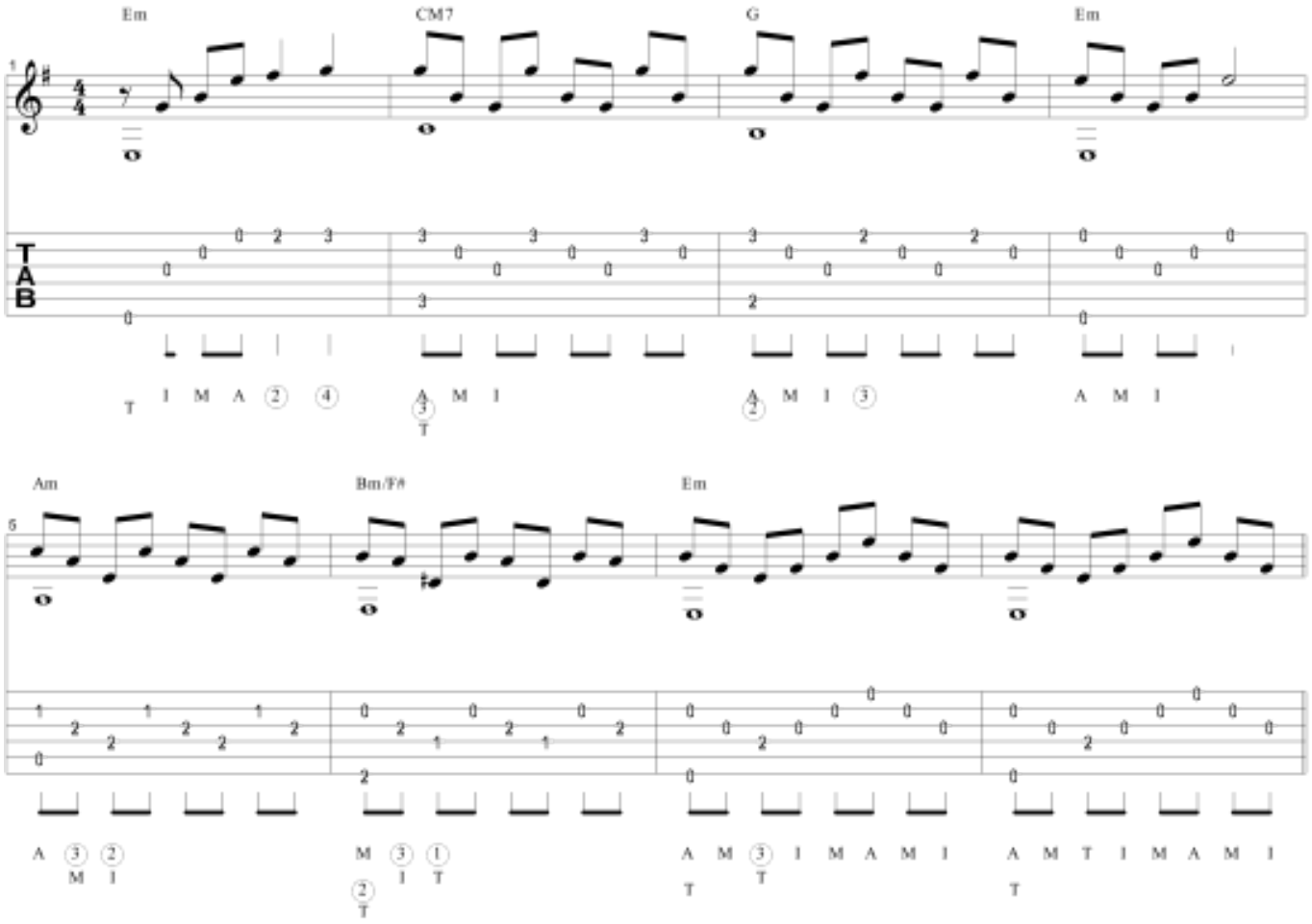
- Open-string (natural) harmonics

CLASSIQUE

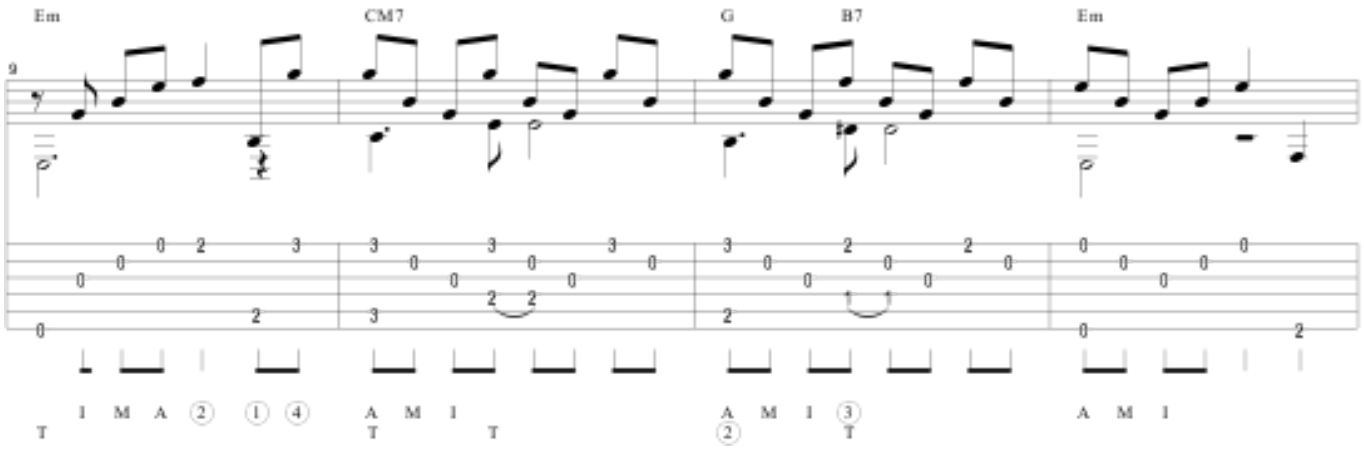
♩ = 92

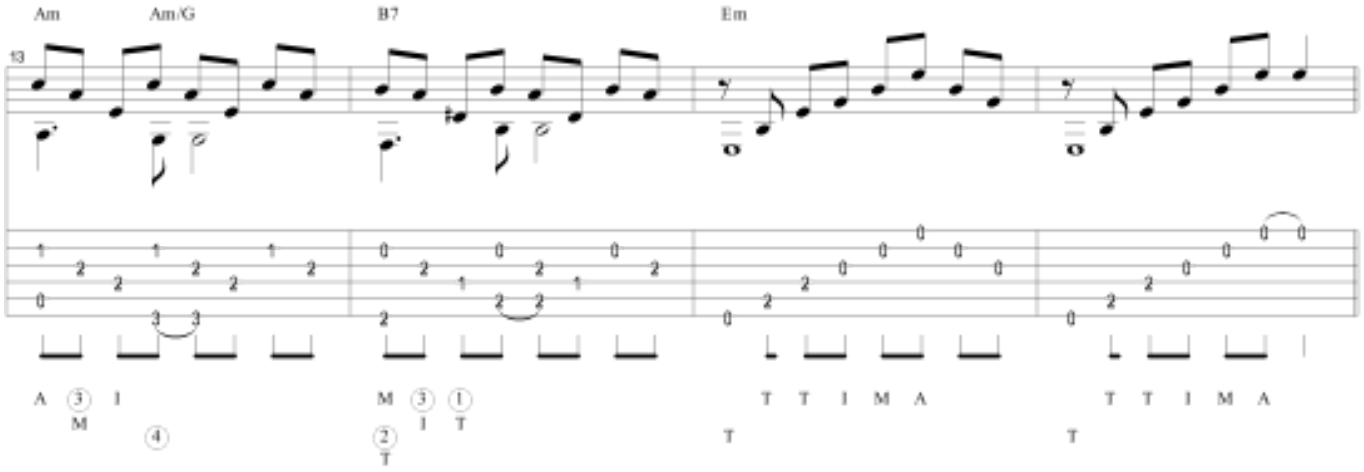
Music by Franck Lopez

Part A

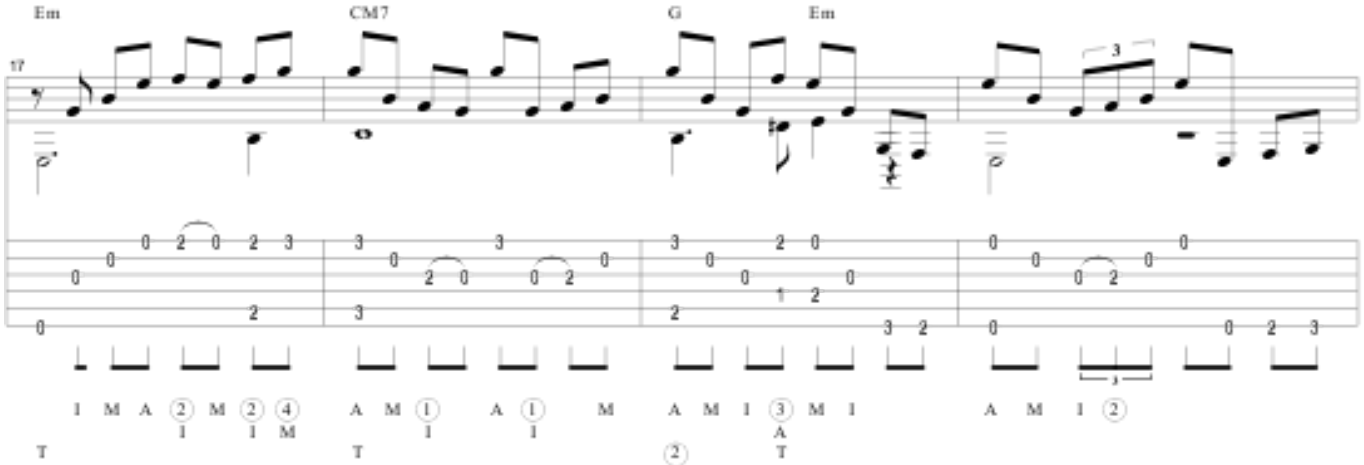


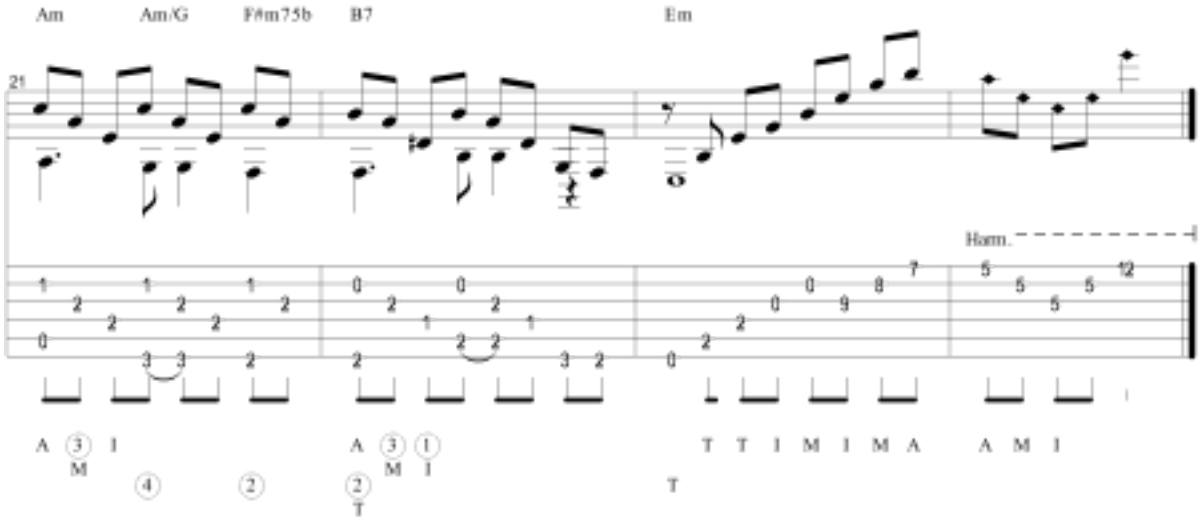
Part B





Part C





Determining the key

As we saw in the chapter on “The elements of a score,” the method to identify the key of a piece is rather simple.

Elements to consider	
The key signature	We can see here that it comprises one sharp. The rule: Last sharp + ½ step up = key Thus : F# + ½ tone = G Major
The relative minor	The rule : Major key and 3 half steps down Thus: relative minor of G Major = 3 semitones down from G = Em
The end chord	The final chord of each part being Em, we can easily conclude that this piece is in the key of E minor.

Determining the scales

The Em scale will be favored here; nevertheless the G scale will sound nicely too, on the bars that comprise a low G or natural D (which is the dominant in the G scale; see the chapter on “The Elements of a score”).

Determining the chords

- Key of E minor
- To harmonize the scale (see Chapter on “Chords”):

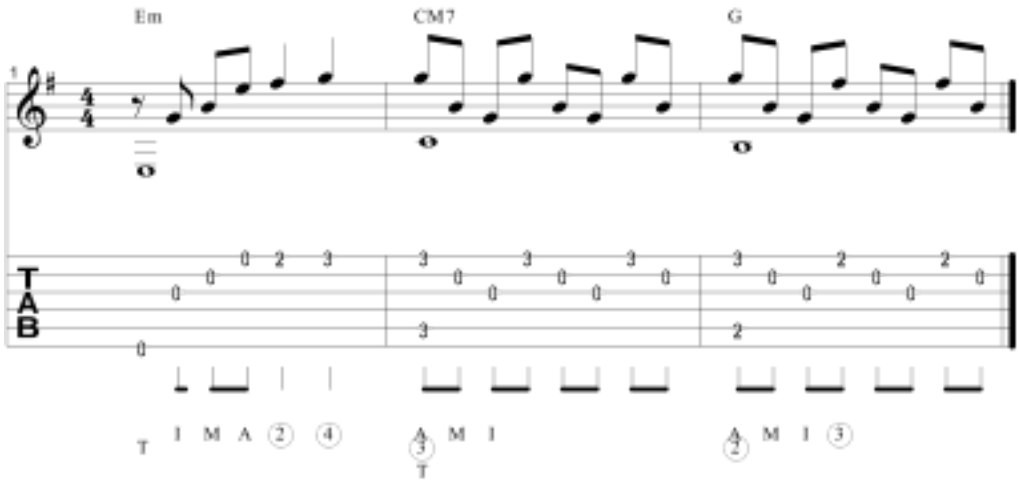
  Em Fm G A B Cm D#m7/5b

- Additional chords:
  CM7 Bm/F# Am Am/G F#m75b

these chords come from the key of G, which is the relative major scale of Em.

Exercises

Exercise 1

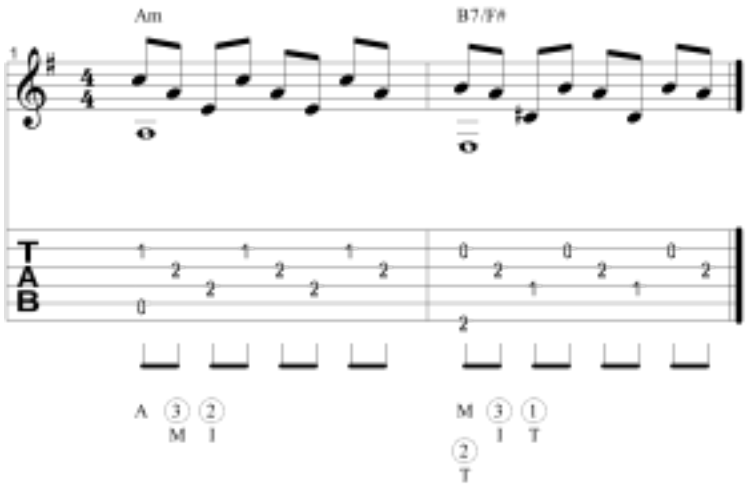


We recommend following the right-hand and left-hand fingering pattern given here. Keep a steady beat, and make sure that every note rings out.

The difficult element here is found on the first beat of bar 2. You need to play the C with you left-hand third finger (ring finger).

☞ Stretching your fingers when those are not used to so much musical gymnastics can take time and slow you down as you progress.
You should take that factor into account, and make sure you practice slowly, repeating the exercises many times.

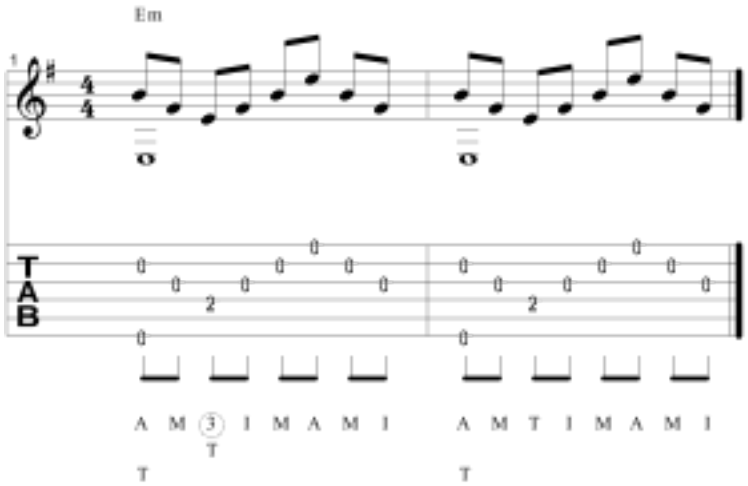
Exercise 2



The first chord here is an Am. Watch the fingering. This is a very popular position when accompanying songs.

The second bar presents a B7 inverted chord with F# as bass note. Play the bars through slowly.

Exercise 3

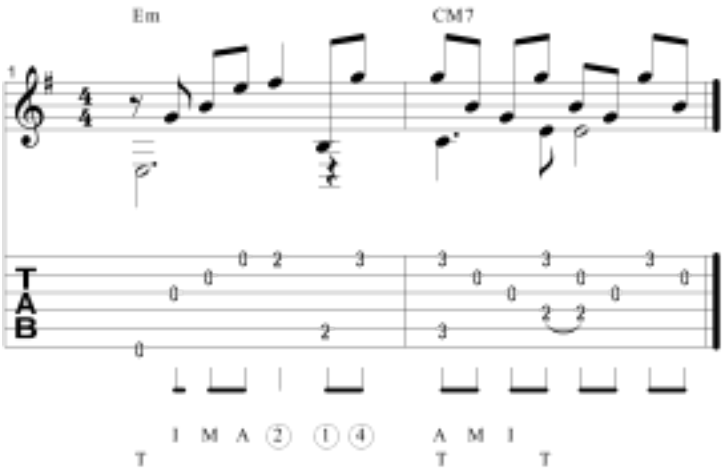


The difficulty here lies not in the left-hand work, but in the right-hand fingering.

Rather than playing each bar's second beat with your index finger, play it with your thumb. That is merely to follow the logic behind the open-string arpeggio.

☞ Leave your left-hand second finger down on the note to keep it ringing.

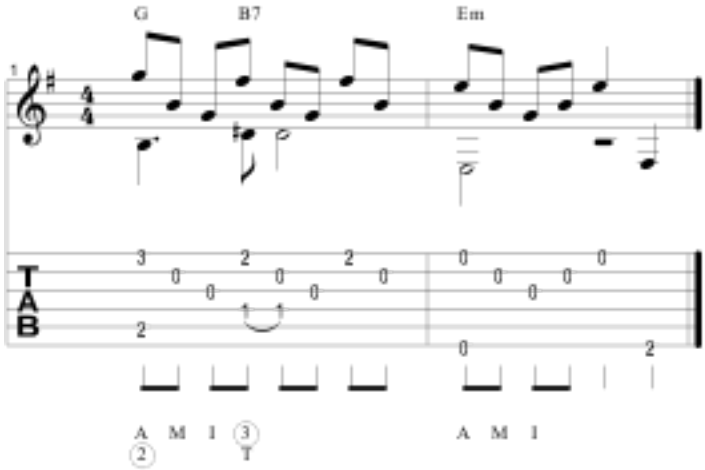
Exercise 4



Bear in mind that music is an art form that demands accuracy. Notice here that the first note (E) is a dotted half-note (two and a half beats). You must therefore mute the note so it doesn't go on ringing to the fourth beat. It is the same in the second bar, but with a dotted quarter-note (one and a half beat).

☞ There are various ways to mute a note. You can do it either with your left hand by using one of your free fingers, or with the thumb of your right hand (classical guitar).

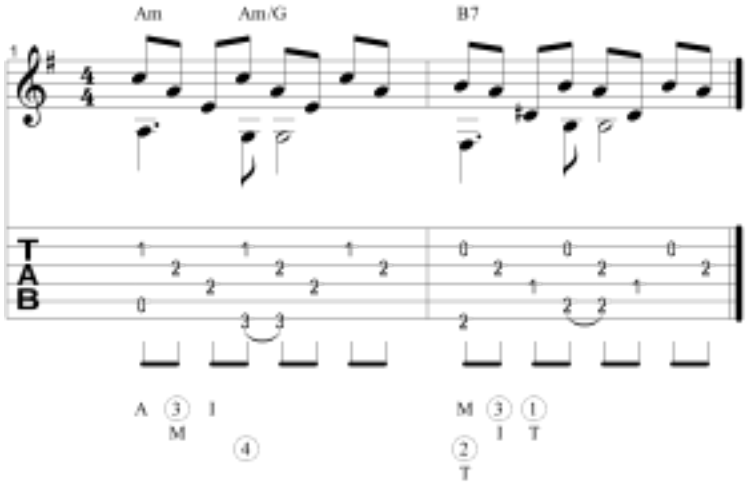
Exercise 5



It is not always easy to play all the notes through.

This first bar is not very complicated, but it does require some attention. Exercise your fingers carefully.

Exercise 6

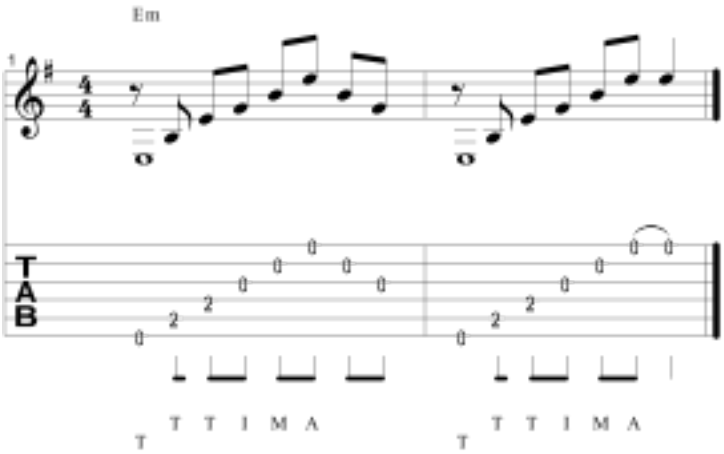


The left-hand little finger is very useful to guitar players.

Here the trick is to play the G on the E string with your little finger. Practice slowly, keeping a steady tempo.

☞ To reach the note more easily, make sure your left-hand thumb is properly placed in the middle of the neck.

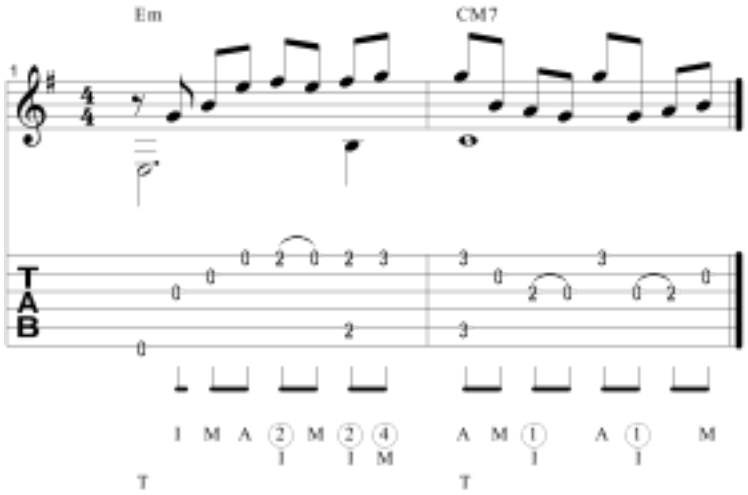
Exercise 7



In this exercise, your right-hand thumb plays three consecutive notes on different strings. Let it pluck the strings in one flowing move. Mind the change from thumb to index on the second beat.

☞ Leave the left-hand fingers forming the chord on the fingerboard.

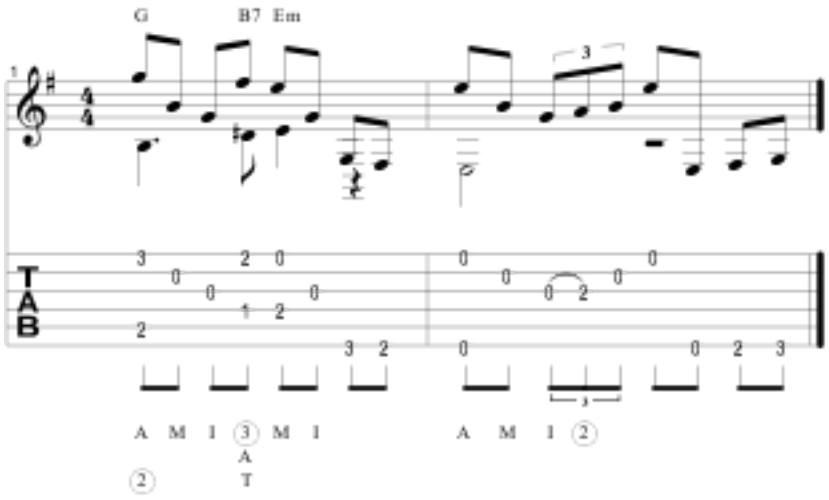
Exercise 8



A technical reminder: the second of two tied notes isn't played – or rather it is not attacked anew.

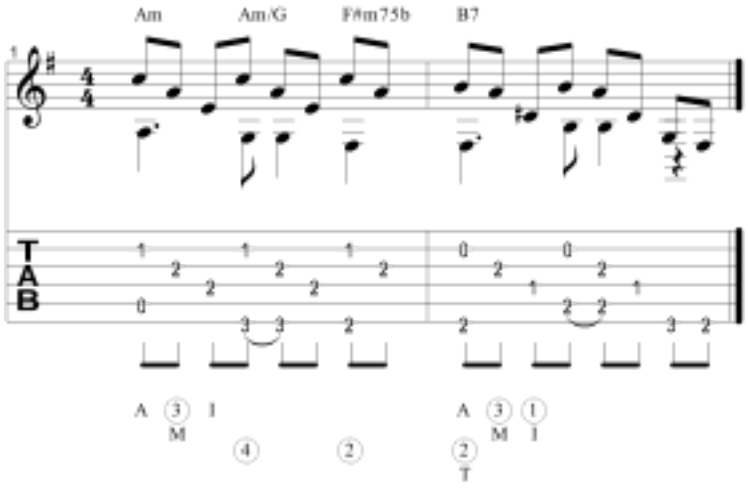
If that second note is lower than the first in the pair, it will be played by a left-hand pull-off. If it is identical to the first, then you need only count its value. If harmonically the second note is higher than the first, your left-hand finger plays it by tapping it (hammer-on). See the chapter on "Techniques" for more details.

Exercise 9



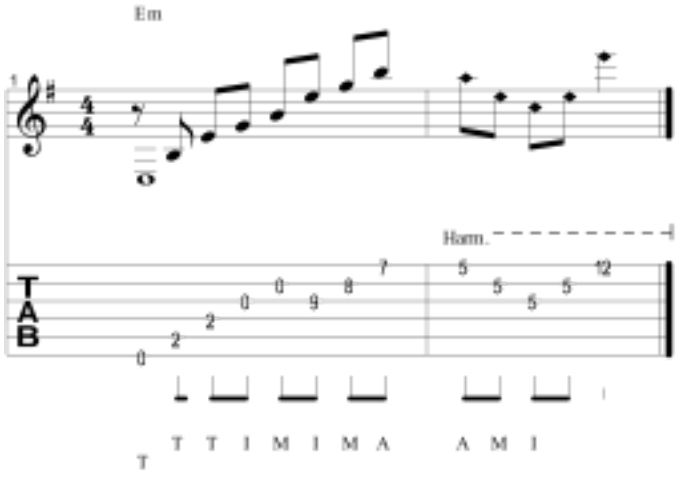
Mind the time length of each note. Don't hesitate to mute them to make the phrase sound neat. Play the triplet relaxed, don't rush it!

Exercise 10



Do use the fingering indicated, as it is designed to make you progress technically.

Exercise 11



Artificial harmonics are an integral part of the guitar playing technique.

This is a musical phrase written over two bars. Brush the string, and then take your finger away as soon as you have played the note. Be as smooth and regular as possible; your moving from note to note should hardly be heard.

Folk

The folk (steel-stringed) guitar has come to play an important role in the blues, folk music, and singing repertoires. It is very appreciated by guitar players for its sound qualities, as well as because it is so versatile.

On the technical side, the folk guitarist can play using his/her fingers, a plectrum, or fingerpicks, which are a kind of picks that adapt to the end of the fingers on the right hand.

The score we are presenting here is to be played using bare fingers.

Content

The piece will come in three progressive versions: A, B and C.

☞ Do not rush it; practice slowly.

Rhythmic patterns

- Eighth notes and variants
- Sixteenth notes and variants
- Ties notes

Particular technical points

- Hammer-on
- Capo

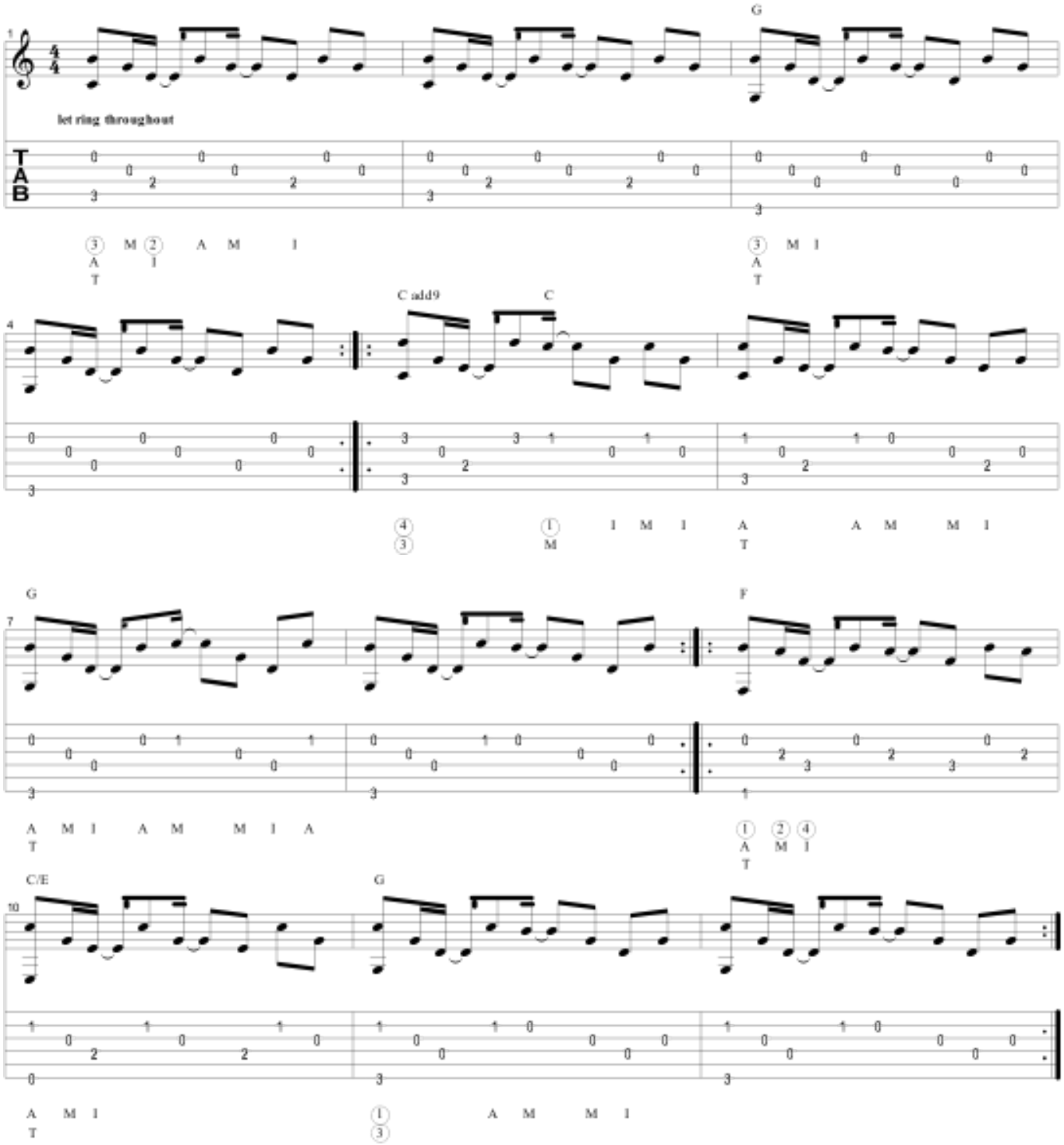
FOLK

Capo. 3 fret

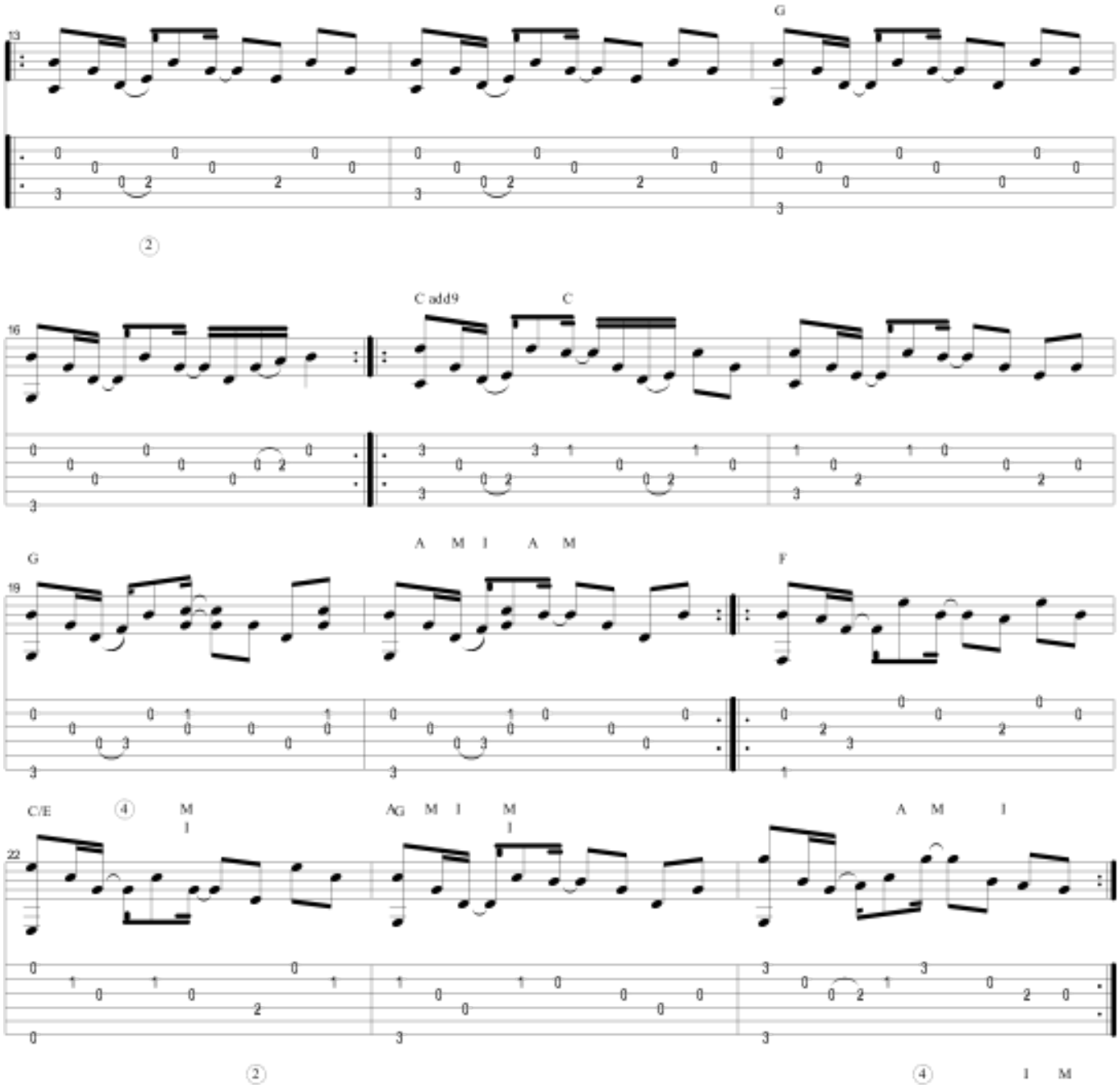
♩ = 94

Music by Franck Lopez

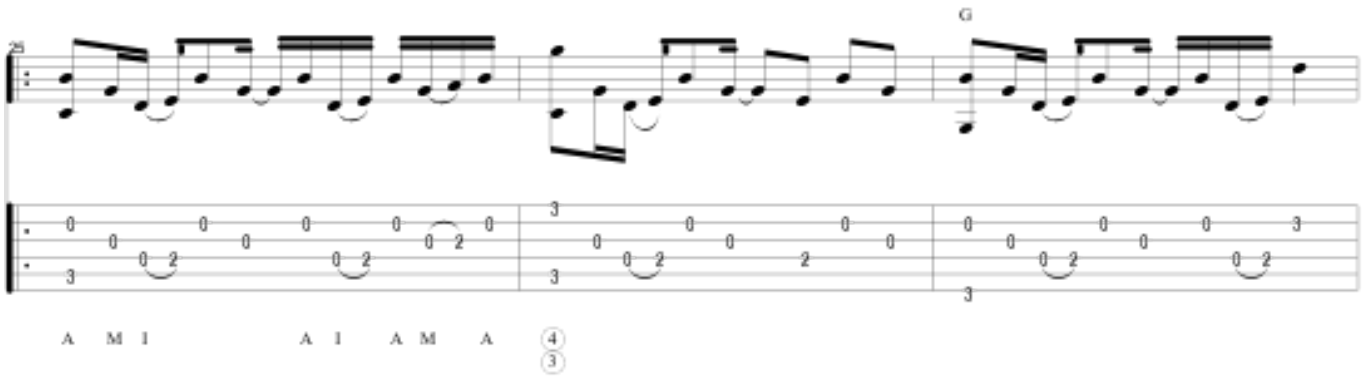
Part A

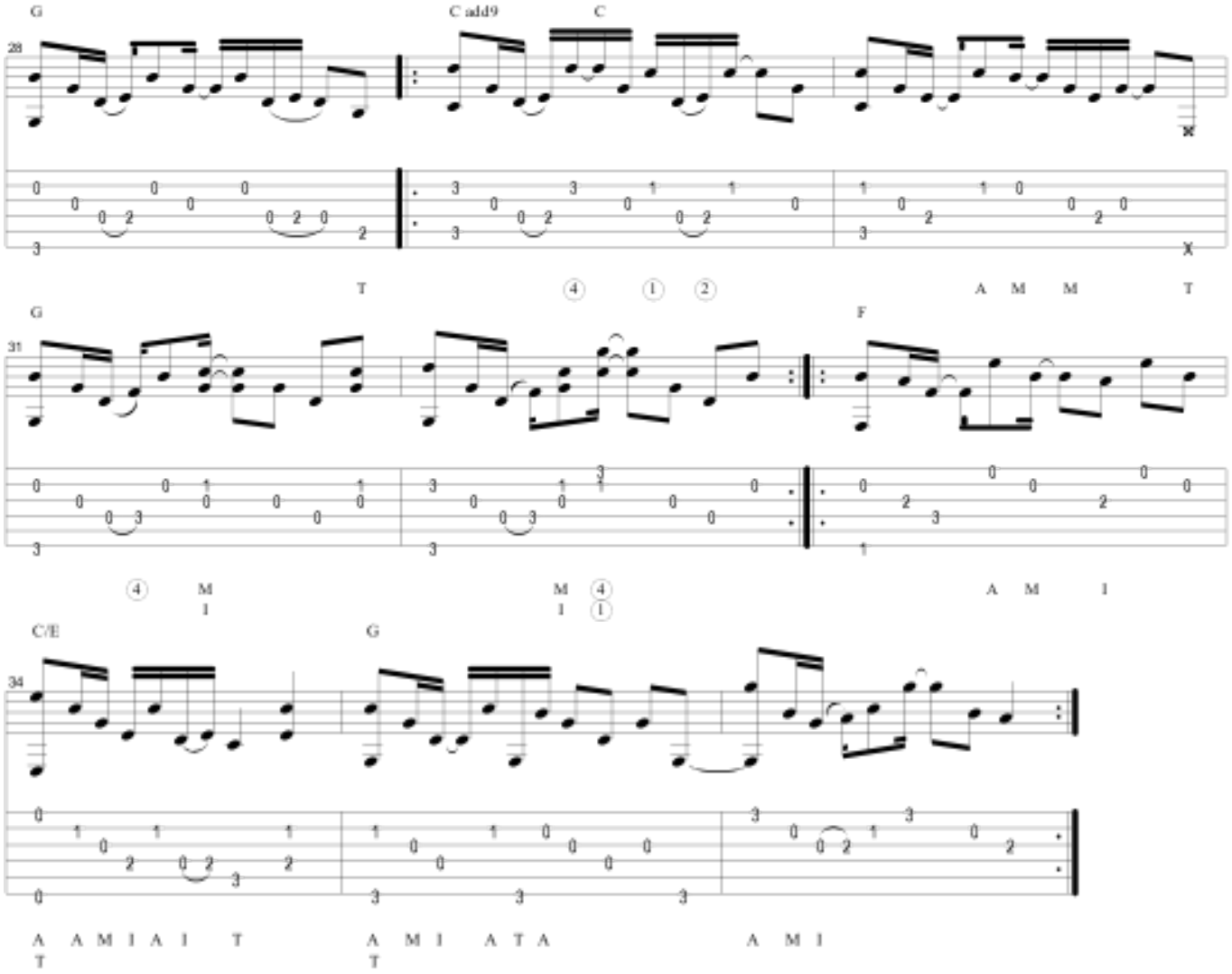


Part B


13
G
16
C add9
C
19
G
A M I A M
F
22
C/E
4
M
I
AG M I M
I
A M I
2
4 I M

Part C


25
G
A M I A I A M A
4
3



Determining the key

As we have already seen (in the chapter on “The Elements of a Score”), the method for finding out the key of any given piece is simple.

