

STRING DAMPING, Part 3

By Douglas Niedt

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- **MORE ON CLEANING UP THE BASS. (Going from a higher string to a lower string).**
- **PLUS, USING LEFT-HAND DAMPING TO CLEAN UP MELODIES (Going from a higher string to a lower string)**

We have learned how to damp bass strings going from a lower to a higher string. Once we learn how to damp going from a higher to lower bass string, we will be able to play any piece with an absolutely clean, linear bass line.

In *Twinkle* here are the spots where we must damp going from a higher to lower string.

Example #24:

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star: Damping basses going from higher to lower string

1 *m i m i* 2 *m i m* 3 *i m i m* 4 *i m i*

4th string must be damped 5th string must be damped 5th string must be damped

5 *i m i m* 6 *i m i* 7 *i m i m* 8 *i m i*

5th string must be damped 5th string must be damped 5th string must be damped 5th string must be damped

9 *m i m i* 10 *m i m* 11 *i m i m* 12 *i m i*

4th string must be damped 5th string must be damped 5th string must be damped

There are three methods by which we can execute string damps going from a higher to a lower bass string.

Method #1: Damping higher string X *after* plucking lower string Y

I have already explained this method in detail when going from a lower string to higher string. The technique is the same here with the same advantages and disadvantages of execution.

Example #25:

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Damping basses going from higher to lower string.
Damping higher string X *after* plucking lower string Y.

The musical score is written for guitar in 4/4 time, key of D major (two sharps). It consists of 12 measures, grouped into three systems of four measures each. The notation includes a treble clef staff and a bass staff with strings T, A, and B. Fingerings are indicated by 'i' (index) and 'm' (middle). Damping is indicated by red and blue arrows pointing to specific strings in the bass staff, with accompanying text labels.

Measure 1: Treble: quarter note D4 (i), quarter note E4 (m), quarter note F#4 (i), quarter note G4 (m). Bass: open string (0), quarter note D3 (0), quarter note E3 (0), quarter note F#3 (0). *4th string is damped here* (red arrow pointing to 4th string).

Measure 2: Treble: quarter note A4 (i), quarter note B4 (m), quarter note C#5 (i), quarter note D5 (m). Bass: quarter note G3 (0), quarter note F#3 (0), quarter note E3 (0), quarter note D3 (0). *5th string is damped here* (blue arrow pointing to 5th string).

Measure 3: Treble: quarter note E5 (i), quarter note D5 (m), quarter note C#5 (i), quarter note B4 (m). Bass: quarter note C3 (0), quarter note B2 (0), quarter note A2 (0), quarter note G2 (0). *5th string is damped here* (red arrow pointing to 5th string).

Measure 4: Treble: quarter note A4 (i), quarter note G4 (m), quarter note F#4 (i), quarter note E4 (m). Bass: quarter note F#3 (0), quarter note E3 (0), quarter note D3 (0), quarter note C3 (0). *5th string is damped here* (red arrow pointing to 5th string).

Measure 5: Treble: quarter note D4 (i), quarter note E4 (m), quarter note F#4 (i), quarter note G4 (m). Bass: quarter note D3 (0), quarter note C3 (0), quarter note B2 (0), quarter note A2 (0). *5th string is damped here* (blue arrow pointing to 5th string).

Measure 6: Treble: quarter note A4 (i), quarter note B4 (m), quarter note C#5 (i), quarter note D5 (m). Bass: quarter note G3 (0), quarter note F#3 (0), quarter note E3 (0), quarter note D3 (0). *5th string is damped here* (red arrow pointing to 5th string).

Measure 7: Treble: quarter note E5 (i), quarter note D5 (m), quarter note C#5 (i), quarter note B4 (m). Bass: quarter note C3 (0), quarter note B2 (0), quarter note A2 (0), quarter note G2 (0). *5th string is damped here* (blue arrow pointing to 5th string).

Measure 8: Treble: quarter note A4 (i), quarter note G4 (m), quarter note F#4 (i), quarter note E4 (m). Bass: quarter note F#3 (0), quarter note E3 (0), quarter note D3 (0), quarter note C3 (0). *5th string is damped here* (red arrow pointing to 5th string).

Measure 9: Treble: quarter note D4 (i), quarter note E4 (m), quarter note F#4 (i), quarter note G4 (m). Bass: quarter note D3 (0), quarter note C3 (0), quarter note B2 (0), quarter note A2 (0). *4th string is damped here* (blue arrow pointing to 4th string).

Measure 10: Treble: quarter note A4 (i), quarter note B4 (m), quarter note C#5 (i), quarter note D5 (m). Bass: quarter note G3 (0), quarter note F#3 (0), quarter note E3 (0), quarter note D3 (0). *5th string is damped here* (red arrow pointing to 5th string).

Measure 11: Treble: quarter note E5 (i), quarter note D5 (m), quarter note C#5 (i), quarter note B4 (m). Bass: quarter note C3 (0), quarter note B2 (0), quarter note A2 (0), quarter note G2 (0). *5th string is damped here* (blue arrow pointing to 5th string).

