

Strumming Patterns

20 Must-Know Grooves



20 GROOVES TO LEARN

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Learn some of the most recognizable strumming patterns that have been present in many great songs over the past decades. 20 grooves equipped with full audio tracks and notation in Guitar Pro and PDF formats. 100% free.

First, some opening notes before you begin.

There are two levels of rhythm guitar players: Those who are *stiff* and those that are *fluid*.

Some players are able to groove with the best of them while they manage to make strumming look effortless. For others, it is a constant struggle to even keep up with a song. Many inexperienced players go on a quest to fix this by learning more strum patterns only to feel more stiff and more unnatural than before. Learning new strum patterns is cool... Heck, the reason you have read this far is that you are looking forward to learning some new grooves.

You are going to learn some great new patterns. You are going to learn some of the most recognizable strumming sounds that have been present in many great songs over the past decades. *But before you dive in*, I want you have the right **perspective and approach** so that you don't stiffen up, get frustrated and give up. I want you strum *freely!* It should feel. It should not hurt your shoulder, make your jaw tense up and drain your energy. So what's the key to great strumming? Some say it is: "Just don't over think things. Let it flow".

That is partially right, but there is more to it. I call it "**The Human Metronome Concept**".

Set a metronome to a *slow*, comfortable tempo and start **clapping along with the click**. Then move your body along with your clapping. Make that click groove in your person. Let it get in your leg, your neck ...your shoulders. Then, start clapping twice at even increments for every click you hear. You will be clapping "8th notes". Keep the feel in your body and try that for awhile. When you're comfortable with this, slow down the tempo if you need to, feel the groove again, and then clap four times for every one click. This will give you 16th note claps for every quarter note click coming from the metronome. Make this feel good and natural. You should be able to groove to 16th notes at a constant tempo while clapping without your guitar in hand.



Ok, when you are comfortable and feelin' the rhythm without your guitar, you then have permission to actually pick up your guitar and start trying to strum. Before you go to any one pattern, you need to work this mindset of putting the groove and subdivisions in your body and playing mechanics.

Set the click and strum down strokes for every click. Then strum "down up down up down up" to the feel of eighth notes. *Feel* it. Then strum all down strokes to the 8th note while the click is moving at quarter notes. Look at your arm. If you count the upward motion of your arm resetting itself to get ready for the next 8th note, you have 16th notes already baked into the motion of your arm! Now play a "down up down up down up" pattern in a 16th note feel simply by employing the motion that is already there!

When you learn new strumming patterns, you want to keep this "16th note" motion going *all the time*. Let the arm, the foot, the neck, head and shoulders always internalize the pulse of the music and be moving with it. When it's time to accent or not play a particular 16th note, you simply move your arm slightly away from the guitar so that the pick doesn't touch the strings, but you don't stop the motion. You keep it going all the time. *This is the "Human Metronome Concept".*

Each one of the strum patterns in this package should be approached like this. Listen to the provided audio example, set your metronome to the recommended tempo and then just strum along and internalize the feel BEFORE you go trying to learn the accents and other particulars. The "down up down up down up" motion should never stop. You should be able to naturally sort of stumble into the feel of each pattern if you approach it this way. If you start by trying to sort out which beat or sub beat is down and which is up, or taking it beat by beat trying to figure out how to make the transcription natural, it NEVER will. You'll get frustrated and quit.

Get in the groove. *Feel it in your body*. Strum along generically over the groove, and let it sink into your playing! If you need more help, come see me over on JamPlay and we'll strum you into shape! Enjoy this diverse set of 20 strum patterns presented in no particular order :)

- Chris Liepe

90s Alternative

Played at 90 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



There was an Oasis album in the 90s that made this kind of strumming feel and sound sooo cool. If you were a music fan back then, you'll enjoy being taken back. Maybe you'll want to talk on a landline telephone for a few minutes too.

Acoustic

mf
let ring throughout

G5 **A7sus4** **Csus2**

G5 **A7sus4** **Csus2**

G5 **A7sus4** **Csus2**

G5 **A7sus4** **Csus2** **G5**

Bo Diddley

Played at 100 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



This groove is in an uncountable number of songs across pretty much any genre. It's not an easy one to play, but it is really fun once you start grooving with it. Note the scratches and muting needed to get the desired effect. It's a lot easier to master if you're using barre chords when you're first learning it because it makes string muting a bit more efficient.

Acoustic

Free Feelin' 16th Note Groove

Played at 86 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



If you have your human metronome concept going in the back of your mind, you will grasp the simplicity of this classic strumming groove. You play on every 16th note. Keep that arm moving: Down up down up down up down up! If you keep your arm going and accent where you see on the transcription you'll be golden. Just don't stop that arm! Oh yeah, and go listen to some Tom Petty.

Acoustic

1

D Dsus4 D Dsus2

mf let ring throughout

4

D Dsus4 D Dsus2

6

D Dsus4 D Dsus2

8

D Dsus4 D Dsus2 D

Accents with String Muting

Played at 80 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



Employing a subtle bit of string deadening, this groove sounds confident and authoritative. It's great for working between chords that share a lot of similar notes as the audio example demonstrates. This is great at any tempo, but really lays back nicely at around 80 beats per minute.