The elements you need to consider

- The key signature
- The relative minor
- The end chord
- The capo

This score comprises some repeat dots to the left of double bar lines at the end of every section, or part. They specify that you must play that part again from its beginning.

This score does not include a final chord, so we won’t be able to use that as a clue to the score’s key.

Since the relative minor is related to the final chord, it cannot be taken into account either.

Thus, all we have left to help us with is the key signature.

As there are no sharps or flats in the signature, we can conclude that it is in the key of C Major.

A score which you must play using the capo will always be written as though there were no capo. This is a convenient way to simply play a piece in the key you wish without changing the score.

Here you need to place the capo by the third fret – that is, one and a half step above standard tuning.

Therefore, we need to add to the key given by the signature that number of extra semi-tones implied by the use of the capo.

Hence: C Maj + 1 ½ tone = D# Maj

Determining the scales

The scale of D# Major will be the most appropriate here. We still have the possibility of using its relative minor: C minor.

Determining the chords

- Key of D#
- Scale harmonization (see Chapter on “Chords”):

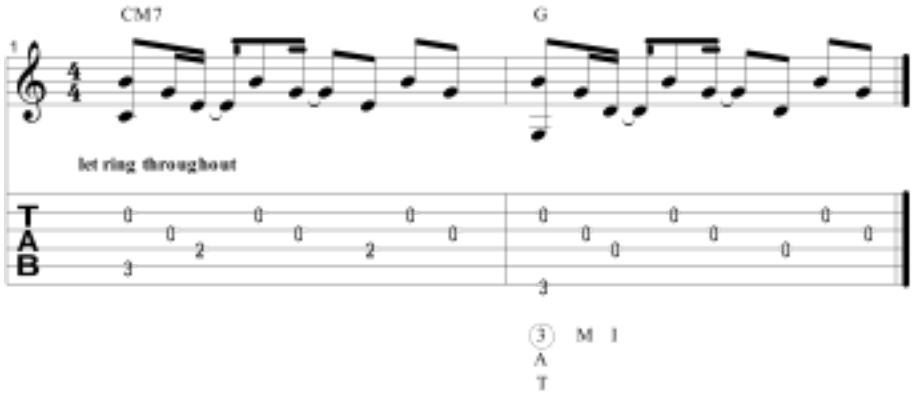
  D# Fm Gm G# A# Cm D#m7/5b

- Additional chords:

  C/E Cadd9

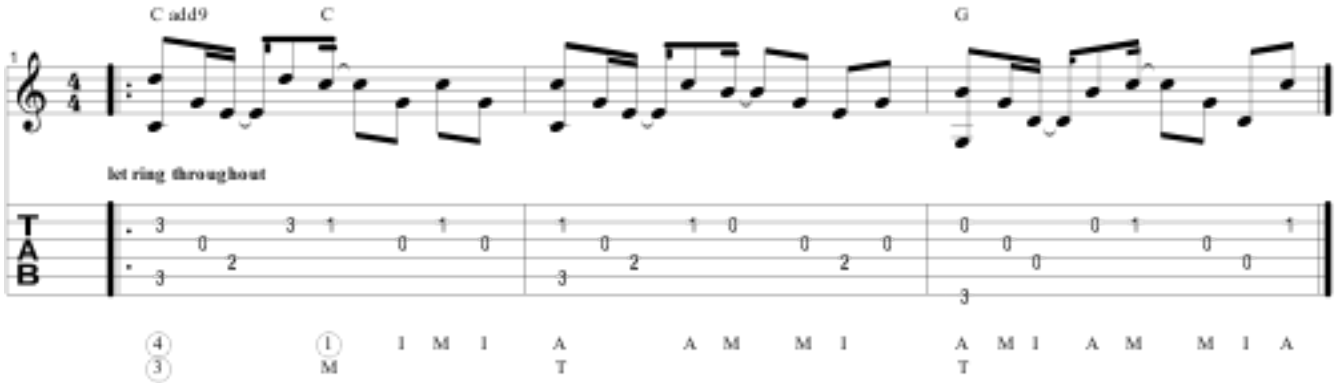
Exercises

Exercise 1



For this first exercise, take your time to fully assimilate the rhythmic pattern, as it is cyclical over practically the whole score. Watch for tied notes.

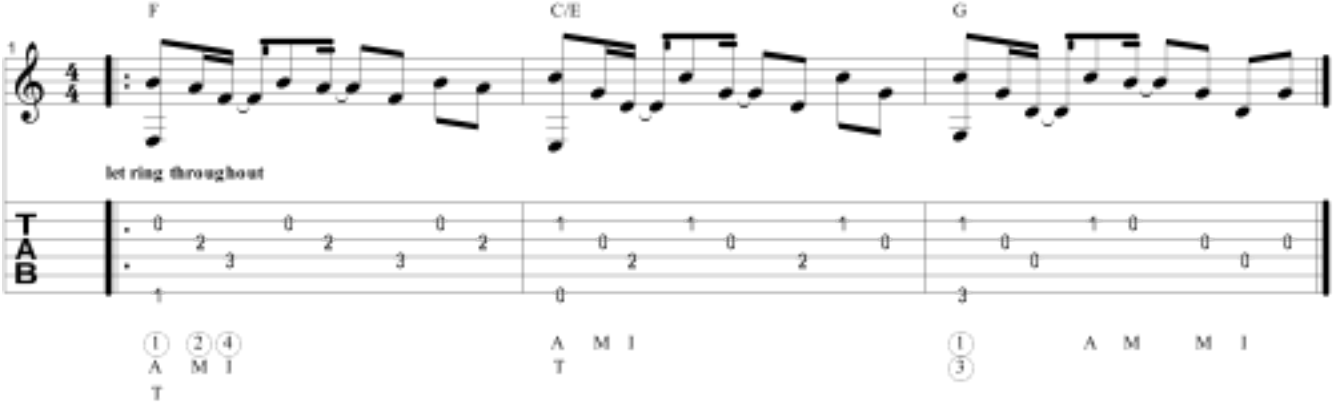
Exercise 2



The first position is a Cadd9, made up of C + the additional ninth. Since that ninth is a D, here is the structure for this chord: C E G D.

Pay close attention to the shifting of fingers; play as neatly as possible.

Exercise 3

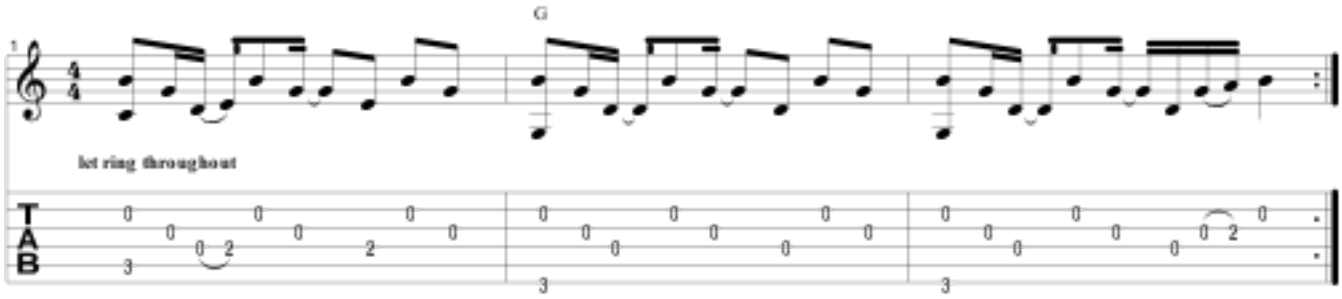


The first bar is made up of an F chord. Play it with your fingertips.

Your right-hand thumb announces the beginning of each bar. The chord for the second bar is a C/E (C chord with an E bass). To play this type of chord, you need to replace the root (bass) note which gives its name to the chord with another bass note.

☞ Play slowly at first, and increase speed as you progress.

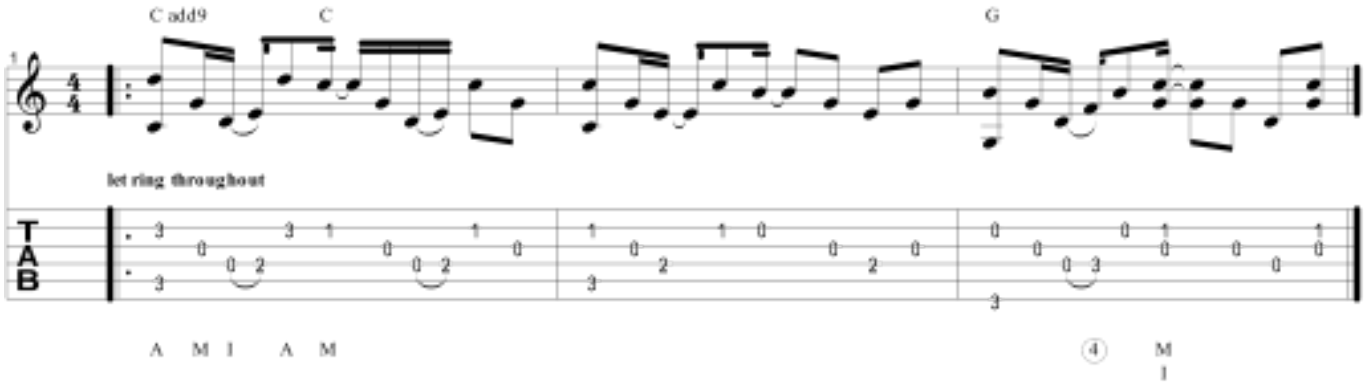
Exercise 4



This first exercise for Part B presents us with a subtlety in the use of the hammer-on. The trick consists in playing it while maintaining a steady time.

Slow down tempo to properly assimilate this subtlety. Mind the last bar, with its third beat including a series of sixteenth-notes. Be relaxed.

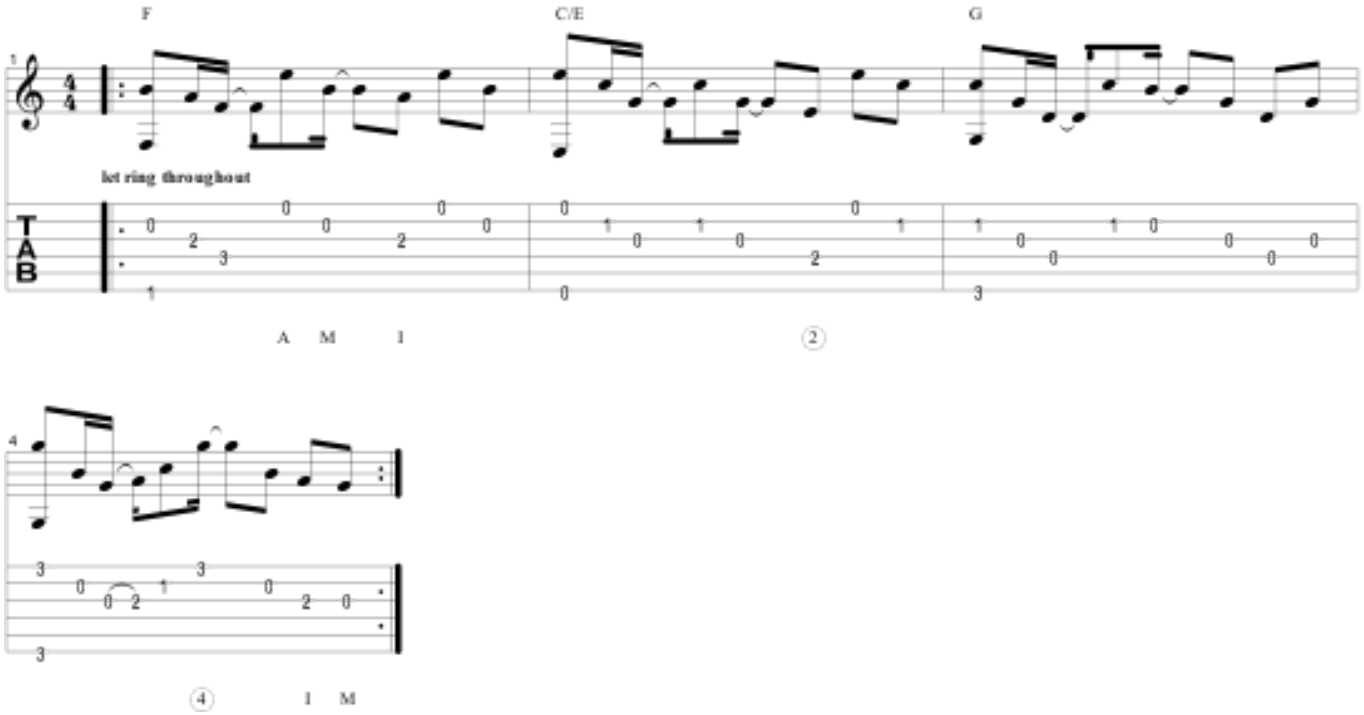
Exercise 5



You can modify the right-hand fingering if it doesn't suit you. The one indicated here is standard for this type of note sequence. You can replace the index finger with the thumb. The tie in the third bar is tricky – it is played using the little finger of your left hand.

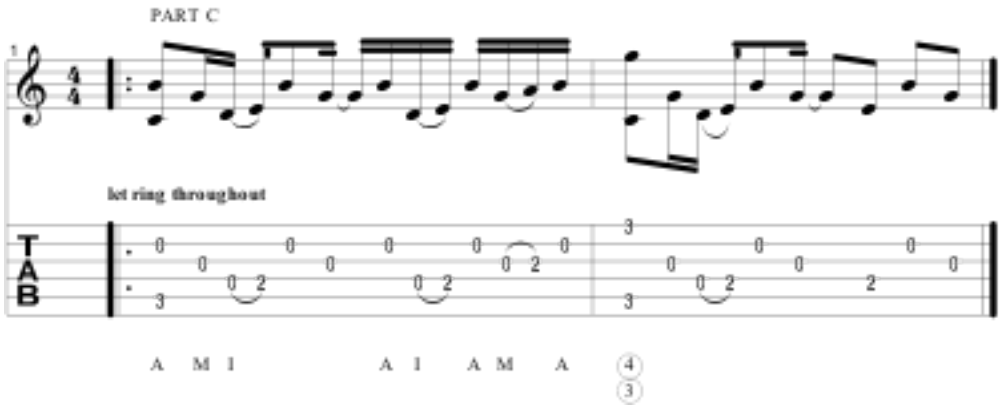
☞ Try to isolate the difficulties to work on them individually.

Exercise 6



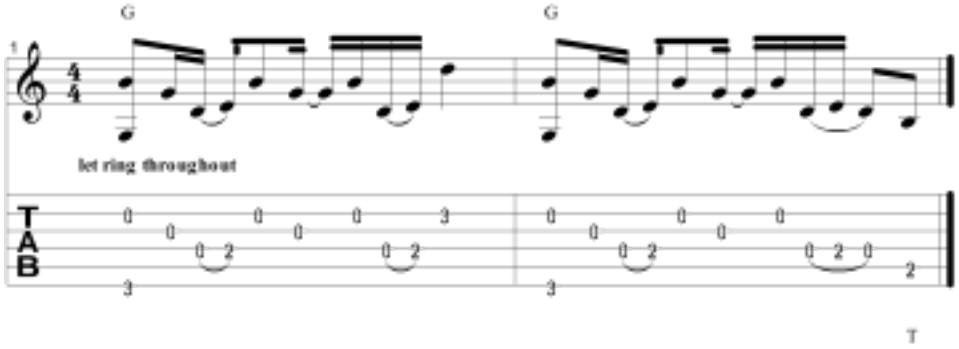
This is the easiest exercise from Part B. As the notes are expected to last long, leave your fingers as long as you can on the strings. In the fourth bar, make sure you play the rhythm as indicated.

Exercise 7



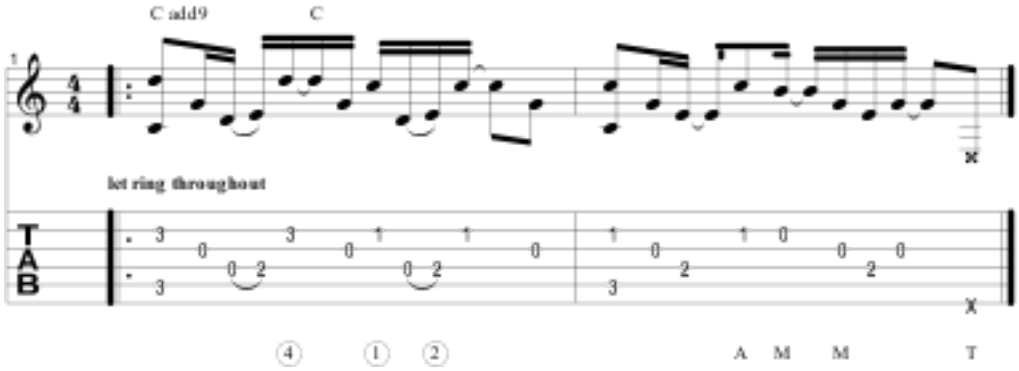
The hammer-on is prominent in Part C. To play it well, you need to try to only move the finger that is hitting the note. The palm of your hand and your wrist should have no part in doing a proper hammer-on.

Exercise 8



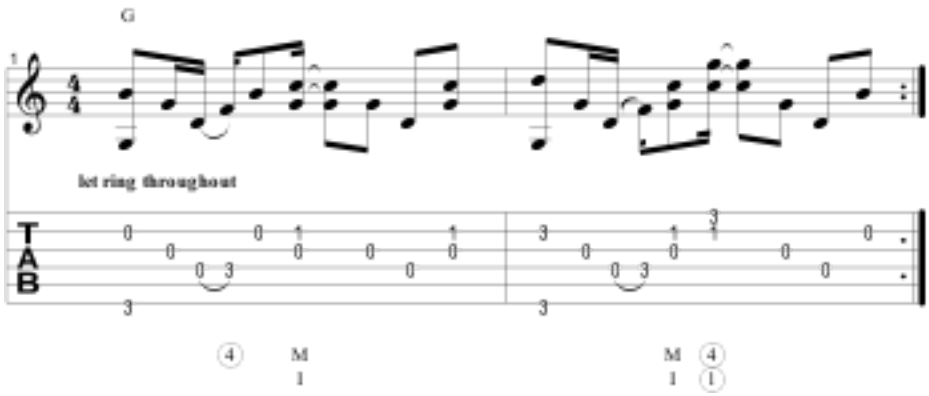
The trickiest element here is the last beat of the second bar: a single tied note made up of a hammer-on and a pull-off. This sequence is very common in guitar-playing. Practice slowly to familiarize yourself with the subtlety of the phrasing.

Exercise 9



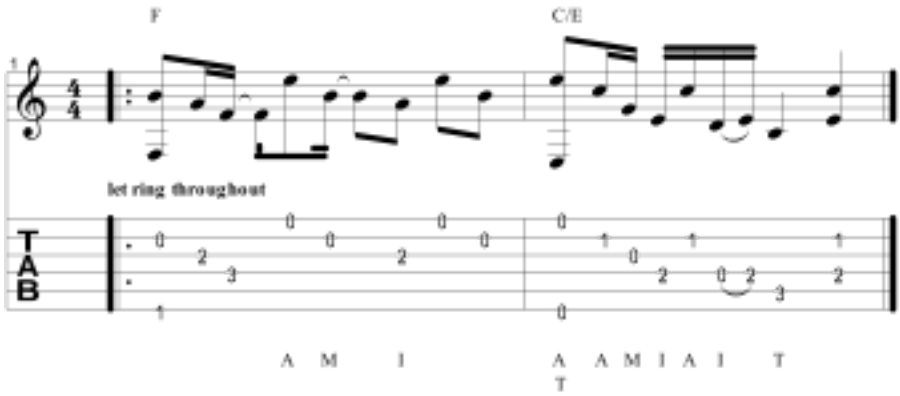
By leaving your fingers as long as possible on the strings, you will have a solid basis to play the hammer-on. The last note in this exercise is muted. It is played by resting your left-hand ring finger on the string to keep it from ringing.

Exercise 10



Watch for double notes played together. Leave your index finger on the string.
The second bar will get you to practice your little finger more specifically. Take your time to fully understand how this note sequence works.

Exercise 11

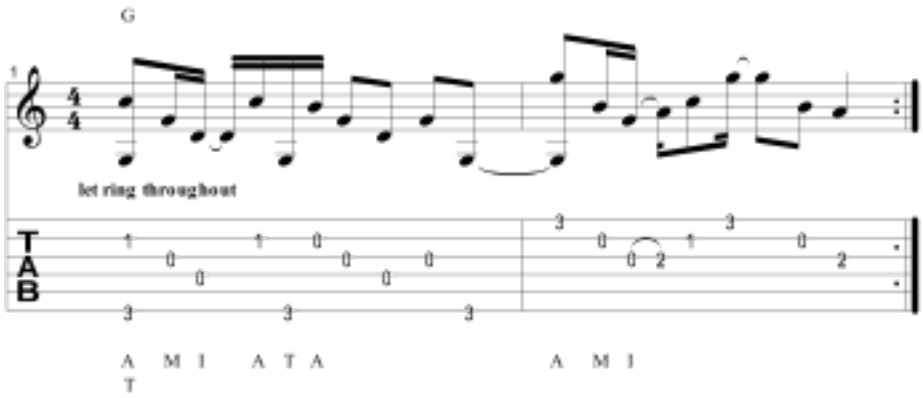


Keep the same position during the first bar. The difficulty appears in the second bar.

Whenever a bar includes a great quantity of information (notes, rhythm, fingering), it is advisable to separate the difficulties. Start by practicing the notes by playing them through on a regular beat, add the specific fingering to it, and then finally add the rhythmic pattern.

This method will allow you to progress more rapidly.

Exercise 12



Let the bass notes ring throughout this exercise. Mind the rhythm and the tied notes.

Be careful to anticipate the repeat sign at the end, so you can link the two parts smoothly.

Rock

12 Studies

Rock guitar now appears all over the musical spectrum. Its particular qualities benefit to every musical genre, such as, say, the blues or pop music.

This is a first approach to the genre, which will enable you to grasp the basics of rock playing.

To your guitars!

Content

This piece will appear in three successive versions – A, B, and C –, with a theme and a rhythmic pattern specific to each.

Rhythmic patterns

- Eighth notes and variants
- Sixteenth notes and variants
- Triplets
- Ties notes

Particular technical points

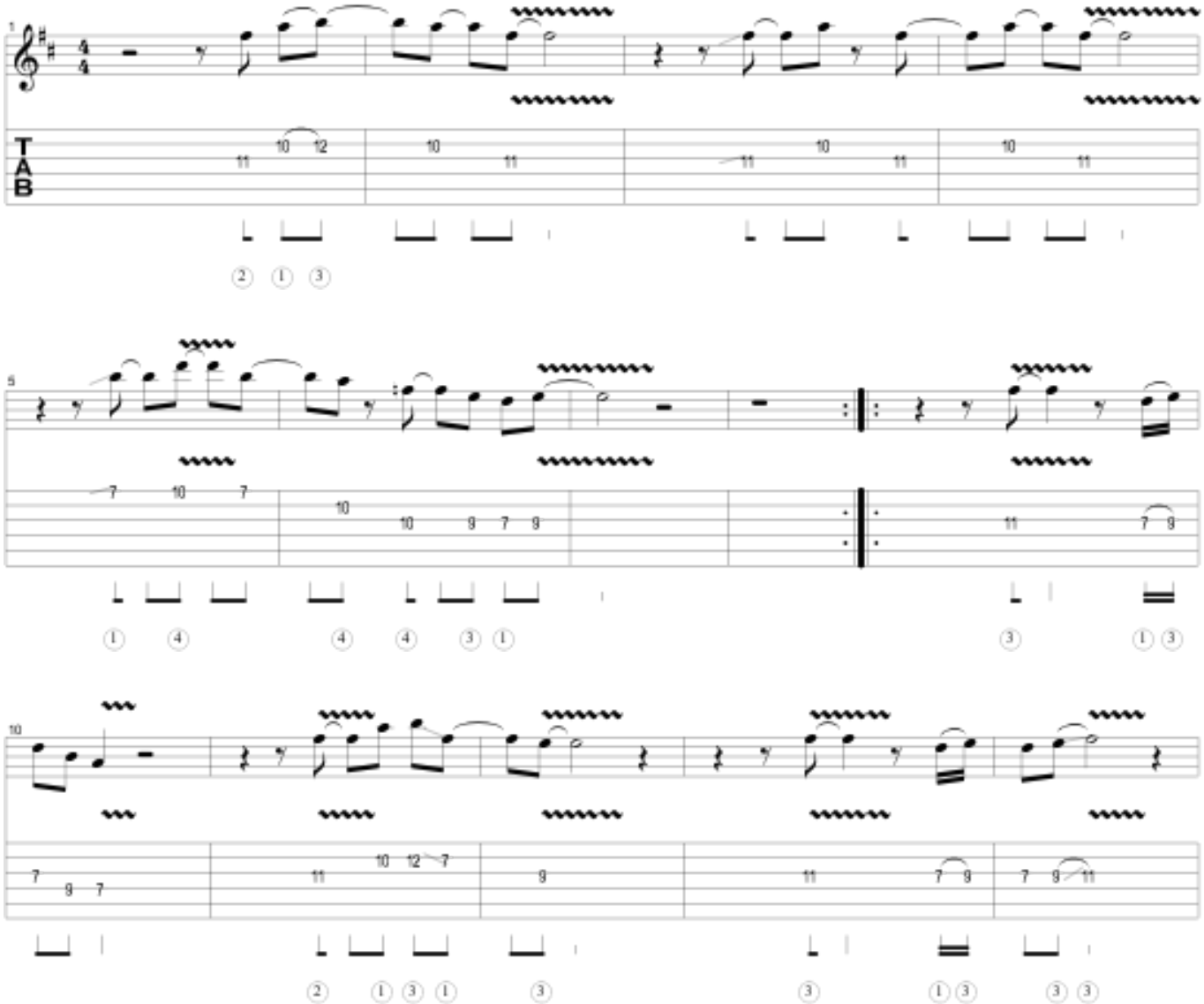
- Hammer-on
- Vibrato
- Slide
- Sweeping

ROCK

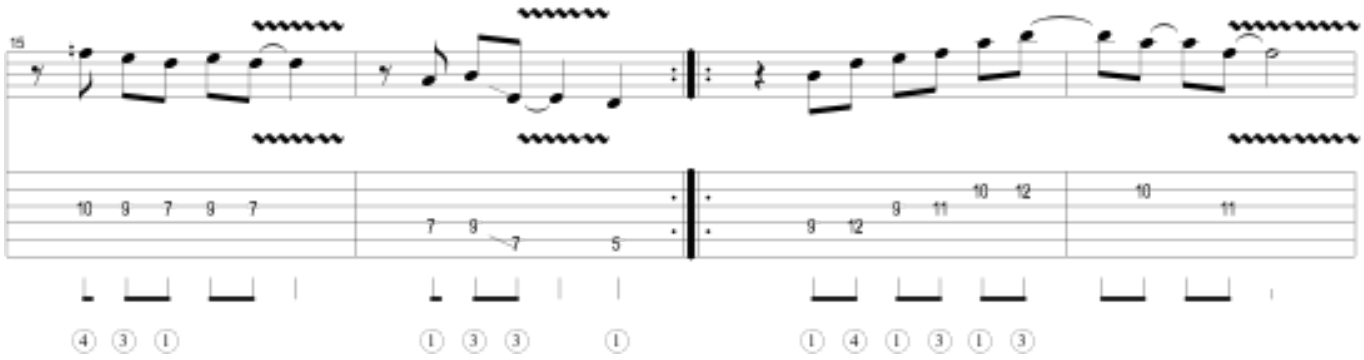
♩ = 130

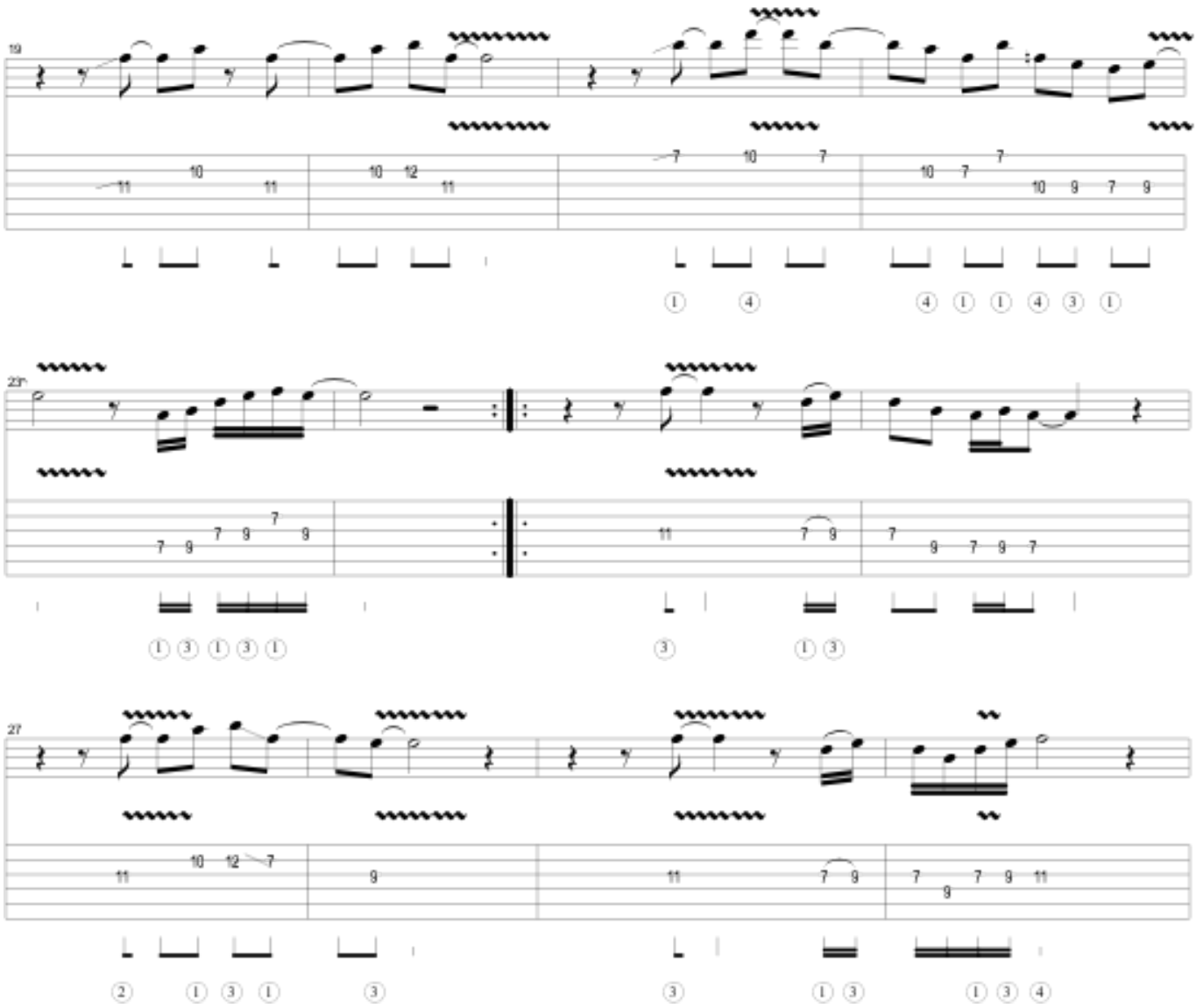
Music by Franck Lopez

Part A

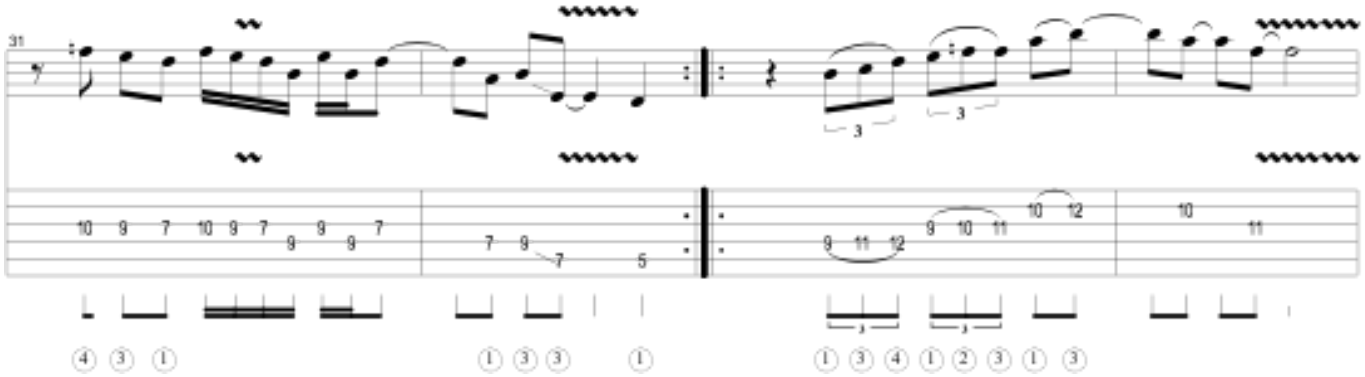


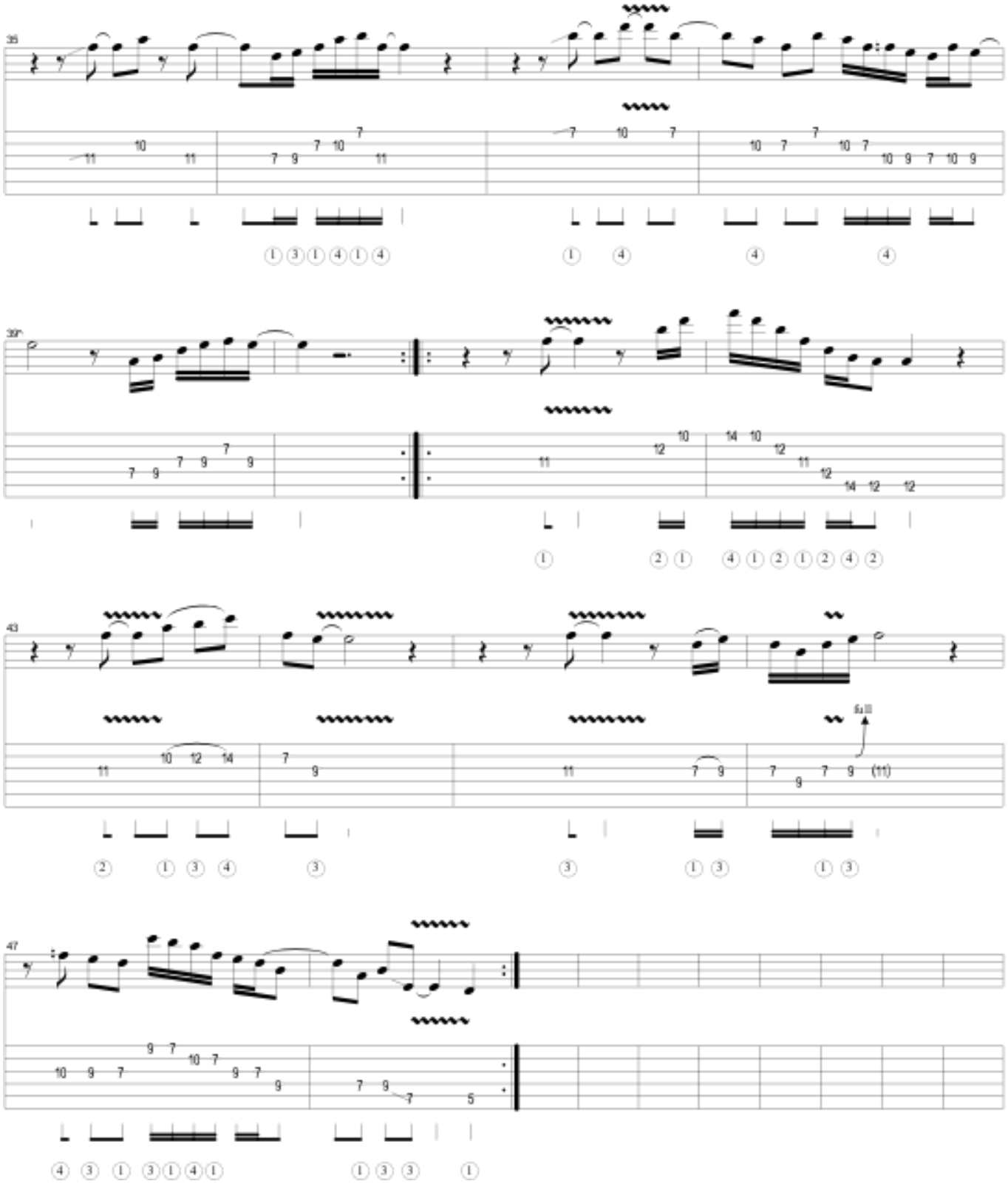
Part B





Part C





Determining the key

The elements to look at

- The key signature
- The relative minor
- The end chord

This score comprises some repeat dots to the left of double bar lines, at the end of every section, or part. They specify that you must play that part again from its beginning.

This score does not include a final chord, so we won't be able to use that as a clue to the score's key.

Since the relative minor is related to the final chord, it cannot be taken into account either.

Thus, all we have left to help us with is the key signature.

The key signature here comprises 2 sharps.

Let's apply the rule we know:

Last # + ½ step = key of the score

C# + ½ step = D Major

To find the relative minor of D Maj:

From Major key, down 3 half steps

D Maj - 3 half steps = Bm

Since the piece opens on a Bm chord, we are allowed to say that this is in the key of Bm (relative) and not in the key of D.

Determining the scales

The blues scale of Bm is the easiest to use on these chords. Of course, the D scale will sound nicely too.

Determining the chords

- Key of D
- Harmonization of the scale (see Chapter “Chords”):

D Em F#m G A Bm C#m7/5b

On this score, the chords are noted as “5.”

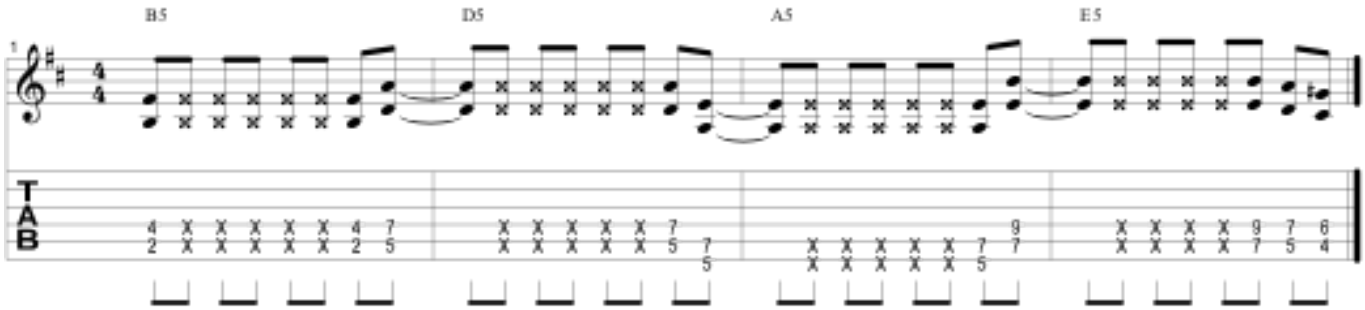
As we have seen previously, a chord is basically made up of three notes: 1, 3 and 5.

In the rock style, the note numbered 3 (the third) will be eliminated in favor of the 5 (fifth).

What you get is a chord noted as: chord 5.

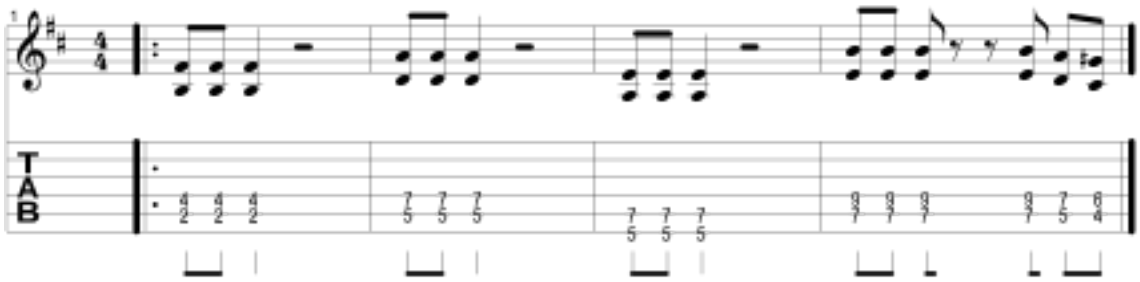
Exercises

Exercise 1



This is a rhythm that is simple and representative of the rock playing style. The muffled noted should not sound too dry. Keep to the tempo and be as steady as you can.

