
Introducing Strumming and Developing Chord Changes

Introducing Strumming

In the previous lesson we learnt how to play the Chords of G, E minor, A minor and D7.

In this lesson we will learn the new chords of D, A and E. Furthermore though, we will learn how to strum the guitar creating more interesting **rhythms** whilst developing the ability to change between the many new chords we are learning.

To get used to the motion of strumming it is useful to play the following exercise using alternate down and up strokes. (**Down strokes** go from the lowest pitched string to the highest pitched string and **Up strokes** go from the highest pitched string to the lowest.)

Exercise 1 Strumming using Up and Down Strokes

lesson008.igsis.techstore.01

Keep the strumming hand relaxed and gently play up and down strokes on the rhythm below. In the video David is playing the chord of G.



Play the above exercise at 100 beats per minute, no slower. If the rhythm is played any slower it's difficult to build up any momentum.

On the down strokes allow the weight of the arm to fall through the guitar. You will hear how the up strokes sound slightly different to the down strokes as the treble strings are being hit before the bass strings. On the down strums we are hitting the bass strings first.

Lesson Objectives

- Introduce the technique of **strumming**.
- Develop control of rhythmic patterns by introducing **Up strokes**.
- Develop the ability to change chords more fluently within rhythms.
- Build our library of chords by introducing the chords of D, A and E.



Applying Strumming to the Chord of E minor

Once you are comfortable with the up and down strokes, place a chord of E minor on the guitar neck.

We are now going to practise a common rock rhythm on the chord of E minor. The strums which land on the beat are down strums and the beats which are off the beat are up strums.

In this example this creates the pattern: Down, Down, Down-Up, Down-Up.

Play the exercise at 100 beats per minute, no slower. If the rhythm is played any slower it's difficult to build up any momentum.

On the down strokes allow the weight of the arm to fall through the guitar. You will hear how the up strokes sound slightly different to the down strokes as the treble strings are being hit before the bass strings. On the down strums we are hitting the bass strings first.

Exercise 2: Lesson008.igsis.01

Applying Strumming to Changing Chords

We are now going to move on to applying this same strum pattern over a chord change. Probably the easiest chord change on the guitar is G to Em so we will start with this.

Exercise 3: Lesson008.igsis.02

Changing the chords (one chord every two bars)

As with the exercises in *Lesson Seven*, it is essential that the strumming continues in time and un-interrupted, regardless of how well the chords are being changed. The chord changes will catch up with the strumming.

Now that there is less time to change chords because the strum pattern is busier than in *Lesson Seven* make sure that when changing from G to Em that the G chord comes off the guitar on the final up stroke prior to the Em. This allows enough time for the new chord shape to be formed and placed on the guitar on the first beat of the next bar. Leaving the previous chord on for too long, right up to the bar line will not leave enough time to execute the chord change smoothly. This rule applies no matter what chords are involved.

With certain changes it may be possible to leave the first chord on longer but this technique will ensure that all chord changes are smooth. Once this chord change can be executed correctly move on to the following exercises where the rhythm is played over the four chords learnt so far.

Exercise 4: Lesson008.igsis.03

The exercise consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff contains four bars of music. The first two bars are in the key of G major, with a G chord above each bar. The last two bars are in the key of E minor, with an Em chord above each bar. The strumming pattern for all bars is D D D U D U. The second staff starts at bar 5 and contains four bars of music. The first two bars are in the key of A minor, with an Am chord above each bar. The last two bars are in the key of D major, with a D7 chord above each bar. The strumming pattern for all bars is D D D U D U.

Changing chords (one chord every bar)

It may be necessary to practice each of the individual changes with this rhythm as was practiced in the changes from G to Em. For example, Em to Am, Am to D7 etc.

Once the above exercise can be executed correctly proceed to the following exercise where the chords change every bar.

Exercise 5: Lesson008.igsis.04

G Em Am D7

D D D U D U D D D U D U D D D U D U D D D U D U

Introducing the Chords of D, A and E

The next three chords that we will learn are; D, A and E. The chord boxes for these new chords are shown below, together with their multimedia files.

Exercise 6: Chord of D

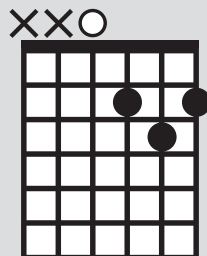
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Technique Tips

Notice which bass note is played in each chord...

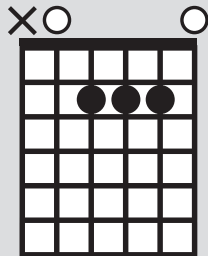
The third lowest string is the D string (4th string) and so we strum the chord of D from the open D string.

Chord of D



Exercise 7: Chord of A

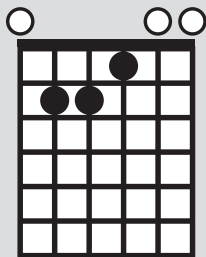
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Chord of A

The second lowest string on the guitar is the A string (5th string) and so we strum the chord of A from the open A string.

Exercise 8: Chord of E

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Chord of E

The lowest string on the guitar is the E string (6th string) and so we strum the chord of E from the open E string.

To learn these 3 chords thoroughly we need to again practice strumming the chord slowly making sure that each note plays clearly without buzzes.

Remember that an **open string** is so named as it does not have a finger on it and is therefore left open to 'ring'.

As with the four chords learnt in *Lesson Seven*, ensure that each finger in each chord is not touching another string. This is the most common reason for strings not sounding clearly. Once you feel comfortable with the form of these chords lets practise them. Play along with the media files to help fluency, timekeeping and accuracy of sound.

Exercise 9: Lesson008.igsis.05**Exercise 10: Lesson008.igsis.06****Exercise 11: Lesson008.igsis.07**

Developing Chord Changes (every bar)

In the following exercises we will change chords at the beginning of each bar rather than every two bars, focusing on our ability to develop fluency in changing chords.

For the moment we are keeping the rhythm simple and once we are secure in the changes we will look at integrating more rhythm by using the skills we developed in strumming earlier on this lesson.

Exercise 12: Lesson008.igsis.08



Exercise 13: Lesson008.igsis.09



Exercise 14: Lesson008.igsis.10



Developing our rhythmic playing using our new chords

Now that we have become more secure with the new chords, let's try changing the chords over the strum pattern we learnt earlier in this lesson. As usual play along with the media files to help fluency and control.

Exercise 15: Lesson008.igsis.11

Developing greater fluency by combining all chord changes

By the end of this lesson you will not only be able to play 2 positions of each power chord but also play 7 new chords, of both the Major and Minor variety.

It is, however, very important that you can change from each one of these chords to any other of the 7 chords. There are numerous combinations and I have listed a few here which you should try with the strum pattern.

This is far from an exhaustive list of combinations but provides you with the idea of what needs to be developed to enable you to become a fluent guitarist.

Exercise 16: Lesson008.igsis.12

Exercise 17: Lesson008.igsis.13

Musical notation for Exercise 17: Lesson008.igsis.13. The notation is in treble clef, common time (C), and consists of four measures. The first measure is marked with a 'D' chord above it and contains a quarter note D4, followed by a quarter rest, and then a quarter note D4. The second measure is marked with a 'G' chord above it and contains a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note G4, and then a quarter note G4. The third measure is marked with an 'E' chord above it and contains a quarter note E4, followed by a quarter note E4, and then a quarter note E4. The fourth measure is marked with an 'A' chord above it and contains a quarter note A4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a quarter note A4. The piece ends with a double bar line.