



5 Minute Guitar Lessons



Practice Aid: Fake any Song in 3 Lessons Lesson 2 - How to Strum a Guitar

Lesson Overview:

This leverages the simplicity of open tuning to help you focus on the most fundamental guitar skills – strumming the guitar. I present a short, non-technical overview of meter and rhythm concepts.

This practice aid captures some of the key concepts and suggests a few techniques for you to practice your strumming skills. Mastery of basic strumming techniques will make it easier for you to play more complex patterns later.

Rhythm Concepts - Basic Vocabulary

The **rhythm** of a song is the timing of notes played. The **beat** is the heartbeat of the song – the fundamental unit of rhythm – the thing you tap your foot to. A **measure** is a set number of beats that you can count to tell you where you are in the song. A **time signature** or **meter** describes the basic framework for the rhythm, telling you the number of beats in a measure, and the type of note that represents a beat.

The meter or time signature is written as a fraction - two numbers, one on top of the other. The top number tells you the number of beats in a measure. The bottom number tells you what kind of note represents a beat when it's written down.

Down-beats and Up-beats and How to Count

Most rock and country songs are written in a 4/4 time signature. That is, each measure contains 4 beats, and they're represented on a musical staff by a quarter note. To mentally keep track of when to play, we count out beats. "One, two, three, four, One, two, three, four..."

Some other songs are written in 3/4 time. That is, there are three beats to a measure. Waltzes are written in 3/4. We would count the beats in a waltz those as "one, two, three, one two, three...."

If you tap your foot each time you count a beat in a song (right on "one, two, three, four"), you're counting what we call the **down-beat**. (Your foot is going "down" when you count the number).



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Of course, not all notes are played exactly on the beat. Even simple songs have notes that occur between beats. If you're tapping your foot on each downbeat, you would play those notes when your foot comes up (on the "up-beat"). To count these, use the word "and" between the beat counts. "One, and, two, and, three, and, four, and..."

Counting like this - "One, and, two, and, three, and, four, and..." – gives you a framework for expressing rhythm.

Basic Strum

Move your strumming hand down when you count the numbers, and up when you say "and." Practice strumming on all down-beats and up-beats (1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and), until you know that your hand is always going down on the downbeat and up on the upbeats.

Common Strum Patterns

The key to learning and strumming the rhythm patterns of any song lies in moving your hand to the basic strum pattern, but only making contact when necessary. That is, your hand keeps moving up and down to the beat, but you only touch the strings when it fits the groove of the song. For example, here are two strum patterns that will help you fake a huge number of rock, country and pop songs.



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4/4 Basic Pattern # 2 (1, 2 and 3, 4 and)

Use this pattern for songs written in 4/4 time. While moving your hand down on the down-beat and up on the up-beat, touch the strings as you count the pattern (1, 2 and 3, 4 and). This fits great with almost any fairly laid-back 4/4 song. Try this out while humming a few bars of an Eagles or George Strait song.

Hint: For faster rock, bluegrass, or metal applications, you can double the speed of your picking hand, playing a down stroke on each down and upbeat, and playing an up-stroke on the notes in between. It's the same concept, just a lot faster. Try this out on some songs by Pantera, Metallica or Iron Maiden.

3/4 Basic Pattern # 2 (1, 2 and 3 and)

This pattern fits well for just about any laid-back waltz. As before, you're your hand down on the downbeats, and up on the upbeats. Touch the strings only when you count the pattern (1, 2 and 3 and). Try it out to the tune of "Amazing Grace," "Waltz Across Texas," or any other $\frac{3}{4}$ song.

Summary - Finding the strum pattern of any song

Once you find the meter, and count your way through the song, you can pick up the basic rhythm, by counting, and noticing when the guitar guy strums the strings.

If you can count the song, you can strum it. Remember to move your hand to every down and up-stroke. Then you just hit the strings only on those strokes that sound right.



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Lesson Link / Other Online Resources:

The video lesson can be downloaded at the following link:

<http://www.5minuteguitarlessons.com/fake-any-song-how-to-strum-a-guitar/>

Ultimate Metronome

A metronome is a great tool for developing your sense of timing. The program I've linked to below has some additional features that look pretty handy, including the ability to gradually speed up the tempo during practice sessions. This could be especially handy as you start practicing more interesting rhythms and chord changes.

<http://31864xofoe0coda7jmug2cz6bz.hop.clickbank.net/?tid=5MGLPA>