

# SECTION TWO

## Learning to Read Music

### Playing Techniques

The playing techniques used for playing **PICKSTYLE** and **FINGERSTYLE** melody or *lead* are described here. Except for classical guitarists, most guitar players learn both styles.

### Pickstyle

Pickstyle guitar players use a **PICK** to pluck or *stroke* the strings. Review page 8 for a recommendation on pick size and shape, and a description of how to hold it.

#### RIGHT HAND POSITION

There are three commonly used hand positions: 1) free floating, 2) fanning the fingers, and 3) resting the palm of the hand on the strings behind the bridge. In the free floating position, the middle, ring, and little fingers are curled into the hand. They follow the movement of the thumb and index finger as the hand moves from string to string, fig. 1. Some guitarists fan the fingers and allow the little finger to skim the pick guard, fig. 2. For more stability or for special effects, the palm of the hand can lightly rest on the strings just behind the bridge, fig. 3.



fig. 1 Free floating position



fig. 2 Fanning the fingers

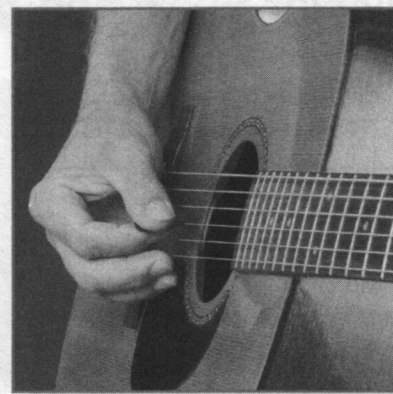


fig. 3 Resting the palm

#### DOWN-STROKE

The **down-stroke** (▣) is the basic stroke used in pickstyle. In the *down-stroke*, the thumb pushes the pick through the string, stops short of the next string and immediately returns to the starting position. Use an economy of motion. Only follow through enough to finish picking the string. The angle of the pick to the strings should be fairly upright, fig. 4.

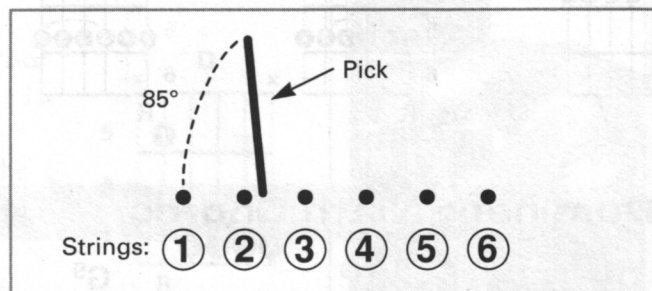


fig. 4

Pick angle

#### UP-STROKE

The **up-stroke** (∨) is used on eighth notes that occur on the upbeat (an). Eighth notes are discussed in detail on page 82. In the *up-stroke*, the index finger pushes the pick through the string. Only follow through enough to finish

picking the string and then return to the starting point. Alternate (▣ ∨) *down-* and *up-strokes* are used when you are playing a succession of eighth notes.

## Fingerstyle

Place the forearm on the edge of the guitar just above the bridge base. Make a fist with your hand. Now open the hand. Keep the fingers in a natural curve. The knuckles should be above the treble strings (strings 3, 2 and 1). Place the thumb on the 5th string. Keep the thumb rigid. Place your index finger on the 1st string, fig. 1 and 2.

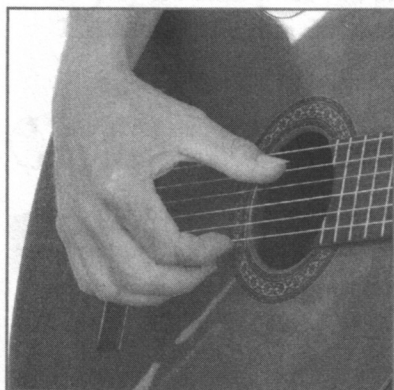


fig. 1 Hand position

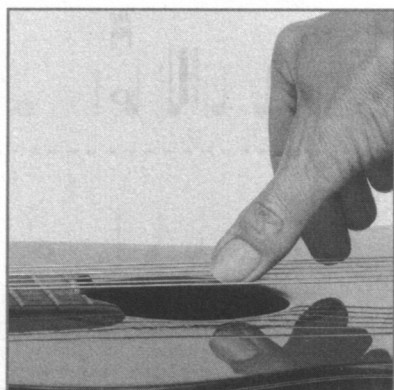


fig. 2 Thumb position

## REST STROKE

The **rest stroke** is used to play single-note melodies. In this stroke, the index (*i*) or middle (*m*) finger comes to rest on the adjacent (lower sounding) string.

