

Right Hand Workout I

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These exercises will help you to develop a good right-hand technique with alternate picking.

The exercises built up on one another, so you need to start with number 1 and then work your way through the exercises.

Note that all the exercises can be used as building blocks for making up your own licks and riffs. They are more than just technical exercises, they are musical ideas that just wait to be played in your next solo!

Important, read first!

Always practice with a metronome! Otherwise it will just be a waste of time. Alternate picking means that both of your hands have to work together in perfect sync. If one is faster than the other it doesn't work. A metronome provides you with a timing reference that your hands can sync to.

If you don't have a metronome:

- Buy one. Everything between 20 - 30 eur will do.
- If you have a smartphone, you can download a free metronome from the app-store or android market. Do a search for "metronome" and you will find some good ones.
- Download a free metronome app for your mac or pc (just google "free metronome").
- www.metronomeonline.com is a free metronome that runs in your webbrowser.

Always start practicing new exercises slow. Your fingers will move precisely in the way you train them, so if you practice something just fast and sloppy all the time it will always just sound fast and sloppy.

First learn to play the lick perfectly with a good sound and all the notes in the right place, then speed it up.

Remember: „Speed is a by-product of accuracy“. You have to start slow in order to be able to play fast. Take your time and don't lie to yourself by forcing up the metronome before you are ready.

Don't rush the material. It's a lot of stuff in there and you can spend a lot of time doing those exercises. Master one thing first before going on to the next.

Just do it! Be patient and keep practicing these exercises regularly for some time, and your technique will increase dramatically!

Alternate Picking and Right Hand Technique

Before you start with the exercises, read through the following tips about your right-hand- and pick-position:

- Rest the palm of your right hand on the lower strings or the body of the guitar. This makes it easier to control which string you hit with the pick and dampens unwanted noise from the strings you are not playing on. This is especially important for playing music that uses high volume and distortion (like rock and metal). Think of the way you write with a pen: You rest your writing hand on the table to be able to control the movement of the pen. Same idea applies to your picking hand here.
- Grip the pick low towards its tip (again like you would hold a pen). The shorter the distance between tip and your finger, the easier it is to control the picking movement. Don't worry if you touch the string a little with your thumb or index finger.
- Tilt the pick a little to the front or back. Play with the "sharp" edge of the pick. The pick will glide much more easily on the string giving you a better sound. It also prevents the pick from getting "stuck" when you do an upstroke.
- Use small, precise movements. Distance equals time, the smaller your movements, the faster you can play.
- Don't tense up in any part of your body (not only the hands and arms, also watch your back, face...). Really pay attention to this one. Tension blocks you from playing fast.

The exercises

The best way to practice alternate picking is to play licks that only use one single string for some time. Changing from one string to the other requires a different technique that we are going to focus on later. You have to learn a good, comfortable alternate picking first. For that reason "Right Hand Workout I" only focuses on single-string licks.

I notated all licks on the highest string but the idea is to play them on all six strings. Your left hand always plays exactly the same, just on another string. You will be surprised at how different most licks sound on another string! A great solo line can easily turn into some heavy riff just by changing to a lower string.

Ex. 1

Always play the fretted note (12,10,7,5) with the same finger of your left hand. Watch your alternate picking, never play two up- or down-strokes in a row. Accent the first 16th note on every beat (the 12,10,7,5). Pay attention to playing the accent exactly together with the click of your metronome.

Ex. 2

Same as Ex. 1 but adds one more note of the scale.

Ex. 3

Ex. 3 is the same as Ex. 1 and 2 but instead of 16th notes you play triplets. Instead of four notes per beat you only have three now. The open string is only played twice between the fretted notes.

Triplets and alternate picking are a bit tricky, really pay attention not to play two up- or down-strokes in a row.

Don't forget to accent the fretted note with your right hand.

Ex. 4

Now you will use two fingers of your left hand per position. This one sounds especially good on the low strings.

Ex. 5

Again two fingers per position but now your left hand as to stretch out a bit more. Might remind you of a famous tune by AC/DC.

Ex. 6

This one really sounds great in a solo. Note that the fretted notes in the melody move down while the whole lick moves up the neck.

Ex. 7

Now it's time for the big step. Ex. 7 - 11 use fingerings with three fingers per position. Most scales on guitar are played with three notes per position, so this is a very important thing to learn.

If this is totally new to you it might be hard to do first, that's perfectly normal. Allow your left hand some time to get used to this kind of fingerings, it will really pay off later.

Ex. 8

Same idea as Ex. 7 but moving up the neck.

Ex. 9/10/11

The last three exercises are sequences that are used a lot in pop and rock music. There are countless famous licks that can be build from these exercises and we will also use them with other techniques like legato and tapping later.