

Classical Guitar Technique

THE METRONOME IS YOUR FRIEND, Part 2

How to use the metronome to improve practice and performance

By Douglas Niedt

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PART 2. How to Use the metronome as a Diagnostic Tool

The original purpose of the metronome to set an absolute tempo is still important, but the phenomenal growth in its use is due to the realization of how it can be used in many other ways to improve one's playing of specific pieces and in general. Just to recap, in Part 1, I listed the three functions of the metronome and discussed the first two.

Function #1. To set an absolute tempo.

Function #2. As a tool to help us develop and improve our inner pulse. This enables us to play "in the pocket" or groove and to accurately hold a precise and steady tempo.

Here, in Part 2 and next month in Part 3, I will explain Function #3:

Function #3. As a practice and diagnostic tool to improve the efficiency of your practicing and the quality of your final performance.

The metronome can be used as a diagnostic tool to solve specific rhythm problems with specific practice techniques, usually on specific passages within a piece.

In Part 2, I will cover:

1. The basics of using the metronome and subdivision together.
2. How to use the metronome with subdivision to help keep arpeggios rhythmically even.
3. How to use the metronome with subdivision to help keep tremolos rhythmically even.
4. How to use the metronome and use subdivision to understand and play complex rhythms.
5. The importance of knowing precisely:
 - Which notes fall on the metronome clicks (the beats).
 - Which fingers play on the metronome clicks (the beats).
6. How to improve the rhythmic evenness of an arpeggio plus improve your right-hand finger independence by practicing with two different metrical subdivisions.

Rules for Metronome Use

1. Always keep the metronome in a spot where it is immediately available. ALWAYS. You should not have to get out of your chair to find one.

2. Make sure you can hear the metronome. If you cannot hear it clearly, you will not be able to tell whether you are in sync with it. Find one that has a solid sound that grabs your attention (but is not irritating). The best idea is to find one with adjustable volume. As you learned in Part 1, sometimes you want to make the metronome quieter to improve your ability to play in the pocket.

You can also get a metronome with an earbud to make sure you can hear it clearly. Many players find this helps immensely in being able to focus on and stay in sync with the clicks.

3. Do not throw your metronome across the room when it points out your obvious deficiencies.

The Basics of Subdivision

It is important that you understand the principle of subdivision to use your metronome most efficiently. We can set the metronome to click different note values in a piece or passage. This is called subdivision of the measure or bar (a bar and measure are the same thing) or subdivision of the beat.

Here are examples of using subdivision in a *Caprice* by Italian guitarist Matteo Carcassi.

1. I can set the metronome to click once for each measure. The piece is in 2/4 meter, so the metronome is clicking half notes (minims):

Caprice by Matteo Carcassi

The image shows the first system of the musical score for 'Caprice' by Matteo Carcassi. It includes a guitar staff with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is written in a key with one sharp (F#). Above the staff, the lyrics 'p i m p i p m p i p i m a m i m i p i m a i p' are written. Below the staff, there is a metronome track with red 'x' marks indicating clicks on half notes. The tablature track shows fret numbers for the guitar, with 'T' for treble and 'B' for bass. The second system starts at measure 5.

Watch me demonstrate in Video #1:

Video #1: *Caprice* (Matteo Carcassi)

Subdivided into half notes.



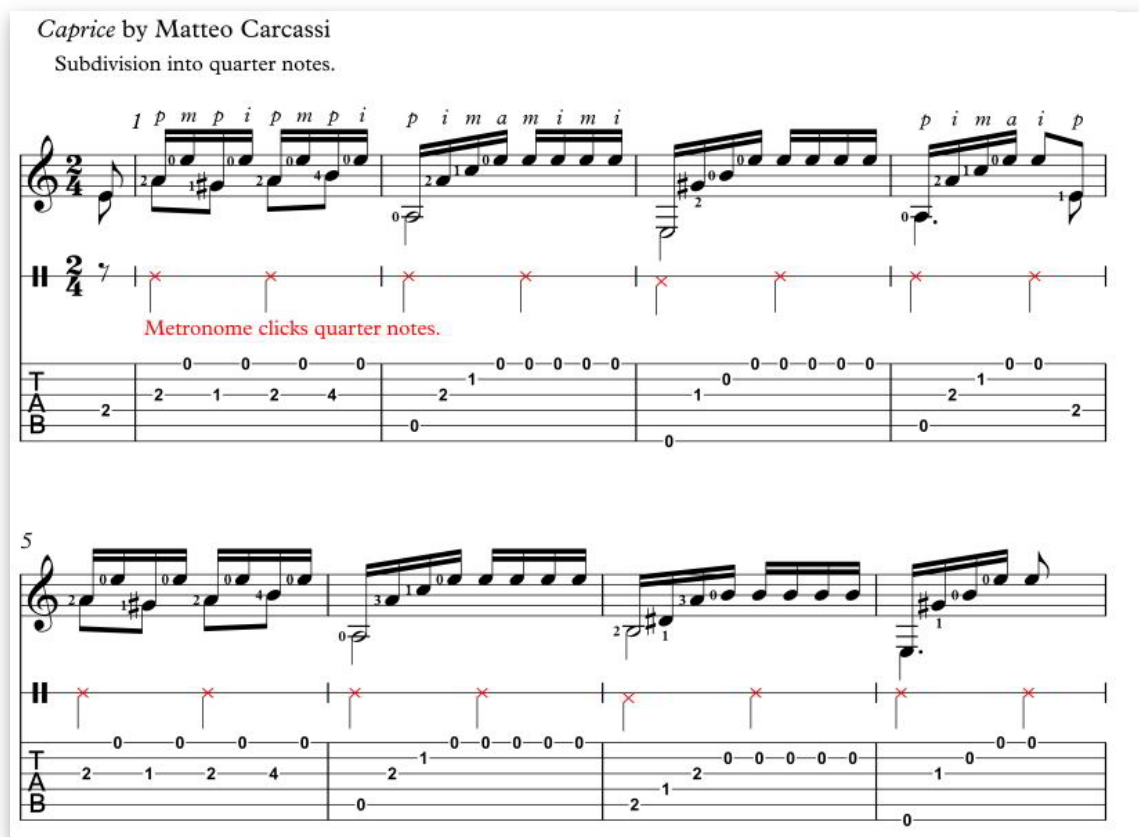
The metronome is ticking half notes at 40 bpm.

CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com
Video #1: Caprice (Matteo Carcassi)

2. I can divide the measure in half and have the metronome click two times in each measure. This means I am subdividing the measure into quarter notes. The metronome is clicking two quarter notes (crochets) in each measure:

Caprice by Matteo Carcassi
Subdivision into quarter notes.

