

FINGERPICKING EXERCISES

Exercise 1

```
E-----0-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E--0----0----0----0---  
    q     q     q     q  
    1     2     3     4
```

This is played without any chord, just open strings. The thumb plays a steady 1-note-per-beat rhythm on the 6th string. The only melody note is on the third beat of each measure. The melody note can be played with either the index or middle finger but in preparation for exercises that follow, you should use the middle one.

Exercise 2

```
E-----0-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E--0----0----0----0---  
    q     q     e  e  q  
    1     2     3  A  4
```

Still without any chord, we'll change the melody note from an "on-the-beat" note to a "between-the-beats" one. Make sure the bass notes continue the steady pattern.

Exercise 3

```
E-----0-----0-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E--0----0----0----0---  
    q     q     e  e  q  
    1     2     3  A  4
```

Now we'll combine Exercises 1 and 2. The first melody note is on the beat, the second is between beats. For most fingerstyle playing, these are the only two kinds of melody notes you'll encounter.

Exercise 4

```
E-----0-----0-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E--0-----0-----0-----0---  
    e e   q     q     q  
    1 A   2     3     4
```

This reverses the order of melody notes. The first one is between beats, the second one is on the beat.

Exercise 5

```
E-----0-----  
B-----0-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E--0-----0-----0-----0---  
    e e   q     q     q  
    1 A   2     3     4
```

Now we'll get a second finger into the act. The melody notes now fall on two strings. The pattern is exactly as in Exercise 4 but the first melody note is on the 2nd string. The proper fingering is to play the first melody note with the index finger, the second with the middle finger.

Exercise 6

```
E--0-----0-----  
B-----0-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E--0-----0-----0-----0---  
    e e   q     q     q  
    1 A   2     3     4
```

This adds one new melody note to the pattern in Exercise 5. It's an on-the-beat melody note on the first beat. Again, the proper fingering is to play the notes on the 1st string with the middle finger and the notes on the 2nd string with the index finger.

Exercise 7

```
E---3-----0-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A---3-----3-----3-----3---  
E-----  
      q      q      q      q  
      1      2      3      4
```

Now we'll put a chord behind the pattern. In this case, it's a C chord. The chord is fingered with the ring finger on the low C note (on the A string) and the pinky on the high G note (on the high E string). Here's what the chord looks like in TAB form:

X32010 (fret)

X32010 (finger)

Take a little time to get the rhythm going with the thumb. Then add two melody notes. They're both on the beat with the second one played by releasing your pinky from the 1st string.

Exercise 8

```
E---3-----  
B-----1-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A---3-----3-----3-----3---  
E-----  
      q      e  e  q      q  
      1      2  A  3      4
```

This changes the second melody note from an on-the-beat to a between-beats note AND it moves it to the second string. Play the first melody note with the middle finger and the second one (the C note) with the index finger.

Exercise 9

```
E---3-----3-----  
B-----1-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A---3-----3-----3-----3---  
E-----  
      q      e  e  e  e  q  
      1      2  A  3  A  4
```

Now we'll add another note to Exercise 8. It's a second between-beats note played between the third and fourth beat. This may take a little time as we're getting into some real fingerstyle patterns now. Make sure the thumb continues a regular pattern and once you feel comfortable with this pattern, gradually increase the speed.

Exercise 10

```

E---3-----0--3-----
B-----1-----
G-----
D-----
A---3-----3-----3-----3---
E-----

      q      e  e  e  e  q
      1      2  A  3  A  4
  
```

Adding one more melody note (on the third beat) gives us a rather complex pattern. This combination of three closely-spaced melody notes is about as complex as it gets. Practice this one until you can play it at speed with a good rhythmic feel. This is a typical Merle Travis lick.

Exercise 11

```

E---3-----3-----
B-----
G-----
D-----2-----2---
A---3-----3-----
E-----

      q      q      q      q
      1      2      3      4
  
```

Staying with the C chord, we'll start alternating the bass notes. This simple pattern alternates the bass between a C and E note. The usual arrangement is to use the chord's root (C in this case) for the first and third beats and either the third or fifth for the second and fourth beats. Here we're using the third (an E note on the fourth string).

Following this convention, the bass notes for the first and third beats are on a lower string than the bass for beats two and four. That means that the typical motion of the thumb is to alternate between the low bass note (usually the sixth or fifth string) and a higher bass note (usually the fourth string).

Exercise 12

E---3-----3-----
B-----
G-----
D-----2-----2---
A---3-----3-----
E-----

q e e q q
1 2 A 3 4

This is the same as Exercise 11 except that the second melody note is between beats. The main thing is to make sure you can keep the steady alternating bass pattern.

Exercise 13

E---3-----0-----
B-----
G-----
D-----2-----2---
A---3-----3-----
E-----

q e e q q
1 2 A 3 4

Going a step further with the melody, we'll change the second melody note so you can get used to alternating the bass and changing melody notes at the same time.

Exercise 14

E---3-----0-----3-----
B-----
G-----
D-----2-----2---
A---3-----3-----
E-----

q e e e e q
1 2 A 3 A 4

Building on Exercise 13, we'll add a third melody note, this time between the third and fourth beats. As you increase the speed on this pattern, you should be able to capture the bouncy shuffle feel that it should have.

Exercise 15

```
E---3-----0--3-----
B-----1-----
G-----
D-----2-----2---
A---3-----3-----
E-----

      q      e  e  e  e  q
      1      2  A  3  A  4
```

This is the same as Exercise 10 except that the bass is alternating. Once you've mastered this, you have a rather complete repertoire of fingerstyle patterns for use in accompaniment. The exercises that follow will help you develop a full variety of patterns which will be required for playing complete melodies.

