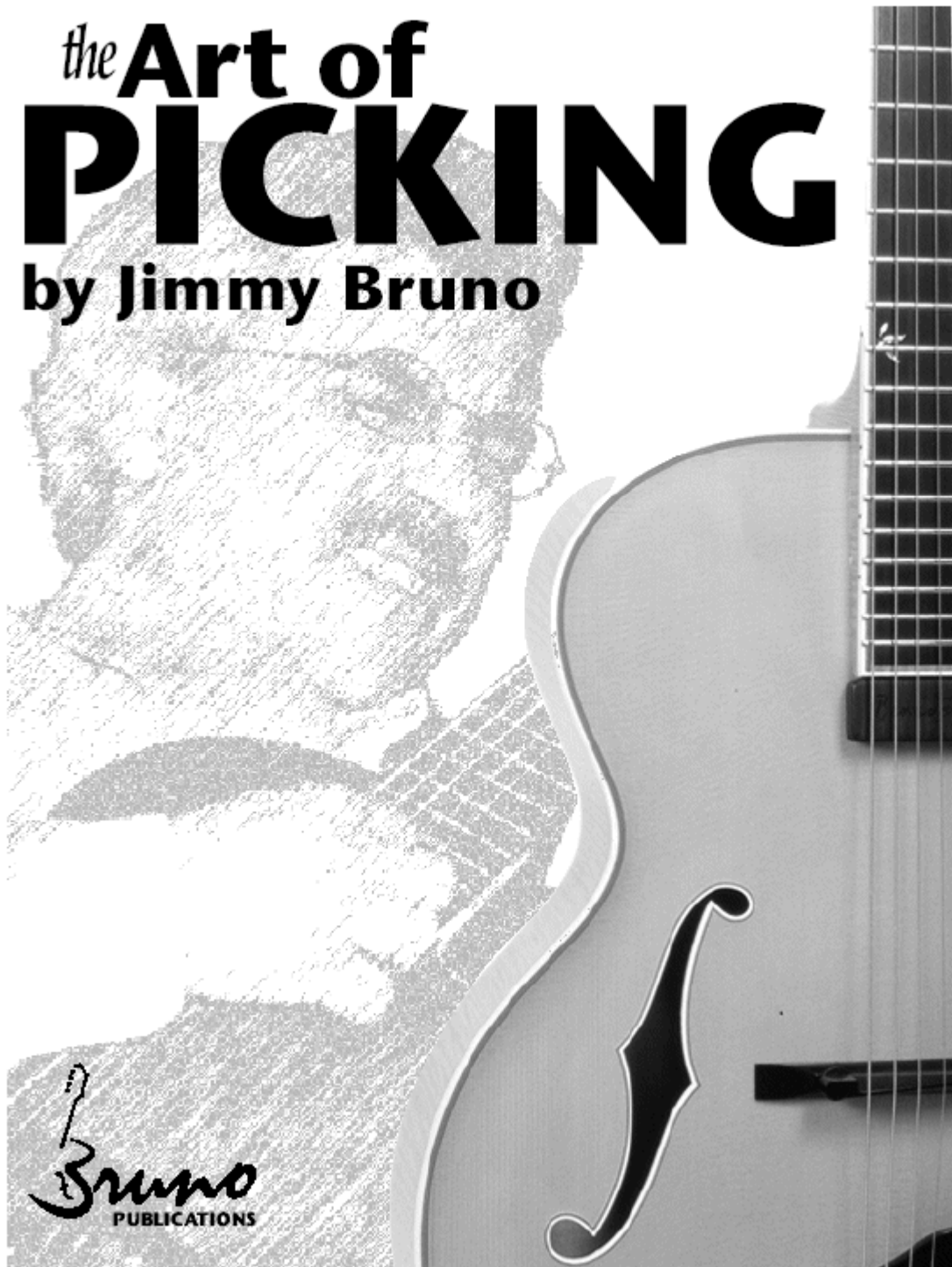


the **Art of**
PICKING

by Jimmy Bruno



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A special thanks to everyone I have ever taught. Teaching has enabled me to formalize this whole concept.

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Introduction

When I first began to play jazz guitar, I listened mostly to guitarists. A few years later I was introduced to the music of Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Art Tatum and Oscar Peterson, as well as many other instrumentalists. I mention those four individuals because they had the most effect on my technique and musical style. After a few attempts to copy or imitate horn and piano lines, I soon realized the alternate picking technique, which I was using at the time, was not going to cut it. I had to find a better way to move the pick across the strings.

