

Classical Guitar Technique

HOW TO USE REST STROKE WITH THE FINGERS TO BRING OUT A MELODY WITHIN AN ARPEGGIO

Part 2 of 2

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There is an Elephant in the Room

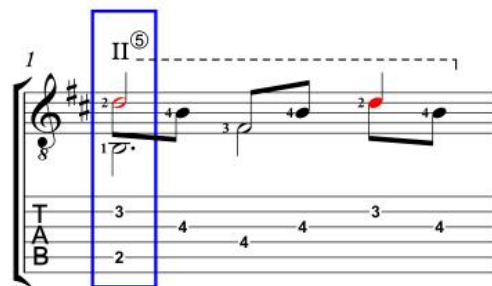
When you play the guitar, it seems as though there is ALWAYS an elephant in the room. You are working your way through a piece and all is well. But suddenly, the composer introduces something which is different from everything else in the piece. All the techniques that were easy to execute do not apply to this situation and you must learn a different technique to solve this new problem.

In this Sor study and many other pieces, that elephant is all the instances where the thumb must pluck its bass note with free stroke simultaneously with one of the fingers playing its note rest stroke.

It happens in the very first measure. Example No. 15:

Example #15.

Study No. 5 in Bm (Fernando Sor)
Measure #1:



It happens frequently from measure #25 through measure #32. Example No. 16:

Example #16.

Study No. 5 in Bm (Fernando Sor)
Measures 25-32:

25 II ⑤

29 or 1 or 1 II Full Bar

The elephant makes its final appearance in the final eight measures. Example No. 17:

Example #17.

Study No. 5 in Bm (Fernando Sor)

Measures 41-end:

The image shows a musical score for Example #17, measures 41-end of Study No. 5 in Bm by Fernando Sor. The score is in B minor (two sharps) and 3/4 time. It shows two systems of music. The first system (measures 41-44) has a treble clef staff with a melody and a guitar tablature staff below it. The second system (measures 45-48) also has a treble clef staff with a melody and a guitar tablature staff below it. Blue boxes highlight specific techniques: 'Finger Bar' in measure 41, 'IV' in measure 42, and 'Full Bar' in measure 45. Red dots indicate fingerings. The tablature uses numbers 0-7 for frets and letters T, A, B for strings.

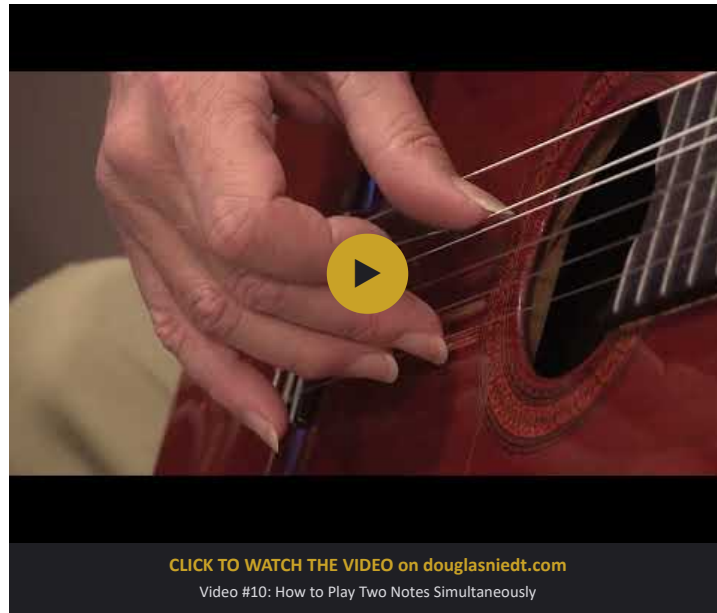
Playing the melody with rest stroke on the other measures will probably not be a problem. But using a finger to play a string rest stroke simultaneously with the thumb playing a string free stroke can be difficult.

