

Lesson One: Pim & Pmi Arpeggios

Beginning guitar students are usually taught to play arpeggios by preparing some or all of the fingers. This is an extremely useful technique that not only allows the beginning student to develop a good arpeggio technique but a well-developed right hand position. As the student moves from the beginner stage to more advanced stages, the limitations of this technique often prevent the development of a professional arpeggio technique. The following approach is one that I have found particularly effective with my students.

The key to successfully playing arpeggios is to be aware of when you release the muscle tension in the fingers needed to pluck each note. While there are several good approaches, the following is what I, and my students, have found to be both easy to learn and apply.

This approach can be used with any arpeggio that moves in one direction from the thumb. The following are the most common of these arpeggios: pim, pmi, pia, pai, pima, and pami. The technique is based on releasing the the tension needed to keep the fingers in the hand each time that you pluck the thumb.

Exercise 1

Playing the following exercise, begin with your fingers in the hand as if you have just finished playing a chord.



When the thumb plucks, release the tension in the fingers and let them come out and place them on the strings. Pluck the chord and immediately place the thumb on the bass note keeping the fingers in the hand. Practice this exercise until you are comfortable releasing the tension in the fingers when the thumb plucks then move to Exercise 2

Exercise 2

The following approach will work for both the pim and pmi arpeggios. Begin with the fingers in the hand as discussed in Exercise 1. When the thumb plucks, release the tension holding the fingers "ima" in the hand and let them come out as a unit. This time, however, don't place them on the strings but position them over the strings they will play. It is important that the fingers come out naturally, by releasing the muscle tension needed to keep them in the hand.

Pim Arpeggios:

Play the notes of the arpeggio by bringing the index finger to the string and then plucking the string. When "i" plucks, "m" is drawn directly to the string it will pluck. M plucks and p is placed on the next bass note. It is important that when you prepare the finger on the string, it is in playing position. No adjustment should be required before plucking. After the finger has played the note leave it in the hand, at rest, until the thumb plucks. When the thumb plucks, release the tension in all fingers and let them come out and place them over the strings.

Note: All the fingers are at rest in the hand before p plucks. When p plucks all of the fingers are released over the strings.

Pmi Arpeggios:

Playing a pmi arpeggio the fingers are prepared in reverse order, first m then i all other steps are the same.



For a more detailed discussion and additional exercises using this approach see, *Guitar Technique Volume 2* by Richard Provost available from GSP in San Francisco, CA.