

V. Single-String Exercises

We will now begin exploring the guitar fretboard via some exercises that use only 1 string at a time.

Single-string playing is an often overlooked subject in the guitar's educational literature. It is felt by many players though, that a proper understanding of the guitar can not be achieved without serious consideration of each string on its own.

There are many ways to finger scales and arpeggios on 1 string. I have not explored all the possibilities here by any means. The fingerings I am demonstrating do have some internal logic though. In general: Position shifts are best accomplished by shifting to a finger that is not currently being used to play the note just before the shift. I.e. We usually try to shift to a finger that is free. Sometimes, however, slides with the same finger can also be a good way to execute a position shift.

The 3 single-string fingering methods for scale playing that I will touch upon can be described as:

1. Playing as many notes within a single position as are available *without using any finger stretches*, and then shifting to another position. This involves avoiding finger stretches totally, by shifting position whenever a finger stretch would be needed. If you observe the hands of many of the best players you'll probably see that this strategy is used a whole lot. Finger stretches are an important facet of playing the guitar, but they do tire the hands somewhat, and if they can be avoided it's usually a good thing.
2. Fingering 3 notes in one position, and then shifting to another position. This requires using finger stretches from time to time, usually 1st-finger stretches rather than 4th-finger stretches.
3. Fingering 2 notes in one position, and then shifting to another position. This requires no finger stretches, but it does not prohibit them either.

I present a couple of possible fingerings in the 1st few exercises, and then it's up to you to experiment.

Don't get hung up on trying to play these things too fast. This is more about note recognition and learning the fretboard, than it is about chops and technique. 1/4 note = 60 BPM is fine.

I have decided on the 20th fret as being the highest fret position used for these exercises. The highest note on most acoustic-electric jazz guitars is at the 20th fret, but on an instrument like this it may not be practical to access these frets except on the first string. Some instruments may not even go this high, but most solid body electrics go a bit higher. Feel free to adjust the following exercises to your own instrument's range by using different fingerings than the ones I am suggesting, when necessary. The exercises for the lower strings go no higher than the 17th fret.

A. The 6th String

Please consult Chapter IV when doing these exercises, especially the part about string dampening. Use only down-picks, for now, for these exercises. I.e. No up-strokes with the pick.

Ex. V.A-1

String[®] Any Finger

E F G A B C D E F G A A G

Fret # 0 1 3 5 7 8 10 12 13 15 17

F E D C B A G F E

Ex. V.A-2

Avoid stretches

Finger: E F G A B C D E F G A G F E
 0 1 3 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 1 4 3

Position # I

D C B A G F E
 1 4 3 1 3 1 0

Ex. V.A-3

3 fingers, then shift -including stretches

Finger: E F G A B C D E F G A G F E
 0 1s 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 4 2 1s 4

D C B A G F E
 2 1s 4 2 1s 2 0

Ex. V.A-4

2 fingers, then shift

Finger: E F G A B C D E F G A G F E
 0 1 3 1 3 1 3 1 2 1 3 1 2 1

D C B A G F E
 3 1 3 1 3 1 0