

Rasgueados, Part 1

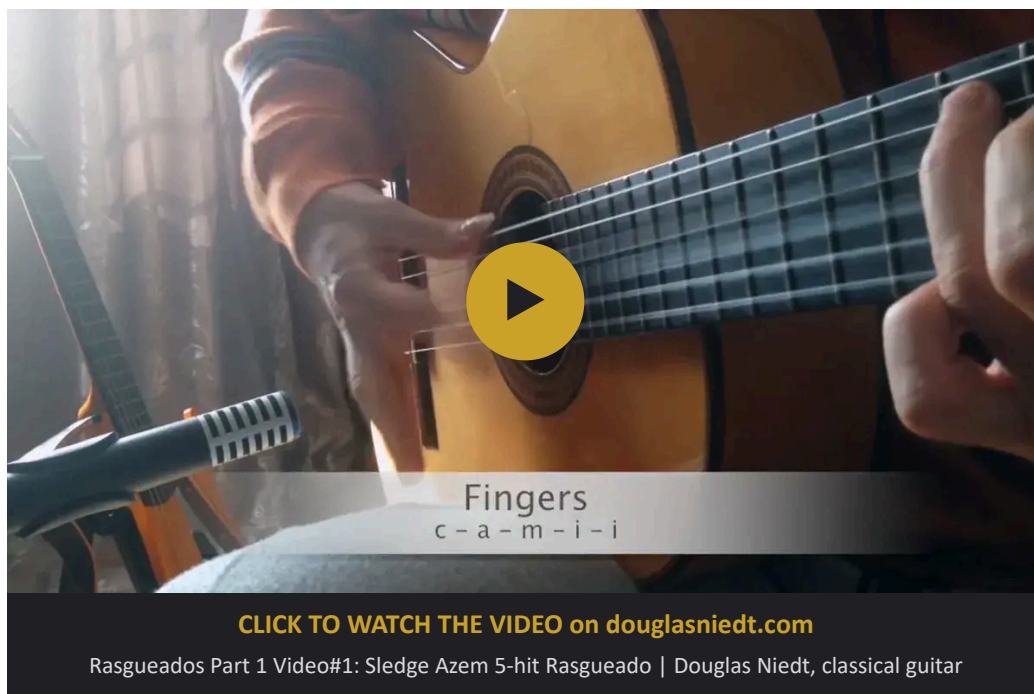
By Douglas Niedt

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Here is Ukrainian flamenco guitarist Sledge Azem demonstrating a common 5-hit (c-a-m-i-i) rasgueado pattern we are going to learn:

★ BE SURE TO WATCH ON FULL SCREEN. Click on the icon at the bottom on the right:

Video #1: Ukrainian flamenco guitarist Sledge Azem



It's a wonderful and impressive sound and I can't guarantee you will sound like Mr. Azem after reading this tech tip! But you will understand how it is done and the steps necessary to master it (or at least sound like you know what you're doing).

I love flamenco but I don't play flamenco. I'm a classical guitarist. In this technique tip I am only presenting the basics which will be sufficient for your needs in the classical repertoire. If you wish to delve deeply into the technique or into flamenco itself, I suggest you seek out a specialist on the topic.

Professional and amateur flamenco guitarists have their favorite rasgueado patterns. A guitarist may be a follower of a particular flamenco guitarist such as Paco de Lucía, Sabicas, Juan Serrano, Paco Peña, etc., and an advocate for their mentor's patterns and techniques. Likewise, different guitarists have different ways of teaching the rasgueado technique. Again, I'm a classical guitarist not a flamenco guitarist. But what follows is how I learned what little I know about the rasgueado technique.

Rasgueado comes from the Spanish verb rasgear which means to strum. Rasgueado means strummed. In Andalusian dialect or flamenco jargon rasgueado is also spelled/pronounced rasgueo, rageo, and rageao.

It is thought that rasgueado techniques were originally developed to produce as loud and strong a sound as possible to be heard above the vocals of the singer and the footwork of the dancer. Guitarists invented many patterns—some to produce maximum volume and others for quieter shadings that could still be heard above the other participants.

The Benefits of Rasgueado Practice

Rasgueados are a cornerstone of flamenco guitar playing but are not used much in classical guitar repertoire. Classical guitarists only need to be able to do a few basic moves. So why spend much time with them?

1. Many teachers such as Pepe Romero, believe they are very beneficial to building right-hand strength, right-hand finger speed and independence, and general right-hand relaxation.
2. We have flexor muscles and extensor muscles. The flexors are what we use most in daily life and for playing the guitar. They are the muscles that bend or curl our thumb and fingers and that we use to grip objects. The extensor muscles straighten our fingers. The practice of rasgueados builds the strength of the extensor muscles so that the extensors and flexors are more balanced for guitar playing.
3. It is believed that one reason flamencos are able to play amazingly fast scales and arpeggios is because of their intense practice of rasgueados. For the right hand, speed is not only a function of how quickly the fingers pluck the strings. It is also dependent on how fast the fingers recover to get back into position to pluck again. By developing the extensors, the fingers recover faster (return to plucking position) after plucking a string.
4. Some players report that practicing rasgueado exercises improves their tremolo. It also improves your typing speed!
5. When properly played, rasgueados are very loud. The practice of rasgueados is very effective at driving in-laws or other unwanted people out of the house. Caution: It could work the other way around. YOU may find yourself thrown out of the house with your guitar and footstool.
6. If you have neighbors close by, you can mute the strings with the left hand. You should also mute the strings if you want your husband, wife, boyfriend or girlfriend to still be at home when you are done practicing.

