

LESSON 3 TIMING AND SIMPLE STRUMS

Now that you know some chords (left hand positions) you will want to do more interesting strumming with your right hand. This lesson will introduce two simple strums, one in 2/4 time and one in 3/4 time. For more strums and detailed information on strums, read chapter {9}. Before introducing the two strums, let's talk about timing.

TIMING

Songs have patterns of beats or accents and the strum pattern follows these beats. For instance, in the song "ON TOP OF OLD SMOKEY" (see chapter {2}), the pattern is:

"ON TOP OF OLD SMO- KY ALL COVERED WITH. . . ."
1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

In this song, the accent takes the count "1". To each "measure" there are 3 counts, each of which lasts as long as any other, or the length of one "quarter note". Therefore the song is in 3/4 time. This means that there are three counts or quarter notes per measure. If you tapped your foot to this song, you would tap on each count, 1,2,3, etc. The first word of this song is not accented. The accent is often called the "down beat". This song starts on count three or the "up beat".

Each song in the book has information on the title line to help in determining the beat, and to indicate where to start the song, and also to show what note the song starts on. For instance, the title line for ON TOP OF OLD SMOKEY has:

ON TOP OF OLD SMOKEY (3/4, 3, S2F3)

- Basic timing is 3/4
- Starts on third beat (3 of 1,2,3)
- Hold string 2, fret 3 to get first note of song

The first note (string 2, fret 3) is the "pitch" where you start singing and not necessarily the first string you strum when playing the song. Fret 0 indicates an open string (no fret held).

Now let's look at some different strums. The first one is in 2/4 time. it is also useful in 4/4 time. This strum starts with your left hand playing some chord to start a song. Your right hand thumb plucks down (toward the ground) on a single bass string (string 4, 5 or 6), then your index finger brushes down on strings 1, 2 and 3 together, using the back of the fingernail. Then you alternate to a different base string with your thumb, followed by another brush down with the index finger. Avoid using a base string with you thumb if it is illegal in the chord you are playing (usually string 6).

The next page has notation for this strum. I call this strum the THUMB-BRUSH strum, or the TB strum.

Notation for the THUMB-BRUSH-BRUSH (TBB) strum:

	-----B-B- -----B-B-
	-----B-B- -----B-B-
	-----B-B- -----B-B-
	---T----- -----
	----- ---T-----
STRUM	----- -----
NUMBER-->	2) q q q q q q
TIMING-->	3/4) 1 2 3 1 2 3
	T B B T B B

Try this strum on some 3/4 songs. Remember that some songs like "ON TOP OF OLD SMOKEY" start on the up beat. In "ON TOP OF OLD SMOKEY" you would start the strum like this:

	ON TOP OF OLD
	T B B T B B T B B
	1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

Another 2/4 (4/4) STRUM (Thumb-Pluck)

Here is another strum just a little more complex than the Thumb-Brush strum. In this new strum, we substitute a different action for the index finger down stroke. This strum also starts with your left hand in some chord position. Your right hand thumb plucks down (toward the ground) on a bass string (string 4, 5 or 6). See the picture below on the left. Then your first, second and third (index, middle and ring) fingers pluck up together on strings 3, 2 and 1 respectively. That is, your index finger plucks on string 3 only, while at the same time your middle finger plucks string 2 and at the same time your ring finger plucks string 1. See the picture below on the right.

Next your thumb plucks down with the 3 fingers (index, middle and ring) remembering to all fingers touching each other and not touching your wrist or arm. To pluck a string, apply a little pressure, then slide your thumb over the string to hit the string as you pluck. Your right hand nails are long enough to pluck the string. Do not move your arm or wrist for the pluck - only the fingers, which should bend at the knuckles.



Other pluck up and over, should be lightly plucked with the wrist apply a little pressure with the thumb. It helps if your right hand nails are long enough to pluck the string. Do not move your arm or wrist for the pluck - only the fingers, which should bend at the knuckles.

This strum will be called the THUMB-PLUCK ("TP") strum, or as one of my students dubbed it, the "DUMB CLUCK" strum. Here is notation for this strum:

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          |-----R--|-----R--| String 1 (thinnest - highest pitch)
          |-----M--|-----M--|
          |-----I--|-----I--|
          |---T-----|-----|
          |-----|---T-----|
STRUM     |-----|-----| String 6 (thickest - lowest pitch)
NUMBER--> 1)   q q       q q
TIMING--> 2/4) 1 2       1 2
           T P         T P

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3/4 STRUM (Thumb-Pluck-Pluck)

A similar strum is used for 3/4 time. The TP strum has a 1,2 ; 1,2 beat. For 3/4, you need one which is 1,2,3 ; 1,2,3. This one will be the THUMB-PLUCK-PLUCK (TPP) strum. The only difference from TP is that you do two finger plucks following each thumb.

Here is notation for this strum:

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          |-----R-R-|-----R-R-|
          |-----M-M-|-----M-M-|
          |-----I-I-|-----I-I-|
          |---T-----|-----|
          |-----|---T-----|
STRUM     |-----|-----|
NUMBER--> 2)   q q q     q q q
TIMING--> 3/4) 1 2 3     1 2 3
           T P P       T P P

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STRUM PATTERNS

There is also information to show the strum pattern for a song below each line. This information is in the form of T's and P's, meaning Thumb and Pluck, respectively. The T's and P's show the beat and the proper number of thumb strokes and finger plucks to put into each song. If you go back to lesson two, you will see this notation in use in the songs. Sometimes patterns are shown for other strums that are presented later in the book. See chapter 9 for other strums.