Measure 12: Treble: quarter note A4 (i), quarter note G4 (m), quarter note F#4 (i), quarter note E4 (m). Bass: quarter note F#3 (0), quarter note E3 (0), quarter note D3 (0), quarter note C3 (0). *5th string is damped here* (blue arrow pointing to 5th string).

Method #2: Use thumb rest stroke to damp higher string X as you play lower string Y

Thumb rest stroke is very easy for some players to use. It can be very awkward for others. This is usually due to differences of thumb length, thumbnail length, and hand position. If it comes

naturally to you, it is a great way to do string damping when going from a high string X to a lower string Y. By the way, this method only works with adjacent strings. It would not work for example, going from the 4th string to the 6th string.

If you are new to this, I recommend practicing the technique on open strings as shown in the following exercises. I have also notated what this technique actually sounds like. Note that with this technique there is no overlap of the two notes.

Example #26:

Practice damping the higher string by playing the lower string with thumb rest stroke

Play first note with thumb free stroke.
Play second note with thumb rest stroke.

Pluck this 6th-string E with thumb rest stroke to damp 5th-string open A

Sounds like:

5th string is damped here

The two notes do not ring together but are seamlessly connected

Play first note with thumb free stroke.
Play second note with thumb rest stroke.

Pluck this 5th-string A with thumb rest stroke to damp 4th-string open D

Sounds like:

4th string is damped here

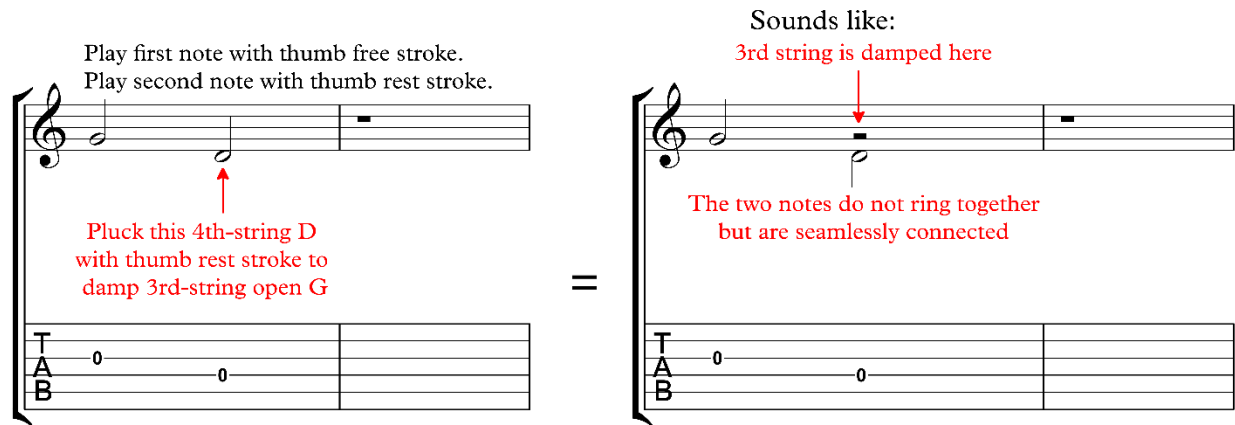
The two notes do not ring together but are seamlessly connected

Play first note with thumb free stroke.
Play second note with thumb rest stroke.

Pluck this 4th-string D
with thumb rest stroke to
damp 3rd-string open G

Sounds like:
3rd string is damped here

The two notes do not ring together
but are seamlessly connected



Watch me demonstrate in this brief video (Video #1):



Video #1 Ex 26 Basic Cut with Thumb Rest Stroke

To master this technique and to use it in real-life situations, it is important to practice playing other strings with the bass notes. Once again, practicing all these patterns may seem tedious, but these can be particularly difficult or awkward for some players to master.

Example #27:

Damp the higher bass string by playing the lower bass string with thumb rest stroke
(Practice as presented--these are not in a random order).

Play first chord of each pair all free stroke.
Play the bass note of the second chord with thumb rest stroke.

a
m
i *a*
m
i

Pluck this 5th-string open A with thumb rest stroke to damp 4th-string open D

T	0	0
A	0	0
B	0	0

a
m
i
and
m
i

Pluck this 5th-string open A with thumb rest stroke to damp 4th-string open D

T	0	0
A	0	0
B	0	0

a
m
i
and
m
i

Pluck this 4th-string open D with thumb rest stroke to damp 3rd-string open G

T	0	0
A	0	0
B	0	0

a
m
i
and
m
i

Pluck this 6th-string E with thumb rest stroke to damp 5th-string open A

T	0	0
A	0	0
B	0	0

Practice the rest of the combinations in the same way.

To damp the bass note of the first chord, play the bass note of the second chord with thumb rest stroke.

