

HOLDING A TEMPO

Another important skill is to be able to stay in tempo. Some call it, "hold a tempo". In other words, you must **develop the ability to play with a steady beat (maintain the same speed) over the course of several measures or an entire piece.**

When used correctly as in the following exercises, the metronome truly shows its strength as a partner to help you develop and internalize a conception of steady time—your inner pulse.

In this exercise, you will tap/play along with the metronome clicks for several measures. The metronome will go silent and disappear as you continue to tap or play the beats at an unwavering, steady tempo. The metronome will reappear after one or more measures of silence. If you hold the tempo successfully, your ongoing tap and the first re-entry click of the metronome will be perfectly in sync. If your tap and the metronome click are not together, you failed to hold the tempo.

The purpose of the exercise is to develop your ability to maintain an inner pulse when the metronome goes silent. Some people find they do better if they only listen to the clicks and do NOT look at the video.

Tap only, WITHOUT the guitar:



**Rhythm Section, Bounce Metronome PLAY GO SILENT at 60.
Four-Four Meter, Bass Drum**

CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com

If you have been humbled, stay on DouglasNiedt.com and 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.

Try this one in 3/4 time WITH your guitar. In this video I have chosen a Clave Click which **blends really well with the guitar if you play the high C# on the first string at the 9th fret**. Hold a steady tempo throughout AND try to make the click vanish. Some people find they do better if they only listen to the clicks and do NOT look at the video.



**Rhythm Section, Bounce Metronome PLAY GO SILENT at 40.
Three-Four Meter, Clave Sound**

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The exercise becomes progressively difficult as the tempo is slowed. The ultimate test, 40:



**Rhythm Section, Bounce Metronome PLAY GO SILENT at 40.
Three-Four Meter, Clave Sound**

CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com

Again, if you have been humbled, stay on DouglasNiedt.com and 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.

If you successfully did the preceding exercise at 40 with eight measures of silence, you have an exceptional ability to hold a steady tempo. Job opportunities will be plentiful: be a live replacement for Britney Spears' click track, conduct the London Symphony, replace Lars Ulrich in Metallica.

The preceding videos were produced using the [Bounce Metronome](#) developed by Robert Walker (I will discuss the different types of metronomes and their features below). This type of training is called "Go Silent Briefly" in the Bounce Metronome. It is called the "Rhythm Trainer" in the Pro Metronome phone app. The basic idea is that the metronome plays X number of measures and then goes silent for Y number of measures. Some advanced metronomes such as the Bounce Metronome have countless play/go silent options from which to choose.

One More Test

This last video tests your ability to maintain an even beat as the metronome changes from ticking quarter notes to half notes to whole notes to tied whole notes. Continue to tap or play the beats with your guitar at an unwavering, steady tempo as the metronome changes note values. In other words when the metronome changes, do not change with it. Continue your own steady tap of 1, 2, 3, 4. Some people find they do better if they only listen to the clicks and do NOT look at the video.



Bounce Metronome for Tech Tip SHORT TO LONG NOTES at 60 Four Four Meter Bass Drum

CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com

Okay, were you one of the hotshots who thought they could jump right to these exercises, ace them, and wait till next month for Part 2? What's that? You didn't do so well on these tests? Okay hotshot, go back to the beginning and read the entire tip like you should have in the first place.

FEATURES AND TYPES OF METRONOMES

For those who don't keep up with the latest technological advances of metronome science, here is a brief rundown of what features are now available and the different types of metronomes.

Features

1. **Notches.** Traditional metronomes and even many digital metronomes are marked with increases of approximately 5% for each notch or setting. That is why:

From 40-60 each notch increases by 2 bpm (beats per minute)

From 60-72 each notch increases by 3 bpm

From 72-120 each notch increases by 4 bpm

From 120-144 each notch increases by 6 bpm

From 144-208 each notch increases by 8 bpm

Many digital metronomes can be set in increments of 1 bpm. Some can be set in even finer increments with decimal entry. (My online metronome on DouglasNiedt.com has single-digit increments).

Some guitarists prefer the 1 bpm increments so that at high speeds they can increase the setting by 5's or less instead of being stuck with having to skip by 8's in the 144-208 range.