I discovered when two notes were not on the same string, the pick had to travel past the string that the second note was on and then reverse direction to come back up and play the note. That is a long way for the pick to travel. I found one concept or rule that causes the pick to travel the least amount of distance. The fundamental concept is:

- **When going to a higher string, use a down-stroke.**
- **When going to a lower string, use an up-stroke.**
- **When playing on one string, use alternate strokes.**

This technique creates a significant change in one's right hand technique or, I prefer the term "habit"; most guitarists have been using the alternate picking "habit" for many years. That habit is not easy to break. With a fair amount of practice and discipline you can break that habit and develop a much more efficient right hand technique.

The Right Hand

The right hand, wrist and elbow should always be relaxed and never tense or tight. The wrist should not move or tilt. The movement should come from the elbow. Do not touch the strings, bridge or any other part of the guitar with the fingers of your right hand. Your palm may rest lightly on the strings.

The Strokes

This technique creates the following strokes:

- Down-up: Everyone can do this one
- Up-down: A bit more difficult, especially keeping the accent strong. The goal is to make the up-stroke sound as strong and round as the down-stroke.
- In-between – stroke: This stroke requires the pick to move between two adjacent strings or non-adjacent strings. This stroke is difficult to master
- Consecutive down-stroke and consecutive up-stroke: When practicing this technique it is important to play the notes evenly and with an equal amount of attack. The tendency is to rush the notes that follow the initial stroke. An example would be two, three or four notes, each on an adjacent string, played with a single down or up stroke depending on the direction of the phrase. The consecutive up-stroke is harder to control.

I have attempted to cover most situations that a guitarist might encounter, but it is an impossible task to cover them all. Music and guitar have an infinite number of possibilities.

Symbols

▣ = Down-stroke ▽ = Up-stroke

Some of the exercises require you to start the exercise with both a down stroke then an up stroke. See exercise 23 page 30.

If you follow the uppermost picking indicators, you will see that the 1st eighth note has an up stroke, the next eighth note has a down stroke and the 3rd eighth note has an up stroke. It doesn't matter which way you start, by the 3rd or 4th stroke, you will be at the same stroke whether you started with an up or a down. You can see that by the 3rd stroke (an up stroke) you are in sync with the lower indicators where you started with a down stroke. Since there are only two strokes, this should be obvious. I recommend that you practice all the exercises starting with both strokes. There should be only a very slight difference in sound.

If you have been playing a long time, you will find it very difficult to change your picking technique or "habit". But all habits can be modified. It will take a little patience and a moderate amount of practice. At first, your technique will suffer. This is only natural since you are incorporating something that is foreign to your brain and hands. When this new picking technique becomes a habit, your speed and accuracy will improve. How long this will take, will vary with how much time you practice. I recommend you practice these exercise at MM 60 to 120, then increase your speed from there.

It is impossible to cover all the possible picking scenarios. Music has an infinite number of possibilities. I have attempted to describe the techniques that I use when improvising various phrases. The exercises are designed to take the student from point A to Z. It is not a good idea to skip around in this book

Check my web site www.jimmybruno.com for movies of a few of the exercises.