Repeat each measure until secure, consistent, and confident.

a
m
i

a
m
and
m
i

a
m
and
m
i

a
m
and
m
i

m *m*

m *m*

m *m*

a *a*

a *a*

a *a*

i *i*

i *i*

i *i*

Watch me demonstrate how to do thumb rest-stroke string damping (Video #2):



Video #2 Ex27 Damping with Thumb Rest Stroke playing other strings too

Once again, here is *Twinkle* in its entirety with the string damps from higher string X to lower string Y. To damp higher string X, play lower string Y with the thumb rest stroke.

Example #28:

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Damping basses going from higher to lower string.

Damp higher string X *simultaneously* as you pluck lower string Y with thumb rest stroke.

The musical score is divided into three systems, each containing four measures. The treble staff uses a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. Fingerings (m, i, m, i) are indicated above the notes. The bass staff shows fret numbers for strings T, A, and B. Red and blue arrows point to specific notes with text explaining thumb rest strokes and damping.

Measure 1: Treble: 2nd fret D4 (m), 2nd fret E4 (i), 0 (m), 0 (i). Bass: 0 (T), 2 (A), 0 (B). Annotations: Red arrow to 2nd fret D4: "A is played thumb rest stroke. D is damped here." Blue arrow to 2nd fret E4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here."

Measure 2: Treble: 0 (m), 2nd fret D4 (i), 2nd fret E4 (m), 0 (i). Bass: 0 (T), 2 (A), 0 (B). Annotations: Red arrow to 2nd fret D4: "A is played thumb rest stroke. D is damped here." Blue arrow to 2nd fret E4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here."

Measure 3: Treble: 3rd fret F#4 (i), 2nd fret E4 (m), 2nd fret D4 (i), 0 (m). Bass: 0 (T), 3 (A), 2 (B). Annotations: Red arrow to 2nd fret E4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here." Blue arrow to 3rd fret F#4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here."

Measure 4: Treble: 0 (m), 2nd fret D4 (i), 2nd fret E4 (m), 2nd fret F#4 (i). Bass: 0 (T), 0 (A), 0 (B). Annotations: Red arrow to 2nd fret D4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here." Blue arrow to 2nd fret E4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here."

Measure 5: Treble: 0 (m), 3rd fret F#4 (i), 2nd fret E4 (m), 2nd fret D4 (i). Bass: 0 (T), 3 (A), 0 (B). Annotations: Red arrow to 3rd fret F#4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here." Blue arrow to 2nd fret E4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here."

Measure 6: Treble: 2nd fret D4 (i), 2nd fret E4 (m), 0 (i), 0 (m). Bass: 0 (T), 2 (A), 0 (B). Annotations: Red arrow to 2nd fret D4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here." Blue arrow to 2nd fret E4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here."

Measure 7: Treble: 0 (m), 2nd fret D4 (i), 3rd fret F#4 (m), 2nd fret E4 (i). Bass: 0 (T), 0 (A), 3 (B). Annotations: Red arrow to 2nd fret D4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here." Blue arrow to 3rd fret F#4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here."

Measure 8: Treble: 2nd fret D4 (i), 2nd fret E4 (m), 0 (i), 0 (m). Bass: 0 (T), 2 (A), 0 (B). Annotations: Red arrow to 2nd fret D4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here." Blue arrow to 2nd fret E4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here."

Measure 9: Treble: 2nd fret D4 (m), 2nd fret E4 (i), 0 (m), 0 (i). Bass: 0 (T), 2 (A), 0 (B). Annotations: Red arrow to 2nd fret D4: "A is played thumb rest stroke. D is damped here." Blue arrow to 2nd fret E4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here."

Measure 10: Treble: 0 (m), 2nd fret D4 (i), 2nd fret E4 (m), 0 (i). Bass: 0 (T), 0 (A), 0 (B). Annotations: Red arrow to 2nd fret D4: "A is played thumb rest stroke. D is damped here." Blue arrow to 2nd fret E4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here."

Measure 11: Treble: 3rd fret F#4 (i), 2nd fret E4 (m), 2nd fret D4 (i), 0 (m). Bass: 0 (T), 3 (A), 2 (B). Annotations: Red arrow to 2nd fret E4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here." Blue arrow to 3rd fret F#4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here."

Measure 12: Treble: 0 (m), 2nd fret D4 (i), 2nd fret E4 (m), 2nd fret F#4 (i). Bass: 0 (T), 0 (A), 0 (B). Annotations: Red arrow to 2nd fret D4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here." Blue arrow to 2nd fret E4: "E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here."

Watch me demonstrate the thumb rest-stroke damping technique on Twinkle (Video #3):



Video #3 TAKE 2 Ex 28 Twinkle Complete Thumb rest stroke damping

Thumb rest stroke can be used relatively easily on *Gymnopedie No. 1* by Erik Satie as arranged by Christopher Parkening.

Example #29:

Example #29

Gymnopedie No 1 (Erik Satie) arr. Christopher Parkening

IV

Measures 1-6:

- Measure 1: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G#4 (quarter), A#4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Bass: 0 (whole).
- Measure 2: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G#4 (quarter), A#4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Bass: 0 (whole).
- Measure 3: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G#4 (quarter), A#4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Bass: 0 (whole).
- Measure 4: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G#4 (quarter), A#4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Bass: 0 (whole).
- Measure 5: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G#4 (quarter), A#4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Bass: 0 (whole).
- Measure 6: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G#4 (quarter), A#4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Bass: 0 (whole).