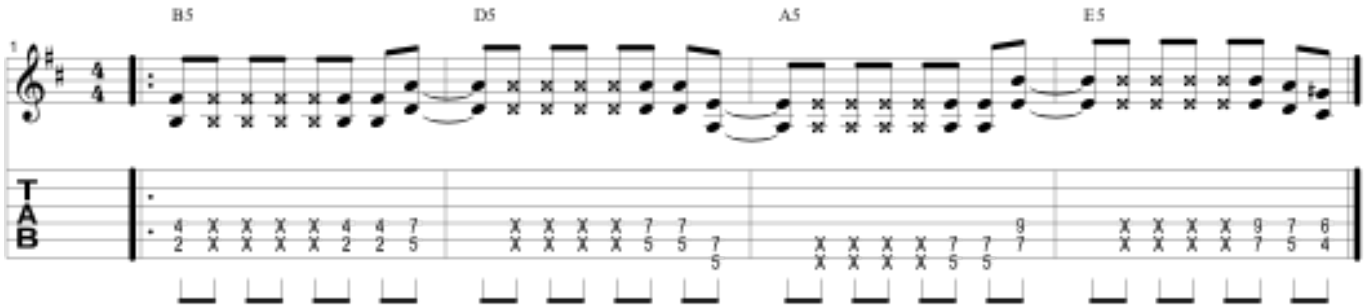
Exercise 2



This is simple, basic rhythm. What is tricky is playing neatly and respecting the rests.

In order to not produce any unwanted sounds, you will need to mute all the strings with your right hand.

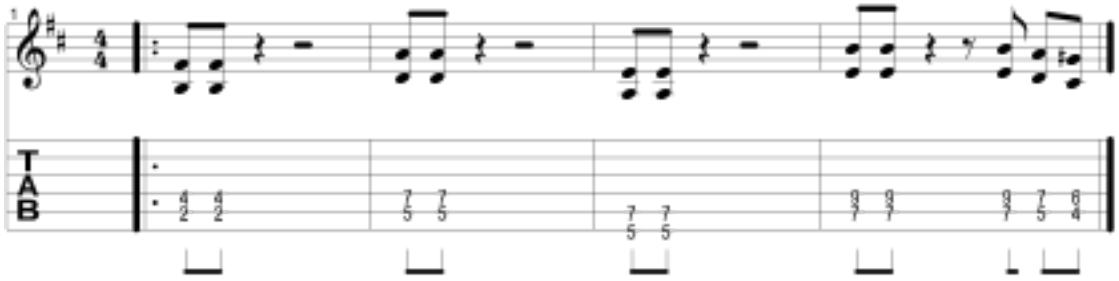
Exercise 3



First exercise for Part B.

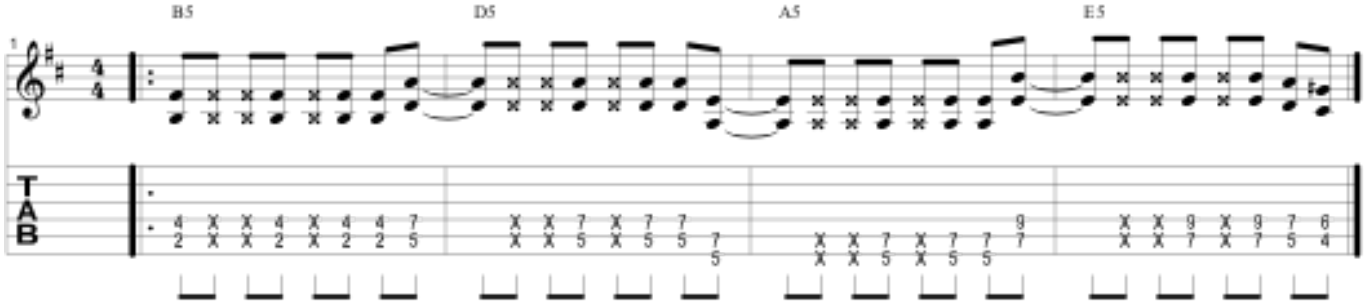
Don’t worry if the exercises look similar. This actually is a part evolved from exercise 1. The note comes back to what it was, non-muffled. To that effect, you will lift your right hand slightly to avoid touching the strings.

Exercise 4



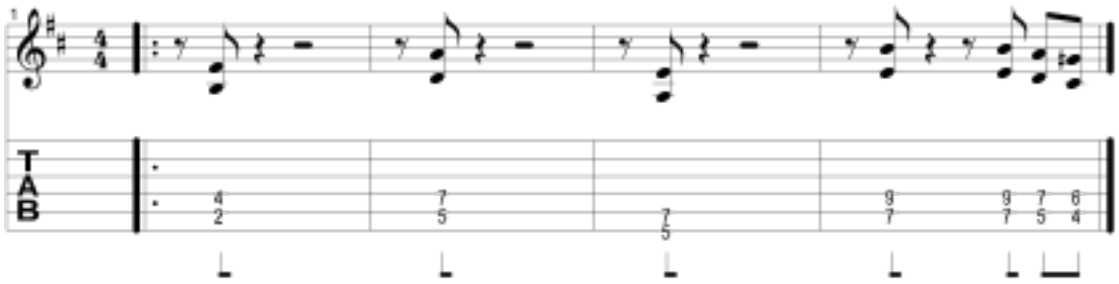
This exercise is simpler, with only two eighth notes per bar. What is tricky is to keep time during the rests. Tap the beat with your foot if it helps, and stay in time.

Exercise 5



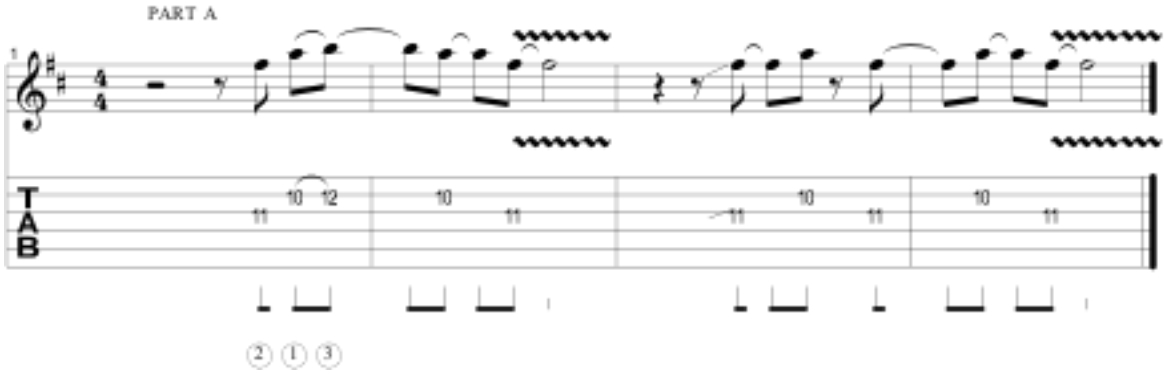
The rhythmic sequence here is full. Mind the action of your right hand during the change from muted notes to non muted notes. Practice this move slowly.

Exercise 6



One last exercise about rhythm. This one is more complex, as the note you play is the second eighth note in the bar. This is a fairly common type of rhythmic pattern in music, and it is a good idea to familiarize yourself with it. Make sure that your rests are clean, remember to mute the strings. Keep to time to place each note properly.

Exercise 7



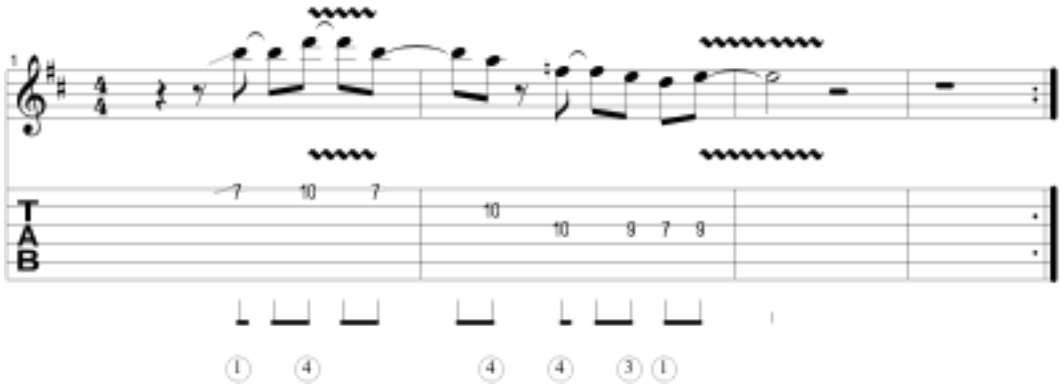
This is the theme of the piece.

Rhythm is always an important part of any musical phrase. It is essential to respect it. The first note is on the second eighth of the beat, which is commonly called “the upbeat.”

Tied notes are tricky things. You should always look through the score before you start playing.

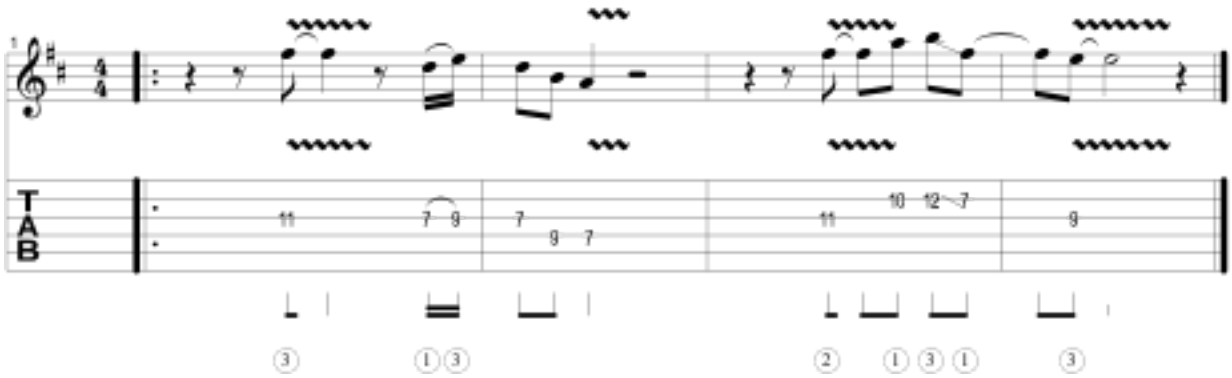
All the vibratos are played with the left hand.

Exercise 8



This is based on the Bm blues scale. Watch for rhythm and modulated notes (vibrato). The rests at the end of the exercise need to be impeccable.

Exercise 9



The fourth beat of this first bar includes an eighth rest followed by two sixteenth notes.

What this implies:

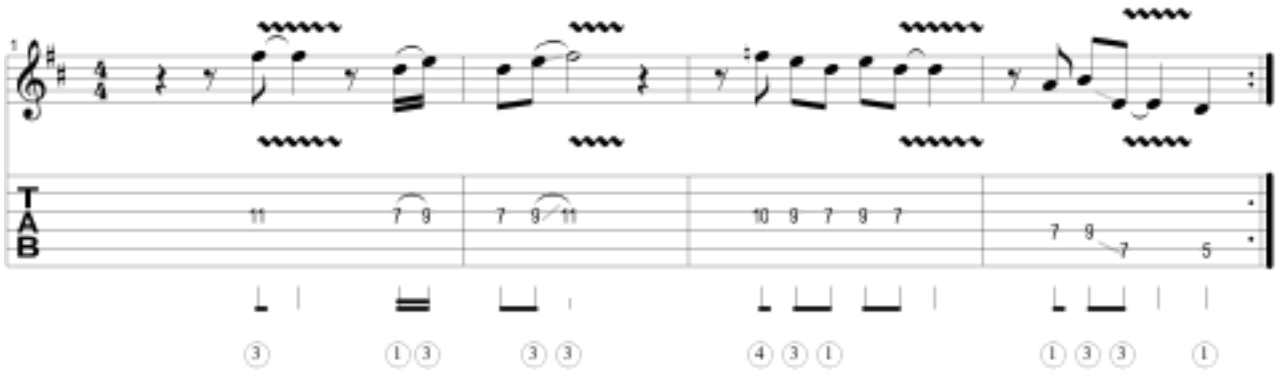
- a sixteenth note = a quarter of a beat
- two sixteenth notes = half a beat, i.e. an eighth rest

There is, at the beginning of the beat, an eighth rest which replaces the first two sixteenth notes. Those that come after the next eighth rest are sixteenth notes 3 and 4.

This rhythmic pattern is widely used in music, so it is good to be familiar with it, and to fully grasp its mechanism.

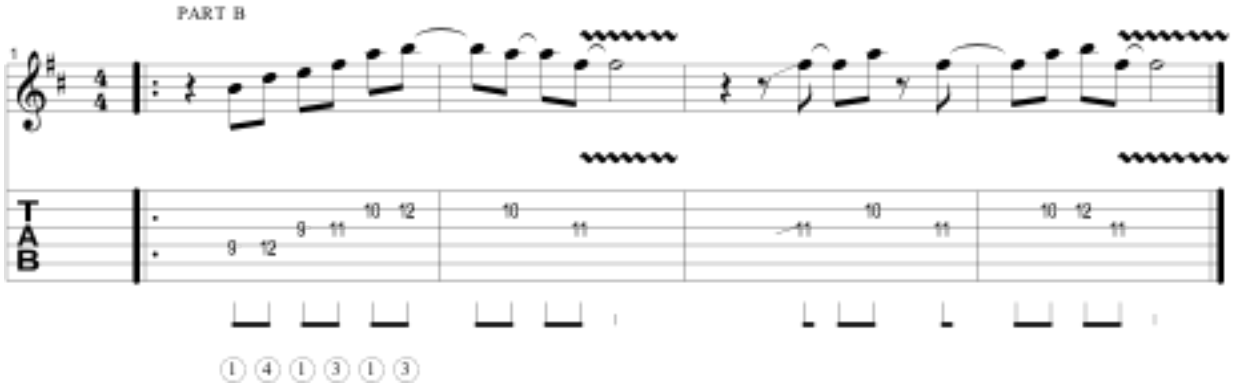
Pay attention to the slide in bar 3 which is the usual technique in reverse.

Exercise 10



For this exercise, as for the others, we recommend following the fingering indications below the score. Mind the rhythm, the vibrated notes, and the slide at the end, played with the left-hand ring finger.

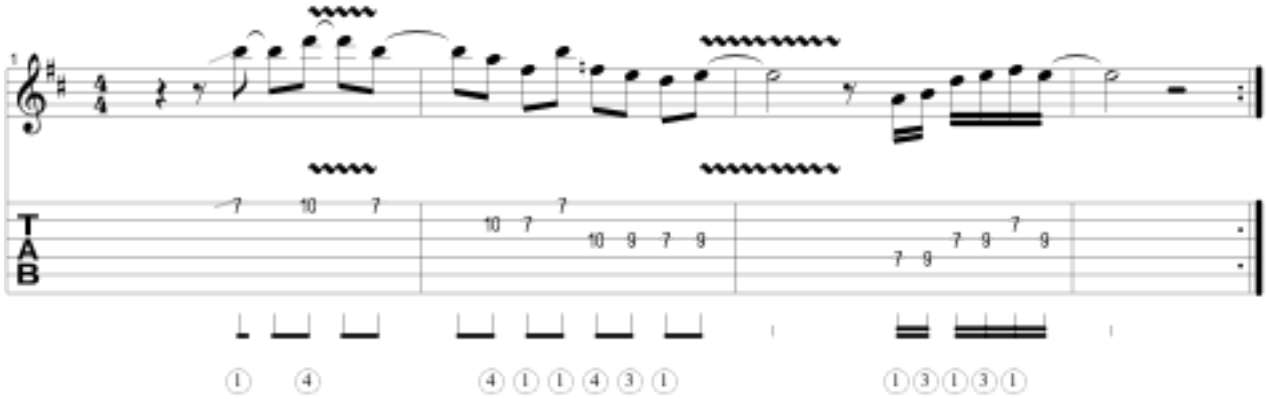
Exercise 11



Part B.

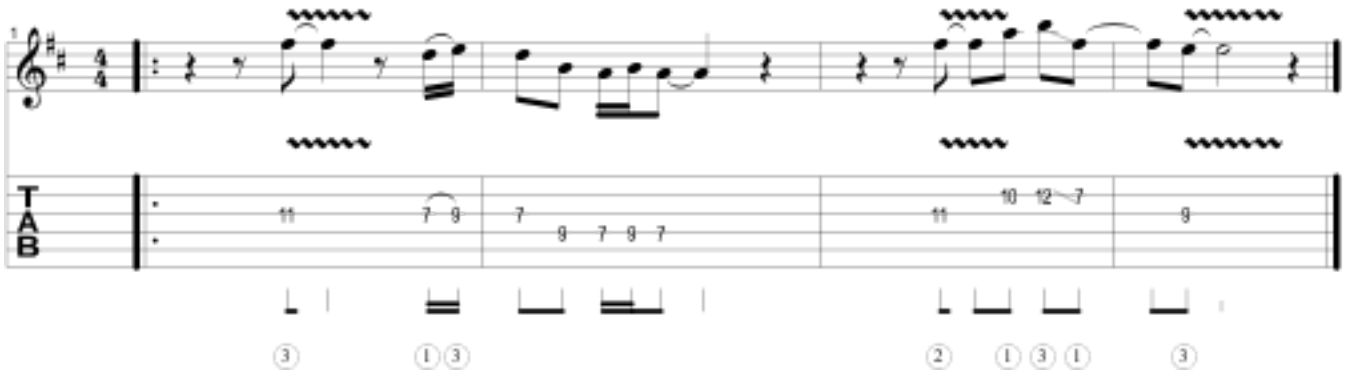
The theme evolves here with a first scale. Mind the rhythm and the durations of the notes.

Exercise 12



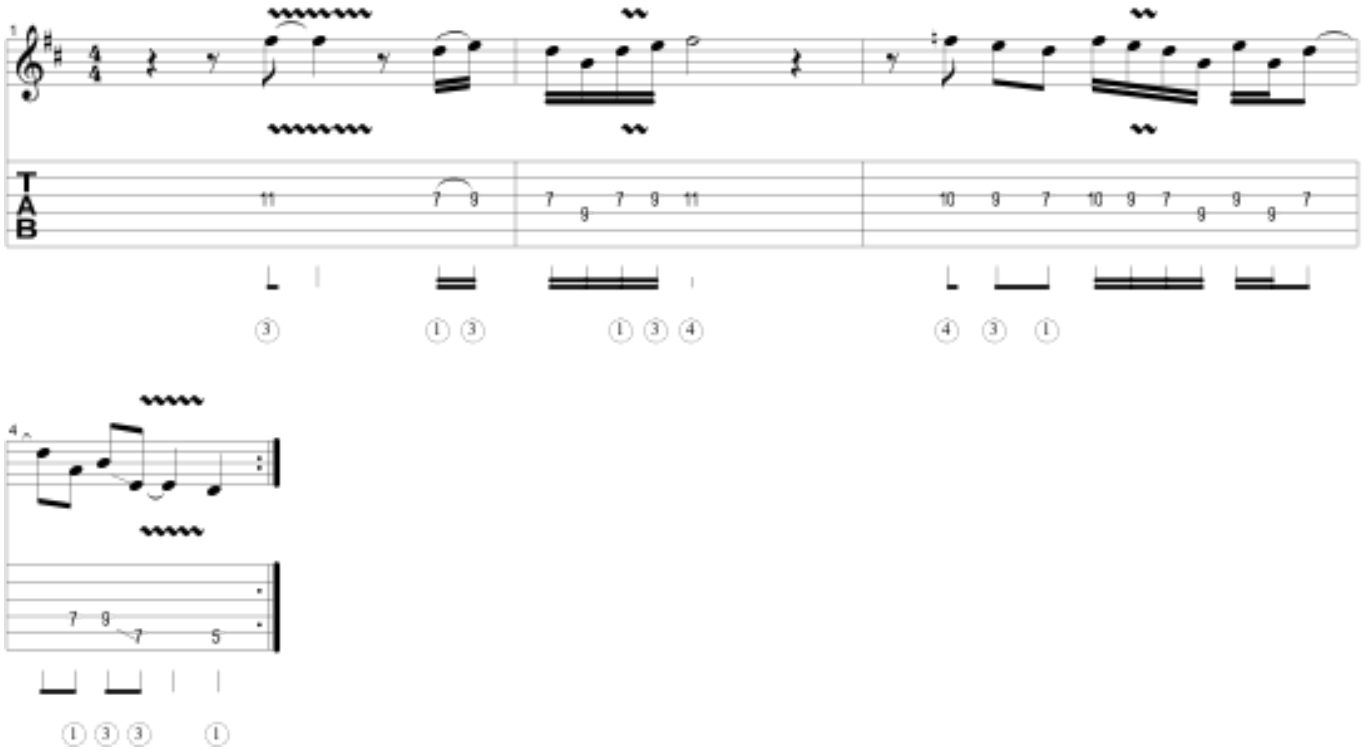
The second bar here includes a phrase based on the Bm blues scale. The difficult part lies in skipping the B string to finish the phrase. Practice slowly at first to assimilate the technique for both hands. It is important to get a neat sound.

Exercise 13



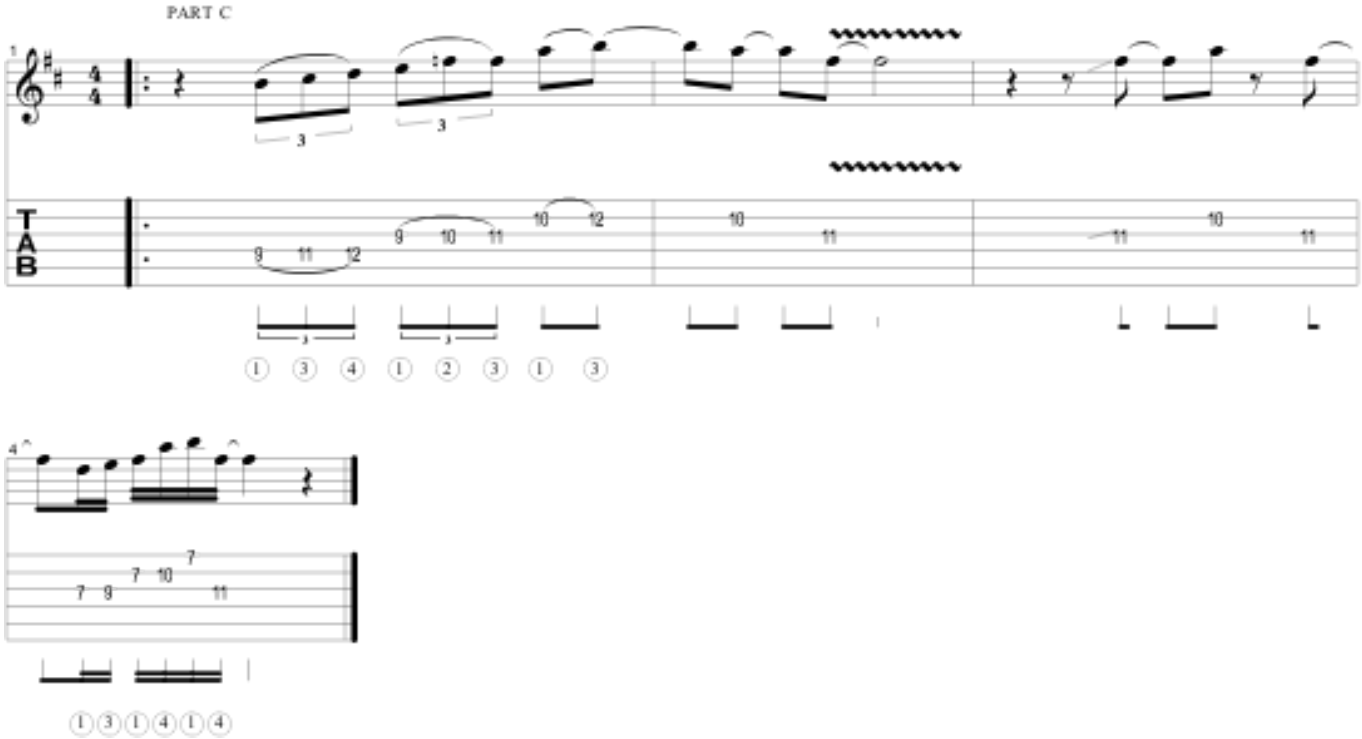
When the rhythm is complicated, it is important to fully understand the theory so you can play the phrases later without problems. The difficulty in this particular exercise lies in playing through the various rhythmic patterns. Work slowly at first.

Exercise 14



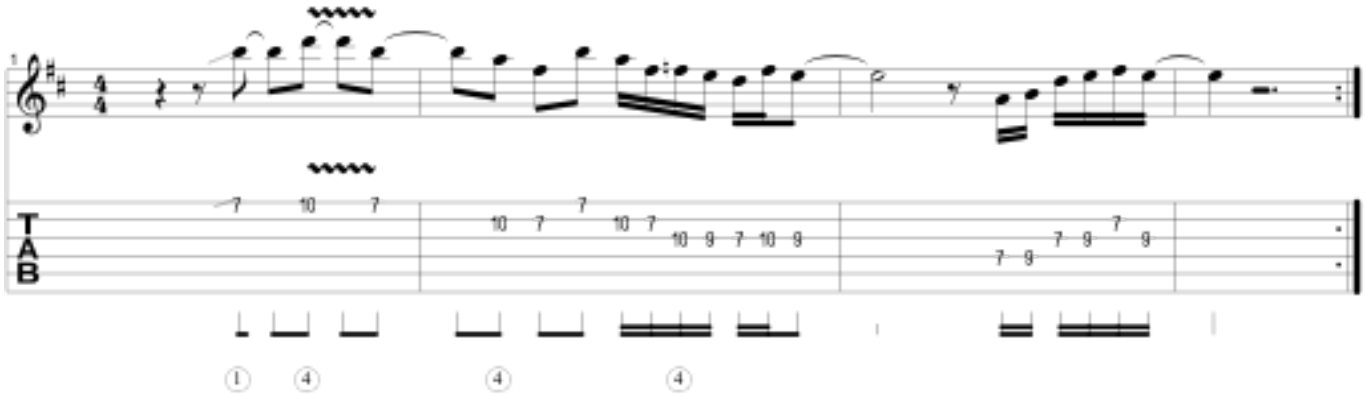
This exercise is rendered complex by the diversity of the phrases that compose it. Practice it by isolating the bars that pose a problem. Work on each problem separately.

Exercise 15



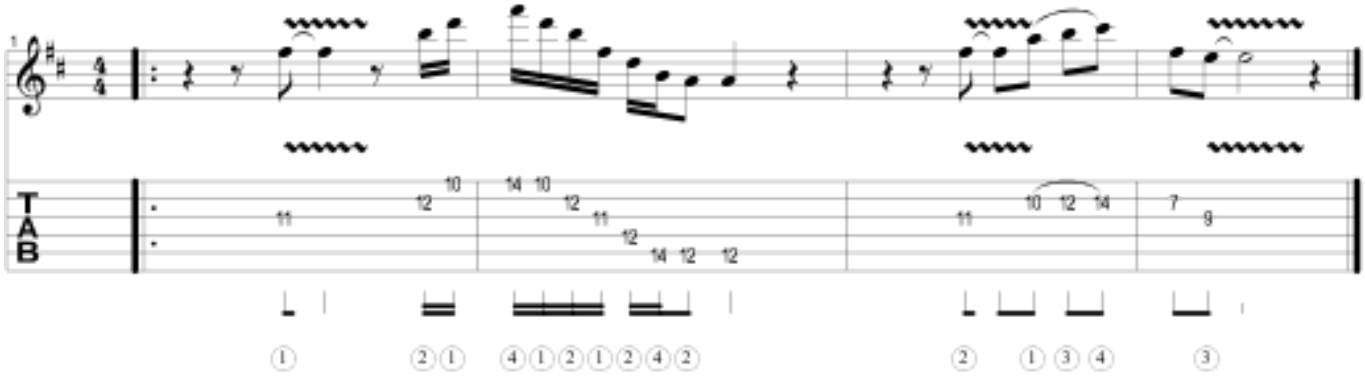
The first bar here comprises two series of triplets. This pattern appears commonly – it consists of three notes in one same beat. Practice it apart from the exercise in order to assimilate it well. The notes are tied by successive hammer-ons. The last phrase includes the skipping of a string, which you should practice slowly as well.

Exercise 16



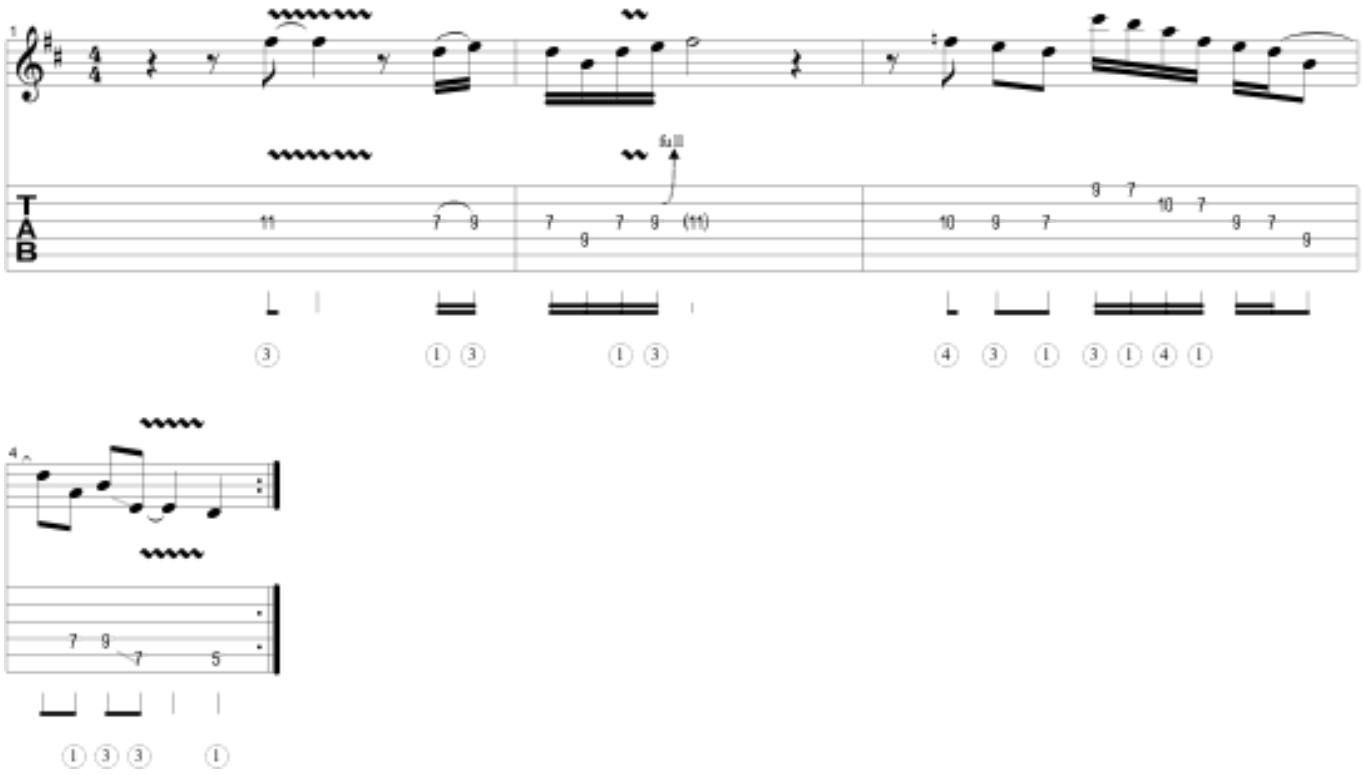
There are endless possibilities for improvising on the blues scale. Guitar players resort to all kinds of tricks to make it “sound good.” Mind the rhythm.

Exercise 17



You can play this descending Bm arpeggio by using the sweep-picking technique, or by using alternate picking (down-up, or up-down) with your right hand. Whichever technique you choose, the end result should sound flowing and relaxed. Mind the shifting positions from bar 3 to bar 4.

Exercise 18



Here the bend is played along with a sequence of eighth notes. Your left hand needs to be relaxed, don't strain it. The phrase ends on a position based on the Em blues scale. Follow the rhythm and be as accurate as possible.

Jazz

13 Studies

Jazz guitar appeared in the thirties with the flat-picking technique (i.e. playing with a guitar pick).

Flat-picking produced a sharper, more dynamic kind of sound, thus allowing the guitarists to come to the fore – particularly during solo parts.

Richer chords than those used in the blues or rock n' roll underpin the particular colors of jazz music.

Here's a first approach to the genre.

Content

This piece will appear as three progressive versions: A, B, and C – each comprising a theme and an appropriate rhythmic pattern.

