

Strumming Patterns Made Easy

Why Do You Need Strumming Patterns?

Here are a couple of reasons why you should learn to read and use strumming patterns.

- They Are Easy To Learn
- They Are Easy To Read
- They Will Seriously Improve Your Rhythm Playing

Most song sheets and TABS online don't show you the rhythm or if they do it's usually some weird convoluted way that doesn't make much sense at all. That is a massive problem because RHYTHM is one of the three main components of music.

1. Rhythm
2. Harmony (Chords)
3. Melody

As you can imagine, without rhythm you're fighting a losing battle! If you can learn to read rhythms (which is super easy!) you'll literally cut your learning time in half. The cool thing about learning to read rhythms is that you don't have to focus on reading notes (which can be very tricky on the guitar!) you only have to focus on the rhythms.

So now that you know why they're so important let's check out what they're exactly about.

What Exactly Are Strumming Patterns?

Strumming Patterns are basically just rhythms written down so you can read them and then play them on the guitar. You need to understand the following things in order to read strumming patterns.

1. Time Signatures
2. Note Values
3. Strokes
4. Extra info like ties, rests, ghost notes etc



1. Time signatures basically tell you how many beats there are in a bar and what kind of beats defines the pulse. Most Rock and Pop songs are in 4/4 and we count them like this.

ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR

So a 4/4 time signature tells you that there are four (top number) 1/4 a.k.a quarter notes (bottom number) in a bar.

A 3/4 time signature will be a bar of three Quarter Notes. Think of a Waltz...

A 6/8 time signature means there are six 1/8th notes in a bar.

2. Once you know how many beats there are in a bar we can start to subdivide it in order to create rhythmic interest. (We'll cover this in the next section.)
3. This refers to down and upstrokes. Using the right kind of strokes is essential if you want your playing to groove! Downstrokes and Upstrokes sound very different and using them correctly will make a massive difference.
4. Ties, Rests and Ghost Notes can really spice up your rhythm playing. These are extra techniques we use to make things more interesting rhythmically. Once again using these tiny tweaks will dramatically increase your rhythm playing and you'll sound like you know what you're doing which can only be a good thing, right?

It's actually quite baffling that there's so little info around online regarding strumming patterns that I decided to put together a site that's purely devoted to it. Visit <http://www.strummingpatterns.net>

On the site you will find audio examples as well as videos where I demonstrate all these various patterns and more. One more thing before we carry on, [visit this page](#) and tell me what you want to learn and then I'll cover that in future lessons.

Cool so let's get back to business at hand. You now know why you need strumming patterns as well as what they are. Let's have a closer look at how they work...

How Do Strumming Patterns Work?

Strumming Patterns consist of various different notes and are usually written across one or two bars. In order to get the most out of them you need to understand how the different note values relate to each other.

So far you know that in a bar of 4/4 we have 4 beats right? Let's check out how the different note values relate to that.

1. A Whole Note (2nd stave on the following diagram) lasts four beats. Since we only have 4 beats in a bar of 4/4 it means that we can only fit in one whole note per bar.
2. A Half Note (3rd stave) lasts two beats. So we can fit in two half notes in a bar of 4/4. You could also see it like this: 2 Half Notes = 1 Whole Note
3. Quarter Notes (4th stave) lasts only 1 beat. That means we have one quarter note per beat which will be 4 in each bar. We count 1/4 notes like this: ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR
4. Eighth Notes (5th stave) only lasts half a beat which means we get 2 eighth notes per beat or 8 eighth notes in a bar. We count 1/8 notes like this: ONE, AND, TWO, AND, THREE, AND, FOUR, AND
5. Sixteenth Notes (6th stave) only lasts a quarter of beat which means we get 4 sixteenth notes per beat or 16 sixteenth notes per bar. We count 1/16 notes like this: ONE e and a, TWO e and a, THREE e and a, FOUR e and a,

Have a look at the following diagram to see how they all relate to each other.

Note Value Relationships:

1 2 3 4

Whole note lasts 4 beats

Half note lasts 2 beats

Quarter note lasts 1 beat

Eighth note lasts 1/2 a beat (or 2 per beat)

Sixteenth notes lasts 1/4 of a beat (or 4 per beat)

1 E + A 2 E + A 3 E + A 4 E + A

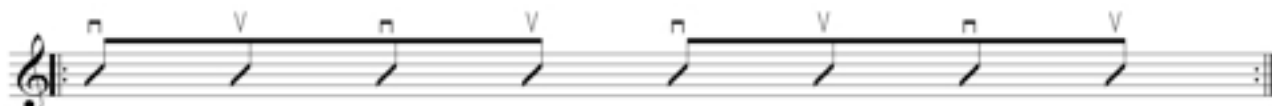
In the chart above you can clearly see the way we subdivide beats.

Strumming Pattern Examples

Let's look at a basic quarter note strumming pattern with 4 downstrokes.



This is what it will look like if I subdivide the quarter notes in two, which will give me eight notes. Note that I'm adding an upstroke in between each downstroke to achieve this.



Obviously we want our rhythms to sound a little cooler so we need to mix and match the different note types, otherwise it can sound pretty dull and predictable

Have a look at the following strumming patterns.

Pattern 01



Pattern 02



Pattern 03



Pattern 04



All the previous rhythms had 3 quarter notes and 2 eighth notes. Let's check out a few rhythms with 2 quarter notes and 4 eighth notes. You'll hear they sound fuller than the previous rhythms. There is no right or wrong rhythm. It all depends on how they suit the song you're playing. Try them all and choose the one that sounds the best to.

Pattern 05



Pattern 06



Pattern 07



Let's kick things up a gear by using what is known as ties. A tie basically adds the value of a note to the previous note. All this means is that the previous note now becomes longer. In order to achieve that we must make sure the note keeps ringing and we do that by simply missing the strings. In the following three examples you will see ties in action. Also note that every time I used a tie, the end result is two consecutive upstrokes, which we refer to as syncopation. Give it a try! I'm sure you'll dig it.

Pattern 08



Pattern 09



Pattern 10



There you have it! The basics of strumming patterns along with 10 easy strumming patterns. I hope you've learned something cool and that this will help you become a better and more confident rhythm player. You may be wondering "Cool! What's next?"...

“Cool! What’s Next?”

Up to this point you have learned to play A, D and E along with a number of strumming patterns. In the next video I will show you how to play 3 songs using just these 3 chords and strumming patterns. Keep your eye on your inbox for the next video.

Happy Strumming,

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