

Synchronization Drills

For the Left and Right Hand

by Kevin O'Shaughnessy

The purpose of these drills is to improve the synchronization between the left and right hands. They can also be used to address issues in finger dexterity and to try out different picking patterns.

For each of the exercises, start at a slow tempo; 60 BPM is recommended but you can use whatever you're comfortable with. The goal is to pick a tempo that is slow enough to play through the entire exercise without mistakes.

To get the most out of these exercises, follow these steps:

- 1. Sit with good posture**, as described on my Guide to Sitting With the Guitar.
- 2. Decide on a picking pattern.** You may want to choose alternate picking or all downstrokes. Whatever it is, BE CONSISTENT throughout the exercise.
- 3. Frets equal fingerings.** In these exercises, each fret on the TAB equals a finger on the fret hand, with fret 1 equalling your pointer finger, and fret 4 equalling your pinky. It's important that you follow this fingering precisely to get the best results.
- 4. Play with as little effort as possible.** For the fret hand, use only the amount of pressure needed to generate a good sound out of each note without buzzing. You don't need to press hard on the strings. For the pick hand, strike the string deliberately enough to generate a good sound, but relax the arm so you don't hit the strings too hard. These should be all be relaxed motions.
- 5. Continue up the neck and back down.** Once you've completed an exercise, shift your fret hand up one fret and repeat the same exercise. Continue this way to the twelfth fret then reverse the process. Do this for all the exercises.
- 6. Gradually increase the tempo.** When you've mastered each exercise, increase the tempo by ten points and repeat. Continue this way until you can perform all of the exercises at 120 BPM.

① ♩ = 60 The traditional "spider" exercise, works out all fingers.

The image shows the musical notation for the 'spider' exercise. It is written in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The melody consists of eighth notes. Below the staff is a guitar tablature with four lines. The first line is labeled 'T', the second 'A', the third 'B', and the fourth is unlabeled. The tablature shows fret numbers 1 through 4 for each string, corresponding to the notes in the melody.

First exercise: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody consists of three measures. The first measure contains a descending eighth-note scale from G4 to Bb3. The second measure contains an ascending eighth-note scale from Bb3 to G4. The third measure contains a descending eighth-note scale from G4 to Bb3. Below the staff, the fingering is indicated as 4 3 2 1 for the first measure, 4 3 2 1 for the second measure, and 4 3 2 1 for the third measure.

2 Exercise for fingers 1 and 2.

Exercise for fingers 1 and 2, first exercise: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody consists of three measures. The first measure contains a descending eighth-note scale from G4 to Bb3. The second measure contains an ascending eighth-note scale from Bb3 to G4. The third measure contains a descending eighth-note scale from G4 to Bb3. Below the staff, the fingering is indicated as 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 4 for the first measure, 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 4 for the second measure, and 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 4 for the third measure.

Exercise for fingers 1 and 2, second exercise: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody consists of three measures. The first measure contains a descending eighth-note scale from G4 to Bb3. The second measure contains an ascending eighth-note scale from Bb3 to G4. The third measure contains a descending eighth-note scale from G4 to Bb3. Below the staff, the fingering is indicated as 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 4 for the first measure, 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 4 for the second measure, and 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 4 for the third measure.

Exercise for fingers 1 and 2, third exercise: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody consists of three measures. The first measure contains a descending eighth-note scale from G4 to Bb3. The second measure contains an ascending eighth-note scale from Bb3 to G4. The third measure contains a descending eighth-note scale from G4 to Bb3. Below the staff, the fingering is indicated as 4 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 for the first measure, 4 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 for the second measure, and 4 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 for the third measure.

Exercise for fingers 1 and 2, fourth exercise: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody consists of three measures. The first measure contains a descending eighth-note scale from G4 to Bb3. The second measure contains an ascending eighth-note scale from Bb3 to G4. The third measure contains a descending eighth-note scale from G4 to Bb3. Below the staff, the fingering is indicated as 4 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 for the first measure, 4 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 for the second measure, and 4 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 for the third measure.

3 Exercise for fingers 2 and 3.

This exercise consists of four systems, each with a treble clef staff and a three-line fingerboard staff. The fingerboard staff contains numbered fingers (1-4) indicating the sequence of notes.

- System 1:** Treble staff has three measures of eighth-note patterns. The fingerboard staff shows the sequence: 1 2 3 2 3 2 3 4, 1 2 3 2 3 2 3 4, and 1 2 3 2 3 2 3 4.
- System 2:** Treble staff has three measures. The fingerboard staff shows: 1 2 3 2 3 2 3 4, 1 2 3 2 3 2 3 4, and 1 2 3 2 3 2 3 4.
- System 3:** Treble staff has three measures. The fingerboard staff shows: 4 3 2 3 2 3 2 1, 4 3 2 3 2 3 2 1, and 4 3 2 3 2 3 2 1.
- System 4:** Treble staff has three measures. The fingerboard staff shows: 4 3 2 3 2 3 2 1, 4 3 2 3 2 3 2 1, and 4 3 2 3 2 3 2 1.

4 Exercise for fingers 3 and 4.

This exercise consists of one system with a treble clef staff and a three-line fingerboard staff. The fingerboard staff contains numbered fingers (1-4) indicating the sequence of notes.

- System 1:** Treble staff has three measures of eighth-note patterns. The fingerboard staff shows: 1 2 3 4 3 4 3 4, 1 2 3 4 3 4 3 4, and 1 2 3 4 3 4 3 4.

1 2 3 4 3 4 3 4 1 2 3 4 3 4 3 4 1 2 3 4 3 4 3 4

4 3 4 3 4 3 2 1 4 3 4 3 4 3 2 1 4 3 4 3 4 3 2 1

4 3 4 3 4 3 2 1 4 3 4 3 4 3 2 1 4 3 4 3 4 3 2 1