

Fingerpicking The Guitar

a basic guide

Will Fly



Oreham Common Press

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By Will Fly

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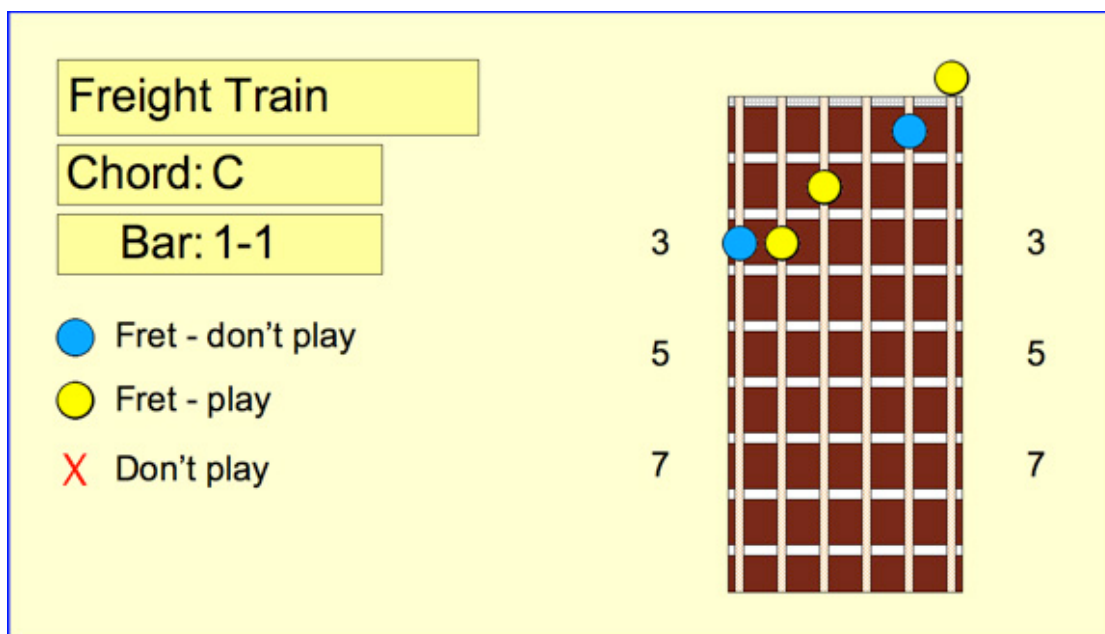
Preface

I've been playing a steel strung guitar with both pick and fingers for over 45 years. The purpose of this little book is to pass on to the beginning guitar player some of the fingerpicking techniques I've learned during this time. When I started playing the guitar in 1964, I listened to a wide variety of players with very different styles: to Merle Travis and Django Reinhardt; to Big Bill Broonzy and Segovia; to Hank Marvin and Leadbelly. Every one of these players - and many others - had something to offer to the budding guitarist. Of course, I heard these people on the radio and on record, and never met any of them in the flesh. However, I was also lucky enough to make friends with and play with other, more experienced guitarists in the places in the north-west where I lived. Each of them taught me something in their own way. After a while, like many another before me, I got the itch to perform. While some friends formed bands or joined bands, I was attracted to solo performance and found the world of the folk clubs to be an ideal place where a beginner like me could start to learn the arts of playing and performing to an audience. After moving down to London in 1968, I also joined a band - a jug band, as it happened - and, over the following years, went on from folk, blues and ragtime to play 1920s dance music, jazz, rock'n roll, Memphis soul - and ceilidh music! I still enjoy playing all these types of music in various ways and in various places. And, whatever style I play, I keep the fingers picking away at those steel strings. I hope this book inspires you to do the same.

Will Fly. 2011

Introduction

Diagrams form a major part of this book, so some preliminary explanation of how they look and what they mean is in order here. Here is a typical diagram showing the fretboard of the guitar:



In this book, the conventions are as follows:

1. The title of the song or part of the song being demonstrated is shown in the box on the top left of the diagram.
2. Below the title box is the chord shape box showing what chord is being fretted.
3. Below the chord box is a box showing the bar and in which beat of the bar the chord is being played.
4. Blue circles indicate notes which are fingered but *not* played; yellow circles indicate notes which are fingered *and* played; a red X at the top of the fretboard means "don't play this string".
5. Some diagrams also include bars showing barred and half-barred chords.

Other diagrams contain music and tablature. They look like this:

The image shows a musical score for guitar in 4/4 time, G major. It consists of a treble clef staff with a melody, a bass clef staff with a bass line, and a six-line tablature staff. The tablature uses numbers 0-3 to indicate frets. Below the tablature, the chords G, Em, C, and D7 are listed under their respective measures. Notes with stems pointing down are played with the thumb, and notes with stems pointing up are played with the fingers.

Notes with the stems pointing down are played with the thumb; notes with the stems pointing upwards are played with the fingers. The musical notation gives a clear indication of the duration of the notes and the tablature numbers show the strings and frets which make the notes sound on the fretboard. Underlying chords to a tune are shown below the tablature staff.

The book does not contain information or instructions on how to hold the guitar or on the playing of basic chord shapes – it assumes that the reader has some knowledge of these things already. However, I do have one piece of advice regarding the little finger of the picking hand. Many fingerpicking guitarists – some very well known ones - rest that finger on the face of the guitar as a kind of anchor. My view on this is that it restricts the movement of the picking hand and puts it into an unnatural position. Start by resting the picking fingers on the strings as described in Chapter 1 and there will be no restriction on the most complex picking.

Most of the examples in the first chapters of the book use a simple C major chord on which to play the fingerpicking patterns, and the patterns themselves utilise the 5th and 6th strings of the guitar – played by the thumb – and the top 3 strings of the guitar – played by the first three fingers of the second hand. However, Chapter 9 and the chapters following take you into more complex territory, so do make sure that you feel comfortable with the contents of Chapters 1 to 8 before going further.

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Chapter 1: Getting started – alternating thumb and fingers

The first thing that the budding fingerpicking guitarist should get to grips with is feeling comfortable with the picking fingers on the guitar strings. To get started, follow these picking hand instructions:

1. Rest the thumb on the 5th (A) string.
2. Rest the index (1st) finger on the 3rd (G) string
3. Rest the middle (2nd) finger on the 2nd (B) string
4. Rest the ring (3rd) finger on the 1st (E) string

Many fingerpicking practice and playing patterns can be kicked off from this basic position. Now, with these fingers resting on the strings, hold down a C chord with the fretting hand. The notes being fretted should be as in Illustration 1 below. (The circles above the nut indicate open strings).

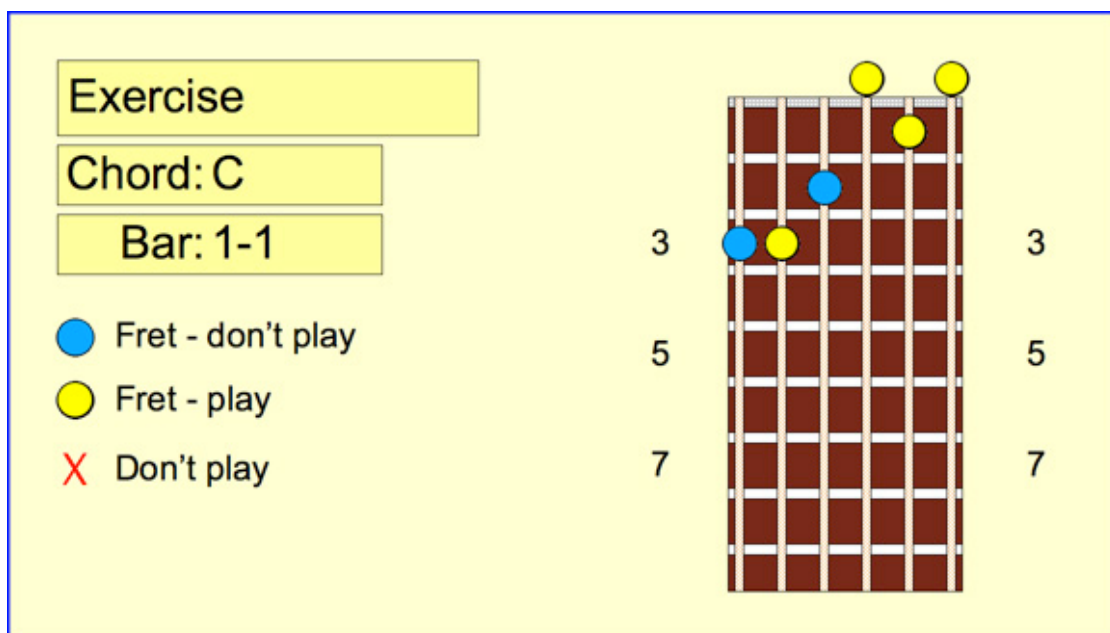


Illustration 1

If you now pluck the strings on which your plucking fingers are resting, the yellow notes in the diagram above will be played. Keep your fretting fingers in the same position on the C chord and move the thumb on your plucking hand so that it rests on the 6th string. The notes being fretted should look like this:

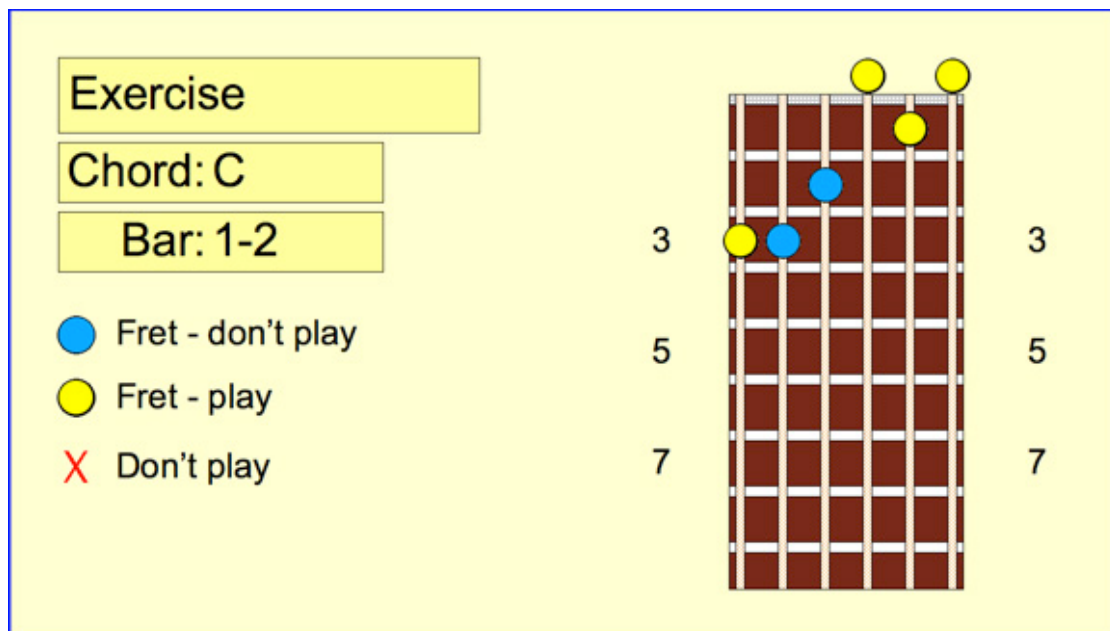


Diagram 2

This is a C chord, just like the previous chord you played, but with a different bass note to it. In the first chord you played the notes C, G, C and E; in the second chord you played the notes G, G, C and E. In both cases the bottom note was plucked by the thumb and the top three notes by the three fingers of the picking hand.

