

Lesson 3

Single Note Free Strokes

After completing the patterns presented in Lesson 2, you are ready to start playing single note, alternating free strokes on a single string. The following exercises are meant to help develop comfort in using this technique, especially for an extended period of time.

Like the initial free stroke exercises in Lesson 1, we will first work on controlled and quick releases. These exercises will help develop the control needed when exchanging between the fingers.

While practicing the following exercises, remember:

- 1) When *i* plays, *m* and *a* should remain inactive.
- 2) When *m* plays, the *a* finger and pinky should move along with the *m* finger while the *i* finger remains inactive.
- 3) When the *a* finger plays, the pinky should move along with it while the *i* and *m* fingers remain inactive.

Exercise 1a: Controlled Release

With your thumb on the 3rd string, place your *i* finger on the 1st string. Make sure the finger's large knuckle is placed over the 1st string. Play the *i* finger finger, allowing the tip joint to stay relaxed and let the finger follow through into the hand. Hold the finger in the hand for a few seconds and feel the amount of energy needed to keep the finger in the hand. Let go of that energy and release the finger allowing it to come out of your hand and in front of the string. Check to make sure that you've released all the energy from that finger while maintaining a proper right hand position. Place the finger back on the string and play again.

Playing 4 notes consecutively will create a single set. Repeat that set 3-5 times. As you become more comfortable, increase the amount of notes per set from 4 to 8, then to 16, etc... Repeat this for the *m* and *a* finger on the 1st string. **Note** – you may find it more comfortable to place the thumb on the 4th string when using the *a* finger.

Exercise 1b: Quick Release

With your thumb on the 3rd string, place your *i* finger on the 1st string. Make sure the finger's large knuckle is placed over the 1st string. Play the *i* finger, allowing the tip joint to stay relaxed and let the finger follow through into the hand. Once the finger has finished playing, allow the finger to release out of the hand immediately. The finger should come to rest in front of the 1st string. Take a moment to make sure you've released all the energy from the finger while maintaining a proper right hand position. Place the finger back on the string and play again.

Playing 4 notes consecutively will create a single set. Repeat that set 3-5 times. As you become more comfortable, increase the amount of notes per set from 4 to 8, then to 16, etc... Repeat this for the *m* and *a* finger on the 1st string. **Note** – you may find it more comfortable to place the thumb on the 4th string when using the *a* finger.

Exercise 2: Alternating on a Single String

After practicing the individual fingers, now it is time to combine the *i* and *m* fingers and alternate free strokes on a single string. Remember to coordinate the exchange of the *m* finger when the *i* finger plays and the exchange of the *i* finger when the *m* finger plays. Take the time in between notes to make sure:

- 1) You have a stable Right Hand position
- 2) You are relaxing the finger when you release/exchange
- 3) Prepare the new finger
- 4) Remember to keep the tip joint of your finger relaxed while playing

♩ = 60

i x *m* x *i* x *m* x *i* x *m* x *i* x *m* x

x = prepare the new finger on he rests

Exercise 3: Alternating with String Crossing

As you become comfortable with alternating free strokes on a single string, apply the concepts from Exercise 2 with changing strings.

♩ = 60

i x *m* x *i* x *m* x *i* x *m* x *i* x *m* x *i* x *m* x *i*

x = prepare the new finger on the rests

Now try the exercise without the rests in between notes.

♩ = 60

(*m* *i* etc...)
i *m* etc...

The material from this lesson excerpt comes from Nick Cutroneo's book entitled *Free Stroke Development* published by GANEmusic Publications. If you wish to read the whole lesson, the book is available for purchase at <http://www.nickcutroneo.com>