

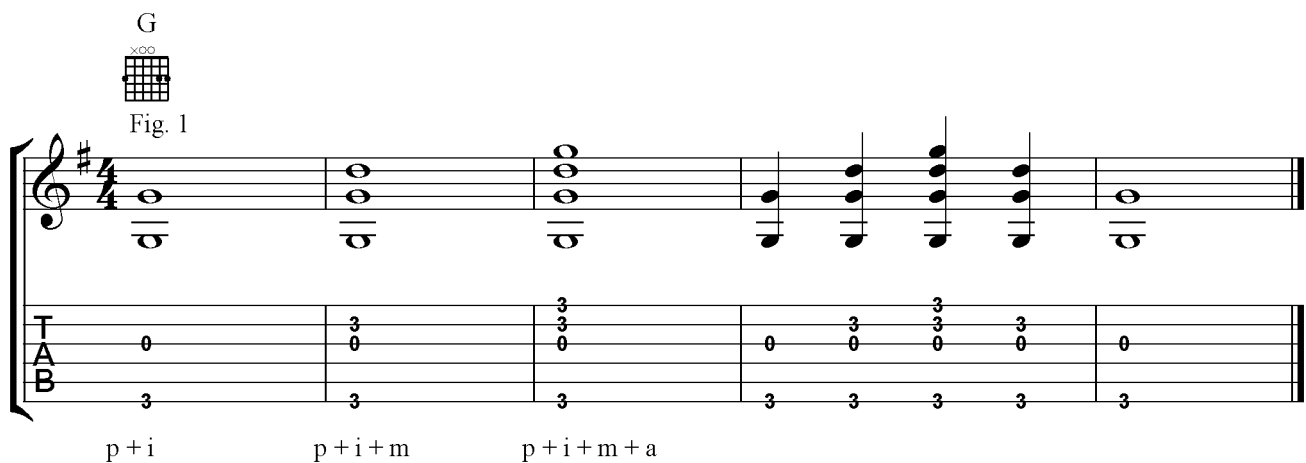
Beginning Acoustic Guitar - Part 5

I hope you are enjoying playing your acoustic and exploring all its various tonal and percussive possibilities. There's so much you can do with it! Strum it, pick it, pluck it, even drum it... in short, you have a beautifully rich and varied tonal palette with which to express the music you like making.

Naturally enough various techniques are necessary to realise and execute all the rich sounds that are quite literally at your fingertips. So far we've looked at strumming, pick and strum, and arpeggio techniques. The more of these techniques you know, the more expressive possibilities you have with your playing. A good picking style will sometimes require good thumb and finger independence, and sometimes, as we are about to see, real thumb and finger dependence. Playing arpeggios, for example, is a great way to get each of your picking digits to work independently of each other because you are playing notes consecutively.

However, the technique we're about to look at is quite different. In the pinch, as I call it, your thumb and fingers work together like pincers in various combinations to pluck notes, chords and chord fragments. It's an indispensable technique that crops up in all known forms of acoustic guitar playing, from classical to rock, from jazz to folk and all over.

G
x00
Fig. 1



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

This technique allows you to be more precise, clear and expressive in your note production. Have a look at fig. 1. (Don't forget the pima convention for your picking hand, where p = thumb, i = index finger, m = middle finger, a = ring finger). Play the G chord with the fingerings indicated. Pay attention and listen to how the sound thickens the more notes you add to the pinch. Let's now apply this technique by playing a simple Minuet by Henry Purcell (Fig. 3 next page). I don't demand that you use the suggested fingerings (pima) for your picking hand, but I do ask that you consider the logic of why I have fingered the piece this way. It has to do with how the picking hand should cover and manage the six strings at its disposal. As a general rule the thumb takes care of the bass strings, the index finger is responsible for the G string, the middle finger minds the B string, and the ring finger takes care of the E string. Of course, this is not a strict rule, but it's a rule worth knowing before you break it.