Rhythmic patterns

- Triplets and their variants
- Sextuplets
- Tied notes
- Muted notes

Particular technical points

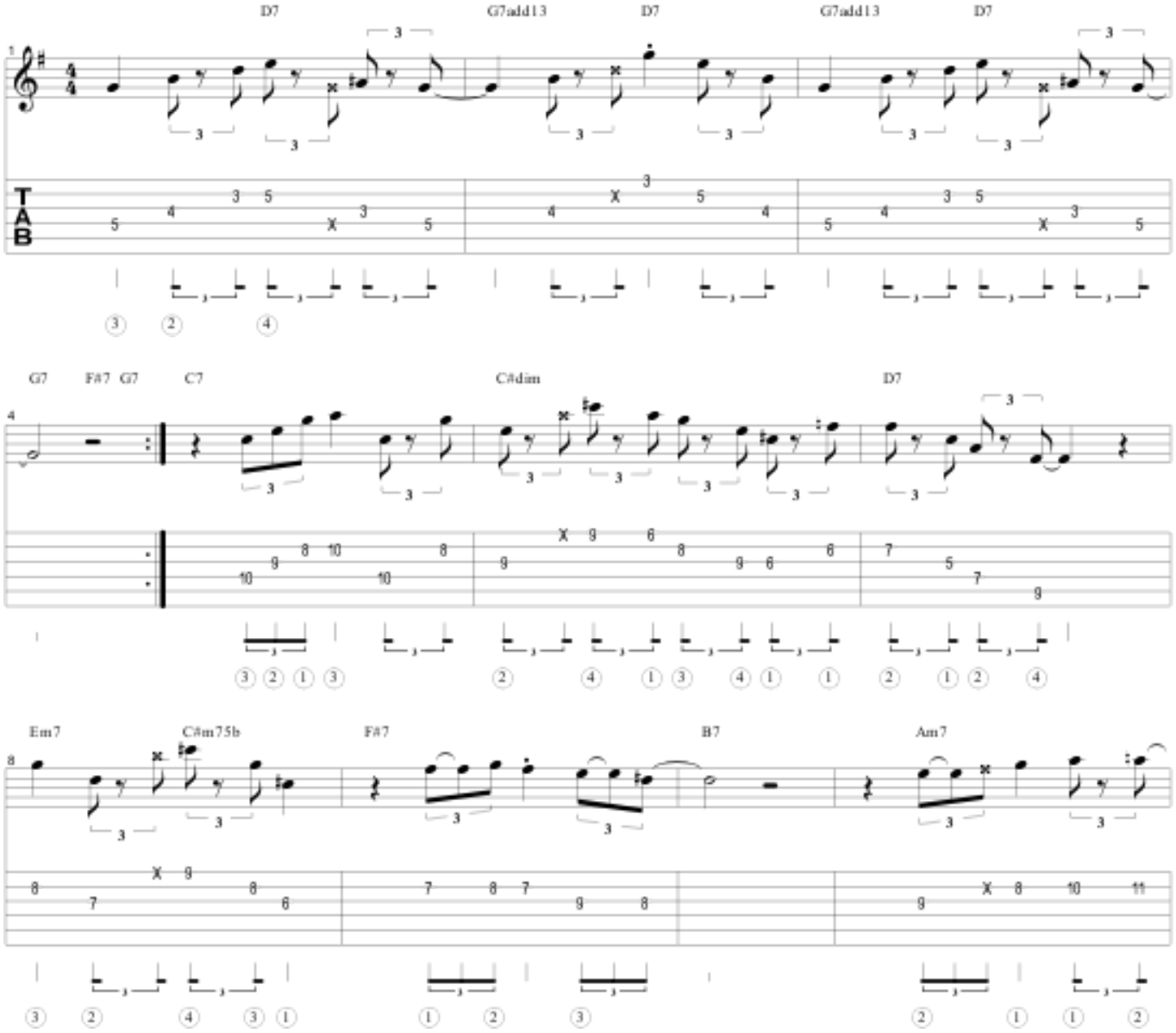
- Octave
- Hammer-on
- Appoggiatura

JAZZ

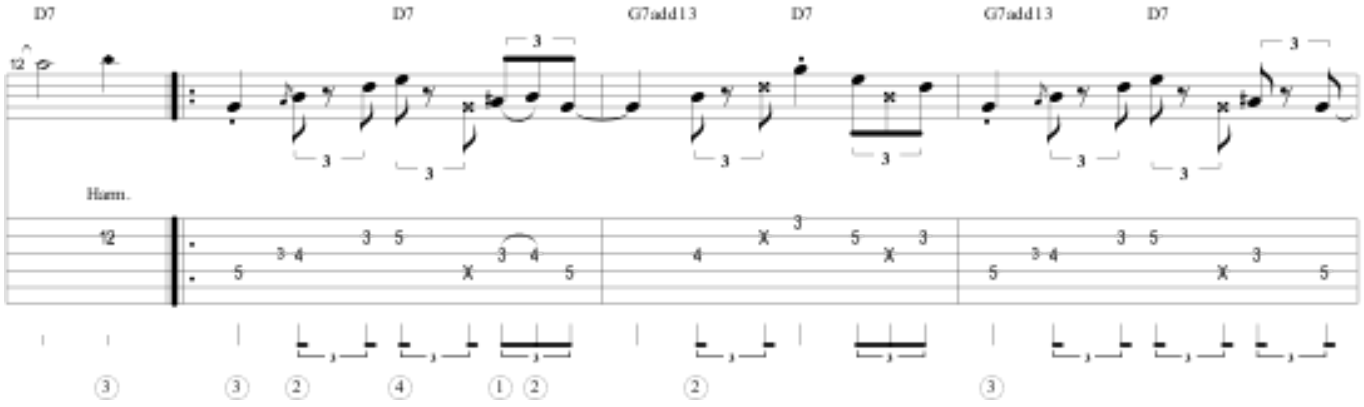
♩ = 80

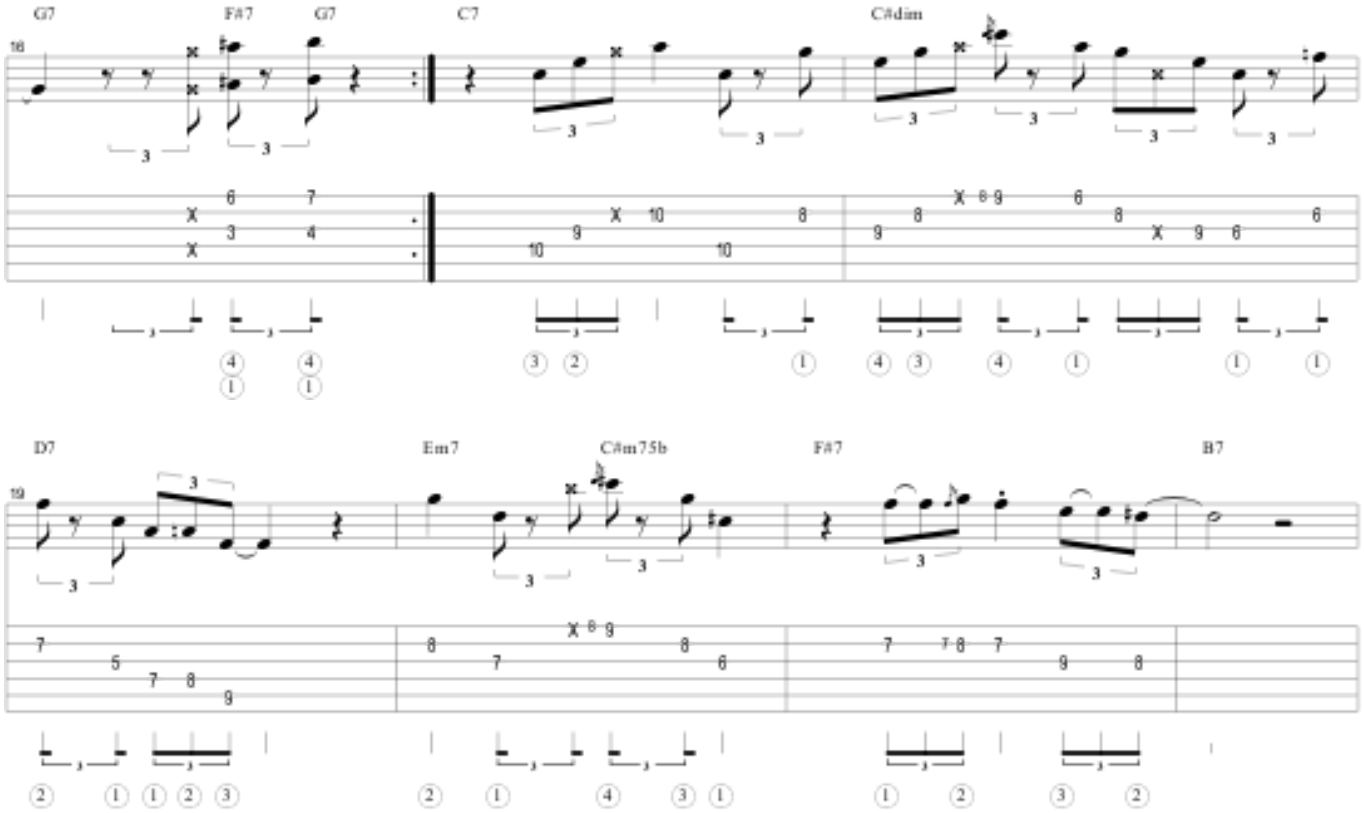
Music by Franck Lopez

Part A

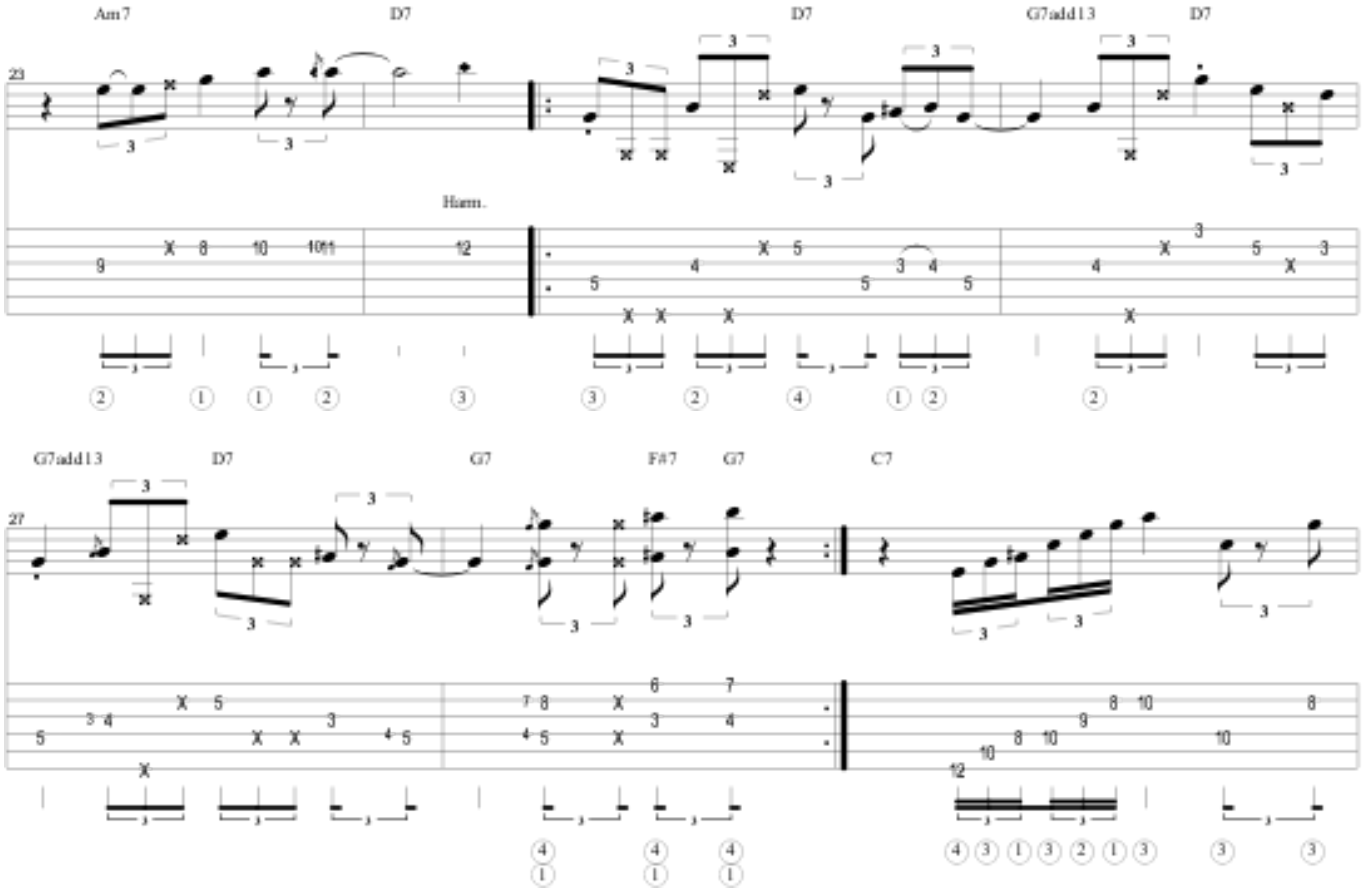


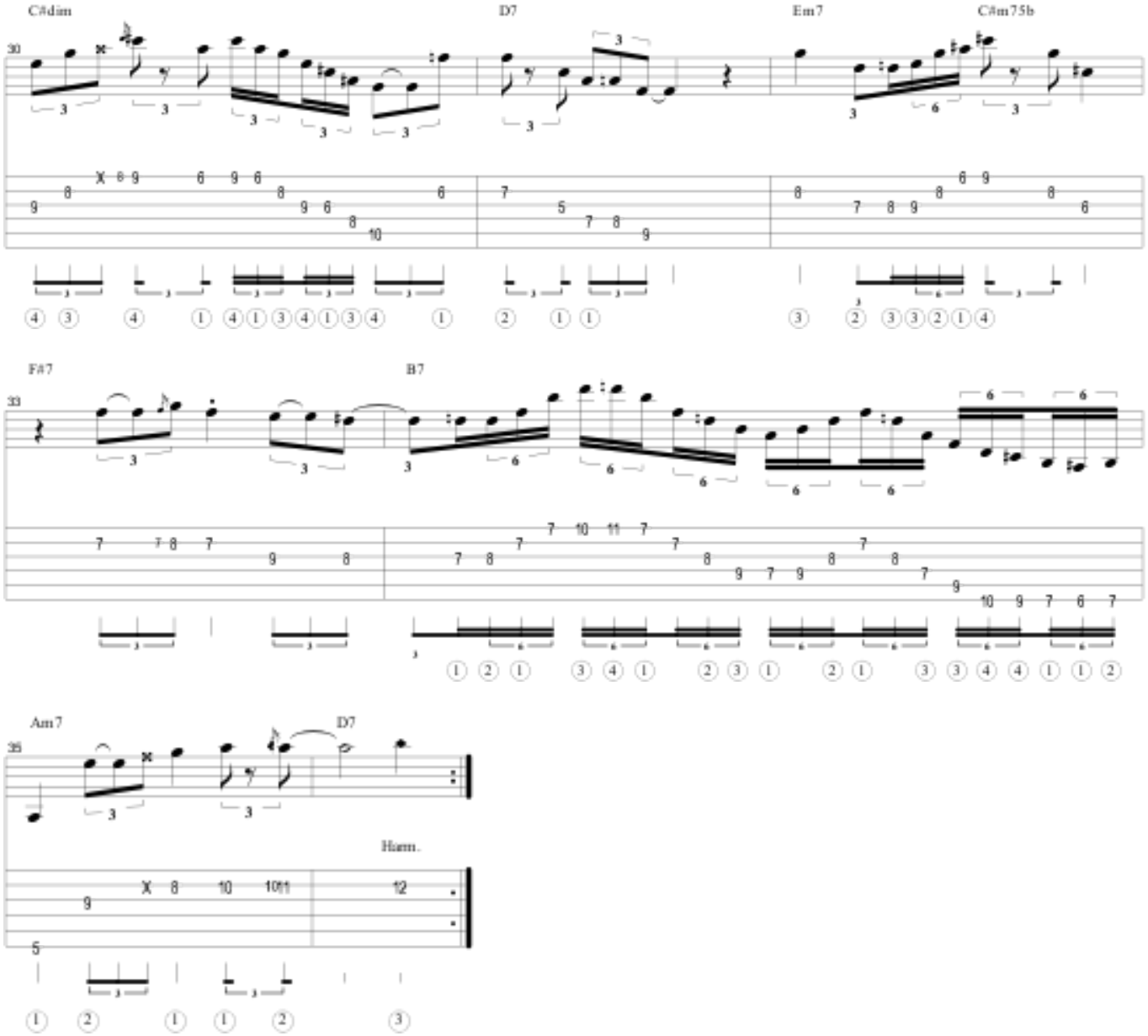
Part B




G7
F#7
G7
C7
C#dim
16
D7
Em7
C#m75b
F#7
B7
19

Part C


Am7
D7
D7
G7add13
D7
23
Hum.
G7add13
D7
G7
F#7
G7
C7
27


C#dim
D7
Em7
C#m75b
30
F#7
B7
33
Am7
D7
35
Harm.

Determining the key

Elements to look at:

- The key signature
- The relative minor
- The final chord

The signature here bears only one sharp (F#) – this is therefore in the key of G.

At this point in the tonal analysis, we can deduce the relative minor key for this score only from the final chord. That chord is a D7; and we know that the relative key of G (signature) is Em.

This score cannot be in the key of Em, as the ending chord does not match it.

Since D7, however, is the dominant note in the G scale, we can conclude that this score is indeed in the key of G.

Determining the scales

The G scale, then, would seem to be the most appropriate one to play here; but in order to get a jazz atmosphere, the first part of the theme is written on a Gm blues scale.

In the second part, the piece gets its jazz color by decomposing the structure of each chord.

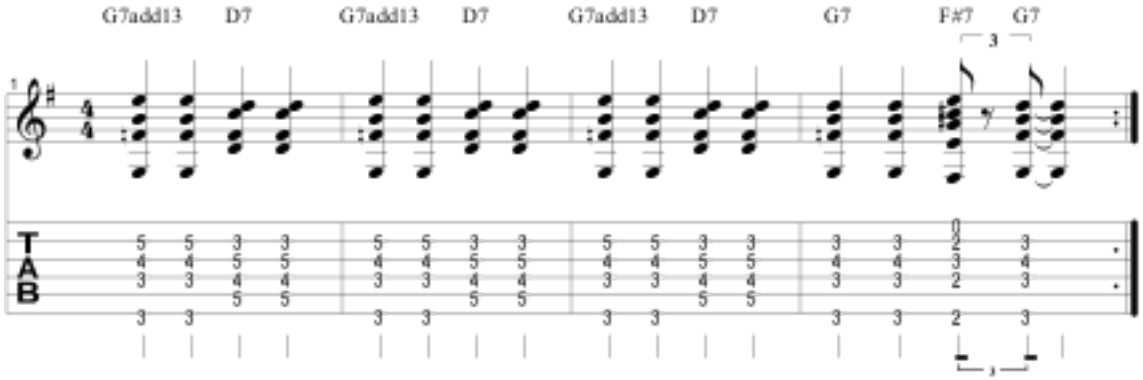
Determining the chords

- Harmonization of the scale (see Chapter “Chords”):

  G Am Bm C D Em F#m7/5b

Exercises

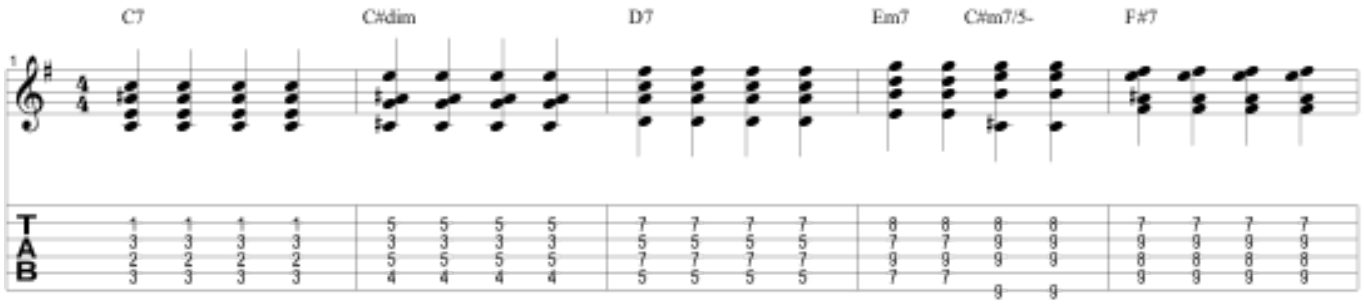
Exercise 1

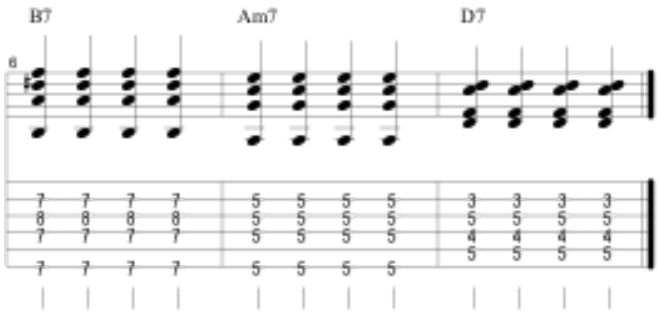


The rhythm for part A is fairly simple. This is meant to help you practice chord changes. Mind the particular pattern in the 4th bar.

The triplet is a rhythmic pattern that uses three notes of the same time length in one beat. Here, the second note in the triplet is replaced by an eighth rest (a triplet eighth).

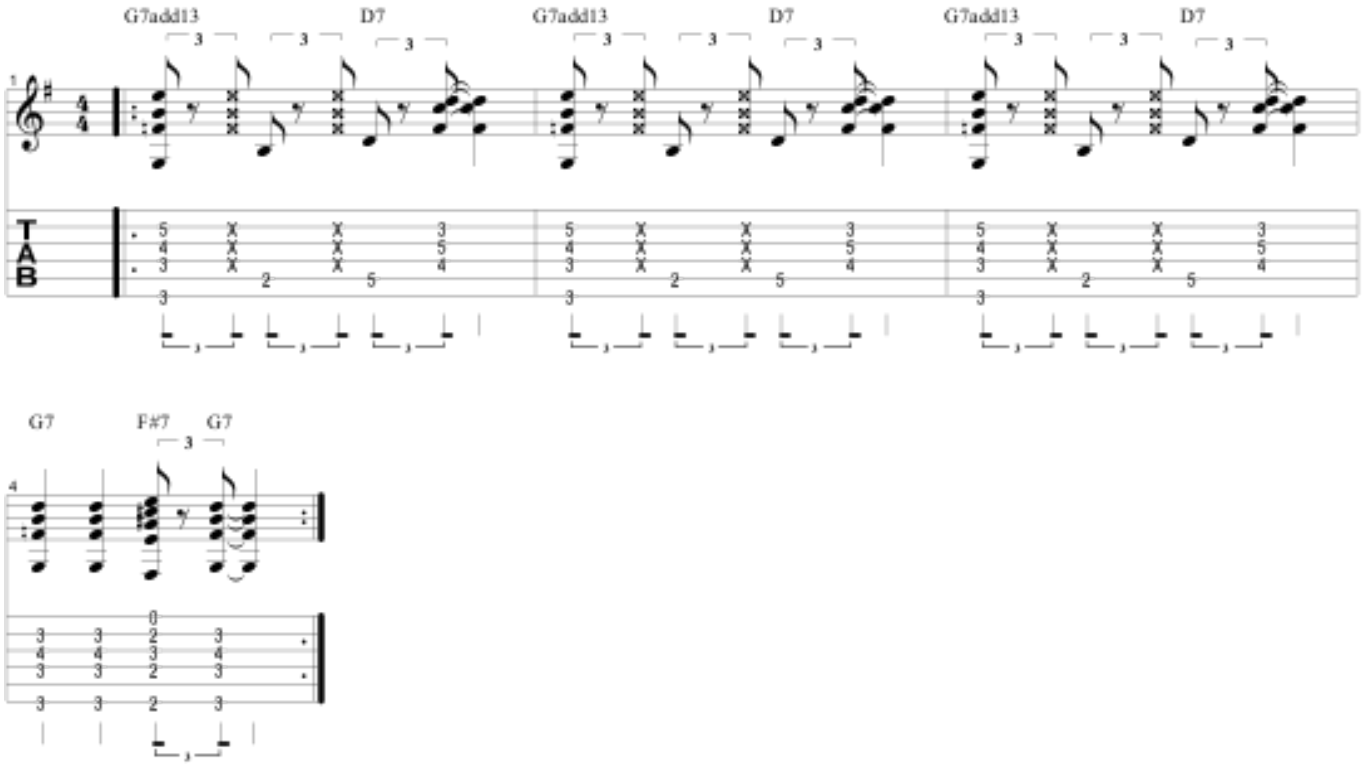
Exercise 2





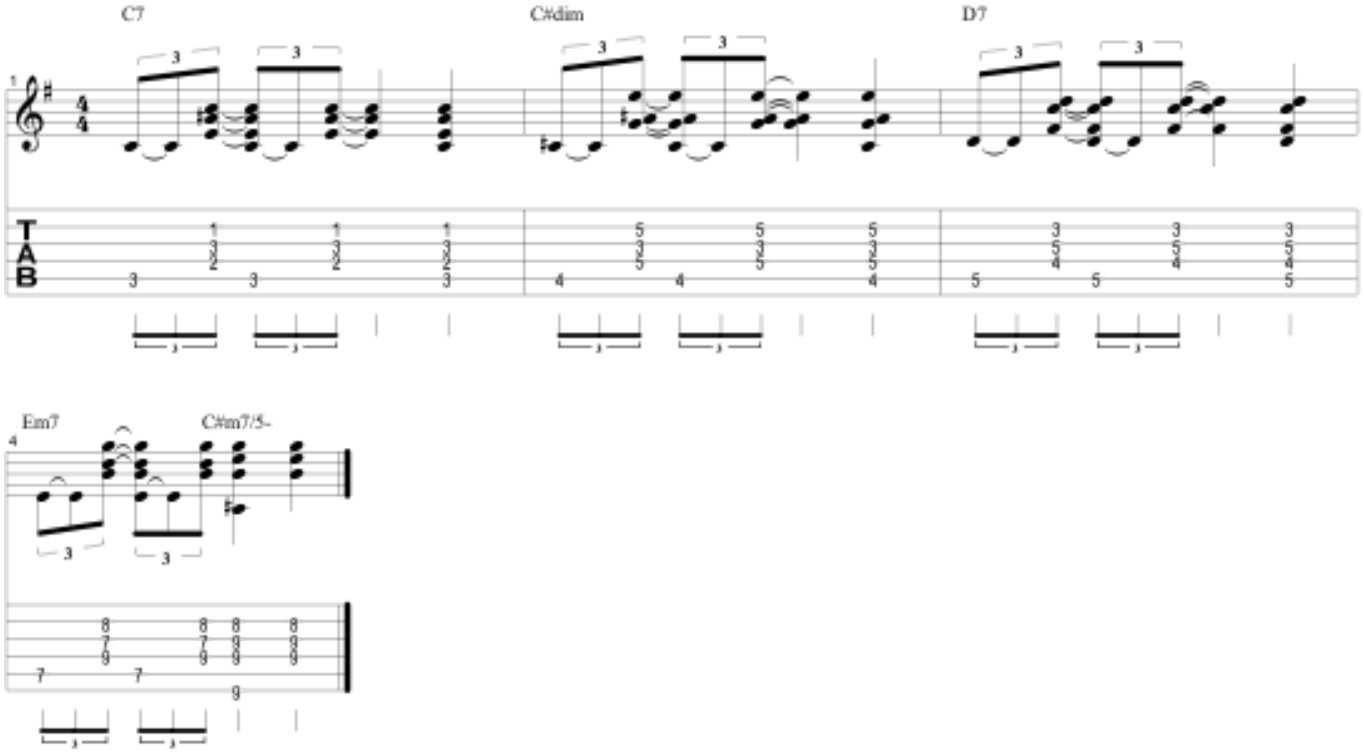
This exercise is the same as before, with a series of successive chords. Work on neat position changes, giving only downstrokes with your pick.

Exercise 3



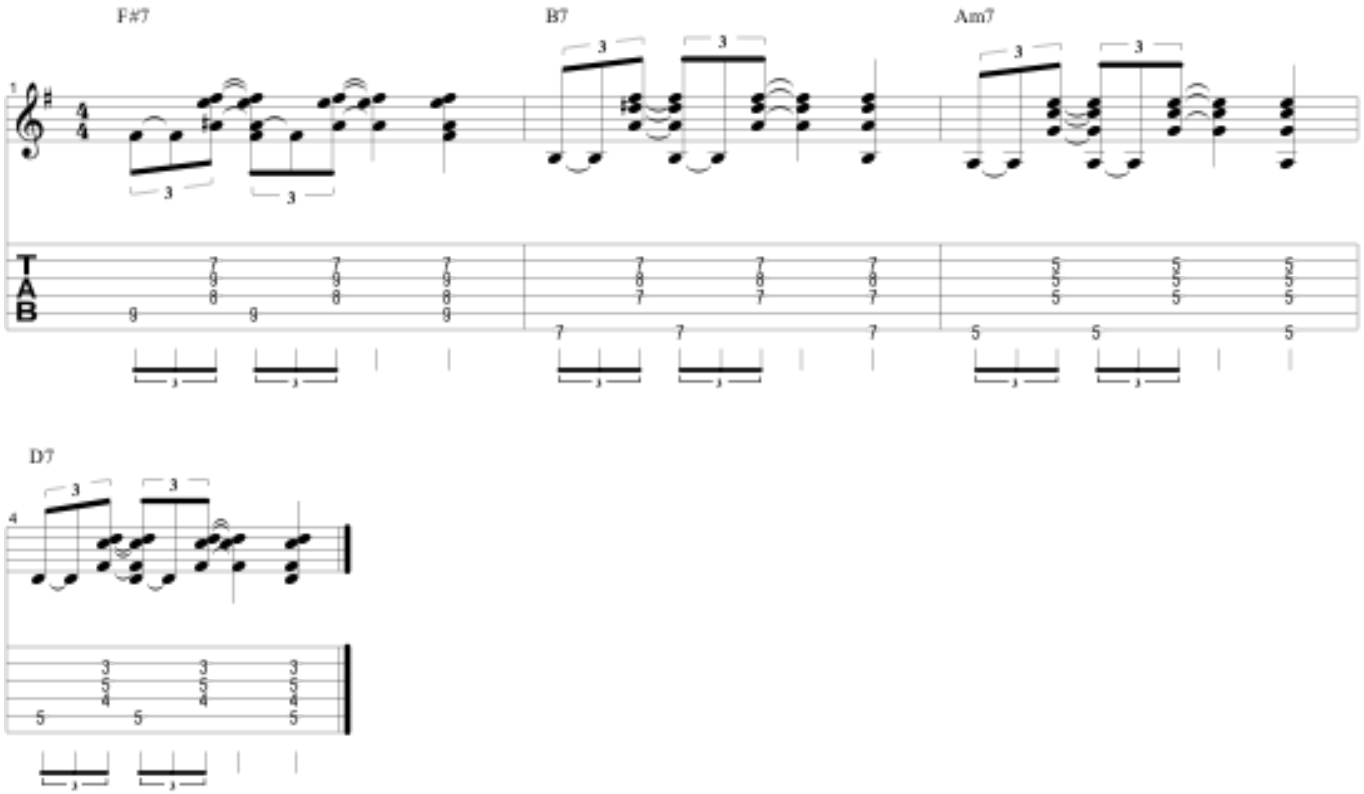
This is the first exercise from part B. The rhythm is less rigid: you must play the notes only on the first beat, and then play only eighth rests or muted notes. Before you grab your guitar, take your time to carefully read the rhythm as is written, and to visualize exactly when you are to play the notes. It is essential to be able to build on solid theoretical grounds.

Exercise 4



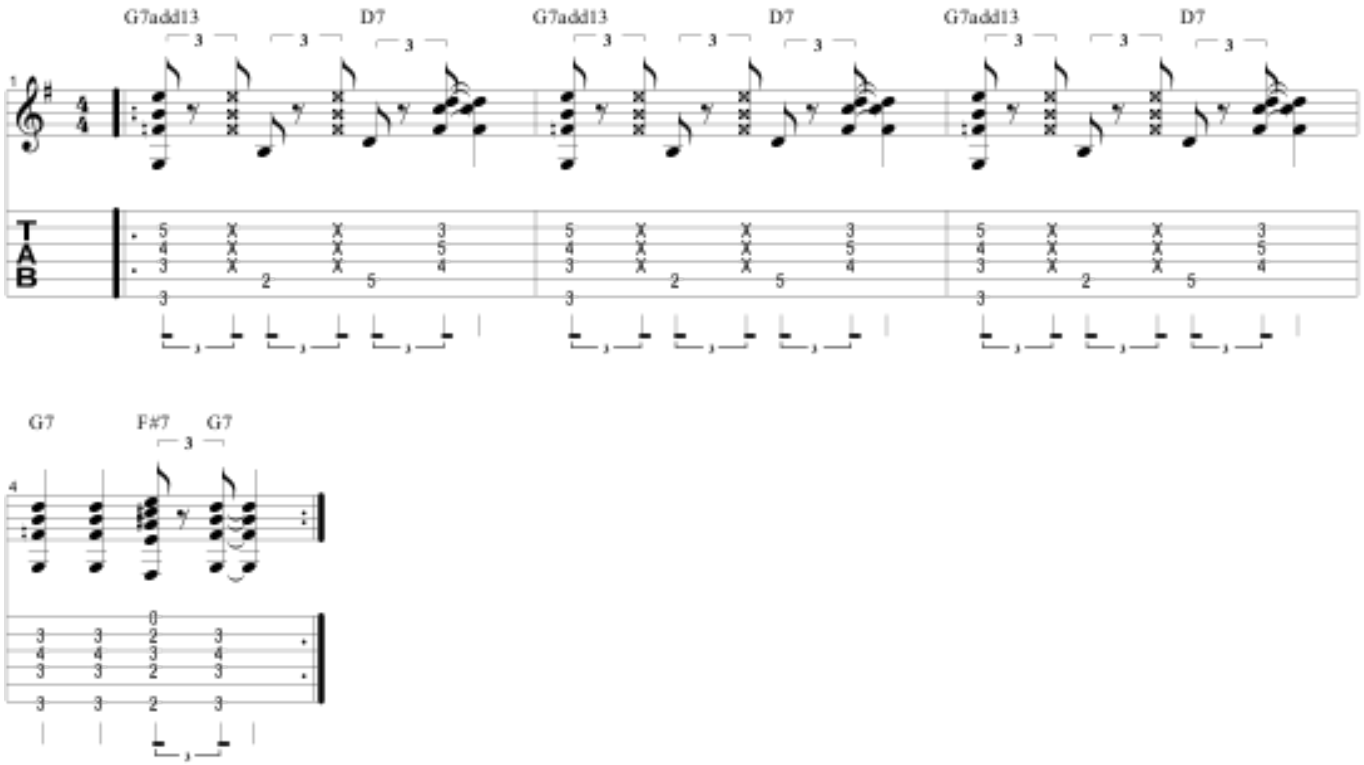
Do not confuse tied notes and eighth rests. Whenever two identical notes are tied, you need to play the first one in the pair – but adding to its duration the length of the second note, which you do not attack. An eighth rest, on the other hand, replaces a note.

Exercise 5



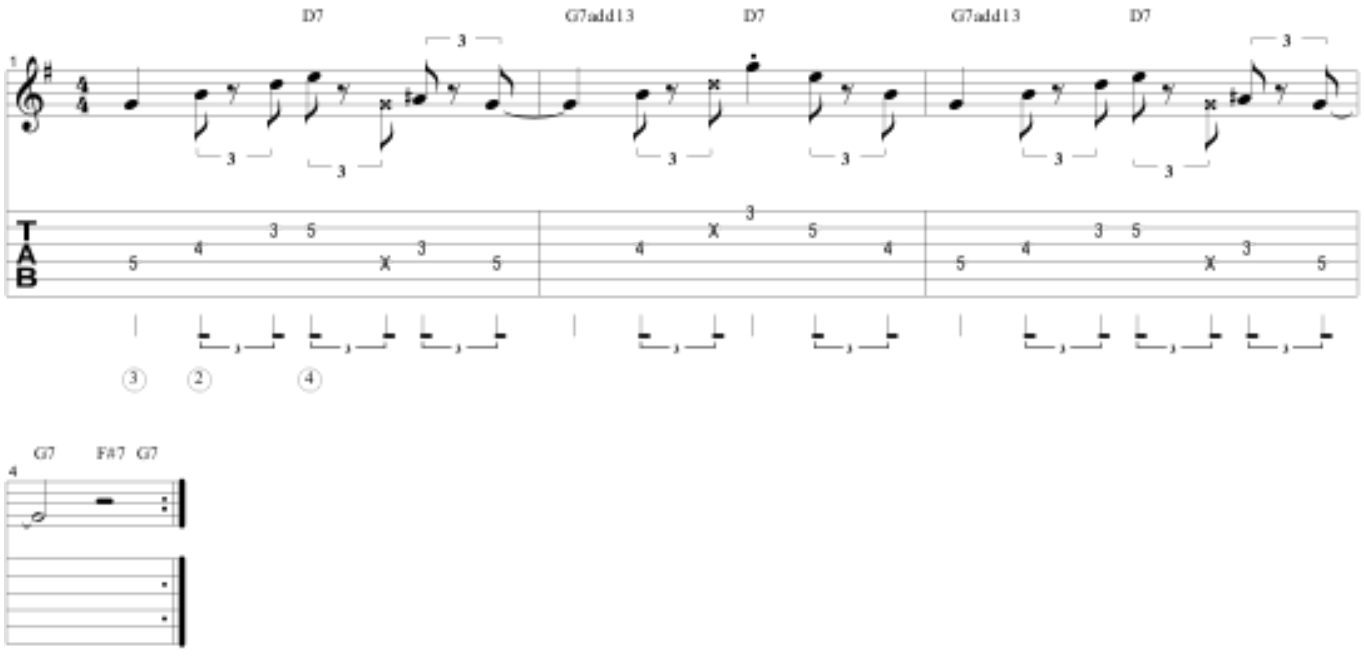
As for muted notes, keep the chord position, and slightly lift fingers. To play the B note (second fret, fifth string) on the second beat, don't change position; only your index finger needs to be moving. Mind the rhythm and tied notes.

Exercise 6



This is the most complex rhythmic pattern of the score. You need to change the chord's bass note while maintaining the high notes. Practice this exercise on a reasonably low tempo, and then increase the speed progressively as you improve. The ties are very important; also pay attention to the rests.

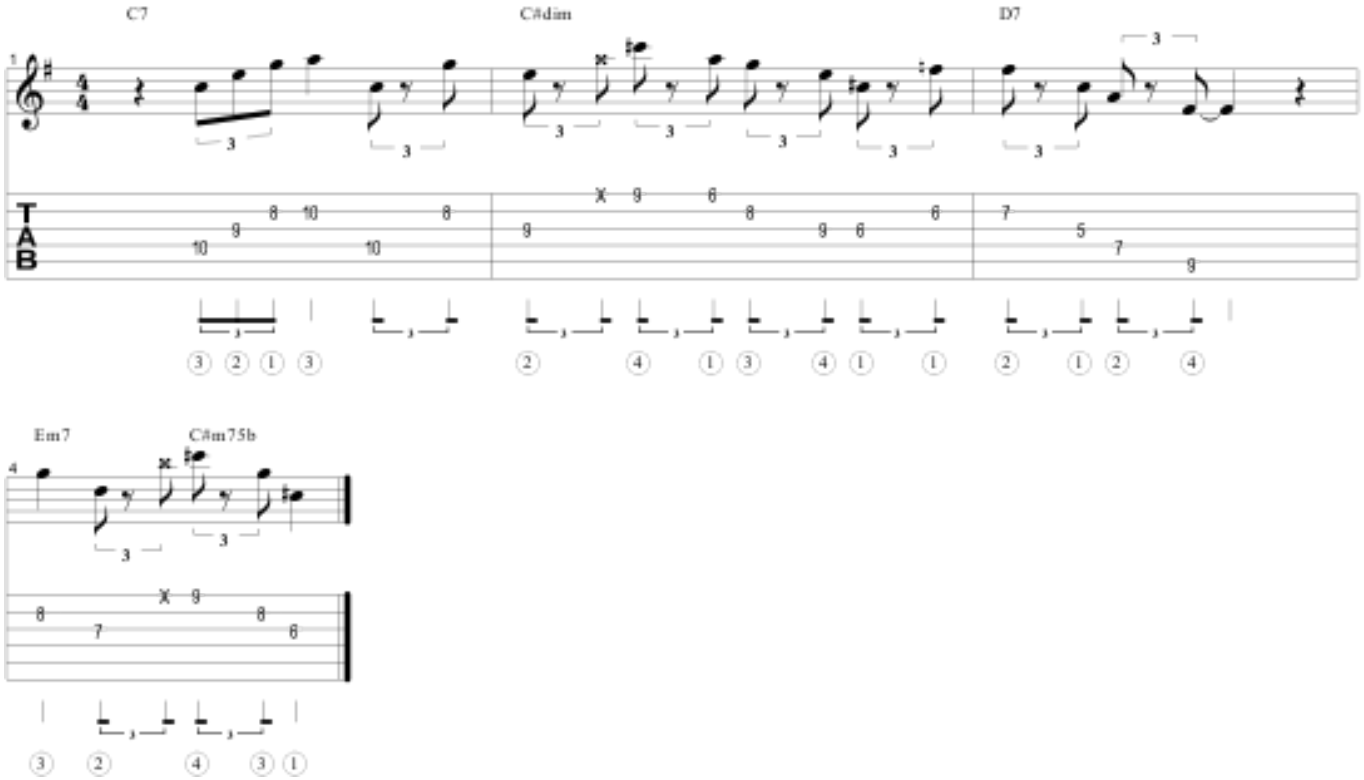
Exercise 7



This is the main theme of the piece.
Follow the fingering indications below the score. This theme is written in the Gm blues scale, while the chord is G Major. That is a musical peculiarity: a minor theme on major chords.

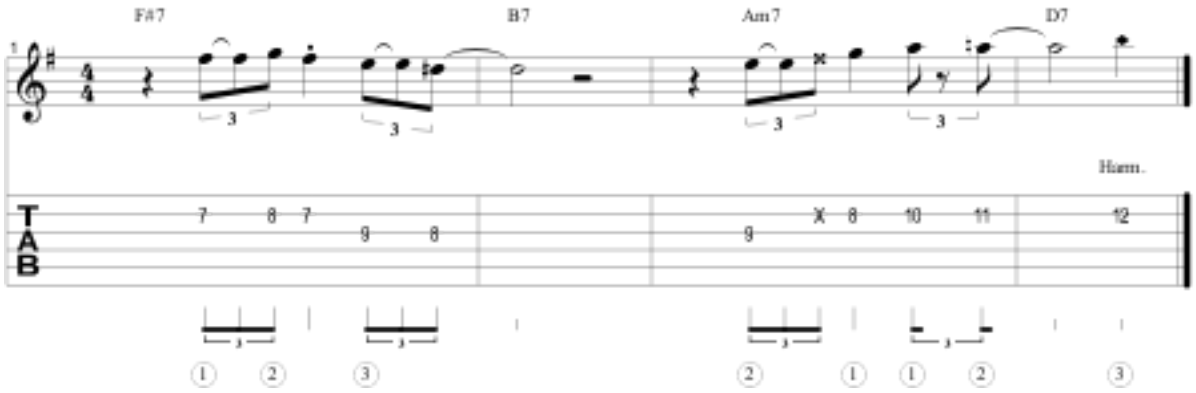
What you get here is a jazzy swing feel, but you need to mind the muted notes and rhythm. On the third beat, second bar, you will find a staccato note, which means that it has a shorter duration than the note actually written on the score. The attack is more abrupt.

Exercise 8



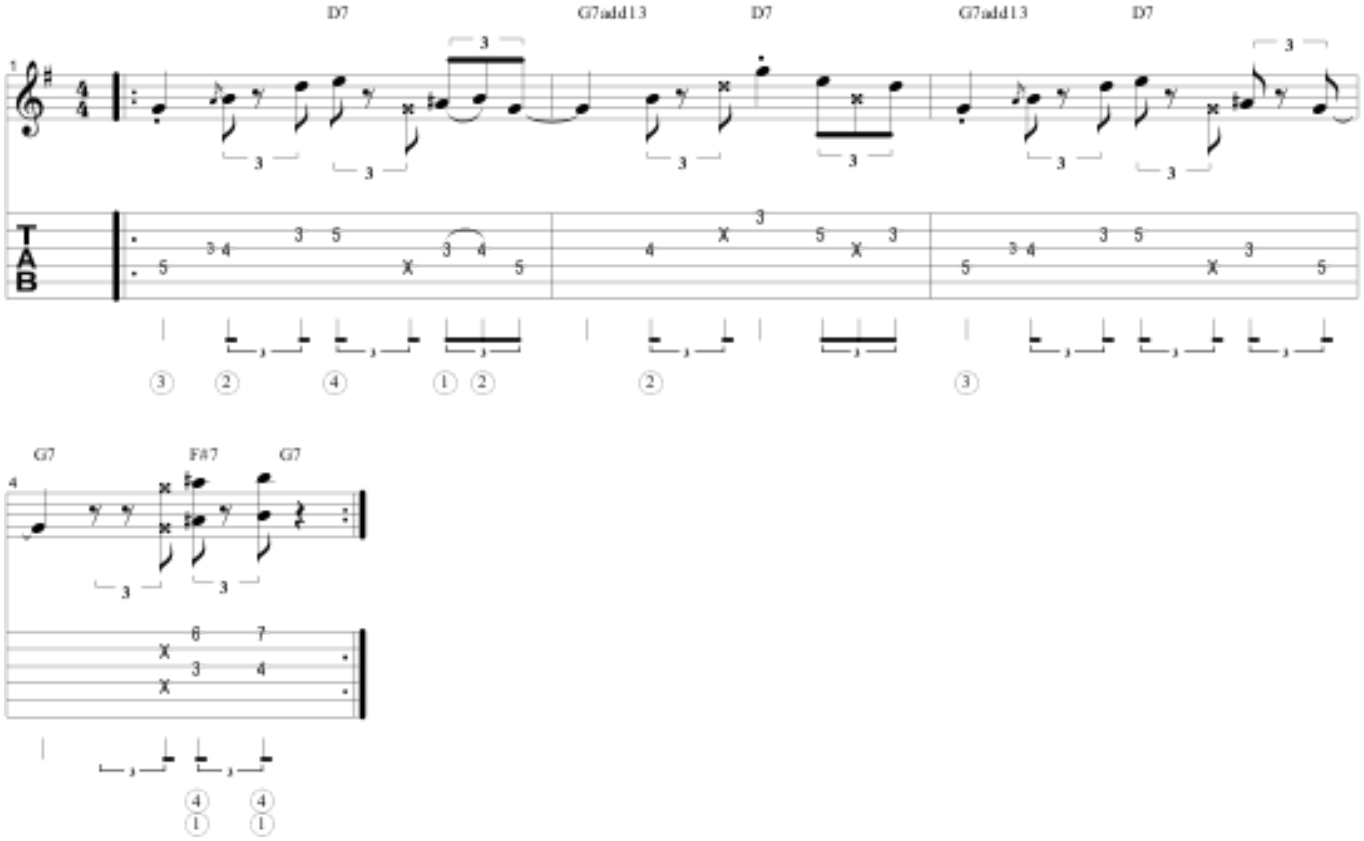
The notes here are in harmony with the succession of chords. It is important that you understand the theory of rhythm to practice this exercise properly. Use the right fingering.

Exercise 9



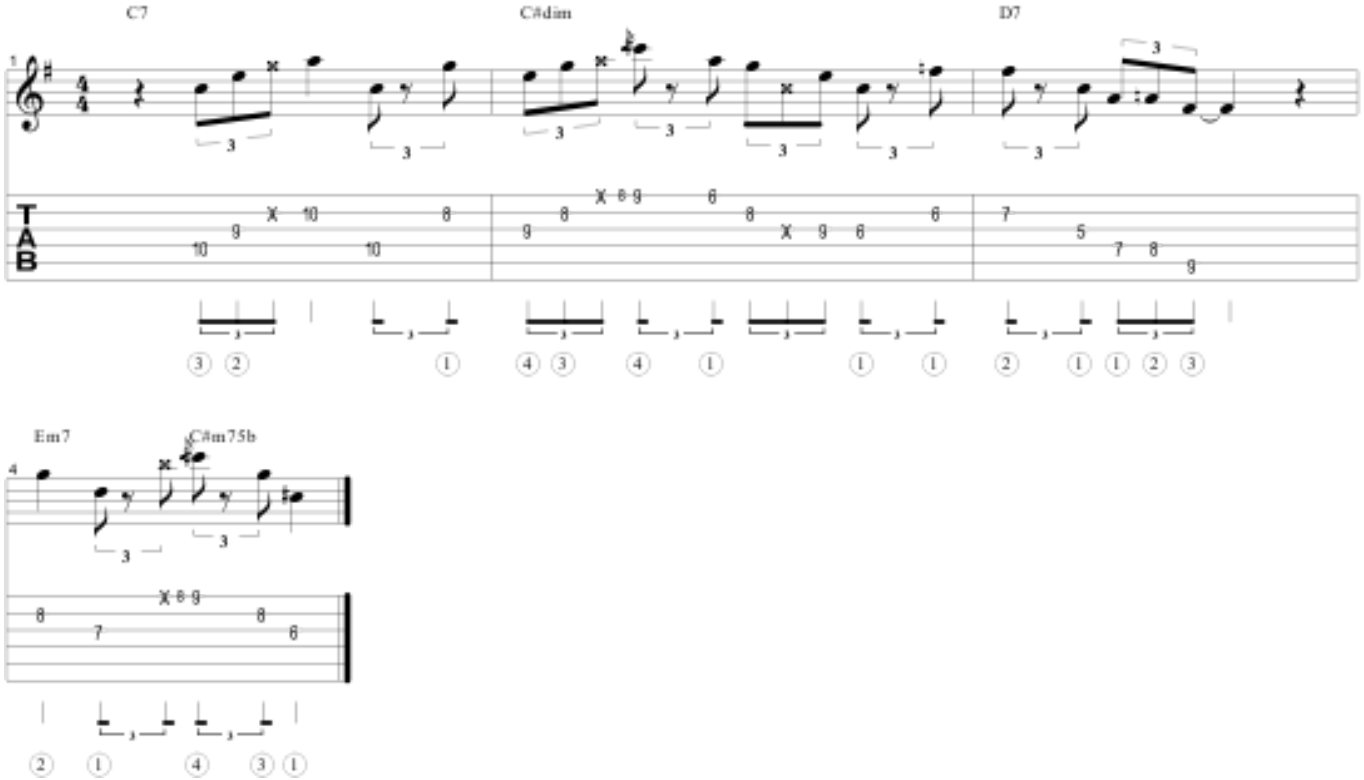
Mind the staccato note on the third beat. Rhythmic rigor is of the essence. The second bar includes a half note, and it is important that this note be played as it is written: over two beats. Such rigorous practice will enable you to progress faster and get better results.