Hope you enjoy this book,

Sincerely,

Jimmy Bruno

The Strokes

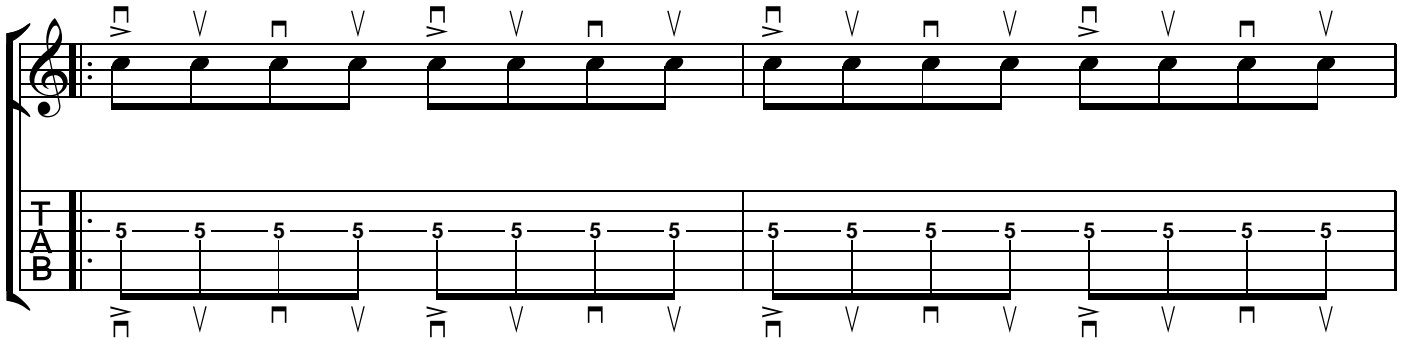
The down-up stroke

This is the most common stroke on the guitar.

Use this exercise to control your accent on the downbeats.

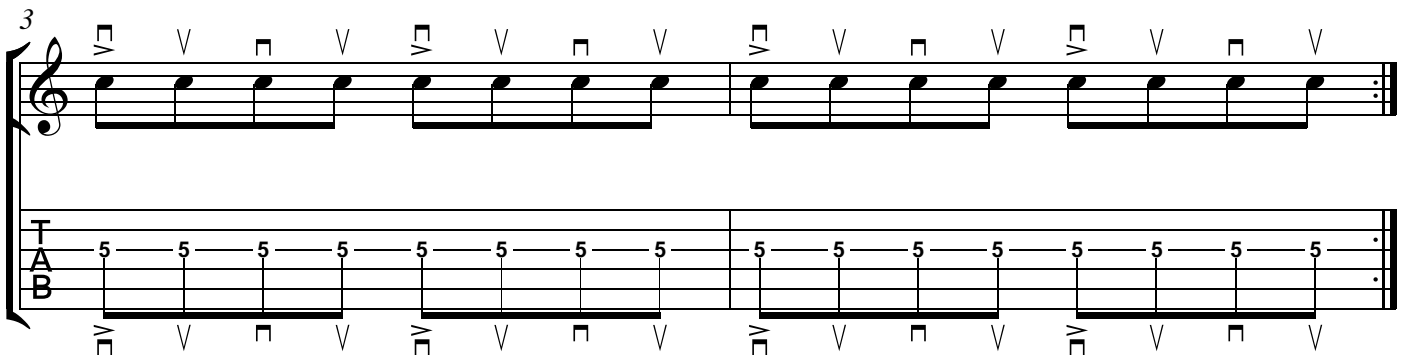
Apply to all strings.

exercise 1



Exercise 1 musical notation. The top staff is a treble clef staff with a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature staff with fret numbers (5) and stroke directions (V for down, U for up).

Practice keeping your wrist straight but not stiff. Remember: the movement is from the elbow.



Exercise 2 musical notation. The top staff is a treble clef staff with a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature staff with fret numbers (5) and stroke directions (V for down, U for up).

The up-down stroke

Use this exercise to control your accent on the downbeats but with an up-stroke.
Apply to all strings.

exercise 2

Musical notation for exercise 2, measures 5-8. The notation is presented in two systems: a standard musical staff and a guitar tablature staff. The musical staff shows a sequence of eighth notes on a single line, with accents (>) placed above the notes on downbeats. The guitar tablature staff shows the fret number '5' for each note, with accents (>) placed above the notes on downbeats. The notes are grouped in pairs, with a downstroke (V) and an upstroke (∩) indicated below the notes.

Do not touch the guitar with the fingers of the right hand.

Musical notation for exercise 2, measures 7-10. The notation is presented in two systems: a standard musical staff and a guitar tablature staff. The musical staff shows a sequence of eighth notes on a single line, with accents (>) placed above the notes on downbeats. The guitar tablature staff shows the fret number '5' for each note, with accents (>) placed above the notes on downbeats. The notes are grouped in pairs, with a downstroke (V) and an upstroke (∩) indicated below the notes.

Mixed strokes

This exercise is designed to alternate the accents with a down-stroke then an up-stroke.
Apply to all strings.

exercise 3

Musical notation for exercise 3, measures 9 and 10. The notation is presented in two systems: a standard musical staff and a guitar tablature staff. The musical staff uses a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. It features eighth notes with accents and down-bow/attack strokes. The tablature staff shows the fretting hand with the number '5' on the fifth fret for all strings. Above the tablature, brackets indicate triplets of eighth notes. Above the musical staff, arrows and brackets indicate the alternating down-stroke and up-stroke patterns for the eighth notes.

