

Basic Exercises 1

Here is a collection of basic fingerstyle exercises that will help you build up your fretting and picking hand. Each exercise includes a variation for both fretting and picking hand. Since we should already all know about basic open chords and basic barre chords, the 'fretting' hand exercises involve techniques we've already learned under "Basic Techniques 1" for added depth to the playing. (Who wants to just play a G or a C chord at Fingerstyle 101? Not Me!)

Important Term

"PIMA" (or "TIMA")

PIMA is an acronym that stands for:

P = Pulgar = Thumb

I = Indice = Index finger

M = Medio = Middle finger

A = Anular = ring finger

What is important about this is that this acronym is a basic guide into finger picking based on the same concept of "Eat **A** Darn **G**ood **B**reakfast **E**arly" (EADGBE) and the color wheel/rainbow of "ROY-G-BIV" (**R**ed **O**range **Y**ellow **G**reen **B**lue **I**ndigo **V**iolet).

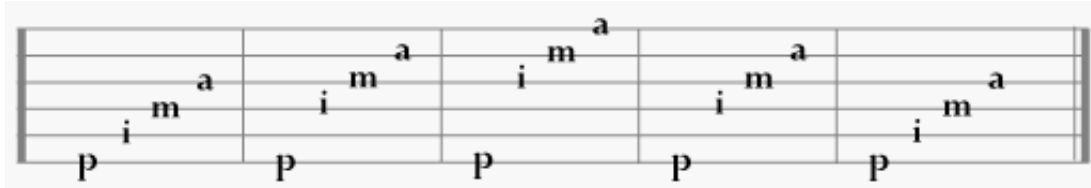
There's a general rule in solo fingerstyle playing, especially in classical, that you don't use the same finger twice, apart from the thumb. When two consecutive notes are on the same string, you usually alternate between i, & m or m, & i.

This is really a general rule about fingerstyle accompaniment, rather than solo fingerstyle. In fingerstyle accompaniment you are mostly playing chords and always changing string, so that rule about using a different finger for each of the upper strings works well.

For now, we don't have to focus too much on this idea, but I want to introduce you to it because it allows you to play ANY note on the fretboard for practice in your own personal studies. Using PIMA will allow you to create your own exercises without having to stare at tablature. I will be supplying you with the tablature, but also an overall legend using PIMA.

It is also called TIMA, but that is only because the "T" stands for thumb instead of "P" for 'pulgar.' Since PIMA is a much older acronym, we'll be using it, as it will probably appear as PIMA in your future studies.

Basic Legend:



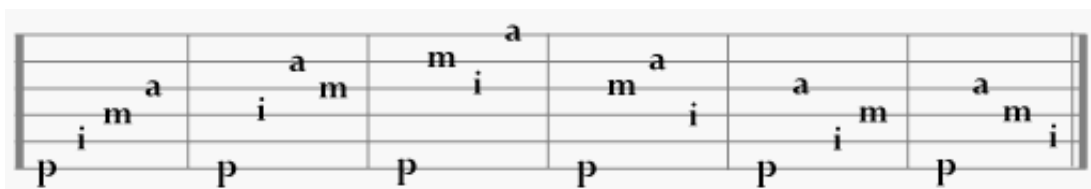
Here we have a basic legend that uses PIMA. Notice that all "P's" are on the Low E string, followed by the next series of letters. The "i, m, a" just change string placement.

You will recall that we've talked about the difference between arpeggios and actual fingerstyle guitar, where arpeggios are individual notes played out, and sometimes fingerstyle guitar uses more than one individual note WITHIN an arpeggio, right?

For the purpose of this series of basic exercises, we are going to use PIMA in the form of arpeggios, and then add to it with fingerstyle.

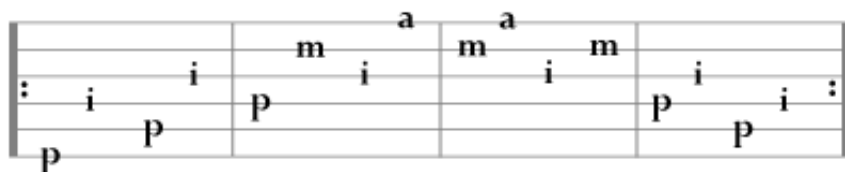
Other Examples:

Mixed Patterns



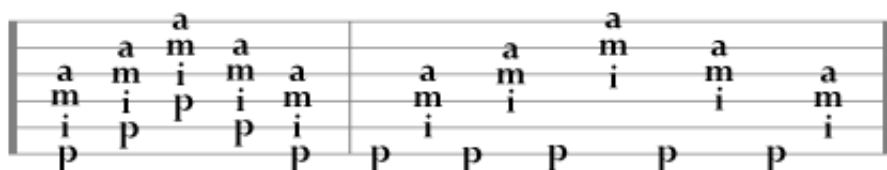
This mixed pattern set still uses the PIMA, but in various order. This example proves that the acronym can be adjusted accordingly.

Classical Guitar



This is a very common pattern in classical guitar. It still uses the acronym, but really enhances your picking hand movement.

Blocked (Flutter) Patterns



This is what you will PROBABLY be most familiar with. It's based on the 'boom-chuck' that is so common in classical/fingerstyle guitar.

But Wait A Minute

Did you notice that using PIMA completely eliminates the use of your 4th finger, or 'pinky' finger? There are two reasons for this:

1. Though the pinky (4th) finger is actually the STRONGEST finger on your hand (I know, it seems strange, but it's based on the muscle structure of your hand) it is rare that you use it solely to play a note. We'll try to change that a little, because when you get into work by Tommy Emmanuel and Chet Atkins, not only will you have a need to use your 4th finger at times, but you'll probably wish for once you had another set of fingers to work with!
2. The general rule with PIMA is a basic guideline and the 4th finger many times is 'nested' using the C-cup formation we've already talked about.

The Exercises

Here I will supply you with the STYLE from above and you are to play in the appropriate order as it appears from above. I've changed the PIMA to standard tab notation so that it is easier to grasp immediately but have included it in the tablature at the top of the staff.

Picking A

Basic Arpeggio Using G

♩ = 60

P I M A P I M A P - I - M - A P I M A P I M A

Gtr I

0 3 3 3 0

0 0 0 0 0

2 3 3 3 2

3 3 3 3 3

Picking B

Basic Arpeggio Using E

♩ = 60

P I M A P I M A P I M A P I M A P I M A

Gtr I

Picking C

Mixed Arpeggio Using G

♩ = 60

P I M A P I A M P M I A P M A I P A I M

Gtr I

Picking D

Mixed Arpeggio Using E

♩ = 60

P I M A P I A M P M I A P M A I P A I M

Gtr I

Picking E

Classical Using C

$\text{♩} = 60$

Gtr I P I P I P M I A M A I M P I P I

Picking F

Blocked Flutter Using G (Barred)

This one is a little different, but not by much. Here you have the standard PIMA, which starts from the lowest string, going up. (In other words, the Low E string is the P, then the I, then the M, then the A.)

The "P" will always be the lowest note, and the "A" will always be the highest note for this example. This exercise is for both picking and fretting hand and is reminiscent of the 'boom-chuck' found in fingerstyle guitar.

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Summary

Since you've already completed the following:

1. Getting Started
2. Fingerstyle Intro
3. Techniques 1
4. Exercises 1

We've now completed our first series of basic exercises.

Let's learn a few beginner songs.



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