What you're going to do now is to create a simple rhythm by separating the thumb from the other three fingers. Go back to Diagram 1 on page 1 and place your picking fingers on the 5th, 3rd, 2nd and 1st strings. However, instead of plucking all four strings at the

same time, pluck the 5th string with the thumb and then the top three strings separately. In diagrammatic terms, the two separate actions are as in Diagrams 3 and 4 below:

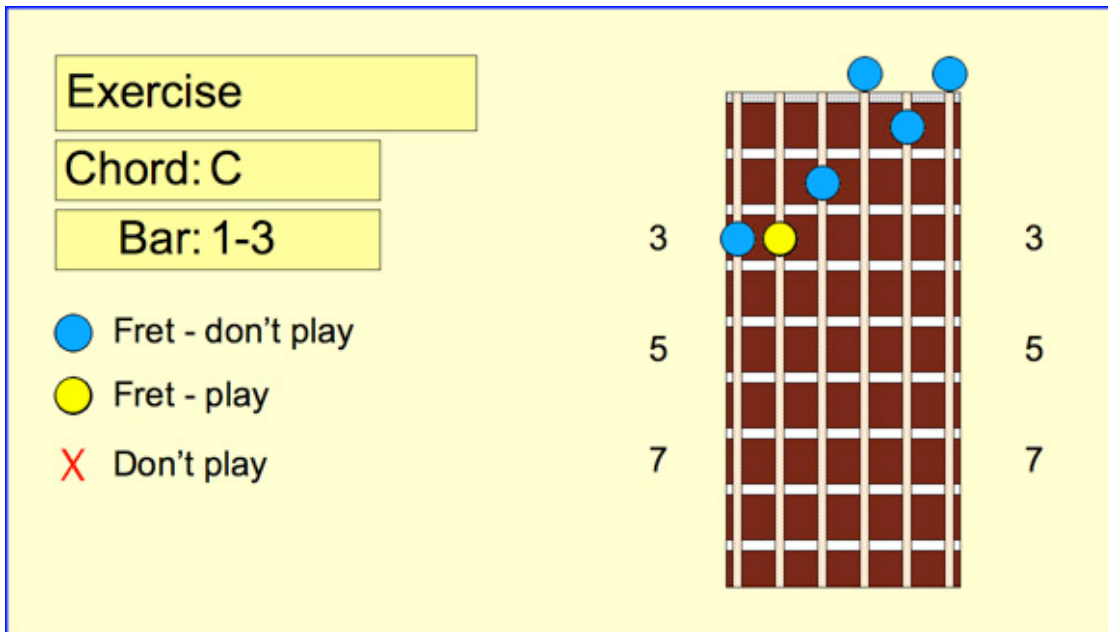


Diagram 3

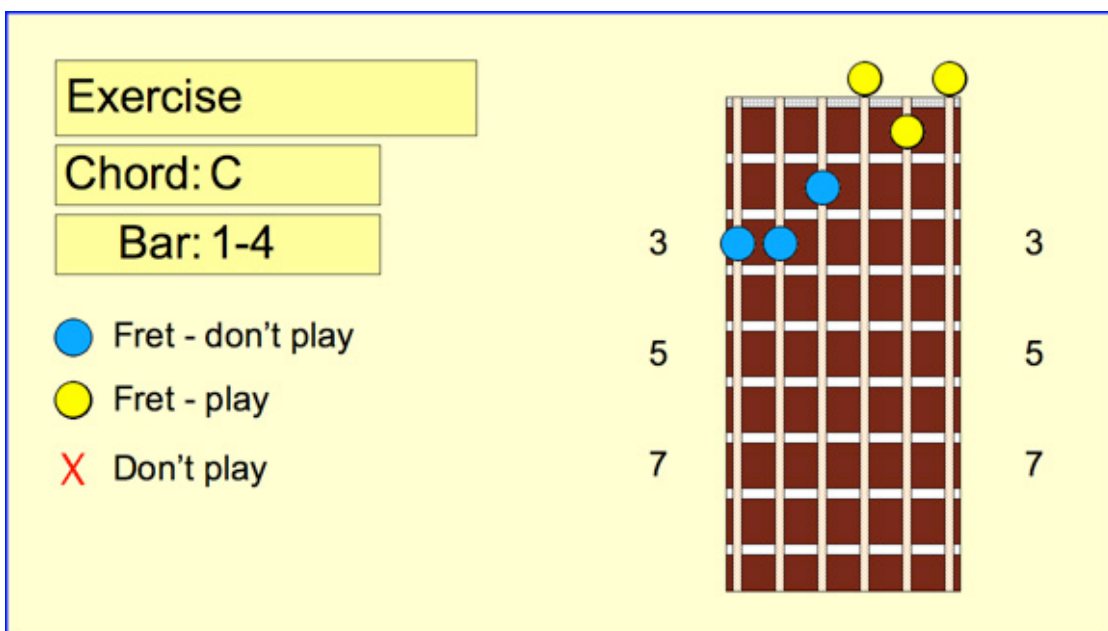


Diagram 4

Now go to the finger placement in Diagram 2 and do a similar exercise, i.e. play the 6th string with the thumb and then the top 3 strings as a separate beat – as in Diagrams 5 and 6 below:

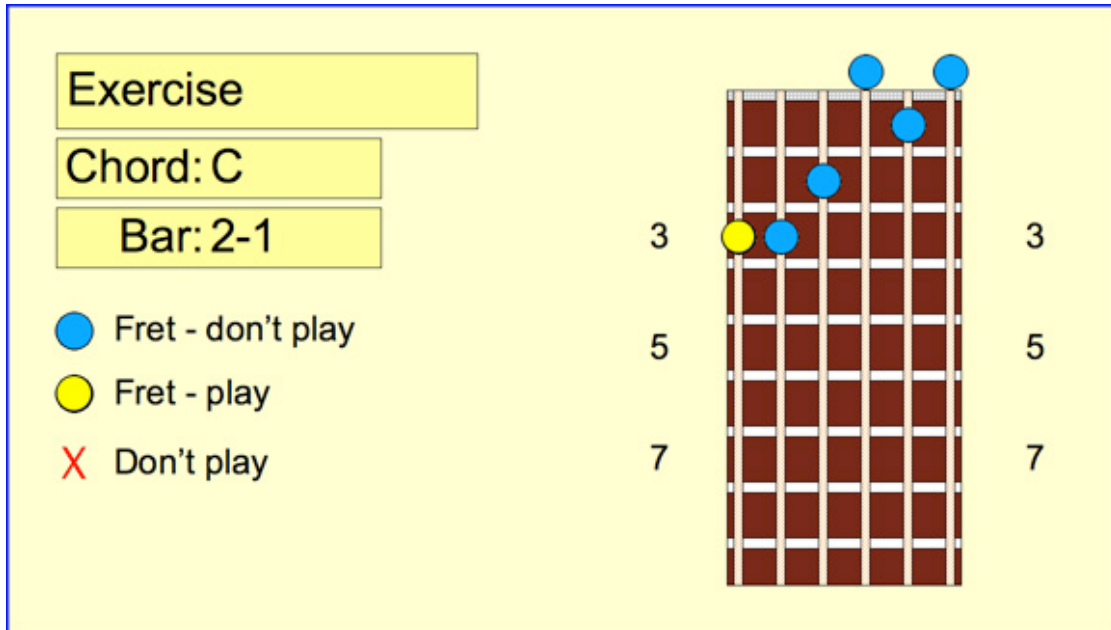


Diagram 5

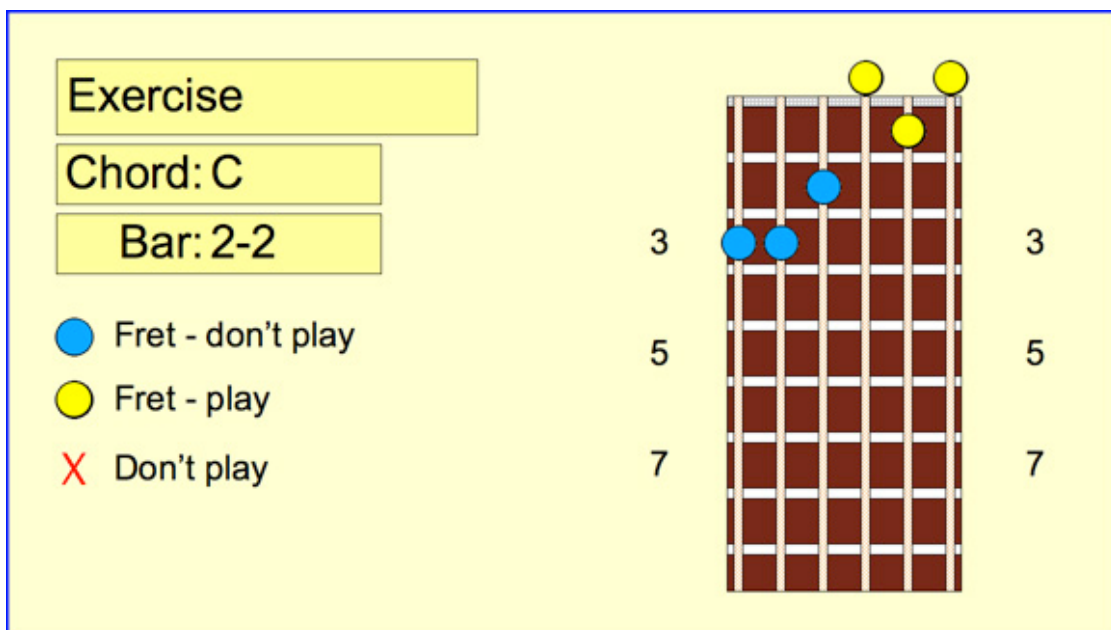


Diagram 6

The music and tablature in Diagram 7 shows exactly what you've just played in Diagrams 3-6:

Diagram 7 consists of a musical score and a guitar tablature. The musical score is written in 4/4 time and features a treble clef. The first measure contains a quarter note on G4, followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note on E4, and finally a quarter rest. The second measure contains a quarter note on G4, followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note on E4, and finally a quarter rest. The guitar tablature is written on six lines representing the strings. The first measure shows the following fret numbers: 0 on the 1st string, 1 on the 2nd string, 0 on the 3rd string, and 3 on the 4th string. The second measure shows the following fret numbers: 0 on the 1st string, 1 on the 2nd string, 0 on the 3rd string, and 3 on the 4th string. The third and fourth measures are empty.

Diagram 7

This is the beginning of fingerpicking guitar. Repeat this pattern until you can get a steady rhythm between the thumb and the three fingers of the picking hand and the alternating thumb of the fretting hand.

Chapter 2: An arpeggio played up the chord

An arpeggio is a group of notes which are played one after the other, either going up or going down the notes of a chord. Executing an arpeggio requires the player to play the notes of a chord individually to differentiate them. Here's the arpeggio we're going to play on a C chord - shown in the music and tablature in Diagram 8 below:

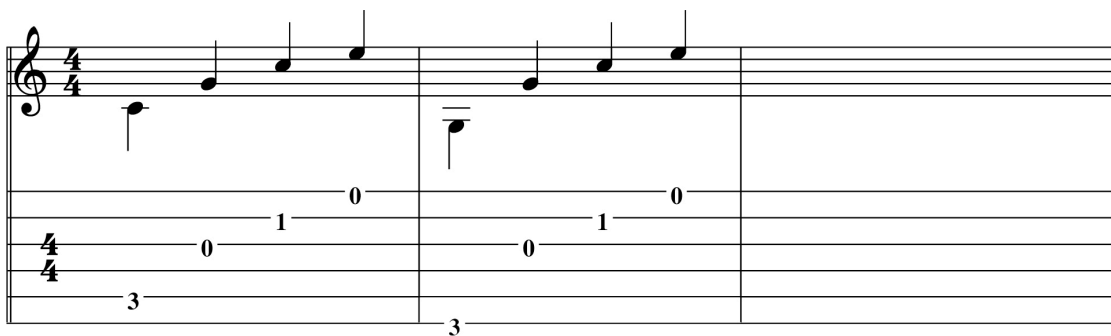


Diagram 8

Place your picking fingers as they were in Diagram 1 (page 1) and pick the strings as follows:

1. Pick the 5th string with the thumb
2. Pick the 3rd string with the 1st (index) finger
3. Pick the 2nd string with the 2nd (middle) finger
4. Pick the 1st string with the 3rd (ring) finger

Repeat the exercise from the position in Diagram 2 (page 2), i.e. pick the 6th string with the thumb and then the top three strings as in instructions 2-4 above. Diagrams 9 – 12 below show the first bar, note by note.

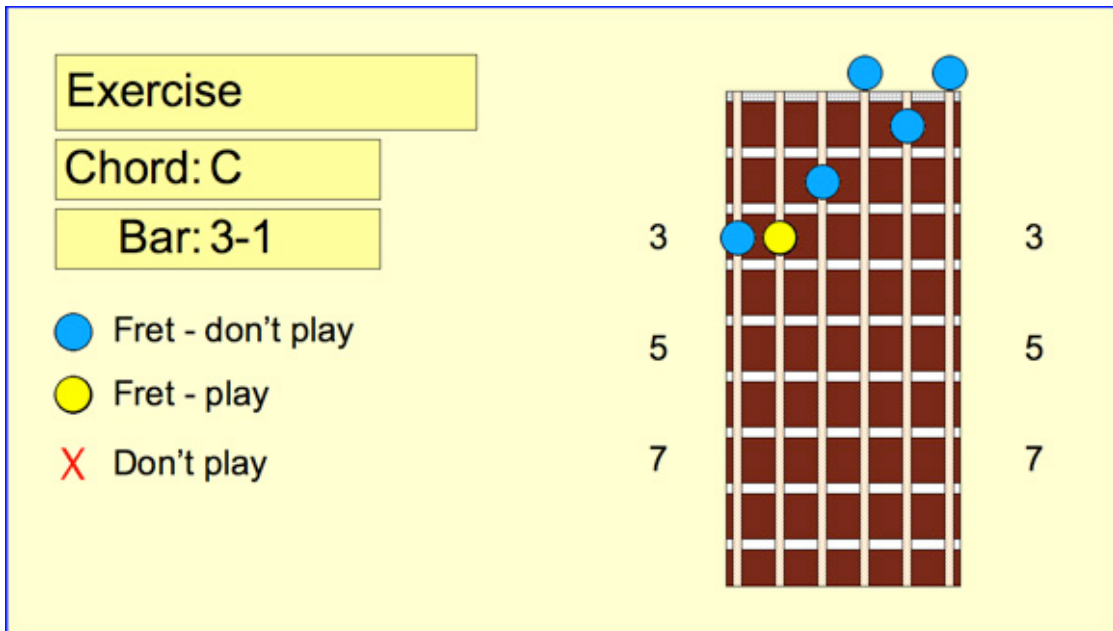


Diagram 9

The note above – low C - is played with the thumb.

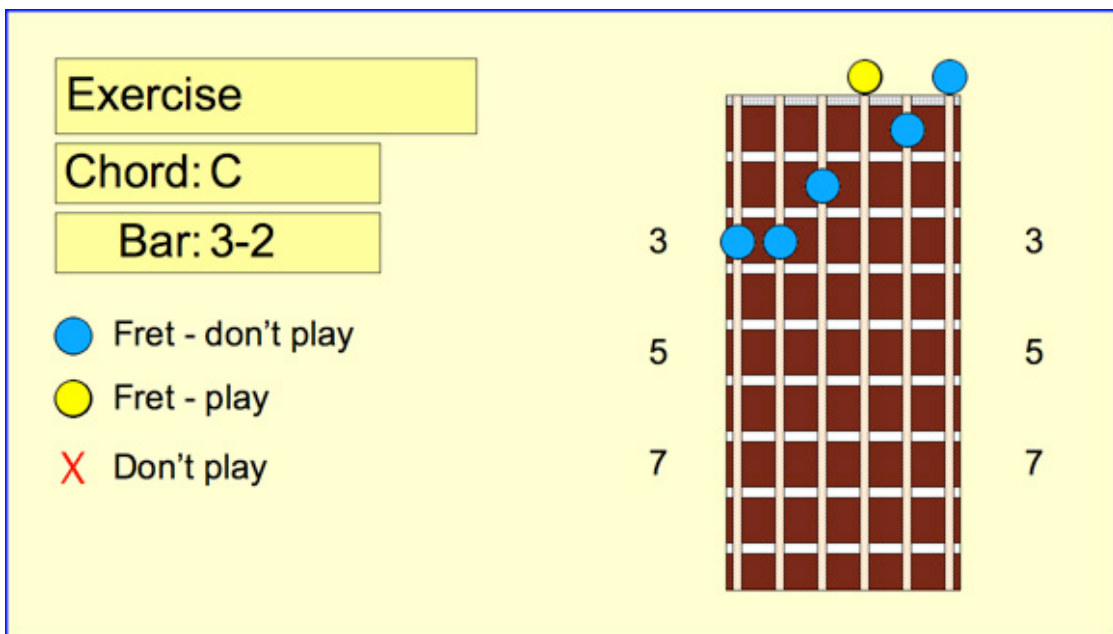


Diagram 10

The note above – G - is played with the 1st (index) finger).

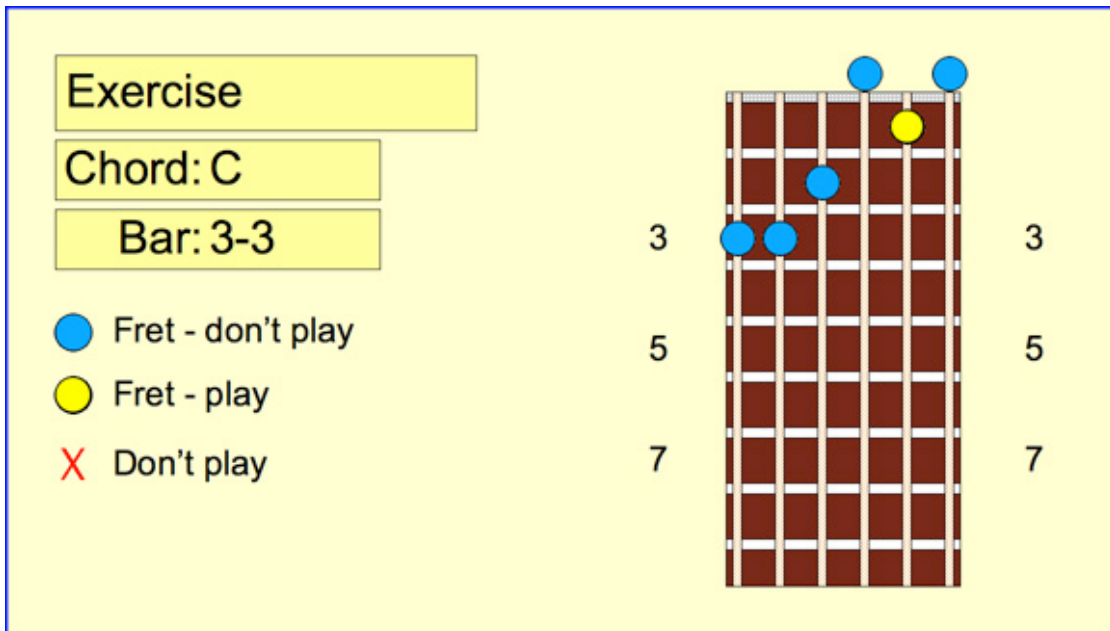


Diagram 11

The note above – a higher C - is played with the 2nd (middle) finger.

