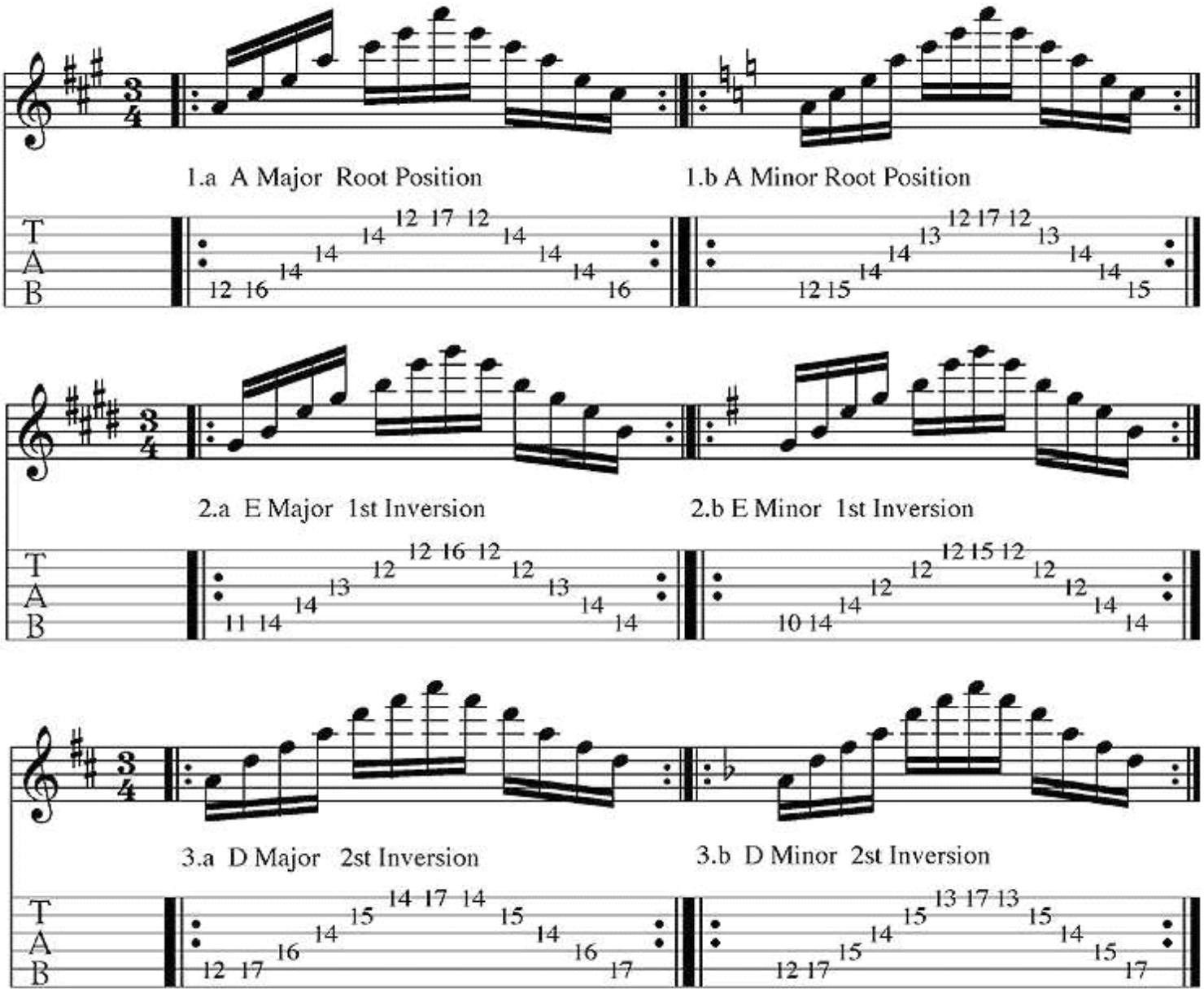
# Sweep Picking

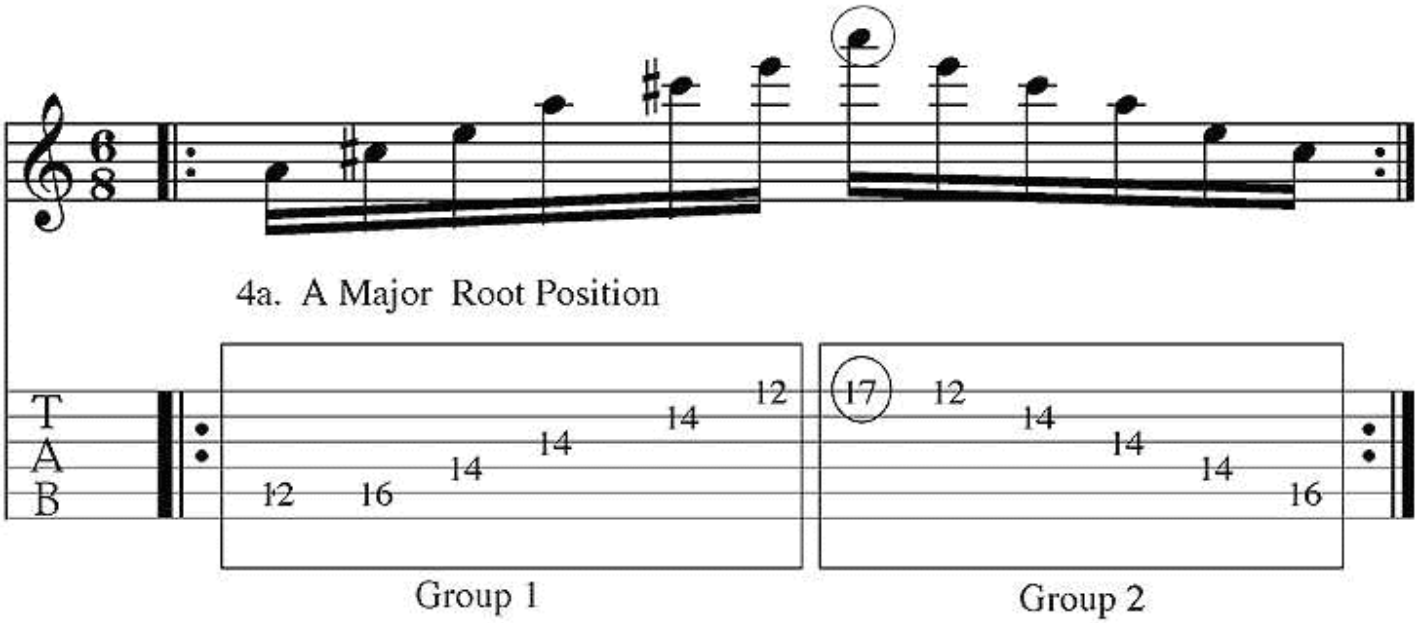
## By Neal Nagaoka

This is a technique that was adapted to guitar from violin. A commonly used technique that is used to execute arpeggios. Many people tend to think that this technique sounds very Classical sounding which it can if used with a Classical sounding progression. Well hopefully this will break that myth but I suggest we take these in steps so we will start with the typically generic sounding Classical examples first.