Acoustic

1

C Cadd4

mf

let ring throughout

P.M.

4

C Cadd4

P.M.

6

C Cadd4

P.M.

8

C Cadd4 c

P.M.

Waltz Feel

Played at 60 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



It is bouncy, light and the complete opposite of the driving, confident feel. Pay particular attention to how the bass notes move within the strum pattern. You can really hit a homerun with this feel if you incorporate a loose alternating bass like the audio example suggests.

Acoustic

1

D

let ring throughout *mf*

cont. simile

5

G

7

D

9

G

D

Driving in 6/8

Played at 65 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



Well, you can hear a small hint of Waltz in here right? That's only because they both embrace that triple rhythm core. This one however is more aggressive and powerful. Keep that arm moving and let the accents flow. Don't force anything here (or with any of them for that matter, but I'm extra reminded of that need when playing faster, more demanding grooves).

Acoustic

1

G5

G/B

let ring throughout

mf

5

Csus2

Dsus4

7

G5

G/B

9

Csus2

Dsus4

Train Beat Strum

Played at 80 bpm.

Navigation controls: back, forward, play/pause, and a yellow 'PLAY AUDIO' button with a volume slider.

Lots of older acoustic Country and Bluegrass come to mind when strumming this groove. This is another one that works really well with an alternating bass feel. It gets its unique sound by accenting consistently on the "ands" rather than on conventional downbeats. (1 e AND a, 2 e AND a, etc...). The key is that you keep strumming "down up down up down up" through the whole pattern! (Tired of me saying that yet? Well it still is the most important takeaway from this thing!)

cont. simile

Acoustic guitar notation for measures 1-3. Chords: C, Fmaj7. Includes treble clef, rhythmic notation, and guitar-specific notation for strings T, A, B.

Acoustic guitar notation for measures 4-5. Chords: C, Fmaj7. Includes treble clef, rhythmic notation, and guitar-specific notation for strings T, A, B.

Acoustic guitar notation for measures 6-7. Chords: C, Fmaj7. Includes treble clef, rhythmic notation, and guitar-specific notation for strings T, A, B.

Acoustic guitar notation for measures 8-9. Chords: C, Fmaj7, C. Includes treble clef, rhythmic notation, and guitar-specific notation for strings T, A, B.

12 Bar Blues Groove

Played at 68 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK

Navigation controls: back, play, forward, **PLAY AUDIO**, volume slider.

We have all heard this one. The beauty of getting this groove down is that there is so much you can do with it in the context of the Blues. The audio example presents it in the most bare-bones context, but embrace this strum along with the 12 Bar form and the possibilities are vast!

Acoustic

1 **E5**

T
A
B

2 0 0 2 0 0 4 0 0 4 0 0 5 0 0 5 0 0 4 0 0 4

4 **A5**

T
A
B

2 0 0 2 0 0 4 0 0 4 0 0 5 0 0 5 0 0 4 0 0 4

6 **E5**

T
A
B

2 0 0 2 0 0 4 0 0 4 0 0 5 0 0 5 0 0 4 0 0 4

Percussive Riffing

Played at 100 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



This upbeat pattern blurs the lines between just playing chords and incorporating a simple single note riff while maintaining that strumming. It's challenging if you haven't done it before, but quite rewarding when you realize that you can move the fretting hand a lot while you're strumming and it can sound kinda cool if you do it right. Pay special attention to the muting that happens!

Acoustic

(F) G5 (F) G5 (F) G5 (F) G5

mf

T A B

(F) G5 (F) G5 (F) G5 (F) G5

T A B

Bb C

T A B

(F) G5 (F) G5 (F) G5 (F) G5

T A B

Simple Setup Strums

Played at 100 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



No, we didn't run out of ideas! This pattern doesn't so much need to be practiced as it needs to be acknowledged and studied. Each strum presents a subtle technique and way to approach the beat. Notice that the strum begins BEFORE the actual beat and finishes on the beat. This type of strum, when properly placed, can really fit into any strum pattern. Practice making it musical here.

Acoustic

E5

1

TAB

Aadd9

4

TAB

E5

6

TAB

Aadd9

8

E5

TAB

Driving Down 8th

Played at 110 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



Straight and simple. This feel has been played over and over again and sounds great when you focus your strumming energy on the lower strings. Oh yeah, and use some power chords too... Maybe a little drive. Play these 8th note strums as all downstrokes and watch that your "down up down up" action still look like 16th. This is a perfect application of the human metronome concept.

Acoustic

1

A5 G5

mf

T A B

4

F5 G5

T A B

6

A5 G5

T A B

8

F5 G5 A5

T A B

Ska-Like Ups

Played at 105 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



Mute on the downs, strum loud on the ups! Focus your energy on the higher strings and you'll want to hire some smelly, poorly dressed horn players to jam with you. It's a great and fun feel and works well with the acoustic and the electric guitar.