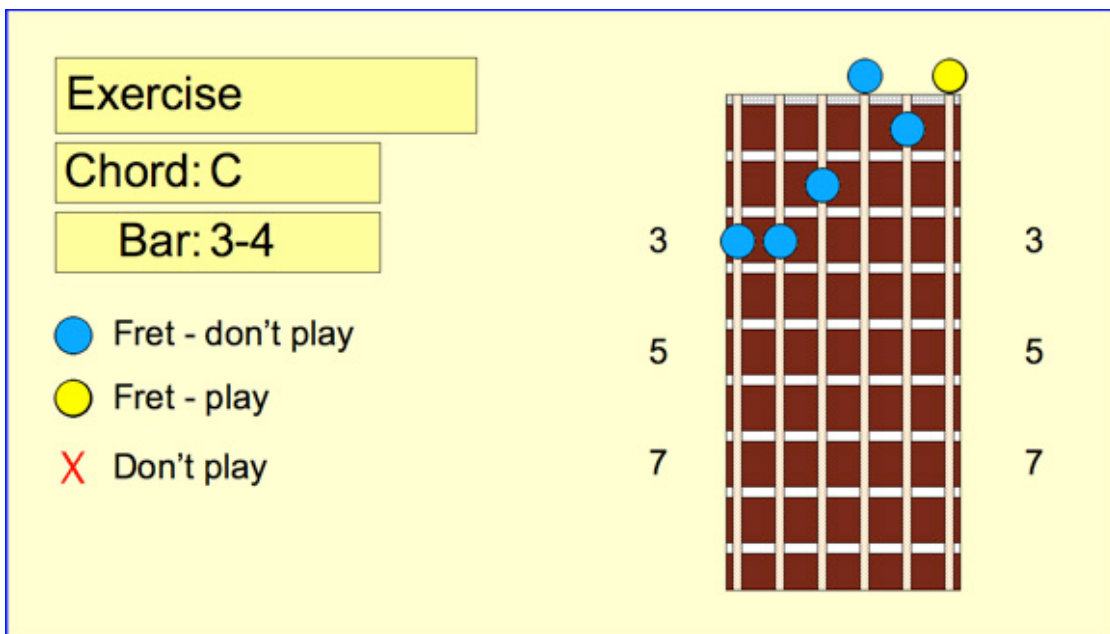


Diagram 12

The note above – E – is played with the 3rd (ring) finger. The second half of the arpeggio is the same as the first half – except that the first

note of the second half is played by the thumb picking the 6th string instead of the 5th string. Played at the correct tempo, the whole arpeggio fits into one bar and looks like this:

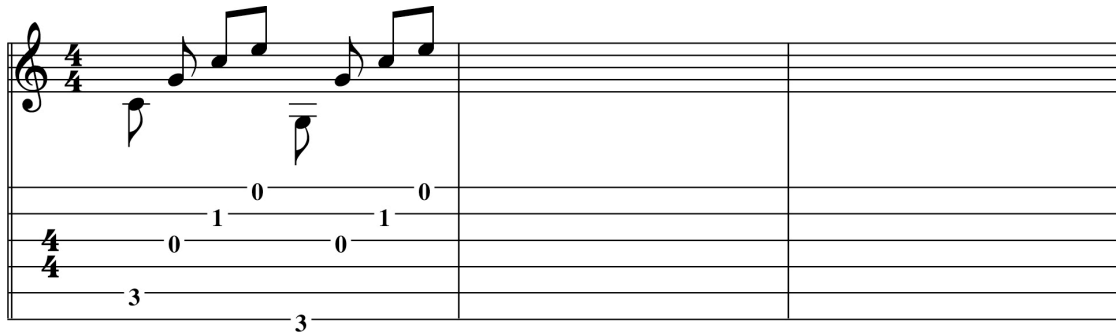


Diagram 13

Practice this on a simple C chord with a slight emphasis on the thumb beat to give the rhythm some pulse. Count **one**-two-three-four, **one**-two-three-four while playing, and make the notes as equal as possible.

And here's an important piece of advice which applies to all the patterns in this book: play *slowly* at first, making sure every note sounds equally. When every note sounds equally, then you can start to pick up speed.

Chapter 3: An arpeggio played down the chord

Arpeggios can go down the notes of a chord as well as up it. In this example, the thumb plays the first note of the 4-note arpeggio – on the 5th string, and exactly as in Diagram 9. Then, instead of playing strings 3, 2 and 1 separately with the 1st, 2nd and 3rd fingers, you play strings 1, 2 and 3 separately with the 3rd, 2nd and 1st fingers. Diagram 14 below shows the music and tablature, and Diagrams 15 – 18 below show the sequence graphically.

Diagram 14

Exercise

Chord: C

Bar: 4-1

● Fret - don't play
● Fret - play
X Don't play

Diagram 15

Play as before with thumb.

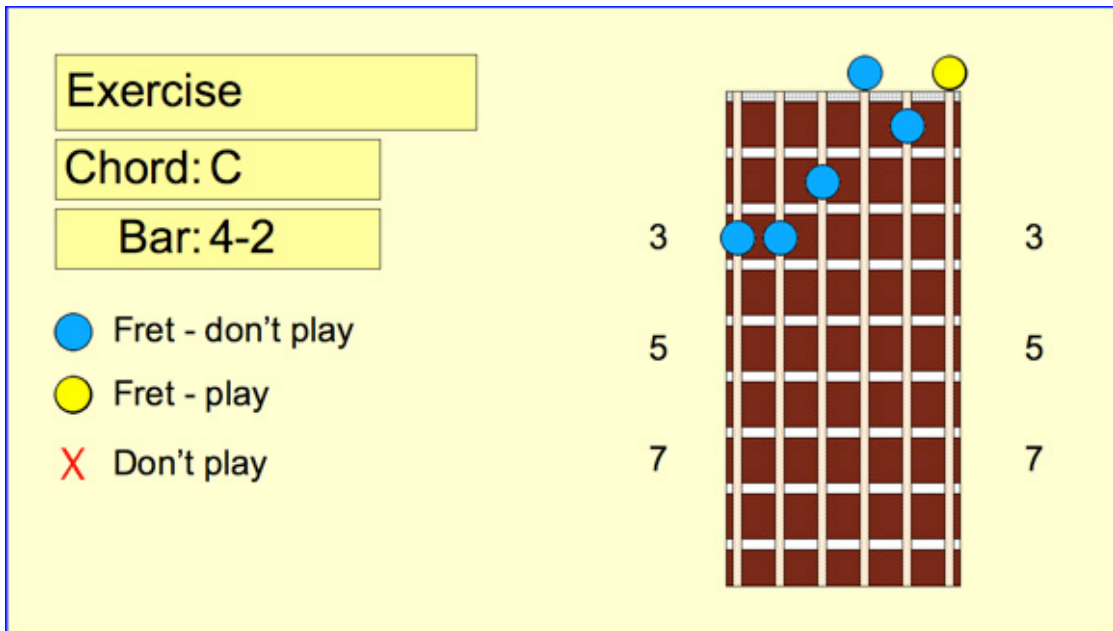


Diagram 16

Play the top E note with the 3rd finger of the picking hand.

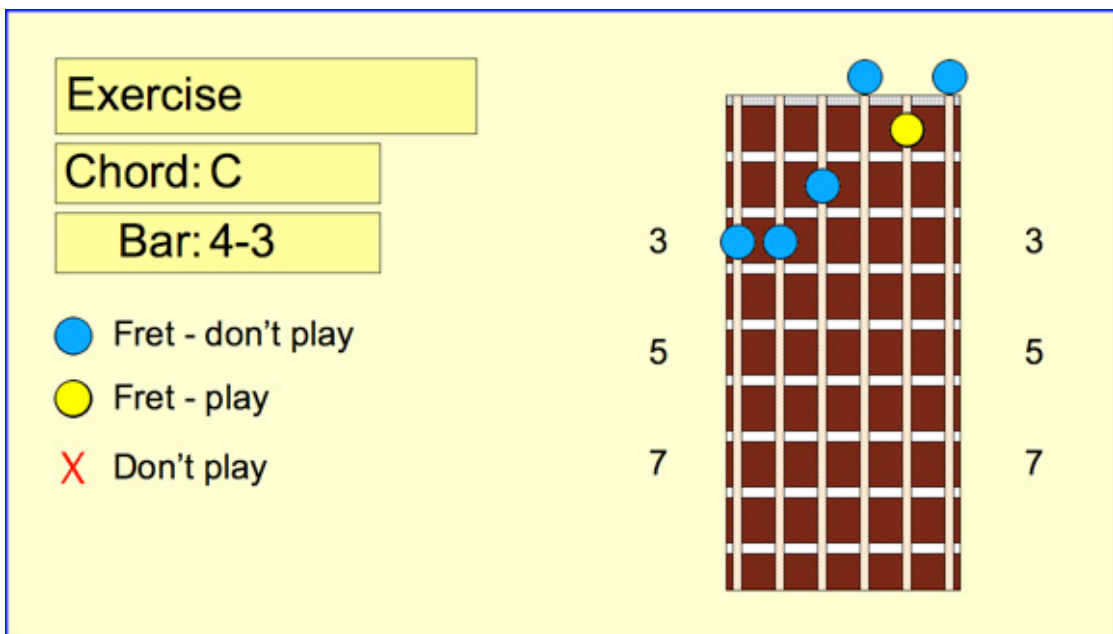


Diagram 17

Play the C note with the 2nd finger of the picking hand.

