

Alternate Picking Exercise

Four of the main techniques favoured by rock guitarists for playing at fast(er) speeds are alternate picking, sweep picking, legato and tapping. These exercises will help you to develop your alternate picking, i.e. a strict adherence to alternating down and up pick strokes. The pros are that it is convenient to keep steady time and enables precise note articulation. On the down side, it can sound too machine gun-like and is tricky when crossing strings.

A-minor pentatonic, shape 1 (the common "blues box" for rock guitarists) is used here for a precise descending line using strict alternate picking. Try both picking directions to see which you prefer and ultimately learn to perform both with confidence. Although shown in groups of three notes per beat, it's also worth exploring two notes, or even six.

This is less straightforward than Example 1, as there are several moments where you'll need to skip strings. Start very slowly until all notes are perfectly played with even timing and dynamics. Watch also for excessive string noise, which can be reduced by muting unplayed strings with either hand.

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