Exercise 10



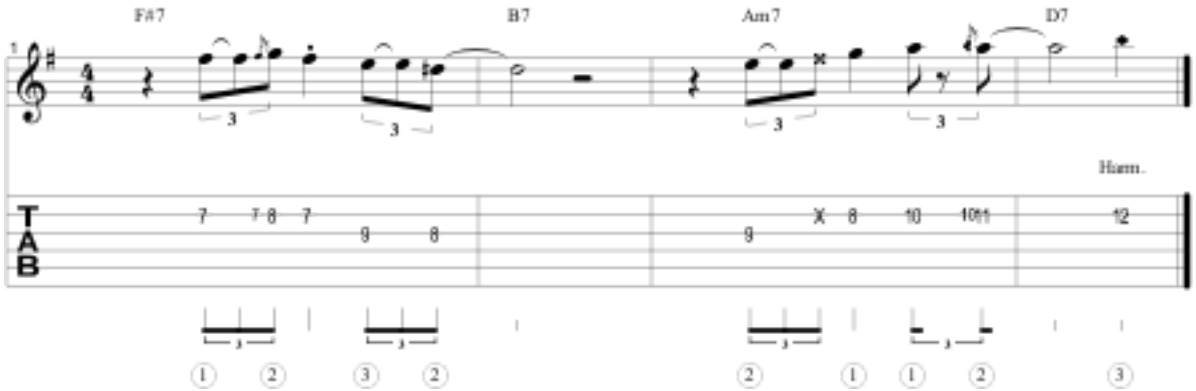
On the second beat, the written note appears preceded by another note in smaller type. That is an grace note. Each of these notes is played using a different finger. Here use your index for the smaller starting note (grace note) and your middle finger for the following note. Those two notes being tied, attack the first one and then the second one very fast by hitting it with your middle finger. This is not an easy technique, but with a little practice it will become very useful to you. Mind the tied notes and the rhythm.

Exercise 11



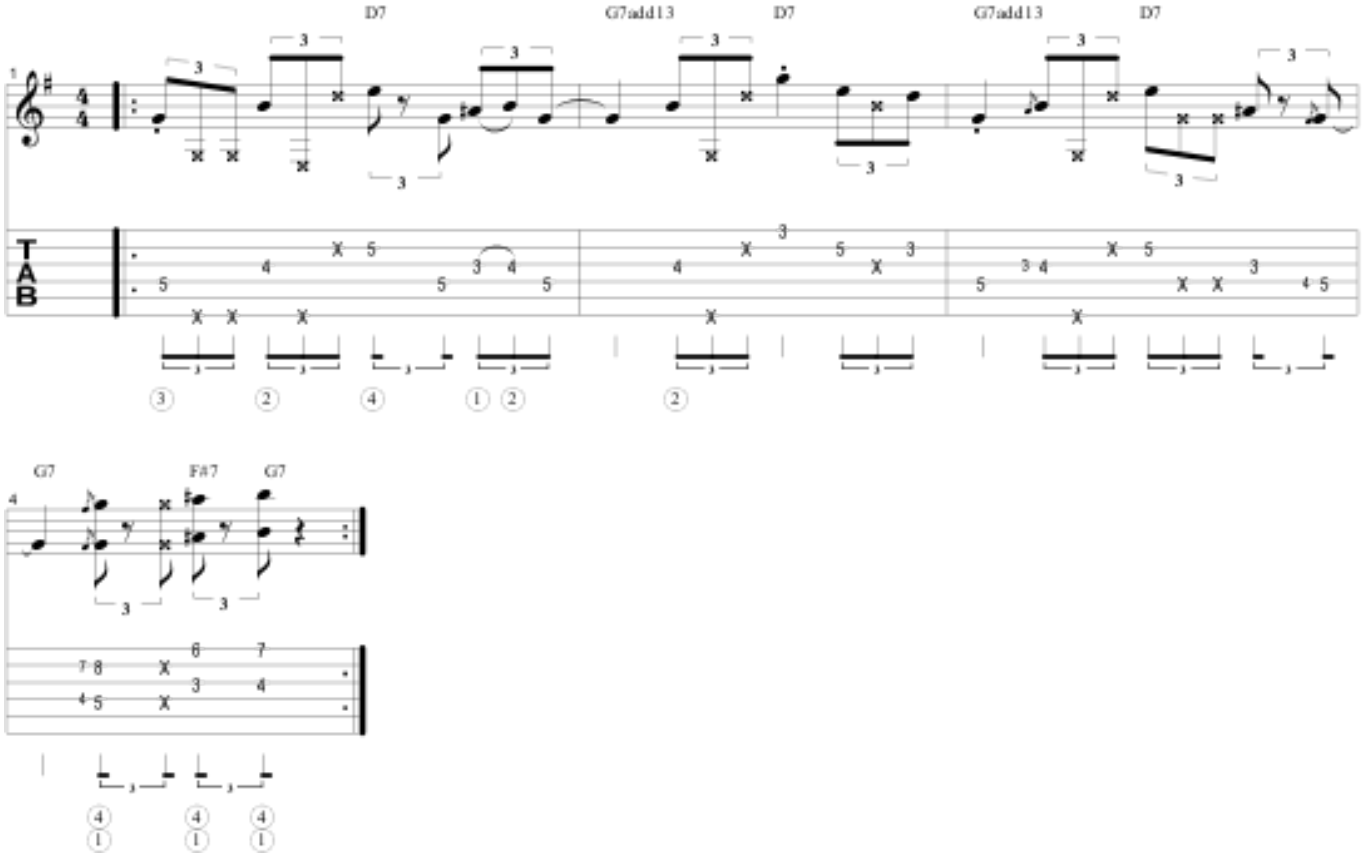
To play this exercise correctly, proper fingering is vital, especially in the third bar. You should switch positions without making extra noises, and as neatly as possible. Here the appoggiatura ought to be played with the ring and little fingers of your left hand. Those are the two weakest fingers on the left hand, and you should exercise them regularly to obtain good results.

Exercise 12



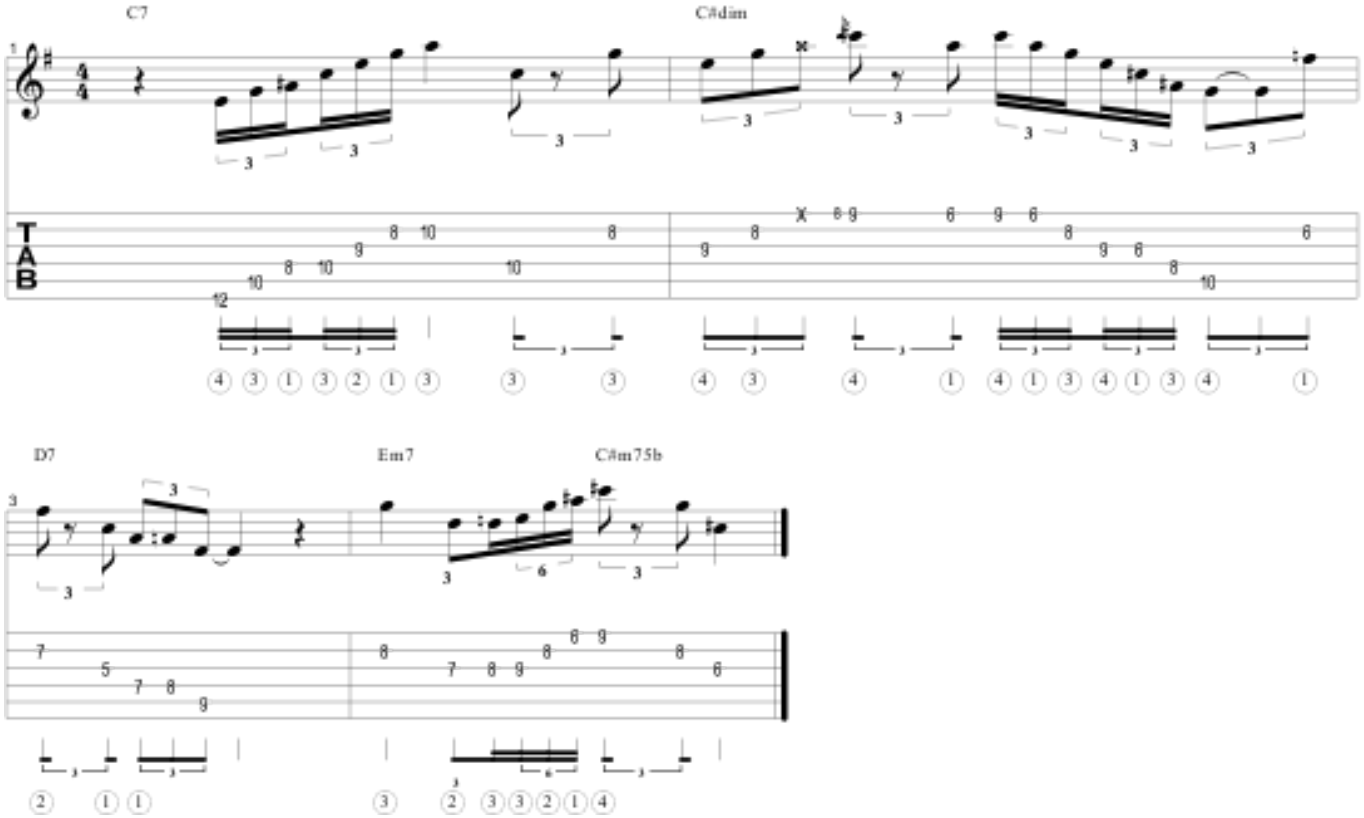
Once again, the difficulty lies in the grace note. You will achieve a less conventional kind of phrasing after you have mastered this technique. Just like sliding or hammering-on, this is one of the techniques which contribute to the elegance of a playing style, and it cannot be ignored.

Exercise 13



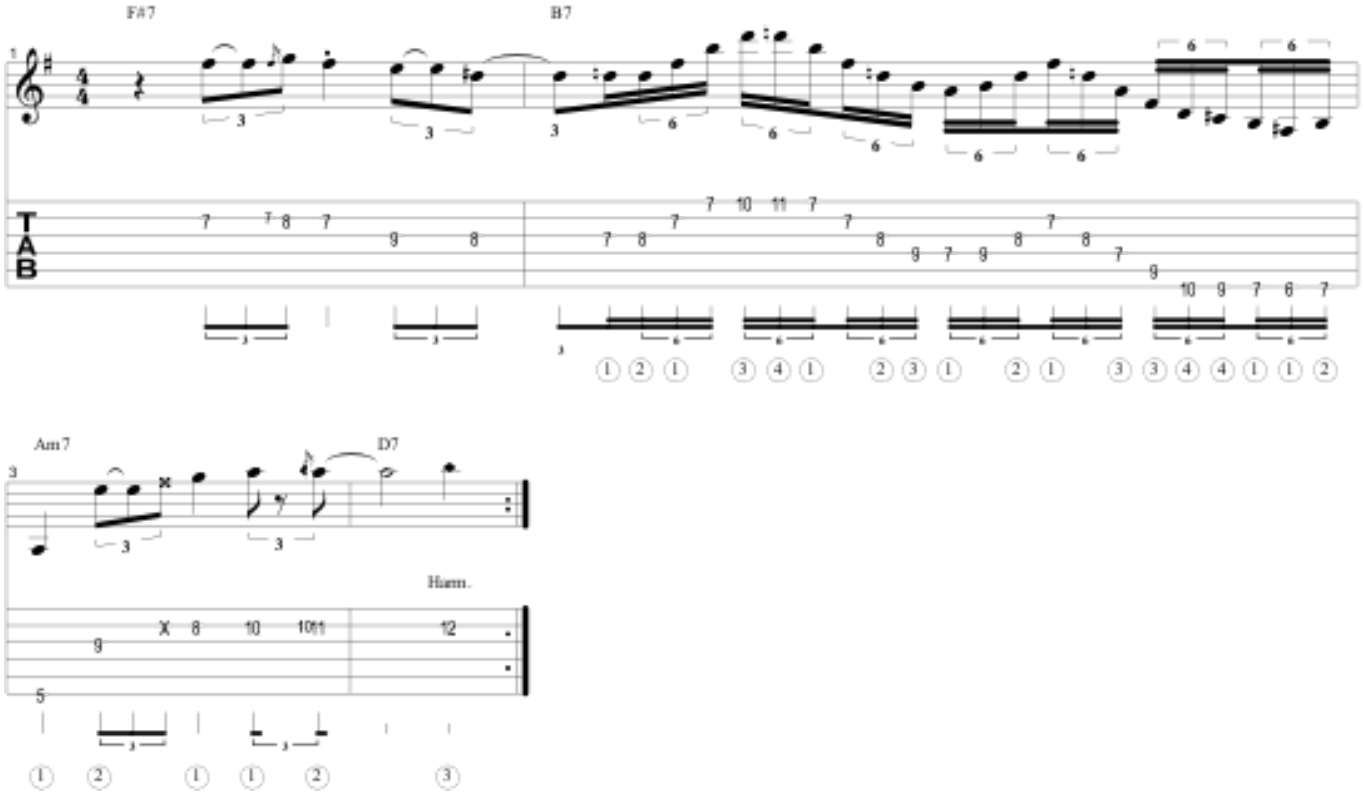
This is the most difficult part of the theme. The muted notes give impetus to the musical phrase, but you will also have to skip strings. Work on each problem individually, beat by beat. Increase tempo when you are satisfied with your progression. Then play all the beats through.

Exercise 14



Since there are several problems here, it is advisable to practice methodically. Isolate each difficulty and work on it individually. Play with a metronome, slower than the score's real pace (tempo), and then increase speed depending on what you have achieved.

Exercise 15



Apply our working advice to this long musical phrase. Practice slowly, beat after beat, then increasing speed depending on what you have achieved.

Blues

14 Studies

The blues appeared in the South of the United States in the early 1920s.

The style has greatly evolved since then, to the point where it has become absolutely central to the guitar universe.

The blues style today is very wide. It constitutes an inexhaustible source of information, of playing techniques, and of inspiration.

The blues piece we present you here is not conventional; it reflects the genre as it was played in the 1980s.

Content

This piece will appear in three successive versions (A, B, and C), each comprising a specific theme and rhythmic pattern.

Rhythmic patterns

- 12/8 time signature
- Dotted quarter notes
- Eighth notes
- Sixteenth notes
- Thirty-second notes

Particular technical points

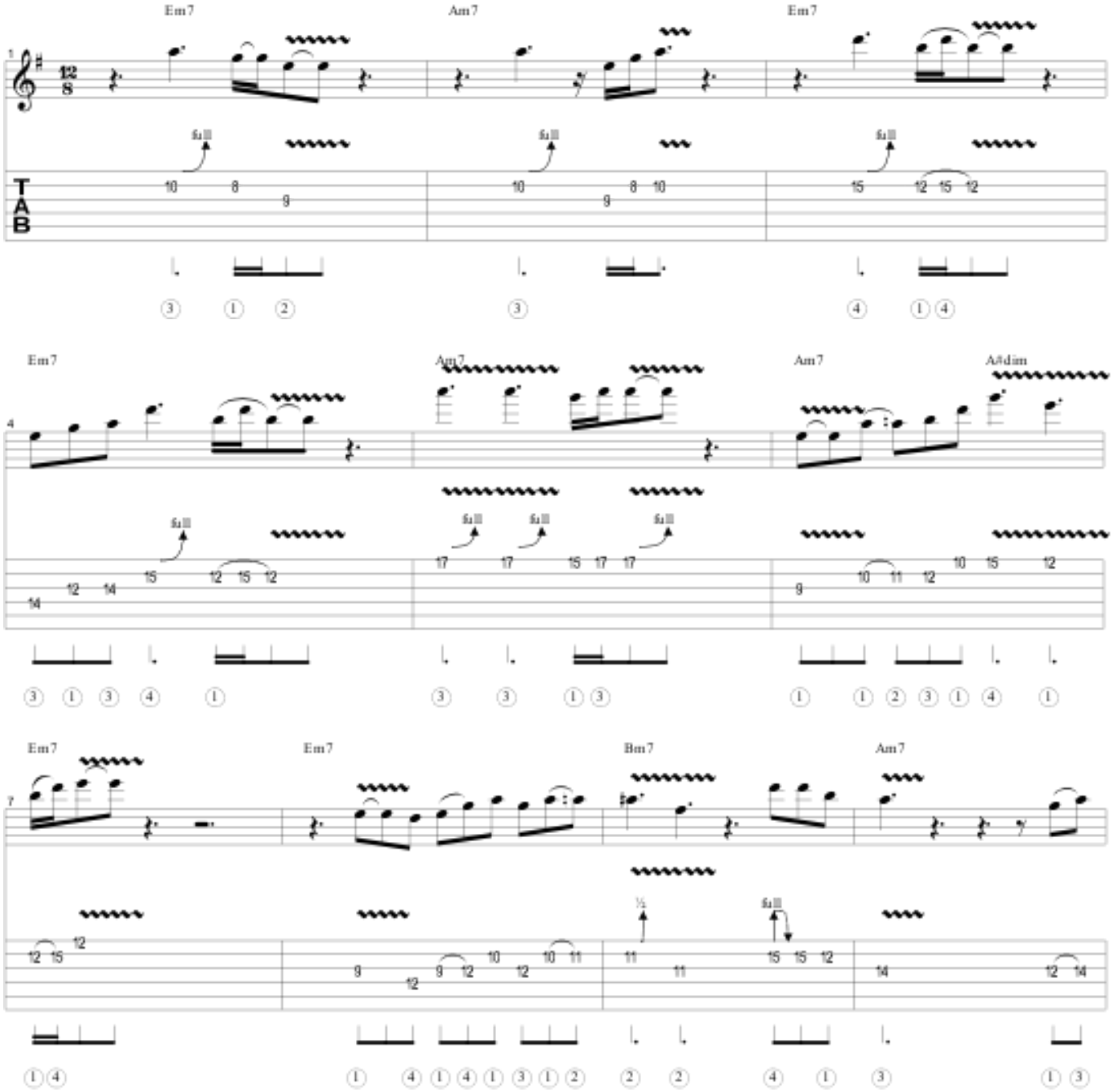
- Bend
- Hammer-on
- Pull-off
- Vibrato

BLUES

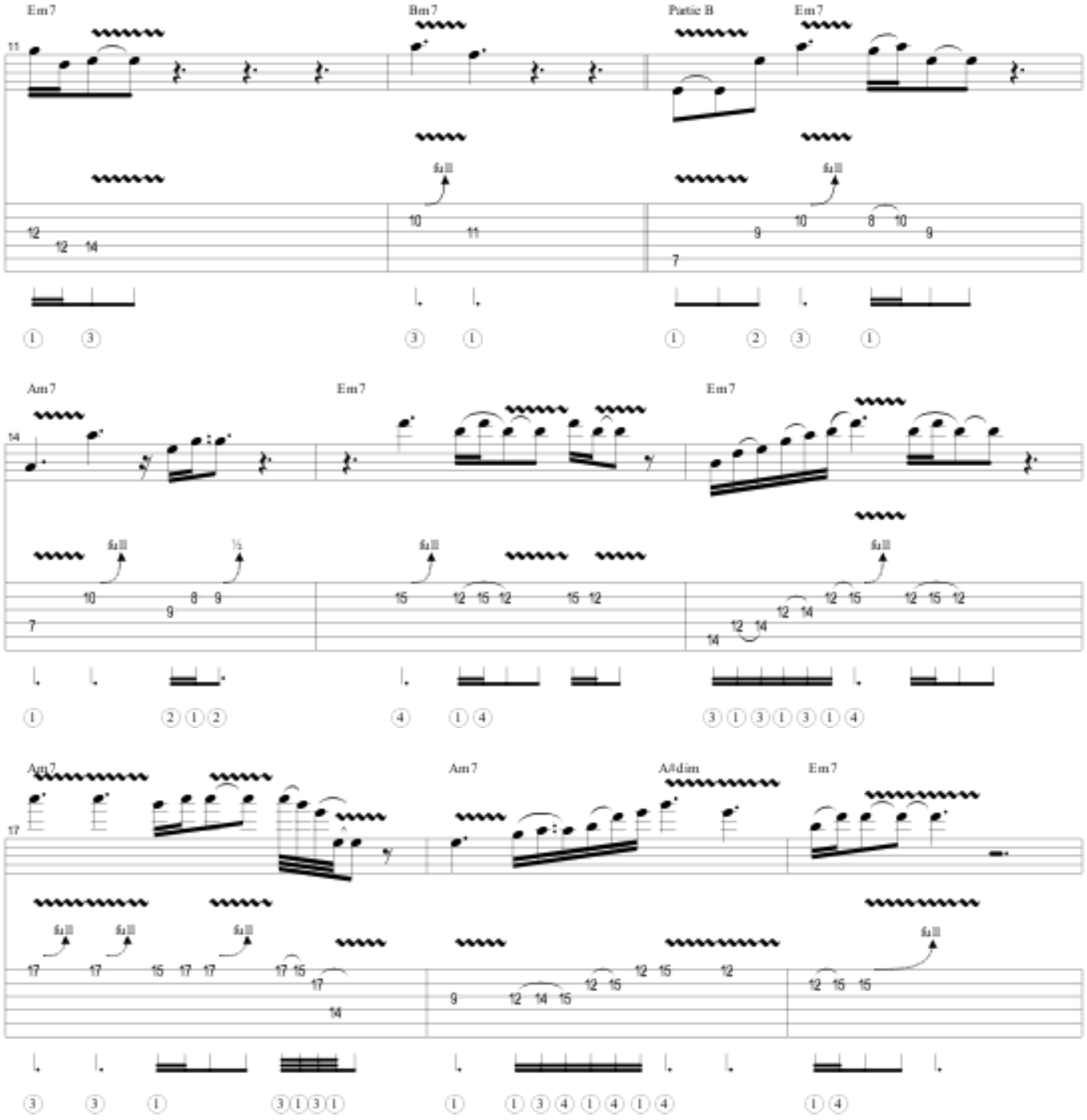
♩ = 70

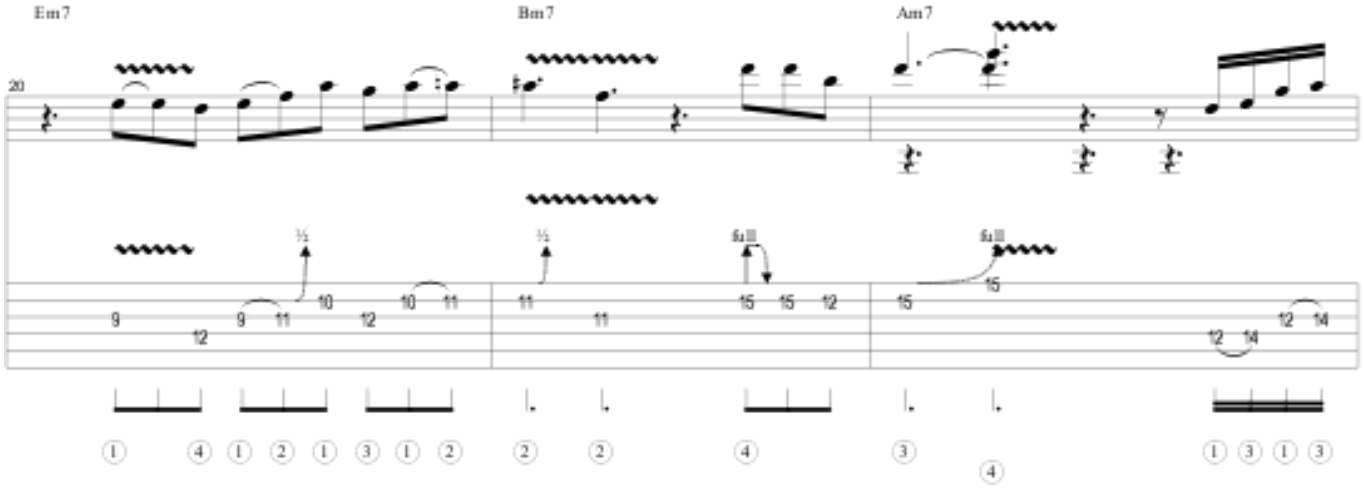
Music by Franck Lopez

Part A

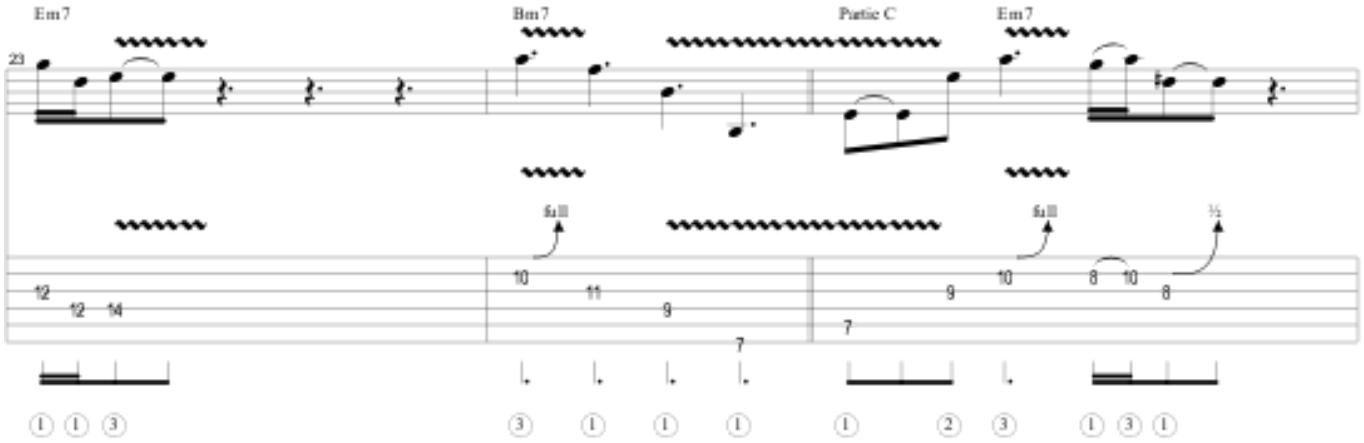


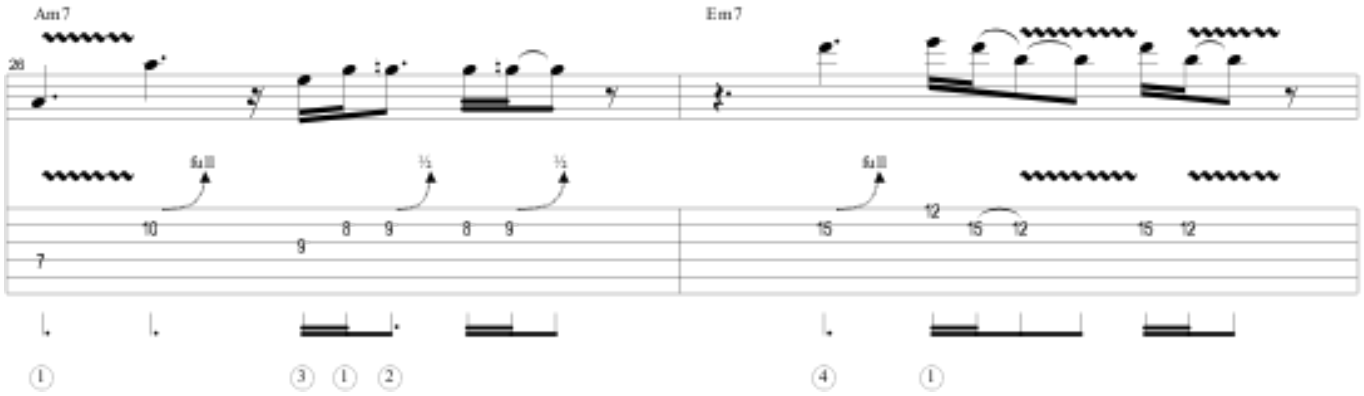
Part B

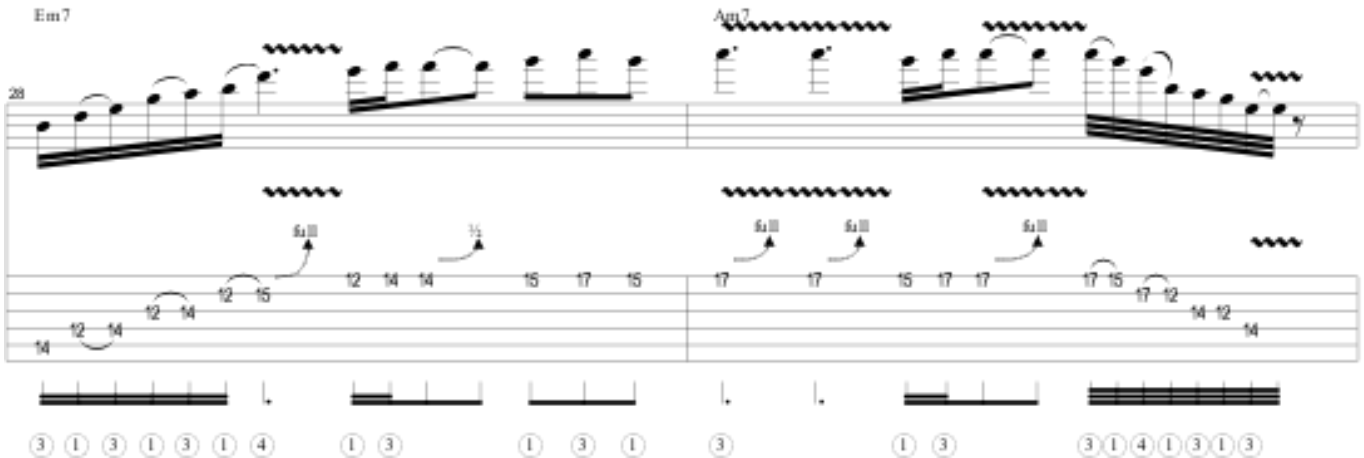

Em7
Bm7
Partie B
Em7
11
full
12
12 14
10
11
9
10
8 10
9
7
Am7
Em7
Em7
14
full
½
10
8 9
9
7
15
12 15 12
15 12
12 14
12 15
12 15 12
14
Am7
Am7
A#dim
Em7
17
full
17
17
15 17 17
17 15
17
14
9
12 14 15
12 15
12 15
12
12 15 15

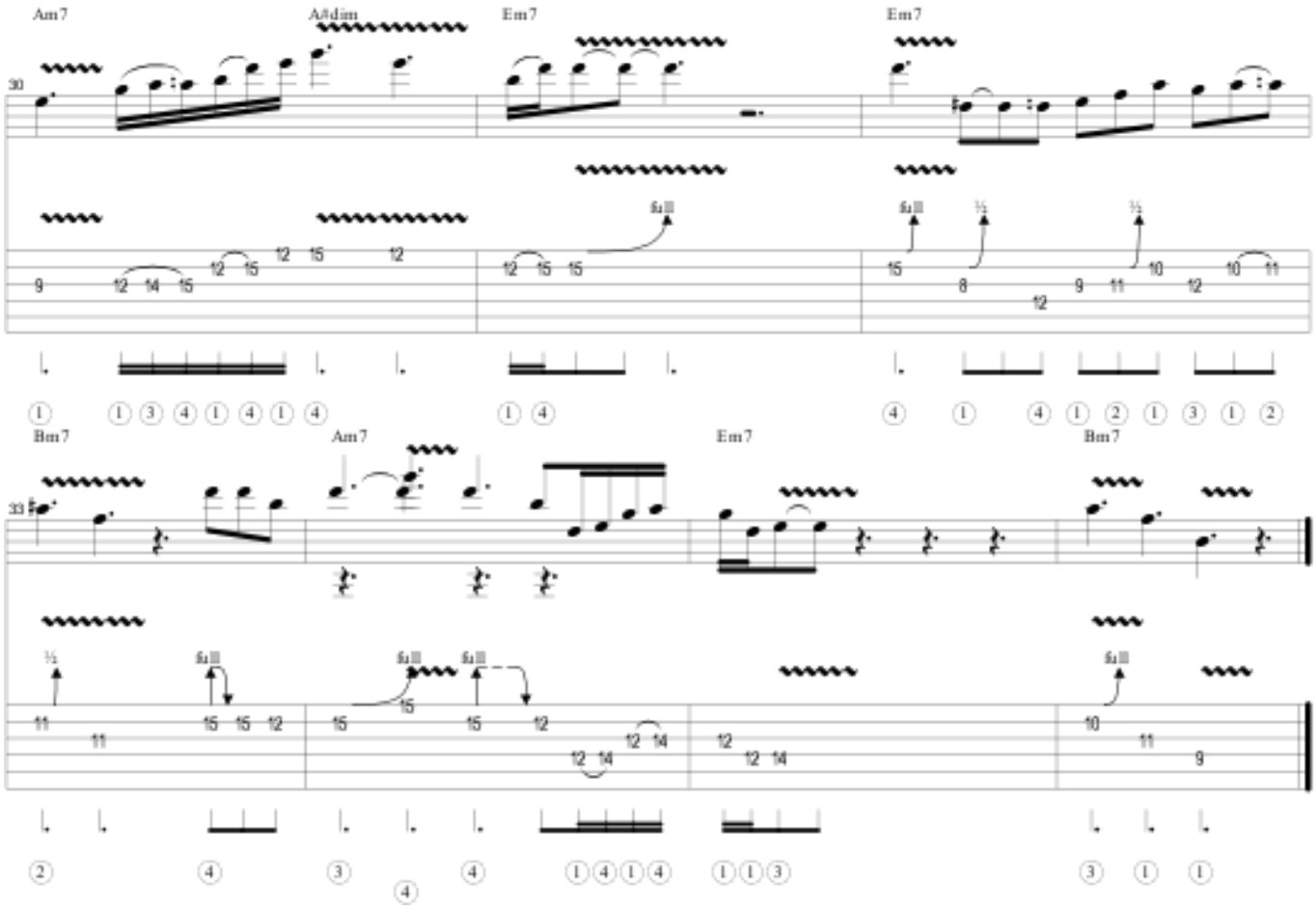

Em7
Bm7
Am7
20
full
1/2

Part C


Em7
Bm7
Partie C
Em7
23
full
1/2


Am7
Em7
26
full
1/2


Em7
Am7
28
full
1/2



Determining the key

Elements to look at

- The key signature
- The relative minor
- The final chord

Since the key signature bears only one sharp (F#), we are led to believe that the piece is the key of G.

The final chord – Bm7 – cannot here represent a clue to the piece being in the key of G, or that it is in its relative minor key of Em. Bm7 is merely the dominant chord of that relative minor.

The first chord in the score is Em7, and no G chord appears throughout the piece. The key for this score can thus only be Em.

Determining the scales

The Em blues scale is the most appropriate scale to use for this score.

Of course, you can resort to harmonization techniques for each chord when you improvise, but that wouldn't be pure blues style.

Determining the chords

- Harmonization of the scale (see Chapter "Chords"):

  Em F#m G Am Bm C D

To get a detailed explanation of what a 12/8 time signature means, go back to Chapter 4 on "The elements of a score."

When you start playing this blues piece, we recommend that you first practice each exercise with a clear sound. You will thus be able to focus on each problem in a stress-free atmosphere.

Once you have assimilated every exercise, add some distortion to work on sounding neat.

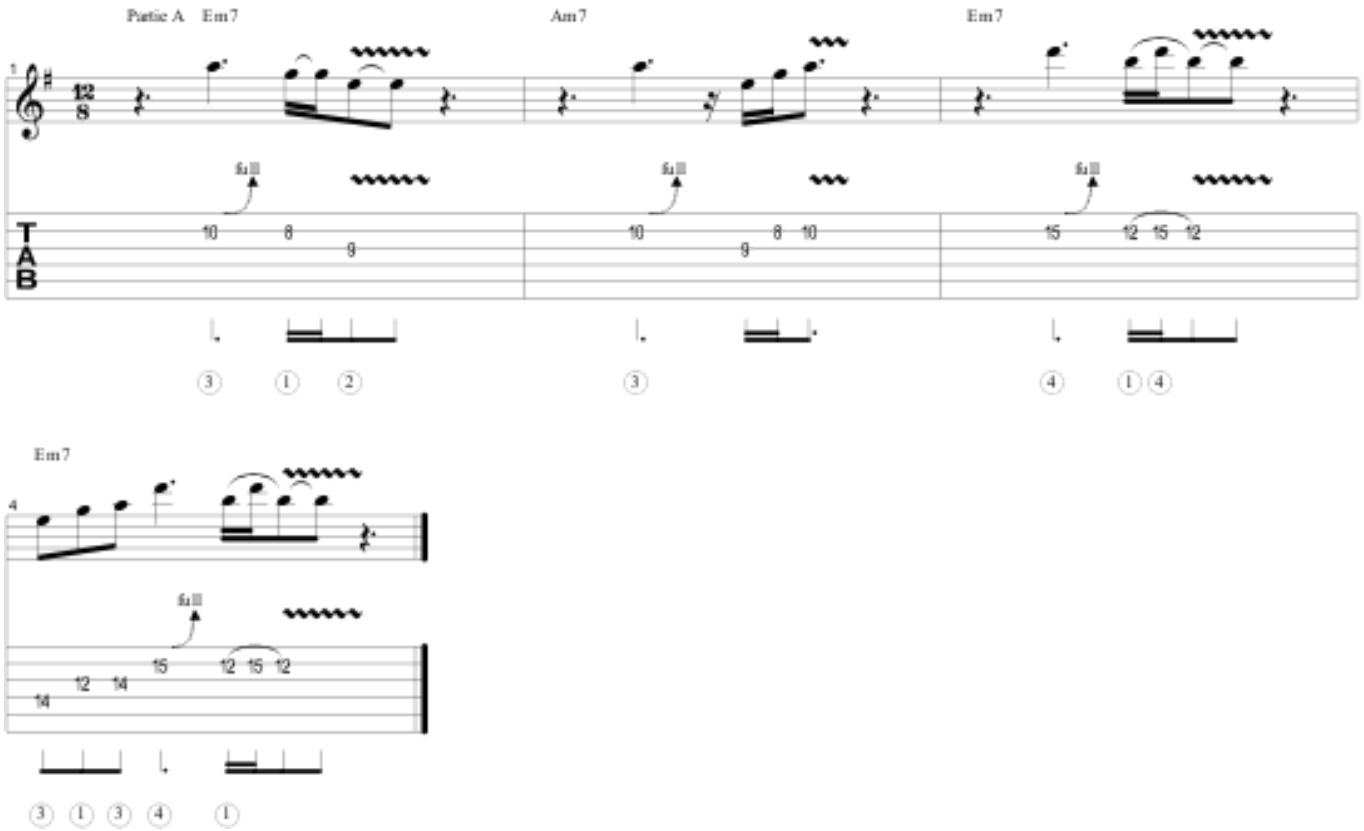
It is important to fully grasp the rhythm and tempo of this blues piece before you try it out on your instrument.

The basic time reference here is the dotted quarter note: each beat is made up of three eighth notes (3 quavers), or six sixteenth notes (6 semiquavers).

Don't hesitate to count aloud while you practice the exercises, so as to get a good feel for the placement of each note in the beat.

