

Beginner Songs

Here is a collection of songs that you can use basic fingerstyle guitar with and learn with some degree of ease. We won't learn ALL of the parts of each of these songs yet, as each of them have some intermediate work involved, but we'll work with the basics of each song for now. We will be revisiting the more intermediate - advanced parts later as well as more work from the masters.

"Fire and Rain" by James Taylor

Simple and sweet with smooth vocals, Fire and Rain is not too difficult to play. One of the best things about this song is that there is such a blue emotion put into the very notes. This tutorial takes you in-depth into learning the basic verse theme for this song. We'll hit the intro later in the course.

Here is the basic verse theme to this classic song. We'll reserve the intro for later in the course as it is a little more advanced.

The song tempo is set to 77 bpm with a capo on the third fret. If you do not have a capo, you can play this open. However, it will NOT sound the same. The tuning is standard.

As with all of our song study videos, I've slowed this down a bit AND added a slow motion feature so that you can really see the fretting and picking hand. I also like to create cut scenes so that you can instantly go back and re-watch some of the more intricate details measure by measure.

Part I

Chords: A⁷ G/D D A

Fretboard diagram showing fingerings for the four measures:

Measure 1: 5 3 | 6 0 | 0 | 0

Measure 2: 5 3 | 0 | 0 | 0

Measure 3: 2 0 | 2 2 | 0 | 0

Measure 4: 2 0 | 2 2 | 0 | 0

H

Part II

The first and second measures are in the video. The third and fourth are a repeat, so I didn't include it on the video. The Verse has roughly the same theme in the fifth and sixth measures, so I didn't repeat that either. I went directly to the seventh and eighth measures. The song is meant to be played at 120 bpm, but that may be a little fast for now. Try following with the video for now.

Intro

Moderately Fast ♩ = 120

A Aadd9 A Aadd9

Chr I *mf*
let ring

2 2 2 4 | 2 4 4 2 | 2 2 2 4 | 2 4 4 2

2 2 2 | 2 2 2 | 2 2 2 | 2 2 2

5 | 5 | 5 | 5

Verse (Part I)

A Aadd9 A Aadd9 Em6/G

let ring

2 2 2 4 2 | 2 2 2 4 2 | 2 4 2 4 4 | 2 4 2 2

2 2 2 | 2 2 2 | 2 2 2 | 2 2 2

5 | 5 | 3 | 3 3

PIMA Legend

Moderately Fast ♩ = 120

A Aadd9 A Aadd9

Chr I *mf*
let ring

I I I I

P 2 P 2 P | 2 I 2 I I | 2 2 2 4 | 2 4 2 2

2 P 2 P 4 | 4 2 4 2 | 2 2 2 4 | 4 2 4 2

2 2 2 | P P P | 2 2 2 | 2 2 2

5 | 5 | 5 | 5

A Aadd9 A Aadd9 Em6/G

let ring

"Stairway To Heaven" by Led Zeppelin

So cliché that it's barely cool to play? Definitely. I mean, what guitarist hasn't tried learning Stariway to Heaven? Yet it maintains rank in the best songs of all time. The intro to this song is a great exercise to practice in building up your fingerstyle chops.

It's Stairway...enough said.

I've chopped the video down a little because every time I play this song for a student, they always ask me to slow down considerably. I did that here.

Intro Part I

$\text{♩} = 74$

Gtr I *mf* (set to the left channel on amp) ...finger picking mostly
let ring

T	5	5	7	5	7	8	5	8	2	3	2	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1
A	7	5	6	5	5	5	5	5	4	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
B												3						2	0	0	0	0

sl

let ring

T	5	5	7	5	7	8	5	8	2	3	2	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1
A	7	5	6	5	5	5	5	5	4	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
B	0											3						2	0	0	0	0

Intro Part II

let ring

T	0 2	2	0 0	1 3	3	3 2 2 2
A	0	2	3 2 2	1 0 1 0	0	3 3
B	3	0	3 0 0 2	3 2	0	2 2

p

let ring

T	1 3	2	0 1 0	1 3	2	0 0 0
A	0	2	3 2 2	2 0 1 2 3	0	1 1 1
B	3	0	3 0 0 2	3 2 0	0	2 2 2

PIMA Legend

♩ = 74

Gtr I *mf* (set to the left channel on amp) ...finger picking mostly

let ring

T	5 7	7	8 8 2	2	0	1 1 1
A	5	5	5	3	2	0 0 0
B	7	6	5	4	3	2 2 2

p

let ring

T	7 5	7	8 5 8 2	2	0	1 1 1
A	5	5	5	3	2	0 0 0
B	7	6	5	4	3	2 2 2

let ring

T 0 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2

A P 0 P 2 | 0 2 | 3 2 | 2 2 | 0 2 | 1 0 | 0 2 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | P P

B 3 | 3 | P 0 0 2 | 3 2 | P 3 | P 3 | P 0 0 | 0 2

P

let ring

T 1 3 2 | 0 0 2 | 1 3 2 | 0 0 0

A 0 2 | 3 2 2 | 0 1 2 3 | 2 2 2

B 3 | 3 | 0 0 2 | 3 2 0 2 | 3 3 3

"Time In A Bottle" by Jim Croce

This piece will force you to use your pinky (if that's something you've avoided) and is even more meaningful because of the tragic death of Jim Croce. This one is much more challenging, and may not be playable by the learning fingerstyle guitarist, but I've slowed it down considerably so that you can practice along and build up your finger strength.