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



Metronome clicks quarter notes.

5

Watch me demonstrate in Video #2:

Video #2: *Caprice* (Matteo Carcassi)

Subdivided into quarter notes.



3. I can divide the measure into 4 parts and have the metronome click four times in each measure. This means I am subdividing the measure into eighth notes. The metronome is now clicking eighth notes (quavers):

Caprice by Matteo Carcassi

Subdivision into eighth notes.

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

Metronome clicks eighth notes.

5

Watch me demonstrate in Video #3:

Video #3: Caprice (Matteo Carcassi)

Subdivided into eighth notes.

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Video #3: Caprice (Matteo Carcassi)

4. I can divide the measure into 8 parts and have the metronome click eight times in each measure. This means I am subdividing the measure into sixteen notes. The metronome is now clicking sixteen notes (semiquavers):

Caprice by Matteo Carcassi

Subdivision into sixteen notes.

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

Metronome clicks sixteen notes.

5

Watch me demonstrate in Video #4:

Video #4: *Caprice* (Matteo Carcassi)

Subdivided into sixteenth notes.



Which should you use? That depends on how long you have been working on the piece and the problems you are having or your goals.

If you have just learned the notes of the piece, you might subdivide into 16th notes at 60 bpm. In other words, the metronome will now click on every 16th note. This is very slow but might be a good tempo to go through the piece to find your problem spots with chord changes.

But if it is too slow for you, you could increase the 16th note speed to 160 or 190. But you would probably drive yourself nuts listening to all those clicks (like in Video #4 above ticking sixteenths at 320 bpm). Instead, you could set it at 80 but make each click an 8th note instead of a 16th. That way, you only have to listen to half the number of clicks. But you still have plenty of reference points (the clicks) to keep things even and steady.

If you are at a stage where you want to start testing yourself at faster tempos, you might keep the metronome in the 60's or 80's but make the clicks quarter notes.

If you want to test yourself at extreme tempos you would set the metronome in the 40's-50's clicking half notes.

Watch me demonstrate how to decide which subdivision to use in Video #5:

Video #5: *Caprice* (Matteo Carcassi)

Which subdivision should you use?



How to Use Subdivision and Your Metronome to Keep an Arpeggio Rhythmically Even

The metronome, combined with subdivision, can be very effective to help even out arpeggios rhythmically.

Let's begin with a fairly easy example. In the ascending arpeggio section of *Allegro* by Mauro Giuliani, the arpeggios are written as even eighth notes:

Allegro by Mauro Giuliani

Even eighth notes as written.

The image shows musical notation for the ascending arpeggio section of "Allegro" by Mauro Giuliani. It includes a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation shows a series of eighth notes ascending the scale. Above the staff, the notes are labeled with fingerings: p i m a p i m a p i m a p i m a p i m a p i m a p i m a p i m a. Below the staff, there is a guitar tablature with fret numbers: 0 2 1 0 3 0 2 1 0 0 2 1 0 3 0 2 1 0 0 0 2 0. The notation ends with a double bar line.

Watch me play this phrase in Video #6:

Video #6: *Allegro* (Mauro Giuliani)

Played in even eighth notes as written.



If the metronome (or you are feeling) clicks only on the half-note (minim) thumb strokes and the tempo is increased, there is a strong tendency for "ima" to play too fast in an uncontrolled "roll" which is what produces an uneven "gallop":

Allegro by Mauro Giuliani

Out-of-control "rolled" chords.

17

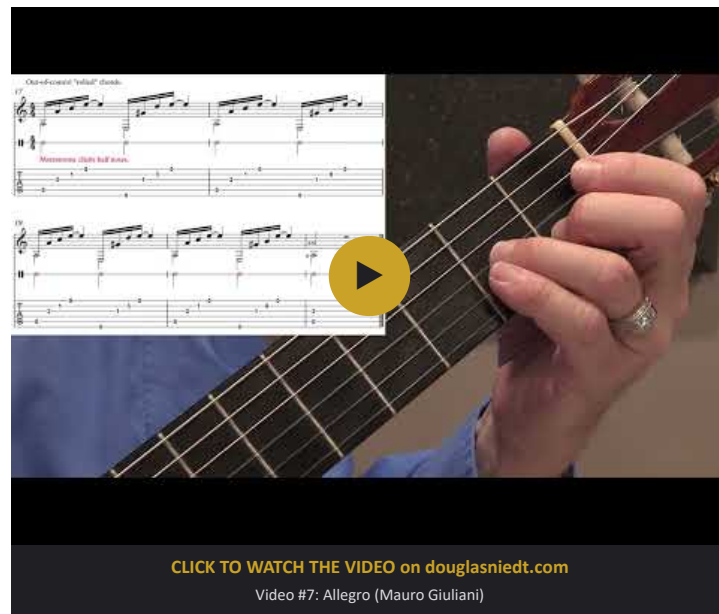
Metronome clicks half notes.

19

Watch me demonstrate the mangled arpeggio in Video #7:

Video #7: *Allegro* (Mauro Giuliani)

Played as an uneven, mangled arpeggio.



The way to keep the arpeggio pattern even is to subdivide the beat into quarter notes (crochets) so the metronome clicks on "p" and "m". Providing the additional reference point to tell "m" when to pluck helps all the fingers maintain their correct rhythmic spacing. Everything stays more precisely in rhythm.

That is the crux of using subdivision. It provides additional reference points to tell the fingers precisely when to play their notes. You can use this principle on almost any piece you play or are learning.

Allegro by Mauro Giuliani

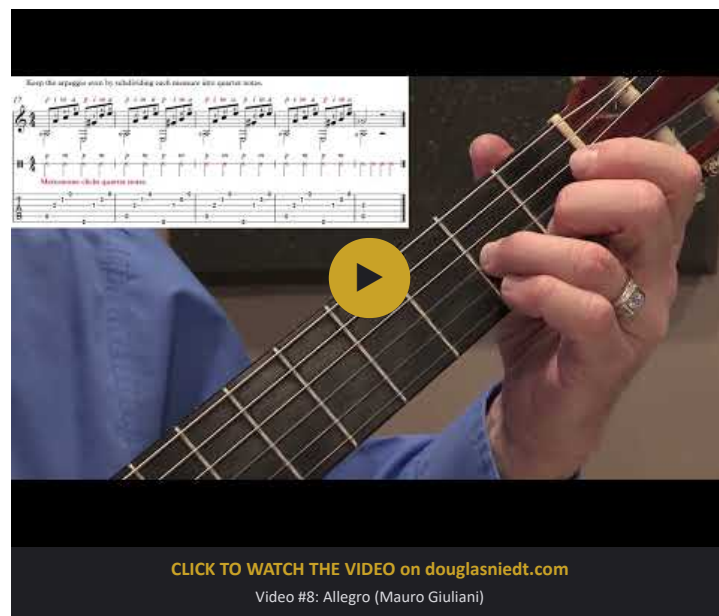
Keep the arpeggio even by subdividing each measure into quarter notes.