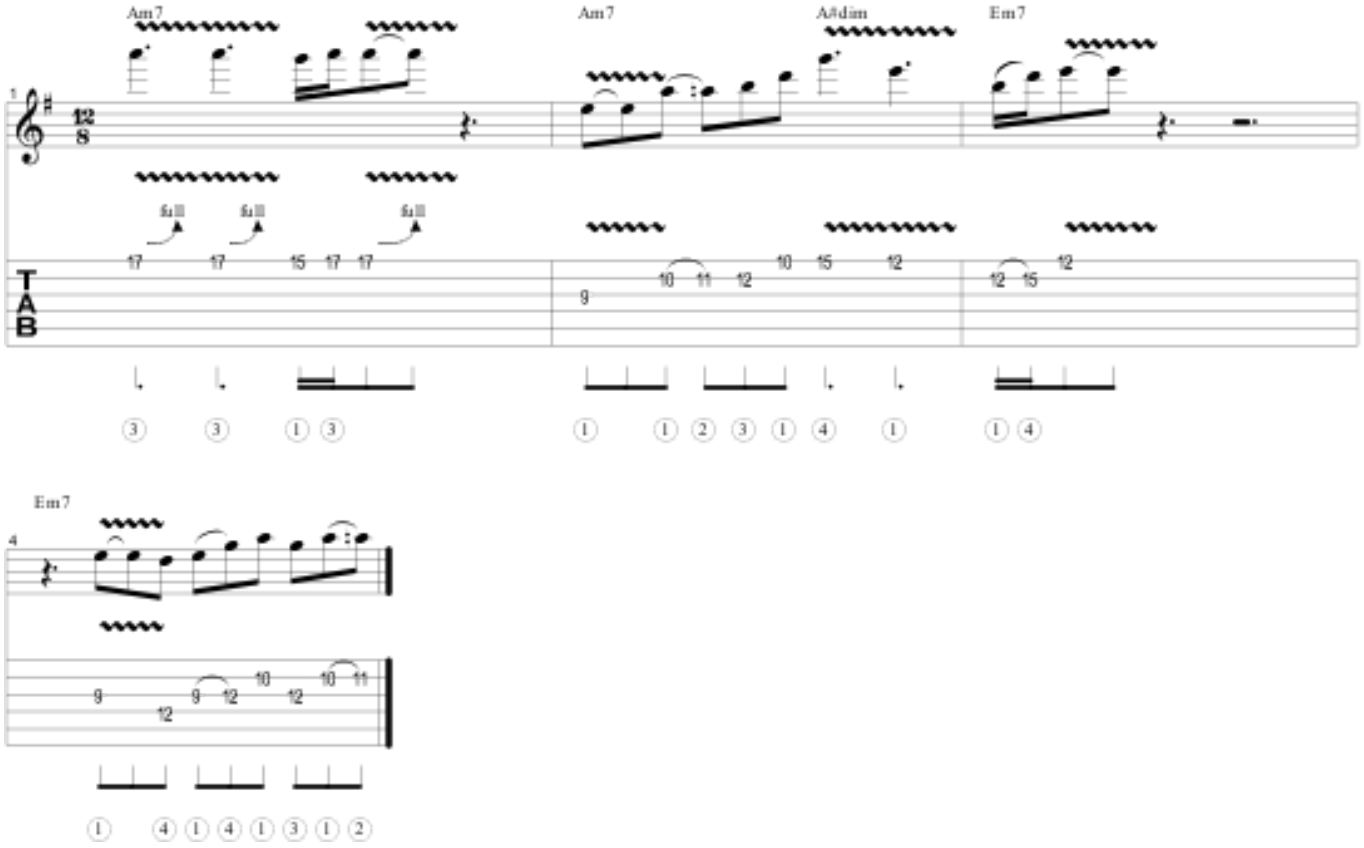
Exercises

Exercise 1



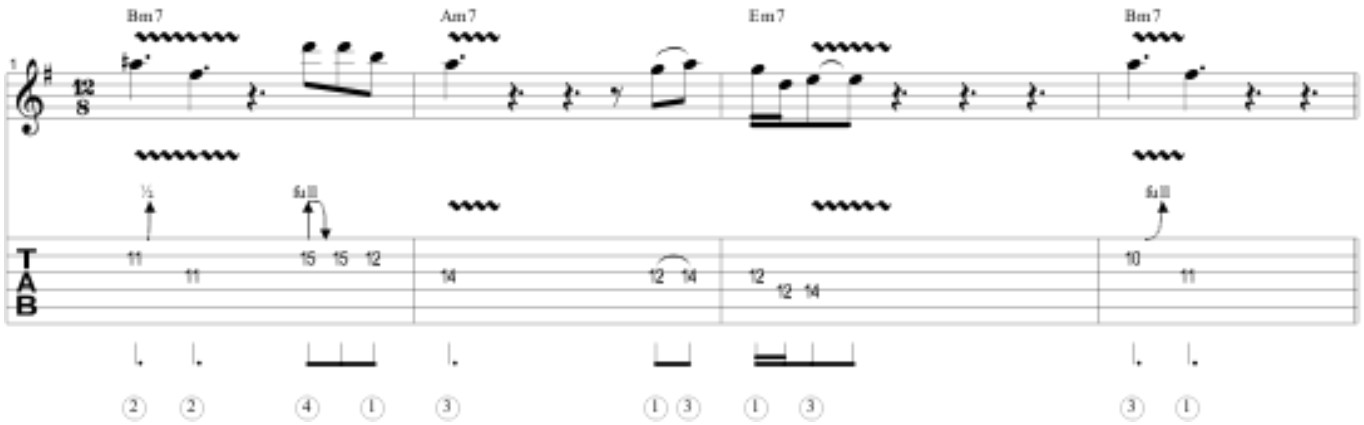
This is a very slow type of bend. Pivot your hand round by using your index finger as a pivotal axis. Your fingers should remain stiff. Do not strain it, or the sound would get altered. Left-hand vibratos have to be subtle and melodic. Use the correct fingering.

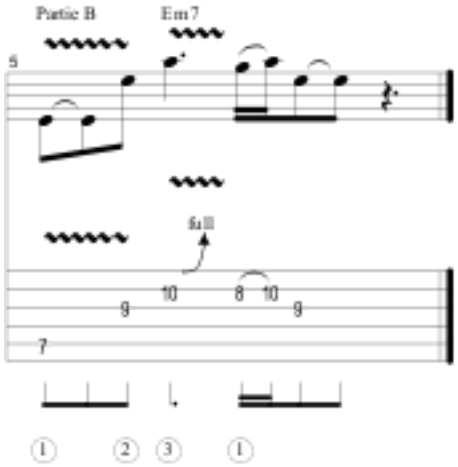
Exercise 2



You can actually play a bend with any left-hand finger, but it is still advisable to use your middle finger. Even though the basic technique remains the same, you will have to adapt it to achieve various kinds of bends. Watch for tied notes, for their duration is not left to chance. The same applies to vibrato.

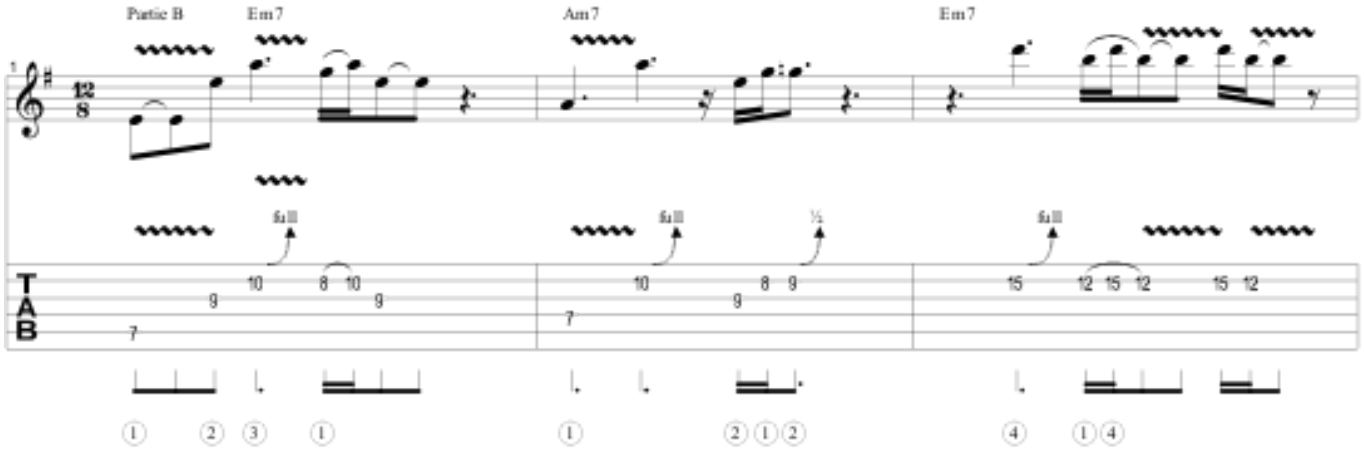
Exercise 3

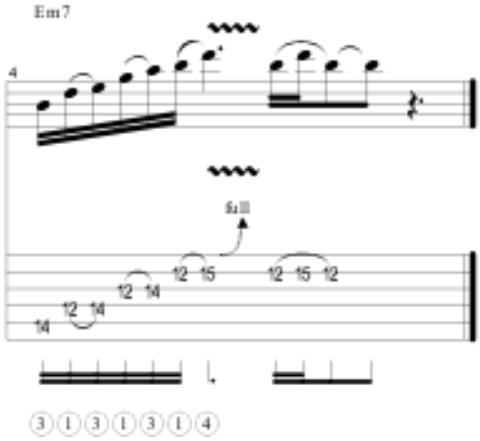




The exercise begins with a bend played with the left-hand middle finger. It is rather difficult to achieve, for the energy in your left hand gets carried here through only two fingers. Bends of this type usually push the pitch of the note up by a half step (a semi-tone).

Exercise 4

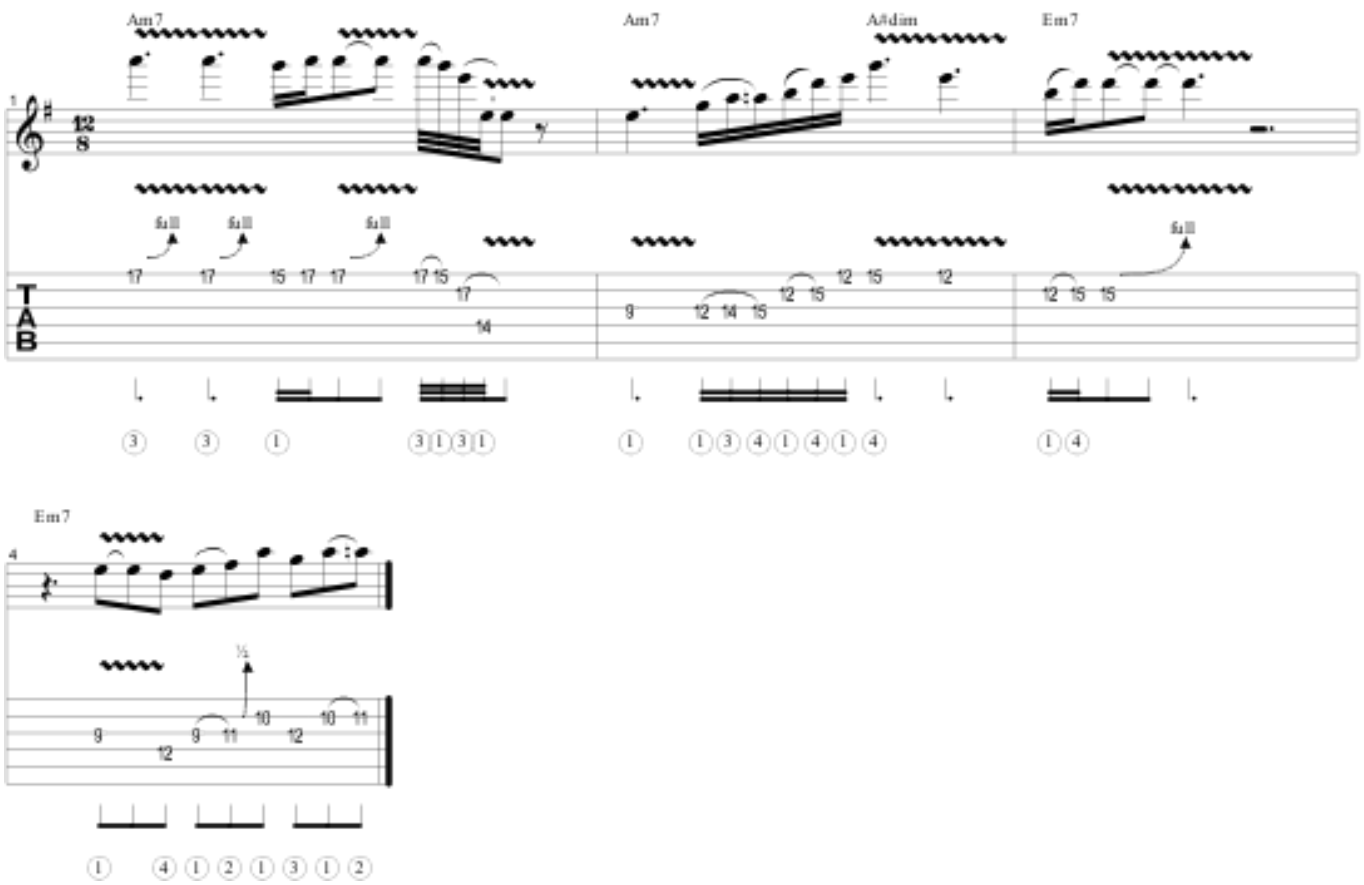




As you play the guitar, you need to make a clear distinction between whole-step and half-step bends. The technique is the same for both, but in the second case the energy you carry is only half of that in the case of a whole step.

It takes time and patience to achieve accurate bends. A harmonically false bend will sound atrociously to your audience. Take the time to practice them one by one. Watch for the bend which comes right after the phrase made of six sixteenth notes, in the fourth bar.

Exercise 5



On the third beat, first bar is the first difficulty – the thirty-second notes (demisemiquavers).

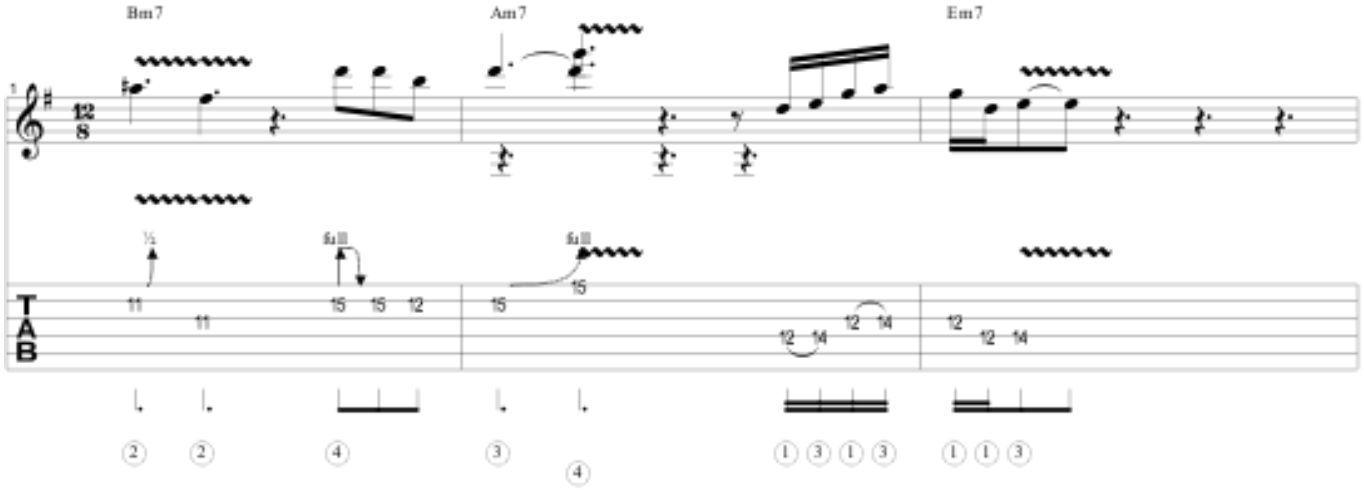
In 12/8 time there are three eighth notes to the beat, or six sixteenth notes, or then again twelve thirty-second notes.

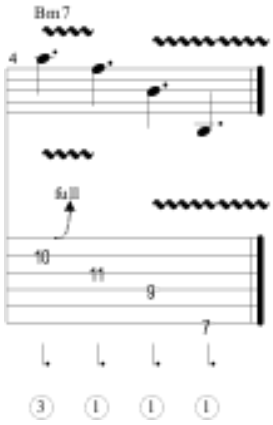
In this exercise, we only get the first four thirty-second notes, plus a skip of a string.

Slow down tempo, and work at your pace.

In the fourth bar, the bend is played with the left-hand middle finger, and it must be done by pushing the string up.

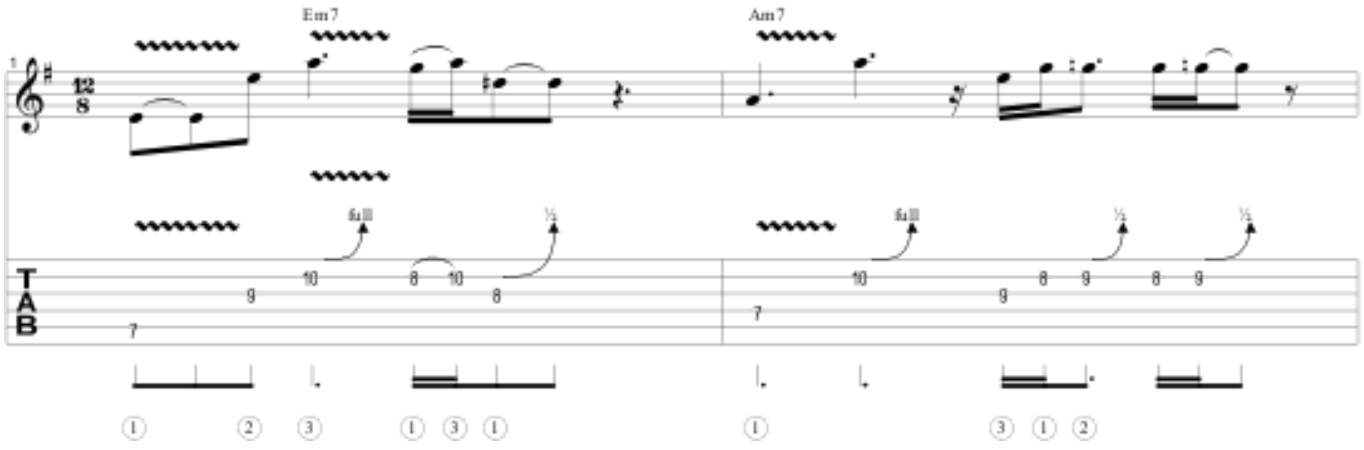
Exercise 6

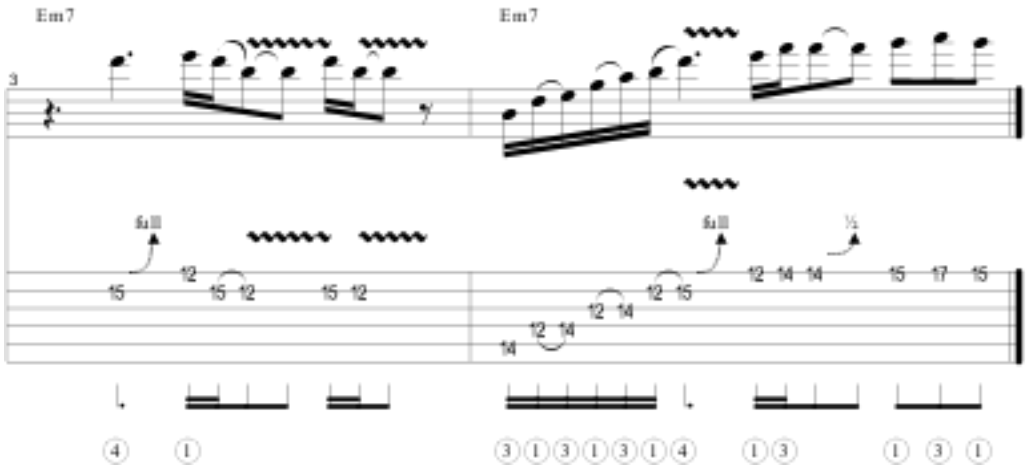




A bend can very often be played with an added note. That note can be played at the same time as the bend, or it can merely be added, as it is here in bar 2. Hold the bend and play the extra note while keeping it. The vibrato must be unassuming.

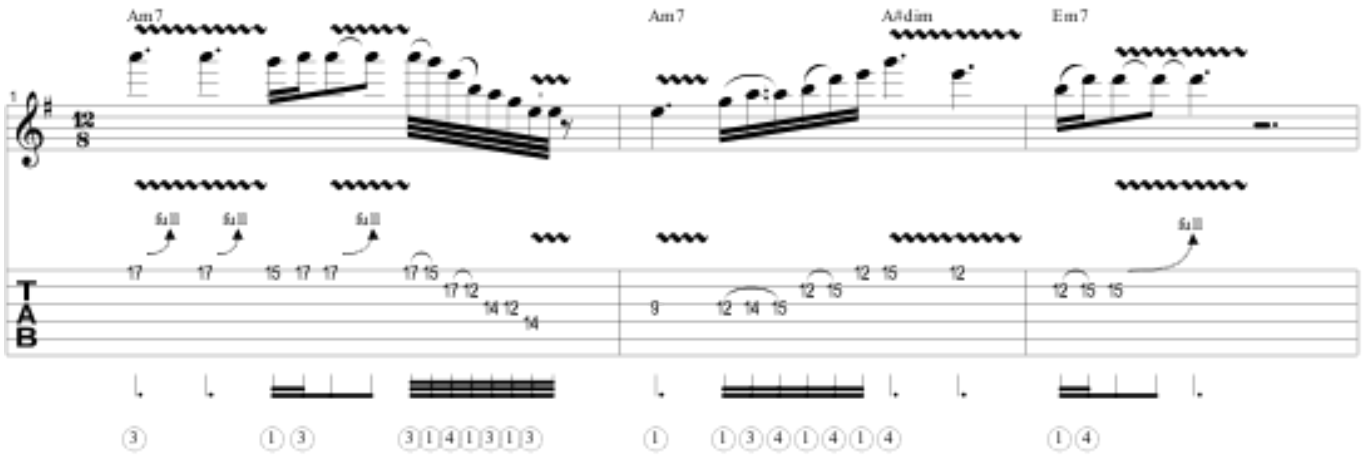
Exercise 7

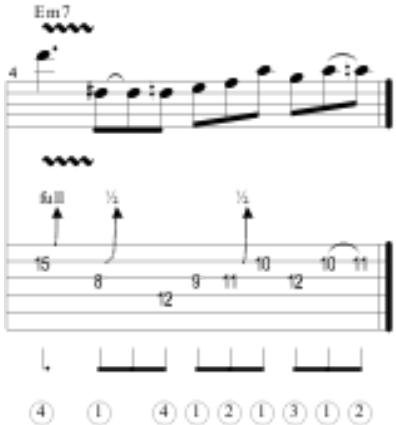




The bend here is played with the left-hand index finger. Most bends of this kind heighten the pitch of the note by a half-step. Make sure to play it accurate, it is extremely important. Make a clear distinction between a half-step bend and a whole-step bend. Be careful: the rhythm must be perfect.

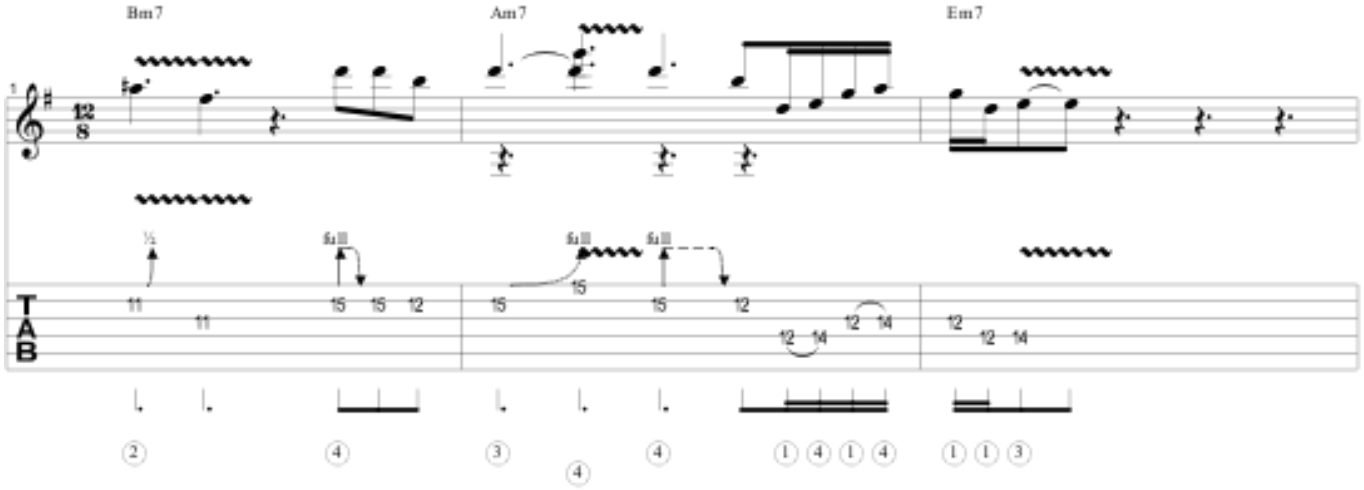
Exercise 8

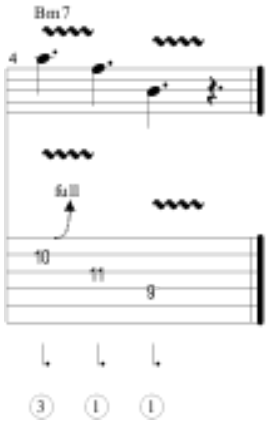




The fourth beat of the first bar presents a sequence of thirty-second notes. Use the fingering indicated to you, and slow down tempo before you increase speed later. The fourth bar comprises by itself three bends played with different fingers from the left hand. The first one has a whole-step value, the other two have a half-step value. Practice slowly to ensure accuracy.

Exercise 9





Take the time you need to get a clear understanding of the notation before you start playing on your guitar. The first two bars present us with complex rhythmic patterns. It would be good for you to know and master them before you play them on your instrument. Watch out: the four bends are of different kinds. Practice conscientiously.

Metal

15 Studies

Heavy metal guitar is now everywhere present in the musical landscape.

Some innovations such as the seven-stringed guitar and extreme tunings have been created to support and widen the possibilities of this music style.

It is characterized by a very rhythmic and energetic playing style. Here is a modern approach to the style.

Content

This piece will be presented here in three successive versions (A, B, and C), each comprising a specific theme and rhythmic pattern.

Rhythmic patterns

- Sixteenth notes
- Thirty-second notes
- Sextuplets

Particular technical elements

- Up and down strokes
- Legato
- Vibrato

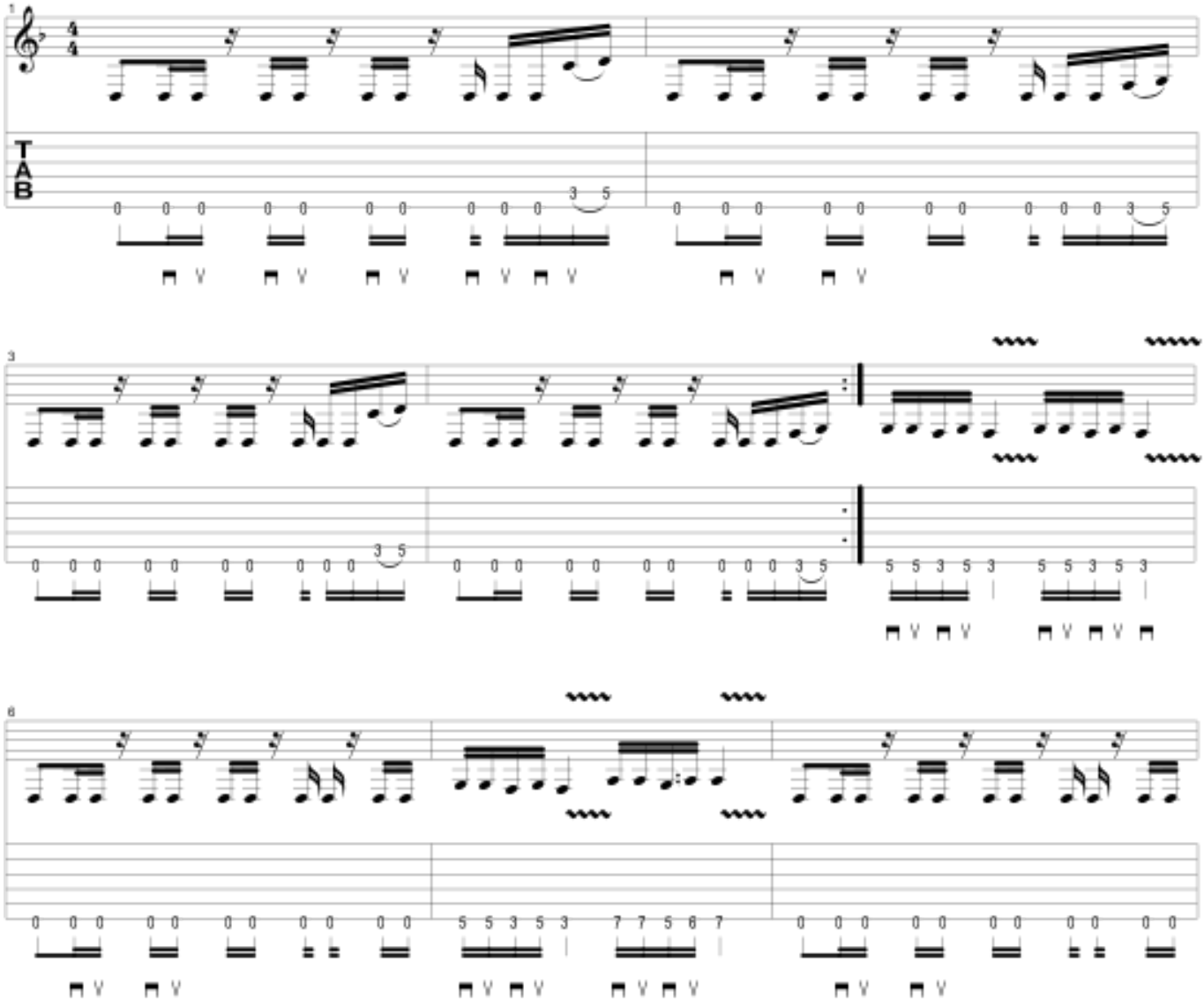
METAL

Tuning: Dropped D

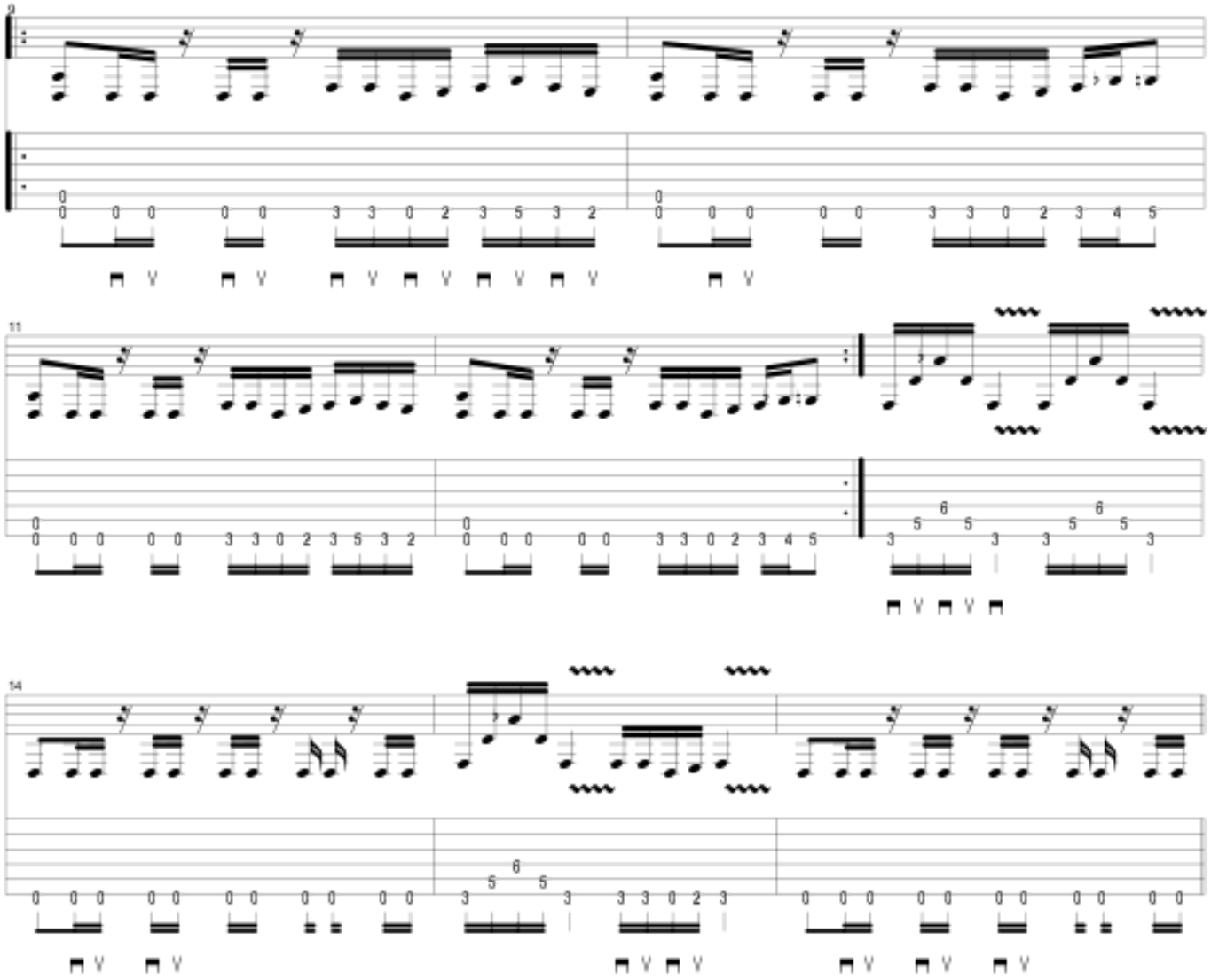
♩ = 110

Music by Franck Lopez

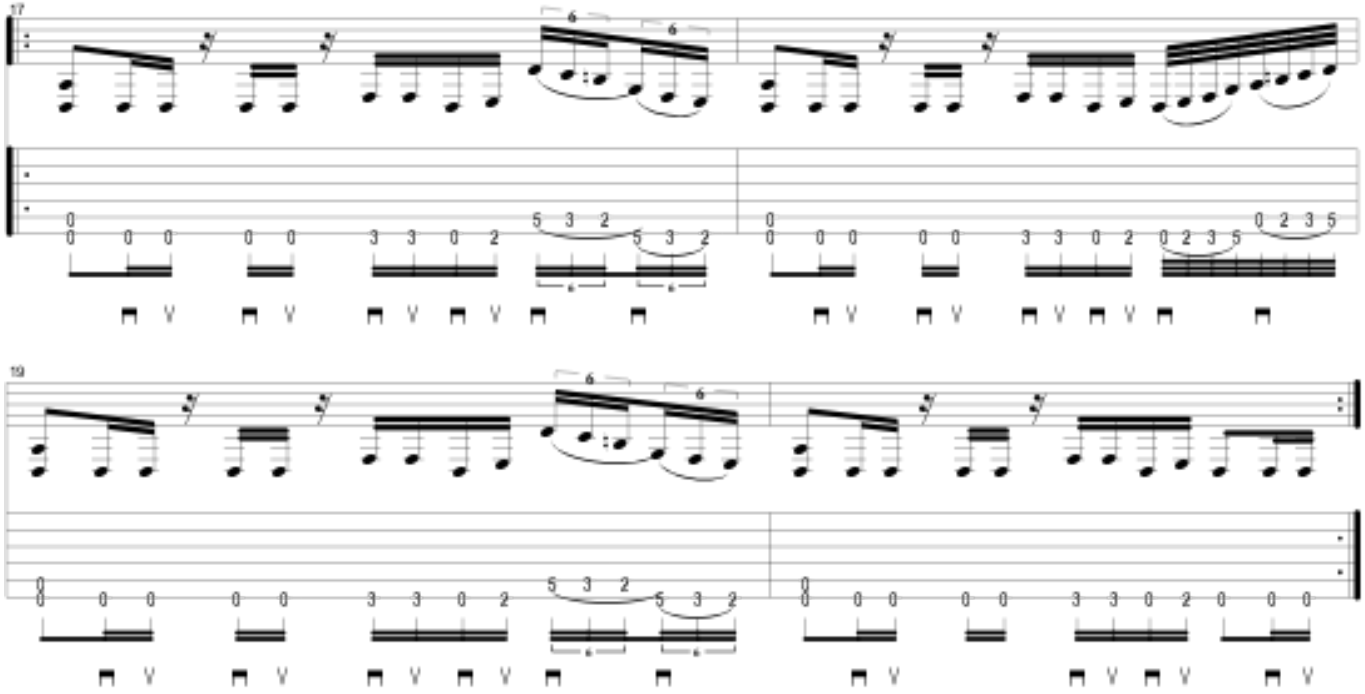
Part A

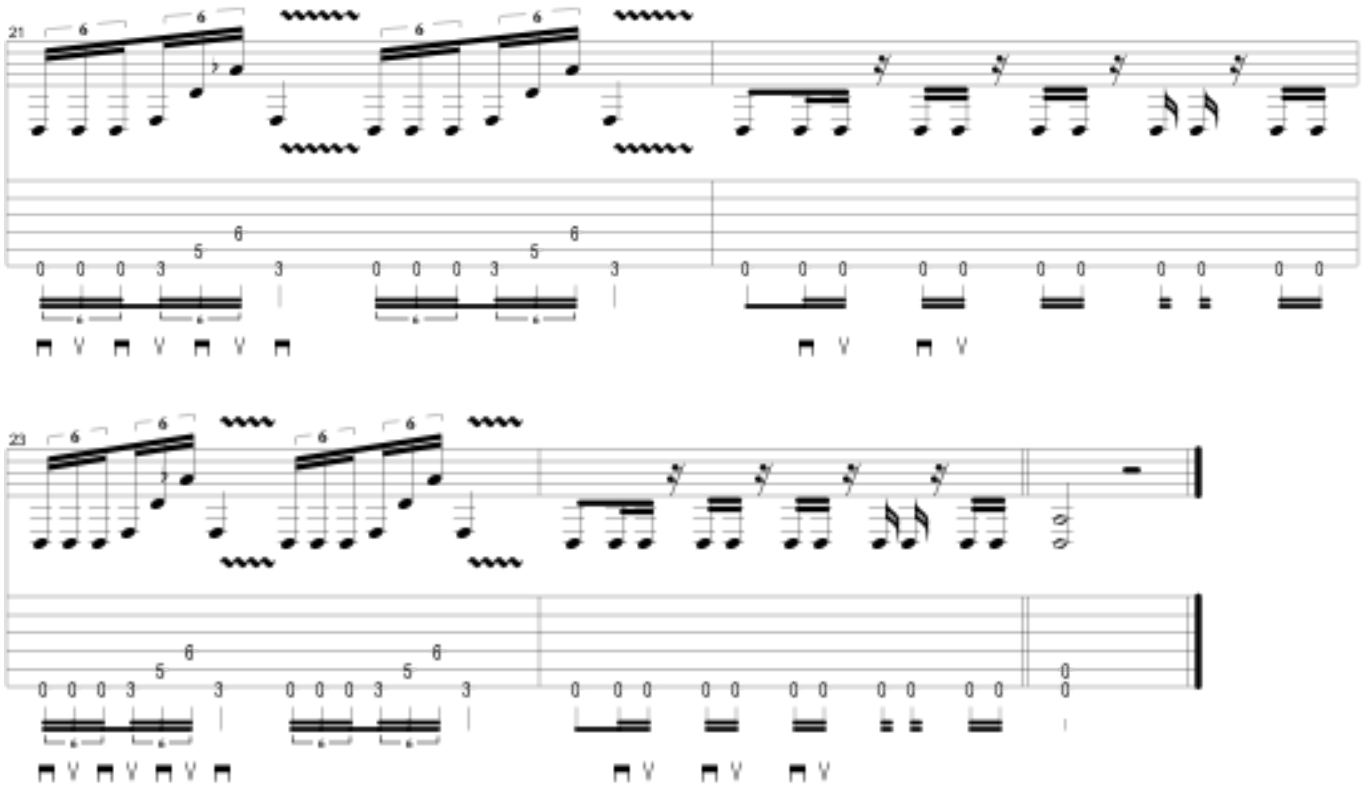


Part B



Part C





Determining the key

Elements to look at

- The key signature
- The relative minor
- The final chord

The key signature indicates only one flat – this score is thus in the key of F.

At this point of the analysis, we can only deduce the relative key for this score from the final chord. That chord is a Dm, which is also the relative key of F (signature).

We can therefore conclude that the whole piece is in the key of Dm.

Determining the scales

We shall be able to use here the Dm blues scale, as well as the D Major scale, which will yield a different tone to the music.