Here we're going to play the Verse theme using a capo on the 7th fret. I chose this theme because I felt it was the easier of the two, as the notes are closer together than the other part. Try your best to fingerstyle pick these passages.

Part I (Measures 1 and 2)

♩ = 140

let ring

1 1

3 3

0 0 2 2 0 0

4 0

Part II (Measures 3 and 4)

Musical notation for Part II (Measures 3 and 4). The top staff shows a melody with eighth notes. The bottom staff shows a bass line with fingerings: 2, 3, 1, 0 for the first measure and 0, 3, 0, 0 for the second measure.

Part III (Measures 5 and 6)

Musical notation for Part III (Measures 5 and 6). The top staff shows a melody with quarter notes. The bottom staff shows a bass line with fingerings: 0, 3, 0, 0 for the first measure and 3, 2, 3 for the second measure. A "let ring" instruction is present above the first measure.

Part IV (Measures 7 and 8)

Musical notation for Part IV (Measures 7 and 8). The top staff shows a melody with quarter notes. The bottom staff shows a bass line with fingerings: 2, 3, 5 for the first measure and 8, 6, 5, 0 for the second measure.

Part V (Measures 9 and 10)

Musical notation for Part V (Measures 9 and 10). The top staff shows a melody with quarter notes. The bottom staff shows a bass line with fingerings: 1, 3, 0, 0 for the first measure and 1, 3, 2, 0 for the second measure. A "let ring" instruction is present above the first measure.

Part VI (Measures 11 and 12)

Musical notation for Part VI, measures 11 and 12. The treble clef staff shows a melody of quarter notes. The guitar staff shows fret numbers: 0, 3, 1, 0, 0, 0, 3.

Part VII (Measures 13 and 14)

Musical notation for Part VII, measures 13 and 14. The treble clef staff shows a melody of quarter notes. The guitar staff shows fret numbers: 2, 3, 0, 3, 3, 5, 1, 3. A 'let ring' instruction is present above the guitar staff.

Part VIII (Measures 15 and 16)

Musical notation for Part VIII, measures 15 and 16. The treble clef staff shows a melody of quarter notes. The guitar staff shows fret numbers: 2, 3, 0, 2, 3, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2, 4, 0. A 'let ring' instruction is present above the guitar staff. The letters 'H P' are written below the guitar staff.

PIMA Legend

PIMA Legend musical notation. The treble clef staff shows a melody of quarter notes. The guitar staff shows fret numbers: 0, 2, 4, 0. PIMA symbols are used: M 1, 1 3, 2, 2, 3, 1, P, P, P, P. A 'let ring' instruction is present above the guitar staff.

Musical notation for the first system, including a staff with notes and a guitar chord diagram below it. The diagram shows fingerings (I, 1, 3) and plucking directions (P) for the strings.

Musical notation for the second system, including a staff with notes and a guitar chord diagram below it. The diagram shows fingerings (I, 3, 2, 0, 1, 0) and plucking directions (P) for the strings. The instruction "let ring" is written above the diagram.

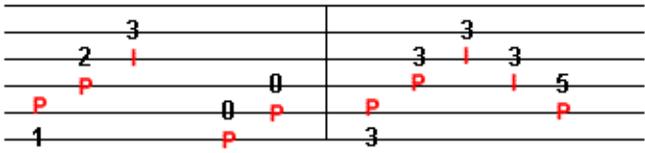
Musical notation for the third system, including a staff with notes and a guitar chord diagram below it. The diagram shows fingerings (2, 3, 5, 8, 6, 5, 8, 7, 5) and plucking directions (M, P) for the strings.

Musical notation for the fourth system, including a staff with notes and a guitar chord diagram below it. The diagram shows fingerings (M 1, I 3, 0, 2, 3, 2, 0) and plucking directions (P) for the strings. The instruction "let ring" is written above the diagram.

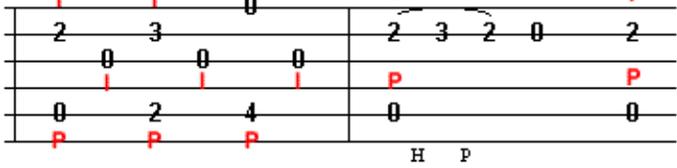
Musical notation for the fifth system, including a staff with notes and a guitar chord diagram below it. The diagram shows fingerings (M 0, I 3, 0, 3, 0, M, 0, 1, 0) and plucking directions (P) for the strings.



let ring



let ring





Video Reference: Much more material is covered in our Fingerstyle 101 DVD. Please refer to Chapter 1 "Beginner Songs" on the DVD for additional information.