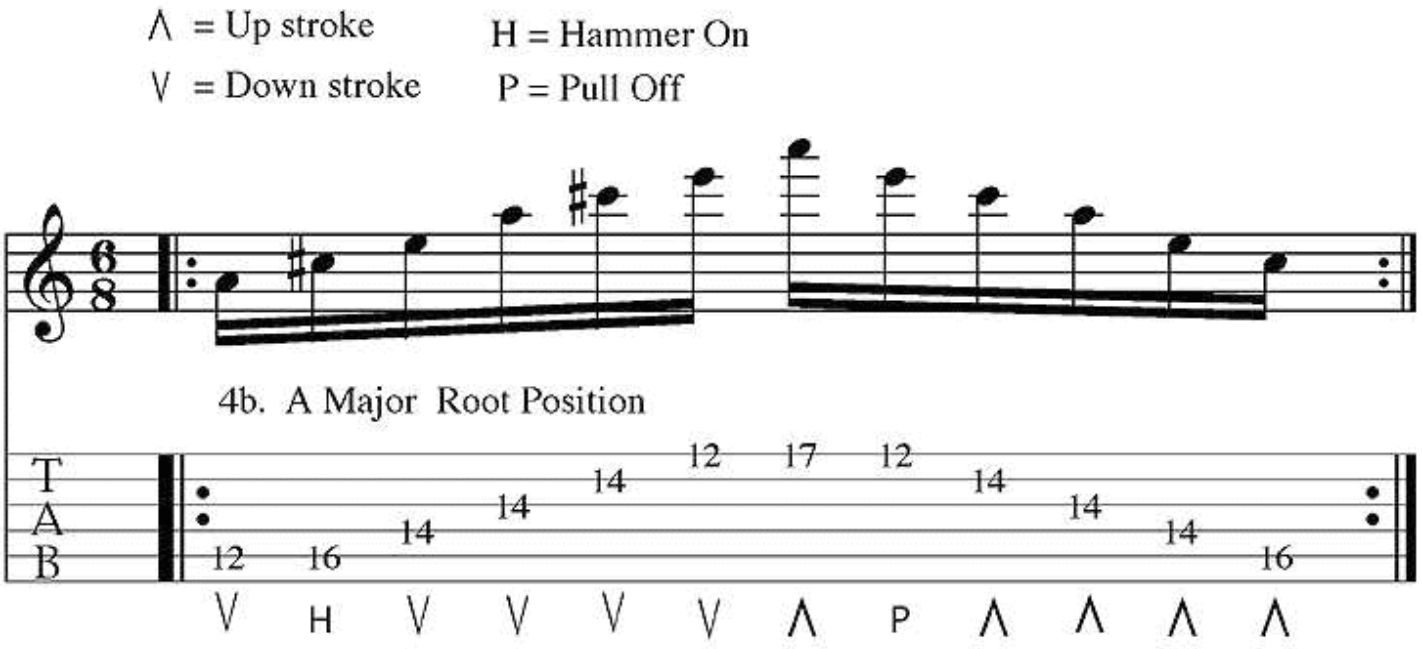
Lets start with the basic triads. Major shape and the Minor shape. I usually tend to relate them with open chord shapes. What I mean by this is for example, take 1a. This pattern is a A major Arpeggio but if you look closly, the pattern reminds of an A Barre chord at the 12th fret or you can look at it as an open A chord but 12 frets higher. Example 1b. is an A minor arpeggio that looks similar to an open A minor chord. Example 2a looks like an E chord and 3a looks like a D chord while 2b looks like an E minor chord and 3b looks like a D Minor Chord.



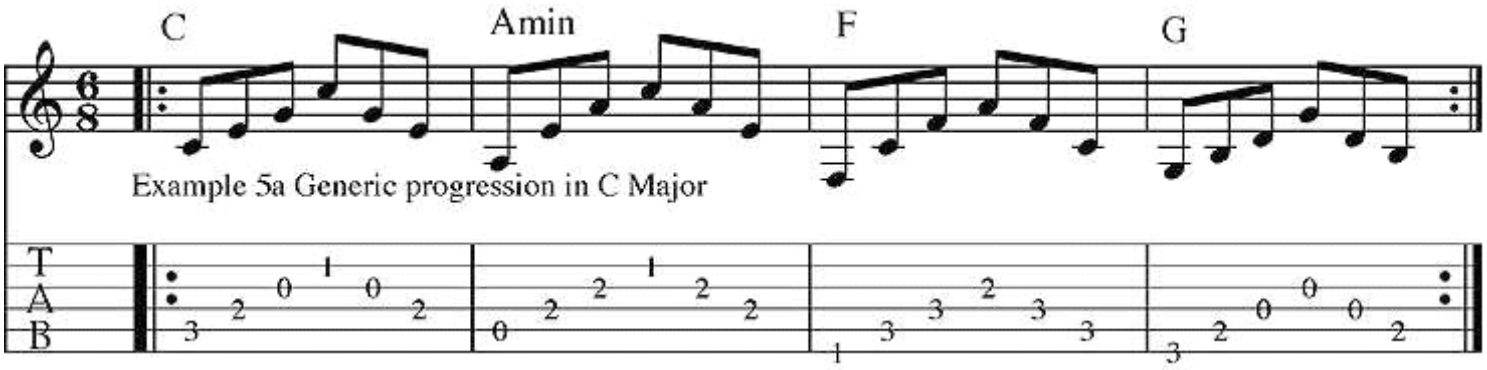
The key to executing these cleanly is basically to do them over and over but I highly reccomend practicing these with a metronome at a slow speed. The object of making the sweeps sound good is to make sure they are even and in tempo. Lets take example 1a. Since this pattern contains 12 notes, we have to systematically break them up into 2 groups of 6s. Think of the acsending half as group one and the descending half as group two. Another thing to keep in mind is when there are 2 notes on a string, pick just the first note and hammer on the second note. The only exception to this is when you are actually using the second note as a pivot point like in the 7th note in the example below. Once you have mastered this, the technique will gradually become much easier to do with any arpeggio.



