

STRUM MAGIC

This part of the book looks at some new uses for our old strum patterns, some new strums and many strum techniques that will add more flavour to your playing.

It's very important that you immediately add these tricks and flavours to your playing.

In level 1 you were taught a rigid system of strumming, but in this level we'll really want to "break the shackles". You'll use these new

strums and tricks to make your strumming sound more musical and interesting.

There will be few rules to follow. The main one is to keep in time, and to also use the suitable strum for the song. Apart from that you should be mixing and messing with all the strums and tricks you are going to learn.

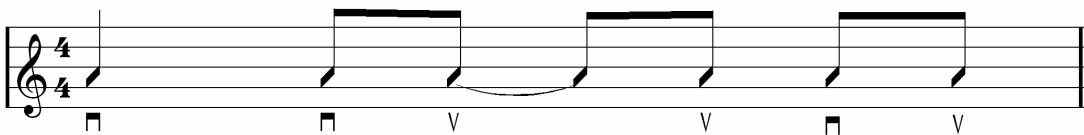
VARYING STRUMS

So far we have been rigid in the use of our strums. We have used the same strum for each bar – rock strum number 3 for whole bars and two chords in the bar strum number 1 for two chords in the one bar. Now to make our strumming more fun to play and more interesting to listen to we'll vary strums. Use the starting strum as a foundation and change it. Add a strum here, leave a strum out there or make a strum shorter or longer. Maybe change the strum in the chorus or even change

it every bar. As long as the strumming is in rhythm it won't really matter how you vary a strum.

Lets look at some examples of varying rock strum number 3. Try some of your songs with these variations. Remember you can vary from bar to bar, from verse to chorus, or a bar here and a bar there.

Rock Strum Number 3.



Rock Strum Number 3 – Variation (a).



Chords Level 2

Try these simple exercises to get used to mixing the variations.

Example 1. – Four bars of the same strum pattern. Rock strum number 3 and then variation (a).

The image shows two systems of musical notation for guitar. Each system consists of four bars. The first system is marked with a '1' above the first bar. The second system is marked with a '5' above the first bar. Both systems use a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The chords are G, C, and D. The strum patterns are indicated by 'V' (downstroke) and 'v' (upstroke) below the notes. The first system shows a sequence of chords: G (4 bars), C (4 bars), D (4 bars). The second system shows a sequence of chords: G (4 bars), C (4 bars), D (4 bars).

Example 2. – Two bars of the same strum pattern. Rock strum number 3 and then variation (a).

Example 3. – One bar of mixing the strums.

Use the ideas in your songs straight away. For example mix the variations in these ways –

- (a) Verse by verse.
- (b) Line by line.
- (c) Chord by chord.
- (d) Bar by bar.

MORE STRUM PATTERNS

All the strum patterns we have studied so far have been one bar long.

These new strum patterns are two bars long. They all have one thing in common – the last up strum of the first bar is tied to the first strum of the second bar. The counting is left

out – you fill it in.

Obviously this strum is used for chords that last for two bars, but you'll see on the next page how they can be used for chords that last 1 bar each.,

Example 1. Rock Strum Number 2 extended.



Example 2. Rock Strum Number 3 extended.



Example 3. Rock Strum Number 3 Variation (a) extended.



Example 4. An example from “Good Riddance” by Greenday.



CHANGING TO THE NEW CHORD EARLY

The two bar strum patterns where you tie the last up strum are also used for changing to the new chord early. Instead of waiting for the normal count 1 to change you can change on the & of count 4 from the previous bar. This is effective and gives the chord changes a “push” or “drive”.

Some songs will show you this early change by writing the new chord above the end of the previous bar. Other times you can use the early change to dress up any chord change.

Example 1.

Example 1 shows a 4/4 measure with a G chord above the first bar and a C chord above the second bar. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5 in the first bar, and G4, F4, E4, D4 in the second bar. Strumming patterns are indicated by 'u' (up) and 'd' (down) strokes below the staff.

Example 2.

Example 2 shows a 4/4 measure with a G chord above the first bar and a C chord above the second bar. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5 in the first bar, and G4, F4, E4, D4 in the second bar. Strumming patterns are indicated by 'u' (up) and 'd' (down) strokes below the staff.

Example 3.

Example 3 shows a 4/4 measure with a G chord above the first bar and a C chord above the second bar. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5 in the first bar, and G4, F4, E4, D4 in the second bar. Strumming patterns are indicated by 'u' (up) and 'd' (down) strokes below the staff.