Measures 7-12:

- Measure 7: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G#4 (quarter), A#4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Bass: 0 (whole).
- Measure 8: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G#4 (quarter), A#4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Bass: 0 (whole).
- Measure 9: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G#4 (quarter), A#4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Bass: 0 (whole).
- Measure 10: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G#4 (quarter), A#4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Bass: 0 (whole).
- Measure 11: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G#4 (quarter), A#4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Bass: 0 (whole).
- Measure 12: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Notes: G#4 (quarter), A#4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Bass: 0 (whole).

Annotations for E string (E4):

- Measure 2: E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here.
- Measure 4: E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here.
- Measure 6: E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here.
- Measure 8: E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here.
- Measure 10: E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here.
- Measure 12: E is played thumb rest stroke. A is damped here.

Watch me demonstrate thumb rest-stroke string damping in Satie's *Gymnopedie* (Video #4):



Video #4 Satie Gymnopedie Thumb Rest Stroke Damping

SPEED DOESN'T MATTER

The thumb rest stroke damping technique may be used very easily in fast passages. Unlike the technique of damping *after* a note is plucked, no decisions have to be made about when to execute the damp. Higher string X is always damped at the same moment lower string Y is plucked. We don't have to delay damping an offensive-sounding bass string because of technical speed issues. It can be damped cleanly as the next note is played with no over-ring.

Example #30:

Grande Overture (Mauro Giuliani)

197

198

E is played
thumb rest stroke.
A is damped here.

E is played
thumb rest stroke.
A is damped here.

Watch me demonstrate the ease of damping with the thumb rest-stroke technique in a fast passage from Mauro Giuliani's *Grande Overture* (Video #5):



Video #5 Giuliani Grand Overture Thumb Rest Stroke Damping

Thumb rest stroke damping has its advantages and disadvantages:

PROS:

1. The higher string X is damped *simultaneously* as the lower string Y is played rest stroke with the thumb. Produces a very clean bass line. There is no over-ring of the offensive note and the notes will be perfectly connected.
2. Easy to use in fast passages, arpeggio passages, and passages containing slurs.
3. No decision has to be made about when to damp the offensive note. Higher string X is always damped precisely as the lower string Y is played, resulting in a perfectly legato and clean bass line.
4. In bass lines with consecutive changes from high string to low string to high string, thumb rest stroke can work very well in combination with back-of-the-thumb string damping.
5. For those for whom thumb rest stroke comes naturally, the moments when the thumb is resting on a string will lend stability to the right hand.

CONS:

1. Playing thumb rest stroke is awkward for many players. It may require a change of hand position (usually arching the wrist) resulting in inaccurate playing. If the thumb is extended further to the left to avoid arching the wrist, the tone quality of the thumb may be adversely affected.
2. It will be difficult for many players to pluck two or more strings simultaneously if they play the bass string rest stroke with the thumb.
3. It will be difficult for some players to get consistent simultaneous flesh/nail contact with thumb rest stroke, especially when playing another string with a finger at the same time.
4. For some players the change in hand position can adversely affect the tone quality of notes played by the fingers.
5. Rest stroke is inherently louder and fuller than free stroke. When playing lower string Y with rest stroke, care must be taken that its volume and tone match the notes preceding and following it.

Method #3: Use the *left-hand fingers* to damp higher string X *at the same time* you pluck lower string Y

Some players prefer left-hand finger string damping as an alternative to right-hand methods. We have two “flavors” of left-hand string damping.

Flavor #1 of Left-Hand Finger Damping: Fingertip Damping. Touch the offensive string with the tip of an available left-hand finger

Any available left-hand finger may be used to damp a higher string X at the same time a lower string Y is plucked. Touch the string lightly with a left-hand finger.

If you are new to this, I recommend practicing the technique on open strings as shown in the following exercises. Be sure to practice damping with each of the left-hand fingers: 1, 2, 3, and 4. I have also notated what this technique actually sounds like. Note that with this technique

there is no overlap of the two notes. It also doesn't matter how strings X and Y are plucked. They may be plucked rest stroke or free stroke, with the thumb, fingers, or combination of the two.

Example #31:

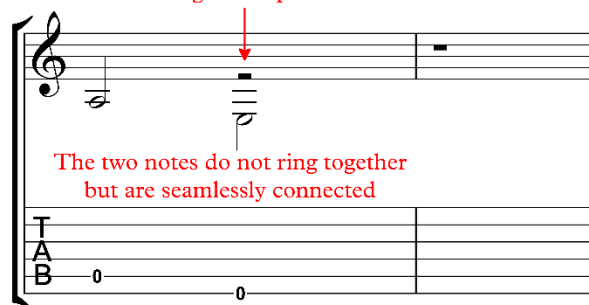
Practice damping the higher string with a left-hand finger at the same time the lower string is played.