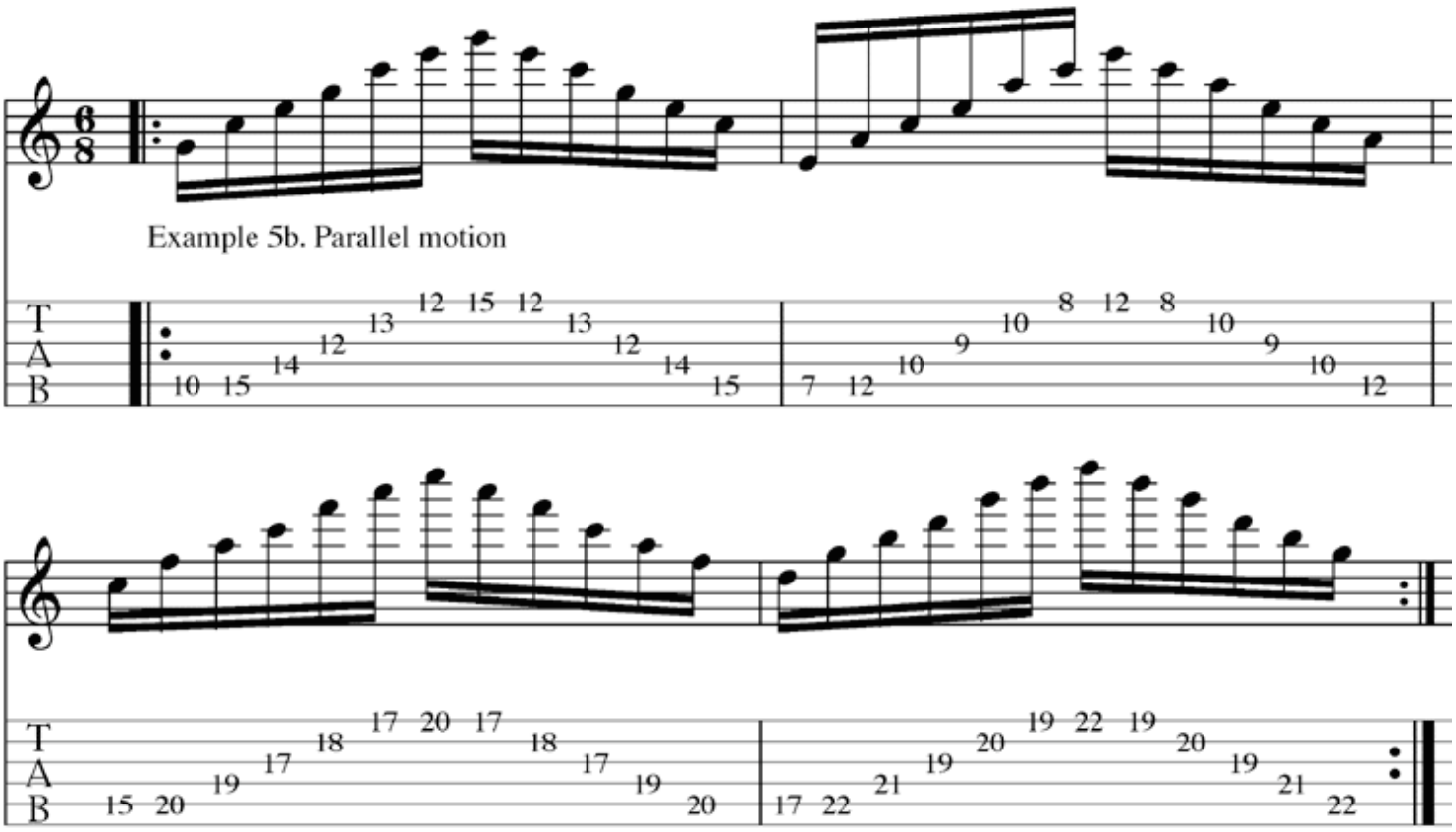

Exercise 4b. shows the actual direction of the picking and which notes to hammer on and pull off. Just remember when you practice these to keep them as even as possible and in time.

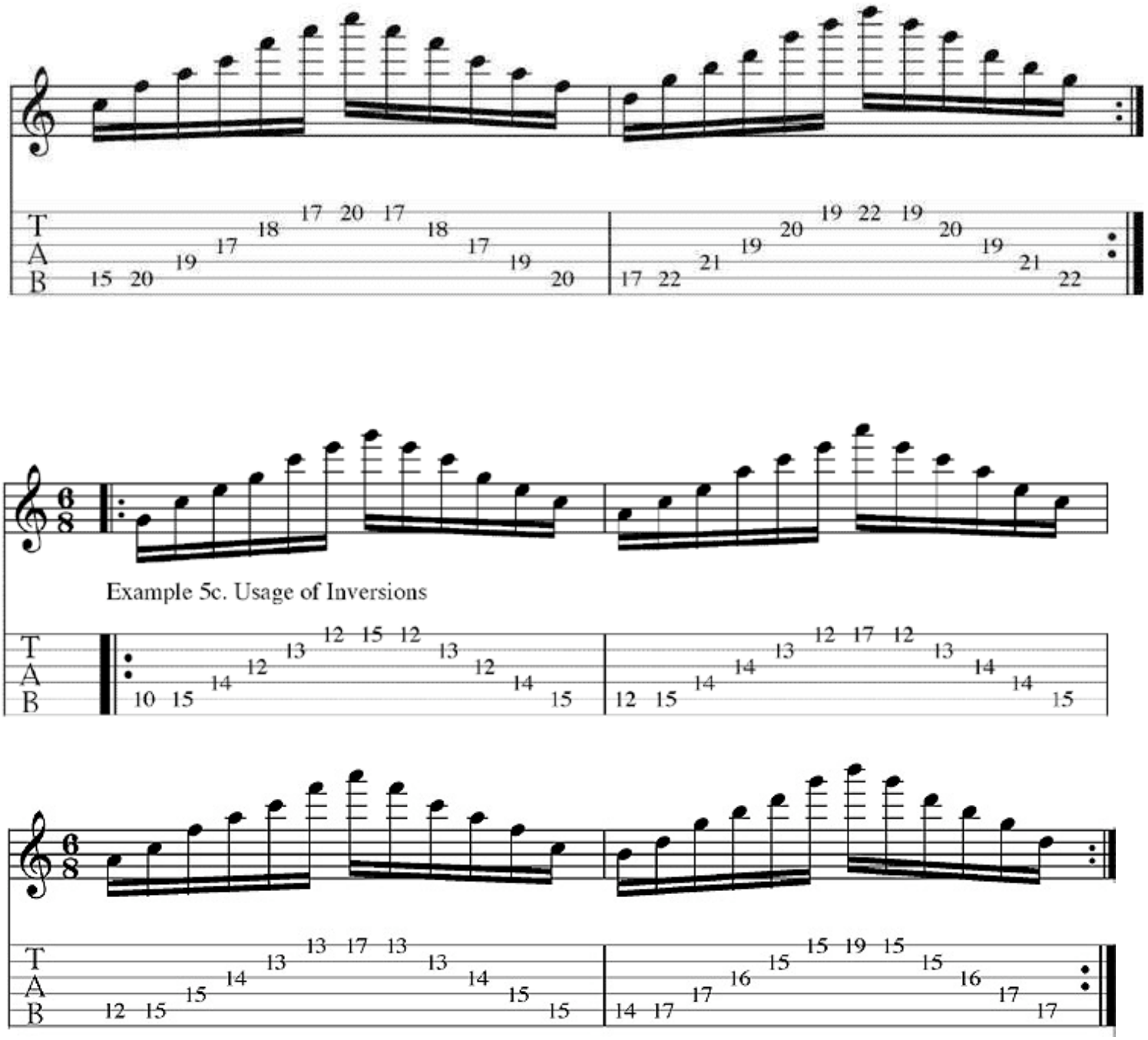


So now you have the basic idea of how to sweep an arpeggio but the next question usually follows," How do I use them when I am playing a song or when I am improvising?. One common way to use them is to follow a chord progression. Lets take example 5 with a generic I vi IV V progresion in the key of C Major.