Do not touch the pick guard or strings with the fingers of the right hand.

Musical notation for exercise 3, measures 11 and 12. The notation is presented in two systems: a standard musical staff and a guitar tablature staff. The musical staff uses a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. It features eighth notes with accents and down-bow/attack strokes. The tablature staff shows the fretting hand with the number '5' on the fifth fret for all strings. Above the tablature, brackets indicate triplets of eighth notes. Above the musical staff, arrows and brackets indicate the alternating down-stroke and up-stroke patterns for the eighth notes.

In between stroke

This is the hardest stroke to master. It involves going between two adjacent strings. This is a critical part of your right hand technique. Take your time with this one. Apply to any two adjacent strings using the double-stop of your choice. **Do not let notes ring!**

exercise 4

13

Exercise 4 consists of four measures of music. The top staff is a treble clef with a series of eighth notes and double-stops, each marked with a 'V' above it. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature with strings T, A, and B, showing a sequence of double-stops on the 5th fret.

exercise 5

17

Exercise 5 consists of four measures of music. The top staff is a treble clef with a series of eighth notes and double-stops, each marked with a 'V' above it. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature with strings T, A, and B, showing a sequence of double-stops on the 5th fret. The word "simile" is written above the second measure.

Consecutive Strokes

Consecutive "Down" to "up" strokes

This exercise gets more into the real world as this type thing occurs in many jazz phrases.

Apply to any two adjacent strings using the double stop of your choice. **Do not let notes ring!**

exercise 6

21

T
A
B

5 5-6 7-5 5-6 7 5 5-6 7-5 5-6 7 5 5-6 7-5 5-6 7 5 5-6 7-5 5-6 7

Consecutive "Up" to "Down" strokes

Same as previous exercise but in reverse. **Do not let notes ring!**

exercise 7

25

T
A
B

6 6-7 5-6 7-5 5 6 6-7 5-6 7-5 5 6 6-7 5-6 7-5 5 6 6-7 5-6 7-5 5 6 6-7 5-6 7-5 5

It is necessary to play the above exercises evenly . At this stage, precision of the 8th notes is more important than speed.

Triplets

The following exercise uses a major triad with a triplet rhythm
I have found when playing triplets with a repeating pattern such as a triad or some other pattern, it is better to break the rule. Instead of playing the exercise like this,

exercise 8

29

use an up stroke on the repeat

use three "down-strokes" followed by three "up-strokes". Apply to any three note chord on any three adjacent strings. This exercise is designed to practice three consecutive strokes in the same direction.

exercise 8

31

exercise 8

however, if I had to play a triplet phrase in the context of a line and not in an exercise, I would adhere to the rule. The following phrase illustrates my point.

33

The next exercise illustrates triplets with the rule applied.
This is more likely to occur in a jazz phrase.

exercise 9

34

Musical notation for exercise 9, measures 34-37. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat. It contains a melodic line with eighth notes and triplets, marked with accents (v) and slurs. The bottom staff is a guitar TAB with strings T, A, and B. It shows fret numbers (5, 7, 8) and triplet markings (3) with slurs and accents.

or like this with 16th notes. Pay close attention to the accents.

36

Musical notation for exercise 9, measures 36-39. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat. It contains a melodic line with 16th notes and accents (v). The bottom staff is a guitar TAB with strings T, A, and B. It shows fret numbers (5, 7, 8) and 16th note markings with slurs and accents.

Sixteenth notes

This exercise requires you to reverse direction on the same string. A common stroke that happens with repeated notes. Apply this exercise to any four note chord anywhere on the guitar.

exercise 10

38

Exercise 10 musical notation showing a sequence of sixteenth notes with slurs and accents, alternating between ascending and descending directions. The notation includes a treble clef staff and a guitar staff with string numbers (T, A, B) and fret numbers (6, 5, 7, 8) indicated.

exercise 11

40

Exercise 11 musical notation showing a sequence of sixteenth notes with slurs and accents, alternating between ascending and descending directions. The notation includes a treble clef staff and a guitar staff with string numbers (T, A, B) and fret numbers (6, 5, 7, 8) indicated.

The Major Scales

Picking applied to Major scale fingering 6V2

Below are the six basic fingerings for the major scales. This will give you an idea how the rule works on any scale or scale type passage..

