Bluegrass and Flatpicking Guitar Workshop
By Dan Geib

- The Pick.
- Holding the Pick and Hand Placement
- Picking Exercises with Metronome
- Intro to Rhythm
- Rhythm Samples with Metronome
- Major Scales
- Song demo with Major Scale Solos with Metronome
- Pentatonic & Blues Scales
- From Melody to Solo
- Song Demo with Pentatonic and Blues Scales Solos with Metronome
- Open Discussion

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1. Using the Pick and hand position
   “To Anchor Or Not To Anchor?”
   . Floating
   . Posting
   . Gliding
   “Start Slow to go Fast”

The Metronome.

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Picking Exercises:
Alternate Pick Stroke
Open String Exercise
Straight Eights Vs Bounce

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Playing Rhythm

The most important role of the guitar in Bluegrass is a rhythm instrument. In the early Bluegrass recordings, the guitar often never took a lead break at all. Just a few bass runs, and the rest was rhythm. Today it’s common for guitarists to take lead breaks in bands, but even then the guitarist is playing rhythm 80% or more of the time.

Rhythm Guitar Roles

As a rhythm instrument in bluegrass, the guitar serves several roles:

1. It acts like a metronome to keep the tempo constant. In most situations, the rhythm guitarist will place the emphasis on the off beat rather than the down beat. In a tune that is 4/4 time that means that the guitar is emphasizing beats 2 and 4.
2. It fills the tune with notes besides the main melody. While the lead instrument is playing a single note melody, the guitar is adding the other notes in the chords of the song.
3. It adds ornamentation to rests and turnarounds. The guitar can add short phrases when there are rest measures in a song. The most common place that you will hear this is in turnarounds, where the guitarist might add a lick like the famous G-run.

Playing rhythm requires you to:

- Learn the basic chord shapes in several keys (C, G, and D are the important ones)
- Develop a rock-solid sense of timing to keep the beat (metronomes help)
- Learn how to vary your rhythm patterns with different time signatures and tempo
- Learn how to play bass runs to transition between chords
- Always remember that you’re part of a band, and develop an awareness of how your playing is contributing to the whole sound

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Playing Rhythm The G-Run

Standard G Run

| 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 |

Standard G Run with Hammer On and Pull Off

| 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 |

Standard G Run in C

| 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 |

Standard G Run in D

| 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 |

Standard G Run in A

| 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 |

Standard G Run in E

| 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 |

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Playing Rhythm Tablature Samples

Basic

One Quarter – Two Eight Notes

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Add an Eight Note Hammer-on to One Quarter – Two Eight Notes

One Quarter – 6 Eighth Notes with Some Passing Tones

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2 Quarter Notes with 4 Eight Notes

All Eighth Notes - Dan Tyminski Style

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The Standard Bluegrass Rhythm

The Standard Bluegrass Rhythm with Cross Picking

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Major Scales

**C Scale**

**D Scale**

**A Scale**

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Minor Pentatonic Scales and the Blues Scale

using scale tones 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7 of the natural minor scale.¹

The blues scale is very closely related to the minor pentatonic scale, and is used unsurprisingly in blues. The blues players often add an additional passing note to the pentatonic scale which is technically known as a flattened 5th - that means an extra note in between notes 3 and 4 of the pentatonic scale. This note is called the blue note, and when you add it to the minor pentatonic scale you get the blues scale.

¹ The notation for the natural minor scale is not provided, but it is usually represented as a five-step scale starting with the root note and proceeding to the second, third, fourth, fifth, and seventh steps.

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