

Pluck with "m"

Same as before:

1. Set the thumb on the 5th string. Leave it there. The pinky finger should hang loosely next to or slightly in front of the "a" finger.
2. Place "i" and "m" between the 1st and 2nd strings. (Practicing on the second string makes the 1st string a boundary line that the fingers should not cross).
3. Touch (don't pluck) the 1st string with the "a" finger and then keep the finger hovering in front of or just above the 1st string. Keep the "a" finger very close to the string.
4. **Pluck** the 2nd string with "m". Allow it to IMMEDIATELY **return** to its starting position in front of the string by releasing the tension created when the finger plucked the string. Think: let go, empty the finger of tension, relax the finger. Use whatever phrase connects with you so that *gravity* pulls the finger back to its starting position. Do NOT forcibly push the finger back.
 - Therefore, there is no follow-through. Well yes, you must follow-through to pluck the string, but THINK ZERO FOLLOW-THROUGH. Remember, *the release of tension in the finger should happen almost at the same time the string is plucked.*
 - The finger should not travel past the 3rd string.
 - Also, be certain the finger returns all the way in front of the string. Otherwise, a wasteful additional movement forward will be required to pluck the string again.
 - Remember to "play on top" of the string. Don't pull across or from underneath.
 - Make sure the "i" finger is still hanging in place in its position between the 1st and 2nd strings.
5. Continue plucking the 2nd string with "m" VERY SLOWLY. Set your metronome at 70 or 72 for a quarter note (crochet). Play whole notes (semibreves). In other words, *the metronome will tick four times for each note you pluck.*

Practicing at 70 or 72 may seem like it is way too slow, but do it. It is important to be aware of the near-total relaxed state of the fingers and hand. The goal is to imprint on your brain that this is now the normal state of your hand when playing the guitar.

- During the time between plucking the string, feel how loose the fingers feel just hanging there in position. Do not ignore this step of *feeling the near-total relaxation of the finger*. It is as important as the stroke itself.
- Be certain your head is in a position where you can clearly see the movements of the finger.
- Keep "i" and "m" positioned together, always between the 1st and 2nd strings.
- Keep the "a" finger close to the 1st string. If the "a" finger wanders off, occasionally touch (don't pluck) the 1st string with the "a" finger to reestablish its position.

Pluck with "a"

Same as the technique to play "i" or "m":

1. Set the thumb on the 5th string. Leave it there. The pinky finger should hang loosely next to or slightly in front of the "a" finger.

2. Place all three fingers ("ima") between the 1st and 2nd strings. (Practicing on the second string makes the 1st string a boundary line that the fingers should not cross).

3. **Pluck** the 2nd string with "a". Allow it to IMMEDIATELY **return** to its starting position in front of the string by releasing the tension created when the finger plucked the string. Think: let go, empty the finger of tension, relax the finger. Use whatever phrase connects with you so that *gravity* pulls the finger back to its starting position. Do NOT forcibly push the finger back.

- Therefore, there is no follow-through. Well yes, you must follow-through to pluck the string, but THINK ZERO FOLLOW-THROUGH. Remember, *the release of tension in the finger should happen almost at the same time the string is plucked.*
- The finger should not travel past the 3rd string.
- Also, be certain the finger returns all the way in front of the string. Otherwise, a wasteful additional movement forward will be required to pluck the string again.
- Remember to "play on top" of the string. Don't pull across or from underneath.
- Make sure the "i" finger is still hanging in place in its position between the 1st and 2nd strings.

4. Continue plucking the 2nd string with "a" VERY SLOWLY. Set your metronome at 70 or 72 for a quarter note (crochet). Play whole notes (semibreves). In other words, *the metronome will tick four times for each note you pluck.*

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- During the time between plucking the string, feel how loose the fingers feel just hanging there in position. Do not ignore this step of *feeling the near-total relaxation of the finger.* It is as important as the stroke itself.
- Be certain your head is in a position where you can clearly see the movements of the finger.
- Keep all three fingers ("ima") positioned together, always between the 1st and 2nd strings.

Be sure the "a" finger minds its manners! Sometimes it will fail to completely release its tension and therefore will not return to its starting position, or will follow-through too far, or even curl up.

STEP 2. LEARN TO ALTERNATE THE FINGERS.

Alternate "i" and "m"

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2. Place "i" and "m" between the 1st and 2nd strings. (Practicing on the second string makes the 1st string a boundary line that the fingers should not cross).

3. Touch (don't pluck) the 1st string with the "a" finger and then keep the finger hovering in front of or just above the 1st string. Keep the "a" finger very close to the string.

4. **Pluck** the 2nd string with "i". Allow it to IMMEDIATELY **return** to its starting position in front of the string by releasing the tension created when the finger plucked the string. Think: let go, empty the finger of tension, relax the finger. Use whatever phrase connects with you so that *gravity* pulls the finger back to its starting position. Do NOT forcibly push the finger back.

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- The finger should not travel past the 3rd string.
- Also, be certain the finger returns all the way in front of the string. Otherwise, a wasteful additional movement forward will be required to pluck the string again.
- Remember to "play on top" of the string. Don't pull across or from underneath.
- Make sure the "m" finger is still hanging in place in its position between the 1st and 2nd strings.

5. **Pluck** the 2nd string with "m". Allow it to IMMEDIATELY **return** to its starting position in front of the string by releasing the tension created when the finger plucked the string. Think: let go, empty the finger of tension, relax the finger. Use whatever phrase connects with you so that *gravity* pulls the finger back to its starting position. Do NOT forcibly push the finger back.

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- The finger should not travel past the 3rd string.
- Also, be certain the finger returns all the way in front of the string. Otherwise, a wasteful additional movement forward will be required to pluck the string again.
- Remember to "play on top" of the string. Don't pull across or from underneath.
- Make sure the "i" finger is still hanging in place in its position between the 1st and 2nd strings.

5. Continue plucking the 2nd string alternating "i" and "m" VERY SLOWLY. Set your metronome at 70 or 72 for a quarter note (crochet). Play whole notes (semibreves). In other words, *the metronome will tick four times for each note you pluck.*

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VIDEO # 3: ALTERNATE THE FINGERS.



Tech Tip Free Stroke Pluck Return Video 3 ALTERNATING FINGERS

CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com