For more info on these fingerings see my book "Six Essential Fingerings for the Jazz Guitarist" at www.jimmybruno.com

exercise 12

** = moving to HIGHER STRING
* = moving to LOWER STRING

42

44

Picking applied to Major scale fingering 5V2

exercise 13

46

2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 4

4 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 4

8 10 7 8 10 7 9 10 8 10 11 8 10 12 13

V V V V V V V V V V V V V V V

**

48

13 12 10 8 11 10 8 10 9 7 10 8 7 5 8

V V V V V V V V V V V V V V

*

Picking applied to Major scale fingering 6V4

exercise 14

50

4 1 3 4 1 3 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4

** **

T
A
B

8 5 7 8 5 7 4 5 7 5 6 8 5 7 8

V V V V V V V V V V V V V V V

52

8 7 5 8 6 5 7 5 4 7 5 8 7 5 8

V V V V V V V V V V V V V V V

* *

T
A
B

8 7 5 8 6 5 7 5 4 7 5 8 7 5 8

V V V V V V V V V V V V V V V

Picking applied to Major scale fingering 5V4

exercise 15

54

4 1 3 4 1 3 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4

** **

T 5 6 8 10 12 13
A 8 5 7 8 5 7 5 6
B 8 5 7 8 5 7 5 6

56

13 12 10 8 6 5 8 6 5 7 5 8 7 5 8

* * *

T 13 12 10 8 6 5 8 6 5 7 5 8 7 5 8
A 13 12 10 8 6 5 8 6 5 7 5 8 7 5 8
B 13 12 10 8 6 5 8 6 5 7 5 8 7 5 8

Picking applied to Major scale fingering 6H2

exercise 14

58

2 4 1 2 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 ** 1 3 4

8 10 7 8 10 12 9 10 12 9 10 12 10 12 13

60

13 12 10 12 10 9 12 10 9 12 10 8 7 5 8

Picking applied to Major scale fingering 5H2

exercise 14

62

2 4 1 2 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4

8 10 7 8 10 7 9 10 8 10 11 13 10 12 13

64

13 12 10 13 11 10 12 10 9 12 10 8 7 10 8

Arpeggios

Although this is not a book about arpeggios, I feel it is important to include a few basic arpeggios so that you can see the picking method applied to arpeggios.

The difficulty with any arpeggio exercise, is keeping the notes from ringing. Articulation is more important than speed.

Major 7ths vertical

66 CMa⁷th

T
A
B

70 FMa⁷th

T
A
B

Major 7ths *horizontal*

CMa⁷th

74

2 1 4 1 2 1 4 3 4 3 4 1 2 1 4 1 2

8 7 10 9 10 9 12 12 13 12 12 9 10 9 10 7 8

Major 7ths *horizontal*

FMa⁷th

78

2 1 4 1 2 1 4 3 4 3 4 1 2 1 4 1 2

8 7 10 9 10 10 13 12 13 12 13 10 10 9 10 7 8

minor 7ths *vertical*

Amin⁷th

82

1 4 3 1 3 1 1 4 1 4 1 1 3 1 3 4

5 8 7 5 7 5 5 8 5 8 5 5 2 0 2 3 5

Dmin⁷th

86

1 4 3 1 3 2 1 4 4 4 1 2 3 1 3 4

5 8 7 5 7 6 5 8 10 8 5 6 7 5 7 8 5

1

minor 7ths *horizontal*

Amin⁷th

90

T
A
B

Dmin⁷th

94

T
A
B

Major triad exercises: This makes a great warm-up exercise. It is very difficult to play with clean articulation. The result is well worth the time. This exercise alone will facilitate the separation of notes with any phrase that contains an arpeggio or arpeggio fragment.

98

12 15 20 15 12
13 12 14 15 12 8
7 - 11 - 14 14 13 11 12 11 - 14 19 14 11 12 11 13 14 14 11 7

Fingering and picking is the same throughout.

100

6 10 13 13 12 10 11 10 13 - 18 13 10 11 10 12 13 13 10 6 5 - 9 12 12 11 9 10 9 12 - 17 12 9 - 5 5 6 7 7 9 - 5

102

Musical notation for measures 102-103. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. It contains eighth-note triplets. The bottom staff is a guitar TAB with fret numbers and triplet markings.

