

## LESSON 9 STRUMS FOR GUITAR

In chapter {3}, we learned two strums (Thumb-Pluck and Thumb-Pluck-Pluck). This chapter introduces a few more. In this lesson, the following notation is used to indicate the type of notes used:

- (w) indicates a whole note.
- (h) indicates a half note.
- (q) indicates a quarter note.
- (e) indicates an eighth note.
- (s) indicates a sixteenth note.
- (q\*) indicates a dotted quarter note.
- (e\*) indicates a dotted eighth note, etc.

### FLAT PICKING STRUMS

This strum is often done using a flat pick (hence the name). In the list at the end of the chapter, it is strum number {3}. It will be taught here without a pick. The strum involves using the thumb of the right hand on the bass strings and the index finger alone brushing up or down on the other strings. The count for this strum is "1 and 2 and 1 and 2 and", or "1 A 2 A 1 A 2 A". On the first and third "A", no finger action is taken. The "A" is there to help with the timing. The notes on the Thumb strokes are quarter notes (q below tab). The other notes (on D,U) are eighth notes (e below tab).

```

|-----D-U-|-----D-U--|   String 1  (thinnest - highest pitch)
|-----D-U-|-----D-U--|
|-----D-U-|-----D-U--|
|-----|-----T-----|
|-----T-----|-----|
|-----|-----|   String 6  (thickest - lowest pitch)
3)      q   e e   q   e e
2/4)   1 A 2 A   1 A 2 A
```

You begin by plucking the primary bass string with your thumb, then you brush down (toward the ground) with the back (nail) of your index finger on strings 1,2 and 3 then back up with your index finger on the same strings. This is followed by the thumb on a different bass string and the down-up pattern again with the index finger. This is repeated endlessly (or until you get tired). Note that the "DOWN" and "UP" strokes are shown as "D" and "U" on the strings. The timing must be correct. It must follow the 1 A 2 A pattern.

After you get comfortable doing the strum, try it in a song. Remember to pause at chord changes, and concentrate on switching chords, then go back to concentrating on the strum. Normally chords will change right after completion of a whole strum. Don't worry if the pause seems too long. It will get shorter as you learn the strum.

The previous strum will later be useful for "flatpicking melody" style. That style involves playing the melody with the thumb, with down-ups thrown in as chord accompaniment. Note that strum number {4} is the 3/4 version of this strum.

A variation of the above strum is interesting. The strum is number {5} from the list at the end of the chapter.

```

|-----D-----U-D-U-|
|-----D-----U-D-U-|
|-----D-----U-D-U-|
|----T-----|
|-----T-----|
|-----|
5)   q   q   e e e e
4/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A 4 A

```

On the 1A2A the thumb hits a bass string on "1" then the index finger brushes down on "2". It is very important to keep the index finger pointing down at this point. The reason is that the index finger must be ready for its next action, which is an upstroke. Next the thumb plucks a different bass string on 3, then the index finger brushes UP-DOWN-UP on "A4A". At this point, the index finger should remain curled up. If you do not follow these tips, you may have a tendency to brush DOWN-UP-DOWN (a common problem as you learn this strum). If you are tapping your foot steadily to the beat, you should be tapping on the first thumb (1), the first DOWN (2), the second thumb (3) and the second DOWN (4). The two "UP" brushes must fit between the steady beat of 1,2,3,4.

NOTE: don't worry if you don't learn all the strums immediately. Do one at a time, and pick up other strums when you are ready. The main idea is to have fun. You have lots of time to learn new stuff.

## ARPEGGIOS

Arpeggios are strums in which you pluck individual strings separately. An example is shown below.

```

|-----R-|-----R---|           |-----R-----|-----R-----|
|-----M---|-----M-----|           |-----M---M---|-----M---M---|
|-----I-----|-----I-----|           |-----I-----I---|-----I-----I-|
|-----T-----|-----T-----|           |-----T-----|-----T-----|
|-----T-----|-----T-----|           |-----T-----|-----T-----|
|-----T-----|-----T-----|           |-----T-----|-----T-----|
11)   e e e e   e e e e           12)   e e e e e e   e e e e e e
2/4)  1 A 2 A   1 A 2 A           3/4)  1 A 2 A 3 A   1 A 2 A 3 A

```

In this strum (number 11), you alternate your thumb as in a Thumb-Pluck strum (chapter {3}). But instead of the Pluck, you use Index, Middle and Ring fingers, one after the other. The count is 1 A 2 A, with the Thumb and each finger as eighth notes. Strum 12 is a 3/4 version of the strum in which you use Index, Middle, Ring, Middle and Index fingers, one after the other.

