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Introducing Eighth Notes



Understanding Eighth Notes

In *Lesson 1*, we divided the bar into 4 notes giving us quarter notes.

Now we are going to divide each of those quarter notes in half, producing ***eighth notes***. They are called eighth notes because they divide a bar of common time into 8 equal notes.

You will recall that a quarter note is worth 1 beat. Now that we have cut the quarter note in half, we have two notes per beat and therefore each eighth note is worth half of a beat.

You will see from the example below a bar of quarter notes and a bar of eighth notes.

Notice that we count the quarter notes '1-2-3-4' and we count the eighth notes '1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and'.

Example 1 – Quarter and Eighth Notes.



Understanding Eighth notes (using Right Hand Alternate Picking)

Using the first two fingers of the right hand, ***alternate picking*** makes it easier to play eighth notes. The example shows how to alternate picking using the first and second fingers to play an **A** bass note.

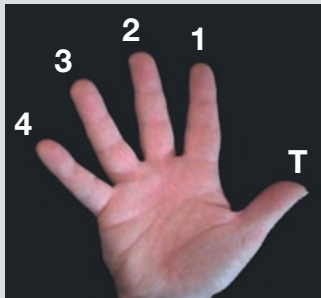
We can develop our understanding of how we play eighth notes by running through the exercise. You will see that we have written the count immediately underneath each note. You alternate your fingers starting with your first finger and the fingering is noted on the second line.

Lesson Objectives

- Understand and be able to count ***eighth notes***.
- Play more rock grooves using eighth notes.
- Introduce the use of a ***plectrum*** (also known as a ***pick***).
- Understand ***right hand alternate picking***.
- Understand the use of ***down*** and ***up strokes***.



Numbering of the fingers of the right hand (the hand that picks the strings)



The fingers of the right hand are numbered from 1 to 4, with the index finger being number 1 through to the little finger being number 4. The Thumb has no number and is referred to as the Thumb.

Both of the next two exercises should be played on the **A** bass note. Count out loud and read the + sign as 'and'. Accordingly, when you count the exercise, you will say: '1-2-3-4-1-and 2-and 3-and 4-and'.

Take some time to watch the video file very carefully.

Exercise 1: Fingering #1

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COUNT	1	2	3	4	1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
FINGER	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2

Alternate picking starting with your second finger

It is also possible to start with your second finger, as our second exercise shows below. This time start with your second finger as noted below.

Exercise 2: Fingering #2

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COUNT	1	2	3	4	1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
FINGER	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1

Introducing the use of the Plectrum (using Down and Up Strokes)

Using a **pick**, or **plectrum**, is another way to play bass notes. It is possible to play eighth notes using a plectrum to play **up** and **down strokes**.

Look at the exercise below. For the first bar, when you are playing just quarter notes, it makes sense to play just one down stroke. In the second bar when you revert to eighth notes, you can play the '+' on the way 'up', with an up stroke.

Watch the video clip below that accompanies this exercise so that you can see how the plectrum is held and used to play the strings. Then have a go yourself along with the play-along file.



How to hold a plectrum

Video 1: Using a Plectrum

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Exercise 3

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The **Down** strokes are marked by this sign.



The **Up** strokes are marked by this sign.



Plectrums or Picks



Developing Eighth Notes by playing Rock Grooves

The most logical thing to do now is to take the rock groove in *Lesson 1* and change some of the quarter notes for eighth notes and build a groove that has eighth notes as part of it. You can play with or without your plectrum.

Exercise 4

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More Rock Grooves

Here are 4 more exercises incorporating eighth notes played on the bass. Play the eighth notes using both fingers to help develop your co-ordination and as always count out loud to help you position the notes accurately. Each of the exercises has the usual video clips and play-along media files to play along with.

Exercise 5

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Exercise 6

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Exercise 7

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Musical notation for Exercise 7: A bass clef staff with a common time signature (C). The melody consists of four eighth notes: A (first space), G (second space), G (second space), and A (first space). The notes are grouped by a horizontal line above them. Below the staff, the notes are numbered 1 through 4, with fingerings A, G, G, and A respectively.

Exercise 8

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Musical notation for Exercise 8: A bass clef staff with a common time signature (C). The melody consists of six eighth notes: A (first space), G (second space), G (second space), G (second space), G (second space), and A (first space). The notes are grouped by a horizontal line above them. Below the staff, the notes are numbered 1 through 4, with fingerings A, G, G, G, G, and A respectively.