

Lesson #29 Finger Picking With Alternating Bass Line.

This is a great place for you flat-pickers to try something new!

Here we have an alternating bass line, popular with "Travis picking" and "Piedmont" folk style blues and Rag type blues. As with other finger style playing, we need to gain thumb (T) and finger(s) independence.

Let's look at the three possibilities (for most all "finger picking").

- 1) Thumb (T) down. I call this "bass".
- 2) Thumb down / finger(s) up. I call this "squeeze".
- 3) Finger(s) up (no bass). I call this "note".

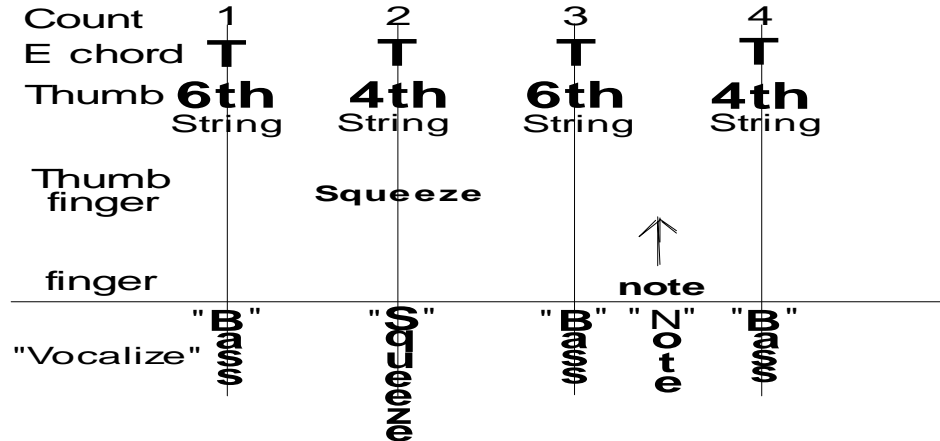
1) This style generally always has the thumb on each down beat. In this example we will be alternating between the 6th and 4th string on the E chord.

2) We always have four choices where we want that squeeze. It could be on any combination of the four down beats. Here I have chosen to put it on the 2nd beat only.

3) The note(s) between basses could also be on any or all of the up beats. Here I have chosen just that one between the 3rd and 4th down beats.

This is a typical one measure finger picking pattern.

**It has always helped me to vocalize these moves. In other words, I talk to my right hand.*



Start with the bass notes. All thumb (T) down. Then put that squeeze in there on the 2nd beat. For now just play the high (small) string or two. Then add in that note(s) between the 3rd and 4th beats.

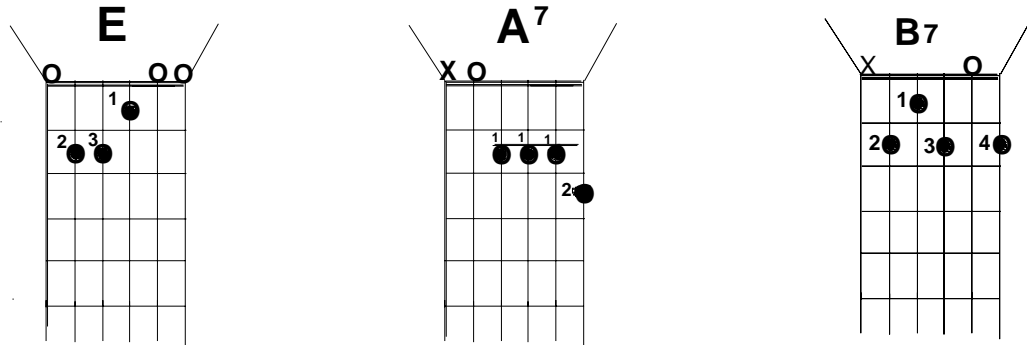
Again, just a high string or two.

Let's plug this into the 12-bar in E.

NOTE: On the **A7** and **B7** chords, alternate your thumb between the **5th** and **4th** strings. Again, coming up on the top (high, small) string or two.

12-Bar in E With Alternating Bass.

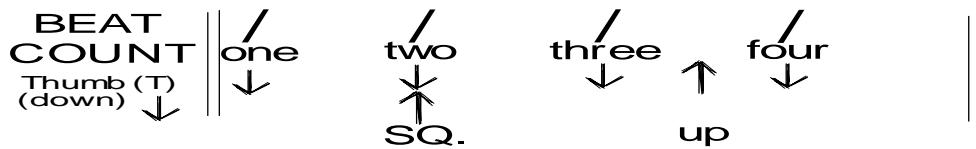
Here are those I, IV, and V chords in E again.