104

Musical notation for measures 104-105. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two sharps and a common time signature. It contains eighth-note triplets. The bottom staff is a guitar TAB with fret numbers and triplet markings.

106

Musical notation for measures 106-107. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two sharps and a common time signature. It contains eighth-note triplets. The bottom staff is a guitar TAB with fret numbers and triplet markings.

Minor 9 arpeggios: I have seen this referred to as sweep picking
I see no reason to make any distinction. Everything follows the rule:

Higher string = "down stroke" Lower string = "up stroke"

107

Amin⁷th

Gmin⁷th

fingering is the same throughout

7 10 9 8 7 8 9 10 7

5 8 7 6 5 6 7 8 5

109

Fmin⁷th

Gmin⁷th

3 6 5 4 3 4 5 6 3

5 8 7 6 5 6 7 8 5

Minor 11 arpeggios: Because of the fingering it is possible to play 6 notes in one beat.(sextuplet)
 The fingering sets up the consecutive down and up strokes to go across four strings. Saxophone players and pianists use phrases like this.

Amin¹¹ **Gmin¹¹**

111

1 4 3 2 1 4 1 2 3 4 1

7-10-9 8 7-10-7 8 9 10-7

6

6

Fmin¹¹ **Gmin¹¹**

113 *simile* *simile*

fingering is the same throughout

3 6 5 4 3 6 3 4 5 6 3

6

6

Minor 11 arpeggios: This is more of the same but with groups of quintuplets.

115

simile

117

simile

Minor 9th arpeggios: Below are several ways to pick this. Again, the fingering makes the speed possible.

119

The exercise consists of three phrases of a minor 9th arpeggio. The first phrase is on a treble clef staff with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second phrase is on a bass clef staff with notes G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4. The third phrase is on a treble clef staff with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. Above the treble staff, guitar-specific notation shows pick strokes (down and up) and fingering numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 1). Below the bass staff, standard notation shows fingering numbers (7, 8, 9, 10, 7) and pick strokes (down and up). The text 'fingering is the same throughout' is written between the two staves.

fingering is the same throughout

I have found when there is a rest between phrases, it is possible to break the rule and use whatever stroke you please to start the phrase. Below I used an up stroke to start each phrase.

120

The exercise consists of three phrases of a minor 9th arpeggio, identical in notation to exercise 119. However, the pick strokes are consistently up strokes for every note in every phrase. The text 'fingering is the same throughout' is written between the two staves.

fingering is the same throughout

Try starting any phrase with both strokes, down and up. There should be only a slight difference in sound.

Minor 9th arpeggios: By using fingerings that place notes on adjacent strings, either higher or lower, these large two octave arpeggios become possible.

121

10 10

fingering is the same throughout

123

simile simile 10 10

To illustrate all the possible arpeggios is beyond the scope of this book. The main point to remember is that the fingering will determine the picking. By placing as many notes of an arpeggio on adjacent strings, the easier the so called "sweep" becomes. I am not fond of that term; to me there is only one way to think about it: "When going to a **higher string** always use a "**down stroke**", when going to a **lower string** always use an "**up stroke**." I often run across guitarists who become misled into thinking that picking for single lines is different than picking for arpeggios. You have to be careful to NOT let the **fingerboard** make the music. The music comes from inside; the picking mechanism described in this book is designed to make it easier for the music to be realized.

String Skipping

Skipping Strings

When skipping strings the same rule applies: When going to a higher string use a down-stroke; when going to a lower string, use an up-stroke.

exercise 14

125

Apply this exercise to strings (4 and 2), (5 and 3) and (6 and 4). Use any notes you like.

Here's the same thing in the opposite direction

exercise 15

127

Apply this exercise to strings (4 and 2), (5 and 3) and (6 and 4). Use any notes you like.

This exercise is a bit more difficult. It uses the same exercise but with the "in-between-stroke".

exercise 16

129

Apply this exercise to strings (4 and 2), (5 and 3) and (6 and 4). Use any notes you like.

Here's the same thing in the opposite direction

exercise 17

131

Apply this exercise to strings (4 and 2), (5 and 3) and (6 and 4). Use any notes you like.

Consecutive down-up strokes with a string skip.

START THIS EXERCISE WITH BOTH STROKES, DOWN AND UP
exercise 18

133

Apply this exercise to strings (4 and 2), (5 and 3) and (6 and 4). Use any notes you like.