Touch the 5th-string open A with a left-hand finger at the same time you pluck the 6th-string open E. Practice damping with 1, 2, 3, and 4.



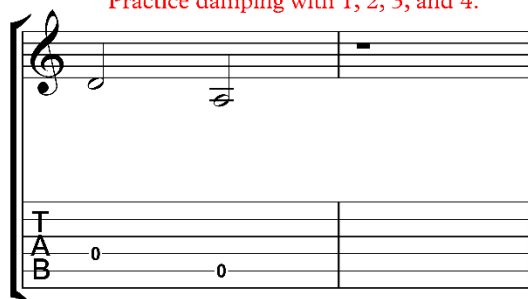
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Sounds like:
5th string is damped here



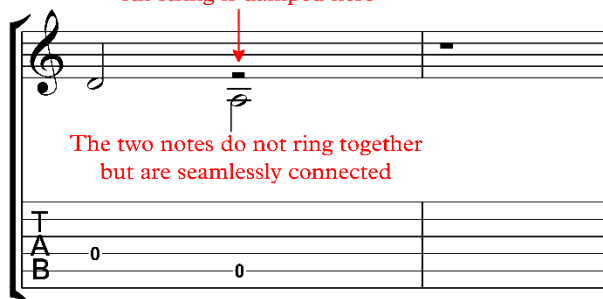
The two notes do not ring together
but are seamlessly connected

Touch the 4th-string open D with a left-hand finger at the same time you pluck the 5th-string open A. Practice damping with 1, 2, 3, and 4.



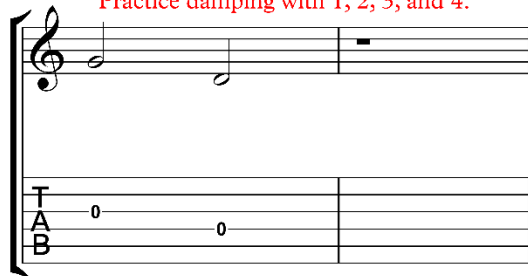
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Sounds like:
4th string is damped here



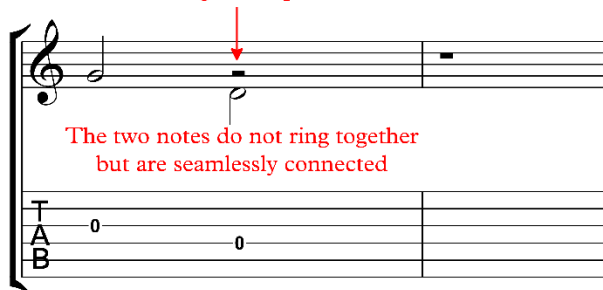
The two notes do not ring together
but are seamlessly connected

Touch the 3rd-string open G with a left-hand finger at the same time you pluck the 4th-string open D. Practice damping with 1, 2, 3, and 4.



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Sounds like:
3rd string is damped here



The two notes do not ring together
but are seamlessly connected

Watch me demonstrate basic left-hand fingertip string damping (Video #6):



Video #6 Ex31 Basic LH finger damping

Fingertip damping in situations where only the bass strings are played is pretty simple. In Fernando Sor's *Lesson No. 3*, the 4th-string open D needs to be damped as the 5th-string open A is plucked.

Example #32:

Twenty-Four Progressive Lessons, Book 1, Op. 31 Lesson No. 3 (Fernando Sor)

Allegretto Moderato

T	3	3	2-3-2-0-2
A	4 0 4 0	2 4 2 4 0	
B	5 0 0	0	

We could damp the 4th string after we play the 5th string. Or, we could play the 5th string rest stroke with the thumb. Or, perhaps the easiest thing for many players is to damp the 4th string with the tip of the left-hand 3rd or 4th finger as the 5th string is plucked.

Watch me demonstrate the passage from the *Lesson No. 3* by Fernando Sor (Video #7):



Video #7 Ex32 Sor Lesson 3 LH damp

Another example occurs here (and a few other spots in the piece) in Bach's well-known *Prelude in Dm*. To produce a clean bass line, we need to damp the 4th-string open D's as we play the 5th-string open A's.

Example #33:

Prelude in Dm (originally in C minor) BWV 999 (J.S. Bach)

39 40 I ③

Damp 4th-string open D here with left-hand 3rd finger.

41 42 43

Damp 4th-string open D here with left-hand 3rd finger. Damp 4th-string open D here with left-hand 3rd finger.

Tablature for measures 39-43:

Measure	String	Fingering
39	5	0
39	4	2
39	3	3
39	2	1
39	1	3
39	5	0
40	5	0
40	4	2
40	3	3
40	2	1
40	1	3
40	5	0
41	5	0
41	4	2
41	3	3
41	2	1
41	1	3
41	5	0
42	5	0
42	4	2
42	3	3
42	2	1
42	1	3
42	5	0
43	5	0
43	4	2
43	3	3
43	2	1
43	1	3
43	5	0

The open D's could be damped with the thumb after plucking the open A's. Or we could damp the D's by plucking the open A's with the thumb rest stroke. But again, many players will find it very easy to damp these D's each time by touching the 4th string with the left-hand 3rd finger as the 5th string is plucked.