COMBINING STRUM PATTERNS

Another way to experiment with your strumming is to combine strum patterns.

A good example of this is the song “Good Riddance” by Greenday, which uses two of the most popular strums – rock strum number 2 and 3 as well as some 2 bar strum patterns.

By mixing strum patterns you will add variety to the sound of the song.

Another reason for mixing strum patterns is to be able to play bars where chords last for different lengths. Like the standard way we’ve played a mixture of one chord in a bar and two chords in a bar.

Try these examples for Stand By Me. There are mixtures of rock strums 2, 3, 3a, two bar strum patterns and also changing early.

STAND BY ME

	G	G	Em	Em	C	D	G	G
(a)	No 3	No 3	No 3	No 3	No 2	No 2	No 2	No 2
(b)	No 3	No 3	No 3a	No 3a	No 2	No 2	No 2	No 2
(c)	2 BAR		2 BAR		No 3	No 3	No 2	No 2
(d)	2 BAR		2 BAR		No 3a	No 3a	No 2	No 2
(e)	2 BAR		2 BAR		No 2	No 2	No 3a	No 3a
(f)	2 BAR		2 BAR		No 3	No 3a	No 2	No 2
(g)	No 3	No 3	No 3a	No 3a	2 BAR	Change Early	2 BAR	
(h)	No 3	No 3	No 3a	No 3a	2 BAR	Change Early	2 BAR Change Early	
(i)	No 3a	No 3a	2 BAR		2 BAR	Change Early	No 3	No 2
(j)	2 BAR		No 3a	No 2	No 2	No 3	2 BAR	

TWO CHORDS IN A BAR

We'll now start to use some different strum options for two chords in a bar. Remember we have been only using two bar strum number 1 and 2 for two chords in a bar. From now on we'll say that you can use any strum pattern for two chords in a bar e.g. rock strum number 2, strum number 3 and its variations.

You have to choose which suits each individual situation. Sometimes all of the two

chords in a bar can use the same strum patterns or you might mix different strum patterns.

The two main ways of changing to the new chord is either on count 3 or on the & of count 2. Experiment with both anytime you find two chords in a bar and listen to which suits that bar. Remember the next two chords in bar could be a different strum.

Changing on Count 3.

Two musical staves in 4/4 time showing chord changes on count 3. The first staff shows a G chord for the first two counts and a C chord for the last two counts. The second staff shows a G chord for the first two counts and a C chord for the last two counts, with a different strumming pattern for the C chord.

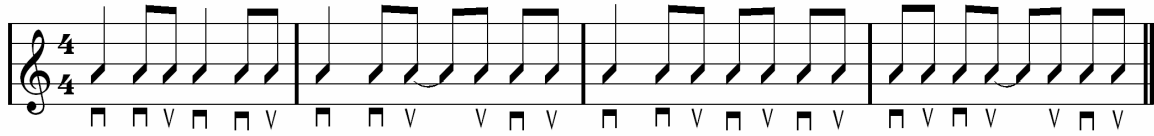
Changing on the & Count of 2.

Two musical staves in 4/4 time showing chord changes on the & of count 2. The first staff shows a G chord for the first two counts and a C chord for the last two counts. The second staff shows a G chord for the first two counts and a C chord for the last two counts, with a different strumming pattern for the C chord.

Here are two song examples using our new ways of handling two chords in a bar.

American Pie by Don McLean – Chorus.

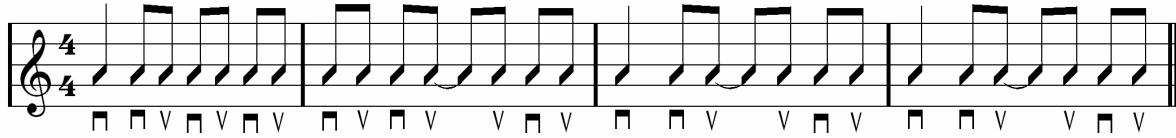
G C G D G C G D



The musical notation for the chorus of 'American Pie' by Don McLean is shown in 4/4 time. It consists of four measures. The first measure contains two chords, G and C, each with a half note. The second measure contains two chords, G and D, each with a half note. The third measure contains two chords, G and C, each with a half note. The fourth measure contains two chords, G and D, each with a half note. The melody is a simple eighth-note pattern: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Below the staff, the fingering is indicated by numbers 1-4 for fretting and 'V' for the virtual string.

Polly by Nirvana – Chorus.