Acoustic

1

D C

mf

T
A
B

4

D C

T
A
B

6

D C

T
A
B

8

D C D

T
A
B

Scratch Scratch, Play Play

Played at 85 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



It's kinda like the last one, but for some reason, it is a lot harder to play. You are jumping back and forth between muted strings and fully sustained strums quickly and trying to be rhythmically accurate at the same time. If there is a strum pattern that will really make you tense up in this batch, this one is it! Don't let it! Keep loose and it'll be a lot of fun!

Acoustic

1

A G

mf V

TAB

3

A G A G

mf V

TAB

5

A G A

mf V

TAB

Good Old Swing Feel

Played at 95 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



Playing a good swing feel takes some practice, and this pattern is a great place to start. There's not a lot of busyness here. Relax, stay loose and try to truly internalize the difference between this swing feel and the traditional straight feel we've been living in.

Acoustic

1

(♩ = $\overset{\frown}{\text{3}}$)

A

let ring throughout

mf

E

4

A

6

E

8

A

Covering the Low End

Played at 95 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



When played with chord voicings that emphasize the low end of the guitar, this pattern creates a drudgy and somber mood. While the recommended tempo is 95 beats per minute, it sounds really cool played super slow too. Experiment with this one and you might find your own sweet spot.

Acoustic

1

E5 Cmaj7/G D6add4/A

let ring throughout *mf*

4

E5 Cmaj7/G D6add4/A

6

E5 Cmaj7/G D6add4/A

8

E5 Cmaj7/G D6add4/A Em

Palm Muted 8th with Outbursts

Played at 115 bpm.

Navigation controls: back, play, forward, and a yellow 'PLAY AUDIO' button with a progress slider.

The contrasts present in this pattern provide opportunity to blend nicely with a music bed and then **strike** every so often. Dynamics are key in mastering this pattern and will help you capitalize on the on the eighth note/sixteenth note contrast.

Acoustic guitar tablature for 'Palm Muted 8th with Outbursts'. The piece is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The guitar is tuned standard (E2-A2-D3-G3-B3-E4).

The tablature is divided into four systems, each with a treble clef staff and a three-string guitar staff (T, A, B strings). The first system starts at measure 1. The second system starts at measure 4. The third system starts at measure 6. The fourth system starts at measure 8.

Chord progressions are indicated above the staff: A5, A, A5, A, A5, A, G5, A5.

Dynamic markings include *mf* and *P.M.* (palm mute). The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and palm mutes. The guitar staff shows fret numbers (0, 2, 3, 5) and string numbers (2, 3, 4).

The Gallup!

Played at 125 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



Metal players *love* this feel, and it works great without really long hair and a stack of speakers behind you as well. Like pattern 16, there's a large dynamic range here and paying special attention to the contrasts will help you stay in the groove. There is also opportunity to focus more on single notes and then dig into some chords in the same groove.

Acoustic

1

E5

G5 A5

TAB

4

E5

G5 A5

TAB

6

E5

G5 A5

TAB

8

E5

G5 A5 E5

TAB

Palm Muted 16ths

Played at 100 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



Ok... so it is not technically strumming here, but you get a chance to practice your picking accuracy and consistency with 16th notes. Plus, it sounds really cool and will build technique that you can use with other patterns as well.

Acoustic

1

(C) (F/C)

mf

P.M.

T
A
B

4

(C) (F/C)

P.M.

T
A
B

6

(C) (F/C)

P.M.

T
A
B

8

(C) (F/C) C

P.M.

let ring

T
A
B

Laid Back in Church

Played at 105 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK

Navigation controls: back, forward, play/pause, and a yellow 'PLAY AUDIO' button with a progress slider.

Incorporating palm muting, string targeting, this is one of those rhythm patterns you'd hear in that layered contemporary church music sound. Maybe this pattern would be played on a verse and then you'd open up to a more driving sixteenth feel during the chorus.

The musical score is divided into four systems, each with a treble clef staff and a guitar tablature staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system starts at measure 1 and includes chords E5, Em, and Csus2. The second system starts at measure 4 and includes chords G5 and D5. The third system starts at measure 6 and includes chords E5, Em, and Csus2. The fourth system starts at measure 8 and includes chords G5, D5, and G5. The guitar part uses palm muting (P.M.) and string targeting (indicated by >). The acoustic guitar part is marked *mf*. The tablature shows fret numbers for strings T, A, B, and G.

Anticipation Makes the Groove

Played at 90 bpm.

PLAY AUDIO TRACK



When you play the subdivision right before the downbeat as loud as the downbeat is normally played and then greatly minimize the actual downbeat, it creates a really cool anticipated feel. This is used all over the place and this pattern exposes this concept without getting to crazy.

Acoustic

G5

1

let ring throughout *mf*

TAB

Csus2

4

TAB

G5

6

TAB

Csus2

8

G5

TAB

(3)



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