2. **Tempo Range.** The standard bpm range of metronomes is 40-208 bpm. But one can find digital metronomes with ranges that begin at 1 bpm and go into the 1000's bpm. (My online metronome on DouglasNiedt.com has a range of 15-480).

3. **Volume.** Some metronomes are louder than others. Loud is usually better. But it is best to have a volume control. Some hand-held metronomes have a volume control. Phone app metronomes of course can be controlled by the volume control of the phone, but some have independent controls as well. Many online metronomes do not. My online metronome on DouglasNiedt.com does have a volume control. An ear bud jack is always handy.

4. **Click Tone.** Some people are sensitive (my wife for instance) to the tone of the click. She refused to use one of my metronomes in her piano practice because she could not stand the sound of the click. After rummaging through my collection of metronomes I have accumulated over the years, I finally found one she found agreeable. That is one good thing about a lot of software and phone app metronomes. They usually give you options of click sounds from which to choose. Some have a huge variety from which to choose. Most handheld metronomes only have a choice of one or two sounds.

Many metronomes have the same click for every beat. On others you can choose to have certain beats accented or played with a different sound. This can be helpful if you're having difficulty feeling the subdivisions within a meter or beat. But sometimes it can lead to confusion. You just have to try it.

5. **Practice Modes.** Some phone app metronomes and desktop metronomes can be programmed to gradually increase their speeds, either by specific numbers of beats or by ratios over a set period of time. Most make the tempo changes in stairstep fashion. The complex devices and desktop versions can

also make the changes gradual over a specified time that you choose. The developers say these features are for warmup, cool down, building speed, or changing between fast/slow practice. I have never used these features. I find that reaching over and changing the speed manually does not require a great expenditure of energy on my part...

6. **Go silent mode, practice mode, play/mute mode.** The name varies from metronome to metronome. Not many metronomes have this function. You program the device to click for X number of measures and then go silent (mute) for Y number of measures. Then it comes back on, goes off, etc. It is actually very useful to check if you are holding your tempo steady. Most metronomes can only be set to one X and one Y value. Complex desktop metronomes can be programmed to play/mute in any combination of numbers of measures (or time).

7. **Crazy Stuff.** From there, things get crazier. You will find choices of LED or LCD lights, light patterns, choice of complex compound/multiple time signatures, ability to communicate with musicians in other solar systems, choice of complex beat patterns you will never play, complex subdivision, programmable rhythms, Wi-Fi and/or Bluetooth connected units, auto off, timer functions, tone generators, upbeat and downbeat indicators, vibrating metronomes, networking capabilities, programmable practice routines, and other features that will keep you up at night wondering how you can use them.

Types of Metronomes

1. **Traditional pyramid-shaped wood or plastic.** MUST be used on level service. You will need to keep a level in your guitar case! Even on a level surface they are not very precise. Newer versions have options to accent selected beats with a different tone. Overall a poor choice, but their old-school charm does have a certain appeal.

2. **Handheld digital.** Many guitarists prefer the portability of a handheld metronome. Usually these are very accurate and rugged. Beethoven could have thrown one around during a tantrum and it would never have missed a beat. Basic models with a tuner, light-only switch, and earbud jack are inexpensive. More advanced models have additional bells and whistles such as volume control, choice of click tones (including voice), ability to choose time signatures, choice of which beats to accent with varied tones, choice of specific rhythm patterns, auto-off, timer functions, tap tempo, tone generator, pre-beat (upbeat) function, downbeat indicator, etc. etc. etc.

3. **Hand-held talking metronome.** Some people already hate the metronome. When it talks to them, they go bonkers. Give one to someone you don't like as a gift. But seriously, they are VERY effective in correcting rhythm problems. I use one frequently in my teaching.

4. **Online live (as opposed to downloadable) metronomes** are surprisingly limited and are often computer security risks. Many operate with flash which is no longer supported by most browsers unless you specifically allow it. Personally, I would not. Some of the online metronomes I tested contain malware or attempt to direct you to malevolent websites. The [online metronome on DouglasNiedt.com](http://online-metronome-on-douglasniedt.com) is safe, and very easy to use.

In the United States, if you type in "Online Metronome" into Google Search, a metronome will appear at the top of the page. It is very basic, but it works and is safe.