Determining the chords

This score is written based on a single chord. This is an architecture that is typical of the heavy metal style. It will be good, though, to go over the extent of the key:

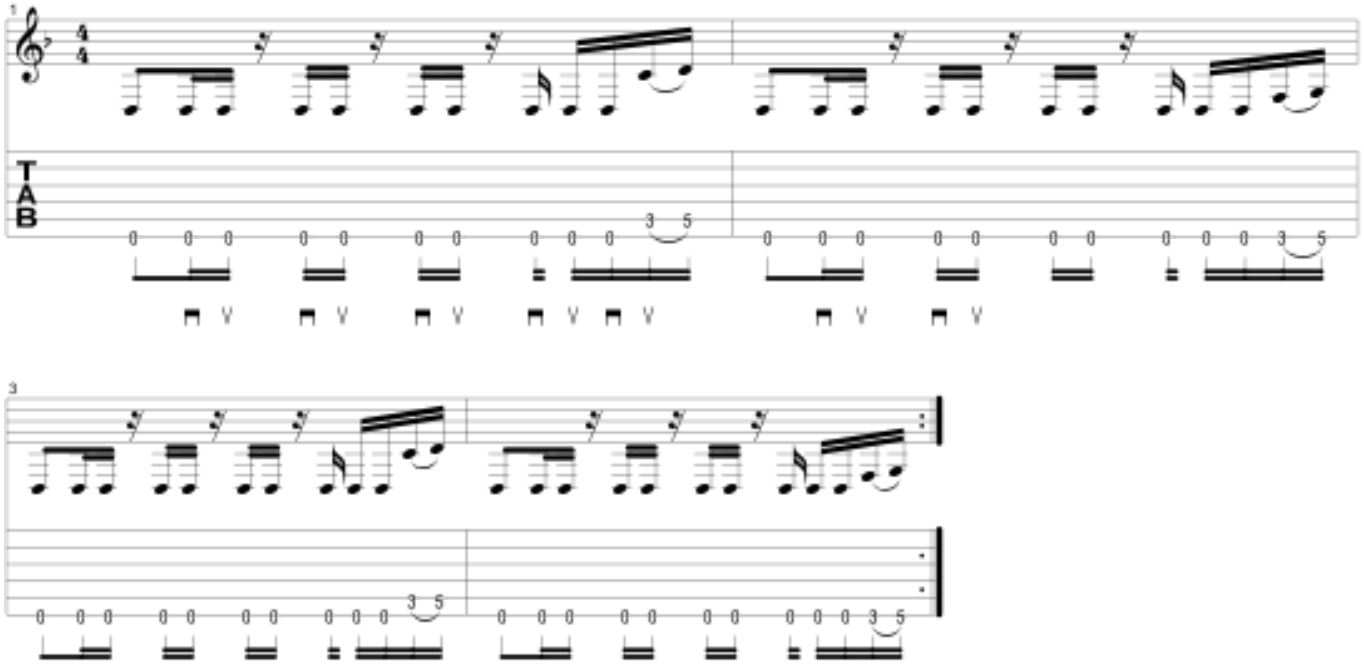
- Harmonization of the scale (see Chapter on “Chords”):

  Dm Em F Gm Am Bb C

The tuning used here is a dropped D, meaning that the low E string must be tuned down one step to get a low D.

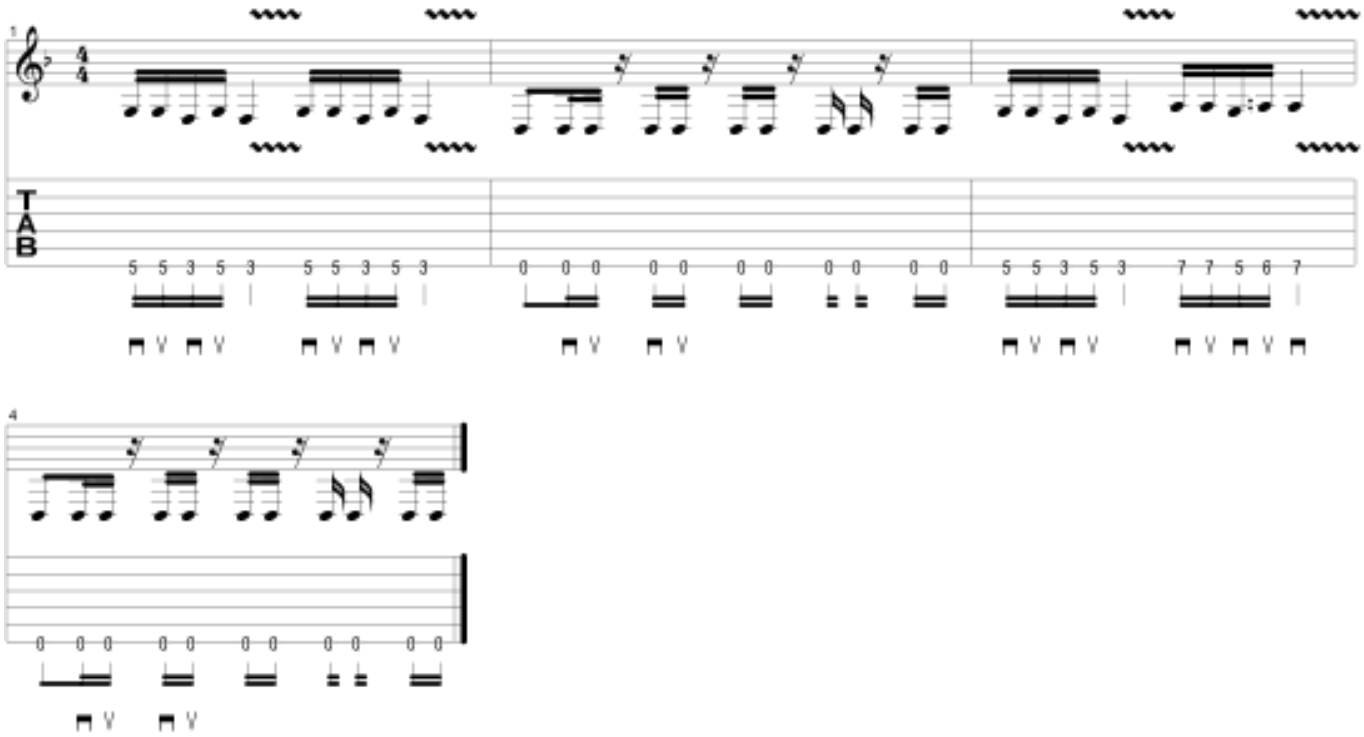
Exercises

Exercise 1



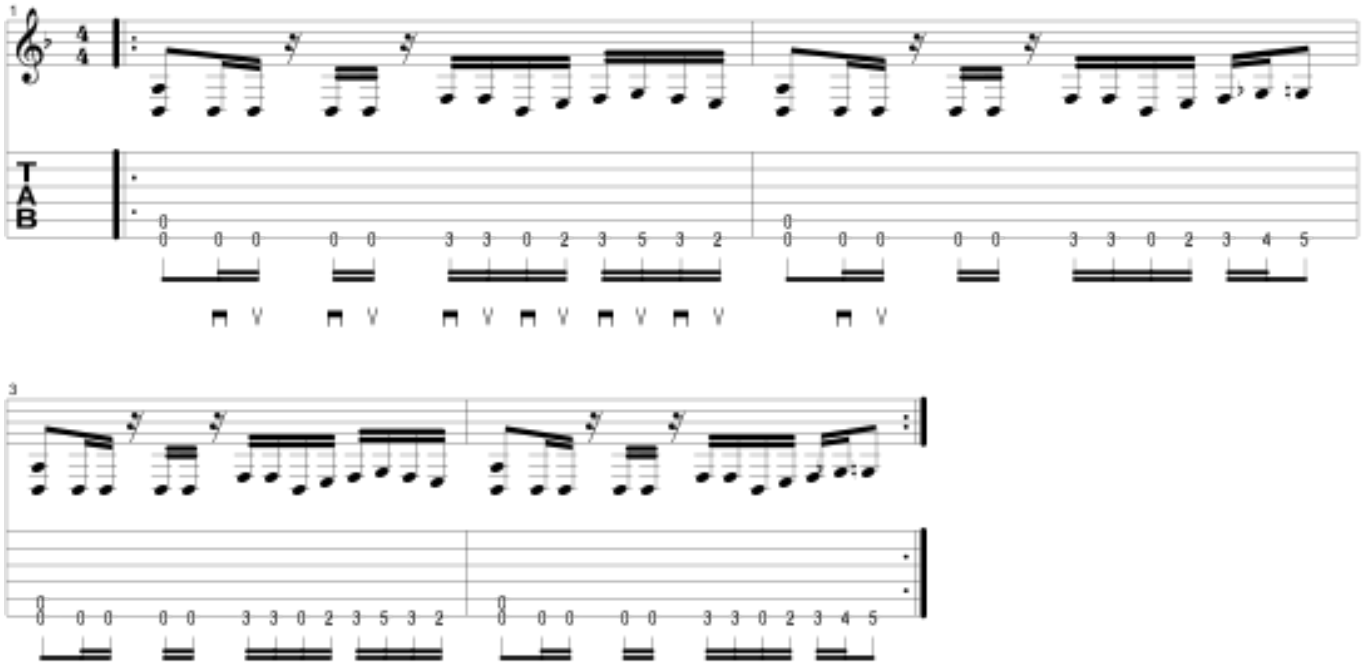
Do make sure you pick the strings in the manner indicated below the score. Take time to assimilate the rhythm. Here a beat includes four sixteenth notes, and every sixteenth rest replaces a sixteenth note. Slightly muffle the E string with your right-hand palm. Practice slowly at first.

Exercise 2



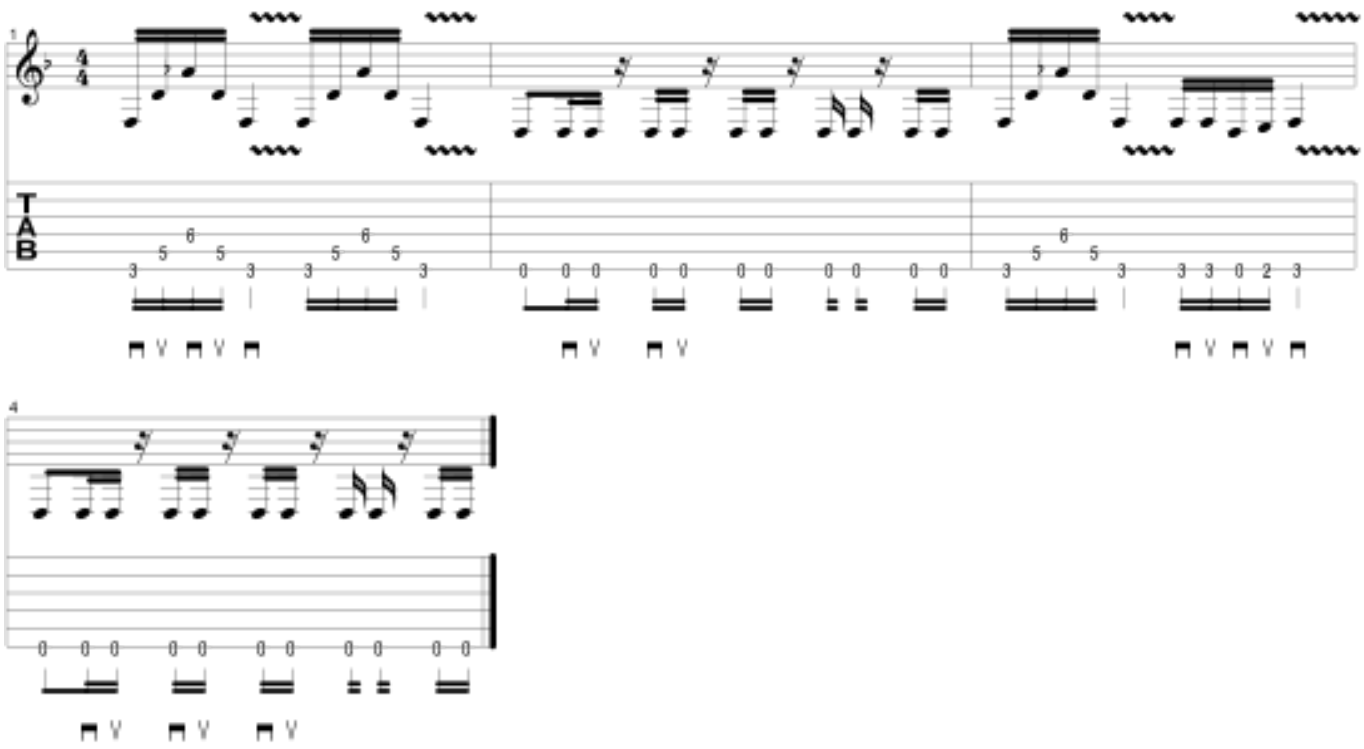
Since the E string has been tuned down, it is slightly slacker. That will make your left-hand vibratos easier. They must be expressive enough to be noticed, but not so much that they distort the note. As for the rest, pick the string in a dynamic manner; be energetic.

Exercise 3



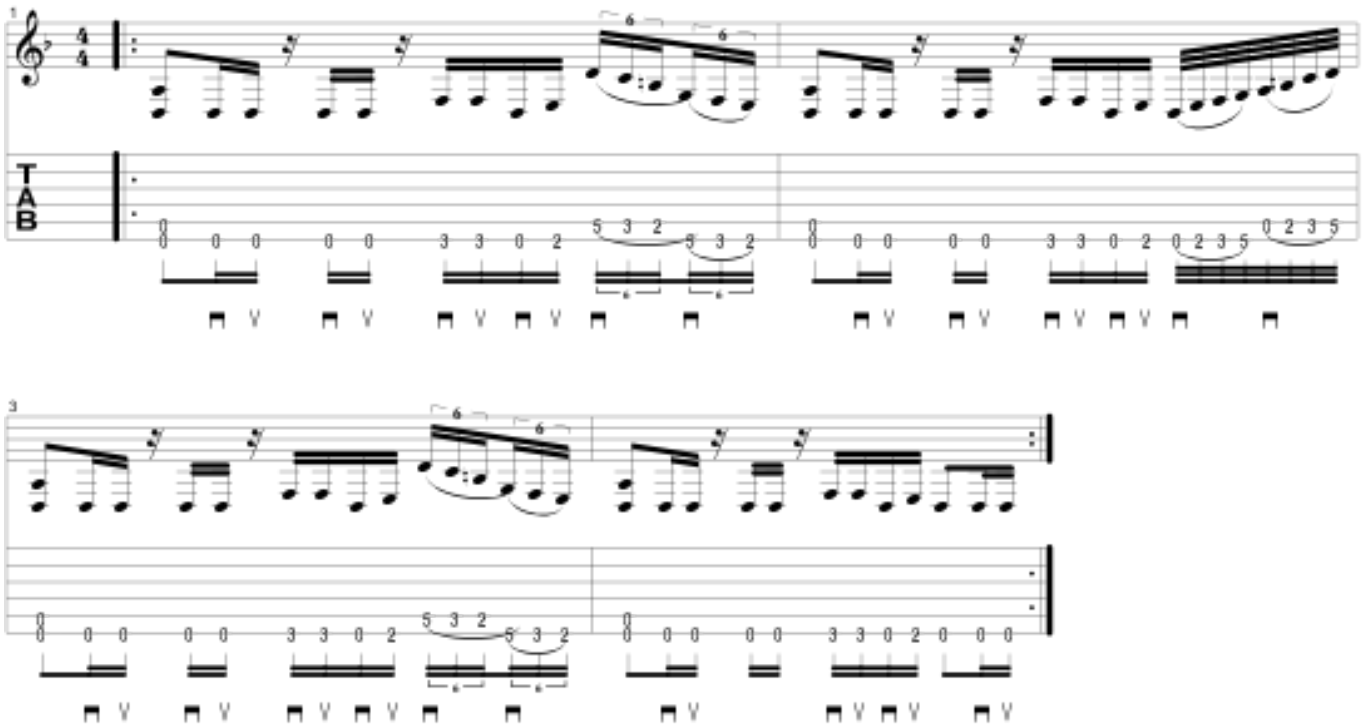
This exercise follows from the preceding ones. Keep in time, and play neatly.

Exercise 4



It is difficult to shift from string to string while picking up and down strokes. Your right hand will have to muffle the three strings at once, moving only slightly.

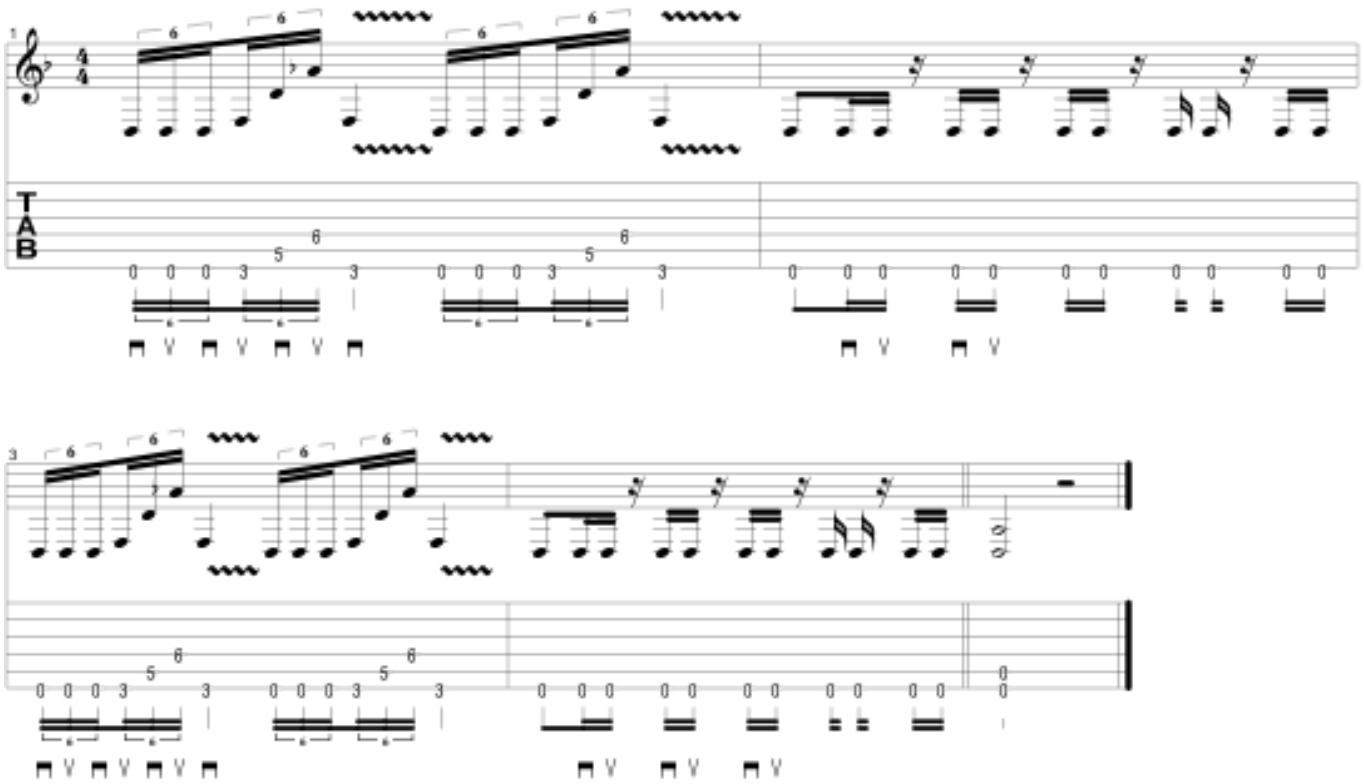
Exercise 5



The problem in Exercise 5 lies at the end of every bar. The first bar ends on a series of sextuplets played legato. Each note must ring neatly and distinctly. It is technically rather difficult and we recommend that you practice that phrase independently from the rest at first. Don't rush it; it is not as fast as it looks.

The second technical difficulty, which lies at the end of the second bar, consists in a series of thirty-second notes. It goes a little faster than the sextuplets, but the move is easy enough. Leave your fingers on the strings after you have played the notes.

Exercise 6



The sextuplet at the beginning of the exercise isn't too complicated. Although it is played fast, all the work revolves around your right hand. Decompose each difficulty slowly (rhythm, fingering, and pick strokes) to assimilate it fully.

Going Further

Sound Engineering

Chapter 16

We have a number of possibilities today to capture the sound of a guitar.

The quality of a sound system is very important when one aims at a satisfying end result. It is even more so if we are talking about an actual recording.

The techniques for sound capturing vary depending on the type of guitar you use.

The classical guitar

There are two types of classical (nylon-stringed) guitars on the market:

- The traditional kind (without any amplification system)
- The electro-acoustic kind (fitted with an amplification system)

The traditional classical guitar

You can only amplify it by using an external microphone. You will get the best results with a cardioid type of microphone.

You can adjust the position of the microphone in front of the instrument. Whichever position you choose will depend on what final sound result you seek.

The two most common positions are:

- Microphone close to the bridge:

This first option will produce a very gentle kind of sound, but it tends to physically bother the guitarist.

- Microphone located between the neck and the rosette:

This is the option the most commonly chosen. It makes it possible to fully capture the energy of the musician.

The electro-acoustic classical guitar

This type of guitar offers an additional option for sound capture, as it is fitted with a little microphone located under the nut of the bridge, called a “Piezo pickup.” This pickup is connected to the amplifier or to the mixing desk by use of a jack. The results obtained in this way, however, are inferior in quality to those obtained with an external microphone.

The acoustic folk guitar

Apart from the steel strings, acoustic folk guitars are of a design similar to that of classical guitars.

Just as for the classical guitar, the folk guitar comes in two types. The first type is a traditional kind deprived of an amplification system, while the second one is fitted with a Piezo pickup for sound amplification.

The electric guitar

The electric guitar differs from the two preceding types of guitar.

No natural sound is produced by the instrument alone; it is dependent on an external amplification system.

The capture of sound is done by use of pickups placed on the guitar’s soundboard, and which can be variously selected according to the needs of the musician.

Sound amplification

The electric or electro-acoustic guitar player will need an amplifier if he/she wishes to be heard by his/her audience.

There are two parts to those amplifiers:

- the amplification system
- the loud-speaker

The amplification system comes with a number of potentiometers with which to modify the quality of the sound produced	
Master volume	Overall volume of the amplifier
Volume	Volume of the selected channel
Gain	Saturation level of the amplifier
Bass	Level of the bass frequencies
Middle	Level of the medium frequencies
Treble	Level of the treble frequencies
Presence	Adjusts the sound's amplitude
Reverb	Reverberation level (to simulate an environment)

The guitarist can adjust any and all of those aspects of the sound, by recourse to a series of knobs that are usually gradated from 0 to 10 – position 5 representing the middle level.

The various kinds of amplifiers

Types of amplifiers	
Vacuum tube amplifiers	This is the oldest amplifier technology. The first amps were of this kind. The tubes give coloring to the sound by warming up and stocking the energy produced thereby. The sound of this kind of amplifier is smooth and well-defined.
Solid-state amplifiers	Those make up 80% of the market today for they are reliable, generally produce enough power, and are reasonably low-cost. The sound you get is slightly colder than with tube amps.
Modeling amplifiers	Since the early 1990s, a new generation of guitar amps is accessible to all. They are designed to simulate the sound of legendary amplifiers, while offering a whole new range of sound possibilities. As the technology is in constant evolution, this type of amplifier is about to become the market leader.

Some amplification settings

There are so many different amplifiers and ways to adjust them, that the possibilities for sound modulation are virtually infinite. So much so that the guitar itself can affect the final sound.

It is still necessary to be familiar with some basic settings to start with a good, reliable sound quality before you can add a personal touch.

Clear sound						
Master	Volume	Gain	Bass	Middle	Treble	Reverb
5	4	4	5	5	7	4

Rock sound						
Master	Volume	Gain	Bass	Middle	Treble	Reverb
5	5	7	6	6	7	3

Jazz sound						
Master	Volume	Gain	Bass	Middle	Treble	Reverb
5	4	4	8	6	7	3

Blues sound						
Master	Volume	Gain	Bass	Middle	Treble	Reverb
5	4	5	5	5	8	3

Heavy metal sound						
Master	Volume	Gain	Bass	Middle	Treble	Reverb
5	7	8	6	0	6	0

Effect pedals and pedalboards

A pedal is a device that takes place between the guitar and the amplifier, and which allows you to modulate the basic sound of the instrument.

Guitar players use a great number of different effects to get the sound they want.

Those effects come in two different shapes:

- as individual pedals (one effect per pedal)
- as pedalboards (combining several effects)

Pedals and pedalboards sit on the floor, and are activated by pushing on large on/off switches with your foot.

In order to use those effects well, you need to know what they are good for and in what way they affect the final sound.

The wah-wah pedal

A wah-wah pedal (or just wah pedal) is a kind of foot-operated, modeling band-pass filter. It is designed to alter the tone of the guitar's signal and give it the sound of a vowel. Every music style uses it, particularly in the case of funky muted strumming and solo parts.

Delay

This special effect makes the sound repeat itself a set number of times, not unlike echo in the mountains. Depending on how you set it, it can let the sound fade out progressively or go on endlessly. It gives spatial quality to the sound.

The repetition pattern must be adjusted to the rhythmic character of the piece (quarter, dotted quarter note, eighth note, etc.) and relative to the tempo.

Reverberation

Reverberation, or "reverb", is a sound effect which simulates a particular place's atmosphere, together with the sound variations that its actual size would imply. Among other things, you can simulate the sound quality of, say, a tiny room, a cathedral, or a stadium.

Whammy

The whammy pedal makes it possible to change the pitch of the note being played up to two octaves. It is used by solo guitarists to achieve original sounds.

Phaser

This effect is a signal filtering technique used to make the sound rotate between peaks and troughs in the frequency spectrum. The speed of that rotation, as well as the power of the filter, can be adjusted. The phaser effect is mostly used on clean sounds, but it can also be combined with saturated sounds.

Chorus

This effect widens the sound, makes it richer and more pleasant. It is mostly used when playing chords or jazz themes.

Envelope filter

As its name indicates, this is meant to control the dynamic envelope of the signal. It is widely used in funk music and with the palm muting technique. Use it with caution, for it can rapidly change the nature of the original sound.

Flanger

A flanger duplicates the original signal, and modifies the frequency of one of the two channels thus obtained. It is very useful to give a spatial quality to the sound.

Compressor

This device controls the dynamic range of the signal given by the instrument. It can also protect your speakers from excessive sound peaks by toning those down. Guitar players use the compressor effect to equalize their guitar sound.

Tuner

The tuner is the guitarist's basic tool. You cannot get round using it, for being properly tuned is one of the first steps to getting ready to play the guitar.

Daily Practice

Chapter 17

It is vital for any guitarist to achieve good technical proficiency. You will need solid technical grounds to manage in any kind of musical situation.

Daily practice implies warming up the muscles in order to play without risk of injury. It also ensures that your two hands are well coordinated, and acquire reliable muscle robustness.

Before you play, it is always a good idea to try and feel at one with your instrument, so as to achieve the concentration you need to play.

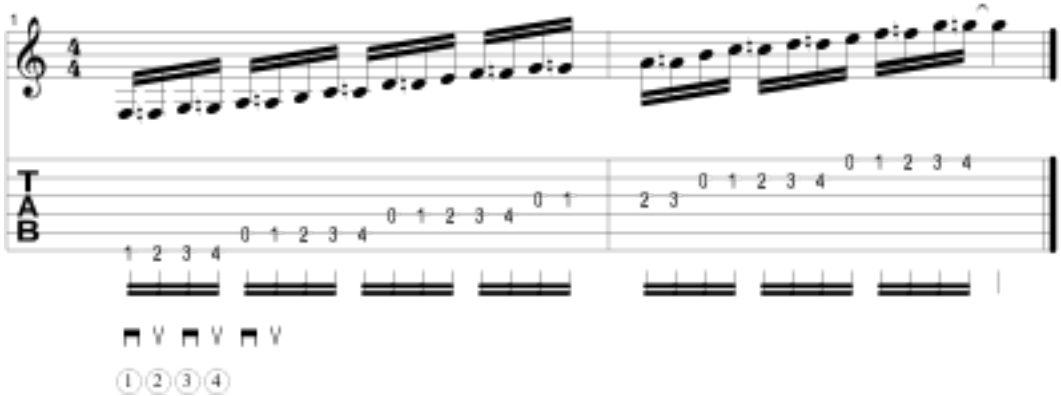
What follows is a number of warming-up exercises.

Chromatic scales

A chromatic scale is a series of notes that are all separated from each other by a half step. There is no harmonization for such scales, and you can use them as you please.

Ascending chromaticism

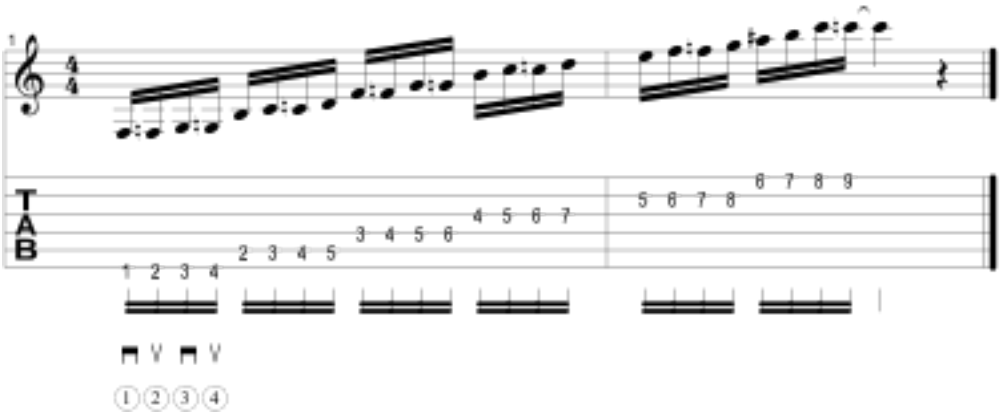
Ascending 1



Play this scale on the first four frets, which are the widest on the instrument on the guitar's neck. To do this exercise properly, the position of your instrument and of your hand must be flawless.

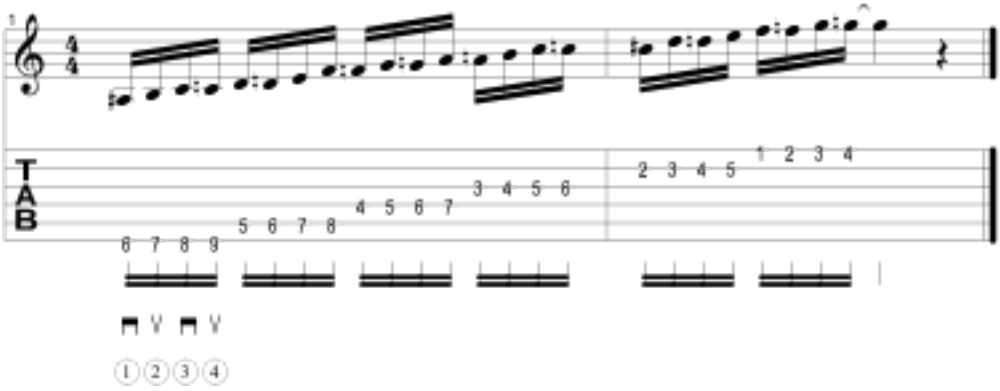
Place your thumb on the back of the neck, parallel to the other fingers. Play the notes with the tips of your finger.

Ascending 2



This is exactly the same scale, except that it is played with shifting positions. Try and make no unwanted sound as you move your left hand, and play the notes neatly.

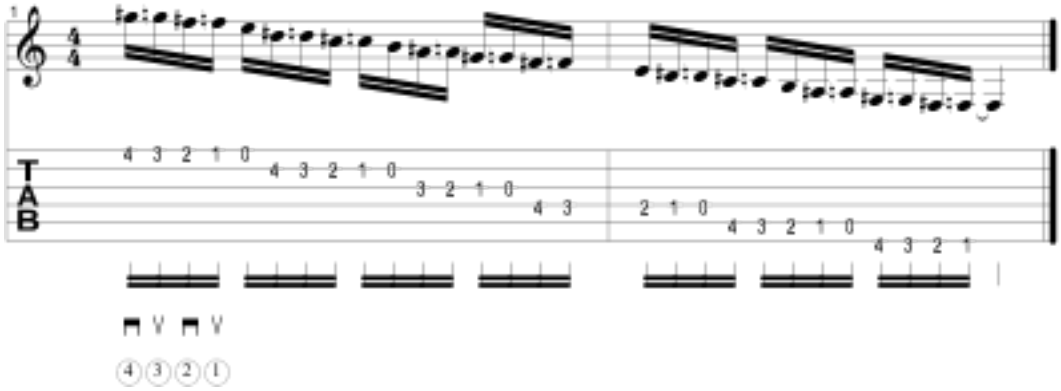
Ascending 3



There are several ways to shift positions. The notes here are played through by shifting positions toward the top of the neck. This technique is not commonly used, but it is good to see further than mere practicality and be inventive with scale patterns.

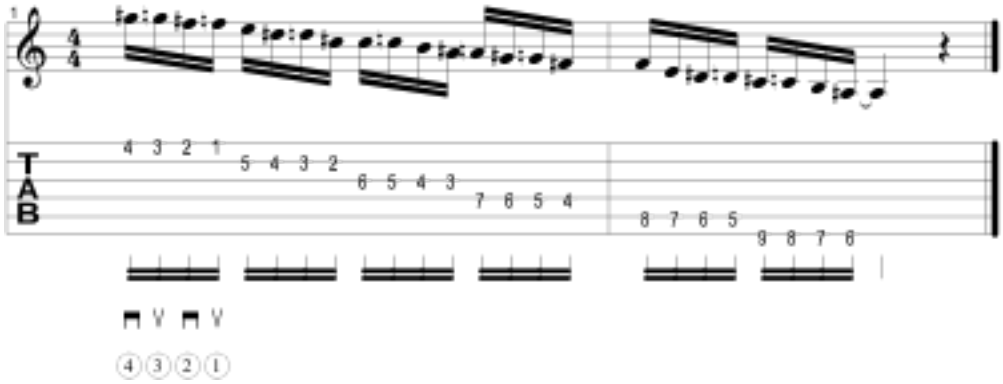
Descending chromaticism

Descending 1



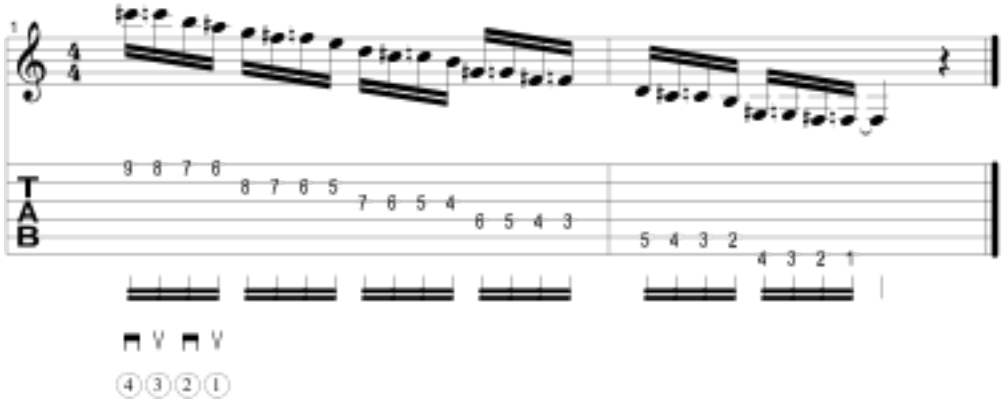
This is actually the second part of Ascending 1. You should know your guitar's neck all over to improve your technical skills. Your right hand should slightly move up with the plectrum. The technique used here is thus different from that of an ascending scale.

Descending 2



What is difficult here is shifting position by a half-step from string to string, and using your left-hand little finger. As you practice it, mainly direct your eye onto the first note played on each string.

Descending 3

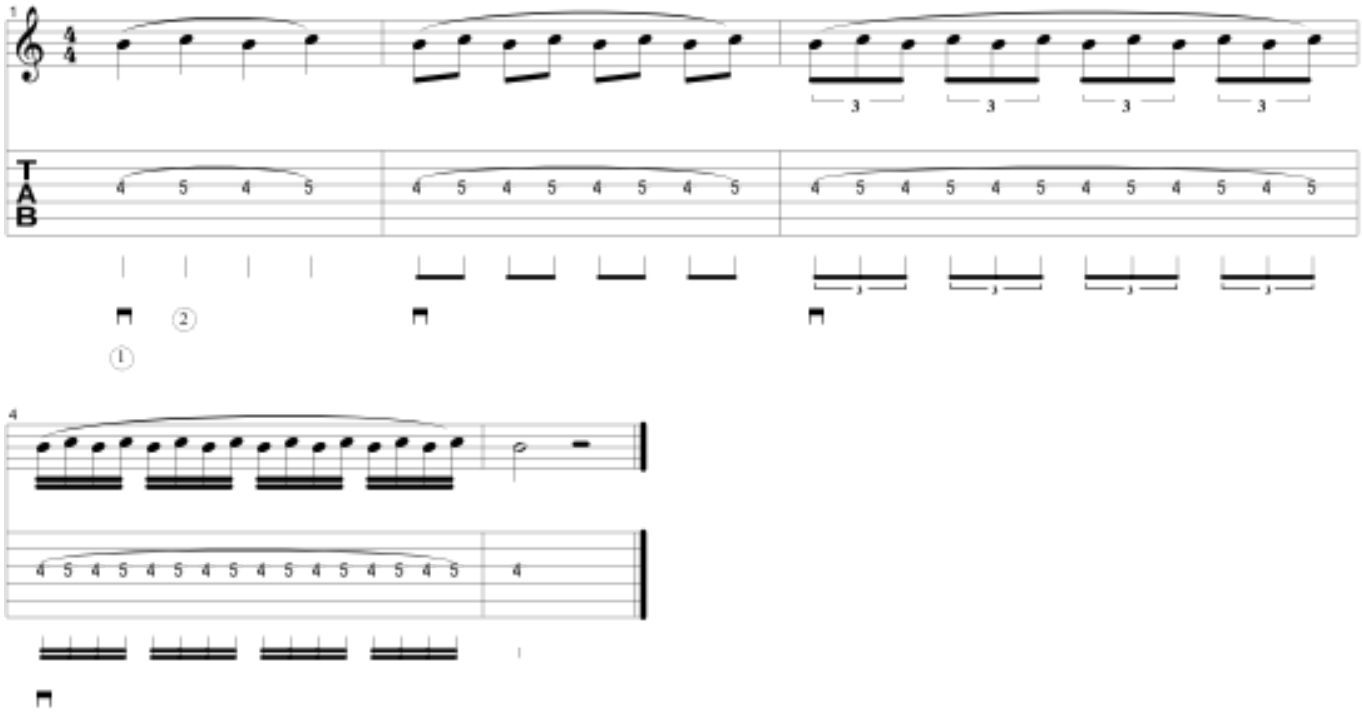


This is the same exercise as the one before, but the descending chromaticism is reversed.

Trills

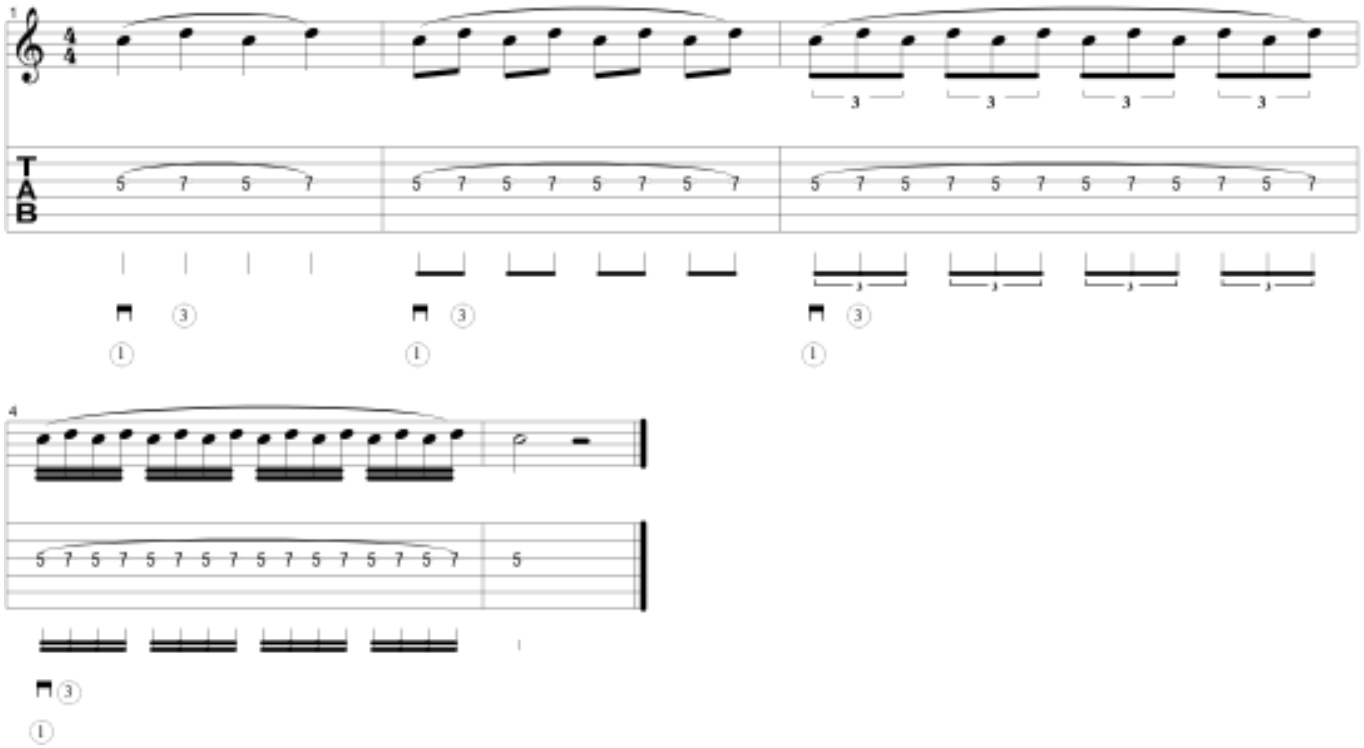
Trills are what you get by playing fast a succession of pull-offs and hammer-ons over two notes. This technique is used on many types of instruments.