How to Simultaneously Play Rest Stroke with a Finger and Free Stroke with the Thumb

Watch me demonstrate the technique in this next video. Then, you can proceed to read and review the steps below. Video No. 10:

Video #10: How to Play Two Notes Simultaneously

Play rest stroke with the finger and free stroke with the thumb.



1. Set (plant) the thumb ("p") on the 5th string.

Place and leave the thumb on the 5th string.

2. Play only the 1st string with "m" rest stroke. "p" is still planted on the 5th string.

Example #18.

1. First, place the thumb on the 5th string and leave it there.

2. Play the open E's rest stroke with "m".

- A. Be sure the string is seated against the left side of the fingernail.
- B. The string should be in contact with the fingernail and flesh simultaneously.
- C. Relax the tip joint.
- D. Pull "m" and the string into the guitar.

Play the open E's with "m" rest stroke.

Plant the thumb on the 5th string and leave it there.

Be sure "m" is pulling INTO the guitar to produce a full-bodied tone. Relax the tip joint enough to allow it to hyperextend slightly. In other words, allow it to bend backwards a little bit. Or you can think of letting the tip joint "give". Or, think of it as collapsing slightly. Use whatever thought works best for you. Do NOT keep it stiff or straight. You can still play rest stroke with a straight tip joint, but the sound will be more hard-edged and percussive. In most pieces, we want a full and warm tone on the melody.

Be certain to use standard rest-stroke technique. Place the finger on the string so that the string touches the left side only of the fingernail. Also, be sure the string is in contact with the flesh and fingernail simultaneously before plucking the string.

If you are getting caught in any way on the fingernail you are most likely not contacting the string correctly. If both sides of the fingernail contact the string, the fingernail will catch. If the flesh contacts the string before the fingernail (instead of simultaneously), the fingernail will click and catch. In some instances, the nail may be too long or shaped incorrectly.

3. Play only the 5th string free stroke with "p". Plant "m" on the 1st string.

Example #19.

Plant the "m" finger on the 1st string with the hand leaning back in rest stroke position.

- A. Be sure the string is seated against the left side of the fingernail.
- B. The string should be in contact with the fingernail and flesh simultaneously.
- C. Relax the tip joint.

Play the 5th string quietly with the thumb. Notice that your thumb is pulling upwards more than it usually does. That is correct and okay.

Be sure your hand is in the same position as in Step #2 when "m" was playing rest stroke. Make sure the "m" finger is locked on the 1st string with the flesh and the left side of the fingernail simultaneously.

Play the 5th string free stroke with the thumb. Play quietly. Notice that your thumb is pulling upwards a bit more than it usually does. That is correct and okay.

4. Alternate playing "m" rest stroke and "p" free stroke.

- A. Play the 1st string four times with "m" rest stroke. Play loud.
- B. Replant "m" on the 1st string.
- C. Play the 5th string quietly four times with "p" free stroke.
- D. Repeat over and over.

Example #20.

- Regardless whether "m" is plucking the 1st string or planted on the string:
 - Be sure the string is seated against the left side of the fingernail.
 - The string should be in contact with the fingernail and flesh simultaneously.
 - Keep the tip joint relaxed.
- Play the 5th string quietly with the thumb. Notice that your thumb is pulling upwards more than it usually does. That is correct and okay.

The notation for Example #20 consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It shows three measures of music. In the first measure, there are three red notes on the 1st string (E4) with the letter 'm' above them. In the second measure, there are three blue notes on the 5th string (A2) with the letter 'p' above them. In the third measure, there are three blue notes on the 1st string (E4) with the letter 'p' above them. The bass staff shows the corresponding fretting: three red '0' notes on the 1st string and three blue '0' notes on the 5th string. Above the treble staff, there are red annotations: 'Play the open E's with "m" rest stroke.' and 'Plant "m" on the 1st string.' Below the treble staff, there are blue annotations: 'Plant "p" on the 5th string.' and 'Play the open A's quietly with "p" free stroke.'