5. **Online downloadable metronomes** are also available, usually with increased functionality. The only one I have tested is the [Bounce Metronome](http://Bounce-Metronome.com). It is very good, does just about everything but cook your

dinner, but is VERY complex. Power user tip: You will need to click "File/Reset Nearly Everything" quite often as you try out all the various functions, do the wrong things, and make a hopeless mess of it!

6. **Phone apps.** I am an Android guy and I began counting how many metronome apps are in the Google Play Store. I gave up after 120. I have only tried a few. Some are simple (nothing wrong with that) and others have tons of features, many of which you will never use. I like [Pro Metronome from EUM Lab](#) for iOS and Android. It is a little complicated, but the complexities can be ignored and the app used in a basic mode. *The downside to metronome phone apps is that they can seriously drain your battery power.*

7. **Vibrating metronomes.** Some guitarists have difficulty playing in sync with the click of the metronome. Or, they (or others in the household) don't want to listen to interminable clicks. Vibrating metronomes were invented for these people, so they can *feel* the beat. I am familiar with two: Soundbrenner and Peterson. Soundbrenner is terrible. It clicks unevenly in both the hardware and phone app versions. The Peterson is excellent.

For \$30-40, one can purchase just the [Peterson BodyBeat Pulse Solo](#) metronome *accessory*. "Connect it to the audio output of your smartphone for use with metronome apps or to a traditional metronome's headphone output. The BodyBeat Pulse Solo converts the click into a clear pulse that you can clip to your belt, shoe, or other desired location. For situations where you can't or don't want to audibly hear your metronome."

Actually, you *can* hear the vibratory pulse. It is very quiet. But I was hoping for absolutely silent.

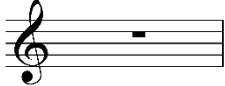
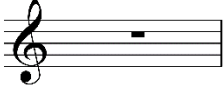
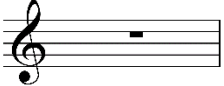
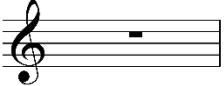
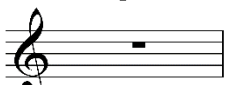
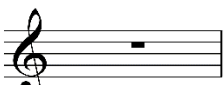
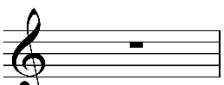
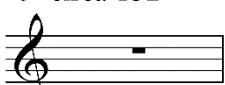
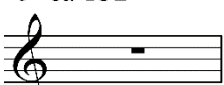
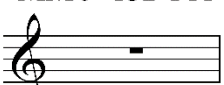
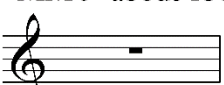
Or, for those who love advanced and amazing gadgets, for \$140 you can purchase the physical Peterson metronome in the full-featured [Peterson Body Beat Sync](#). They tell us The Body Beat Sync® represents the ultimate in musical tempo reference devices and transmits the beat by visual, aural and tactile means. It can be networked with multiple devices onstage for a music ensemble. It can store presets and tempo maps. It too can communicate with musicians in other solar systems.

8. **Drum machines** (hardware and software versions). These are advanced metronomes obviously designed for percussionists but very useful for any musician. They tend to be higher in price, have every feature imaginable, and are programmable.

METRONOME NOTATION

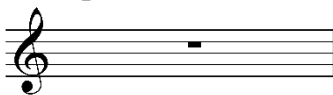
No universal "correct" notation exists. Any and all variations of the styles below are fine. In these examples, the musical note value tells us what kind of note gets one beat or click on the metronome. MM or M.M. means Maelzel's Metronome (not metronome mark). BPM or bpm means beats per minute. "Circa" means approximately.

Styles of Metronome Notation

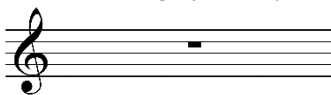
$\text{♩}=72$ 	OR	$72=\text{♩}$ 	M.M. $80=\text{♩}$ 	OR	M.M. $\text{♩}=80$ 
MM $80=\text{♩}$ 	OR	MM $\text{♩}=80$ 	$\text{♩}=112 \text{ b.p.m.}$ 	OR	$\text{♩}=112 \text{ B.P.M.}$ 
$\text{♩}=112 \text{ bpm}$ 	OR	$\text{♩}=112 \text{ BPM}$ 	MM $\text{♩}=\text{circa } 132$ 	OR	MM $\text{♩}=\text{ca } 132$ 
$\text{♩}=\text{circa } 132$ 		$\text{♩}=\text{ca } 132$ 	MM $\text{♩}=132-144$ 		MM $\text{♩}=\text{about } 138$ 

Any descriptive word in any language may be used before or after a marking.

