

## Part Two

# First Lessons for the Right-Hand

## Lesson 1. The Bass Strings

### Lesson 1a introduces the open 4th string “D”.

The wire-wound sixth, fifth and fourth strings are commonly called the bass strings. Before you begin the lesson, place “i”, “m”, and “a” on the third, second and first strings, respectively (the first string is closest to the floor). Use the right thumb (*p*) throughout the lesson. After playing the open string, allow the tip-joint of the thumb to follow through to the index finger resting on the third string. Avoid passing the thumb behind the first finger and under the palm. This is one of the essential mechanical skills (called a “mechanic”) you will need to be a successful guitarist.

Since the strings vibrate at a 90° angle to the top of the guitar, the top (which is the vibrating soundboard) cannot fully resonate in phase with the strings. We can exploit this design weakness by setting some notes more closely in phase with the top of the guitar, thereby more fully activating the soundboard and achieving a more robust tone. The guitarist can also let some notes remain out of phase with the soundboard allowing for a thinner, less resonant tone.

A free stroke, commonly called *tirando*, is a lighter stroke often used for accompaniments. The thumb still presses into the string but plays at an angle that allows it to just pass over the next, higher string. The thumb flexes at all the joints as it moves across the strings and comes to rest at the index finger. Some guitarists can create very warm, rich free strokes by carefully cultivating the angle and pressure of the thumb.



Before the thumb free-stroke.



After the thumb free-stroke. Notice only the thumb has moved and the rest of the hand remained motionless.

A rest-stroke, commonly called an *apoyando*, is a more powerful stroke. Press the thumb down, through the string, setting the vibration of the string more in phase with the soundboard of the guitar. The physical result is the thumb resting on the next highest (closer to the floor) string. The musical result is a rich and powerful tone.



The thumb before rest-stroke. Notice that the thumb is prepared on the fourth string.



The thumb after rest-stroke. Notice that the thumb has come to rest on the third string.

**CD TRACK 1**

Count: **1** (2) (3) (4)    **1** (2) (3) (4)    **1** (2) **3** (4)    **1** **2** **3** **4** etc.

Lesson 1a. ① Place i,m,a on the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st strings before you begin. (continued below)  
 ②  
 ③

Student

Teacher

Count-off "1-2-3-4-"    The circled numbers indicate which string to play (the first string is closest to the floor).

The double bar indicates the end of the piece.

You successfully performed Lesson 1a if you:

- Kept a steady rhythm by counting to yourself or tapping your foot.
- Kept your thumb to the left of your other fingers.
- Practiced with both rest-strokes and free-strokes.
- Played Lesson 1a seven times in a row without error.

### Lesson 1b introduces the open fifth string “A”.

Music goes higher and lower than the five line staff. Whenever necessary, we simply expand the staff up or down by short dashes called “ledger” lines. The fifth string “A” lies two ledger lines below the staff. The free-stroke and rest-stroke are the same as on the “D” string. Again, place “i”, “m”, “a” on the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st strings, respectively.

During the next few weeks you will need to develop the ability to consistently find the correct strings with the thumb and fingers of the right hand. To do this you will need to create a “point of reference” for the right hand by keeping the right fore-arm in exactly the same place on the edge of the guitar.



Correct placement of the right fore-arm, allowing the normal weight of the arm to rest on the guitar. Remember to avoid “hunching” the right shoulder.



Less effective placement of the right fore-arm. The angle of the fingers to the strings shown above makes for an unfocused tone. It also forces the thumb to collide with the fingers, or follow through into the palm.

### PROFESSIONAL TIP

Many of the best players will flex the tip joint of the thumb the moment they release the string, especially with the free-stroke. They do this because it takes much less effort to play and there is less residual tension in the palm. See the picture on page 11.

Lesson 1b. ①  
②  
③

Student

Teacher

You successfully performed lesson 1b if you:

- Kept “i”, “m”, and “a” on the 3rd, 2nd and 1st strings.
- Kept the thumb to the left of the fingers and didn't allow the thumb to pass under the palm.
- Kept a steady beat for both rest-strokes and free-strokes.
- Kept the right fore-arm in *exactly* the same place for each performance.
- Played Lesson 1b seven times in a row without error.

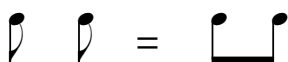
To the Instructor:

Further Teacher parts to the exercise duets are in the Instructor's Edition of The Conservatory Tutor, with the exception of the duets that teach style.

**Lesson 1c introduces the sixth string “E”.**

Notice that some of the notes are beamed together. These are called eighth notes. The duration of an eighth note is one half that of a quarter note. In lesson 1c the quarter note receives one beat so an eighth note receives one half of a beat. If you are tapping your foot, only tap your foot on the numbered beats and not on the “ands”. This will help you keep a steady pulse. The sixth string “E” is played with the thumb. Be sure to use both rest and free-strokes.

A single flag is used for eight-notes when only one eighth note is needed. If there is more than one eighth note in a row, they are often joined by a beam to indicate the beat unit. This is done so that the rhythm is easier to read.



**CD TRACK 3**

Count:            1 (2) 3 (4)    1   2   3 (4)    1    2 & 3   4            1 & 2 & 3 (4)

Lesson 1c.    ①  
                  ②  
                  ③

You successfully performed Lesson 1c if you:

- Kept your thumb to the left of your other fingers.
- Evenly divided the beat during the eighth-note passages.
- Rested your right fore-arm on the guitar in the same place as you did for the previous lessons.
- Practiced with both rest strokes and free-strokes.
- Played Lesson 1c seven times in a row without error.

**PROFESSIONAL TIP**

Most players tap their foot “on the beat” while they practice. They also lift their foot up on the “ands” of the beat, which is a great idea. Also, be sure to tap the right-foot so the guitar neck isn’t “bouncing” up and down.

### Lesson 1d introduces string changes with the thumb.

One way to help stabilize the right-hand is to play the thumb with a rest-stroke. Try playing a thumb rest-stroke with “i”, m, and “a” *on* the strings, followed by a thumb rest-stroke with “i, m, and a” *off* the strings.

Resting “i”, “m”, and “a” on the strings is an aid to help stabilize the right hand while the “point of reference” on the fore-arm is established. Once you are comfortable finding the correct strings with the thumb, play Lesson 1d with a thumb free-stroke *without* resting the other fingers on the strings.

### CD TRACK 4

Lesson 1d. ①  
②  
③

The musical score for Lesson 1d is presented on two staves in 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. It contains three measures of rests, each marked with an 'x' and a circled number 1, 2, and 3 respectively. This is followed by a series of eighth notes, starting with a piano (p) dynamic marking. The second staff continues the eighth-note pattern. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

You successfully performed lesson 1d if you:

- Kept a steady pulse.
- You divided the beat equally for the eighth notes.
- Practiced with both “i-m-a” on and off the strings.
- Maintained a steady right-hand by establishing the fore-arm as a “point of reference”.
- Kept the thumb to the left of the other fingers, even when using the thumb-free stroke with the other fingers off the strings.
- Practiced with both rest-strokes and free-strokes.
- You flexed the thumb-tip when you played free-stroke.
- Played Lesson 1d seven times in a row without error.