Metronome clicks quarter notes.

Watch me demonstrate how quarter-note subdivision works in Video #8:

Video #8: *Allegro* (Mauro Giuliani)

Subdivided into quarter notes.



In pieces where the chords change frequently and quickly, make an exercise out of the passage. Play each chord several times so you can focus on the right hand rather than being distracted by the left-hand chord changes. Use this practice strategy on the pieces YOU play.

Allegro by Mauro Giuliani

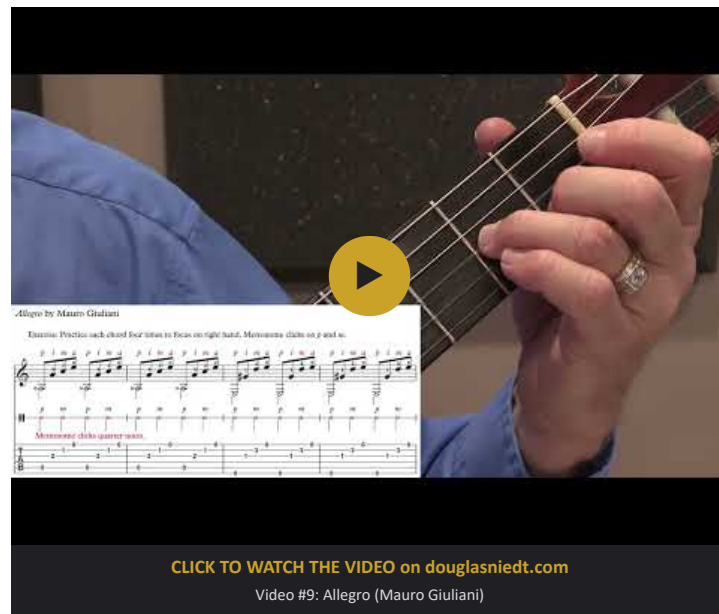
Exercise: Practice each chord four times to focus on right hand. Metronome clicks on *p* and *m*.

Metronome clicks quarter notes.

Watch me demonstrate how to use an arpeggio as an exercise in Video #9:

Video #9: *Allegro* (Mauro Giuliani)

Make an exercise out of the passage.



Allegro by Mauro Giuliani

Examine. Practice each chord four times to focus on right hand. Memorize chords on E and A.

Memorize chords quarter notes.

[CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com](https://douglasniedt.com)

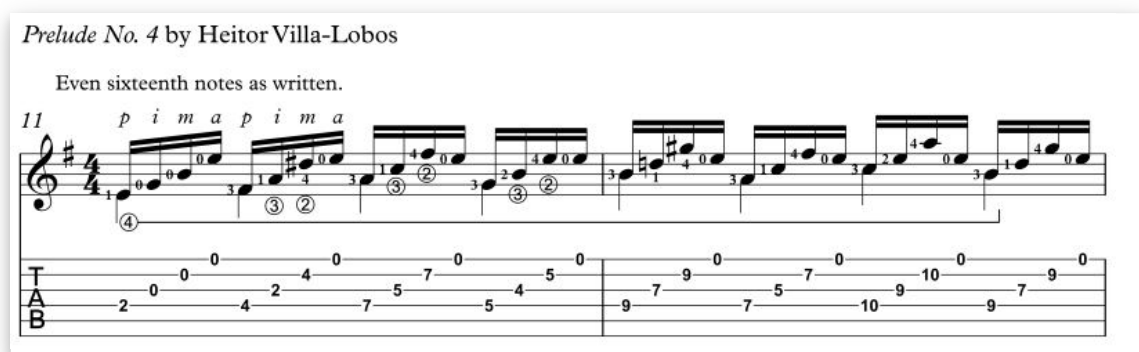
Video #9: Allegro (Mauro Giuliani)

Or, here is an example of the same process on a more advanced piece. In the arpeggio section of *Prelude No. 4* by Heitor Villa-Lobos, the arpeggios are written as even sixteenth notes:

Prelude No. 4 by Heitor Villa-Lobos

Even sixteenth notes as written.

11 *p i m a p i m a*

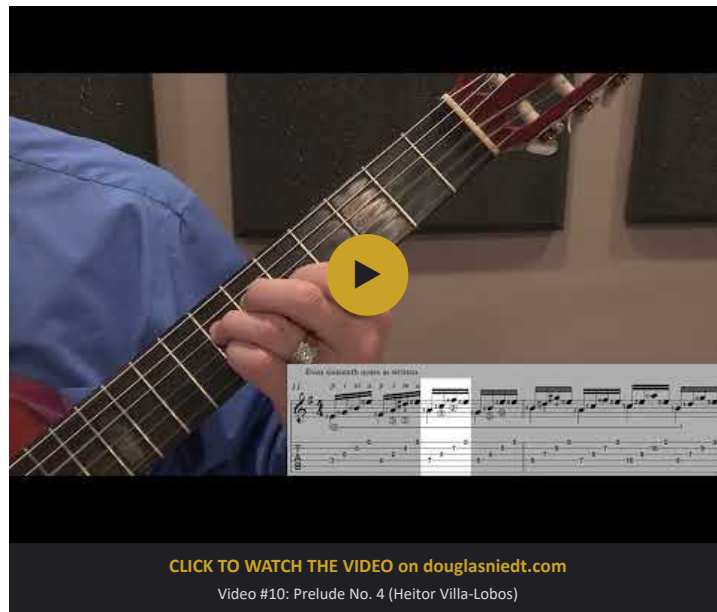


T
A
B

Watch me demonstrate in Video #10:

Video #10: *Prelude No. 4* (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

The arpeggio fragment as written.



If the metronome (or you are feeling) clicks only on the quarter-note (crochet) thumb strokes and the tempo is increased, there is a strong tendency for "ima" to play too fast in an uncontrolled "roll" which is what produces an uneven "gallop":

Prelude No. 4 by Heitor Villa-Lobos

Out-of-control "galloping, rolled" chords.

p i m a p i m a

11

Metronome clicks quarter notes.

TAB

Watch me demonstrate how to mangle the arpeggio in Video #11:

Video #11: *Prelude No. 4* (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

The arpeggio fragment played unevenly.



