

Getting Started With Fingerstyle Guitar...

Even If You
Can't Play
Chords!

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Introduction

Getting Started With Fingerstyle Guitar.... Even If You Can't Play Chords! is a super simple guide on getting those of you who struggle with chords to be able to play fingerstyle guitar.

To be a successful fingerpicking guitarist, all you need is a little time, some perseverance and the excitement of learning how to fingerpick!

Those, along with this simple guide will get you on the path to playing some fun and exciting fingerstyle guitar!

In this guide you will learn:

- Which fingers pick which strings
- How to play a really cool sounding yet simple fingerpicking pattern
- How to add melody notes to the pattern
- An alternate variation of the pattern
- How to add bass notes to the pattern
- And finally, how to put it all together for a little awesome sounding jam.

If you are new to fingerpicking, or have struggled with it in the past, then **this guide will help you to make some beautiful sounding first steps into fingerpicking - all without having to focus on playing chords.**

Step 1 - Ditch The Chords!

That`s right.

We are not going to use all those awkward chord shapes that everyone teaches.

Most guitar teachers and YouTube tutorials teach students with far too big an emphasis on chords.

Don`t get me wrong, chords are great and they are essential to your playing as a guitarist. The trouble is, however, they are not the be all and end all.

When fingerpicking, especially if it is new to you or you struggle or have struggled with fingerpicking in the past, **you want to focus on your picking hand, and NOT your fretting hand.**

Thinking about changing chords AND fingerpicking patterns at the same time is often too much for beginner guitarists.

Therefore, you want to simplify things and focus on one hand at a time.

That is what this guide is about – **focusing on the picking hand.**

We are dropping the chord shapes so you can really focus on that picking hand and see for yourself just how awesome the guitar can sound without chords for once!

We will use the open strings to create chord voicings based around the chord of **E minor**.

Basically, that means you will place no more than one finger on the fretboard at any one time!

All the patterns in this book are played twice in the audio examples you will hear on the [audio extras page](#).

Step 2 - Learn The Basic Fingerpicking Pattern

The fingerpicking pattern we will use is a **simple one that you can easily get started with.**

This is the basic pattern that will act as a template for the book. On its own, it is a bit boring but combined with the variations you will learn right after it, it is far more exciting!

The pattern is below.

Ex.1a

let ring

TAB

[Click here to listen](#)

It doesn't sound like much yet but when we get to the next step it quickly starts to **sound really interesting!**

When fingerpicking, the picking hand:

- **Thumb** plays the Low E, A and D strings
- **Index** plays the G string
- **Middle** plays the B string
- **Ring** plays the high E string

Take your time and practice this pattern super slowly so that you can play it 10 times in a row without any mistakes.

Aim to make each pluck loud, bright, clear and consistent.

Getting a good fingerpicking tone right from the off is important to your playing.

Step 3 – Add-In The Melody Notes

Now then, we will add in some melody notes to the pattern to create some life and interest.

Below are three examples that all use the **same fingerpicking pattern** but with **different melody notes in the last bar**.

Ex.1b

The image displays musical notation for Example 1b. It consists of two staves. The top staff is a standard musical staff in treble clef, showing a melody line. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature (TAB) staff, showing fret numbers for each string. The melody line starts with a quarter note on the 4th line (F), followed by an eighth note on the 5th line (G) and an eighth note on the 4th line (F), then a quarter note on the 3rd line (E), and a quarter note on the 2nd line (D). The last bar of the melody line shows a quarter note on the 4th line (F), a quarter note on the 5th line (G), a quarter note on the 4th line (F), and a quarter note on the 3rd line (E). The TAB staff shows the fretting for each string. The first bar of the TAB staff shows fret numbers 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0. The second bar of the TAB staff shows fret numbers 8, 0, 7, 0, 0, 0. A dashed line labeled 'let ring' connects the end of the melody line to the end of the TAB staff.

[Click here to listen](#)

Here, we play the exact same picking pattern but this time the fretting hand gets involved by fretting the **8th** and then **7th** frets of the high E string.

Ex.1c

The image displays musical notation for a guitar exercise. The top staff is a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The melody consists of the following notes: F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (half), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), and C4 (half). A dashed line labeled "let ring" spans the duration of the first four notes. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature staff with six lines. The fret numbers for the notes are: 0, 0, 0, 0, 3, 0, 5, and 0. The fret numbers are placed on the lines corresponding to the notes in the melody.

[*Click here to listen*](#)

This time the fretting hand plays the notes at the **3rd** and **5th** frets of the **high E string**.

Ex.1d

The image displays a musical example for guitar, labeled 'Ex.1d'. It consists of two staves. The top staff is a standard musical staff with a treble clef, showing a melody of eighth notes. The notes are: E4 (open), D4 (open), C4 (open), B3 (open), A3 (open), G3 (open), F3 (open), and E3 (open). The bottom staff is a guitar fretboard diagram for the high E string. It shows the fret numbers for each note: 0, 0, 0, 12, 0, 8, 0, and 0. A dashed line with the text 'let ring' is positioned above the fretboard diagram, indicating that the notes should be played and allowed to ring out.

[Click here to listen](#)

For our next and final variation of this pattern, we are fretting the notes at the **12th and 8th frets of the high E string.**

Practice the above three examples as many times as needed to get them comfortable.

