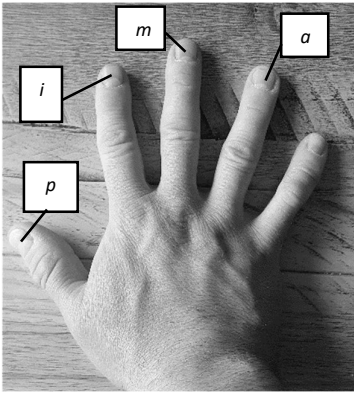


The Picking Hand

Playing melodies

There are two methods for playing single note melodies on the guitar – fingerstyle and plectrum (pick). Here’s a brief rundown of both!

Fingerstyle – The treble strings (G, B and e) are usually played with the fingers and the bass strings (E, A and D) are played with the thumb. We label our fingers like this:



Initially, we’ll practise playing with *i* and *m* alternating:

Fingerstyle Ex. 1

Musical notation for Fingerstyle Ex. 1. It consists of two staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. It contains four quarter notes on the G line (first string), alternating between the index finger (*i*) and middle finger (*m*). The bottom staff is a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature, labeled 'TAB' on the left. It contains four whole notes, each represented by a '0' on the first line, indicating open strings.

Then we can add in the thumb (*p*) playing a bass note:

Fingerstyle Ex. 2

Musical notation for Fingerstyle Ex. 2. It consists of two staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. It contains four quarter notes: the first is a bass note on the E line (third string) played with the thumb (*p*), and the next three are on the G line (first string) played with the index (*i*) and middle (*m*) fingers. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature, labeled 'TAB' on the left. It contains four whole notes, each represented by a '0' on the first line, indicating open strings.

Plectrum style

Playing with a pick seems simple, but to do it well is anything but!

Plectrum playing falls into two broad categories – melody (the tune) and chords (eh... the chords, which we'll look at later).

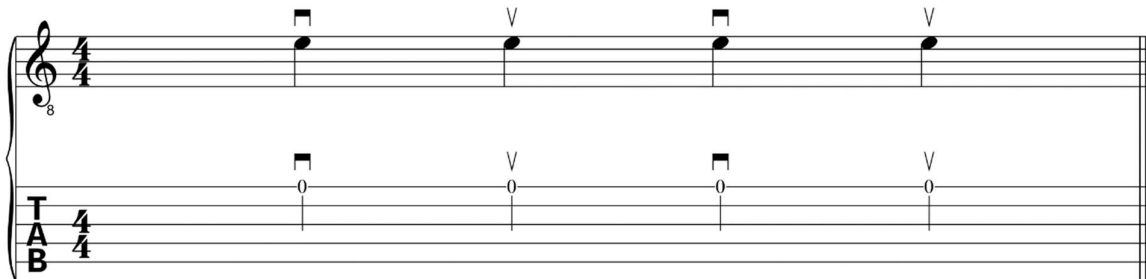
When you're playing a melody, you'll pluck one string at a time with the plectrum and when you're playing chordal guitar you'll play multiple strings.

The most important thing to remember when playing with a plectrum is that you have to hit the strings **ON THE WAY UP AND DOWN!** We call this alternate picking and for many players it's one of the most important techniques to master.

One of the most common mistakes people make is to try and play outside of their natural rhythm. Think of your picking hand as a conductor or metronome – try tapping the table for a few bars of four and see how easy it is to keep time. The same applies when you're strumming a guitar!

Here are some exercises to try out if you prefer to play with a pick. The \sqcap denotes a downward motion and ∇ means hit the string on the way back up:

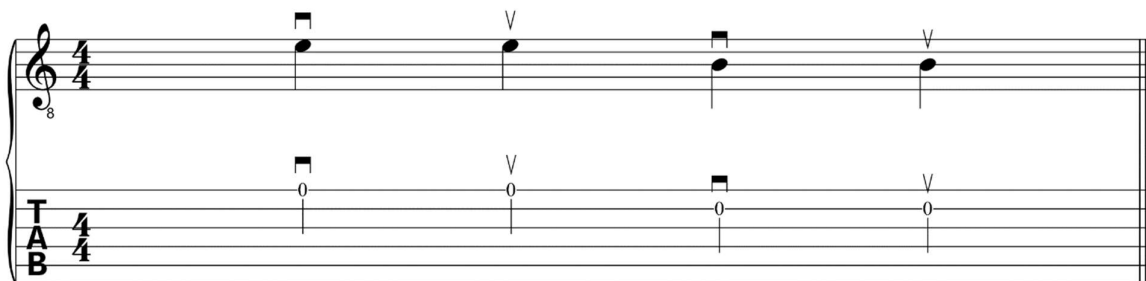
Picking Ex. 1



Musical notation for Picking Ex. 1, showing a 4/4 time signature. The notation is split into two systems: a standard staff with a treble clef and a guitar tablature staff. The tablature staff is labeled 'TAB' and '4/4'. The notation shows a sequence of four notes on the first string, alternating between downward and upward motions. The notes are on the first string, and the tablature shows the fret numbers: 0, 0, 0, 0. The downward motions are indicated by a square symbol with a downward-pointing triangle, and the upward motions are indicated by a square symbol with an upward-pointing triangle.

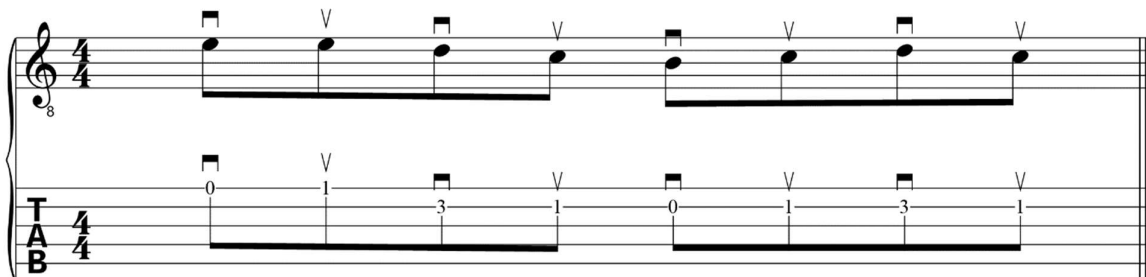
The alternating rule applies whether you're crossing strings or fretting notes:

Picking Ex. 2



Musical notation for Picking Ex. 2, showing a 4/4 time signature. The notation is split into two systems: a standard staff with a treble clef and a guitar tablature staff. The tablature staff is labeled 'TAB' and '4/4'. The notation shows a sequence of four notes on the first string, alternating between downward and upward motions. The notes are on the first string, and the tablature shows the fret numbers: 0, 0, 0, 0. The downward motions are indicated by a square symbol with a downward-pointing triangle, and the upward motions are indicated by a square symbol with an upward-pointing triangle.

Picking Ex. 3



Musical notation for Picking Ex. 3, showing a 4/4 time signature. The notation is split into two systems: a standard staff with a treble clef and a guitar tablature staff. The tablature staff is labeled 'TAB' and '4/4'. The notation shows a sequence of eight notes on the first string, alternating between downward and upward motions. The notes are on the first string, and the tablature shows the fret numbers: 0, 1, 3, 1, 0, 1, 3, 1. The downward motions are indicated by a square symbol with a downward-pointing triangle, and the upward motions are indicated by a square symbol with an upward-pointing triangle.