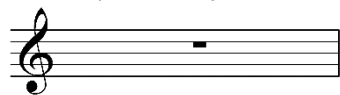
Allegro $\text{♩}=144$



Cheerfully $(\text{♩}=144)$



Sad $(\text{♩}=40-50)$



This style of notation is found in older music.

Allegro (M.M. $\text{♩}=144$)



These four are not recommended. It is always best to specify the type of note that receives one beat.

MM 80



MM=80



M.M. 80



M.M.=80



An alternative measure of tempo is measures (bars) per minute.

Or, some contemporary composers specify the total playing time of a piece to give a feel for the overall pacing of the piece. American avant-garde composer John Cage took this to the extreme. A performance of his piece for organ, *As Slow As Possible*, was begun at St. Burchardi church in Halberstadt, Germany in 2001 and is scheduled to have a duration of 639 years, ending in 2640!

If you already have the ability to count out loud as you play the guitar, you may skip the next section. You are done! See you next month.

Next month, we will examine Function #3 of the metronome as a practice and diagnostic tool to improve the efficiency of your practicing and therefore, the quality of your final performance. We will discuss **specific examples** of how to practice your pieces and exercises with and without the metronome. I will include examples from the repertoire, both intermediate and advanced.

THE FINAL FRONTIER: LEARN TO COUNT AS YOU PLAY WITH THE METRONOME.

In my many years of teaching, I have come to realize that for the beginning and intermediate student, rhythmic weakness or uncertainty is at the root of countless technical and musical problems. In fact, a student will never progress to an advanced level of playing if their rhythm is insecure or faulty.

The ability to count out loud as one plays is extremely important not only to working with the metronome and understanding rhythm, but also to understanding music and how to practice your pieces. If you have not spent much time playing and counting out loud with a metronome, check out my technique tip [Counting Out Loud](#). As I explain in the tip, the skill to be able to count out loud will improve your playing more than almost anything else. The most important skill you can learn has nothing to do with hand positions or sitting positions. Nothing to do with your fingernails. Nothing to do with dexterity or speed exercises. Counting out loud—that is it. Counting quietly or to yourself will not work. You must *count out loud*.

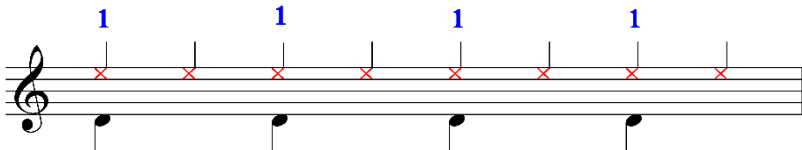
Following is a bare-bones streamlined beginner's guide to learn to count (OUT LOUD!) and play with the metronome. When you count, *be sure to use very short, staccato syllables*. If you are new to this, at first try counting *without* playing the guitar. Once you are comfortable counting, add the guitar.

1. Begin by setting the metronome at 120 with no accented clicks and all the clicks making identical sounds.

Say "One" OUT LOUD on *every other click*. After you are confident in your counting, count out loud and play the guitar at the same time.

♩ = 120

Speak out loud. Say "One" on every other metronome click. Metronome clicks are in red.

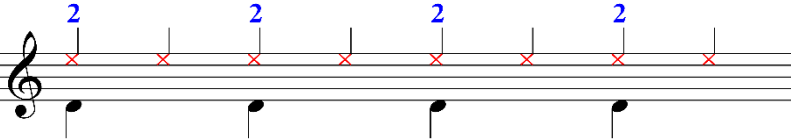


After speaking is mastered, pluck the open D's on the guitar at the same instant you speak each syllable.

Then say out loud, "Two" on *every other* click. After you are confident in your counting, count out loud and play the guitar at the same time.

× = 120

Speak out loud. Say "Two" on every other metronome click. Metronome clicks are in red.