At the end of the chapter are two other strums (13 and 14) which are combinations of a Thumb-Pluck(-Pluck) and arpeggios.

Below are three songs using arpeggios. **(Thumb-Pluck strum is shown for comparison.)**

## SKIP TO MY LOU (2/4, 1, S1F2) - Arpeggios (TIMR)

D

SKIP SKIP SKIP TO MY LOU  
TIMR TIMR TI---M--R TIMR <--arpeggio  
T-P T-P T----P T-P <--thumb pluck

A7

SKIP SKIP SKIP TO MY LOU  
TIMR TIMR TI---M--R TIMR <--arpeggio  
T-P T-P T----P T-P <--thumb pluck

D

SKIP SKIP SKIP TO MY LOU  
TIMR TIMR TI---M--R TIMR <--arpeggio  
T-P T-P T----P T-P <--thumb pluck

A7 D

SKIP TO MY LOU MY DAR- LING  
TI---M--R TI--MR TIMR TIMR TIMR <--arpeggio  
T----P T---P T-P T-P T-P <--thumb pluck

## DOWN IN THE VALLEY (3/4, 1, S5F0) - Arpeggios (TIMRMI)

D

A7

DOWN IN THE VAL - LEY, VALLEY SO LOW  
TIMRMI TI MR MI TIMRMI TIMRMI TI MR MI TIMRMI TIMRMI <--arpeggio  
TPP T-----P--P T-P-P T-P-P T---P---P T-P-P T-P-P <--thumb pluck

D

HANG YOUR HEAD O - VER, HEAR THE WIND BLOW  
TI MR MI TIMRMI TIMRMI TI MR MI TIMRMI TIMRMI <--arpeggio  
T-----P---P T-P-P T-P-P T---P---P T-P-P T-P-P <--thumb pluck

## AMAZING GRACE (3/4, 3, S2F0) - Arpeggios (TIMRMI)

E

E7

A

E

A - MAZING GRACE, HOW SWEET THE SOUND  
TIMRMI TIMR-MI TIMRMI TIMR---MI TIMR--MI TIMR-- <--arpeggio  
T-P-P T-P--P T-P-P T-P----P T-P----P T-P-- <--thumb pluck

B7

THAT SAVED A WRETCH LIKE ME  
--MI TIMR--MI TIMR---MI TIMRMI TIMR- <--arpeggio  
--P T-P---P T-P----P T-P-P T-P-- <--thumb pluck

E

E7

A

E

I ONCE WAS LOST AND NOW I'M FOUND  
--MI TIMR-MI TIMR-MI TIM-MI TIMR-- <--arpeggio  
--P T-P--P T-P--P T-P-P T-P-- <--thumb pluck

B7

E

WAS BLIND AND NOW I SEE  
--MI TIMR--MI TIMR-MI TIMRMI TIMR-- <--arpeggio  
--P T-P---P T-P--P T-P-P T-P-- <--thumb pluck

## USING HAMMER-ONS

In the next strum, a "HAMMER ON" is be used is to jazz up a strum. For example, strum number {5} of this lesson can be changed by adding a hammer on. The new strum in C chord is shown here and is strum number {6} at the end of the chapter. The hammer on is substituted for one of the "U"s.

The "HAMMER ON" may not work in some other chord, since the hammer (on string 4 fret 2) is a note in C chord, but may not be a note in some other chord. If you are playing F chord, do the thumb on string 4 and the hammer on, on string 3. For G7, do the thumb on string 6 and the hammer on, on string 5.

C	F	G7
-----D-----D-U--	-----D-----D-U--	-----D-----D-U--
-----D-----D-U--	-----D-----D-U--	-----D-----D-U--
-----D-----D-U--	-----D---0-H-2--D-U--	-----D-----D-U--
-----0-H-2-----	---T-----	-----
---T-----	-----	-----0-H-2-----
-----	-----	---T-----
6)    q    q    e    e    e    e	q    q    e    e    e    e	q    q    e    e    e    e
4/4) 1 A 2 A 3    A 4 A	1 A 2 A 3    A 4 A	1 A 2 A 3    A 4 A

## "TRAVIS" OR "COTTEN" PICKING STRUMS

In this section we will discuss strum number {7} from the list. Learning this strum will help later when you get into fingerpicking melody (lesson {12}).