The way to help keep the arpeggio pattern even is to subdivide the beat into eighth notes (quavers) so the metronome clicks on "p" and "m". Providing the additional reference point to tell "m" when it should pluck helps all the fingers to maintain their correct rhythmic spacing. Everything stays more precisely in rhythm.

Again, this is the crux of using subdivision. It provides additional reference points to tell the fingers precisely when to play their notes. You can use this principle on almost any piece you play or are learning.

Prelude No. 4 by Heitor Villa-Lobos

Keep the arpeggio even by subdividing each measure into eighth notes.

Metronome clicks eighth notes. "p" and "m" pluck on the clicks.

Watch me demonstrate how to subdivide the arpeggio into eighth notes in Video #12:

Video #12: *Prelude No. 4* (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

The arpeggio subdivided into eighths.



In the *Prelude No. 4* and other pieces where the chords change frequently and quickly, make an exercise out of the passage. Play each chord several times so you can focus on the right hand rather than being distracted by the left-hand chord changes. Use this practice strategy on the pieces YOU play.

Prelude No. 4 by Heitor Villa-Lobos

Exercise: Practice each chord four times to focus on right hand. Metronome clicks on *p* and *m*.

Metronome clicks eighth notes. "p" and "m" pluck on the clicks.

Watch me demonstrate how to turn the arpeggio into an exercise in Video #13:

Video #13: *Prelude No. 4* (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

How to make an exercise out of the arpeggio.

Use this practice strategy on YOUR pieces.



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Video #13: Prelude No. 4 (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

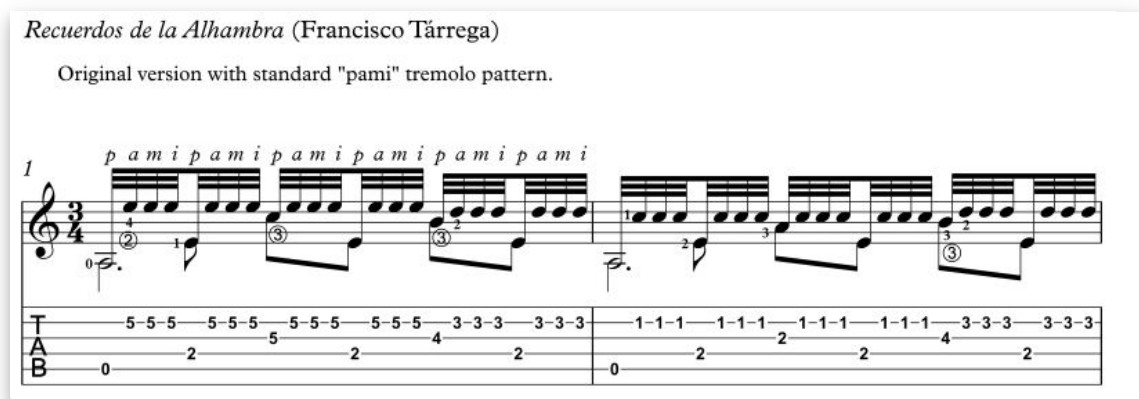
How to Use Subdivision and Your Metronome to Help Keep Your Tremolo Rhythmically Even

As with arpeggios, using the metronome with subdivision can be very effective to help even out a tremolo rhythmically.

In Francisco Tárrega's *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* the notes are written in even thirty-second notes:

Recuerdos de la Alhambra (Francisco Tárrega)

Original version with standard "pami" tremolo pattern.



T 5-5-5 5-5-5 5-5-5 5-5-5 3-3-3 3-3-3

A 0 2 5 2 4 2

If the metronome (or you are feeling) clicks only on the eighth-note (quaver) thumb strokes and the tempo is increased, the tremolo may become uneven or "lopsided" in a number of ways:

Recuerdos de la Alhambra (Francisco Tárrega)

Gap between "p" and "a".

The musical notation is in 3/4 time. The first staff shows a sequence of notes with fingerings: p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i. A blue box highlights the first two notes, 'p' and 'a', showing a significant gap between them. The second staff shows a metronome line with eighth notes marked by red 'x' symbols. Below the metronome line, the text "Metronome clicks eighth notes." is written in red.

Recuerdos de la Alhambra (Francisco Tárrega)

Lack of finger independence between "a" and "m". "m" follows "a" too quickly.

The musical notation is in 3/4 time. The first staff shows a sequence of notes with fingerings: p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i. A blue box highlights the first three notes, 'p', 'a', and 'm', showing that 'm' follows 'a' too quickly. The second staff shows a metronome line with eighth notes marked by red 'x' symbols. Below the metronome line, the text "Metronome clicks eighth notes." is written in red.

Recuerdos de la Alhambra (Francisco Tárrega)

"pami" gallops as a single unit. This produces a rhythmic gap between each tremolo group.

The musical notation is in 3/4 time. The first staff shows a sequence of notes with fingerings: p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i. A blue box highlights the first four notes, 'p', 'a', 'm', and 'i', showing that they gallop as a single unit. The second staff shows a metronome line with eighth notes marked by red 'x' symbols. Below the metronome line, the text "Metronome clicks eighth notes." is written in red.

Recuerdos de la Alhambra (Francisco Tárrega)

"i" follows "m" too quickly. This also produces a rhythmic gap between each tremolo group.

The musical notation is in 3/4 time. The first staff shows a sequence of notes with fingerings: p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i, p, a, m, i. A blue box highlights the last two notes of the first group, 'm' and 'i', showing that 'i' follows 'm' too quickly. The second staff shows a metronome line with eighth notes marked by red 'x' symbols. Below the metronome line, the text "Metronome clicks eighth notes." is written in red.

Recuerdos de la Alhambra (Francisco Tárrega)

"a" follows "p" too quickly. This also produces a rhythmic gap between each tremolo group.

Metronome clicks eighth notes.

Sometimes, these maladies can be fixed simply by subdividing the measures into sixteenth notes instead of eighth notes. Subdivision into sixteenth notes provides reference clicks for "p" and "m".

Recuerdos de la Alhambra (Francisco Tárrega)

Subdivision into sixteenth notes. "p" and "m" pluck on metronome clicks.

Metronome clicks sixteenth notes.

Providing the additional reference point to tell "m" when to pluck helps all the fingers to maintain their correct rhythmic spacing, so they stay more precisely in rhythm.

Watch me demonstrate how to subdivide the tremolo into sixteenth notes in Video #14:

Video #14: *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* (Francisco Tárrega)

How to subdivide the tremolo into sixteenth notes.



Once again, this is the crux of using subdivision. It provides additional reference points to tell the fingers precisely when to play their notes.