Once you are happy with playing them, try to play them one after the other and you will hear just how cool they sound.

Step 4 - Learn The Alternate Fingerpicking Pattern

Now then, we have a variation of the original fingerpicking pattern where we start to turn towards the **bass strings to add the melodic interest to the pattern.**

The first half of the pattern is exactly the same but the second half changes slightly.

It sounds a little boring or even slightly odd at the moment but you will hear how good it sounds in the next step when we start varying the bass notes in the second bar.

Ex.2a



[Click here to listen](#)

For this pattern, you will notice there are more notes plucked on the **low E string**. This adds more `bass` to the pattern.

Step 5 – Add-In The Bass Notes

Now, this is where this pattern gets far more exciting.

We now have three examples of the pattern being played but with bass note variations.

These three variations add a lot more interest than the standard pattern and make it sound like something else entirely.

Ex.2b

The image displays musical notation for a guitar exercise. The top staff is in treble clef, showing a melody of eighth notes: G4 (open), A4 (open), B4 (open), C5 (open), D5 (open), E5 (open), F5 (open), and G5 (open). A dashed line labeled 'let ring' spans the duration of these notes. The bottom staff is in bass clef, showing a bass line with fret numbers: 0, 0, 0, 0, 8, and 7. The exercise is marked with a double bar line at the end.

[Click here to listen](#)

For this variation, we play the **8th and then 7th frets of the low E string** both followed by plucks of the **open high E string**.

Ex.2c

The image displays a musical exercise labeled 'Ex.2c'. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains a melody of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, and F#4. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature in bass clef, corresponding to the melody. It shows fret numbers for each note: 0, 0, 0, 3, 0, 2, 0, and 0. A dashed line with the text 'let ring' spans the first six notes of the melody. The tablature is marked with a 'TAB' symbol on the left.

[*Click here to listen*](#)

Now, we are changing the bass notes in the second bar to the **3rd** and then **2nd** frets of the low E string.

Ex.2d

The image displays a musical example labeled 'Ex.2d'. It consists of two staves. The top staff is a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in eighth notes: B-flat (first space), A (first space), G (first space), F (first space), E (first space), D (first space), C (first space), and B-flat (first space). The bottom staff is a guitar tablature staff, indicated by the 'TAB' label. It shows the fret numbers for the melody: 0, 0, 0, 0, 3, 7, 0, and 0. A dashed line with the text 'let ring' spans the first four fret numbers (0, 0, 0, 0). The tablature staff is divided into two measures by a vertical bar line, with the first measure containing the first four fret numbers and the second measure containing the last four.

[Click here to listen](#)

...And for our final example in the book we are playing the **3rd and 7th frets of the low E string.**

Step 6 - Put It All Together For The Final Jam

Our last step is to put all of the above together for a fun final jam song.

In this step, we have the 3 melody note patterns and the 3 bass note patterns and have put them together.

We are not using the basic patterns where there are no melody or bass notes as they are not as fun.

They are there simply to teach the picking hand the actual fingerpicking pattern. Basically, all the examples used in the following final jam are from examples **1b, 1c, 1d** and **2b, 2c, 2d**.

The order laid out is the one that sounds best to me and not the order they are taught so check out the tab before playing it.

Three staves of musical notation for guitar, each with a treble clef staff and a TAB staff. The first staff has a 'let ring' instruction and a dashed line. The second staff has a 'let ring' instruction and a dashed line. The third staff has a 'let ring' instruction and a dashed line. The TAB staves contain numbers 0, 8, 7, 3, 5, 12, 8, 0, 3, 2, 0, 0, 3, 7, 0.

There are two speeds at which you will hear this example.

Ex.3a

This is a slower (120bpm) version which you should try first.

[***Click here to listen***](#)

Ex.3b

This is a faster (150bpm) version. Once you are able to play the slower version well, work your way up to the faster version.

[Click here to listen](#)

Now create your own ideas!

There it is.

Your first steps in fingerpicking guitar.

I highly recommend as well as learning some fingerpicking songs that you love; you experiment and create your own ideas using the above as a template and guide.

Experimentation is the key.

Playing about with different melody and bass notes, a different pattern or two different rhythms and even adding in chords, now that you have taken your first steps, is a great way to go.

Final Thoughts

I hope you enjoyed this simple guide and I hope it has given you the confidence and inspiration to tackle more fingerpicking tutorials and songs.

If you want to tackle some of the best sounding fingerpicking songs of all time, now that you have completed this guide, it is a great time to do so.

You can check out my Fingerpicking Classics course and get 20% off with this code - **fingerfun20**

To use the above code, click the [Fingerpicking Classics](#) page, choose which version you would like, click `add to cart` and then enter the code and your discount will be applied.

I wish you all the best on your fingerpicking journey!

Email me at:

hq@guitardomination.net

....for any questions or queries.

Many thanks and much love

Dan Thorpe
Guitar Domination

Other resources available from the author

Dan Thorpe currently has two websites:

Guitar Domination – a free resource for all guitarists to learn and enjoy from.

Elite Guitarist – A selection of courses aimed at making you the absolute best guitarist you can be.

These range from strumming, fingerpicking, chord changes, essential beginner guitar skills and more.

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