

Introduction to Fingerstyle

There has been a lot of interest lately into acoustic related guitar styles, and part of that style is playing with your fingers. All good guitarists should be able to play with a pick and fingers I believe. This will increase your abilities to be creative and perform different styles.

There are two main types of fingerstyle playing - classical and modern – and they both use the same fingering techniques. Classical guitarists use nylon string instruments and play mainly classical music, while modern guitarists use steel string acoustic or electric models and mainly play contemporary music.

When playing in this style your picking hand fingers are notated “p” for thumb, “i” for index, “m” for middle, and “a” for your ring finger. Now grab your guitar and put “a” on the first string, “m” on the second, “i” on the third, and “p” on the fifth. The “p” finger will also play the fourth and sixth strings depending on the chord.

When using the correct technique your thumb should extend out towards the nut of your guitar and you should be able to see a triangle shape being formed by the thumb, first finger, and the strings of your guitar.

Exercise 1. - If you have never done this before it will take a while to feel comfortable, but make sure you begin slowly and pay attention to the right hand fingerings. The fretting hand is playing a C chord, which is in a 3/4 arpeggio style.

Ex 1

The musical notation for Exercise 1 consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. It contains two measures of music. The first measure has four eighth notes: C4 (p), E4 (i), G4 (m), and A4 (a). The second measure has four eighth notes: G4 (m), E4 (i), C4 (p), and A4 (a). The bottom staff is a bass line with fret numbers. The first measure has fret numbers 0, 1, 0, 1, 0. The second measure has fret numbers 0, 1, 0, 1, 0. The third measure has a fret number 3. The strings are labeled T (Treble), A (Acoustic), and B (Bass).

Exercise 2. - This is also a C chord, but played in a 4/4 arpeggio style. Also take it slow and watch that you are using the correct right hand fingers.

3 Ex 2

p i m i a i m i p i m i a m i m

T 0 1 0 0 1 0 | 0 1 0 0 1 0

A

B 3 3

Exercise 3. - Is a C and G7 chord change. Notice that “p” plays the bottom note of the chord being played. Try to play the chords so you can hear every note at the same volume.

5 Ex 3

p ima ima ima p ima ima ima

T 0 1 0 0 1 0 0 0 | 1 0 0 1 0 0 0

A

B 3 3

It is important to get these exercises flowing first because then it will be easier to play your favourite fingerstyle songs. So practise each exercise at least 5 – 10 minutes at a time.

When you have done this lesson it is time to move on and play some songs with what you have learnt in this lesson www.guitar.co.nz/free_lesson.php3?id=17

Have fun.

To hear the music for this lesson visit
<http://www.guitar.co.nz/introduction-to-fingerstyle/>

 Kevin Downing is a professional guitarist, teacher, and author. For more great lessons or to study with him in person or over the internet visit www.guitar.co.nz

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