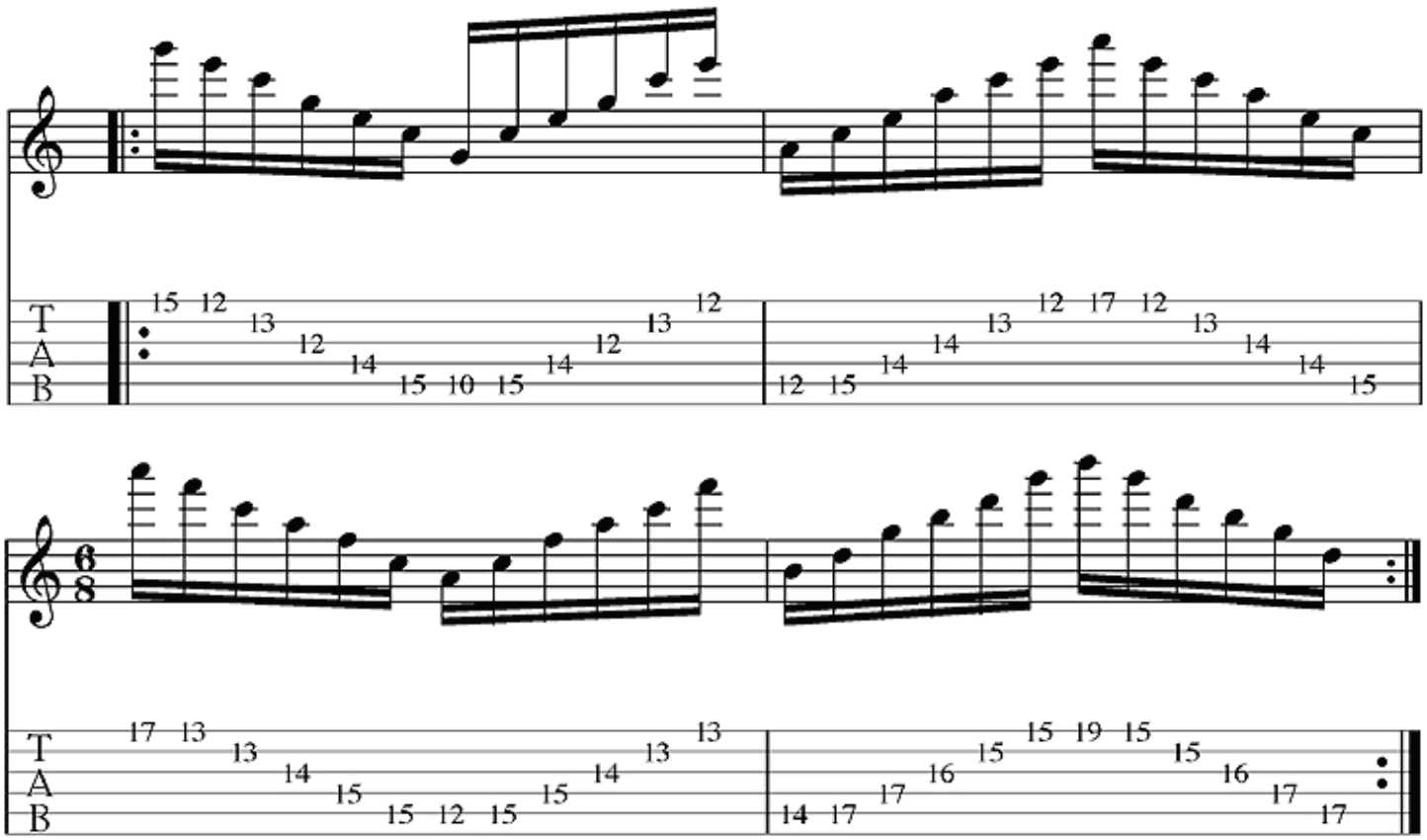



The next step is to decide which arpeggios to use to follow this progression.This ones up to you but for practical purposes, I reccomend mixing different inversions around so you dont have to jump around the entire fretboard to follow a progression. Below, I have given several possibilities to follow the progression so try to find one that you think feels most comfortable for you at first and then try experimenting.

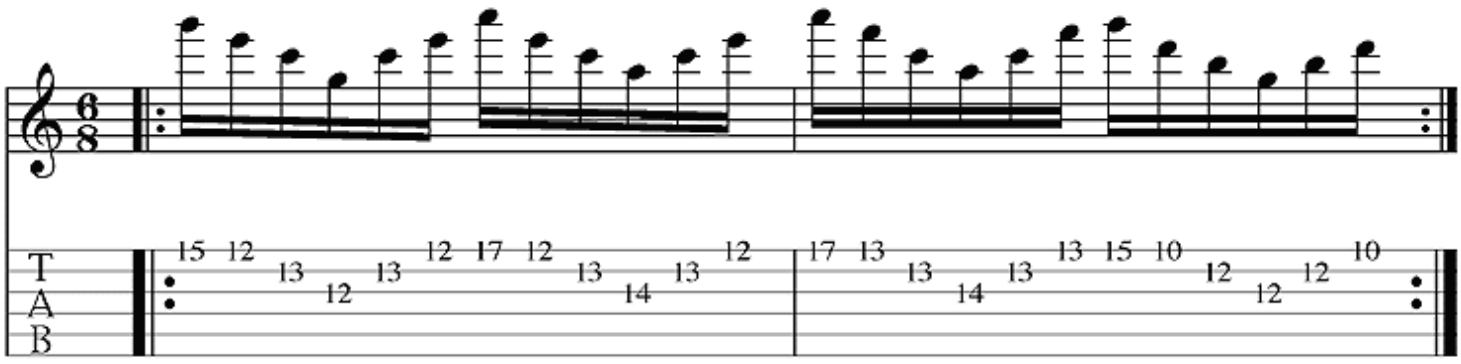





One other thing is that you dont always have to start from the bottom note. For a change, reversing the pattern can be a nice way to break the monotony.




Another possibility is to use smaller sized arpeggios or portions of the sweep arpeggios. Remember that they dont always have to be really large sweeps. Sometimes the smaller ones can be just as difficult or at times,even more difficult.



# Advanced Sweep Picking

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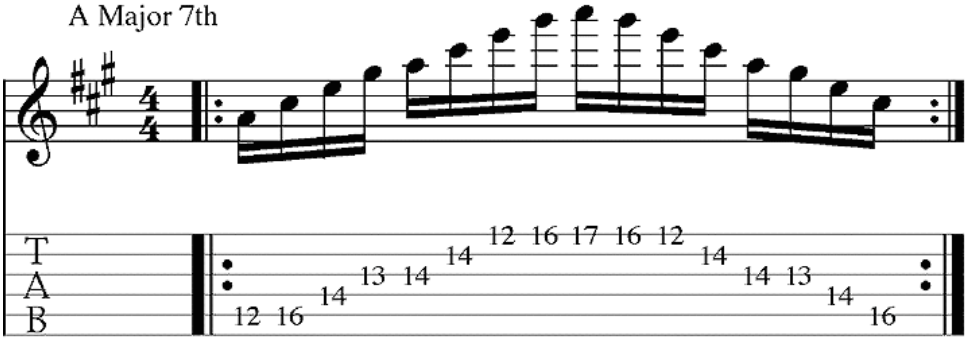
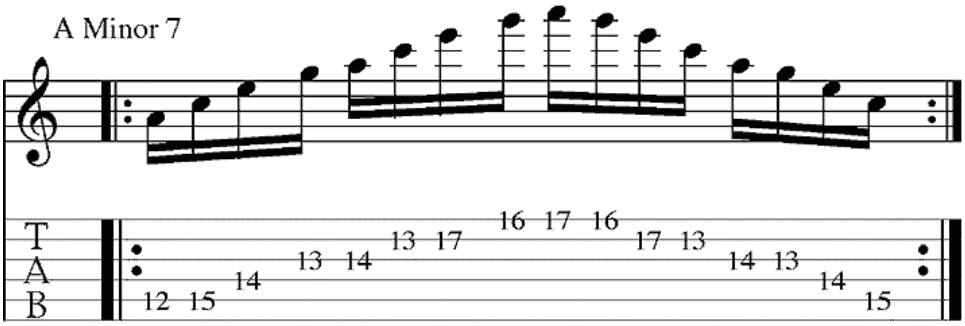
In this section, we will try to use more complex shapes and patterns for sweep picking. Sweeping of 7th chord arpeggios is also a great way to use them to give it a more jazzy flavor.