Watch me demonstrate this passage from Bach's *Prelude in D minor* (Video #8):



Video #8 Ex33 Bach Prelude in Dm Left Finger Damping

In Mauro Giuliani's *Grand Overture* we find an arpeggio passage with a wide string jump from the 4th-string open D to the 6th-string open E played at high speed. Trying to damp the D immediately after playing the low E would be difficult. Playing the 6th-string E with the thumb rest stroke and coming to rest against the 5th string will do no good because it is the 4th string we are trying to damp. The perfect solution is left-hand fingertip damping. To damp the 4th-string open D, touch it lightly with the fingertip of the 1st or 2nd finger as you pluck the 6th-string open E. If you use the 4th finger to play the G#, you would also have the option to use the 3rd finger to damp the 4th string.

Example #34:

Grande Ouverture (Mauro Giuliani)

196

197 //

Damp 4th-string open D here
with left-hand 1st or 2nd finger.
If you use the 4th finger to play
the G#, you could also damp
with the 3rd finger.

T 2 5 2 2 5 2 0 5 0 0 4 0
A 0 4 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 //

Watch me demonstrate the passage from Giuliani's *Grand Ouverture* (Video #9):



Video #9 Ex34 Giuliani Grand Overture LH Finger Damps

But what about situations where other notes are played at the same time as the bass note? Coordinating the plucking of other notes at the same time you touch a string lightly to damp it can be a tricky coordination problem.

Example #35:

Prelude No. 1 (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

56 57 58 59 60

Damp 5th-string open A here with left-hand 2nd finger.

Damp 5th-string open A here with left-hand 2nd finger.

T 0 0 4 7 12 11 9 11 9 7 0 4 7 12 10 8 10 8 7 0 4 7

A 1 0 0 10 9 9 10 9 9 10 9 9 10 9 10 9 10 9 10 9

B 2 2 1 11 0 2 2 1 10 0 2 2 1 0 0 2 2 1 0 0

Or here in John Dowland's *Allemande*.

Example #36:

Allemande (John Dowland)

13 14 15

Damp 4th-string open D here with left-hand 2nd, 3rd, or 4th finger.

T 3 0 3 5 2 3 2 0 2 3 0 2 3 0 2 3 2 0 3 //

A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 //

B 3 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 //

Watch me demonstrate how this is done in John Dowland's *Allemande* (Video #10):



Video #10 Ex36 Dowland Lady Hunsdon LH finger damp

If you need practice with the technique, practice on open strings first. This is probably overkill, but try at least a few of these.

Example #37:

Damp the higher bass string by touching it with a *left-hand finger* simultaneously as you pluck the second chord or interval.

Practice damping the higher bass string with each left-hand finger: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th.

17 *a* *m* *i* *a* *m* *i*

Lightly touch the 4th-string open D with a left-hand finger simultaneously as you pluck this chord

18 *a* *m* and *m* *i*

Lightly touch the 4th-string open D with a left-hand finger simultaneously as you pluck this chord

19 *a* *m* and *m* *i*

Lightly touch the 3rd-string open G with a left-hand finger simultaneously as you pluck this chord

20 *a* *m* and *m* *i*

Lightly touch the 5th-string open A with a left-hand finger simultaneously as you pluck this chord

Practice the rest of the combinations in the same way.
Repeat each measure until secure, consistent, and confident.

21 *a* *m* *i*

22 *a* *m* and *m* *i*

23 *a* *m* and *m* *i*

24 *a* *m* and *m* *i*

25 *m* *m*

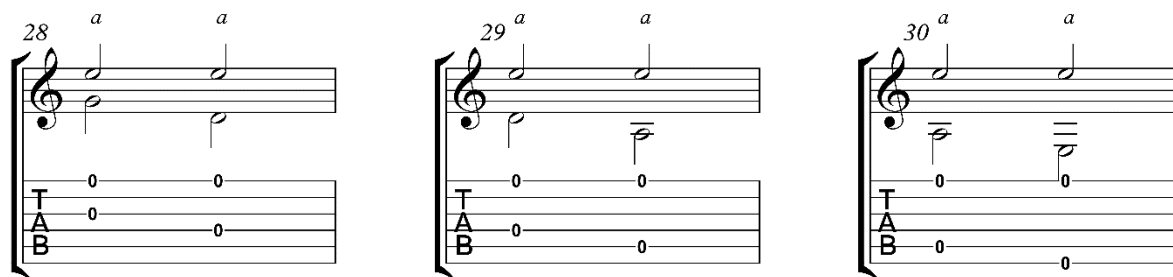
26 *m* *m*

27 *m* *m*

28 *a* *a*

29 *a* *a*

30 *a* *a*



Watch this brief demonstration (Video #11):



Video #11 Ex37 LH Finger Damps on Chords

Finally, let's go back and try out this left-hand fingertip method of string damping on our beloved *Twinkle*.

Example #38:

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Damping basses going from higher to lower string *with the left hand*.