E G D C D C G Bb



The musical notation for the chorus of 'Polly' by Nirvana is shown in 4/4 time. It consists of four measures. The first measure contains two chords, E and G, each with a half note. The second measure contains two chords, D and C, each with a half note. The third measure contains two chords, D and C, each with a half note. The fourth measure contains two chords, G and Bb, each with a half note. The melody is a simple eighth-note pattern: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Below the staff, the fingering is indicated by numbers 1-4 for fretting and 'V' for the virtual string.

THE ONE BEAT CHORD

Quite often a one beat chord will occur in songs. This one count chord is usually found either on count 4 or count 2.

There are two approaches to strumming the one beat chord.

1. You can either just keep using the strum pattern you have been using and make the one beat chord fit in where it belongs. This will

not highlight the one beat chord too much - which in many songs is what is needed of the one beat chord.

2. Other times though the one beat chord has to stand out - so we give it a one count strum and probably also accent it a little bit. Try these exercises, which are both in 4/4 and 3/4.

4/4 EXAMPLES - ONE COUNT CHORD ON COUNT 4.

Rock Strum Number 3. (Firstly normal and secondly with one count strum.)

Two musical staves in 4/4 time. The first staff shows a sequence of chords: G, C, D, C. The second staff shows a sequence of chords: G, C, D, C. Each chord is represented by a single note on the staff, with a vertical line indicating the strumming pattern. The strumming pattern consists of a downstroke followed by an upstroke, with a 'V' symbol indicating the downstroke and a 'u' symbol indicating the upstroke. The first staff has a 'V' under the G chord and a 'u' under the C chord. The second staff has a 'V' under the G chord and a 'u' under the C chord.

4/4 EXAMPLES - ONE COUNT CHORD ON COUNT 2.

Rock Strum Number 3. (Firstly normal and secondly with one count strum.)

Two musical staves in 4/4 time. The first staff shows a sequence of chords: G, C, D, G, C, D. The second staff shows a sequence of chords: G, C, D, G, C, D. Each chord is represented by a single note on the staff, with a vertical line indicating the strumming pattern. The strumming pattern consists of a downstroke followed by an upstroke, with a 'V' symbol indicating the downstroke and a 'u' symbol indicating the upstroke. The first staff has a 'V' under the G chord and a 'u' under the C chord. The second staff has a 'V' under the G chord and a 'u' under the C chord.

RHYTHM TECHNIQUES

Here are some new strumming techniques that will add variety to your rhythm playing. They can be used with open and bar chords. Some of these techniques are for your strumming hand while others are for the chord hand.

(a) Accenting.

Accent means to play louder than normal. Sometimes it will be only a little louder or other times it will be quite a lot louder.

Normal accenting is that each and every beat in the bar (for all time signatures) will be accented, while any strums that fall in between the beat are not accented e.g. the “&” counts.

The strength of the accent for different beats is varied though.

The strongest beat of any bar is count 1 and is therefore played with a very strong accent. By having count 1 strongly accented it is easy to

1 2 **3** 4

In 3/4 each count will be accented. Count 1 is the strongest while counts 2 and 3 are weaker

1 2 3

To break away from the standard rules of accenting any beat can be accented more than it normally would be or maybe the normally

Practice and think about them so that they will become a natural part of your playing. Start to use these techniques in all your songs.

know where the beginning of each bar is. The other beats will be accented, though each may have varying strengths of accents. By having the beats accented it is easy to know where the beats are and makes it easier to play as you can “feel” whereabouts in the music you are. So accenting gives music its rhythmic feel. If all strums were played with the same volume music would sound flat and boring. It would make it hard to clap along with or dance to.

In 4/4 each count will be accented. Count 1 is the strongest, count 3 is the next strongest, while counts 2 and 4 have the weakest accents.

than count 1.

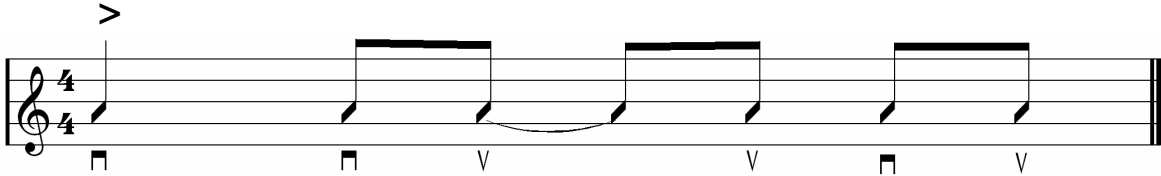
strong accents can be played weakly. Even any non-beat strum can be accented.

