

Lesson 3:

Developing Scale Technique, Part 3

Moving the Forearm

The forearm placement will keep the fingers and mid-joints in optimum position when playing each string. There are two ways that we can use the forearm to keep the fingers in position. One, is to slide it and the other is to pivot at the point where the forearm touches the guitar. Both approaches are used by professional guitarists. Originally, I was taught to position the fingers by pivoting the forearm. In recent years, I switched to sliding the forearm. I made this change because I found that sliding kept my wrist at the same angle playing each string. Pivoting creates a greater wrist angle when playing the bass strings as opposed to playing the treble strings. Sliding also minimized the pressure that I was placing on the point where my arm touched the guitar. In my teaching, I have found that students who adopted the sliding technique seem to have a faster more fluid scale technique. If you want to learn this technique, try the following:

Establish your right hand position and place your i finger on the sixth string. Raising the forearm from your elbow, lift it off the guitar so that the forearm is even with the top of your hand. (The forearm should be about two to three inches off the guitar. It is important not to change your hand position when raising the forearm.) Alternating with i and m rest strokes, slowly walk up and down the open strings. Be aware of the movement in your shoulder and forearm as you pluck each string. When moving to the higher strings, release the tension in the shoulder and allow gravity to move the hand with the fingers. Arriving to the first string, reverse the process. Returning to the bass strings requires that you raise the forearm as you move to each string. Remember to move the a finger and pinky with the middle finger. **It is important to keep your thumb off the bass strings when practicing this exercise.** When comfortable, practice this exercise using free strokes.

Practice this exercise five minutes daily. After a week, return your forearm to the guitar but as you practice the exercise maintain the same freedom of forearm movement that you had with the arm off the guitar.

If you like the freedom that playing with your forearm off the guitar gives,

and want to incorporate it in your playing you will need to find a different way of stabilizing the guitar other than your forearm. I use two medium size suction cups with hooks (the kind that you use to hang objects in your window). Place one on the right side of the guitar slightly above where the right leg rests, and the other is placed on the left side below the neck. Using twine or an old guitar string I make a loop at one end and attach it to the hooks. The other end of the string is attached to my belt. Once you have the correct length, you can cut the string and slip it on your belt each time that you practice or perform. By using a guitar string (e), I find that the audience can't see the string and have no idea how I'm supporting the guitar. Using this technique, I now feel that my guitar is more stable when I play. In addition, it gives me greater freedom of right arm movement.

Good Luck and enjoy your practice.