-----M-----
-----I- -----I--
----- -----
-----T--- -----T---
-----T----- ---T-----
----- -----
7)            q    e    e            e    e    e    e
4/4)        1 A 2 A            3 A 4 A

The timing of this strum (below the "staff") is "1A2A3A4A". The "beats" are on the counts 1,2,3 and 4. The "A" or "And" count comes between beats. If you are tapping your foot, the notes on numbers come when your foot is tapping, and the notes on "A" come in between. Some notes on "A" are left out. Your foot must "tap-tap-tap...-tap" regularly like ticks of a clock.

Now if you look at the "staff" for strum {7}, you see that on the "1" count, the notation shows your thumb plucking on the 5th string. On the first "A" no action is taken. You must, however, pause as if you were hitting a string here. Next on count 2, the thumb plucks down on string 3, followed on "A" by the index finger plucking up on string 2. Then on count 3, the thumb plucks down on string 5. The middle finger plucks up on string 1 on the "A", then on count 4, the thumb plucks string 4, followed by the index finger on string 2. You then repeat this strum until the end of the song.

Note that in this strum, the middle finger always plucks string one and the index finger always plucks string two or three as necessary. This is very important for later fingerpicking lessons. After you know the strum well, you will want to experiment with other ways to alternate the bass strings with your thumb.

As an aid to learning this strum, note that the first and second parts are identical except for the (M) on string one which is left out in the first part. In its place is a pause which is as long as if you actually played the (M). Therefore one way to learn this strum is to learn the second part (simple) and then to play it without the (M) followed by playing it with the (M).

As another aid to learning, think of strings 5 and one as "outside" and strings four and two as "inside". Then you can think of the strum as going: (Out pause In In, Out Out In In). This is not a rule, but only an aid to learning. Later you will want to try different patterns of alternating the bass strings with your thumb.

Here is "Skip to my Lou" noted for this strum.

### SKIP TO MY LOU (2/4, 1, S1F2)

```

D
SKIP SKIP SKIP TO MY LOU
[T TI TMTI] [T TI TMTI] [T T I TMTI]
A7
SKIP SKIP SKIP TO MY LOU
[T TI TMTI] [T T I TMTI]
D
SKIP SKIP SKIP TO MY LOU
[T TI TMTI] [T T I TMTI]
A7 D
SKIP TO MY LOU MY DAR - LING
[T T I TM TI] [T TI TMTI] [T TI TMTI] ...

```

Here is another way to show this strum in Skip to My Lou (First 3 verses)

```

T T1 T 2 T 1 T D T 2 T 1
Skip Thumb-1 Skip 2-Thumb-1 Skip Thumb-1 Lou 2-Thumb-1
Skip Skip Skip To My Lou

```

Last verse

```

T T1 T 2 T 1 T D T 2 T 1
Skip Thumb-1 Lou 2-Thumb-1 Dar - Thumb-1 - ling 2-Thumb-1
Skip To My Lou My Dar - ling

```

The next section illustrates the use of three different strums in a song. You can try each strum and pick the one you like or use another one. In general, you can replace one strum with another one with compatible timing by noting the timing of the strum and replacing the beats of the one strum with the beats of the other. For instance, in the song below, since the song starts on the count 2, you must start the song on that count in the strum you have chosen. You could replace the existing strum with the new one.



Another thing to think about is how you use your thumb when you play a strum. We have said that you should alternate your thumb on different bass strings for variety. One concept is that you start at the beginning of the song with your thumb on the "primary" string and alternate to a "secondary" string and back and forth. For various reasons, this is not always the best way to alternate the bass strings. For instance, if the first and second notes of the song are actually a secondary note followed by a primary note, it may sound odd to accompany this with primary-secondary. Maybe the best rule is to do what "sounds good".

Another way to increase the variety of your playing is to use more than two strings when you alternate your thumb on the bass strings. So far, we have shown strums only using two strings. Suppose you are playing the G chord and using strum 7 from this chapter. It was shown with your thumb alternating from the 5th to the 4th string. In that strum, the following pattern of alternating your thumb sounds good:

5,4,6,3 (string 5, string 4, string 6, string 3)  
S S P P (secondary, secondary, primary, primary)

For the C chord you might use:

5,4,5,3 (in this chord, you shouldn't play string 6)  
P,S,P,S

In these and other chords, experiment and try different combinations that sound good to you.

Note that it is recommended not to play string 6 in C chord, although it is a valid note in the chord (E note also appears on string 1) The reason for not playing the 6th string is that it doesn't sound right - it is too far below the note on the 5th string to sound right.

The following is a listing of some strums. Hopefully you will be able to understand the notation well enough to choose a new strum and learn it from the list. Each strum is numbered, and you typically choose one strum you like with the same timing as the song you want to play. You then start the strum and repeat it endlessly, starting the song on the proper beat or count of the strum (see lesson {3}). Remember as you are learning, to pause where the chord changes (usually at the end of a strum), change chords then go back to concentrate on the strum again.