Chords Level 2

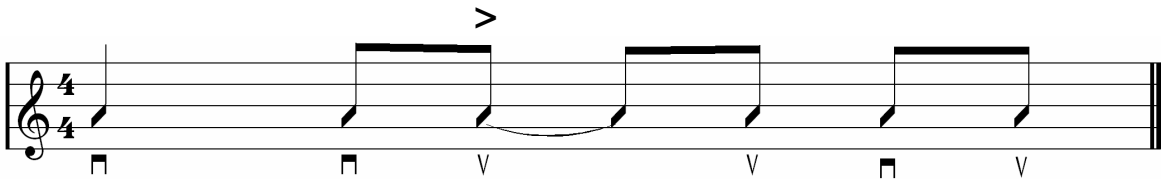
Try these examples in 4/4 using rock strum number 3. Of course accenting works with any strum pattern. The last example works well because these accents will match in with the drummer hitting the snare drum on the same counts. When you are playing on your

own there is the impression that there is a drummer, and when playing with a band you are emphasizing the counts 2 and 4 with the drummer. The third example is also interesting as it accents an & count.

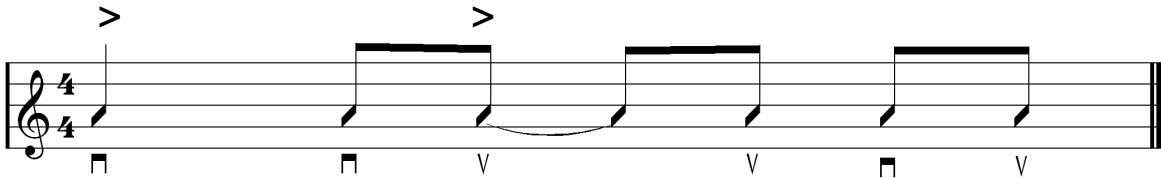
Accenting Count 1.



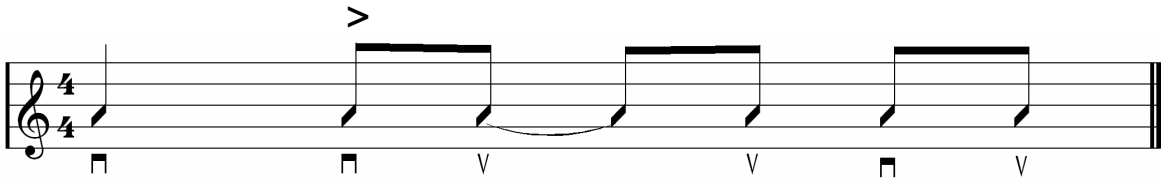
Accenting the main up strum (the & of count 2).



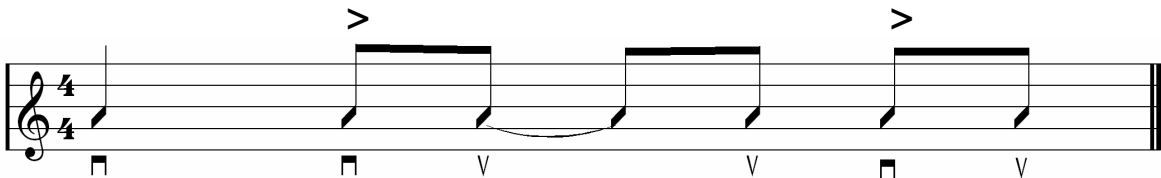
Accenting Count 1 and the main up strum.



Accenting Count 2.



Accenting Count 2 and 4.



You can mix accents (as we did with strum variations). You can vary between the verse and chorus or even every bar. These examples are for the first line of the chorus to Blister in

the Sun and alternate each two bars. Use the idea of mixing accents in other parts of the song as well as in other songs.

BLISTER IN THE SUN - Chorus

	Em	%	C	%
(a)	Count 1	%	Main up strum	%
(b)	Count 1	%	Count 1 and the main up strum.	%
(c)	Count 1	%	Count 2	%
(d)	Count 1	%	Count 2 and 4.	%
(e)	Count 1	Main up strum	Count 1	Main up strum
(f)	Count 1 and the main up strum.	Count 2	Count 1 and the main up strum.	Count 2
(g)	Count 1 and the main up strum.	Count 2 and 4	Count 1 and the main up strum.	Count 2 and 4
(h)	Count 2	Count 1	Count 2	Count 1 and the main up strum.
(i)	Count 2	Count 2 and 4.	Count 2	Count 2 and 4.
(j)	Count 2 and 4.	Count 1 and the main up strum.	Count 2 and 4.	Count 1 and the main up strum.

