



## Tremolo Picking

**W**hen guitar players get together they often talk about how fast they can play, or even show off their speed. Although playing fast is not everything, it is a skill that needs to be practised just in case you are required to use some speedy runs or licks in the future.

Many of the world's top players can play fast to varying degrees and it is up to you to decide how fast your playing needs to be or become to suit your style of music. Swedish metal guitarist Yngwie Malmsteen can play very fast indeed, but at the other extreme, blues guitarist B.B. King hardly ever plays fast.

Tremolo picking is a great way to learn to play fast because it normally uses a repeated note or two like in our exercises here. It has many other benefits too, like two-hand synchronisation, understanding different note values in soloing, etc.

Although it seems very odd to many players, to be able to play fast you need to start off very slow, making sure you get the technique correct. Also, it is best to practice to a metronome to measure your progress and keep the tempo consistent each day when practising. If you are making any flaws, scratchy notes, buzzes, or your right and left hand are not synchronised with each other, then you are going too fast and need to slow it right down immediately.

**Exercise 1** is a very simple warm up in quarter notes. Use all down picks for this exercise. Put your metronome on 50 beats per minute and play one note per beat for a minute per day to warm up.

**Exercise 2** is another simple warm up in eighth notes. Use all down/up (alternating) picking for this exercise. Also, eighth notes go twice as fast as quarter notes so you need to play two notes per beat on your metronome. Play this also for one minute.

By **Exercise 3** we're now getting a bit faster, using sixteenth notes – or four notes per beat on your metronome. Still use down/up picking and play for at least two minutes per day. Make sure you can play Exercises 1-3 really well before going on to Ex 4.

**Exercise 4.** This one is very fast and should only be attempted after you have warmed up well. Playing this fast with cold muscles is not a good strategy. This exercise is 32 notes, or eight notes per beat on the metronome. You might need to slow the metronome down to 40 beats per minute to begin for this one. Play for around three minute intervals per day.

**Exercise 5** is a Stevie Ray Vaughan-style double stop tremolo. It is not easy, so take your time to get it right. Getting the two notes to sound together at similar volumes can be tricky.

**Exercise 6** is a lick from the blues guitar classic *Honky Tonk*, which many guitarists like to play. It has a double stop and single note tremolo for you to get your head and fingers around. Again it's not easy, so take your time.

around 50bpm (or slower) to begin – only working it up by a beat or two when you can flawlessly play at the current tempo.

Tremolo picking practice can be a bit boring, but just think of the benefits after you have acquired this ability. That should make it a bit more interesting.

Keep your ears open for the tremolo licks your favourite players are using.

The image contains six musical exercises, each with a standard musical staff and a guitar tablature staff below it. Ex 1 is in 4/4 time and consists of quarter notes on the 5th fret. Ex 2 is in 4/4 time and consists of eighth notes on the 5th fret. Ex 3 is in 4/4 time and consists of sixteenth notes on the 5th fret. Ex 4 is in 4/4 time and consists of eighth notes on the 5th fret. Ex 5 is in 4/4 time and consists of eighth notes on the 3rd and 4th frets. Ex 6 is in 4/4 time and consists of eighth notes on the 8th, 10th, and 13th frets.

Tremolo picking can be a very flashy technique to play, but you need to use it with taste rather than just to show off. Remember what you play needs to fit the song. Here are some more tips.

Don't dig your pick into the strings. Only be skimming across the top of the strings.

Keep the metronome speed very slow –

To see this lesson on video visit <http://www.guitar.co.nz/category/resources/freelessons/>

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