A Major 7th




A Minor 7

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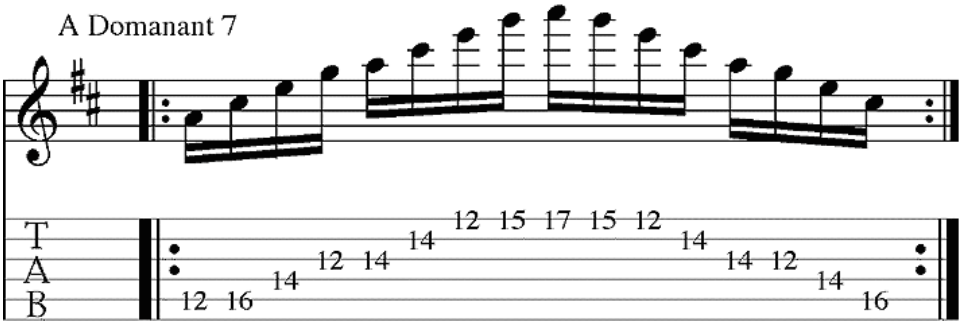
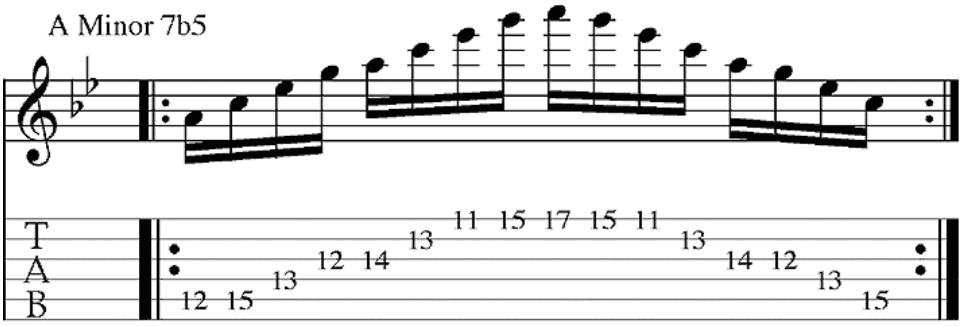
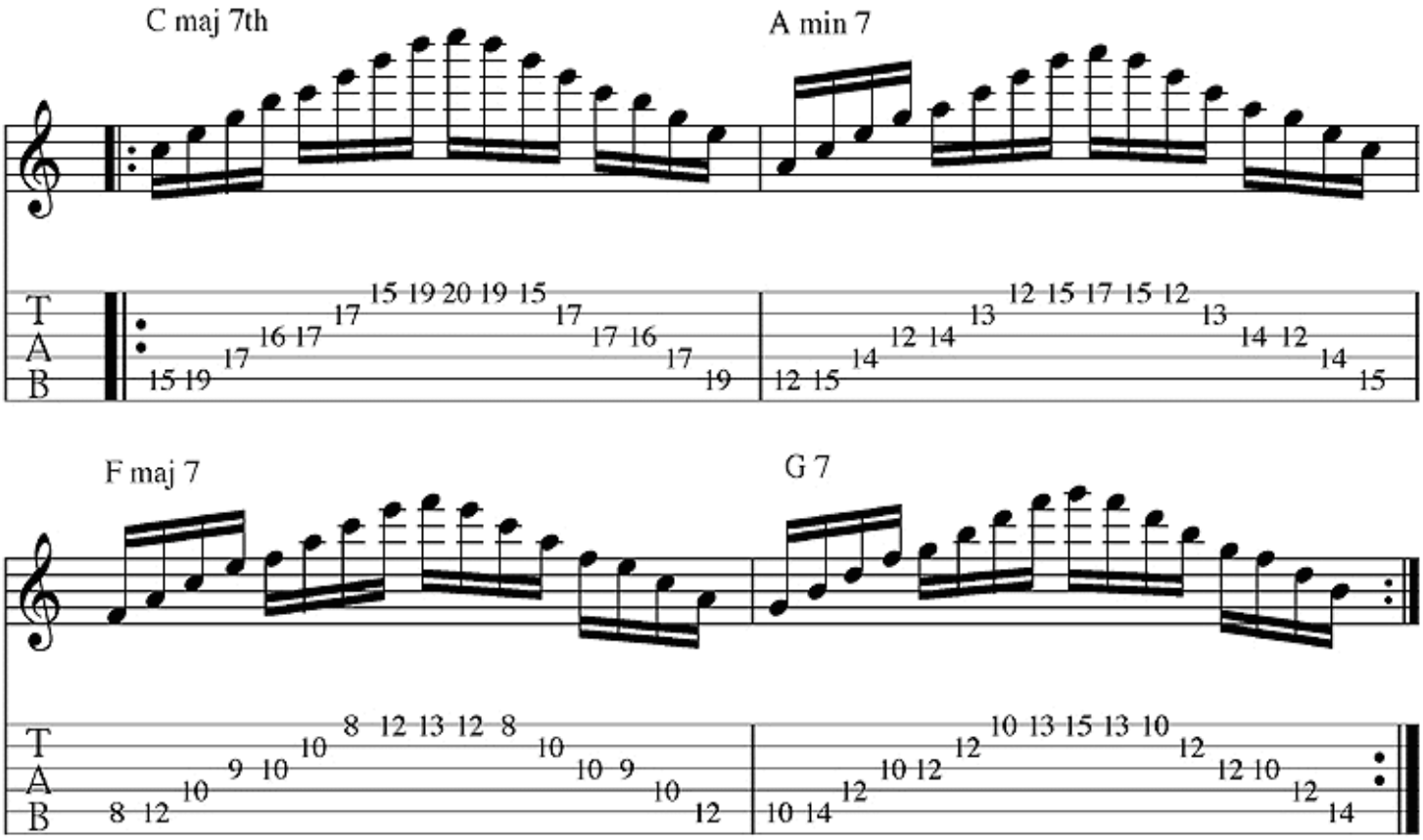


