

## Playing Really Fast, Part Two – Advice From John Moore with an introduction by Joe Carr

As I mentioned in Part One, I have been working with a talented mandolin student with a unique problem. At really fast tempos, he was having clarity and coordination problems. The student determined that his main difficulty occurred on upstroke string crossings from a lower string (in relation to the floor) to a higher string. For example, from the A string to the D string.

After exhausting every suggestion I could think of (including progressive metronome studies), I wrote to a number of accomplished mandolin players for their advice. Last time, we read Steve Smith's comments. Here are John Moore's thoughts and exercises:

John Moore:

These exercises have been very helpful in getting the right hand coordinated with the left, by first getting the right hand coordinated. I try to teach (or learn) by breaking down licks, phrases or songs into basic parts, teaching those parts, and then combining parts a little at a time to build the lick or tune. Each of these exercises is the isolated right hand maneuver for a certain lick or phrase - mostly taken from well-known fiddle tunes.

For instance, exercise 3 is a common fiddle bow shuffle used a lot in Orange Blossom Special, but is surprisingly difficult for most flatpicking (mando or guitar) students to do up to speed. So, rather than have them learn the lick with all the left hand stuff included, I have them learn the right hand first. A side benefit is that they can add whatever left hand fingering they want to create a lick for some other song. Number 3 also makes a cool variation for the A part of Ragtime Annie with the proper left hand fingering.

You hear numbers 5, 7 and 9 a lot in tunes like Grey Eagle. I encourage students to learn each exercise and then, when the exercise is committed to muscle memory (auto pilot), I have them add the left hand. They can add specific fingering for a fiddle tune, or whatever left hand they want, usually some sort of chord at first for exercises 5 through 12. This way they feel like they're starting to improvise a little too.

Other things I can think of are: #1 is usually no problem, but a certain number of students will automatically reverse their pick direction on #2, so I have them pay special attention. Then when they get to #3, things can start to get crazy for a lot of students. They have to remember that their pick direction is determined by counting: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & = down up down up down up down up. Number 3 creates a syncopation that will really make them pay attention.

I tell my students that playing fast means playing well. If something is not done well slow - clean notes, tone, timing, counting out loud - then it won't sound good fast. In other words, if there is something wrong with any of these things, don't go until it is fixed. An old horseman told me once "...practice doesn't make perfect, only perfect practice makes perfect - but practice makes permanent so watch out what you allow yourself or your horse to repeat over and over." That works for anything I've ever tried to learn. I also like the old saying: "If you take the time it takes, it takes less time."

# Exercises

1 2 3 4

Exercise 1-4: A 4-measure exercise in 4/4 time. The first staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The second staff is a guitar tablature with two lines labeled 'T' (top) and 'B' (bottom). The exercise consists of four measures, each with a repeat sign. The first staff contains eighth-note patterns: Measure 1: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5; Measure 2: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5; Measure 3: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5; Measure 4: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The second staff contains fret numbers: Measure 1: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0; Measure 2: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0; Measure 3: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0; Measure 4: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0.

5 6

Exercise 5-6: A 4-measure exercise in 4/4 time. The first staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The second staff is a guitar tablature with two lines labeled 'T' (top) and 'B' (bottom). The exercise consists of four measures, each with a repeat sign. The first staff contains eighth-note patterns: Measure 5: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5; Measure 6: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5; Measure 7: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5; Measure 8: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The second staff contains fret numbers: Measure 5: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0; Measure 6: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0; Measure 7: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0; Measure 8: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0.

7 8 9 10

Exercise 7-10: A 4-measure exercise in 4/4 time. The first staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The second staff is a guitar tablature with two lines labeled 'T' (top) and 'B' (bottom). The exercise consists of four measures, each with a repeat sign. The first staff contains eighth-note patterns: Measure 7: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5; Measure 8: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5; Measure 9: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5; Measure 10: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The second staff contains fret numbers: Measure 7: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0; Measure 8: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0; Measure 9: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0; Measure 10: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0.

11 12

Exercise 11-12: A 4-measure exercise in 4/4 time. The first staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The second staff is a guitar tablature with two lines labeled 'T' (top) and 'B' (bottom). The exercise consists of four measures, each with a repeat sign. The first staff contains eighth-note patterns: Measure 11: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5; Measure 12: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5; Measure 13: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5; Measure 14: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The second staff contains fret numbers: Measure 11: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0; Measure 12: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0; Measure 13: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0; Measure 14: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0.