Plant your index finger on the 1st string and your thumb on the 5th string, fig. 3. Push the index finger through the string toward the 2nd string. The index finger comes to rest on the 2nd string, fig. 4. The **primary motion** should originate at the joint nearest the hand.

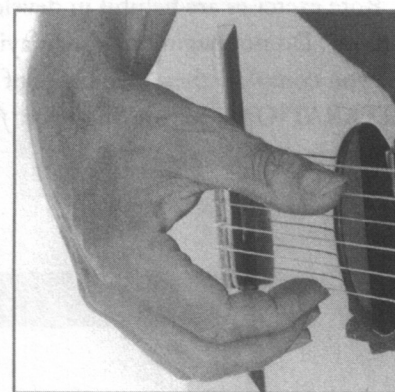


fig. 3 Preparation

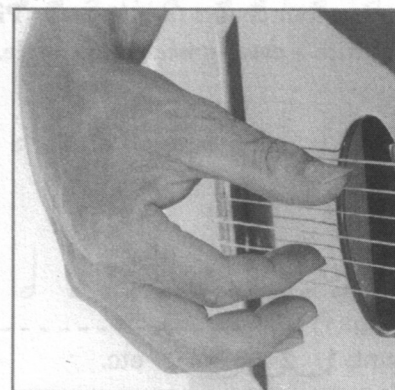


fig. 4 Completion

**ALTERNATE** the index (*i*) and middle (*m*) fingers when you are playing a melody or a single series of notes.

## Left-Hand Position

### NOTE PLAYING

An excellent way to develop a good **LEFT HAND POSITION** is to begin by making a fist without bending the wrist. Now bring the hand up to the neck of the guitar and place the fingers on the fingerboard. The wrist should be straight, the fingers curved and the thumb should oppose the fingers in a "grip" position, fig. 5. Most guitarists find their maximum strength when their thumb opposes a spot located between the first and second fingers, fig. 6. Depress the string as close to the fret wire as is possible. Avoid cradling the guitar between the thumb and fingers.

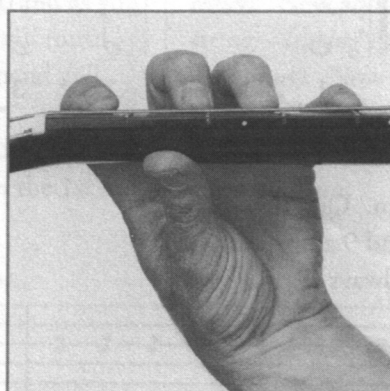


fig. 5 Finger position

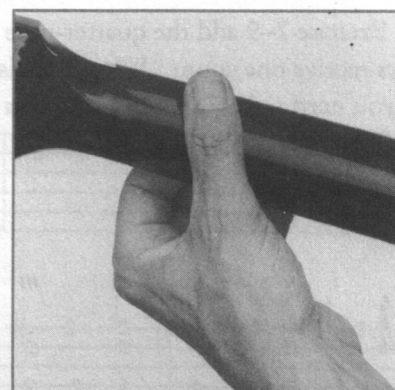


fig. 6 Thumb position



# NOTE READING PREPARATION

Rote exercises are helpful in developing *music reading readiness*. Do not begin the note playing exercises on page 66 until you complete these two pages of **NOTE READING PREPARATION**. Review the *music fundamentals* presented on pages 6 and 7.

You need to be able to play single notes on open strings with a pick (*down-strokes*) or with the fingers (*rest strokes*) before you deal with reading music. Review these right-hand playing techniques on pages 62 and 63. Initially, you need to focus on establishing good playing techniques and on producing a good tone.

Play exercises 1–3 on the open 1st (highest sounding) E string using either pickstyle or fingerstyle techniques. Each note gets four counts (*whole notes*). **Pickstyle.** Play all of the notes with a *down-stroke*. **Fingerstyle.** Use a *rest stroke* with

the index (*i*) and middle (*m*) fingers as indicated. In classical guitar methods, the rest stroke is called an *apoyando*. The goal is to be able to *alternate* between *i* and *m*. Repeat each exercise several times.