Run through that bass line first (all thumb down) . just to get the feel.



Also try vocalizing. "Bass" "Squeeze" "Bass" "Note" "Bass"



12-Bar Shuffle in E.



(The chords have been abbreviated to just the two top strings.)

E(I)	A7(IV)	E(I)	E
T 0 0	3 3	0 0	0 0
A 2 2	2 2	0 0	0 0
B 0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
A7(IV)	A7(IV)	E(I)	E(I)
T 3 3	3 3	0 0	0 0
A 2 2	2 2	0 0	0 0
B 0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
B7(V)	A7(IV)	E(I)	B7(V)
T 2 2	3 3	0 0	2 2
A 1 1	2 2	0 0	0 0
B 2 2	0 0	0 0	2 2

*End on the (I) chord

Here we have a well known type of "Piedmont" or folk blues picking.
 There is a melody on top, and alternating bass notes on the bottom.

OR
with
thumb
on
bass

(Bass strings)
 5th to 4th 6th to 4th 6th to 4th 6th to 4th

Run through that bass line first (all thumb down) . just to get the feel.
 (Here I have made those bass notes a bit bigger so they stand out)
 Those last three bass notes (thumb) are just to lead you back to the C chord.

In this type of song the melody can be all over the place. The thing that holds it together is that bass keeping the rhythm! (Ye olde "oom-pah" baby)

Straight Eight 12-Bar in C

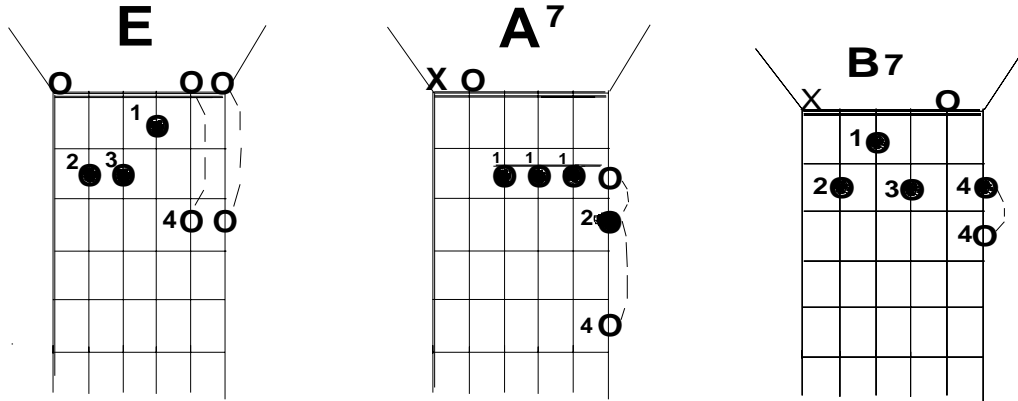
CD TRACK 58

C															
T	3	0		T	3	1		T	3	0		T	3	1	
A	2	2	2	A	2	2	2	A	2	2	2	A	2	2	2
B	3	3	3	B	3	3	3	B	3	3	3	B	3	3	3
F				C											
T	3	1		T	3	1		T	3	0		T	3	1	
A	3	3	3	A	3	3	3	A	2	2	2	A	2	2	2
B	1	1	1	B	1	1	1	B	3	3	3	B	3	3	3
G				C											
T	3	1		T	3	1		T	3	0		T	1		
A	0	0	0	A	0	0	0	A	2	2	2	A			
B	3	3	3	B	3	3	3	B	3	3	3	B	3	0	2

*End on the (I) chord

Now let's do this same type of thing in E!

Ok, our pinky is really gonna work out here!
 We are sticking to that same "squeeze" and "note between basses".



(Bass strings)

6th to 4th

5th to 4th

5th to 4th

Again, these are the same bass notes you used in that first E 12-bar a couple of pages back. But you might want to run by them again, then add "top" notes. We have just bass notes in the last measure, that bring us back to E. (Thumb)



12-Bar Shuffle in E With Alternating Bass

E (I)

T	3	0		3	0		3	0		3	0
A	2		2	2		2	2		2		2
B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

A7(IV)

T	5	3		3	2		3	0		3	0
A	2		2	2		2	2		2		2
B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

B7(V)

T	3	2		3	2		3	0		3	0
A	1		1	1		1	2		2		2
B	2		2	2		2	0		0		0

E (I)

T											
A											
B											

*End on the (I) chord

Try puttin' those "squeezes" and "notes between" in different places.----- Maybe make up a melody!