

RIGHT HAND PICKING EXERCISES

AUDIO CLIP

This excerpt from Tim's "Live Jazz Guitar" project illustrates his picking techniques. It features the legendary [Abe Laboriel](#) on bass and Bob Zimmitti on drums. Tim says, "At a brisk tempo like this I use an assortment of picking techniques: strict down and up, alternating down and up, hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides. ANYTHING THAT WORKS!" The audio clip is 1:57 from his jazz piece "Keepin' Up With the Boys."

There are several ways to excite (sound) the strings on a guitar. Besides all the traditional pick/fingers techniques we're all familiar with, there are also all sorts of hand tapping techniques, tapping with sticks, bowing, E-bow, feedback induced sounds, and on and on. And they are ALL valid, and contribute to the expressive nature of the guitar! I encourage experimentation! That is what gives us the wonderfully rich assortment of guitar styles we enjoy today.

For this lesson I will focus on some tools to create exercises for developing the right hand flat-picking accuracy. As a guitarist, and especially an improvising guitarist, you should be able to cleanly execute any idea that comes to mind. That may mean wanting to play a note that is not as accessible as you would like (coming off an "up" stroke, or an awkward string change for example). Practicing the following picking variations on the following scale will help you achieve flexibility in your available choices (down or up stroke) and let you be that much freer in your playing.

Starting with a simple C major scale in 2nd position, practice the following picking variations, being sure to play each note solidly and cleanly, with both hands attacking the note together. Practice each variation slowly, accurately, and as smoothly as possible. At first it will seem awkward starting a phrase on an upstroke, but it will feel more comfortable with time.

You can apply these picking variations to any piece of music. Try playing your favorite songs with new picking patterns. More advanced players can play and develop patterns and sequences (infinite variety) and practice ear training as well as picking exercises by playing the patterns in all keys and positions. I find that a changing variety of practicing material is beneficial in several ways, including making practicing more fun, and thus more likely to get done!

▣ = down stroke ▽ = up stroke

First variation: C major scale in 2nd position, all notes played with down strokes (▣). The fretboard diagram shows fingerings: 3-5-2-3 for the first two measures, 5-2-4-5 for the next two, and 3-5-4-2 for the final two. The bass line is 3-5-2-3, 5-2-4-5, 5-3-2-5.

Second variation: C major scale in 2nd position, all notes played with up strokes (▽). The fretboard diagram is identical to the first variation, showing fingerings and bass line.

▢ = down stroke ▽ = up stroke

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TAB: 3 5 2 3 | 5 2 4 5 | 3 5 4 2 | 5 3 2 5

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