Several other factors can cause an uneven tremolo and other cures must be applied, but subdivision into sixteenth notes is certainly one of the first fixes to apply to a lopsided tremolo. See my Technique Tip, [How to Master the Tremolo](#) for a comprehensive discussion of how to achieve an even-sounding tremolo.

How to Subdivide the Beat and Use the Metronome to Play Complex Rhythms

When you come across a rhythm that is complex, subdivide to smaller note values that you can count accurately.

For example, this section from Fernando Sor's *Allegretto* from *Twenty-Four Very Easy Exercises, Op. 35 No. 8* can be difficult to play accurately because of both the sixteenth-note triplet figures in measures 33-36, and the dotted sixteenth followed by a thirty-second note figures in measures 37-40:

Allegretto from Twenty-Four Very Easy Exercises, Op. 35 No. 8 (Fernando Sor)

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Allegretto' by Fernando Sor, specifically measures 33 through 37. The score is written for guitar, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The time signature is 3/4. The notation includes a melody line with various fingerings (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 0) and a bass line with corresponding fingerings. The piece is in 3/4 time, and the tempo is marked 'Allegretto'. The score is presented in a standard musical notation format, with measures 33, 34, 35, 36, and 37 clearly indicated.

Watch me play the two phrases in Video #15:

Video #15: *Allegretto* (Fernando Sor)

The two phrases complete.

The image is a video thumbnail for a performance of 'Allegretto' by Fernando Sor. It features a close-up of a person's hands playing a guitar. The left hand is positioned on the fretboard, and the right hand is visible near the soundhole. The video title 'ALLEGRETTO by Fernando Sor' is displayed in yellow text. A yellow play button icon is centered over the image. At the bottom, there is a black bar with white text that reads 'CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com' and 'Video #15: Allegretto (Fernando Sor)'.

It is best to break the section down into its two separate phrases. First, let's look at the triplet figures and how to subdivide them:

Allegretto from Twenty-Four Very Easy Exercises, Op. 35 No. 8 (Fernando Sor)

Subdivide into sixteenth-note triplets

Set metronome to click sixteenth-note triplets.

33

35

3

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

7 4 0 3 1 0 1

2 2 4 4 2 2 0 0

0 0 0 0 0 0

We subdivide each eighth note into three sixteenth-note triplets (the smallest note value in the phrase). Depending on your ability to play the passage, you would set the metronome somewhere between 120 and 200 bpm. Before playing, count with the metronome out loud: "123 123 123". Continue counting and begin playing the passage. Of course, rather than attempting to play the entire passage, you will probably need to practice one measure or even one or two beats at a time.

Watch me demonstrate how to subdivide the phrase into sixteenth-note triplets in Video #16:

Video #16: *Allegretto* (Fernando Sor)

How to subdivide the first phrase into sixteenth-note triplets.



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Video #16: Allegretto (Fernando Sor)

Similarly, in the next four measures we subdivide each eighth note into thirty-second notes (the smallest note value in the phrase):

Allegretto from Twenty-Four Very Easy Exercises, Op. 35 No. 8 (Fernando Sor)

Subdivide into thirty-second notes.

37

Metronome clicks thirty-second notes.

39

Depending on your ability to play the passage, you would set the metronome somewhere between 144 and 208+. Before playing, get in the groove by counting out loud with the metronome: "1234 1234 1234". Continue counting and begin playing the passage. Of course, rather than attempting to play the entire passage, you will probably need to practice one measure or even one or two beats at a time.

Watch me demonstrate how to subdivide the phrase into thirty-second notes in Video #17:

Video #17: *Allegretto* (Fernando Sor)

How to subdivide the second phrase into thirty-second notes.



Let's look at a passage (measures 11-12) from a more difficult piece, the *Prelude* from J.S. Bach's *Lute Suite No. 1*, BWV 996. By the way, when working out complex rhythms, always omit any ornaments and slurs that are present. After the foundational rhythm is precise and rock-solid, you can work the ornaments and slurs back in.

Prelude from Lute Suite No. 1, BWV 996 (J.S. Bach)

Subdivide into thirty-second notes.

Ornaments have been left out. Always learn complicated rhythms without ornaments first.

11

Metronome clicks thirty-second notes.

T 1 1 1 0 1 4 0 3 0
A 2 2 2 0 0 4 0 5 0
B 0 0 0 0 0 4 0 2 3

12

Metronome clicks thirty-second notes.

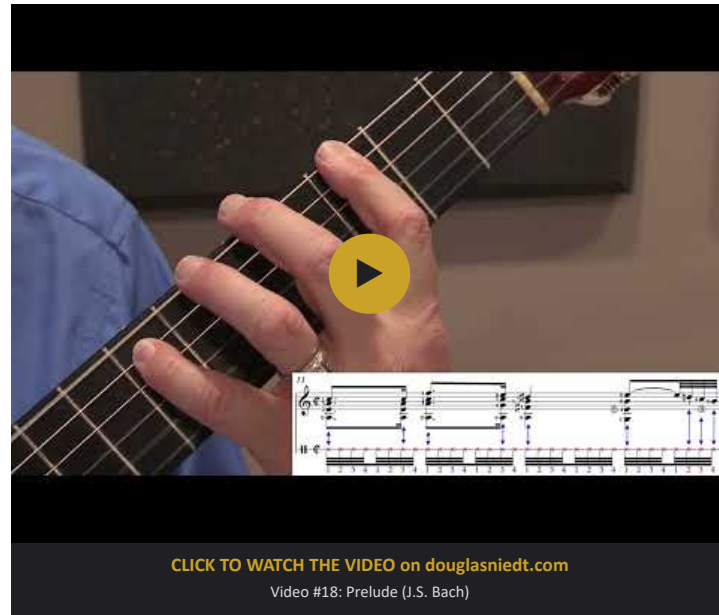
T 2 2 5 2 4 4 0 0 3 0 0 0 0 0
A 2 2 2 2 4 2 4 5 0 0 0 0 0 0
B 3 2 2 2 3 2 3 6 0 0 0 0 0 0

Again, we subdivide down to the smallest value in the passage (thirty-second notes). Depending on your ability to play the passage, you would set the metronome somewhere between 144 and 208+. Before playing, get in the groove by counting out loud with the metronome: "1234 1234 1234". Continue counting and begin playing the passage. Of course, rather than attempting to play the entire passage, you will probably need to practice half a measure or even one or two beats at a time.

Watch me demonstrate how to subdivide the measures into thirty-second notes to understand these complex rhythms in Video #18:

Video #18: Prelude (J.S. Bach)

How to subdivide into thirty-second notes to play the complex rhythms.