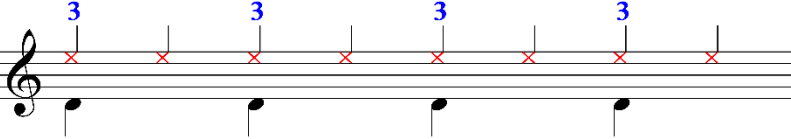


After speaking is mastered, pluck the open D's on the guitar at the same instant you speak each syllable.

Then say out loud, "Three" on *every other* click. After you are confident in your counting, count out loud and play the guitar at the same time.

× = 120

Speak out loud. Say "Three" on every other metronome click. Metronome clicks are in red.

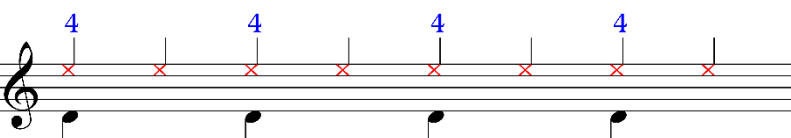


After speaking is mastered, pluck the open D's on the guitar at the same instant you speak each syllable.

Then say out loud, "Four" on *every other* click. After you are confident in your counting, count out loud and play the guitar at the same time.

× = 120

Speak out loud. Say "Four" on every other metronome click. Metronome clicks are in red.

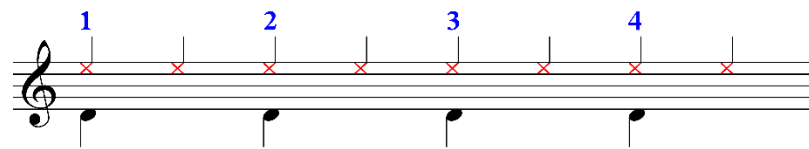


After speaking is mastered, pluck the open D's on the guitar at the same instant you speak each syllable.

2. Next say out loud, "One, Two, Three, Four" but again, say the numbers on *every other* click. After you are confident in your counting, add the guitar, plucking on every other click at the same instant you say a number.

× = 120

Speak out loud. Say a different number on every other metronome click. Metronome clicks are in red.



After speaking is mastered, pluck the open D's on the guitar at the same instant you speak each syllable.

3. Next, on the clicks you were not speaking on, say, "And". Say out loud, "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and", speaking a syllable on every click. After you are confident in your counting, add the guitar. Pluck on every click at the same instant you speak each syllable. Keep your spoken syllables short.

× = 120

Speak out loud. Say a syllable on EVERY metronome click. Metronome clicks are in red.

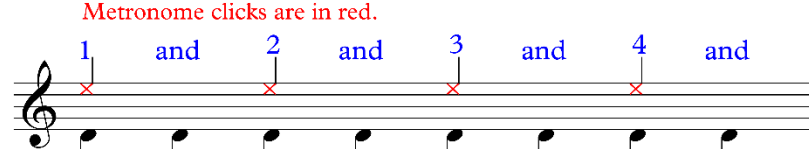


After speaking is mastered, pluck the open D's on the guitar at the same instant you speak each syllable.

4. Change the metronome to 60. Say out loud, "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and" with the numbers spoken on the clicks and the "ands" *between* the clicks. After you are confident in your counting, add the guitar. Pluck the string at the same instant you speak each syllable.

× = 60

Speak out loud. Say a *number* on every metronome click. Say "And" *between* each click. Metronome clicks are in red.



After speaking is mastered, pluck the open D's on the guitar at the same instant you speak each syllable.

5. **To be certain that your syllables and guitar plucks are staying even when you switch to 60, try this next exercise.** Keep counting/plucking, "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and" evenly as the metronome switches back and forth between 120 and 60.