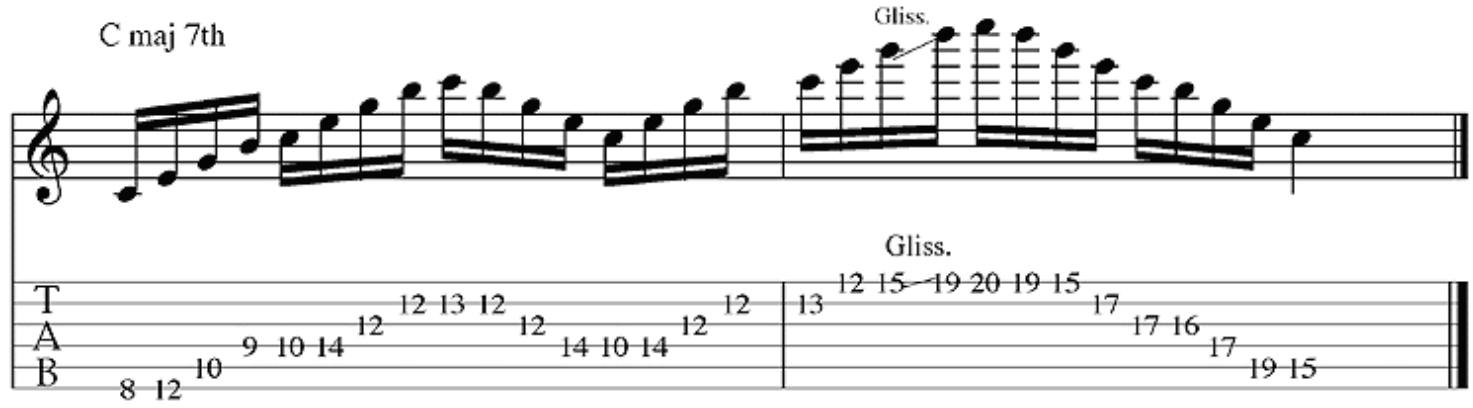

A Minor 7b5



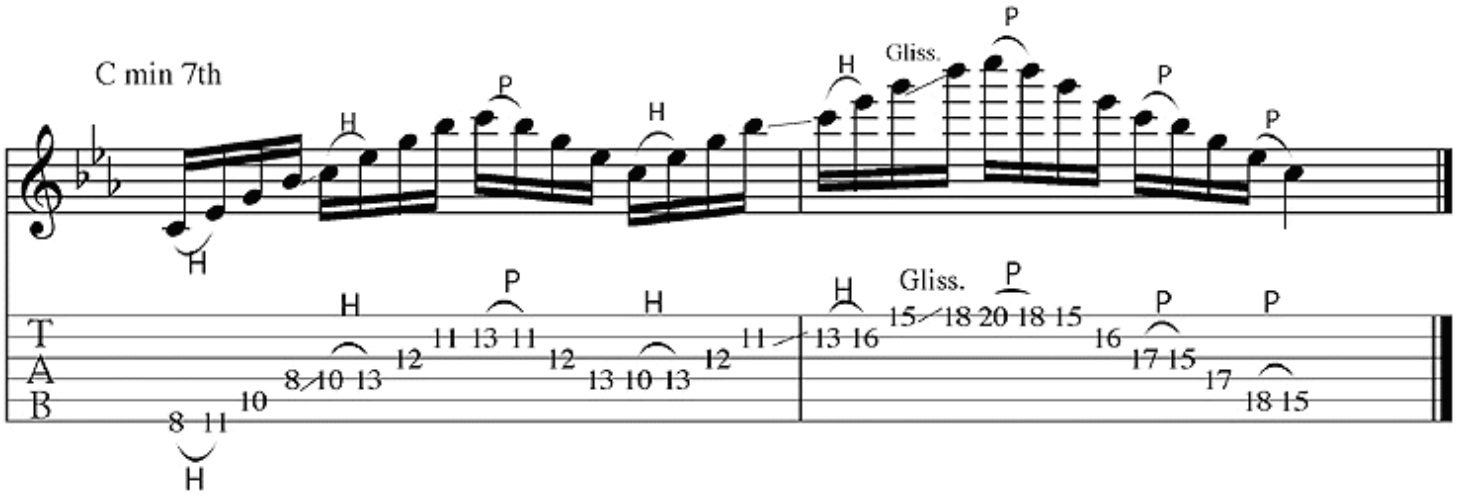
You can also substitute a regular triad arpeggio with a 7th arpeggio if they are used correctly. Below is an example using the generic I, VI, IV, V progression again.



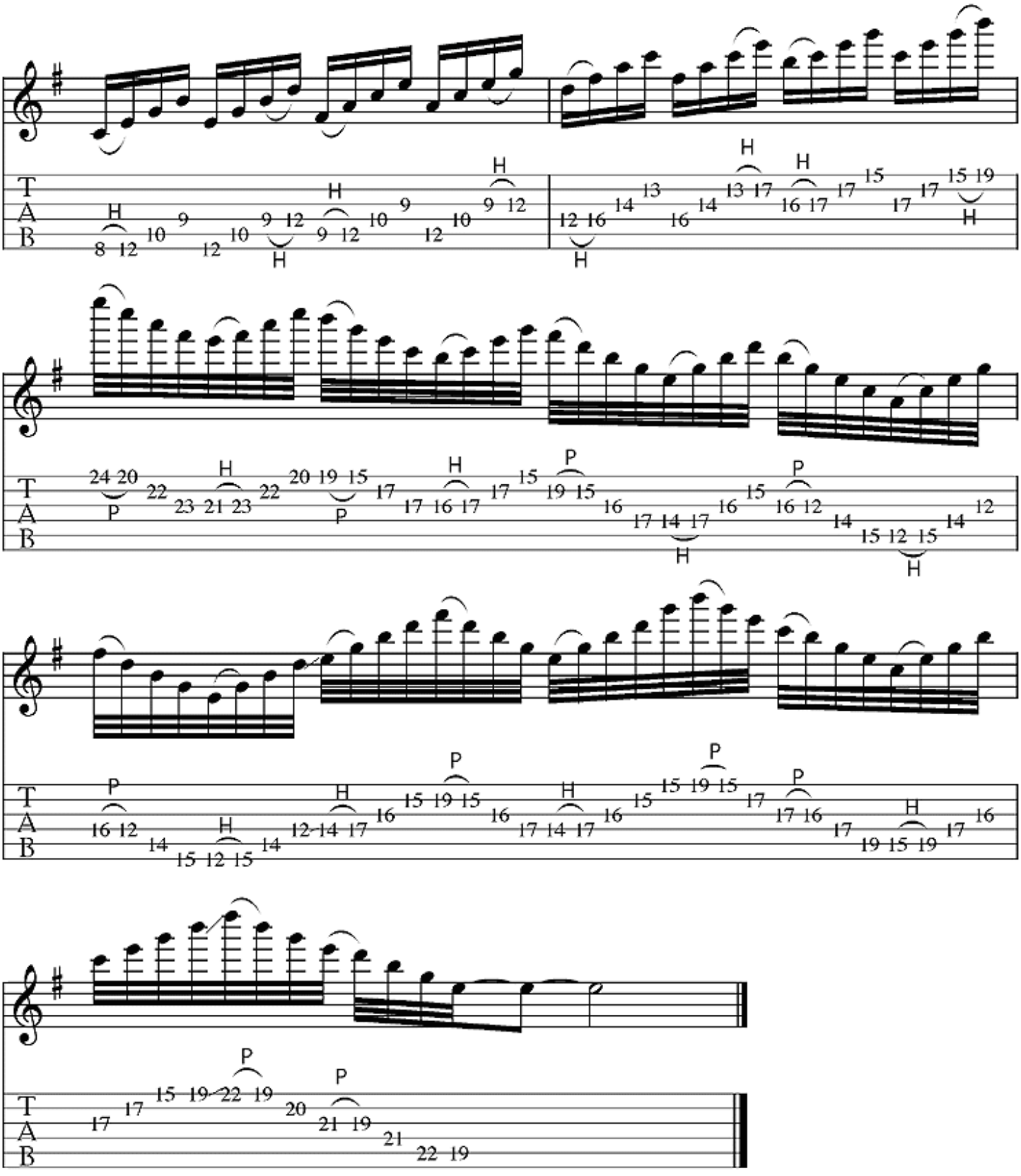
Another possiblity, sweeping 7th's with slides and in octaves pairing. This method will allow you to do those really long and continuous sweeps once you master the technique.