Consecutive up-dwon strokes with a string skip.

exercise 19

START THIS EXERCISE WITH BOTH STROKES, DOWN AND UP

135

Apply this exercise to strings (4 and 2), (5 and 3) and (6 and 4). Use any notes you like.

Sixth with a string skip.

START THIS EXERCISE WITH BOTH STROKES, DOWN AND UP

exercise 20

Musical score for exercise 20, starting at measure 137. The score is written for a six-string guitar, showing a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a tablature staff with fret numbers and string indicators (T, A, B). The exercise consists of five measures of music with various fingerings and string skips indicated by 'V' marks.

START THIS EXERCISE WITH BOTH STROKES, DOWN AND UP

exercise 21

Musical score for exercise 21, starting at measure 140. The score is written for a six-string guitar, showing a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a tablature staff with fret numbers and string indicators (T, A, B). The exercise consists of five measures of music with various fingerings and string skips indicated by 'V' marks.

In-Between stroke with a string skip

START THIS EXERCISE WITH BOTH STROKES, DOWN AND UP

exercise 22

This exercise is very difficult to master. You need to put an accent on the "up-stroke" while skipping a string. It uses the "in-between" stroke with a string skip. You should also practice this with an alternate stroke. I find that when playing exercises like this it is easier to play them with alternating "down" - "up" strokes

exercise 23

START THIS EXERCISE WITH BOTH STROKES, DOWN AND UP

Be-Bop Phrases

exercise 24

149

2 1 4 3 1 2 1 4 3 1 2 1 4 3 1 2 1 4 3 1

8 7-10 9 7 8 7-10 9 7 8 7-10 9 7 8 7-10 9 7

exercise 25

153

3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2

9 10-7 8 9 10-7 8 9 10-7 8 9 10-7 8

exercise 26

157

exercise 27

161

exercise 28

165

165

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

7 8 9 10 9-7

7 8 9 10 9-7

7 8 9 10 9-7

7 8 9 10 9-7

exercise 29

169

169

3 4 1 1

3 4 1 1

3 4 1 1

3 4 1 1

7 8 5 5 4 7

7 8 5 5 4 7

7 8 5 5 4 7

7 8 5 5 4 7

Here's the same phrase in the 7th position. This changes the picking considerably.

exercise 30

173

1 2 3 4

3

7 8 9 10 9 7

□ V □ V □ V

exercise 31

177

1 2 3 1 1 1

5 6 7 5 4

V □ V □ V □

exercise 32

Musical score for exercise 32, measures 181-184. The score is written for guitar, with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a melodic line with eighth notes and rests, featuring four groups of triplets. The bass staff contains a bass line with eighth notes and rests, also featuring four groups of triplets. Fingering numbers (1-3) are provided for the treble staff, and fret numbers (2-7) are provided for the bass staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

exercise 33

Musical score for exercise 33, measures 185-188. The score is written for guitar, with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a melodic line with eighth notes and rests, featuring four groups of triplets. The bass staff contains a bass line with eighth notes and rests, also featuring four groups of triplets. Fingering numbers (1-3) are provided for the treble staff, and fret numbers (4-8) are provided for the bass staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Slurred Triplets

exercise 34

1st example: Picked

2nd example: Slurred

Musical notation for exercise 34. The first staff (treble clef) shows two examples of slurred triplets. The first example is labeled '1st example: Picked' and the second is '2nd example: Slurred'. The second staff (bass clef) shows the corresponding bass line with fingerings (5, 6, 5, 8, 6, 5, 7) and bowing directions (V for down-stroke, ^ for up-stroke). The notation includes slurs over the triplets and specific fingerings for each note.

I prefer the 2nd example; it sounds more horn-like

Learn how to slur triplets with a "down-stroke" and an "up-stroke"

exercise 35

with the down stroke

with the up stroke

Musical notation for exercise 35. The first staff (treble clef) shows two examples of slurred triplets. The first example is labeled 'with the down stroke' and the second is 'with the up stroke'. The second staff (bass clef) shows the corresponding bass line with fingerings (5, 6, 5, 8, 6, 5) and bowing directions (V for down-stroke, ^ for up-stroke). The notation includes slurs over the triplets and specific fingerings for each note.