7. Some flamencos say that a fun part of learning rasgueados is that you can practice them anywhere and without a guitar. They practice the patterns on their knee. They practice them on the top of the dinner table or on their desk at the office. They practice them on the steering wheel while driving. Talk about distracted drivers!

Don't over practice

In our daily activities, the extensor muscles are not used nearly as much as the flexors. We use our flexors all day, so they are much stronger than the extensors. DON'T OVER PRACTICE RASGUEADOS. Rasgueado are a strain on the hand. The fact that you don't use the extensors as much in daily life adds to the risk of injury. Flamenco players have a higher incidence of hand injury than other guitarists. My guess is that it is probably due to excessive practice of rasgueados.

Also, if you haven't worked on rasgueados before, your extensors will quickly become fatigued. Your arm will feel very tight. We call it extensor overload. Once the extensors are overloaded, it becomes more difficult to play. Your muscles will feel sluggish and you will quickly lose speed. Don't practice a rasgueado exercise more than 5 minutes at a time. Take breaks! Remember, creativity requires a fresh mind (and muscles). Taking a break is NOT giving up.

Practicing rasgueado exercises may cause the skin around your finger nails and thumbnail to get sore. Although the nails take the brunt of the wear-and-tear, you may get abrasion on the skin too.

WARNINGS

Protect your guitar

Practicing rasgueados can be hazardous not only to your health, but to the health of your guitar. A guitarist learning rasgueados for the first time will not have very good control of the fingers. The fingers will be flying everywhere. MAKE SURE THE TOP OF YOUR GUITAR IS PROTECTED. I highly recommend Kling-On Clear Non-Permanent Removable Top Protectors [available here](#) and from other retailers.

This is basically a removable flamenco tap-plate with *no adhesives*. It is made from a thick 13-mil plastic material that will protect the top of your guitar from tapping and rasgueado marks. It adheres to your guitar by static only! Be sure to read the disclaimers and instructions on the website.

If you don't use this or something like it to protect your guitar top, you will most likely inflict gouges and fingernail marks in your finish.

Protect your fingernails

Flamenco players are not interested in producing a beautiful, round, lush, Segovia-like tone. They want a bright sound with volume and bite. For flamencos, nail care is mostly about coating the nails with hardeners or reinforcing them so they don't disintegrate under the punishment inflicted upon them by rasgueados and

other flamenco techniques. Flamenco guitarists are not too concerned with perfect nail shape and smoothness.

Be forewarned that practicing rasgueados can tear up your nails. When you practice rasgueado exercises, I recommend that you tilt the hand a little to the right so you are playing on the mostly unused right sides of your nails. That way you won't wear down or rough up the good left sides.

You will also find it advantageous to grow a longer fingernail on the pinky finger. A longer nail (up to about 5 mm) puts the weak pinky on a more equal footing with the other fingers.

Watch this next video.

★ BE SURE TO WATCH ON FULL SCREEN. Click on the icon at the bottom on the right:

Video #2: Practice on the right sides of the nails, long pinky fingernail

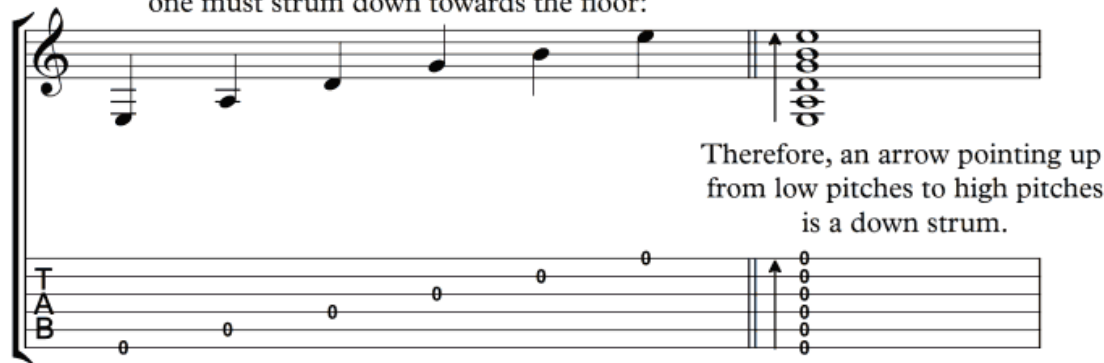


The Strums or Strokes

We have downstrums (or downstrokes) and upstrums (or upstrokes). A downstroke is shooting the finger forward or down towards the ground. An upstroke is pulling the finger backward or up towards the ceiling.

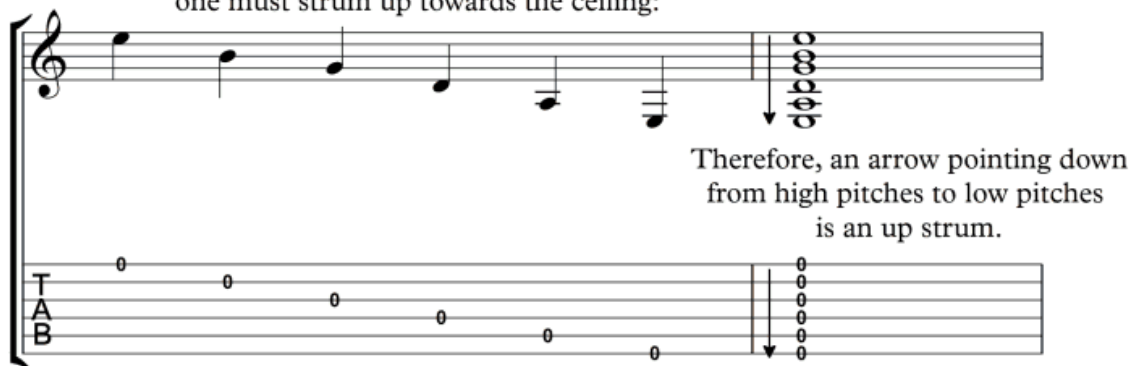
Duh. It isn't rocket science. HOWEVER, the notation for these two basic strokes can be confusing. Standard notation uses arrows to indicate down and up strokes. But the arrows relate to the musical staff, not the physical state of up and down as related to the floor and ceiling:

To play low pitches to high pitches
such as from the 6th string to the 1st string,
one must strum down towards the floor:



Therefore, an arrow pointing up
from low pitches to high pitches
is a down strum.

To play high pitches to low pitches
such as from the 1st string to the 6th string,
one must strum up towards the ceiling:



Therefore, an arrow pointing down
from high pitches to low pitches
is an up strum.

If you have difficulty with this, imagine setting your sheet music flat on a table. Think of the downstroke arrow ↑ as strumming away from you and the upstroke arrow ↓ as strumming toward you.

You will also see other symbols for down/up including up and down caret symbols, the notation used to indicate downbows and upbows, and even D for down and U for up.

Other symbols for downstrokes and upstrokes:

The image displays musical notation and guitar tablature for flamenco techniques. The top staff is in 4/4 time, showing a sequence of chords with downstrokes (v) and upstrokes (^). The bottom staff is a guitar tablature (TAB) with fret numbers (0-9) corresponding to the chords above. The notation is divided into three measures by double bar lines. The first measure contains four chords, the second contains four chords, and the third contains four chords. The tablature is aligned with the chords, showing the fret positions for each string.

Sitting and Hand Positions

Rasgueados can easily be played in traditional classical guitar sitting positions. An interesting thing to note is that most flamenco sitting positions place the bicep of the right arm low on the lower bout. I'm not sure if this is conducive to executing flamenco techniques or if it is just tradition. Here is a summary of several flamenco sitting positions if you want to try them out.

Let me show you.

★ BE SURE TO WATCH ON FULL SCREEN. Click on the icon at the bottom on the right:

Video #3: Flamenco Guitar Sitting Positions

The video thumbnail shows a person sitting on a black office chair, playing a red flamenco guitar. They are wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and khaki pants. A large yellow play button is centered over the image. The background is a simple room with a white wall and a black acoustic panel. The text 'The Paco de Lucía Sitting Position' is written in a gold, serif font at the bottom left. At the bottom, there is a black bar with the text 'CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com' in yellow and 'Sitting and Hand Positions' in white.

For the hand position, I strongly recommend a flat wrist. I do see advocates for a slightly arched wrist which makes the fingers play deeper into the top of the guitar, but the bend in the wrist puts additional stress on the tendons. For us classical guitarists who are not accustomed to working the extensor muscles and tendons so vigorously, I think keeping a flat wrist is a wise precaution even if some subtlety of flamenco tone is sacrificed.

I also recommend a straight wrist/hand position. Flamencos tend to use the bend-the-wrist-to-the-right position. But classical players these days favor the straight wrist for reasons of hand health and better tone quality. Flamenco actually demands a bright, percussive, rough tone quality which the bent hand position helps produce. But again, in the interest of injury prevention, I would recommend that classical players sacrifice some of that hard-edged tone quality and go with the straight-wrist hand position.

Remember, some studies have shown that flamenco players suffer more hand injuries than other types of guitarists.

Watch me demonstrate these safer wrist positions.

★ BE SURE TO WATCH ON FULL SCREEN. Click on the icon at the bottom on the right:

Video #4: Wrist position straight and flat



Symbols for the right-hand pinky or little finger

The pinky or little finger is often used in rasgueados. But you find that it is designated by several different symbols. Here are a few:

- c=chiquito
- ch=chiquito
- d=dedo meñique (little finger)
- e=extremo. Spanish for last, terminal, final, end. (Thanks to reader Egor for enlightening me on this one!)
- x=Possibly another letter name for the Spanish word, extremo.
- q=meñique
- s=small or señalar (point)

Flamenco guitarist Juan Martín typically uses the letter e to represent the pinky. Paco Peña uses the letter x, and Juan Serrano uses the letter s.

The letter "c" is seen most frequently so that is what I use.

How to Practice

1. Practice in short 5-10 minute sessions. **Hand injury may occur if you over practice these techniques!**
2. PRACTICE SLOWLY. The best flamencos say over and over, PRACTICE SLOWLY to learn the movements and details. Slow practice imprints the correct movements into the hands and brain.
3. Play solid, even rhythms.
4. DEVELOP EVENLY LOUD STROKES FROM EACH FINGER.
5. Always release the tension after every finger stroke.
6. The goal is to develop finger independence and to play loud and aggressively. Yes, “rasgueado” means strummed. But that is NOT what you want to do. We want to fire or shoot the fingers at the strings. A flamenco rasgueado is more of a percussive effect than a strum. Think of it as *hitting* the strings with the backs of the nails.

7. Use the speed-burst method of practice.

I will demonstrate all these points as we proceed.

