




Alternate Plucking

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Bass Players
Study Group

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The Basic Concept

Alternate Plucking

Alternate plucking is the name given to plucking the bass strings with alternating strokes of the index and middle fingers.

When performed correctly, alternate plucking will make you a very smooth, fluid and incredibly mobile bass player.

However, to get to this point you must practice in a specific way with a specific practice technique that promotes control, precision and speed in your fingers.

Developing Finger Control

This technique involves playing through basic building blocks of music (I've used scales this week) in alternating long and short notes.

Why is this such a good practice technique?

The alternating long and short notes will force each of your fingers to master control, precision and speed.

To play through the short notes you will need to be in control of your fingers.

You will also need to have control and precision over your movements to change from one stroke to the next and forcing you to move quickly through some notes of a scale and not others (rather than playing them all equally long) will help you be precise.

The reason you shouldn't play all notes equally long when you practice is that it won't isolate each finger and force that finger to develop control, speed and precision.

Eventually you should go back to that. This method is just a stepping stone along the way.

How To Practice These Exercises

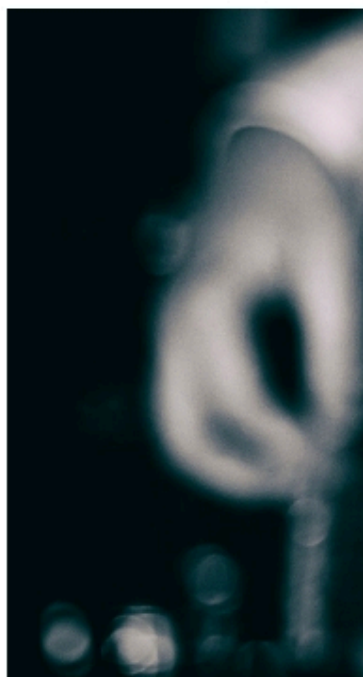
Start each exercise on the index finger of the plucking hand and then use the middle finger for the next note and so on.

This will mean that the index finger always plays long notes and the middle finger short notes.

Follow strict alternate plucking all the time and (if you have access) make sure you watch the video demonstration in the BPSG private Facebook group if you want to see me demo these exercises.

Best of luck,

Hugh



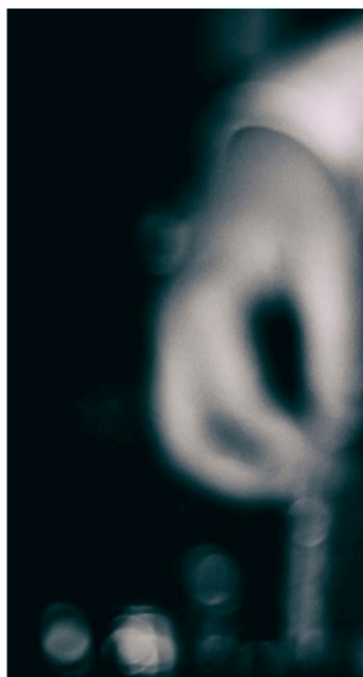
Beginner Exercise

A

5 8 5 7 5 7 5 8 5

Start out slowly here and be as methodical as you can be. I would suggest starting this exercise off at 60BPM but if you don't feel comfortable using a metronome then simply play through in your own time whilst keeping the relationship of long and short notes intact.

This long-short practice method is really what's important to take on board.

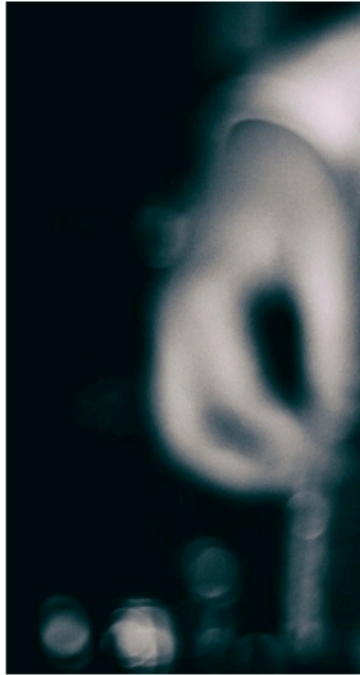


Intermediate Exercise

7 **B**

The speed increases here and the scale is more complex than the beginner exercise so you'll need much greater control. Again, I would suggest starting at 60BPM but try to make sure not to snatch at the shorter notes.

Most bassists have a tendency to play them harder to articulate the shortness of them. But that's not the goal here. Articulate all notes in the scale with the same dynamics and intensity. The rhythms are only a way to promote control in your fingers.



Advanced Exercise

11 C

5 7 8 5 7 8 4 5 7 5 4 8 7 5 8 7 5

This last scale is an altered version of the dorian mode which means more string crossing and the quicker rhythms mean you again need to play quicker with more control.

Perhaps at first you should figure out where to you'll need to skip from string to string and which plucking finger you'll use to make that skip. The details are what counts here and finding out small mechanical details like this will be the difference between good and bad technique.

Further Tips



The next step is to practice all these scales with all the notes played at the same length. As you do this you'll notice that your technique becomes much smoother and the movements feel much more natural to you.

However, you may have noticed that you've only played long notes with one finger and only short notes with the other. So if you're looking for a further challenge this week then go back over the same exercises and reverse the plucking finger patterns. Start every exercise with the middle finger on long notes and the index on short notes.

This will truly iron out any gaps in your technique.

If you're having trouble with these exercises or there's something that you find confusing then head back over to the Facebook Group if you have access to that level of the membership, post a question and I'll go over it during the next Q&A livestream.

Thanks again for your great support and I hope you've gotten a lot from this week's exercises.

All the best,

Hugh