And finally...

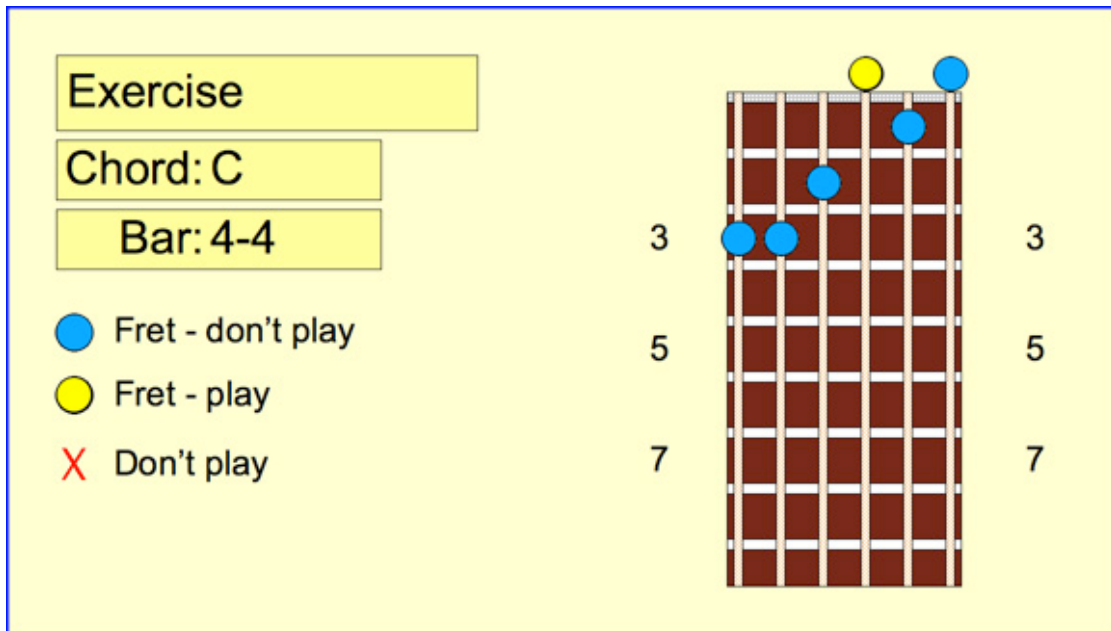


Diagram 18

Play the last note of the arpeggio – G – with the 1st finger of the picking hand.

Chapter 4: An arpeggio played up and down the chord

In this chapter you're going to combine the up arpeggio from Chapter 2 with the down arpeggio from Chapter 3. This isn't quite as simple as it sounds because, by sliding them together, the rhythm shifts from 4 beats in the bar – marked as **4/4** on the staff – to a **6/8** rhythm. **6/8** is counted as “**one**-two-three, **four**-five-six”, and the arpeggio in our exercise looks like this:

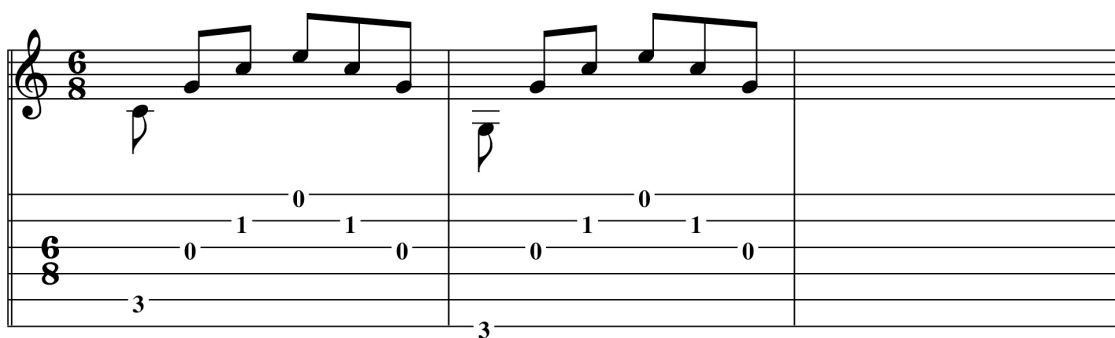


Diagram 19

As you can see, each of the notes played with the thumb – on the 5th and 6th strings respectively – is followed by five notes played on the top 3 strings by the three fingers of the picking hand. The sequence of strings and fingers after each thumb beat is:

1. 1st finger on 3rd string
2. 2nd finger on 2nd string
3. 3rd finger on 1st string
4. 2nd finger on 2nd string
5. 1st finger on 3rd string

The Diagrams overleaf show the pattern.

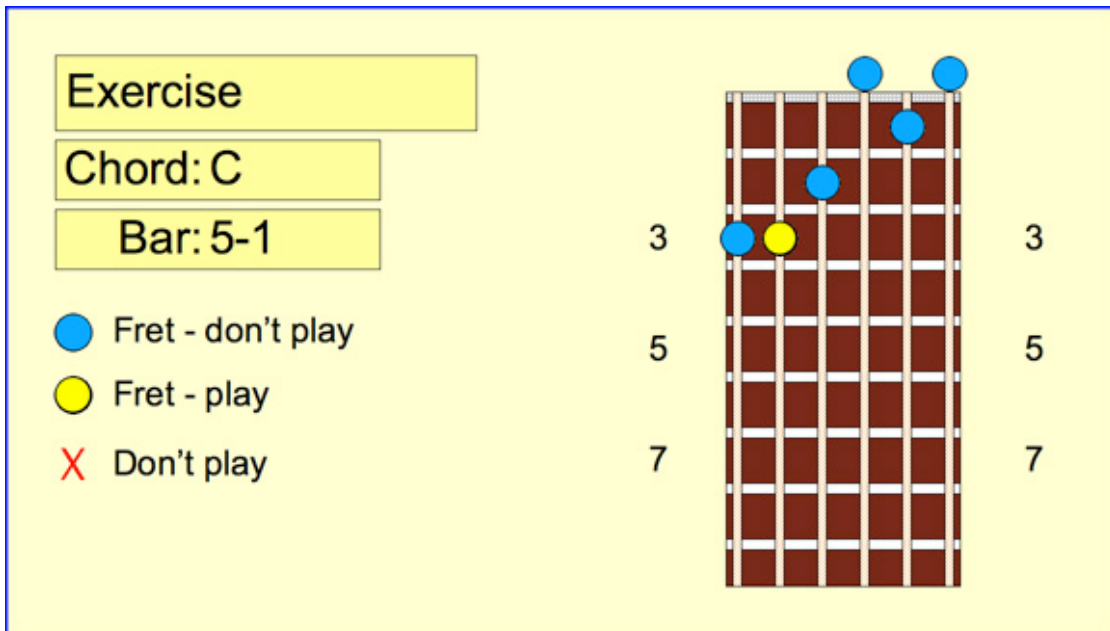


Diagram 20

Play the note above – C – with the thumb as before.

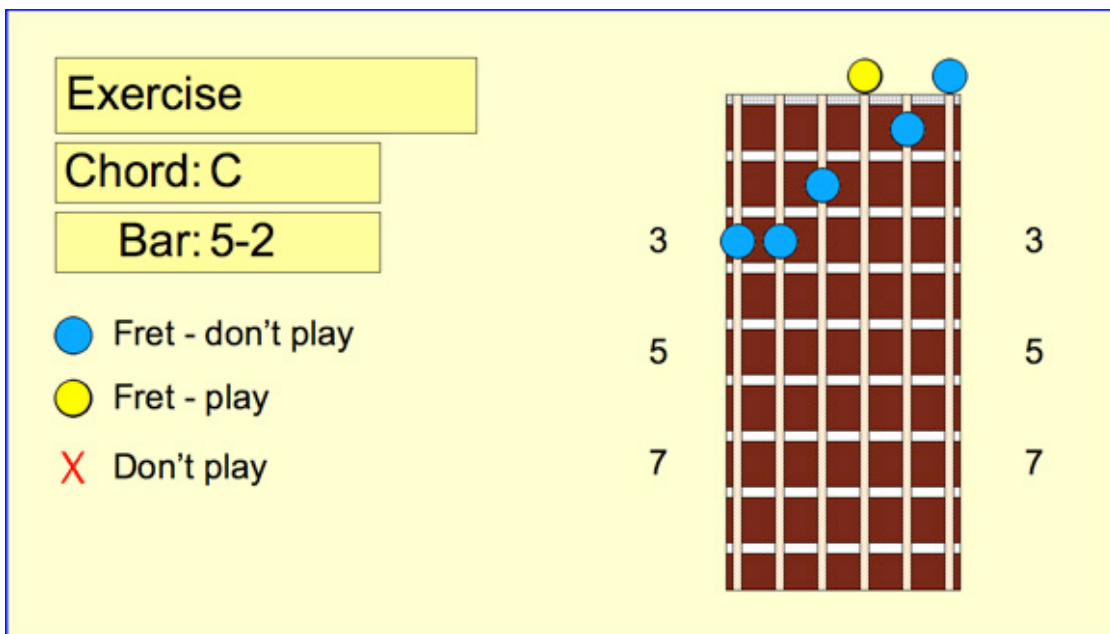


Diagram 21

Play the 2nd note of the arpeggio – G – with the 1st finger of the picking hand.