Types of Rasgueados

Opinions vary greatly on which rasgueado patterns are most useful, in style, out of style, cutting edge, or old fashioned. It is amazing to me how many different patterns are used. One amusing but unproven theory for the many styles of rasgueado is that when competing guitarists performed at a venue, they didn't want the competition to steal their "licks", their rasgueado patterns. They would turn their backs so their colleagues couldn't see how they executed their amazing runs and rasgueados. But the competitor, remembering the sound in his head, would go somewhere quiet and try to figure out how the rasgueado was done. He would imitate the sound but produce it in his own way with a new finger pattern.

Other reasons for the numerous patterns are that different players have different natural abilities. A pattern that famous player #1 uses because he has amazing speed between i and a may not suit famous player #2 who has amazing speed between "i" and "m". Some famous players were missing a finger on the right hand or had a finger injury. They created different patterns out of necessity.

The Two Basic Styles of Rasgueados

1. Separated Rasgueado

In flamenco, the most prevalent type of rasgueado is the separated rasgueado. It is very percussive, rhythmically precise, and a challenge to master. As described in the exercises below, each stroke is separate from the preceding and following stroke. On downstrokes, each finger flicks or snaps out completely *before the next finger leaves the hand*. These are not strums. Each flick is a percussive strike that hits the strings of a chord simultaneously and instantaneously as if they were one string. It is a machine-gun-like attack.

2. Blended Rasgueado

The blended rasgueado is the style most often employed by classical guitarists. The blended rasgueado is a little lighter in sound. It doesn't have the machine-gun-like aggressive attack. The downstrokes are no longer separate and distinct hits. Instead, *each stroke begins before the preceding stroke is complete*, thereby producing a continuous or flowing blended sound.

For classical guitarists, the most common patterns are "cami" and "ami". Although it is a blended rasgueado, we still need to hear that it is made up of separate finger strokes. The key to producing a well-executed blended rasgueado is to first develop the independence of the fingers by practicing the flicked separated rasgueados described below.

Watch me demonstrate the two styles and listen to the difference.

Video #5: The separated versus the blended rasgueado



Two Methods of Playing Flicked or Snapped Downstrokes

1. Flick out the fingers from behind the thumb.
2. Flick out the fingers from the palm.

Each of these methods is used by excellent flamenco guitarists. Choose the one that suits you best. The flicks-from-the-palm method doesn't work well for me at all. I use the flicks-from-behind-the-thumb method.

With either method, each stroke is separate from the preceding and following stroke. In other words, make sure each finger snaps out completely *before the next finger leaves the hand*. These are not strums. Each flick is a percussive hit that hits the strings of a chord simultaneously and instantaneously as if they were one string. It is a machine gun rat-tat-tat attack.

METHOD #1: FINGER FLICKS FROM BEHIND THE THUMB

Practice **WITHOUT** the guitar first!

1. Doing a finger flick from behind the thumb is like shooting a spitball from a tabletop. To shoot a spitball, you set the index finger behind the thumb and build up the necessary tension before firing. Playing a flicked

rasgueado stroke is the same thing except we learn to use all the fingers, not just the index finger.

Turn the hand palm up. Straighten out the fingers and the thumb. Then curl the fingers, bend the thumb (including the tip joint), and place the thumb across the face of all four fingernails. The fingers are now behind the thumb.

2. Engage the finger muscles and push the fingernails against the thumb. The thumb creates resistance against the fingers. This is good tension.

Watch me demonstrate.

Video #6: How to form the hand position for finger flicks from behind the thumb, without the guitar



3. Keeping the palm of the hand turned up, we will practice finger flicks with each finger one at a time.

Begin with "c". Keep "ami" locked behind the thumb as you flick out only the "c" finger. The "c" finger will probably be very weak, but try to make each flick forceful. Do not unfurl or extend the finger completely. At high speed the fingers (especially "i") will not have time to extend completely. After each flick, relax the finger. Don't hold it stiffly straight out. Reset the "c" finger behind the thumb before each flick. Be sure the thumb tip joint remains bent. Repeat 5 times.

Watch me demonstrate the finger flick with "c".

Video #7: Finger flicks with the "c" finger, without the guitar



Next, practice finger flicks with the "a" finger. Lock "ami" behind the thumb but allow "c" to extend out loosely. Keeping "mi" locked behind the thumb, flick out the "a" finger. The "m" finger will want to come out with "a". Keep it behind the thumb. The "c" finger should stay relaxed and can mimic the movements of the "a" finger. Each flick should be forceful, but after each flick, relax the finger. Do not unfurl or extend the finger completely. At high speed the fingers (especially "i") will not have time to extend completely. Don't hold it stiffly straight out. Reset the "a" finger behind the thumb before each flick. Be sure the thumb tip joint remains bent. Repeat 5 times.

Watch me demonstrate the finger flick with "a".

Video #8: Finger flicks with the "a" finger, without the guitar



Next, practice finger flicks with the "m" finger. Lock "mi" behind the thumb but allow "c" and "a" to extend out loosely. Keeping "i" locked behind the thumb, flick out the "m" finger. The "c" and "a" fingers should stay relaxed and can mimic the movements of the "m" finger. Reset the "m" finger behind the thumb before each flick. Each flick should be forceful, but after each flick, relax the finger. Do not unfurl or extend the finger completely. At high speed the fingers (especially "i") will not have time to extend completely. Don't hold it stiffly straight out. Be sure the thumb tip joint remains bent. Repeat 5 times.

Watch me demonstrate the finger flick with "m".