Exercise 16

```
E-----3-----0--3-----
B-----1-----
G-----
D-----2-----2---
A---3-----3-----
E-----

      e  e  e  e  e  e  q
      1  A  2  A  3  A  4
```

Adding another melody note to Exercise 15 we get this rather complex pattern. This is very typical of the ragtime and Travis styles and can be adapted to many different chord forms.

Exercise 17

```
E-----5-----5-----
B-----
G-----
D-----2-----2---
A---0-----0-----
E-----

      q      q      e  e  q
      1      2      3  A  4
```

We'll switch now to an A chord. Unlike some A chords you may know, this one requires an index finger bar across the 4th, 3rd, 2nd, and 1st strings at the second fret. The remaining fingers are then free for melody notes. Here's the TAB form of the chord:

002225 (fret)

001114 (finger)

This pattern continues the alternating bass, still using the 5th and 4th strings, and has two melody notes, one on the beat, the other between the third and fourth beats.

Exercise 18

```

E-----5-----3-----
B-----
G-----
D-----2-----2---
A--0-----0-----
E-----

      q      q      q      q
      1      2      3      4
  
```

Changing the second melody note to an on-the-beat note gives the pattern a much different rhythm. This pattern occurs in many Robert Johnson and Blind Blake tunes.

Exercise 19

```

E-----5-----3--5-----
B-----
G-----
D-----2-----2---
A--0-----0-----
E-----

      q      q      e  e  q
      1      2      3  A  4
  
```

Now we'll add a third melody note between the third and fourth beats to give a pattern that's often heard in ragtime pieces.

Exercise 20

```

E-----5-----3--5-----
B-----2-----
G-----
D-----2-----2---
A--0-----0-----
E-----

      q      e  e  e  e  q
      1      2  A  3  A  4
  
```

Taking the pattern one step further, we add a melody note on the 2nd string between the second and third beat. The notes on the 1st string should be played with the ring finger, the note on the 2nd string with the index. We're now in violation of the rule that one should avoid playing consecutive melody notes with the same finger.

Exercise 21

```
E---3-----3-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----0-----0---  
A-----  
E---3-----3-----  
    q      q      q      q  
    1      2      3      4
```

Now we'll switch to a G chord. This G chord, however, may be different from ones you've learned before. To have the most fingers available for melody notes, it's best to play the G chord with your pinky on the first (high E) string. Here's the TAB notation:

320003 (fret)

320004 (finger)

This pattern alternates the bass across two strings (the 6th and 4th strings), a very common practice. The melody notes are simple so you can concentrate on making the two-string jump with your thumb.

Exercise 22

```
E---3-----0-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----0-----0---  
A-----  
E---3-----3-----  
    q      q      q      q  
    1      2      3      4
```

This is the same pattern except for the changing melody note.

Exercise 23

```
E---3-----0--3-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----0-----0---  
A-----  
E---3-----3-----  
    q      q      e  e  q  
    1      2      3  A  4
```

Now we'll start adding melody notes. The first is a G note between the third and fourth beats. Practice this until you get a good rhythmic feel.

Exercise 24

```
E---3-----0--3-----
B-----3-----
G-----
D-----0-----0---
A-----
E---3-----3-----
      q      e e e e q
      1      2 A 3 A 4
```

Adding another melody note between the second and third beats gives us another common ragtime pattern. What is tricky here is that to play the D note on the 2nd string, you have to move your pinky very rapidly between the 1st and 2nd strings. It may take awhile for you to master moving your left hand this way.

Exercise 25

```
E-----3-----0--3-----
B-----3-----
G-----
D-----0-----0---
A-----
E---3-----3-----
      e e e e e e q
      1 A 2 A 3 A 4
```

This is the same as Exercise 24 except that the first melody note is between the first and second beat. This has a highly syncopated feel with three of the four melody notes played between beats.

Exercise 26

```
E-----3-----
B-----0-----0-----
G-----3-----
D-----0-----0---
A-----
E---3-----3-----
      e e e e e e q
      1 A 2 A 3 A 4
```

The rhythm pattern is the same as Exercise 25 but the melody notes have changed location requiring a three-string jump. This will require that one of your fingers makes the quick jump from one string to another. I'd probably play the first four melody notes with my index finger on the third string and my middle finger on the second. Then for the last note, I'd move my fingers up one string and play it with my middle finger.

Exercise 27

```

E---3-----0-----3-----|-----3-----
B-----0-----|---0---0-----
G-----3-----|---3-----
D-----0-----0---|-----0-----0---
A-----|-----
E---3-----3-----|---3-----3-----
      q      e  e  e  e  q      e  e  e  e  q      q
      1      2  A  3  A  4      1  A  2  A  3      4
  
```

Now we have an exercise with two different measures put together to form a complete lick. The first measure is the same as Exercise 26 and the second is similar. In these two measures are encompassed all the basic patterns of fingerstyle playing.

Exercise 28

```

      G              C
E---3-----0-----0-----|-----0---3-----
B-----3-----1---|-----
G-----|-----
D-----0-----0---|-----2-----2---
A-----|---3-----3-----
E---3-----3-----|-----
      q      q      e  e  e  e  q      e  e  q      q
      1      2      3  A  4  A  1      2  A  3      4
  
```

Finally we'll put two chords together. The first measure is played with a G chord, the second with a C chord. Note, however, that there's a transition note (a C) that leads into the C chord and is actually played on the half-beat prior to the beginning of the C measure. This is a common technique to add a bit of rhythmic interest. It requires getting your index finger down on that leading C note before you actually form the rest of the chord.