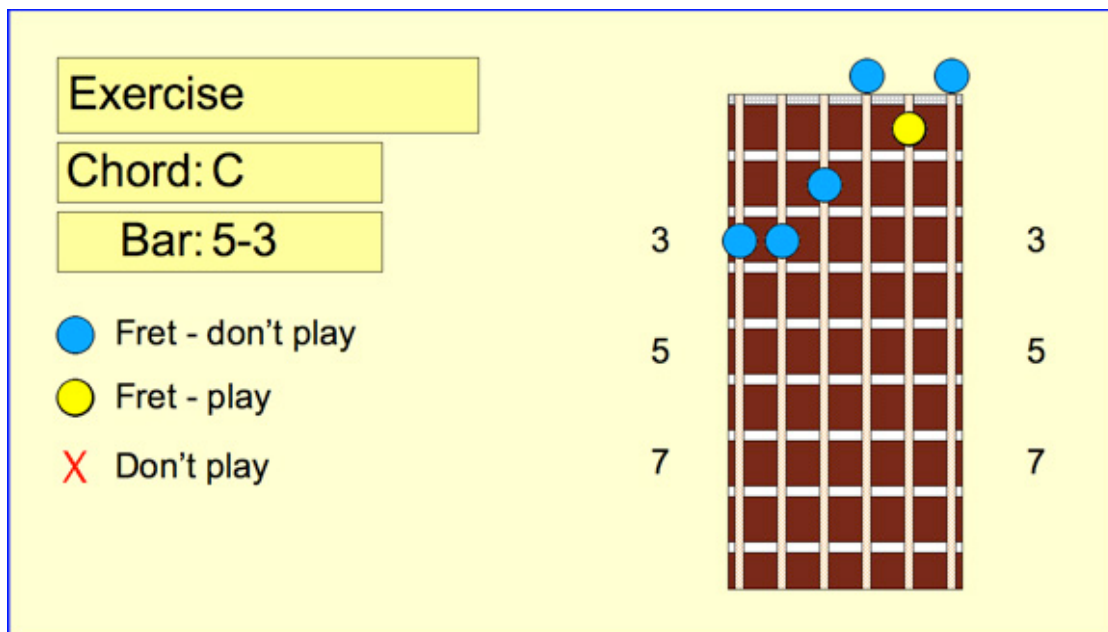


Diagram 22

Play the 3rd note of the arpeggio – C – with the 2nd finger.

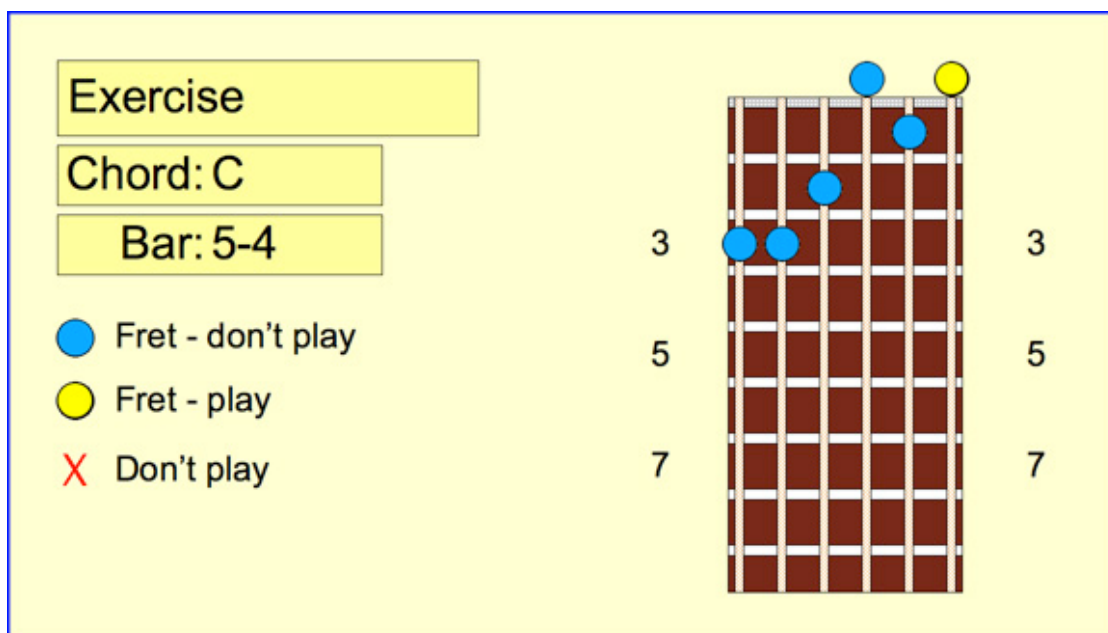


Diagram 23

Play the 4th note of the arpeggio – E – with the 1st finger of the picking hand. The next two notes complete the descending run.

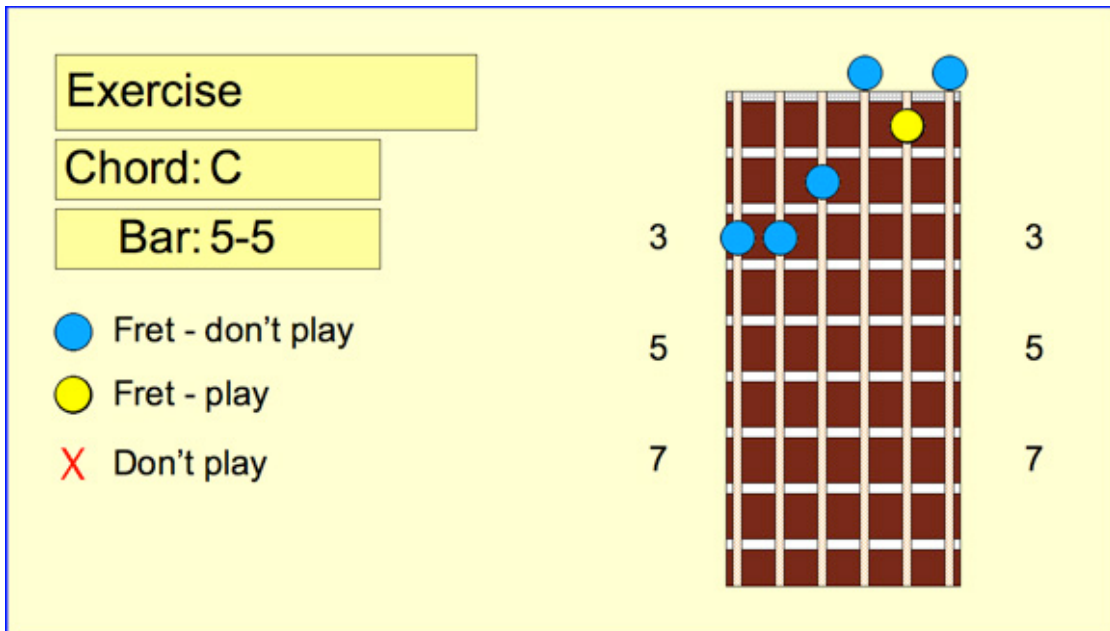


Diagram 24

Play the 5th note of the arpeggio – C – with the 2nd finger of the picking hand.

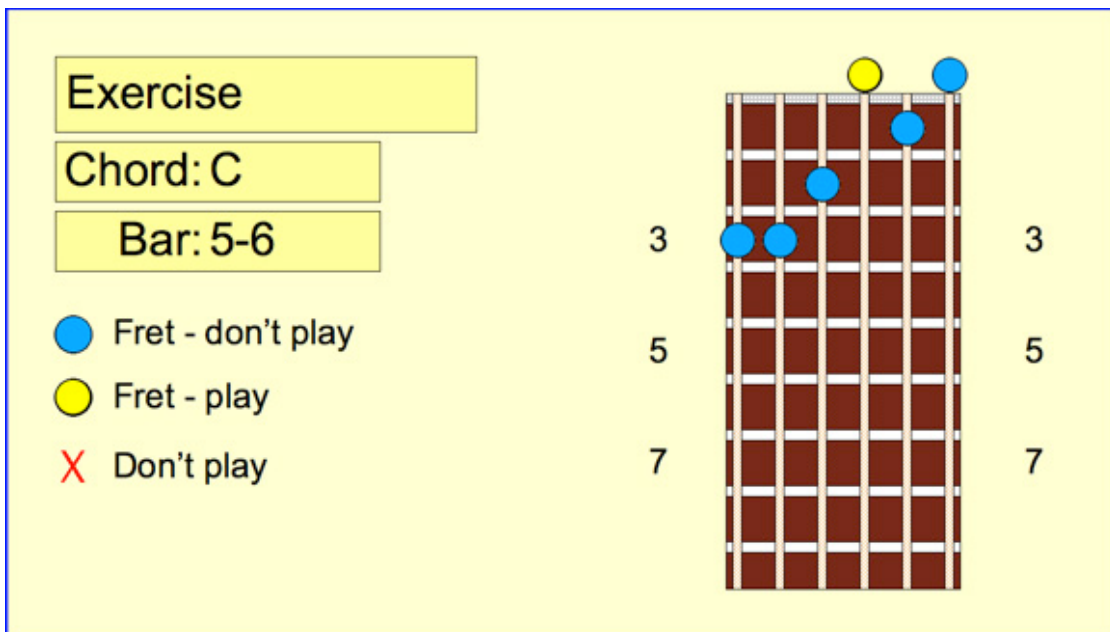


Diagram 25

Complete the arpeggio by playing 6th note G with the 1st finger.

Chapter 5: Alternating treble strings – 3rd with 2nd+1st

This picking pattern can, with practice, be played very quickly and gives a very harpsichord-like sound. In music and tablature form, it looks like Diagram 26 below:

Diagram 26 shows a musical notation and guitar tablature for a picking pattern in 4/4 time. The notation is in treble clef and 4/4 time. The first measure contains a quarter note on the 5th string, followed by an eighth note on the 3rd string, an eighth note on the 2nd string, a quarter note on the 3rd string, an eighth note on the 2nd string, and an eighth note on the 1st string. The second measure is identical but starts on the 6th string. The tablature below shows the fret numbers: 0 for the 5th string, 1 for the 3rd string, 0 for the 2nd string, 0 for the 3rd string, 0 for the 2nd string, and 0 for the 1st string. The pattern is repeated twice, with the second repetition starting on the 6th string (indicated by a '3' on the 6th line).

Diagram 26

In this pattern, the strings are played as follows:

1. The thumb picks the 5th string
2. The 1st finger picks the 3rd string
3. The 2nd+3rd fingers pick the 2nd +1st strings
4. The 1st finger picks the 3rd string

The pattern is repeated again, this time with the thumb picking the 6th string.

Note

From this point onwards in the book, I shall only use the large diagrams to illustrate chord shapes. Picking patterns will be demonstrated using music and tablature diagrams, plus descriptive notes.