Video #9: Finger flicks with the "m" finger, without the guitar



Finally, practice finger flicks with the "i" finger. Lock "i" behind the thumb but allow the "c", "a", and "m" fingers to extend out loosely. Flick out the "i" finger. The "c", "a", and "m" fingers should stay relaxed and can mimic the movements of the "i" finger. Each flick should be forceful, but after each flick, relax the finger. Do not unfurl or extend the finger completely. At high speed the fingers (especially "i") will not have time to extend completely. Don't hold it stiffly straight out. Reset the "i" finger behind the thumb before each flick. Be sure the thumb tip joint remains bent. Repeat 5 times.

Watch me demonstrate the finger flick with "i".

Video #10: Finger flicks with the "i" finger, without the guitar



4. Next, practice flicking each finger out in succession: "c-a-m-i". Lock "cami" behind the thumb. Flick out "c", then flick out "a", then flick out "m", and finally flick out "i". Play very slowly. Try to relax each finger after it flicks out. Only allow one finger to flick out from behind the thumb at a time. Your goal is to flick out each finger in an even rhythm with equal force.

Stop and reload the four fingers—lock them behind the thumb. Repeat the pattern 5-10 times.

Watch me demonstrate how to flick out all four fingers in succession.

Video #11: Flick out all four fingers in succession



METHOD #2: FINGER FLICKS or SNAPS FROM THE PALM

Practice AWAY from the guitar first!

1. Make a loose fist and wherever your fingers land in the palm is the spot from which you will flick or snap out the fingers.

2. With the nails tucked into the palm, engage the finger muscles and push the fingernails against the palm of the hand. This creates resistance against the fingers. This is good tension. Each finger should thump as it strikes outward.

Continue with step 3 above but **reload the fingers into the palm of the hand instead of behind the thumb.**

Watch me demonstrate finger flicks or snaps from the palm.

Video #12: Finger Flicks from the Palm Without the Guitar



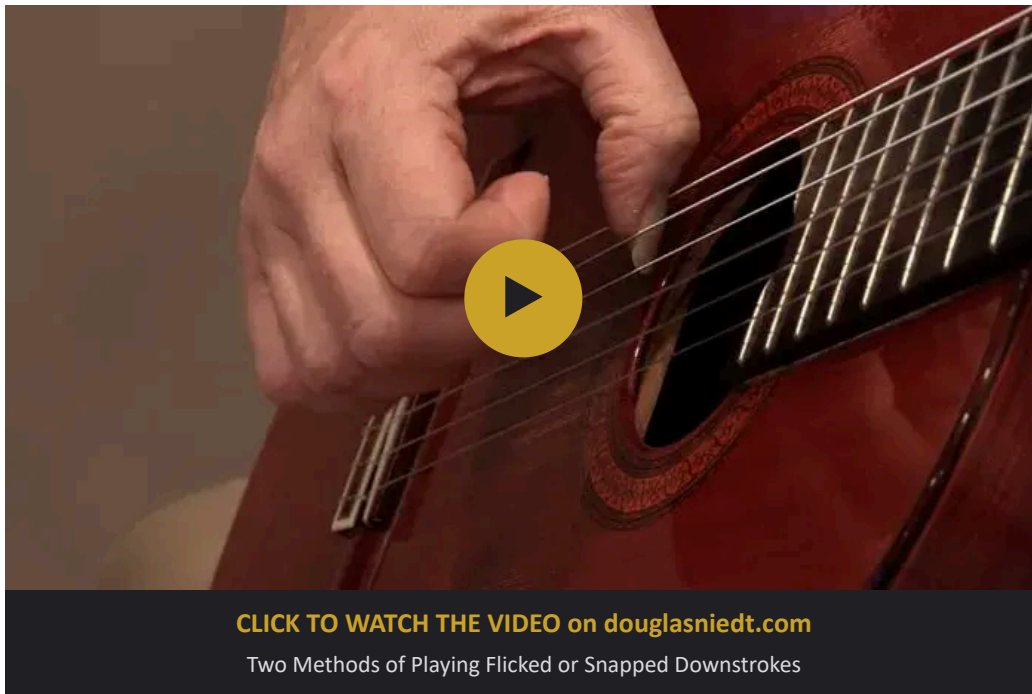
NOW, PRACTICE THE FINGER FLICKS FROM BEHIND THE THUMB (OR FROM THE PALM) WITH YOUR GUITAR!

The first step will be totally foreign to classical guitarists. Bend the tip joint of the thumb and set it *lightly* on the 5th string. You will set it so that the far right side of the nail is against the 5th string. It is okay for the back of the thumb to touch the 6th string. Again, the thumb should be kept extremely bent at the tip joint. This is the only way for all four fingers to lock themselves behind the thumb and is important for tone production. Anchoring the thumb on a bass string also helps steady the hand.

If you are going to execute the finger flicks from the palm, you will still plant the thumb on the 5th string. But bending the tip-joint of the thumb is optional. Some teachers are emphatic that the thumb tip joint must be kept bent. But many fine players such as Pepe Romero keep the thumb in its normal position for the palm flicks.

Watch me demonstrate how the thumb is planted on a bass string.

Video #13: Planting the thumb on a bass string



With the thumb resting *lightly* on the 5th string, and keeping the tip-joint of the thumb bent (optional for palm flicks), lock the fronts of all four fingernails against the back of the thumb (or tucked into the palm). If the thumb tip joint is not bent, you will not be able to lock all four fingers behind it.