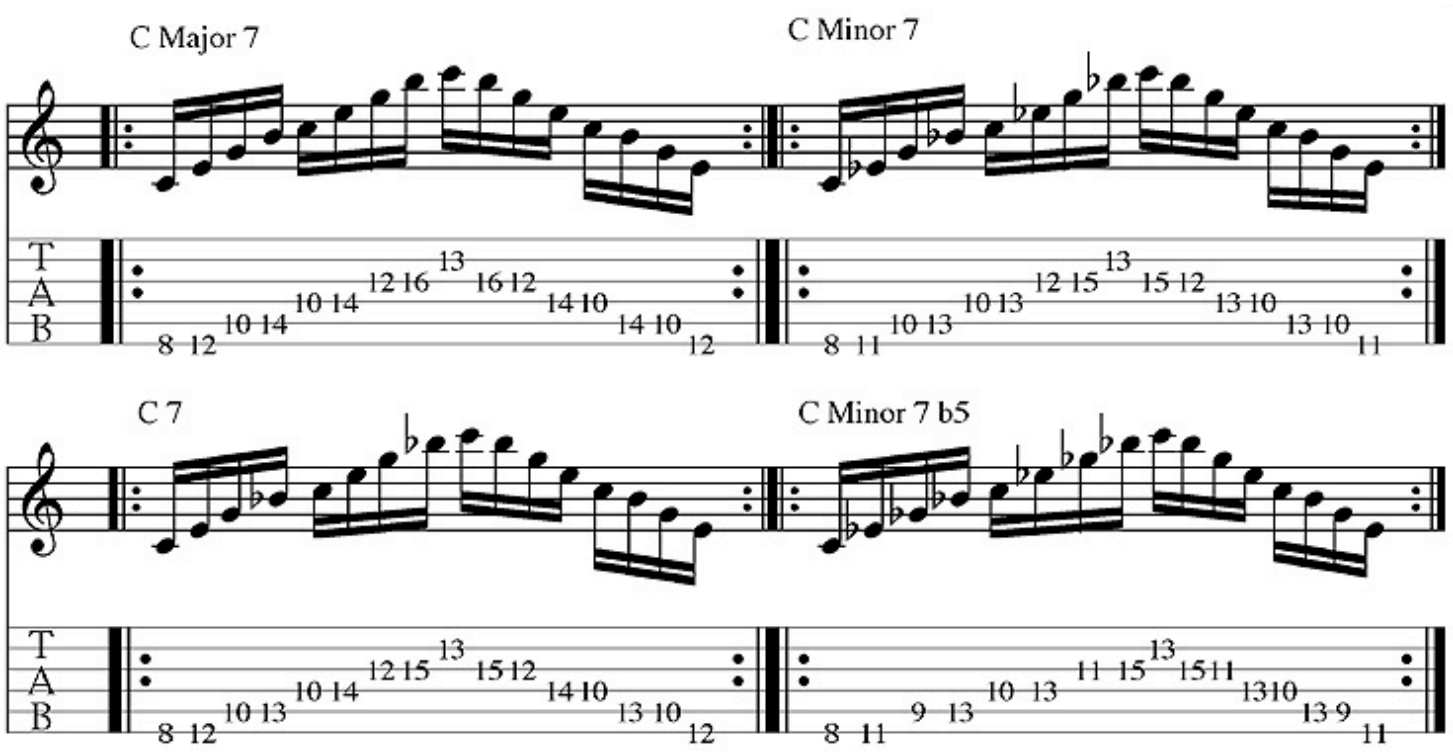

Same idea but in a minor key



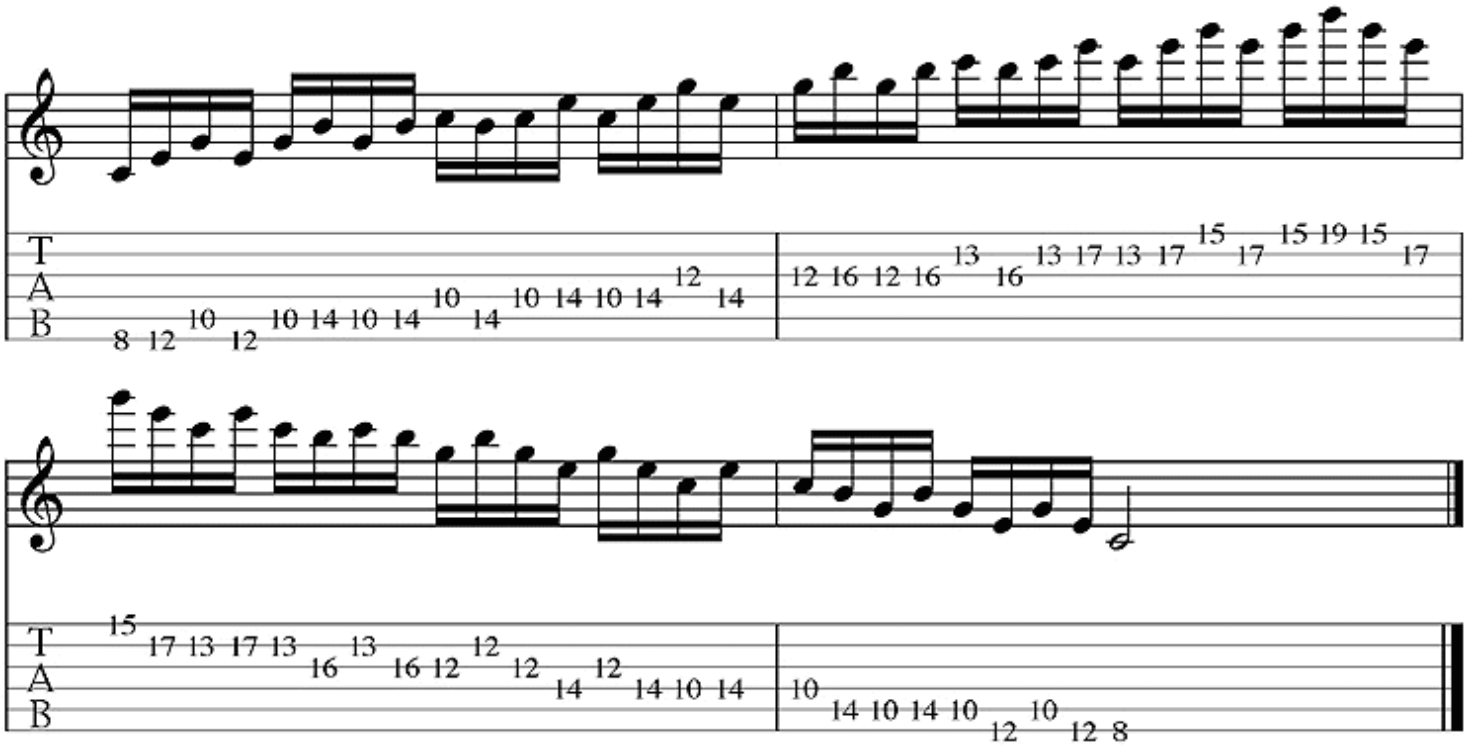

A sequenced set of 7th arpeggios. One of my personal favorites. Below are examples of combining different arpeggios in a sequential pattern.



