

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.



Rasgueados Part 1: Finger flicks with each finger from palm on guitar

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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 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 – i (all downstrokes) followed by an i upstroke:

The musical notation for the 5-stroke or 5-hit flicked rasgueado pattern is shown in 3/4 time. The notes are on a single staff, and the fingers are indicated by letters above the notes: c, a, m, i, i. The notes are grouped by a bracket with a '5' underneath, indicating a quintuplet. The notes are followed by an upstroke (i). The fingering for the thumb, index, middle, and ring fingers is shown below the staff:

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 – i (all downstrokes) followed by an i upstroke.

The musical notation for the 4-stroke or 4-hit flicked rasgueado pattern is shown in 3/4 time. The notes are on a single staff, and the fingers are indicated by letters above the notes: a, m, i, i. The notes are grouped by a bracket with a '4' underneath, indicating a quintuplet. The notes are followed by an upstroke (i). The fingering for the thumb, index, middle, and ring fingers is shown below the staff:

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 4 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.



5 hit vs 4 hit rasgueado

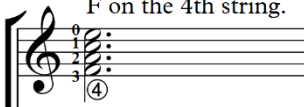
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How to Execute the Pattern:

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 Fmaj 7 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.

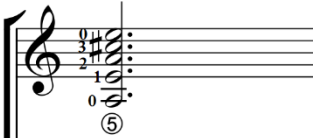


Therefore, plant the
thumb on the 5th string.

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
	2
	0

Watch:



Rasgueados Part 1: Planting the thumb

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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.



5 and 4 hit rasgueado

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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 stiffly 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:



Rasgueados Part 1: Do not reload fingers all at once

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Next month, I will show you more rasgueado patterns and most importantly, demonstrate how to connect them together to form continuous rolls or rasgueados redondos.

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	2
		3	1	0

Chord Progression #2:

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

Watch me demonstrate the two chord progressions:



Rasgueados Part 1: Chord progressions to practice on

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