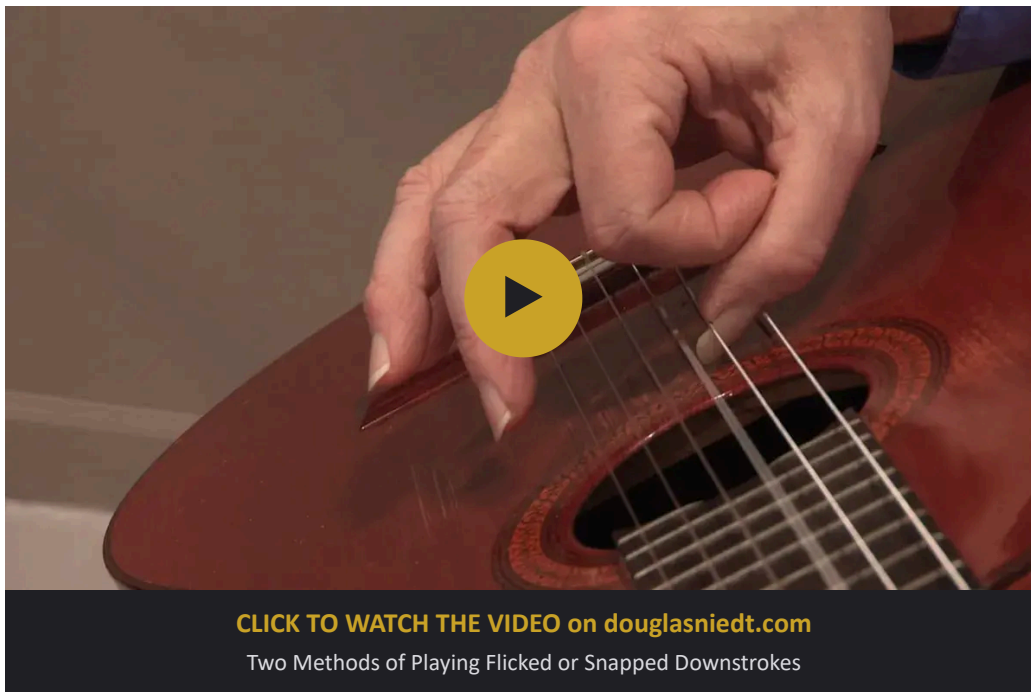
Watch me demonstrate how the fingers should be locked behind the thumb or into the palm.

Video #14: How to lock the fingers behind the thumb or into the palm



Now, watch as I demonstrate how to play flicked downstrokes from behind the thumb with each finger one at a time, and then flicked downstrokes with each finger in succession "c-a-m-i".

Video #15: Finger flicks from behind thumb with each finger, practicing with the guitar



Next I demonstrate how to play flicked downstrokes from the palm. Again, each finger one at a time, and then with each finger in succession "c-a-m-i".

Video #16: Finger flicks with each finger from the palm, practicing with the guitar



Here are the written out instructions for each individual step:

With the thumb anchored *lightly* on the 5th string, the four fingers locked against the back of the thumb (or tucked into the palm), and the wrist flat, execute downstrokes with each finger 5 times.

1. Begin with "c". Keep "ami" locked behind the thumb (or tucked into the palm) as you practice your downstrokes with "c". Don't be concerned about how many strings you actually hit. Allow each stroke to ring out for a few seconds. Each flick should be forceful, but after each flick, relax the finger. Do not unfurl or extend the finger completely. At high speed the fingers (especially "i") will not have time to extend completely. Don't hold it stiffly straight out. Reset it behind the thumb (or tuck it into the palm) before each flick. Be sure the thumb tip joint remains bent (optional for palm flicks). Keep the wrist flat. Repeat 5 times.
2. Next, practice downstrokes with "a". "mi" should be locked behind the thumb (or tucked into the palm). The "m" finger will want to come out with the "a" finger. Keep it locked behind the thumb (or tucked into the palm). The "c" finger will hang loosely and mimic the movements of "a". Don't be concerned with how many strings you hit. Each flick should be forceful. But after each flick, relax the finger. Do not unfurl or extend the finger completely. At high speed the fingers (especially "i") will not have time to extend completely. Don't hold it stiffly straight out. Reset it behind the thumb (or tuck it into the palm) before each flick. Make sure the thumb tip joint remains bent (optional for palm flicks) and is resting lightly on the 5th string. Keep the wrist flat. Repeat 5 times.

3. Next, practice downstrokes with "m". "i" should be locked behind the thumb (or tucked into the palm). The "c" and "a" fingers will hang loosely and mimic the movements of "m". Don't be concerned with how many strings you hit. Each flick should be forceful, but after each flick, relax the finger. Do not unfurl or extend the finger completely. At high speed the fingers (especially "i") will not have time to extend completely. Don't hold it stiffly straight out. Reset it behind the thumb (or tuck it into the palm) before each flick. Make sure the thumb tip joint remains bent (optional for palm flicks) and is resting lightly on the 5th string. Keep the wrist flat. Repeat 5 times.
4. Finally, practice downstrokes with "i". The "i" finger will be locked behind the thumb ready to fire. The "c", "a", and "m" fingers will all be hanging loosely. Don't be concerned with how many strings you hit. Each flick should be forceful, but after each flick relax the finger. Do not unfurl or extend the finger completely. At high speed the fingers (especially "i") will not have time to extend completely. Don't hold it stiffly straight out. Reset it behind the thumb (or tuck it into the palm) before each flick. Make sure the thumb tip joint remains bent (optional for palm flicks) and is resting lightly on the 5th string. Keep the wrist flat. Repeat 5 times.

