



Strumming Masterclass Cheatsheet

*A Quick Reference Guide to the Four
Pillars of Strumming Success.*

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THE *Strumming Technique Checklist*

1 - Experiment With a Natural Pick Grip

You can use a pick or just your fingers and thumb to strum. It really doesn't matter. If you use a pick, just pick it up between your index finger and thumb in as natural a way as possible. Experiment with the angle of the pick. Angling it up toward the ceiling or the floor can make a world of difference. If you are not using a pick, you can just use your thumb, index finger, or index finger and thumb as if you were holding a pick.

2 - Stay Relaxed

If you tense up when you strum, you will have a hard time keeping up with the tempo of faster songs, and you will get tired faster. Try to stay aware of any tension that may creep into your fingers, hand, arm, or shoulder. Here is a great analogy for this. Pretend that you have some honey on your pinky finger, and there is a feather stuck to it. Now, flick your hand as if you are trying to get the feather to fly off. It's tough to be tense at all if you keep this motion in mind.

3 - Don't Death Grip the Pick

If you grip the pick too tightly, you will have a tough time getting the pick through the strings. The lighter the grip on the pick, the easier it will glide through the strings. It's going to take some time to find a balance between holding the pick lightly enough and not having it fly out of your hand, but you will find the sweet spot.

4 - Don't Use Just Your Elbow to Strum

Don't lock your wrist and use just your elbow to strum. I'm not saying to not use your elbow at all, I'm just saying to not use only your elbow. It can hurt after a while and slow you down in the long run.

5 - Experiment With Pick Thicknesses

I'd recommend starting with a medium pick, around .6mm-.8mm. Super-thin picks can give you a lot of string noise and not much volume out of your guitar, while super-thick picks can make it tough to get the pick through the strings and stay relaxed.

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6 - Try Using Two Fingers

If you have trouble holding on to the pick, you can use your index and middle fingers for a bit more stability. If you don't want to use two fingers, using your middle finger to nudge the pick back in place from time to time can be a big help.

7 - Don't Dig Too Much of the Pick Into the Strings

Digging a lot of the pick into the strings can get your strumming stuck. Try to use as little of the pick as possible to produce the amount of volume you want.

8 - Mind Your Upstrokes

If your upstrokes are getting caught, be sure not to dig too much of the pick into the strings as per the last tip. Another thing to keep in mind is that your upstrokes don't have to hit all six strings. Just the thinnest 3-5 strings are usually more than enough depending on the chord you are playing.

9 - Look Back at Your Strumming Hand

As you develop your strumming abilities, be sure to look back at your strumming hand so you can see what's going on. Check if you are doing things right or wrong. You might even want to video yourself or get a small mirror for a better view.

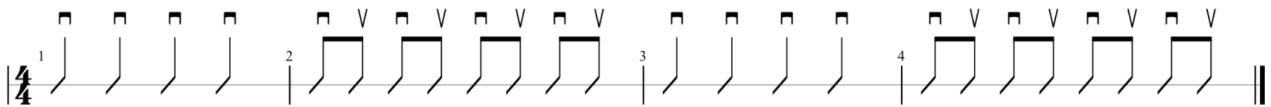
10 - Always Apply Everything to Songs

It's one thing to be able to perform a technique on its own in a vacuum, but it's an entirely different thing to perform a technique in the context of a full song. Always have a song or two in the works that apply your current area of focus. In this case, it would be strumming.

The *Timing Exercise*

Quarter to 8th Timing Exercise

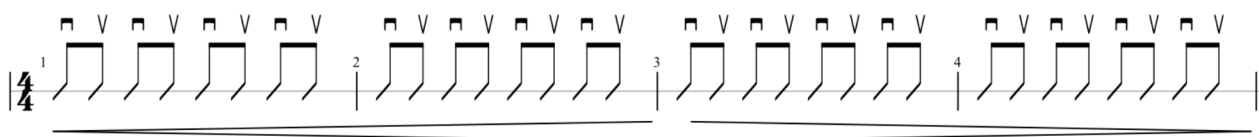
Use this timing exercise to work out the transitional kinks between quarter notes and 8th notes. If you are a more advanced player, you can add in 16th notes or even triplets. You don't have to spend a ton of time on this for it to be super-effective. 2-5 minutes per day for a few weeks will do wonders.



The *Dynamic Strumming Elements*

Dynamics

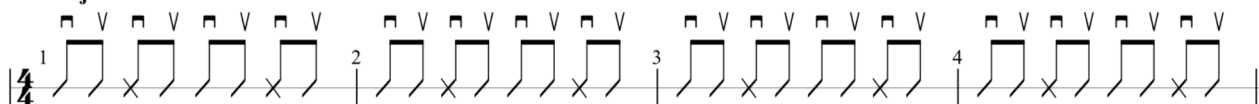
Start by taking your strumming down to a softer or moderate volume. This will give you a wider dynamic range to play with. It's also a good idea to experiment with going from as soft as you can strum to as loud as you can strum. This will help you get more familiar with the dynamic range of your guitar. Talk about bringing your strumming to life!



Muted Strums

Muted strums give a percussive drum-like quality to your playing. This can break up your strumming and make it sound much more interesting, almost like you are actually playing with a drummer. New physical techniques like this can sometimes take a few weeks to develop. Practice it a bit every day for a while, and in a few weeks you will have a new dynamic tool at your disposal.

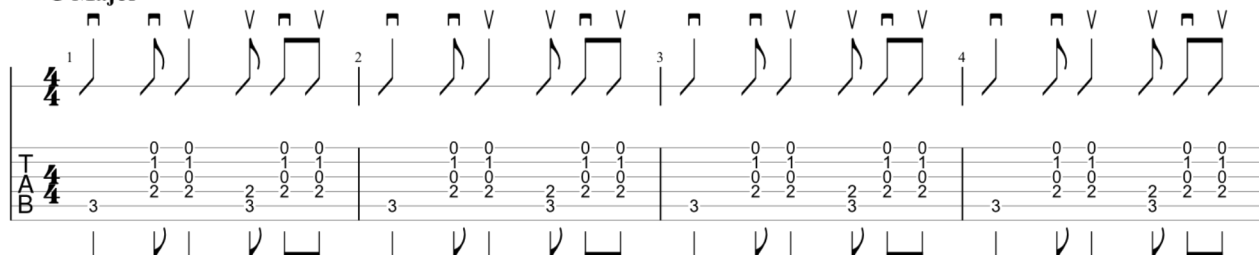
E Major



Single Bass Notes

Strumming all of the strings of any give chord can get a little monotonous if you are not careful. One of the best ways to make your strumming more interesting is to add in some single bass notes. Again, new physical techniques like this can sometimes take a while to develop, so don't get frustrated if you are not great at it right away. This is a technique that is worth investing some time to get down because it can dress up your playing so much.

C Major



The
Songs

Select three songs that are appropriate for your current skill level and use them to apply the other three pillars of strumming. Commit to them over the coming weeks and months. If you need ideas for songs, you can visit www.GuitarFam.com/songs

Song 1 _____

Song 2 _____

Song 3 _____