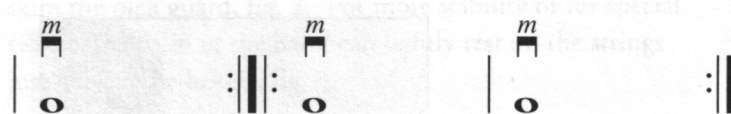
1



2



3



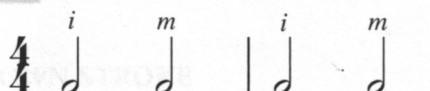
String: ①

Count: 1 2 3 4 etc.

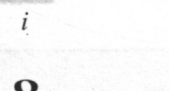
Before going on, play exercises 1–3 on the 2nd and 3rd strings.

Practice all of the following exercises on the open *treble* strings (1st, 2nd and 3rd strings). These exercises combine whole-note and half-note rhythms. A half note receives two counts. When exercises 5 and 6 are repeated, you need to start on *m*. The idea is to always *alternate* the fingers. Begin the repeat of exercise 5 with the middle finger.

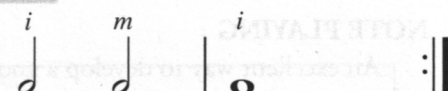
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5



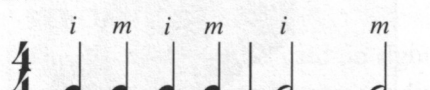
6



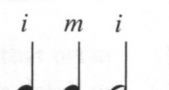
Count: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Exercise 7–9 add the quarter-note rhythm. Quarter notes receive one count. When exercises 7 and 9 are repeated, you need to begin on *m*. The idea is to always alternate the fingers.

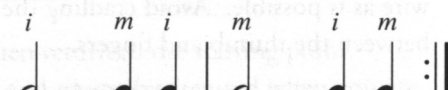
7



8



9



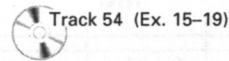
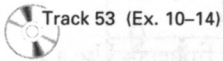
Count: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

\*For an explanation of repeat signs see page 71.

## Rhythm Drills

The following **RHYTHM DRILLS** can be used in many different ways:

1. clap and count the rhythms
2. play the drills on various strings
3. *combine* two drills with other players
4. *combine* three drills playing the open treble strings
5. play various drills on the bass strings
6. play the drills while you practice fretting various notes
7. strum the rhythm drills on a chord or a chord progression
8. *combine* single-note playing and chord playing



**10**  $\frac{4}{4}$  | ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ | ||

**11**  $\frac{4}{4}$  | ♪ | ♪ ♪ | ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ||

**12**  $\frac{4}{4}$  | ♪ ♪ | ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ | ||

**13**  $\frac{4}{4}$  | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ | ||

**14**  $\frac{4}{4}$  | ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ||

**15**  $\frac{4}{4}$  | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ | ||

**16**  $\frac{4}{4}$  | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ | ||

**17**  $\frac{4}{4}$  | ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ | ||

**18**  $\frac{4}{4}$  | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ | ||

**19**  $\frac{4}{4}$  | ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ | ||

## Left-Hand Drill

The following exercise will develop a good left-hand technique. Repeat each note four times and *leave* the left-hand fingers on the fingerboard as they are added, and as you move from the 3rd string to the 1st string. This will force you to have a *straight wrist* and the *palm* of your hand will have to be away from the neck of the guitar.

Begin the drill on the open 3rd string. Play the open 3rd string four times and then place the first finger on the 1st fret

(*play four times*). Now place the second finger on the 2nd fret, 3rd string—*leaving the first finger in place*—(*play four times*). Now add the third finger on the 3rd fret, 3rd string—*leaving both the first and second fingers in place*—(*play four times*). Now move to the open 2nd string and continue this pattern. The point is that you need to leave the fingers on the fingerboard in order to force the hand into the proper hand position.

**20**

i m i m (continue pattern)

|   |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| T | 0 0 0 0 | 1 1 1 1 | 2 2 2 2 | 3 3 3 3 | 0 0 0 0 | 1 1 1 1 |
| A |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| B |         |         |         |         |         |         |

|   |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| T | 2 2 2 2 | 3 3 3 3 | 0 0 0 0 | 1 1 1 1 | 2 2 2 2 | 3 3 3 3 |
| A |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| B |         |         |         |         |         |         |