Don't feel that only one strum fits a given song. Pick the one or ones that fit best. You can even at times switch strums within a song for variety. Experiment and use what you like. There are many variations of strums 7 and 8 that are useful for fingerpicking guitar. This style will be discussed in chapter {12}.

# STRUMS FOR GUITAR

-----R-- ---R--	-----R-R- ---R-R--
-----M-- ---M--	-----M-M- ---M-M--
-----I-- ---I--	-----I-I- ---I-I--
-----T--- -----	-----T--- -----
----- -----	----- -----
----- -----	----- -----
1)     q q     q q	2)       q q q     q q q
2/4)   1 2     1 2	3/4)    1 2 3     1 2 3

---

-----D-U- -----D-U--	-----D-U-D-U- -----D-U-D-U--
-----D-U- -----D-U--	-----D-U-D-U- -----D-U-D-U--
-----D-U- -----D-U--	-----D-U-D-U- -----D-U-D-U--
----- -----	----- -----
----- -----	----- -----
----- -----	----- -----
3)     q    e e    q    e e	4)     q    e e e e    q    e e e e
2/4)   1 A 2 A    1 A 2 A	3/4)   1 A 2 A 3 A   1 A 2 A 3 A

---

-----D-----U-D-U-	In this---> -----D-----D-U--
-----D-----U-D-U-	strum, use  -----D-----D-U--
-----D-----U-D-U-	strings:    -----D-----D-U--
-----T-----	5,4 with C  -----0-H-2-----
-----T-----	6,5 with G7 -----T-----
----- -----	4,3 with F  ----- -----
5)     q    q    e e e e e	6)     q    q    e    e e e
4/4)   1 A 2 A 3 A 4 A	4/4)   1 A 2 A 3    A 4 A

---

-----M-----	-----M-----M-----
-----I- -----I--	-----I-----
----- -----	-----T-----
-----T--- -----T---	-----T-----T---
-----T--- -----T---	-----T-----T---
----- -----	----- -----
7)     q    e e     e e e e	8)     q    e e e e q
4/4)   1 A 2 A     3 A 4 A	4/4)   1 A 2 A 3 A 4 A

---

---M-----M---	-----R-----	<- for
-----I-----	-----M-----M-----	House
-----T-----	-----I-----I---	of
---T-----T---	----- -----	Rising
-----T-----	---T-----	Sun
----- -----	----- -----	
9)     e e e e e e	10)  e* s q    e* s q	
3/4)   1 A 2 A 3 A	4/4)   1 a 2 p 3 a 4 p	

Note the similarity between strums 8 and 9. If you did not know the timing, you might mistake one for the other. However, strum 8 is a 4/4 strum, while strum 9 is 3/4. Strum 8 has two pauses in it, while strum 9 has none.



# STRUMS FOR GUITAR (ARPEGGIOS)

-----R- -----R---	-----R----- -----R-----
-----M--- -----M-----	-----M---M--- -----M---M---
-----I----- -----I-----	-----I-----I--- -----I-----I-
-----T----- -----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
-----T----- -----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
-----T----- -----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
11) e e e e e e e e	12) e e e e e e e e
2/4) 1 A 2 A 1 A 2 A	3/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A 1 A 2 A 3 A

---

-----R-- -----R---	-----R--R--- -----R-----
-----M-- -----M---	-----M--M--- -----M--M---
-----I-- -----I---	-----I--I--- -----I-----I-
-----T-- -----T---	-----T-- -----T---
-----T-- -----T---	-----T-- -----T---
-----T-- -----T---	-----T-- -----T---
13) q q e e e e	14) q q q e e e e e
2/4) 1 A 2 A 1 A 2 A	3/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A 1 A 2 A 3 A

---

-----R-----R---	-----R----- -----R-----
-----M-----	-----M----- -----M-----
-----I-----	-----I-----I--- -----I-----I-
-----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
-----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
-----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
15) e e e e q	16) e* s e* s e* s e* s
3/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A	2/4) 1 A 2 A 1 A 2 A

---

-----R--R--R---	-----R----- -----R-----
-----M--M-----	-----M--M--- -----M--M---
-----I-----I---	-----I-----I--- -----I-----I-
-----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
-----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
-----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
17) e e e e e e e e	18) e e q e e q e e q e e q
4/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A 4 A	4/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A 4 A 1 A 2 A 3 A 4 A

---

This page left blank intentionally

This page left blank intentionally