Finally, we can use the 7ths arpeggios with a 2 note per string idea. This technique is not really mean't for sweeping but more for doing sequential runs with 7th arpeggios.



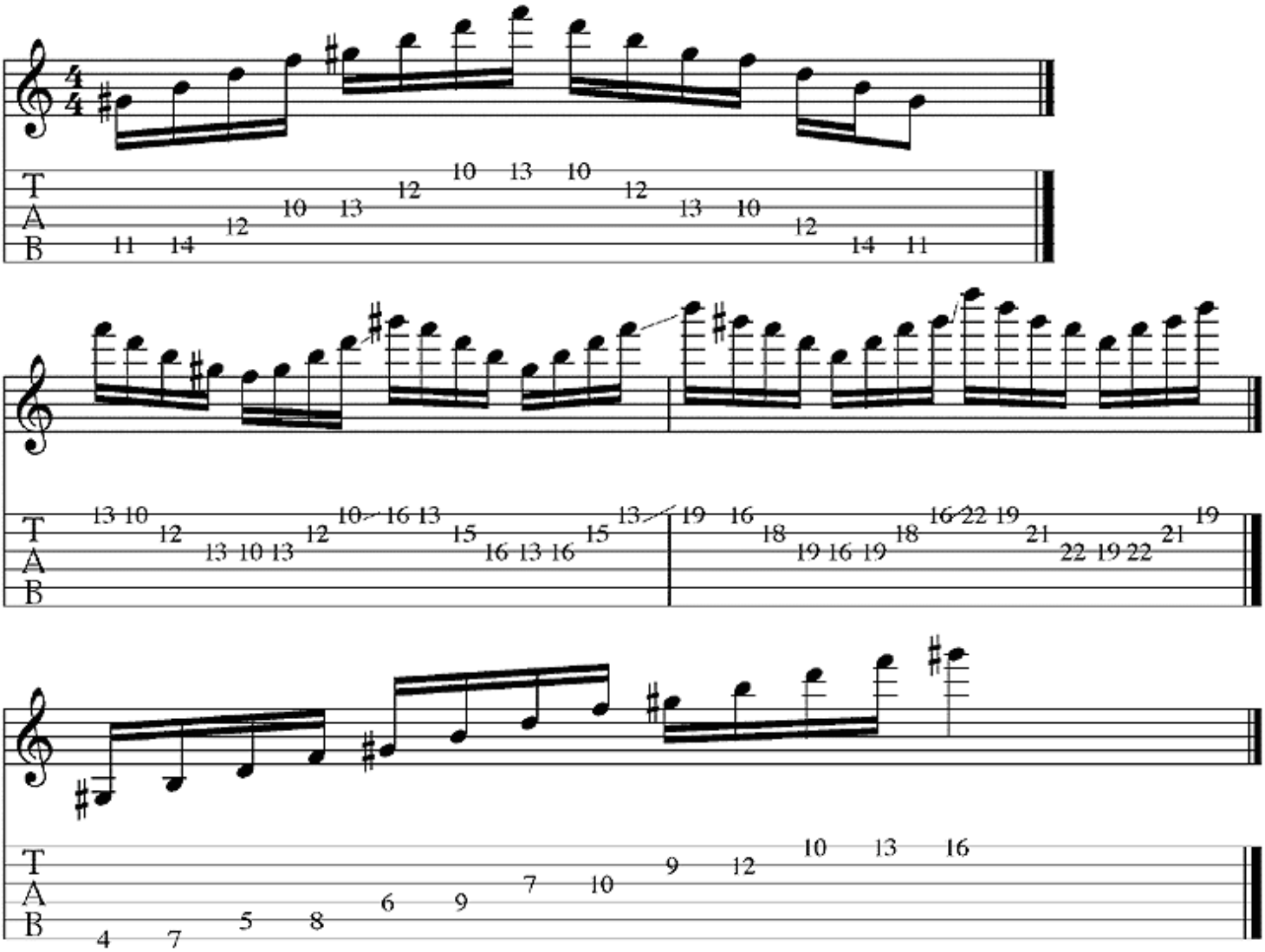

Sequenced C Major 7th run in groupings of 3's

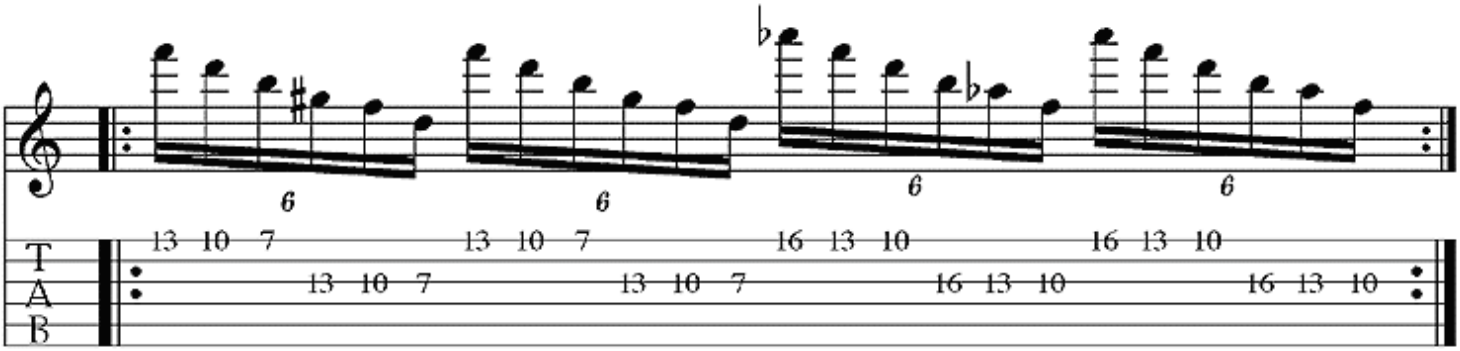


# Diminished 7th Sweeps

Last but not least, no sweep picking method would be complete without the Diminished 7th arpeggios.

The diminished 7th arpeggios are very distinct sounding arpeggios which are derived from the Harmonic Minor. Due to the dark quality it possesses, many people tend to think that it sounds very Neo-classical. Due to the nature of this arpeggio being evenly divided by 4 minor 3rd intervals, the arpeggio is very symetrical in shape, (Hence the term "Symetric Diminished Scale"). Here are a few examples using the Diminished 7ths.

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