5. Plant "m" on the 1st string and plant "p" on the 5th string. Do NOT pluck any strings.

Pull the 1st string into the guitar with "m" (as if doing a rest stroke). At the same time, pull the 5th string slightly upward with "p" (as if doing a free stroke). Do not pluck either string. Then, release the tension keeping "m" and "p" on their strings. Pull firmly on both strings simultaneously and release the tension simultaneously.

Keep the fingers on the strings and repeat the apply tension/release tension movement over and over. Again, do not pluck the strings. Watch the video below to be sure you practice the exercise correctly.

As always, make sure the "m" finger is locked on the 1st string with the flesh and the left side of the fingernail simultaneously.

6. Plant "m" on the 1st string and plant "p" on the 5th string. Pluck the strings simultaneously.

Plant "p" and "m" then pluck. Plant "p" and "m" then pluck. Repeat about 10 times. Example No. 21:

Example #21.

- Check that the flesh/nail contact of "m" on the 1st string is correct *every time* BEFORE you pluck.
- Be sure the hand is leaning back in rest stroke position.

The notation for Example #21 consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It shows two measures of music. In the first measure, there are six notes on the 1st string (E4) alternating between 'Plant' (marked with an 'x') and 'Play' (marked with a red note and 'm'). In the second measure, there are six notes on the 1st string (E4) alternating between 'Plant' (marked with an 'x') and 'Play' (marked with a red note and 'm'). The bass staff shows the corresponding fretting: six red '0' notes on the 1st string and six blue '0' notes on the 5th string. Above the treble staff, there are red annotations: 'Play the open E's with "m" rest stroke.' and 'Plant "m" on the 1st string.' Below the treble staff, there are blue annotations: 'Plant "p" on the 5th string.' and 'Play the open A's quietly with "p" free stroke.'

If you have difficulty:

1. Check that the flesh/nail contact of "m" on the 1st string is correct every time BEFORE you pluck.
2. Be sure the hand is leaning back in rest stroke position.
3. Alternate between Step #5 and Step #6.
4. Also, you can go back and watch me demonstrate the steps again in Video #10.

This Sor study and others contain a multitude of string combinations where a finger plays the higher note rest stroke and the thumb plays the lower note free stroke.

In order that you can handle any circumstance you may encounter in the repertoire, I recommend mastering all possible string combinations with all finger combinations as well. Example No. 22:

Example #22.

Practice all the finger rest stroke/thumb free stroke combinations with all finger combinations.

Practice the rest strokes on the upper string with:

- | | |
|---------|-------------------------|
| All "i" | Alternate "im" and "mi" |
| All "m" | Alternate "ma" and "am" |
| All "a" | Alternate "ia" and "ai" |

Use Rest Stroke with the Fingers to Bring Out a Melody Within an Arpeggio on Other Pieces as Well

Here are a few more pieces that immediately spring to mind where one can use this technique. And as I point out in the video, you may decide you do not want to use rest stroke for the entire piece but only for certain phrases or passages.

Study No. 3 in A Major, Op. 60 No. 3 (Matteo Carcassi)

Example #22.

Study in A Major Opus 60, No. 3 (Matteo Carcassi)

Measures 1-8

Melody notes in red may be played rest stroke with "a".

1 *p i m a i m a i m p i m*

3 *V 2*

5 *III 3*

7 *II 5*

TAB

Study No. 2 (as numbered by Segovia) Op. 35 No. 13 (Fernando Sor)

Example #23.

Study No. 2 (as numbered by Segovia) Op. 35, No. 13 (Fernando Sor)

Measures 1-8

Melody notes in blue may be played rest stroke with "m" or "a".

The musical score is presented in two systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system contains measures 1 through 4, and the second system contains measures 5 through 8. The melody is written in the treble staff, and the bass line is in the bass staff. Blue stems and flags on the melody notes indicate that these notes can be played with a rest stroke using the 'm' or 'a' fingering. The bass line is composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. Measure numbers 1, 5, and 8 are indicated at the start of their respective measures.

Romance, Romanza, or Romance de Amor (Anonymous)

Measures 25-32