

My Soapbox: Pick Direction – Are You Doing It Right? PART 2

By Joe Carr

By now you should be comfortable with eighth notes in common (4/4) and cut time (2/2). Dotted notes and rests may make the music look more difficult, but the rule stays the same: Downstrokes on downbeats, upstrokes on upbeats.

Exercise 1 begins with a quarter note on the beat followed by six eighth notes. Follow the pick direction indicators.

Musical notation for Exercise 1. The top staff is in treble clef with a common time signature (C). It contains a quarter note on the first beat, followed by six eighth notes. Above the notes are pick direction indicators: a square for the quarter note, and a square followed by a 'V' for each of the six eighth notes. The bottom staff is a bass clef guitar tablature with a single '0' on each of the seven lines, indicating open strings.

Here is the common fiddle shuffle pattern.

Musical notation for the common fiddle shuffle pattern. The top staff is in treble clef with a common time signature (C). It contains a quarter note on the first beat, followed by six eighth notes. Above the notes are pick direction indicators: a square for the quarter note, and a square followed by a 'V' for each of the six eighth notes. The bottom staff is a bass clef guitar tablature with a single '0' on each of the seven lines, indicating open strings.

In the next exercise we “wait” during the first downbeat and start playing with an upstroke.

Musical notation for the exercise with a wait on the first downbeat. The top staff is in treble clef with a common time signature (C). It starts with a quarter rest on the first beat, followed by six eighth notes. Above the notes are pick direction indicators: a 'V' for the first eighth note, a square for the second, a 'V' for the third, a square for the fourth, a 'V' for the fifth, a square for the sixth, and a 'V' for the seventh. The bottom staff is a bass clef guitar tablature with a single '0' on each of the seven lines, indicating open strings.

Since a dotted quarter note is “worth” three quarter notes (down up down), the second note of this measure is played with an upstroke.

Exercise 5 presents a variety of note values and rests for practice. Be sure you are comfortable before moving on. The pick direction in parenthesis (d) (u) should be played as you say the following word.

- measure 1) Count: (d) one , (d) two (u) and (d) three (d) four.
- 2) Count: (d) one (u) and two(u) and (d) three (u) and (d) four.
- 3) Rest and (d) two and (d) three (u) and (d) four.
- 4) Rest (u) and two (u) and (d) three (d) four (u) and.
- 5) Rest and two (u) and (d) three (u) and (d) four.
- 6) Rest (u) and rest (u) and (d) three (u) and (d) four.
- 7) (d) one (u) and rest (u) and (d) three (u) and four and.
- 8) (d) one (u) and (d) two (u) and (d) three (u) and four and.

Next time we'll look exceptions to these rules.