

Strumming - Part I

This is where we start getting into strumming and counting. It's not hard, especially if you let your right hand do the work for you.

What's important to note is that you don't have to count if you remember to execute the correct right hand motions for each type of note. If you do this, it will leave the right amount of space between notes every time.

Timing is KING when you play any musical instrument. It is not as important as playing the right notes... it is MORE important than playing the right notes. It's no problem to mess up a few notes, most people will still recognize what you are playing if you keep it in time.

But mess up the timing and no amount of right notes will make your song sound like a song.

In this video we go over quarter notes and eighth notes. Quarter notes look like this:



and are always played using a downstroke. The important part of the quarter note is the return trip back up where you do not hit any strings. I call this a "skip" strum.

Eighth notes come in pairs (for now) and look like this



and are always played using a downstroke for the first note of the pair, followed immediately with an upstroke for the 2nd note of the pair.

In the exercise at the end of the video, we use the following strum pattern:



So following what we've done this would be:

Down – skip (up) – down – up – down – skip (up) – down - up.

From that, I “filled out” the chords and measures to create what is called a **12 Bar Blues**. You'll want to get used to both the term 12 Bar Blues and what it sounds like. It is by far the most common type of blues song.

Here's the whole thing written out in what is called a *lead sheet* form. A lead sheet for guitar just has rhythms and chords usually, no TAB or notation.

The image shows a 12-bar blues lead sheet in treble clef. The notation consists of four staves, each representing a measure. The notes are written as eighth notes with stems, and the chords are indicated by letters above the staff. The sequence of chords is: E7 (measures 1-3), A7 (measures 4-6), E7 (measures 7-8) and B7 (measures 9-10), E7 (measures 11-12). The final measure (12) ends with a double bar line and a diamond-shaped symbol.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON: Make sure you can play along with the recording, at least fairly well. It is imperative that you understand what to do when you see a quarter note and what to do when you see eighth notes. All of the future strum patterns will use this... and more.