Chapter 6: Alternating bass and treble pattern no. 1

The following sections of the book are going to deal with more complex picking patterns, ones in which the thumb does more than alternate on the 5th and 6th strings and in which the picking of the top three strings also becomes more irregular. We'll start with this one, using a C chord once again:

The diagram shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The notes are: quarter note G4 (5th string), quarter note E4 (2nd string), quarter note C4 (top string), quarter note G3 (4th string), quarter note E3 (6th string), quarter note C3 (top string). Below the staff, fret numbers are indicated: 0 for the 5th and 2nd strings, 1 for the 4th and 6th strings, and 3 for the top and bottom strings.

Diagram 27

Start the pattern by resting the thumb on the 5th string, the 1st (index) finger on the 2nd string and the 2nd (middle) finger on the top string. The pattern plays as follows:

1. Pick the 5th string with the thumb
2. Pick the top string with the 2nd finger
3. Pick the 4th string with the thumb
4. Pick the 2nd string with the 1st finger
5. Pick the 6th string with the thumb
6. Pick the top string with the 2nd finger
7. Pick the 4th string with the thumb
8. Pick the 2nd string with the 1st finger

That completes this pattern. You can see that, unlike the patterns described in previous chapters, the thumb is not just alternating between the 5th and 6th strings. The thumb plays a 5-4-6-4 string pattern while the 2nd and 1st fingers alternately pick the 1st and 2nd strings respectively.

The whole string sequence for this picking pattern is therefore 5-1-4-2 followed by 6-1-4-2.

Chapter 7: Travis style picking

In the 1960s this style of picking was mistakenly dubbed in the UK “clawhammer” – which is actually a way of picking a guitar or (more commonly) a 5-string banjo by flicking downwards on the strings with the back of the nails. All the fingerpicking patterns described in the chapters above actually use the alternating bass which was developed by Merle Travis in the 1930s. In this chapter we’ll look at the popular version of this which many players from Chet Atkins onwards used in their playing – and which is frequently employed by folk and blues fingerpickers to this day.

In music and tablature form, the pattern looks like this:

The diagram shows a musical staff and a guitar tablature for a Travis style picking pattern in 4/4 time. The musical staff has a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first half of the staff contains two whole notes: a G4 (open string) and a B4 (open string). The second half contains four quarter notes: an A4 (open string), a G4 (open string), an F4 (open string), and an E4 (open string). The guitar tablature below the staff shows the fretting for each note: 0 for G4, 1 for B4, 2 for A4, 2 for G4, 3 for F4, and 3 for E4. The time signature 4/4 is also written at the beginning of the tablature.

Diagram 28

Note the two whole beats in the first half of the bar and the 4 half-beats in the second part of the bar. This gives a characteristic “dum, dum, didee, didee” sound to the rhythm.

To play this Travis style pattern, follow the instructions on the following page.

1. Pick the 5th string with the thumb
2. Pick the 4th string with the thumb *and* pick the 1st string with the 3rd finger, at the same time.
3. Pick the 6th string with the thumb
4. Pick the 2nd string with the 2nd finger
5. Pick the 4th string with the thumb
6. Pick the 3rd string with the 1st finger

Steps 3 to 6 are played at double the speed of steps 1 to 2. This may seem complicated at first sight but, after playing slowly to begin with and then picking up speed, the rhythmic pattern will become clear.

Chapter 8: Picking different chord shapes

So far, all the fingerpicking examples in this book have used a simple, six-string C major chord as the basis for instruction. However, there aren't many tunes which only use a C chord and the purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how the picking patterns are adapted and altered to play through chords which may or may not use all six strings of the guitar.

Here's a typical D major chord:

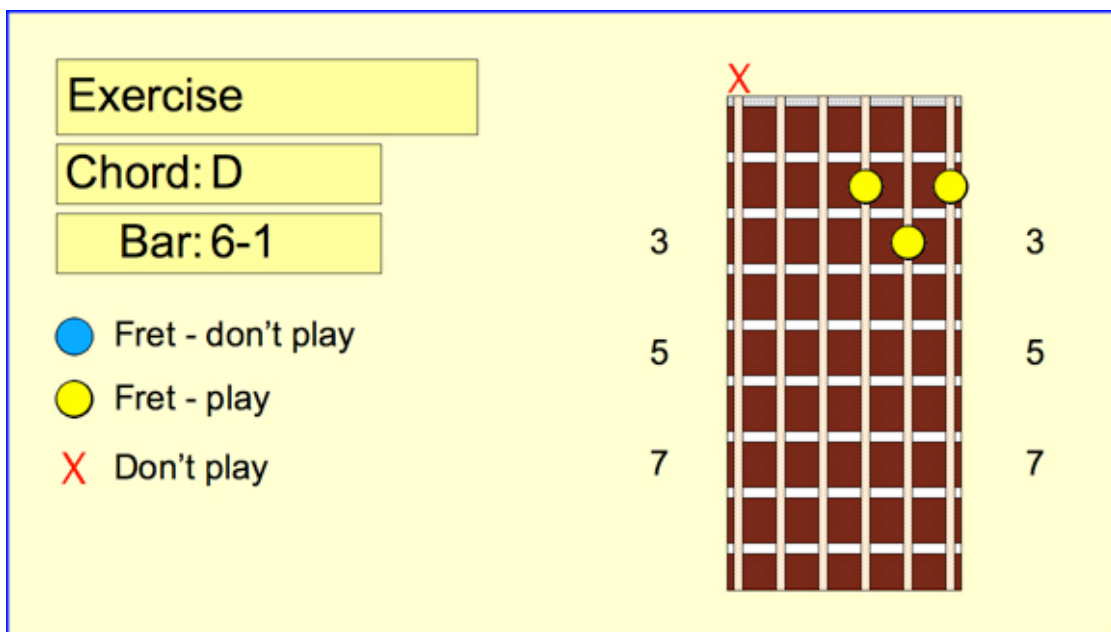


Diagram 29

In this version of the basic D chord, the 6th string isn't fretted or played, so the thumb patterns used for the C chord – alternating between 5th string and 6th string – have to be adapted. In the example below, the thumb alternates between 4th and 5th strings while the 1st, 2nd and 3rd fingers play the 3rd, 2nd and 1st strings:

Diagram 30 shows a musical score in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score consists of two measures. The first measure contains a D major chord (F#4, A4, C#5) and a D major chord (F#4, A4, C#5). The second measure contains a D major chord (F#4, A4, C#5) and a D major chord (F#4, A4, C#5). The bass line shows the following fingering: Measure 1: 2 (4th string), 3 (5th string), 2 (6th string); Measure 2: 2 (4th string), 3 (5th string), 2 (6th string). The thumb alternates between the 4th and 5th strings.

Diagram 30

This is the alternating thumb/fingers pattern described in Chapter 1 – played on a D chord instead of a C chord.

And here's the arpeggio pattern from Chapter 2 also played on the D major chord:

Diagram 31 shows a musical score in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score consists of two measures. The first measure contains a D major arpeggio (F#4, A4, C#5) and a D major arpeggio (F#4, A4, C#5). The second measure contains a D major arpeggio (F#4, A4, C#5) and a D major arpeggio (F#4, A4, C#5). The bass line shows the following fingering: Measure 1: 2 (4th string), 3 (5th string), 2 (6th string); Measure 2: 2 (4th string), 3 (5th string), 2 (6th string). The thumb alternates between the 4th and 5th strings.

Diagram 31

In both these examples, the thumb alternates between the 4th and 5th strings. A simple guide to follow, when playing a chord sequence with any fingerpicking pattern, is to alternate between 5th and 6th strings with the thumb on six-string chords – and between the 4th and 5th strings with the thumb on five-string chords. But there are exceptions to this, and the next chapters contain some practice sequences using different patterns over different chords.

Chapter 9: Patterns played over chord sequences (1)

The first practice exercise is in the key of G. It utilises the chords of G, Em, C and D7, and the first example shown uses the simple alternating thumb and three-finger pattern from Chapter 1.

Diagram 32 shows a musical exercise in 4/4 time, key of G major. The chord sequence is G, Em, C, D7, G, Em, C, D7. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The bass line is indicated by a thick line below the guitar strings. Fingerings are shown with numbers 0-3.

Diagram 32

In this exercise you can see that the thumb picks out a bass line which starts on a low G note, goes down to the bottom E note, then up to the C note on the 5th string – and then up to the open D note on the 4th string.

Here's the same chord sequence played with a basic up arpeggio:

Diagram 33 shows the same chord sequence as Diagram 32, but with an up-bow arpeggio pattern. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The bass line is indicated by a thick line below the guitar strings. Fingerings are shown with numbers 0-3.

Diagram 33

The bar lengths have been spaced out and kept to two bars for clarity, but the bass run is exactly the same as in Diagram 32. Now here's the same chord sequence played with a down arpeggio:

Diagram 34 shows a musical exercise in 4/4 time. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The bass line is played with the thumb (indicated by a '3' above the notes). The chord sequence is G, Em, C, and D7. The notation includes a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a key signature of one sharp. The bass line is shown on a grand staff with a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: G (3), Em (0), C (0), D7 (3). The bass line is: 3 0 0 0 | 0 1 0 3 | 3 0 0 2 | 0 0 0 2. The chord sequence is: G, Em, C, D7.

Diagram 34

Once again the bass line played with the thumb is exactly the same as in Diagrams 32 and 33 – only the notes sequences are different. The next exercise takes the up-and-down arpeggio in 6/8 time and applies it to the same chord sequence. It looks like this:

Diagram 35 shows a musical exercise in 6/8 time. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The bass line is played with the thumb (indicated by a '3' above the notes). The chord sequence is G, Em, C, and D7. The notation includes a treble clef, a 6/8 time signature, and a key signature of one sharp. The bass line is shown on a grand staff with a 6/8 time signature. The notes are: G (3), Em (0), C (0), D7 (3). The bass line is: 3 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0 | 0 1 1 0 | 0 2 3 3 | 0 2 3 2. The chord sequence is: G, Em, C, D7.

Diagram 35

This is a very flowing pattern with one chord per bar, as opposed to the two chords per bar in the previous exercises.