Chords Level 2

Here doing accents will change the flavour of this sixteenth note strum pattern. Normally we accent the first sixteenth to highlight the beginning of each beat. Try these two

variations. The first is suited to disco e.g. Jive Talkin' by the Bee Gees, while the second would be suited to fast reggae or ska.

The image shows two musical staves in 4/4 time, each with a treble clef. Both staves feature a sixteenth note strum pattern: a quarter rest followed by two eighth notes, then a quarter rest followed by two eighth notes, repeated four times per measure. The first staff has accents (>) placed above the first sixteenth note of each of the four beats. The second staff has accents (>) placed above the first sixteenth note of each of the four beats, but the accents are positioned further to the right, closer to the end of each beat.

(b) Palm Muting.

You can use palm muting to get more crunch from the guitar. Palm muting is when you rest your strumming hand on the bridge of the guitar so that your palm lightly rests on the strings. Not only does this give more crunch but it also takes away the "ringingness" of the strings. You'll often find especially at loud volumes that the strings tend to ring too much.

sliding your hand back and forward on the bridge. A lot of palm on the strings for heavy damping or just a little palm on the strings for light damping. If you like slide your hand completely off the strings for no damping.

You can vary the amount of palm muting by

The symbol for palm muting is the initials P.M. Here is one of the most common strums in rock music. It uses all down strums and power chords to give a lot of grunt.

Example 1. Classic Rock Strum.

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. It contains a continuous strum pattern of eighth notes. The first two measures are labeled 'A5' and the next two measures are labeled 'E5'. Below the staff, the letters 'P.M.' are written, indicating palm muting is used throughout the strum.

Chords Level 2

Add accents to your classic rock strum.

Example 1. Classic Rock Strum with an accent on count 1.

A5 E5

P.M.

Example 2. Classic Rock Strum with an accent on count 2 and 4.

A5 E5

P.M.

(c) Rake or “quick arpeggio”.

Drag the pick slowly across the strings to sound each string separately. Think of ‘stuttering’ your strum across the strings. You can rake across all available strings or sometimes try strumming less strings to give

each string more ringing time.

Shown by a wavy line in the music. Notice there is an arrow on the line to show whether it is an up or down strum.

Example 1. Strum 3 with a rake on count 2.

A5 E5

Example 2. Strum 3 with a rake on the & of count 2.

A5 E5

Here are examples of mixing the techniques learnt so far.

Example 1. Combining rake with an accent on count 1.

Musical notation for Example 1, showing a rake pattern with an accent on count 1. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of two measures. The first measure is labeled 'A5' and the second 'E5'. Both measures feature a rake pattern of eighth notes with an accent on the first count. The strumming pattern is indicated by 'V' (down) and '□' (up) symbols below the notes.

Example 2. Combining rake with an accent on count 2.

Musical notation for Example 2, showing a rake pattern with an accent on count 2. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of two measures. The first measure is labeled 'A5' and the second 'E5'. Both measures feature a rake pattern of eighth notes with an accent on the second count. The strumming pattern is indicated by 'V' (down) and '□' (up) symbols below the notes.

(d) Deadened Chord.

As the name implies the sound of the chord is “deadened”. There is no proper sound of the chord but rather a “thunky” or “chicka-chicka” sound. You keep strumming while your chord hand makes the deadened chord.

When playing bar chords you would mostly do deadened chord by relaxing the chord hand while strumming. You could use this for chords that play all the strings or power chords.

When playing open chords there is the problem of not having a finger on all the strings. So when you relax the chord fingers these strings will stop ringing but the open strings will keep ringing. To mute the open strings use either a spare finger or one of the

chord fingers of the chord hand to gently flop on the strings like a bar but with no squeeze. Try using both and see which works best. You’ll probably find the spare finger will work best for some chords while using a chord finger will work best for other chords.

Also try using the strumming hand and gently lay it on the strings to stop them from ringing. Make sure to do this gently so that you don’t make another sound. Sometimes you can slam the strumming hand down on the strings to get a “click” sound.

Two symbols are used for deadened chord. Either an x is used instead of the normal head of the note or a slash is put through the head of the note.

Example 1. Rock Strum Number 3 with a whole bar deadened.

Musical notation for Example 1, showing a rock strum pattern with a whole bar deadened. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of two measures. The first measure is a standard rock strum pattern with eighth notes and an accent on count 1. The second measure is a whole bar deadened chord, indicated by 'x' symbols on the notes. The strumming pattern is indicated by 'V' (down) and '□' (up) symbols below the notes.