You Must Know Precisely:

- 1. What note is played on each click (beat)**
- 2. What fingers play on each click (beat)**

This principle applies to every moment one uses a metronome. One of the main reasons students have trouble following the metronome is that they do not really know which notes or fingers fall on the metronome clicks. They may imitate the way another guitarist plays a piece or may play so freely that they do not know precisely where the beats fall.

Here is an example of this principle on the *Allegro* from *Introduction to the Study of the Guitar, Op. 60 No. 15* by Fernando Sor. It can be tricky to keep the rhythms precise when the music switches from the long note values in measures #1-4 to the eighth notes in measure #5-7:

Allegro from Introduction to the Study of the Guitar, Op. 60 No. 15 (Fernando Sor)

1

Metronome clicks dotted quarter notes.

5

p p p i m a p p i m a m p p i m a i

The first line is not a problem. Something is played on each beat and nothing is between the beats. But starting at measure #5, things can go awry.

For measures 5-7, if the metronome is clicking dotted quarter notes as shown, the rhythms will probably be correct if the player knows:

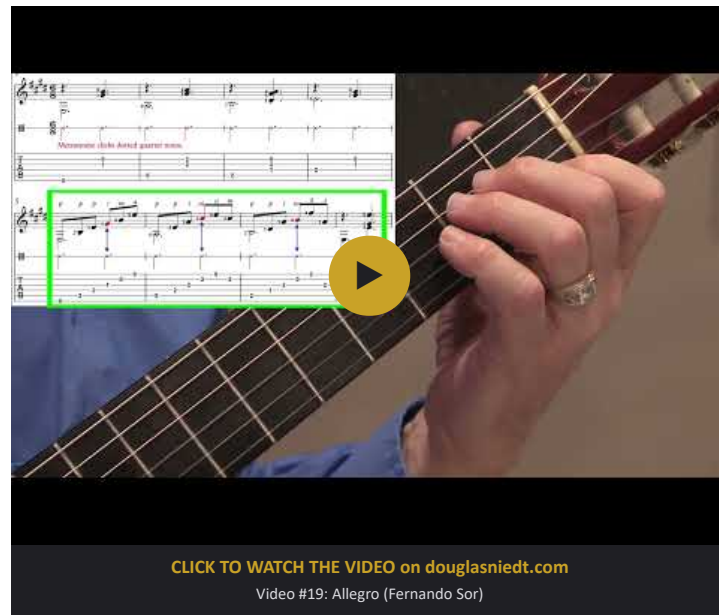
1. The thumb plucks the first note on the first click of each measure.
2. The "i" or "m" finger plucks the fourth eighth note on the second click of each measure.

Starting at measure #5, most players will be aware that the thumb plucks on the first click of each measure. *But, if the player is unaware or uncertain which finger plucks and what note is played on the second beat of each measure, I can guarantee the rhythm will not be precise.*

Let me show you what I mean in Video #19:

Video #19: *Allegro* (Fernando Sor)

You must know which notes are on the beats.



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Video #19: Allegro (Fernando Sor)

For an example in a more difficult piece let's look at Bach's popular *Prelude in Dm BWV 999*. It is important to know which fingers or notes are played on the clicks in order to keep the basic arpeggio smooth and even.

Usually, the guitarist will feel the quarter note as the beat. And most players are certainly aware that "p" plucks on the first beat of every measure. But many players are somewhat unaware of the fact that the "m" finger plucks on the second beat of every measure:

Prelude in D minor, BWV 999 (J.S. Bach)

Be aware that "m" plucks on the second beat of every measure.

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

Metronome clicks quarter notes.

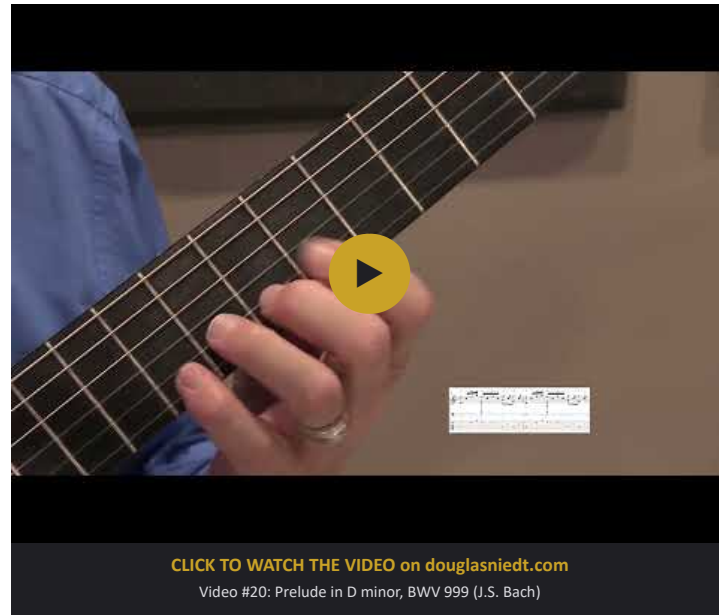
3 *p i m a m i m i p i p i p i m a m i m i p i p i*

Knowing that "m" plucks on the second click of each measure and feeling it pluck precisely on the click helps keep the rest of the arpeggio rhythmically even.

Let me demonstrate in Video #20:

Video #20: *Prelude in D minor, BWV 999 (J.S. Bach)*

You must know which fingers pluck on the beats.



A great example of the importance of knowing which finger is plucking on which beat occurs in the fast E major section of Villa-Lobos' *Prélude No. 1*:

Prélude No. 1 (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

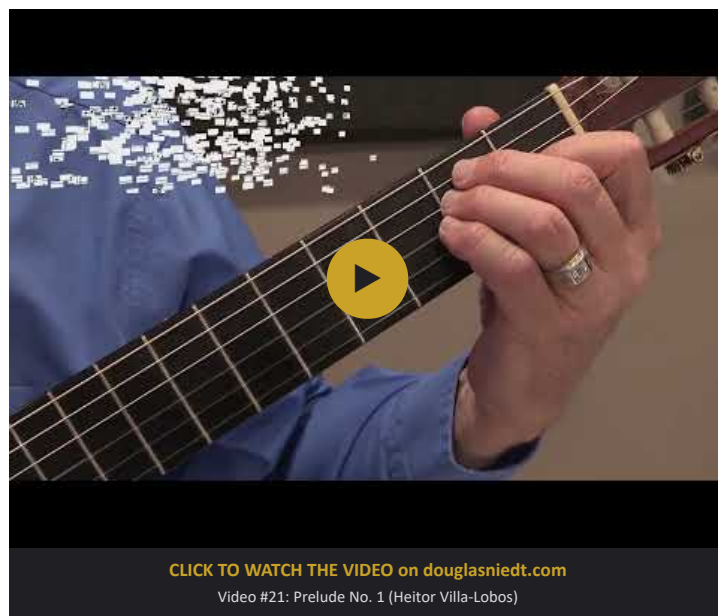
Più mosso

T
A
B

Watch me play it in Video #21:

Video #21: *Prelude No. 1* (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

As written.