Damp higher string X by touching it lightly with a left-hand finger at the same time you pluck lower string Y.

1 *m i m i* 2 *m i m* 3 *i m i m* 4 *i m i*

Touch 4th-string open D with left-hand 3rd or 4th finger.

Touch 5th-string open A with left-hand 1st or 2nd finger.

Touch 5th-string open A with left-hand 1st, 3rd or 4th finger.

T 0 0 2 2 0 3 3 2 2 0 0 2

A 2 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Example continued on next page...

5 *i m i m* 6 *i m i* 7 *i m i m* 8 *i m i*

Touch 5th-string open A with left-hand 1st or 2nd finger.

Touch 5th-string open A with left-hand 1st, 3rd or 4th finger.

Touch 5th-string open A with left-hand 1st or 2nd finger.

Touch 5th-string open A with left-hand 1st, 3rd or 4th finger.

9 *m i m i* 10 *m i m* 11 *i m i m* 12 *i m i*

Touch 4th-string open D with left-hand 3rd or 4th finger.

Touch 5th-string open A with left-hand 1st or 2nd finger.

Touch 5th-string open A with left-hand 1st, 3rd or 4th finger.

TAB

Watch my virtuoso performance of *Twinkle* as I demonstrate left-hand fingertip damping (Video #12):



Video #12 Ex38 Twinkle Complete LH Finger Damping of Basses

Flavor #2 of Left-Hand Finger Damping: Allow a left-hand finger to lean over to touch the offensive string.

This technique is most often used to damp open strings when going from a higher string to a lower string. Three changes in the hand and finger positioning are made to execute this technique:

1. The hand is placed in a lower position causing the finger which will damp the open string to lean over slightly toward the open string.
2. The finger which will damp the open string is *not* placed on its tip. It is placed on its note off the tip.
3. The tip joint of the finger which will damp the open string is straightened very slightly.

This method can work well for damping not only strings in the bass register but the treble register as well. Here is a simple exercise to get the feel of this technique and understand how it is done.

Example #39:

Leaning the left-hand fingers over to damp open strings

As each finger is placed on its note in its leaned-over position, it damps the 1st-string open E

The technique is very easy to do on the lower strings.

As each finger is placed on its note in its leaned-over position, it damps the 5th-string open A

This technique works even when the notes are not on adjacent strings.

Note that the fingers must lean over quite a bit. As each finger is placed on its note in its leaned-over position, it damps the 4th-string open D.

Watch me demonstrate this easy but very effective technique (Video #13):



Video #13 Ex39 Basic LH Finger Leans Over to Damp

Most players already use this method of string damping in many situations without realizing it. They don't give it a second thought and use it without anyone teaching them how to do it.

Example #40:

Twenty-Four Progressive Lessons, Book 1, Op. 31 Lesson No. 1 (Fernando Sor)

3rd finger leans over and touches (damps) 4th-string open D

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

Watch me demonstrate (Video #14):



Video #14 Ex40 Sor Lesson No. 1

The technique is used frequently in scale passages containing open strings. A scale, by definition, is a series of notes sounding one at a time with no ring-over between the notes. If we play a descending G major scale, we do NOT want it to sound like this.

Example #41:

Descending G major scale without string damping

An open string should NOT be allowed to ring through the notes that follow it.

If the open strings are allowed to ring freely without any string damping, the passage no longer sounds like a scale. Well okay, maybe it resembles a scale, but it is a very messy and sloppy scale.

The scale is very easily cleaned up with the application of left-hand finger string damping using the lean-the-finger-over technique.

Example #42:

Descending G major scale with string damping

The scale is played cleanly by allowing a left-hand finger to lean over and touch the offensive open string.

As the left-hand 2nd finger is placed on the 3rd-string 2nd-fret A, it leans over and touches (damps) the 2nd-string open B

As the left-hand 3rd finger is placed on the 5th-string 3rd-fret C, it leans over and touches (damps) the 4th-string open D

As the left-hand 3rd finger is placed on the 2nd-string 3rd-fret D, it leans over and touches (damps) the 1st-string open E

As the left-hand 4th finger is placed on the 4th-string 4th-fret F#, it leans over and touches (damps) the 3rd-string open G

As the left-hand 3rd finger is placed on the 6th-string 3rd-fret G, it leans over and touches (damps) the 5th-string open A

Again, many players already automatically use this technique. They use it without thinking about it and without having been instructed to use it. If the left-hand position is properly lowered, the technique is very easy and natural to use. It can be used on any descending scale passage containing open strings.

Watch me demonstrate how to play clean scales using the left-hand finger leaning-over technique (Video #15):



Video #15 Ex42 LH Lean Over String Damps on Descending Scale

It is also used to play melodic passages as pure lines, one note ringing at a time. Again we go to *Twinkle*.

Example #43:

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Damping open-string melody notes with left-hand finger leaning-over technique.

Play the melody cleanly by allowing a left-hand finger to lean over and touch the offensive open string.

