

Death By Acronym

AP, SAP, OP, IP, EP

Here I will discuss some basic techniques for playing lines.

First I will discuss Alternating Picking, then Economy Picking using Sweeps.

Finally I will discuss some legato techniques; Hammer On, Pull Off and Sliding.

Alternating Picking (AP) is just that, picking down on odd notes and up on even notes. (It really doesn't matter whether it is Up on odd or Down on odd notes)

So the idea of Strict Alternating Picking (SAP) is: pick every note and alternate the picking strokes.

This is much more difficult to do than say, but the idea is simple.

The difficulty comes in when playing on more than one string, because you might have to cross the string to pick an upstroke or a down stroke when changing strings. So if you are playing a down stroke on the 6th string (Low E) and you are about to play an upstroke on the 5th string (A), you will have to cross the plane of the string to the other side (the 4th or D string side) before you can execute an upstroke. I call this "outside picking"(OP).

Conversely, if you are playing an upstroke on the 6th string and are about to play a down stroke on the 5th string you will have to cross back over the plane of the 6th string to hit the 5th string with a down stroke. I call this "inside picking"(IP). The tricky part of this is to not hit the string you are crossing over. Since picking is done with the tip of the pick you have to rise over the crossed over string in each case. I personally find IP easier, but that is mostly because I learned to play that way since I had no teacher to show me the, more accepted method. I developed my own version of Economy Picking (EP) to accommodate my AP weakness.

In more recent years I have spent much time un-learning bad habits and learning new good ones.

AP becomes more difficult when most of the string changes are OP. The types of scales most commonly used are based on three note per string (3NPS) forms. These force you to use OP when crossing strings.

Good AP habits can be learned and reinforced by practicing SAP using 3NPS Forms.

Interestingly enough the very same forms used for good SAP technique studies are also good for EP studies.

The basic idea of EP is use one stroke to sound two notes when crossing strings.

So when executing a down stroke on the 6th string continue to the 5th string and with the same motion sound the note with the same down stroke. Then the pattern becomes: Down (D) Down Up(U), DDU, DDU when ascending across all six strings with 3NPS patterns.

When descending from the 1st to the 6th string with 3NPS patterns the picking becomes: UUD,UUD,UUD.

For legato techniques you Hammer On when ascending in one position and Pull Off when descending in one position. When changing Positions Sliding is very effective. Normally, sliding is 1-1 or 4-4 meaning index to index or pinky to pinky. There are times when you are changing positions and you don't want to use the same finger, so the other possibilities are used also but most are 1-1 and 4-4 followed by 4-1 and 1-4. It is really a matter of distance. If you are changing positions ascending and are about to immediately descend you will likely use 4-4, but if you are continuing up the neck you will likely use 4-1. Conversely, if you are changing positions descending and are about to immediately ascend you will use 1-1, but if you are continuing down the neck you will likely use 1-4.

There has been enough discussion. Now it is time for exercises.

Here is an example of SAP

You can start this with and up stroke or a down stroke.

The image shows a musical exercise for SAP. It consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The melody starts on the 7th fret, moves up to the 8th, then the 10th, and then back down to the 7th, 8th, and 10th again. There are triplets of eighth notes in the first and last phrases. Below the staff are three lines representing the strings: Treble (T), Middle (A), and Bass (B). The fret numbers are 7, 8, 10, 7, 8, 10, 7, 9, 10, 12, 10, 9, 12, 10, 8, 12, 10, 8. The string plucking pattern is indicated by 'v' for downstroke and 'u' for upstroke.

An EP Example

The image shows a musical exercise for EP. It is identical in notation to the SAP example above, but the string plucking pattern is different. It uses 'v' for downstroke and 'u' for upstroke, with some 'u' strokes appearing as dashed lines, indicating a specific picking technique.

EP with Slides

The image shows a musical exercise for EP with Slides. It is identical in notation to the previous examples, but includes 'sl' (slide) markings under the 7th fret notes on the bass string in the first and last phrases.

Legato with Some AP and Slides

Work at making the notes even in duration and level when hammering on and pulling off.

The image shows a musical score for guitar. The top staff is a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat and a 3/4 time signature. It contains a melodic line with triplets and slurs. The bottom staff is a bass clef staff with fret numbers and playing techniques. The techniques include slides (sl), hammer-ons (H), pull-offs (P), and vibrato (v). The fret numbers are 7, 8, 10, 7, 8, 10, 7, 9, 10, 12, 10, 9, 12, 10, 8, 12, 10, 8.

Legato

I couldn't figure out how to show this to be played with out any picking at all but that was my intent.

Don't rush the pull offs!

It is difficult to make the middle note the same level and duration in the pull off section.

This image is identical to the first one, showing a musical score for guitar with a treble clef staff and a bass staff. The bass staff includes fret numbers and playing techniques such as slides, hammer-ons, pull-offs, and vibrato.