It will give you an introductory measure of four quarter notes (crotchets) and then you will begin playing and counting eighth notes (quavers):

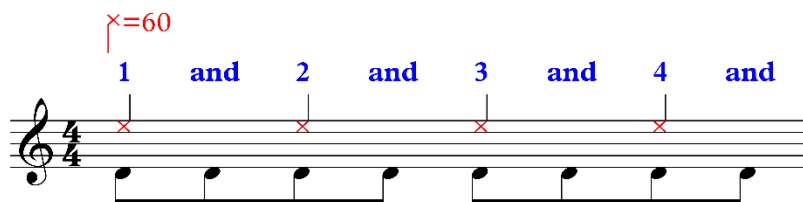


Bounce Metronome for Tech Tip ALTERNATE BACK AND FORTH WITH NOTE VALUE CHANGE 60 TO 120 Four Four Meter Bass Drum

CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com

Congratulations:

You have been counting/plucking eighth notes (quavers) in 4/4 time:

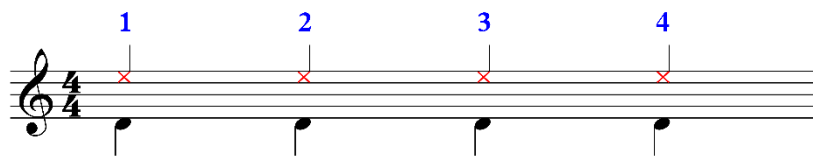


Now, count quarter notes (crotchets) in 4/4 time:

Count quarter notes (crotchets):

⌘=60

Speak out loud, just the numbers, no "Ands": Metronome clicks are in red.



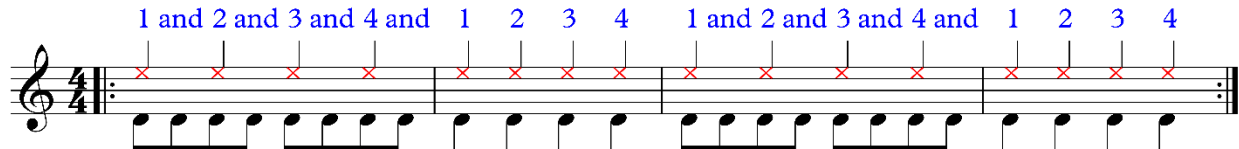
After speaking is mastered, pluck the open D's on the guitar at the same instant you speak each syllable.

6. Next, alternate between counting eighth notes and quarter notes (quavers and crotchets):

Alternate counting eighth notes and quarter notes (quavers and crotchets):

⌘=60

Speak out loud:



After speaking is mastered, pluck the open D's on the guitar at the same instant you speak each syllable.

7. Next, we will learn to count sixteenth notes (semiquavers). We count sixteenth notes with four syllables: a number for the beat, "e" for the second sixteenth note, "and" for the third sixteenth note, and "uh" for the fourth sixteenth note.

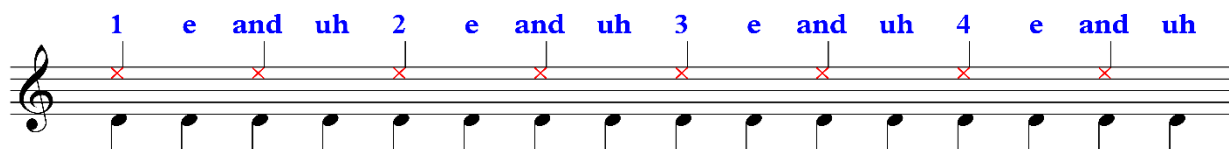
Reset your metronome at 120 and try this exercise. Count without the guitar first. The number syllables and the "and" syllables fall on the metronome clicks. You have to speak fast!

After you are confident in your counting, add the guitar. Pluck the string at the same instant you speak each syllable.

♩=120

Speak out loud. The number syllables and "and" syllables fall on the clicks.
The "e" syllables and "uh" syllables fall between the clicks.

Metronome clicks are in red.



After speaking is mastered, pluck the open D's on the guitar
at the same instant you speak each syllable.

You may need to pluck with "im" if you cannot play
fast enough with only the thumb.

8. Reset the metronome to 60. Count without the guitar first. The number syllables fall on the metronome clicks. You will fit the "e", "and", and "uh" syllables evenly between the clicks.

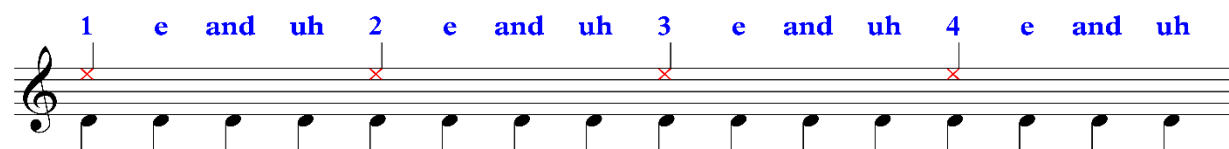
After you are confident in your counting, add the guitar. Pluck the string at the same instant you speak each syllable.

