

Supplement #8 Accents and Muting

The Realm of the Masters

Lack of dynamics is one of the things that can really separate your playing from that of the masters. The two dynamics we are going to discuss here are accenting the back beat and muting. First, you get the beat. [Supplement #2]. You then develop enough technique to play steady, staying with that beat. Then add dynamics to turn that good timing into something deeper.

We get from the clock to the beat, from the rhythm to ----

"THE GROOVE" - It's "riding the crest of the wave",

it's "hittin' the sweet spot", it's "playin' in the pocket".

You can become a very groove oriented musician just playing the very basic fundamental rhythms presented in the first lessons of this book.

The natural tendency is to keep adding information at the cost of deepening our understanding about the very basic stuff which is at the core.

A great way to improve the groove is by tightening your attack.

One way to achieve this is by **muting!**

Muting helps to define the space between the notes.

Go back to Lesson #7 Octave Shuffle to work on your muting technique. Just hang there on the E5; First get that open string muted using the right hand palm, then get that left hand pushing on and coming off the octave.

(Back so soon?--Ok--Let's go on...) .

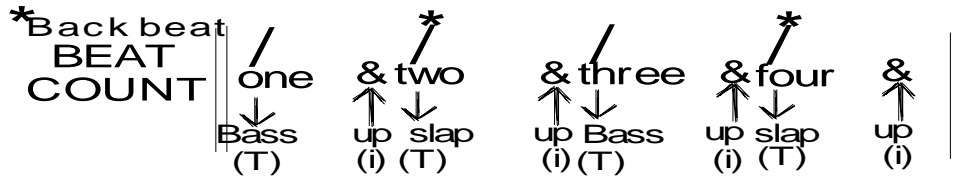
Right hand muting is achieved by placing your hand on the strings (bass strings for now) just where they pass over the saddle. On the typical acoustic guitar, the bridge is wood, the saddle is that plastic thing that is slotted in the bridge. Just start by playing that open 5th string with your thumb, then place the pad of your palm, near the end of your wrist, on the string. This should not impede your ability to freely move your thumb. Eventually you will find the right spot, one that lets the note sound, but also dampens (mutes) it slightly. Some players use this as a place to "anchor" their hand. (Too far towards the sound hole? Too dead! Not far enough? No mute!)

Left hand chord muting requires a bit of coordinated timing. In this case, right after you pick (Sound) that octave note (up) let go of the fretting pressure. Your left hand finger(s) (in this case just index), stays on the string(s) ready to apply pressure (press down on it) again right as you pick it, then "let go" again. This should allow that note (or chord) to sound just briefly, then "kill" the sound of that note (or chord) right after you pick it.

The "Back Beat"

That is an accent on the 2nd and 4th beat of the four beat measure. You will hear this accented beat in most all blues and rock, slow tempos and fast tempos. In a band situation, the drummer hits that snare drum. Listen for it, (counting while listening), realize its important role in creating the "groove". The awareness alone will make you a stronger player.

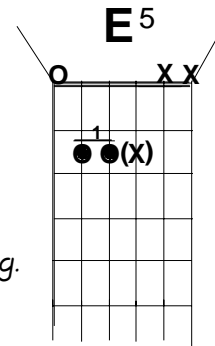
Here we will start the process with a basic exercise.



I vocalize this....."Bass" "UpSlap" "UpBass" "UpSlap" "Up"
Here it is on that E5 power chord...



As you see above, our thumb (T) will play the 6th string, then index finger up. These are E octaves [Supplement #6] Now on that 2nd beat, our thumb "slaps" that 6th string. For now we will "slap" that string with the side of our thumb, coming straight down into it, toward the guitar face. This will obviously "kill" the note produced by normally playing that string. What we are looking for here is a purely percussive sound.



(That 3rd and 4th beat will be the same thing over again.)

HINT: When I slap that 6th string, my index finger stays curled up so as to land right above the 4th string. This then puts it in position to quickly play it.

At some point you will want to sound the note and percussive accent at the same time. This involves more of a "spank" than a "slap". Hang in there-- it takes awhile to gain control of this sort of dynamic.

Become aware of the back beat in all the rhythms you play. Sometimes you may choose to slap it, at other times you might just play it a bit harder.