Then, practice flicked downstrokes with each finger in succession: "c-a-m-i". Flick out each finger from its locked position behind the thumb (or in the palm). Each flick should be forceful, but after each flick relax the finger. Do not unfurl or extend the finger completely. At high speed the fingers (especially "i") will not have time to extend completely. After "i" flicks, stop and reload the fingers behind the thumb (or in the palm). Play very slowly. Try to relax each finger after it flicks out. Only allow one finger to flick out from behind the thumb (or from the palm) at a time. Your goal is to flick out each finger in an even rhythm with equal force. Make sure the thumb tip joint remains bent (optional for palm flicks) and is resting lightly on the 5th string. Keep the wrist flat. Repeat the process 5 times.

Learning to create individual resistances with each finger will help create a loose and articulate rasgueado.

Now that you understand how to execute flicked finger downstrokes, we can learn some rasgueado patterns. Rasgueados combine the flicked finger downstrokes (in varied finger orders) with finger and thumb upstrokes and thumb downstrokes.

A Common (but not easy) Separated Rasgueado Pattern

I recommend learning this pattern first to gain the finger independence and arm muscle strength to do other types of rasgueados. There are two variations of the pattern:

A. 5-stroke or 5-hit flicked rasgueado:

This is a traditional pattern. It uses the "c" finger and consists of a total of 5 hits (a quintuplet): "c – a – m – i" (all downstrokes) followed by an "i" upstroke:

5

T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
B	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

B. 4-stroke or 4-hit flicked rasgueado:

This is a more modern pattern. It does not use the "c" finger and consists of a total of 4 hits: "a – m – i" (all downstrokes) followed by an "i" upstroke:

T	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	1	1	1	1	1	1
B	2	2	2	2	2	2
	3	3	3	3	3	3

For newbies to the rasgueado technique, some teachers recommend learning Pattern B first. Not only does it omit the weak "c" finger, but it is thought that it is easier to learn to play groups of four notes evenly than groups of five notes.

Proponents of the traditional 5-note pattern say that yes, the "c" finger is weak, but why not try to develop it? I recommend at least trying the full pattern with "c". If you find it too difficult, then downsize to the four-note pattern.

Watch me demonstrate the difference in sound between the 5-hit and 4-hit rasgueado.

Video #17: The 5-hit versus the 4-hit rasgueado

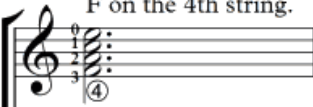


How to Execute the Pattern:

The Thumb

The thumb is usually planted lightly on the string below the lowest one you intend to play. (Remember, in music when we speak about above, below, up, or down we are always referencing pitch, not our physical space.) In other words, if you are holding an Fmaj7 chord and you want to play the 4th, 3rd, 2nd, and 1st strings, you will plant the thumb on the 5th string:

The lowest note is
F on the 4th string.



Therefore, plant the
thumb on the 5th string.

T	0
A	1
B	2
	3

If you are holding an A major chord and you want to play the 5th string as the lowest note, you will plant the thumb on the 6th string:

The lowest note is
A on the 5th string.



Therefore, plant the
thumb on the 6th string.

T	0
A	2
B	2
	0

I'll show you.

Video #18: Which string to plant the thumb on



CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com

A Common (but not easy) Separated Rasgueado Pattern

The Finger Movements:

The pattern is executed with the finger-flick technique you practiced above.

1. Anchor the thumb *lightly* on the 5th string. Be sure the tip-joint of the thumb is bent (optional for palm flicks).
2. Lock the four fingers (or if you are doing the 4-hit version lock only "a", "m", "i") behind the thumb (or tucked into the palm).
3. Keep the wrist flat.

Watch me demonstrate how to play both the 5-hit and 4-hit rasgueado patterns. THIS IS ONE OF THE MORE IMPORTANT VIDEOS TO WATCH IN THIS TECHNIQUE TIP.

Video #19: How to play the 5-hit and 4-hit rasgueado patterns



Here are the written out instructions for each individual step:

1. Flick out the "c" finger (skip this step if you are doing the 4-hit version). Don't be concerned about how many strings you actually hit. Keep "ami" locked behind the thumb (or tucked into the palm). The flick should be forceful, but after the flick, relax the finger. Do not unfurl or extend the finger completely. At high speed the fingers (especially "i") will not have time to extend completely. Don't hold it stiffly straight out. Be sure the thumb tip joint remains bent (optional for palm flicks).

