

Starting to Play!

Lesson Concepts

- The “3 Ps”: Placement, Positioning, and Pressure
- Finger Positions on the Neck
- Four-Finger Exercise
- Warm-Ups



The “3 Ps”: Placement, Positioning, and Pressure

Placement

Proper fingertip placement is just behind the fret. (Figure 1.5.1)

Positioning

Hand shape, finger shape, thumb shape and wrist mechanics are all part of “positioning.” If you pretend you are holding a tennis ball in your left hand, you have the correct hand shape. Keep the hand shape and turn your hand palm up and place your hand around the guitar neck from below. Fingers are held close to the strings and fretboard. The knuckles where the finger joins the hand should be in line or slightly forward of the fretboard. The tip knuckles of fingers should be bent, so the fingertips are coming straight down on the strings and fingerboard. Only the fingertips and thumb come in contact with the guitar. The thumb is placed on the upper back (shoulder) of the neck with the end knuckle of the thumb bent backward a bit. (Figure 1.5.2) The wrist should be relaxed and slightly bent.



Figure 1.5.1

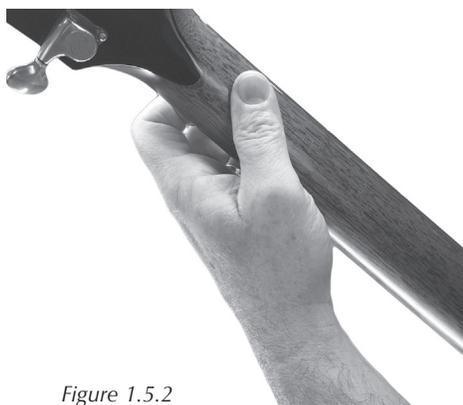


Figure 1.5.2

Pressure

If you have properly considered your placement and positioning, less pressure is needed to get a good sound from the guitar. Sometimes you need to use more pressure on a string (finger) due to compromises in placement and positioning when playing chords.

You should adjust your 3 Ps in this order: first check placement, then positioning, and then finally pressure.

Finger Positions on the Neck

Assigning your four left-hand fingers to four consecutive frets on the fretboard is a *fingering position*. When you are in the first position, your first finger plays the notes on the first fret, the second finger plays the notes on the second fret, the third finger plays the notes on the third fret, and the fourth finger plays the notes on the fourth fret. When you shift your four fingers up one fret, your first finger is now on the second fret, your second finger is on the third fret, and now you are in the second position. The idea of finger position continues up the neck. The fret number of your first finger determines the “position.” Figure 1.5.3 shows how your four fingers would be assigned when playing in the fifth position. (The first finger is on the fifth fret.)



Figure 1.5.3

The Four-finger Exercise (in Fifth Position)

To play the four-finger exercise in the fifth position, start with your first finger on the second string on the fifth fret. Be careful not to interfere with the first or third string and pluck the second string. If you are following the “3 Ps,” for your left-hand, and plucking correctly, using one of the right-hand plucking techniques, you should hear a nice clear note. While holding the second string note with your first finger, pluck the adjacent open first string, pluck the fretted second string again, and then pluck the open third string. If your first-, second-, and third- string notes don’t sound clear when fretting the second string, adjust your left-hand and try again. Once you have succeeded getting clear notes with your first finger holding the second string, add your second finger on the sixth fret and pluck the second, first, second and third strings as you did previously to check that they all sound good. Repeat the process, adding your third finger to the seventh fret second string, and then finally your fourth finger to the eighth fret second string. (Figure 1.5.3) You can then repeat the process for the third, fourth, and fifth strings.

Figure 1.5.4 shows the TAB for the four-finger exercise in the fifth position for the second string:

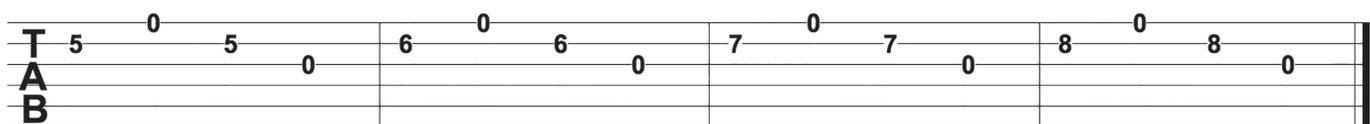


Figure 1.5.4



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- Play the four-finger exercise at the fifth position, be sure to keep the “3 Ps” in mind as you do. When doing the four-finger exercise, try to do it three times with each of the three right-hand techniques, thumb, fingers, or pick.