Chapter 10: Patterns played over chord sequences (2)

This chapter builds on the previous chapter with some more, slightly more complex exercises. Let's start by taking the G-Em-C-D7 chord sequence and utilising the alternating thumb-3-(2+1)-3 pattern as shown below:

Diagram 36 shows a musical exercise in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The exercise is played over a G-Em-C-D7 chord sequence. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The exercise is divided into two measures for each chord. The first measure of G has a treble clef line with notes G4, B4, D5, and G4, and a bass clef line with notes G2, B2, D3, and G2. The second measure of G has a treble clef line with notes G4, B4, D5, and G4, and a bass clef line with notes G2, B2, D3, and G2. The Em measure has a treble clef line with notes G4, B4, D5, and G4, and a bass clef line with notes G2, B2, D3, and G2. The C measure has a treble clef line with notes G4, B4, D5, and G4, and a bass clef line with notes G2, B2, D3, and G2. The D7 measure has a treble clef line with notes G4, B4, D5, and G4, and a bass clef line with notes G2, B2, D3, and G2. The exercise uses the alternating thumb-3-(2+1)-3 pattern.

Diagram 36

Once again the bars have been lengthened for clarity. We'll use this chord sequence yet again for some alternate thumb and finger picking, using the pattern in Chapter 6:

Diagram 37 shows a musical exercise in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The exercise is played over a G-Em-C-D7 chord sequence. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The exercise is divided into two measures for each chord. The first measure of G has a treble clef line with notes G4, B4, D5, and G4, and a bass clef line with notes G2, B2, D3, and G2. The second measure of G has a treble clef line with notes G4, B4, D5, and G4, and a bass clef line with notes G2, B2, D3, and G2. The Em measure has a treble clef line with notes G4, B4, D5, and G4, and a bass clef line with notes G2, B2, D3, and G2. The C measure has a treble clef line with notes G4, B4, D5, and G4, and a bass clef line with notes G2, B2, D3, and G2. The D7 measure has a treble clef line with notes G4, B4, D5, and G4, and a bass clef line with notes G2, B2, D3, and G2. The exercise uses alternate thumb and finger picking.

Diagram 37

The thumb is picking out four notes per chord, while the 2nd and 1st fingers alternate with the thumb strokes. You can see that, on the D7

chord in the 4th bar, the thumb is picking strings 4 and 3 followed by 5 and 3 – while the 2nd and 1st fingers play the 1st and 2nd strings respectively. It looks complex but playing it slowly at first will bring out the picking pattern.

In the next exercise, we'll use the same chord sequence with a Travis-style “clawhammer” pattern:

The diagram shows a four-measure exercise in 4/4 time, key of G major. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, A4 in the first measure; G4, F#4, E4, D4 in the second; G4, A4, B4, A4 in the third; and G4, A4, B4, A4 in the fourth. The bass line consists of quarter notes: G2, B2, D3, B2 in the first measure; G2, B2, D3, B2 in the second; G2, B2, D3, B2 in the third; and G2, B2, D3, B2 in the fourth. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-3 and 0 (open string). Chord diagrams are shown below the bass line for each measure: G, Em, C, and D7.

Diagram 38

It's probably becoming obvious by now that these fingerpicking patterns are just guides to playing and not an exact science. Where the thumb and fingers actually play can depend on the chords being fretted and the sound required.

The next chapters consist of a series of chord sequences and different fingerpicking patterns put together in a few combinations, and these are intended to help you feel at ease with fingerpicking the guitar. As always, take them slowly at first and play them over again until the process of playing them becomes more and more natural.

Chapter 11: Picking tune no. 1

Here's a simple 12-bar blues to get started with:

The diagram shows a 12-bar blues guitar picking exercise in D major, 4/4 time. The piece is divided into four systems of three bars each. Each system includes a treble clef staff with a melody of eighth notes and a bass staff with a picking pattern of eighth notes. Chord diagrams are provided below each system:

- System 1 (Bars 1-3):** Treble clef melody: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter). Bass staff: 2-3-2-2-3-2 | 3-0-3-0-3-0 | 2-3-2-2-3-2. Chords: D, G, D.
- System 2 (Bars 4-6):** Treble clef melody: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter). Bass staff: 2-1-2-2-1-2 | 3-0-3-0-3-0 | 3-0-3-0-3-0. Chords: D7, G, G.
- System 3 (Bars 7-9):** Treble clef melody: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter). Bass staff: 2-3-2-2-3-2 | 2-3-2-2-3-2 | 3-2-0-0-3-2. Chords: D, D, A7.
- System 4 (Bars 10-12):** Treble clef melody: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter). Bass staff: 1-0-1-0-0-0 | 2-3-2-2-3-2 | 2-2-2-2-2-0. Chords: G7, D, D.

Diagram 39

This simple pattern may not sound too bluesy at first, but playing it consistently and at a regular speed will bring out the typical 12-bar blues sequence. Now try the same pattern on these chords:

The diagram shows a 12-bar blues sequence in G major, 4/4 time. Each bar consists of a treble clef staff with a melody line and a guitar tablature staff. The chords are indicated below the tablature.

- Bar 1:** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time. Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). Tab: 3 0 3 0. Chord: $\overset{3}{G}$.
- Bar 2:** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time. Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). Tab: 0 1 0 1. Chord: C.
- Bar 3:** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time. Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). Tab: 3 0 3 0. Chord: $\overset{3}{G}$.
- Bar 4:** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time. Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). Tab: 1 0 1 0. Chord: G7.
- Bar 5:** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time. Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). Tab: 0 1 0 1. Chord: C.
- Bar 6:** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time. Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). Tab: 0 1 0 1. Chord: C.
- Bar 7:** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time. Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). Tab: 3 0 3 0. Chord: $\overset{3}{G}$.
- Bar 8:** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time. Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). Tab: 3 0 3 0. Chord: $\overset{3}{G}$.
- Bar 9:** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time. Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). Tab: 1 0 1 0. Chord: $\overset{2}{D7}$.
- Bar 10:** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time. Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). Tab: 0 2 0 2. Chord: 2.
- Bar 11:** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time. Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). Tab: 0 2 0 2. Chord: 2.
- Bar 12:** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 4/4 time. Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). Tab: 3 0 3 0. Chord: $\overset{3}{G}$.

Diagram 40

You'll notice that I'm using a slightly different D7 shape for the exercise in Diagram 40. One that looks like this:

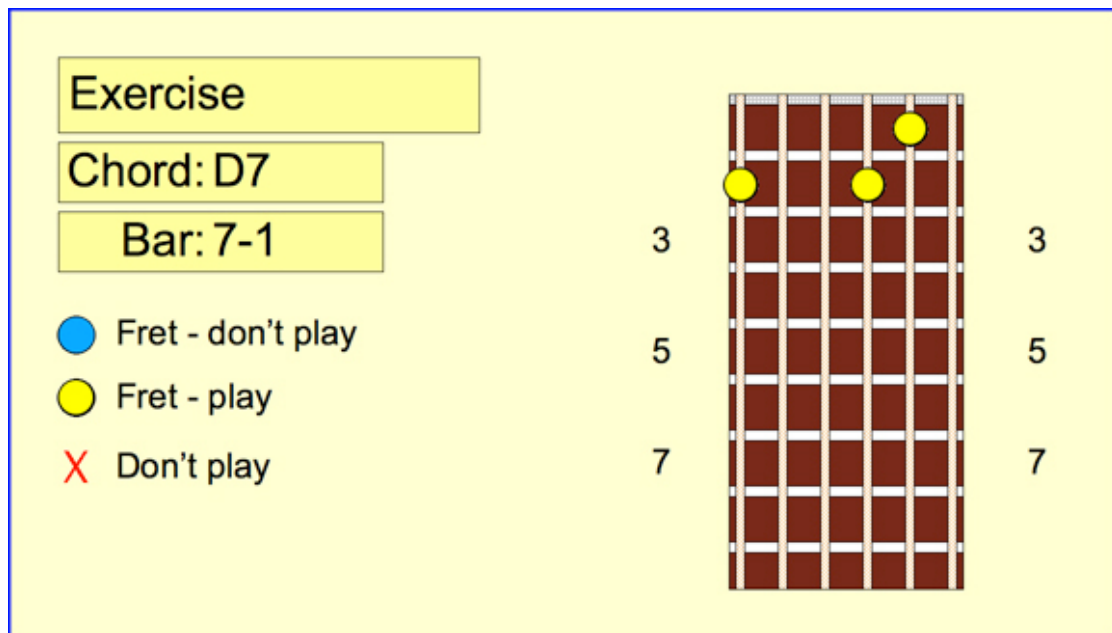


Diagram 41

To fret this chord:

1. Place the 1st finger on the 2nd string/1st fret
2. Place the 2nd finger on the 6th string/2nd fret
3. Place the 3rd finger on the 3rd string/2nd fret

You could also use the thumb on the fretting hand to play the 2nd fret on the bottom (6th) string. Curl it over to stop the string – it may feel a little uncomfortable at first but you will get used to it. It's a good chord to use in a sequence such as Am – D7 – G because you get a nice bass line up the notes on the bottom G string: E to F# to G.

Chapter 12: Picking tune no. 2

Here's a different chord sequence, put to the picking pattern – Travis-style – described in Chapter 7:

The diagram consists of three systems of guitar tablature, each with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The time signature is 4/4. The melody in the treble staff is consistent across all systems, consisting of quarter notes and eighth notes. The bass staff shows the Travis-style picking pattern with fingerings (1, 2, 3) and fret numbers (0, 2, 3). Chord changes are indicated by letters below the bass staff.

System 1: Treble staff: G4, A4, B4, C5. Bass staff: 3-1, 0-1, 1-3. Chords: C, Am, Dm.

System 2: Treble staff: G4, A4, B4, C5. Bass staff: 1-0, 3-1, 0-1. Chords: G7, C, Am.

System 3: Treble staff: G4, A4, B4, C5. Bass staff: 1-0, 2-0, 0-0. Chords: Dm, G7, C.

Diagram 42

To gain familiarity with the different ways that tunes can be played, take tunes or chord sequences with which you're familiar and then apply the patterns described in this book to those tunes. Listen to how they sound with each pattern – and decide what's appropriate for you. Good luck!