2. Flick out the "a" finger. Don't be concerned about how many strings you actually hit. The "c" finger will hang loosely and mimic the movement of "a". Keep "mi" locked behind the thumb (or tucked into the palm). The "m" finger will want to follow the "a" finger. Don't allow that. Keep "m" locked behind the thumb (or tucked into the palm). The flick should be forceful, but after the flick, relax the finger. Do not unfurl or extend the finger completely. At high speed the fingers (especially "i") will not have time to extend completely. Don't hold the "c" or "a" fingers stiffly straight out. Be sure the thumb tip joint remains bent (optional for palm flicks).
3. Flick out the "m" finger. Don't be concerned about how many strings you actually hit. The "c" and "a" fingers will hang loosely and mimic the movement of "m". Keep "i" locked behind the thumb (or tucked into the palm). The flick should be forceful, but after the flick, relax the finger. Do not unfurl or extend the finger completely. At high speed the fingers (especially "i") will not have time to extend completely. Don't hold the "c", "a", or "m" fingers stiffly straight out. Be sure the thumb tip joint remains bent (optional for palm flicks).
4. Flick out the "i" finger. Don't be concerned about how many strings you actually hit. The flick should be forceful but instead of relaxing after its hit, the "i" finger should be held out to prepare for its coming upstroke. *The "c", "a", and "m" fingers should begin a pronounced re-curling movement into the hand.* Be sure the thumb tip joint remains bent (optional for palm flicks).
5. To execute its upstroke, flex the "i" finger to play a quick, aggressive upstroke across only 2-4 strings. Keep the hand steady. Do not move the arm or wrist to execute the upstroke. As "i" completes its upstroke, all four fingers (if you are doing the 4-hit version only "a", "m", "i") should lock themselves behind the thumb (or tuck into the palm) to be ready to begin another repetition of the pattern.
6. Stop completely and check to see that all four (three fingers if you are doing the 4-hit version) fingers have reloaded—that they are locked behind the thumb (or tucked into the palm).
7. Repeat the pattern 5-10 times. Stop completely at the end of each repetition to check that the fingers have reloaded correctly.

To learn the patterns fast, try playing just the downstrokes very fast. On the last downstroke of the "i" finger, be sure to recur the other fingers into the hand. Once that movement has been trained at high speed, then add the final upstroke with the "i" finger. As "i" makes its upstroke, reload the fingers behind the thumb (or into the palm). Alternate playing slowly (thinking about each movement) with playing as fast as you can (without thinking about the individual movements at all). Just be sure you have reloaded the fingers on the final upstroke of the "i" finger. It will take several weeks or even months to master the pattern.

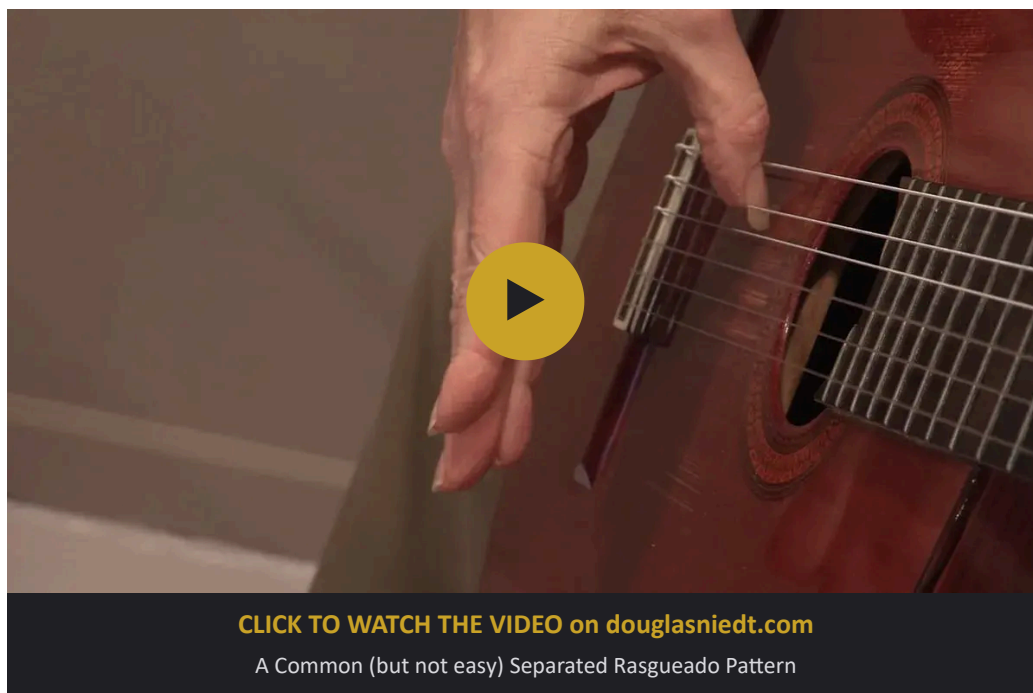
Some teachers say that each stroke should be played with a complete extension of the finger so that after the last downstroke of the "i" finger, all four fingers (three fingers if you are doing the 4-hit version) should be extended straight out. Then, on the "i" upstroke, all the fingers should suddenly recur from that straight-out position to their position locked behind the thumb (or tucked into the palm). Perhaps this has some

value as a training exercise, but in real life such a procedure adds tension to both the hand and fingers and will actually prevent the development of any significant speed.

Be certain that when the fingers reload, especially the little finger, that they are locked behind the thumb (or tucked into the palm) *on the fingernails*.

Watch me demonstrate the wrong and the right way to reload the fingers behind the thumb or into the palm.

Video #20: The wrong and the right way to reload the fingers behind the thumb or into the palm



Next month, I will show you more rasgueado patterns and most importantly, demonstrate how to connect them together to form a continuous roll or rasgueado redondo.

In the meantime, so that you don't get bored practicing on open strings or muted strings, here are a couple basic chord progressions on which you can practice your 5-hit or 4-hit rasgueados.

Chord Progression #1:

4 stays on 2nd string D.

3 stays on 3rd string Bb.

T	1	0	0	0
A	3	3	3	2
B	0	2	0	3

Chord Progression #2:

T	0	0	1	0	0
A	1	1	3	0	0
B	2	0	2	2	1

Watch me explain and play the chord progressions.

Video #21: Basic chord progressions on which you can practice your 5-hit or 4-hit rasgueados



Part 2 coming next month!