Minuet

Henry Purcell

Fig. 3 ♩ = 120

The image shows two systems of musical notation for a Minuet by Henry Purcell. Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a 3/4 time signature, a guitar tablature staff with strings T, A, and B labeled, and a line of fingerings. The first system covers measures 1-4, and the second system covers measures 5-8. The first system includes 'PO' and 'HO' symbols above the first two notes of the first measure. The second system includes a 'PO' symbol above the first note of the fifth measure. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 0-3 on the tablature and letters p+i, m, i, p, p+i, i, i, p+i+m, m on the line below.

Playing the Minuet well requires two dynamic techniques that I'd like to swiftly introduce here. In the first bar of the music there is a 'PO' and an 'HO' symbol. They stand for Pull-Off and Hammer-On respectively. These twin techniques are worth mastering and here's

Fig. 2



how you do it for this tune: grab your guitar and fret as indicated in Fig.2, i.e. place your middle finger at the second fret of the G string (note = A), at the same time as fretting your index finger at the first fret of the G string (note = G#). Pluck the notes as indicated. As soon as you have done this, release your middle fretting finger and if you have executed the Pull-Off correctly the note at the first fret should also sound, a fraction later than your first strike.

The Hammer-On is the reverse of the Pull-Off in that you are hammering down on a note rather than pulling off it. In the Minuet the Pull-Off and Hammer-On are executed with one powerful pluck. You pick, pull-off and hammer back on to produce the first three notes indicated in the music. To get this slick movement right, consider the rhythm. You are playing 3 beats to the bar and the notes are quavers, or eighth notes. So count one-and-two as you try this pluck, pull-off, hammer-on movement. Now this is a technique that might take some time to perfect, so don't be discouraged if your first attempts don't sound right, just keep on picking and it will come.

As you carry on with your acoustic explorations, you'll find many applications for this pinching technique. Whether you're playing acoustic rock or fingerstyle jazz. Let's end on a seasonal note that may, or may not be appropriate to you, but it's a great tune anyway. Have a go at "Silent Night". Play it slowly and with as much expression as you can muster. Note there's another dynamic technique that crops up here in bar 20, the slide. It has a

gorgeous glissando sounding effect. In "Silent Night" you slide from the third up to the fifth fret on the B string. To play a slide you pick a note and slide up or down the fretboard as desired. Again this technique will take some practicing to get it right. You must have just the right amount of pressure in your fretting finger. If you are fretting too hard you won't be able to make the smooth movement up or down the fretboard, without a jerk. And if you are fretting too lightly the initial note will buzz horribly. So, until next time, when we'll be looking at a great alternating bass picking technique, keep practicing and do keep up the pickin'.

Silent Night

♩ = 80

Musical notation for measures 1-7. The treble clef staff shows a melody with a glissando on the B string. The bass clef staff shows an alternating bass line. Fingering is indicated by numbers 0-3. The time signature is 3/4.

T	0	2	0	0	2	0	3	3	0	1	1
A								0			
B	3			3			3		3	3	2

8

Musical notation for measures 8-14. The treble clef staff shows a melody with a glissando on the B string. The bass clef staff shows an alternating bass line. Fingering is indicated by numbers 0-2. The time signature is 3/4.

T	0	2	2	1	0	2	0	2	0	2	2	1	0	2
A														
B	3	1		1			3	2	3	1		1		

15

Musical notation for measures 15-19. The treble clef staff shows a melody with a glissando on the B string. The bass clef staff shows an alternating bass line. Fingering is indicated by numbers 0-3. The time signature is 3/4.

T	0	2	0	3	3	1	3	0	1
A					0				
B	3			3		3			3

20

Musical notation for measures 20-24. The treble clef staff shows a melody with a glissando on the B string. The bass clef staff shows an alternating bass line. Fingering is indicated by numbers 0-5. The time signature is 3/4.

T	5	1	0	0	3	0	1
A			2				0
B	3	3		3		0	3

Slide up from third fret