I cannot tell you how many times I have heard guitarists mangle this passage. It comes out sounding like this:

Prélude No. 1 (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

The mangled version!



Watch me demonstrate this mangled version in Video #22:

Video #22: *Prelude No. 1* (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

Mangled arpeggio.

PRELUDE NO. 1 by Heitor Villa-Lobos
The uneven, mangled arpeggio.



CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com
Video #22: Prelude No. 1 (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

The solution is to first subdivide the beat into eighth-note metronome clicks:

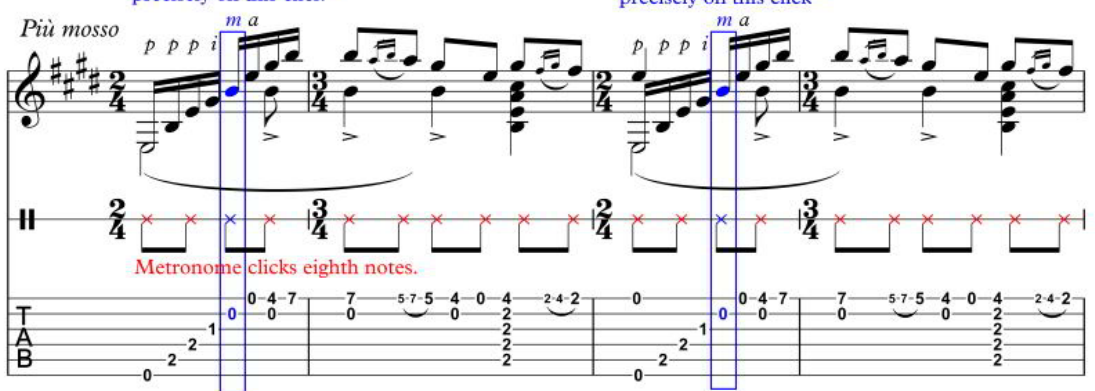
Prélude No. 1 (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

Subdivide into eighth notes.

"m" must be placed precisely on this click

"m" must be placed precisely on this click

Più mosso *p p p i*



Metronome clicks eighth notes.

TAB

This provides plenty of reference points to keep everything even and in order. Be aware that the "m" finger plucks on the third click in the 2/4 measures. Accent it and feel your "m" finger plucking precisely on that click. That will help you feel and control the rhythmic spacing of the notes before and after it.

In Video #23, watch me demonstrate how subdividing the beat into eighth notes helps keep the arpeggio even:

Video #23: *Prelude No. 1* (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

Subdivide into eighth notes.



Next, to work up speed, subdivide up to quarter-note clicks.

Now, you must pay a little closer attention. Be aware that the "m" finger plucks on the second click in the 2/4 measures. Accent it strongly and feel your "m" finger plucking precisely on that click. If you speed up the tempo and always place "m" precisely on the second quarter-note click, the passage will stay in rhythm and can be played very cleanly and musically.

Prélude No. 1 (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

Subdivide into quarter notes.

"m" must be placed precisely on this click

"m" must be placed precisely on this click

Più mosso

p p p i m a

Metronome clicks quarter notes.

0-4-7 7-5-5 4-0 4-2 2 0 0-4-7 7-5-5 4-0 4-2 2

0 2 2 1 0 2 2 1 0 2 2 1 0 2 2 1

In Video #24, watch me demonstrate how to subdivide the passage into quarter notes:

Video #24: *Prelude No. 1* (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

Subdivide into quarter notes.



In the fast scale of the introduction of Tárrega's *Capricho Árabe*, many guitarists play the scale as fast as they can with no understanding of the metrical divisions in the scale:

Capricho Árabe (Francisco Tárrega). This fingering optional.

Subdivide into eighth notes.

The E falls on beat #3. The A falls on the "&" of beat #3.

Metronome clicks eighth notes.

T
A
B

11 12 14 12 11 8 7 10 8 7 10 8 7 0 4 1 0 5 3 2 8

By the way, for total control and understanding of any difficult passage, always write in your fingering for both hands!

In this passage, you must be aware of:

1. Which note is played on beat #3.
2. Which left-hand finger frets that note.
3. Which right-hand finger plucks that note.

AND

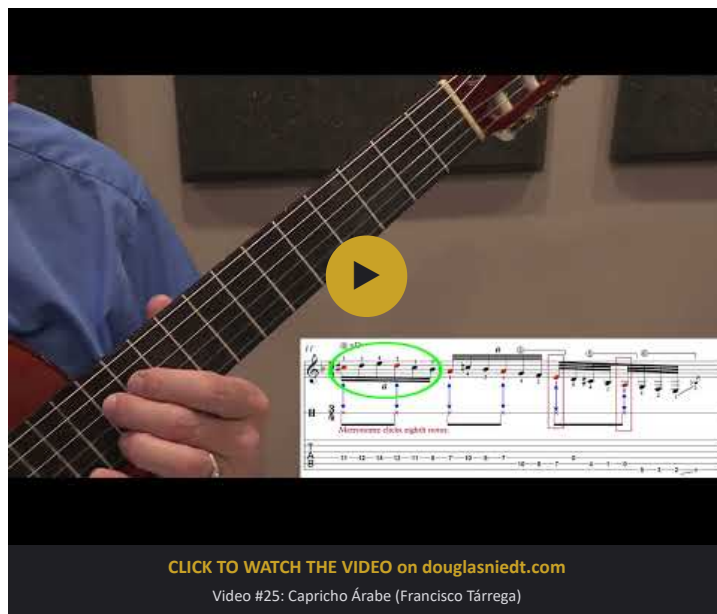
1. Which note is played on the "&" of beat #3.
2. Which left-hand finger frets that note.
3. Which right-hand finger plucks that note.

Understanding the metrical accents of the passage and then practicing those accents with and without a metronome will help ensure the passage is played cleanly and musically at high speed with or without an *accelerando*.

Watch me demonstrate these points in Video #25:

Video #25: *Capricho Árabe* (Francisco Tárrega)

The fast scale subdivided into eighth notes.



CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com

Video #25: *Capricho Árabe* (Francisco Tárrega)

Heitor Villa-Lobos' *Étude No. 1* is a very fast arpeggio. It can be played with several different right-hand arpeggio patterns. The most common is:

Étude No. 1 (Heitor Villa-Lobos) Traditional right-hand fingering.

I prefer the following pattern I learned from Pepe Romero because it can be played much faster with better control by eliminating the "a" finger:

Étude No. 1 (Heitor Villa-Lobos) Pepe Romero's right-hand fingering.

Regardless of which pattern you use, it is imperative that your right hand knows that there is an accent on the open B of beat #3 plucked by "m" in the traditional pattern. Or, if you use the Pepe Romero pattern, the accented open B is plucked by "i".

Many players do not feel or are unaware of this accent and the pattern overall is metrically ill-defined. Or, the notes are uneven in beat #3. Or, because beat #3 is nebulous, the player plucks with the thumb before or after the click on beat #4.

Watch me demonstrate how to use subdivision and the importance of knowing which note is played on beat #3 in Video #26. Also refer to the two musical examples below.

Video #26: *Étude No. 1* (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

Know which finger plays and which note falls on beat #3.



To increase their speed, most players set their metronome to click quarter notes:

Étude No. 1 (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

Normal subdivision into quarter notes.

Metronome clicks quarter notes.

That is okay for intermediate speeds.

But at very fast speeds a better way to emphasize beat #3 is to click half notes, setting the metronome to click only on beat #1 and beat #3 (the opposite of subdividing down to a smaller note value).

That way the hand feels the evenness of the measure as a whole with "p" playing on the downbeat and "i" on the upbeat:

Étude No. 1 (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

Subdivision into half notes.

1

Metronome clicks half notes.

T
A
B

0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2

Again, these points are demonstrated in the preceding Video #26.

Practice a Passage with Two Different Metrical Subdivisions

Sometimes, practicing the same passage with two different types of subdivision works wonders to even out an arpeggio.

Let's look at *Étude in E Minor* by Mauro Giuliani.

Most guitarists would feel an eighth-note subdivision with groups of three notes and the emphasis on "p" and "a":

Etude in E Minor (Mauro Giuliani)

Common subdivision into eighth notes.

1

p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i

Metronome clicks eighth notes.

T
A
B

2

p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i

T
A
B

3

p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i

T
A
B

However, as the tempo of the piece is increased, the arpeggios may begin to gallop. To prevent that and to develop finger independence between "m" and "a", subdivide into eighth-note triplets feeling pairs of notes instead of groups of three. Accent "m" instead of "a":

Etude in E Minor (Mauro Giuliani)

Subdivision into eighth-note triplets helps keep the arpeggio even.

p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i

1

Metronome clicks eighth-note triplets.

p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i

2

p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i

3

Watch me demonstrate how to use two different metrical subdivisions on the Giuliani *Étude* in Video #27:

Video #27: *Etude in E minor (Mauro Giuliani)*

How to practice with two different metrical subdivisions.



As the tempo of the passage is increased, be sure to strongly accent and feel "m" rather than "a".

Use this strategy of practicing with two different metrical subdivisions in the pieces YOU play. It will work on most arpeggios where the notes are in groups of three.

Similar dual subdivision works well on the fast arpeggio section of Villa-Lobos' *Étude No. 11*.

Most guitarists subdivide the arpeggio into eighth notes with the clicks on "p" and "a". They feel the notes in groups of three:

Étude No. 11 (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

Common subdivision into eighth notes.

p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i

Metronome clicks eighth notes.

T 14 10 0 14 14 10 10 14 11 7 0 7 11 14 10 10 14

A 12 0 12 0 9 0 12 0

B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i

T 12 8 0 12 12 8 8 12 9 5 0 5 9 12 8 8 12

A 10 0 10 0 7 0 10 0

B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

But once again, to prevent galloping, it is a good idea to subdivide into eighth-note triplets instead. Feel the grouping of the notes in twos instead of threes. Accent "p,m,m" instead of "pa":

Étude No. 11 (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

Subdivision into eighth-note triplets helps keep the arpeggio even.

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

Metronome clicks eighth-note triplets.

T
A
B
14 10 0 10 14 14 10 0 10 14 11 7 0 7 11 14 10 0 10 14
12 0 12 0 9 0 12 0

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

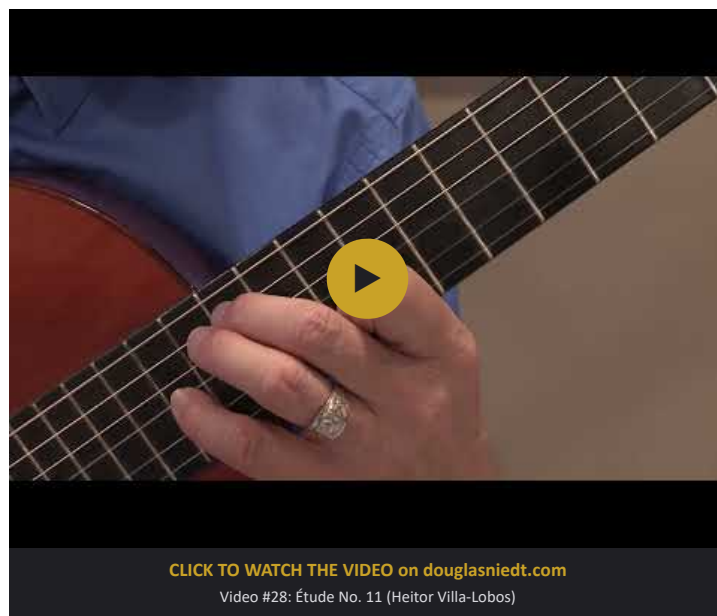
T
A
B
12 8 0 8 12 12 8 0 8 12 9 5 0 5 9 12 8 0 8 12
10 0 10 0 7 0 10 0

This will help keep the arpeggio rhythmically even at high speeds and is also very good practice to develop independence between "m" and "a".

In Video #28, watch me demonstrate how to use dual metrical subdivision in Villa-Lobos' *Étude No. 11*:

Video #28: *Étude No. 11* (Heitor Villa-Lobos)

How to practice with two different metrical subdivisions.



NEXT MONTH:

We will continue to examine Function #3 of the metronome as a practice and diagnostic tool to improve the efficiency of our practicing and therefore, the quality of our final performance.

We will cover how to use the metronome to improve our vibrato, our execution of ornaments, our use of rubato, and more!

Remember to come sit in with the [Rhythm Section](#). You will find fantastic practice videos I have put together with different tempos, click sounds, and levels of difficulty.

And be sure to try out the [DouglasNiedt.com Online Metronome](#).