Trills 1



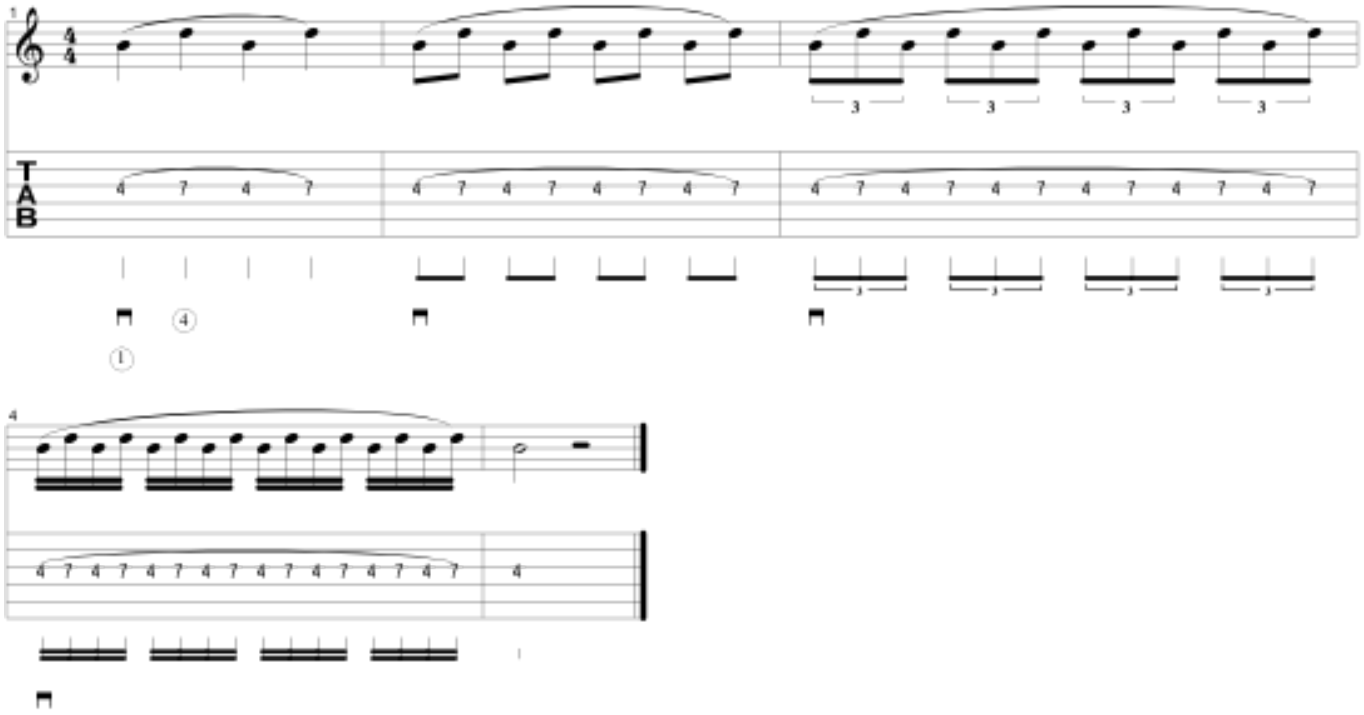
Rest your left-hand index finger on the string, and let the middle finger do all the work. Only pick the first note in each bar – every following note is included in the tie.

Trills 2



Same as for previous exercise, but here use the index and your ring finger.

Trills 3

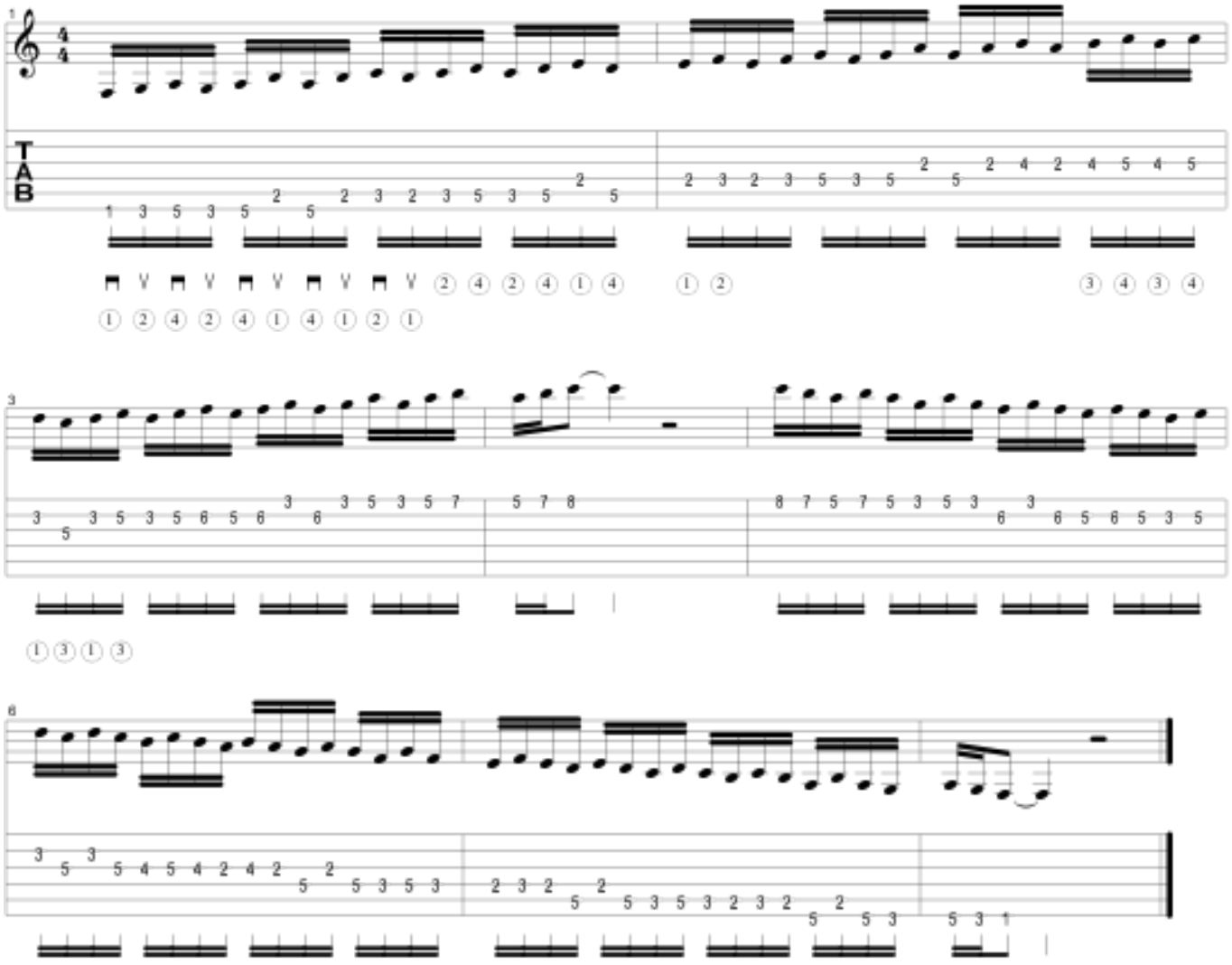


Same as before, but here use your index and your little finger.

Doubling scales

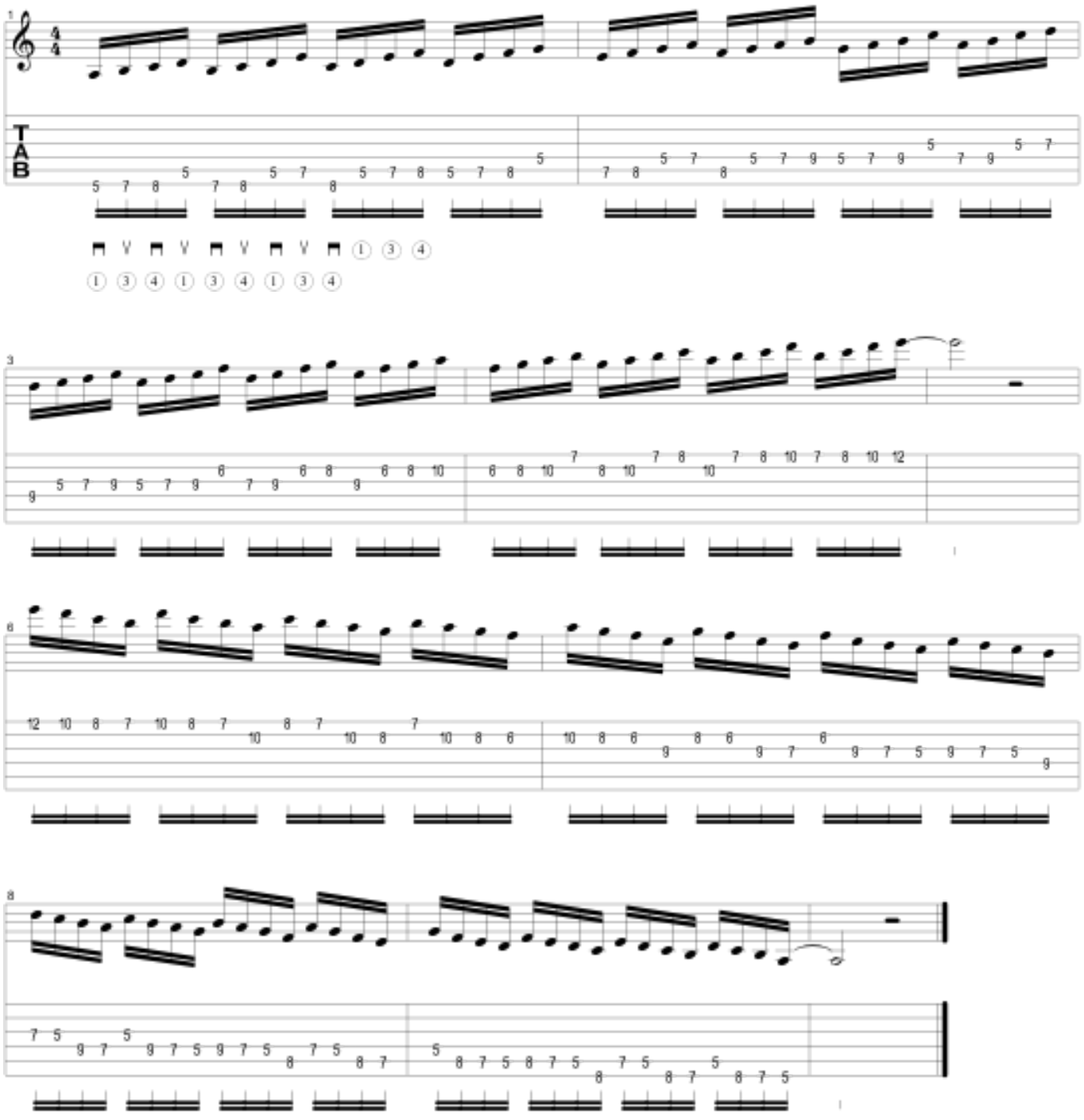
It is useful to know scale positions and how to apply them to playing music. However, simply playing a scale during a guitar solo may sound a little unimaginative. The following techniques will allow you to better understand the various ways to approach scale positions.

Back 1



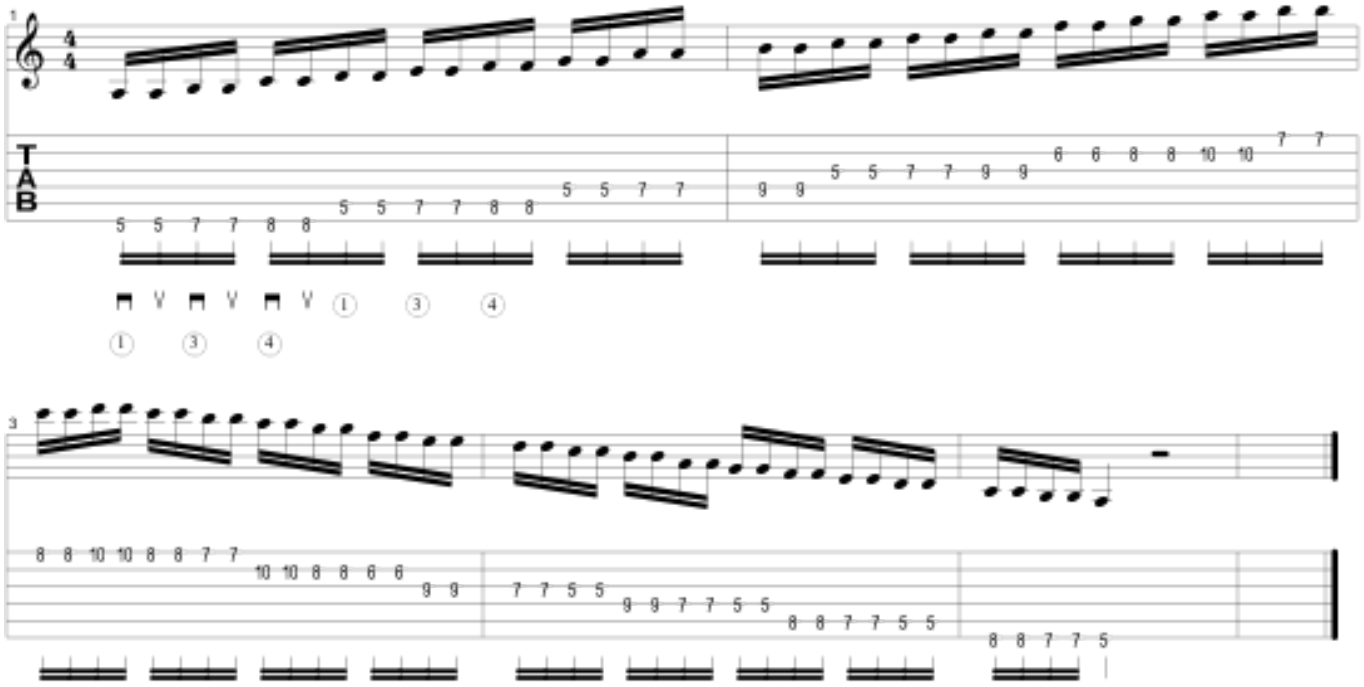
Play three notes, then play again from the next-to-last note, and go on. Make sure you use the correct fingering patterns, indicated below the score.

Back 2



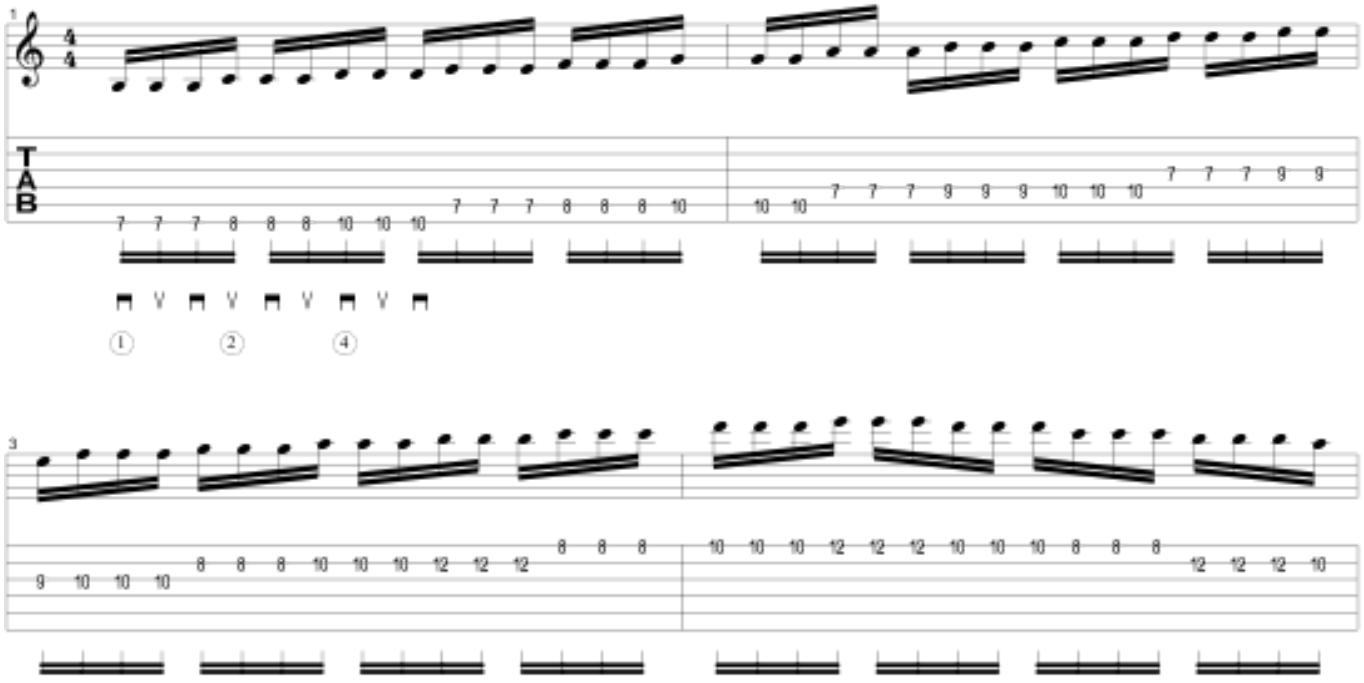
This technique is similar to the one before, but here you need to play again from two notes before the last one, and on.

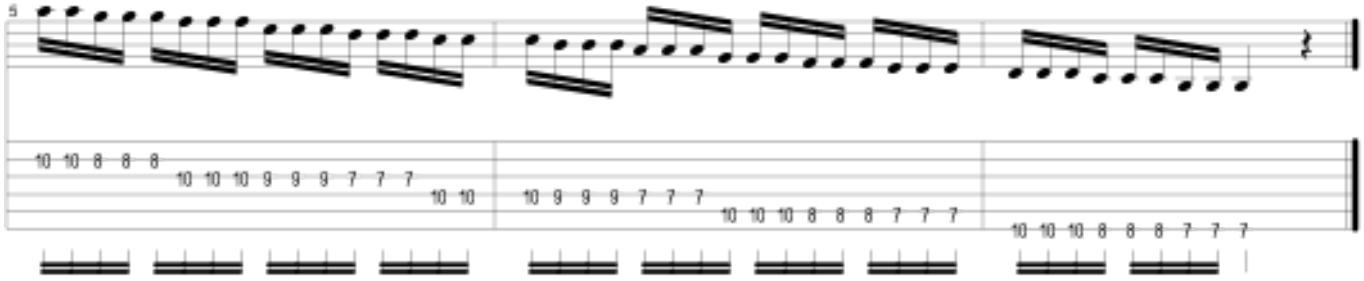
Doubling



Each note in this exercise is played twice. This will allow you to develop your alternate picking technique. Slightly muffle the strings with the palm of your right hand.

Tripling



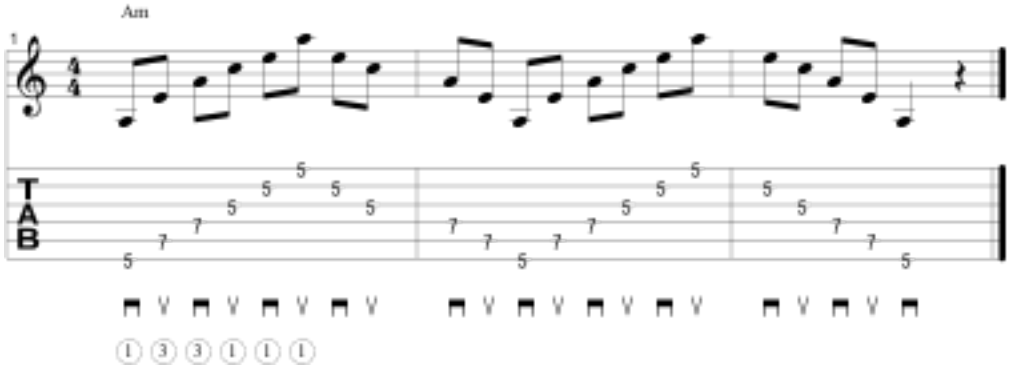


This exercise is similar to the one before, but the notes here are played three times.

Right-hand arpeggio

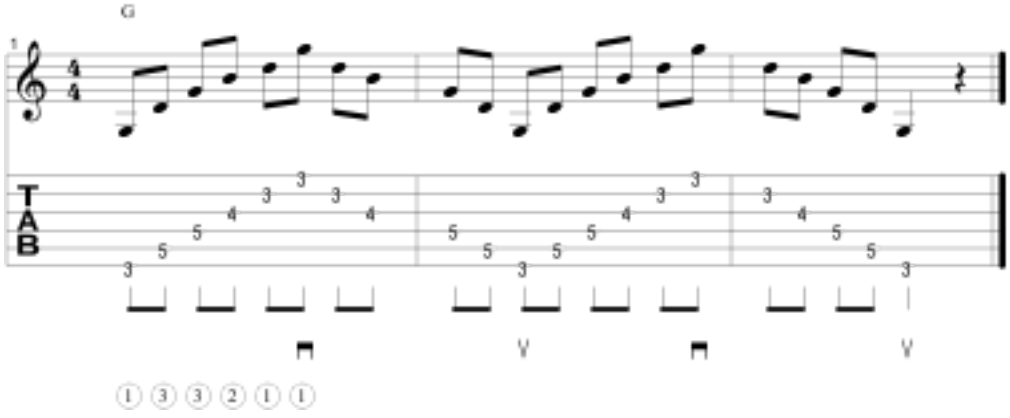
There are many right-hand techniques. We are here going to look at how to play arpeggio with a plectrum.

Arpeggio 1



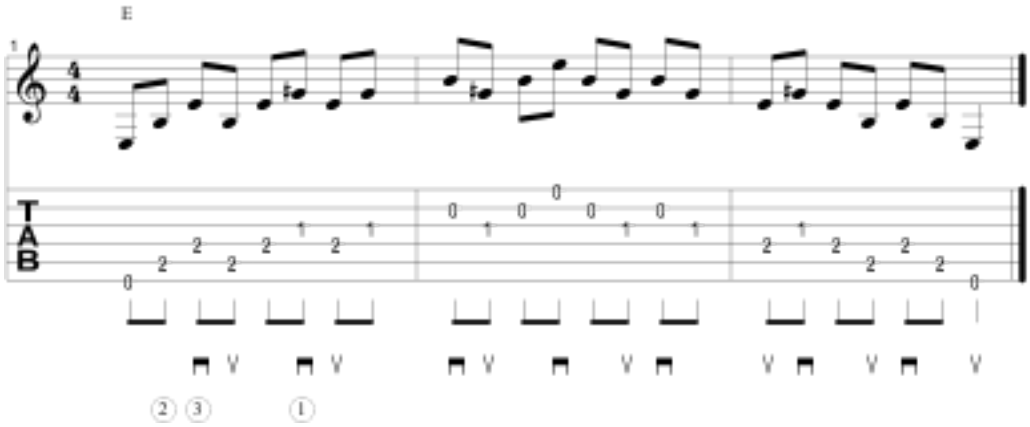
This is an Am chord. Take the chord's position, and then play the notes one after the other in alternate picking. Picking the notes this way is done only by moving your wrist and not your whole arm. Slightly lower your right arm as you shift strings.

Arpeggio 2



This time, take a G chord position, and let your pick go down the strings. It is very important that you don't pick in hard strokes. Once a string is played, your pick should rest on the next one in the same move. The return is identical, but the technique is reversed.

Arpeggio 3

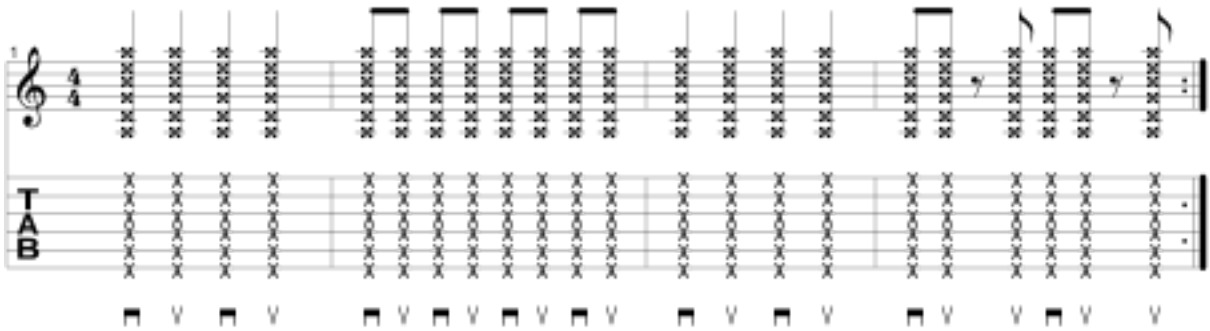


Here you will play the E chord in small successive arpeggios, over three strings. Your pick strokes must remain subtle, and your wrist should move as little as possible.

Strumming

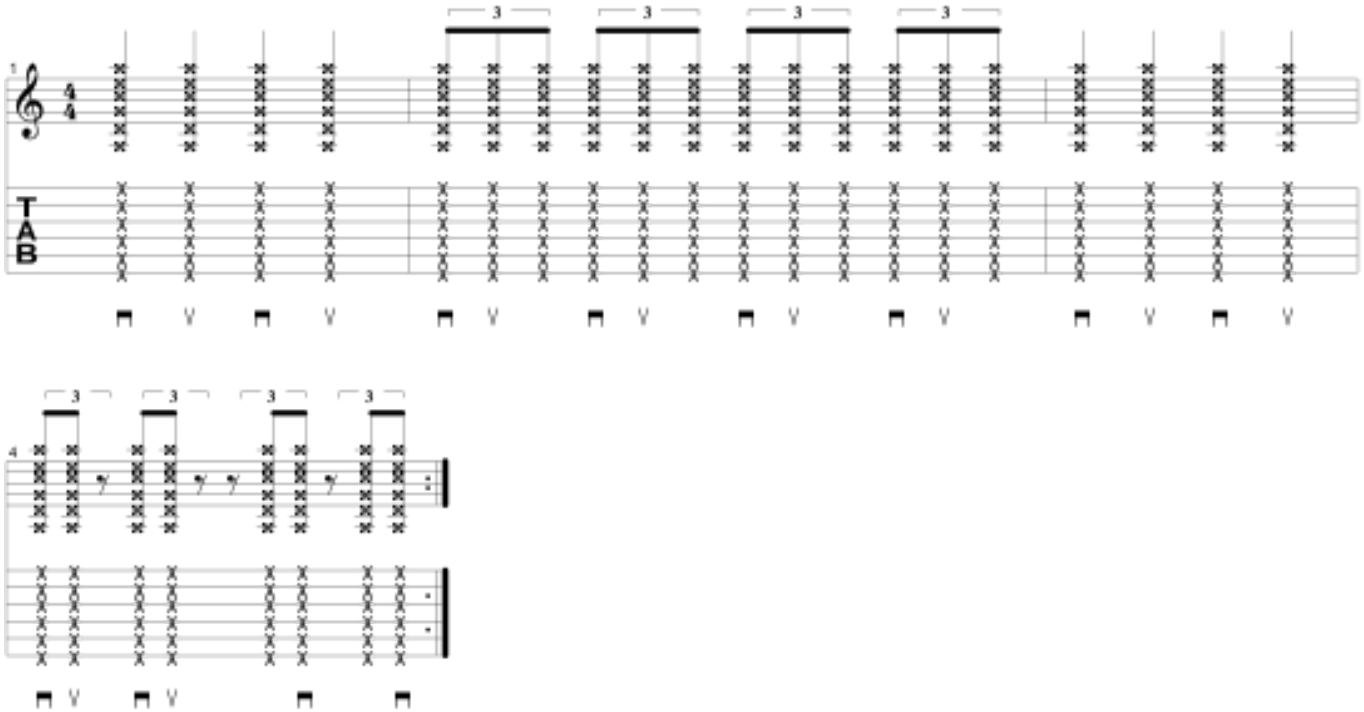
Many singers use a folk guitar for accompaniment. That type of guitar is very appreciated by beginning and intermediate guitar players. Follow the instructions carefully, as well as the pick-stroke patterns indicated below the score. To play strumming you will swing your arm from your elbow, keeping your wrist motionless.

Strumming 1



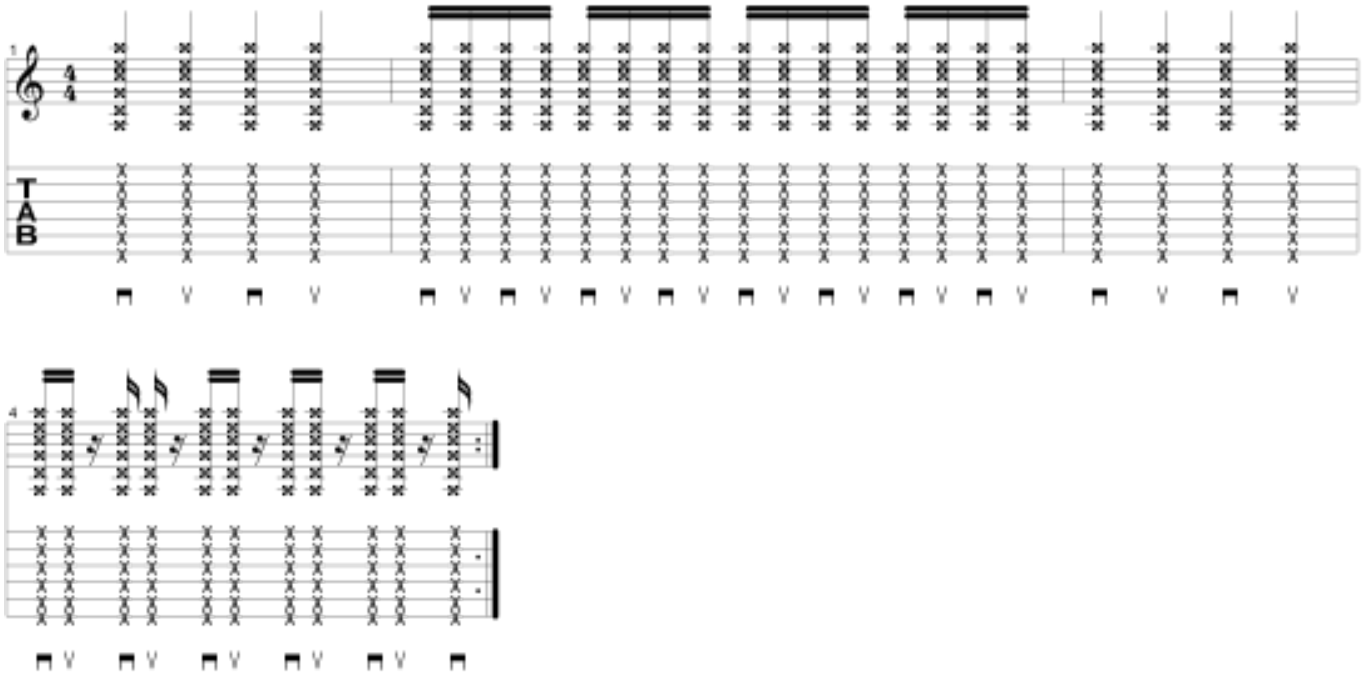
Place your left hand over the strings so as to mute them. We are going to practice quarter and eighth notes. In the fourth bar, some eighths are replaced by their counterpart rests (eighth rests).

Strumming 2



The content of this exercise is the same as before, but this time the rhythmic values used are quarter notes and triplets.

Strumming 3



Same as before, but here you play quarter and sixteenth notes.

Appendix

Guitar Lexicon

A Appendix

A

Acoustic guitar: a hollow-bodied guitar bearing no electronics.

Action: the distance between the strings and the fingerboard.

Archtop guitar: a steel-stringed jazz guitar with a distinctive arched top.

Arpeggio: a chord whose notes you play one after the other, letting them ring.

B

Baroque guitar: a small-sized guitar (from the French 17th and 18th centuries) embroidered with a crafted rosette around the hole, and often richly decorated.

Bigsby (or Bigsby vibrato tailpiece): a sizable vibrato system set on jazz, blues, and rockabilly guitar.

Body: the main part of the guitar, where the pickups and bridge are located.

Bottom plate: the back part of a guitar's body.

Braces: a series of bars glued inside the body of the guitar to strengthen its top and back. (See also "Fan bracing" and "X-brace.")

Bridge: the piece on the soundboard where the strings meet, and which transmits their vibrations to the soundboard.

Bridge saddle: a metal piece fixed to the bridge, through which the string goes.

Bubinga: Gabonese hard wood, better known as African Rosewood, characterized by a pinkish hue and purplish veins.

C

Cedar wood: a type of wood that comes from North America, which is of light to dark brown color, and is used in the making of soundboards.

Cedro wood: a very soft, light and stable type of wood, used in the making of necks.

Charango: a traditional South-American instrument, whose body was originally made from the body of an armadillo.

Chord: at least three notes played together.

Classical guitar: a guitar of Spanish origins, fitted with nylon strings.

Composite material: natural or synthetic resin which binds together free or weaved (glass or carbon) fibers.

Crunch: a modification of the signal, which produces a slight distortion.

Cutaway: an indentation in the body of the instrument adjacent to its neck, and designed to allow easier access to the upper frets and higher notes.

D

Dobro, National: the first brands to have produced guitars with metal bodies, and metal resonators.

Dopyera: the Dopyera brothers created the National resonator guitars in the 1920s.

Dreadnought: the shape of a guitar body that looks like a pear.

E

Ebony: black tropical wood used in the making of fingerboards and bridges.

Electro-acoustic guitar: an acoustic guitar equipped with pickups.

Electronics: the set of microphones, pickups, pre-amplifiers, modifiers, wires, and connectors fitted on a guitar. It is said to be active when the signal goes through an integrated pre-amplifier, and passive in all other cases.

F

Fan bracing: standard bracing pattern, commonly found on classical guitars.

Fingerboard (or **Fretboard**): a piece of wood, usually ebony or spruce, on which the frets are fitted.

Flamenca: Spanish guitar (with spruce board and cypress body), used by flamenco guitarists.

Flat top: folk guitar.

Floyd Rose Locking Tremolo: a “double-locking” vibrato system that makes it possible to keep the strings in tune while they are slackened to a degree which was not achieved with older vibrato tailpieces, making it possible to play dive bombs – i.e., a rapid lowering of the pitch of a note. (See also “Vibrato.”)

Folk guitar: an acoustic guitar with metal strings.

French polish: a method of applying shellac (and no “polish”) smoothly, finishing the instrument many times with a pad soaked with a mix of lac and alcohol.

Fretless guitar: a guitar or bass whose fingerboard is left without frets, the way a violin is.

Frets: thin metal strips embedded along the fretboard (or fingerboard) to determine finger positions.

To fret: to install or replace frets on the fingerboard.

H

Headstock: the upper part of the neck, where the machine heads are fitted and the strings tuned.

Headstock nut: a slim bar, usually made of bone, plastic or metal, constituting the point where the strings touch the neck to join the headstock, setting a regular space between each string, and delimiting its range. (See also “Nut.”)

Humbucker (Humbucking pickup): a type of electric guitar pickup invented by the Gibson engineers, which uses two coils and is able to suppress background noises.

I

Inlaying: a marquetry technique consisting in setting decorative motifs into the surface of the fretboard, the rosette, or the headstock of the instrument.

Inlays: visual references placed on the fingerboard and/or the edge of the neck.

J

Jumbo: a large-sized, curvy-shaped folk guitar.

L

Larsen effect: a special kind of whistling feedback that occurs when a loop is created between an audio input and an audio output.

Legato: a technique consisting in plucking a string only once, and playing the next notes on the same string by use of pull-offs or hammer-ons, thus producing slurred notes.

Long neck: a guitar or banjo with a long range.

Luth: one of the ancestors of the guitar, used in the 16th and 17th centuries.

M

Machine heads (or pegheads, tuners): tuning keys fitted to the headstock and used to tie the strings and adjust their tension, which in turn affects the pitch.

Magnetic microphone: consisting of at least one coil and magnetic pieces, this pickup produces an electrical signal whenever the string moves within its magnetic field.

Mahogany: a kind of tropical wood used in the making of the neck and body of a classical, folk, or electric guitar.

Maple: white wood used in the making of necks and bodies, sometimes misshaped in certain trees, and which is highly sought for the rareness of its grain, which can be watered, cloudy, or spotted.

Memory guitar: a guitar equipped with a microchip electronic system making the storing of volume and tuning settings possible.

MIDI: international standard, designed in the 1980s, which makes it possible to link several machines together and have them communicate.

Mirecourt: a French instrument-making school located in the Vosges region.

Mode: a specific scale, with unique and suggestive tones.

N

Neck: The long narrow part of the guitar where notes are fretted.

Neck joint (or Heel): the lower part of the neck, which connects it to the body.

Neck-through: a type of neck that goes through the entire body of the guitar.

Nut: a little bar, usually made of bone, inserted into the bridge, on which the strings lay and which delimit their range. (See also “Headstock Nut.”)

Nylon strings: they replace the older type of strings that used to consist of gut.

O

Outfitting: the metal parts that are added to the guitar (bridge, electronics, mechanism, etc.).

P

Pass band: the sound range of an instrument.

Pickguard (or scratchplate): a piece of laminated material that protects the soundboard from scratches.

Pickup: any type of microphone, whether magnetic, dynamic, Piezoelectric, or electrostatic, which sends an impulse from the string to the amplifier.

Pickup selector switch: a switch on the guitar’s board used to select the microphone or combination of microphones whose signal is sent to the amplifier.

Piezo pickup: a pick-up generally placed under the bridge of an electro-acoustic guitar to capture its sound.

Potentiometer: a rotary knob adjusting a given value. You can find potentiometers on instruments (for the volume, the tone, etc.), as well as on the effect pedals (for depth, length, etc.), and on the amplifiers.

Preamp: an electronic amplifier which adjusts the signal of a pickup or microphone (adapting and correcting it) before it is processed by the amplifier.

Purfling: a narrow decorative wooden, abalone, or plastic strip inlaid into the top and the sides, often also into the bottom plates, and sometimes into the neck of the instrument.

R

Range: the length of the vibrating string.

Resonator: metal cones serving as acoustic amplifiers on the Dobro and National guitars.

Ribs: the sides of the guitar’s body.

Riff: a rhythmic motif that is representative of a song.

Romantic guitar: a small-sized guitar built around the late 18th century.

Rosette: generally circular, the hole in the guitar's board which lets the sound out of the body.

Rosewood: hard wood from the Indies or Brasil (Rio), of a dark-brown hue, mainly used in the making of the bodies, the fretboard, and the bridge of acoustic guitars.

S

Semi-hollow: a term used to describe a guitar whose body is hollow, but which is half the thickness of that of an acoustic guitar.

Shielding: aluminum protection sheet located in the cavities of the guitar, and meant to reduce interferences (such as radio, neon lights, etc.).

Solid-body: the body of electric guitars, which is not hollow.

Sound holes: 'f'-shaped openings characteristic of jazz guitars, which are directly inspired by the instruments in a quartet, and which let the sound out of the body of the guitar.

Soundboard: the upper part of the guitar's body.

Spray coating: coating applied to the guitar by use of a spray gun.

Spruce: a light-hued type of wood used in the making of the acoustic guitars' soundboards.

String bender: a device fitted on some electric guitars which makes it possible to tune one string in two different ways.

Sunburst: a gradation of colored coating, usually from yellow to brown.

Sustain: the maintaining of the sound in time.

Sweep picking: a technique in which the pick plucks only one note per string. The right hand moves swiftly, as though "sweeping" over the neck.

T

Tapping: a technique consisting in alternating pull-offs and hammer-ons while tapping on the notes of the neck with the right hand.

Three-quarter-size, piccolo, tenor guitars: guitars of smaller sizes.

Timbre: the sound quality that is specific to each instrument.

Tremolo arm or tremolo bar (also called a "whammy bar" or "wang bar"): a lever attached to the side of the bridge to enable the player to create a vibrato, portamento or pitch bend effect. (See also “Vibrato.”)

Truss rod: a metal rod inserted into the guitar’s neck in order to rectify its bow.

Tuning Pegs: the pegs located at the headstock and which are used to tune the guitar. (See also “Machine heads.”)

V

Vibrato: a musical effect, corresponding to a pulsating change of pitch, used to add expression to instrumental music.

There are cases in the world of guitar where one of the terms vibrato (variation in the pitch of a musical note) or tremolo (periodic variations in the volume) is used to describe the effect normally associated with the other term. The vibrato effect is sometimes referred to as tremolo, notably in the context of a tremolo arm, which produces variations of pitch. Conversely, the so-called vibrato unit built into many guitar amplifiers produces what is known as tremolo in all other contexts.

Vintage: a term used to describe an old instrument which is often rare and sought-after.

Volume and tone control: the control knobs on the body of the guitar that are used to adjust guitar volume and tone.

X

X-brace: a standard bracing pattern on folk guitars.

The Authors

B Appendix

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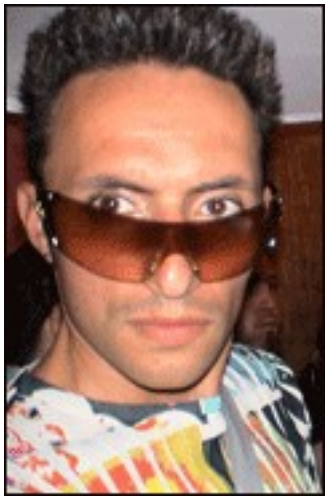

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