1 *m i m i* 2 *m i m i* 3 *m i m i* 4 *m i m i*

As the left-hand 3rd finger is placed on the 2nd-string 3rd-fret D, it leans over and touches (damps) the 1st-string open E

As the left-hand 2nd finger is placed on the 3rd-string 2nd-fret A, it leans over and touches (damps) the 2nd-string open B

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

5 *i* *m* *i* *m* 6 *i* *m* *i* 7 *i* *m* *i* *m* 8 *i* *m* *i* 9 *m* *i* *m* *i*

As the left-hand 3rd finger is placed on the 2nd-string 3rd-fret D, it leans over and touches (damps) the 1st-string open E

As the left-hand 3rd finger is placed on the 2nd-string 3rd-fret D, it leans over and touches (damps) the 1st-string open E

As the left-hand 2nd finger is placed on the 3rd-string 2nd-fret A, it leans over and touches (damps) the 2nd-string open B

T 0 0 3 3 2 2 0 0 0 3 3 2 2 0 0 0

A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

10 *m* *i* *m* 11 *i* *m* *i* *m* 12 *i* *m* *i*

As the left-hand 3rd finger is placed on the 2nd-string 3rd-fret D, it leans over and touches (damps) the 1st-string open E

As the left-hand 2nd finger is placed on the 3rd-string 2nd-fret A, it leans over and touches (damps) the 2nd-string open B

T 2 2 0 3 3 2 2 0 0 0 2

A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Watch me demonstrate how to play *Twinkle* with a clean melody line using the finger-leaning-over technique (Video #16):



Video #16 Ex 43 Twinkle LH Leaning Fingers Melody Damps

Let's use the technique on a more challenging piece. Here is a passage from an *Alman* by Robert Johnson. The open E's and B's are easily damped using the left-hand lean-the-finger-over technique. The result is a clean melodic line.

Example #44:

Alman (Robert Johnson)

Damping open-string melody notes with left-hand finger leaning-over technique.

Play the melody cleanly by allowing a left-hand finger to lean over and touch the offensive open string.

The image displays a musical score for a guitar piece in 4/4 time, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes a melody line with various notes and rests, and a bass line with fret numbers. Red and blue boxes highlight specific fretting and damping techniques. Red arrows point to the 1st and 4th strings, while blue arrows point to the 2nd and 3rd strings. The following text describes these techniques:

- As the left-hand 1st finger is placed on the 2nd-string 3rd-fret D, it leans over and touches (damps) the 1st-string open E** (Red text, red box around measure 5).
- As the left-hand 3rd finger is placed on the 3rd-string 2nd-fret A, it leans over and touches (damps) the 2nd-string open B** (Blue text, blue box around measure 7).
- As the left-hand 4th finger is placed on the 2nd-string 3rd-fret D, it leans over and touches (damps) the 1st-string open E** (Red text, red box around measure 6).
- As the left-hand 4th finger is placed on the 2nd-string 3rd-fret D, it leans over and touches (damps) the 1st-string open E** (Blue text, blue box around measure 7).
- As the left-hand 2nd finger is placed on the 3rd-string 2nd-fret A, it leans over and touches (damps) the 2nd-string open B** (Red text, red box around measure 8).

The bass line is written on a six-string guitar staff with fret numbers: 0, 2, 3, 5, 3, 1, 0, 0, 1, 3, 1, 0, 0, 3, 2, 1, 0, 2, 1, 2, 2, 0, 0. The notation includes a double bar line at the end of the piece.

Watch this (Video #17):



Video #17 Ex 44 LH Finger lean over on Robert Johnson Alman

In J.S. Bach's *Bourée* from *Lute Suite No. 1* (BWV 996), measure #9 is a problematical measure. We have an open G and open B in the upper voice that need to be damped, and an open D in the lower voice that needs to be damped. These notes need to be damped to preserve the contrapuntal texture of the piece. In other words, only one note should be allowed to ring at any given time in the upper voice, and only one note should be allowed to ring at any given time in the lower voice. Open strings ringing against fretted notes destroys the two-voice counterpoint.

Fortunately, this knotty string damping problem is easily taken care of with the left-hand lean-the-finger-over damping technique.

Example #45:

Bourée (J.S. Bach)

As the left-hand 2nd finger is placed on the 6th-string 3rd-fret G, it leans over and touches (damps) the 4th-string open D.

As the left-hand 1st finger is placed on the 6th-string 2nd-fret F#, it leans over (almost into a bar) and touches (damps) the 3rd-string open G.

As the left-hand 1st finger is placed on the 5th-string 2nd-fret B, it leans over (almost into a bar) and touches (damps) the 2nd-string open B.

Watch how I turn disaster into beauty using this easy, natural, and effective technique on Bach's *Bourée* (Video #18):



Video #18 Ex45 Bach Bourree LH Finger Leaning Over

More to come in Part 4: The Epic Conclusion (finally)

Using the right-hand fingers to damp strings

How the style of a piece affects the use of string damping

Observing written rests

Controlling sympathetic vibration and unwanted harmonics

Damping several strings at once

Notation of damping

Putting it all together in actual pieces

All explained and illustrated with great musical examples and stunning videos