193

3

3

T
A
B

6 8 6 5 7 6 6 5 5 8 7 6 8 6 5 5

Same example starting with an "up-stroke"

195

3

3

T
A
B

6 8 6 5 7 6 6 5 5 8 7 6 8 6 5 5

Articulations

I think of articulations as inflections. When someone is speaking not all the words have the same accent, volume, inflection etc. When playing lines you need to alter the inflection of the notes; not all the notes are long or short or accented. These inflections are accomplished by slurring notes. Pick one note and play two notes.

The following exercises illustrate this point . They are all typical be-bop phrases

197

The same phrase in a different position

199

Here's a typical be-bop phrase.

Notice how the different articulations effect the sound

Here is the phrase without slurs

make sure you play these last two notes,
long, short.

201

Here is the phrase with one slur

203

Here is the phrase with the slur moved to the next beat.

205

Musical score for measure 205. The top staff is in treble clef with a 7/8 time signature. It contains a quarter note followed by a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note with a flat, a quarter note with a flat, and a quarter note. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature with strings T, A, and B. It shows a quarter note on the 9th fret, a triplet of eighth notes on the 10th, 9th, and 8th frets, a quarter note on the 7th fret, a quarter note on the 6th fret, a quarter note on the 10th fret, a quarter note on the 9th fret, a quarter note on the 8th fret, and a quarter note on the 9th fret. Vertical lines indicate fingerings: V for the first string, and small squares for the other strings. A slur is placed over the triplet and the following quarter note, and another slur is placed over the quarter note on the 10th fret and the quarter note on the 9th fret.

Here is the phrase with two slurs

207

Musical score for measure 207. The top staff is in treble clef with a 7/8 time signature. It contains a quarter note followed by a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note with a flat, a quarter note with a flat, and a quarter note. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature with strings T, A, and B. It shows a quarter note on the 9th fret, a triplet of eighth notes on the 10th, 9th, and 8th frets, a quarter note on the 7th fret, a quarter note on the 6th fret, a quarter note on the 10th fret, a quarter note on the 9th fret, a quarter note on the 8th fret, and a quarter note on the 9th fret. Vertical lines indicate fingerings: V for the first string, and small squares for the other strings. Two slurs are present: one over the triplet and the following quarter note, and another over the quarter note on the 10th fret and the quarter note on the 9th fret.

No slurs

209

T
A
B

Try moving the slur over any two notes that are on the same string.

With slurs

211

T
A
B

I've added a few slurs. Experiment adding your own slurs at different places

213

Musical notation for measures 213-214. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 7/8 time signature. It contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The bottom staff is a guitar TAB with fret numbers and a 7/8 time signature. It includes a triplet of notes (6, 7, 6) and other fretted notes.

215

Musical notation for measures 215-216. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 7/8 time signature. It contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The bottom staff is a guitar TAB with fret numbers and a 7/8 time signature. It includes a triplet of notes (6, 7, 6) and other fretted notes.

Breaking the rules

There are special circumstances where it may be desirable to break the rules. In the example below, I use consecutive down strokes to emphasize certain notes. This type of picking is useful when you are trying to emulate a big band type phrase.

217

Musical notation for measures 217-218. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. Measure 217 contains notes Bb, Gb, and Ab. Measure 218 contains notes Bb, Gb, and Ab. The bottom staff shows guitar fretting with strings T, A, and B. Fingering numbers 6, 6, 6, 8, 7, and 8 are indicated above the notes. Pickings are shown as down strokes (V) for all notes, with accents (^) over the first two notes of each measure.

219

Musical notation for measures 219-220. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. Measure 219 contains notes Bb, Gb, and Ab. Measure 220 contains notes Bb, Gb, and Ab. The bottom staff shows guitar fretting with strings T, A, and B. Fingering numbers 6, 8, 9, 8, and 6 are indicated above the notes. Pickings are shown as down strokes (V) for all notes, with accents (^) over the first two notes of measure 219.

Here is the same type phrase with slurs.

221

3 3 3

T
A
B

6 8 6 6 8 6 6 8 6 3 1

3 3 3

When there is a rhythmic break between notes, you may want to use to down strokes.

223

6 6 6 8 9 6

Conclusion

Picking is a habit. Habits are hard to break but not impossible. The longer you have been playing, the harder it will be to change. With a moderate amount of practice and a lot of patience, anyone can improve their technique. The key is repetition. Do not overanalyze your right hand movements. After a short time, these strokes will become second nature. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to email me at jimmy@jimmybruno.com