Reset the metronome to 60.

♩=60

Speak out loud. The number syllables fall on the clicks.
The "e", "and", and "uh" syllables fall evenly between the clicks.

Metronome clicks are in red.



After speaking is mastered, pluck the open D's on the guitar
at the same instant you speak each syllable.

You may need to pluck with "im" if you cannot play
fast enough with only the thumb.

Congratulations:

You have been counting/plucking sixteenth notes (semiquavers) in 4/4 time:

♩ = 60
Metronome clicks are in red.

1 e and uh 2 e and uh 3 e and uh 4 e and uh

9. Now, mix it up and switch from quarter notes (crotchets) to eighth notes (quavers) to sixteenth notes (semiquavers) back and forth.

Try these exercises with the metronome set at 120. After you are confident in your counting, count out loud and play the guitar at the same time.

Notice that in the notation, I have replaced the "and" syllables with "&". And I have replaced the "uh" syllables with "a". This is for readability and is the most common notation used in U.S. textbooks. You may also see "+" instead of the "&".

♩ = 120

The "and" syllables are replaced here by "&" and the "uh" syllables by "a" for readability.
Metronome clicks are in red.

Speak out loud:

1 2 3 4 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

After speaking is mastered, pluck the open D's on the guitar.
Pluck with "im" if you cannot play fast enough with only the thumb.

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

1 2 3 4 1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

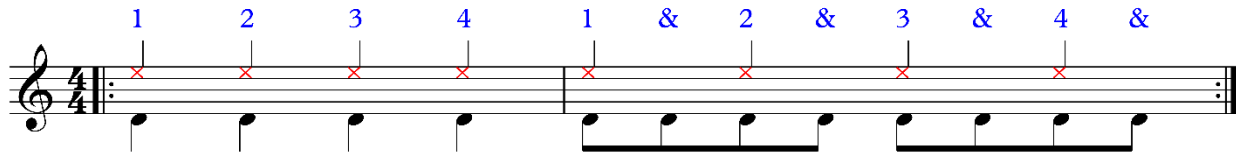
Now reset the metronome to 60. After you are confident in your counting, count out loud and play the guitar at the same time.

♩=60

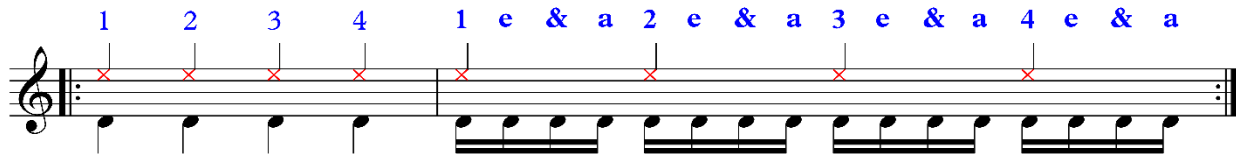
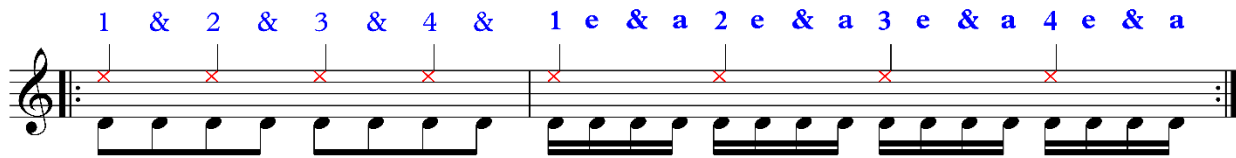
The "and" syllables are replaced here by "&" and the "uh" syllables by "a" for readability.

Metronome clicks are in red.

Speak out loud:



After speaking is mastered, pluck the open D's on the guitar.
Pluck with "im" if you cannot play fast enough with only the thumb.



As I said earlier, the preceding exercises give you the ability to count only the most basic rhythms out loud in sync with a metronome and your guitar playing. If you make it a habit to write the syllables to count in your music, you will soon develop the ability to count, understand, and accurately play complex rhythms.

Next Month:

We will 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.