

Basic Fingerstyle Technique

Fingerstyle technique or '*fingerpicking*' involves plucking the strings with the fingers instead of strumming with a pick or using the thumb. **Basic Fingerstyle Technique** involves using the first, second, and third fingers to pluck the top three strings of a chord while the bass note (*fourth, fifth, or sixth string*) is plucked with the thumb. The following sections provide a step-by-step approach.

'Align & Assign' Fingers to Strings

While fretting a 'G' chord with the left hand, position the right hand over the soundhole and **align** the fingers as follows: right hand thumb-sixth string, first finger-third string, second finger-second string, third finger-first string. (*shown right*) The first, second, and third fingers are now **assigned** to pluck the third, second, and first strings respectively, while the thumb is assigned to pluck the bass note of the chord. With the fingers now aligned, the next section will show how to fingerpick a 'G' chord arpeggio.

Example



Align first, second, & third fingers.

Fingerpicking Arpeggios

Using the finger numbers assigned to the strings, fingerpick an arpeggio by plucking the string numbers in this order: '6 - 3 - 2 - 1 - 2 - 3'. Use the thumb to pluck the bass note with a *downstroke*, then use the fingers to pluck the top three strings using *upstrokes*. Once each string rings clearly, focus on keeping an even tempo by 'counting' each six-note arpeggio as: '1-2-3 - 1-2-3'.

Basic Fingerpicking: 'G'

1	(3) 3
2	(2) 0 (2) 0
3	(1) 0 (1) 0
4	
5	
6	(T) 3

Finger numbers to pluck with shown in ()

Other Chords: Same Technique

The same *basic fingerstyle technique* can be applied to any chord. The top three strings will always be plucked the same way with the same fingers. The only difference will be which bass note (*fourth, fifth, or sixth string*) the thumb plucks. The tabs below show the basic fingerstyle technique applied to all eight basic chords.

	'G'	'C'	'D'	'E'
1	3	0	2	0
2	0 0	1 1	3 3	0 0
3	0 0	0 0	2 2	1 1
4			0	
5		3		
6	3			0

	'A'	'Em'	'Dm'	'Am'
1	0	0	1	0
2	2 2	0 0	3 3	1 1
3	2 2	0 0	2 2	2 2
4			0	
5	0			0
6		0		

Fingerstyle Progressions (1)

Just about every song in any style of music is based on some type of chord progression. A **progression** is an arrangement of chords, and learning to play a basic chord progression will bring the beginning guitarist another step closer to start learning some basic guitar songs. The following sections will describe how to go about learning and practicing a complete '**G-C-D progression**'.

The 'G-C-D' Progression

The same **basic fingerstyle technique** introduced in the previous lesson will be applied to each chord in this progression, so the entire arrangement can be written out using just chord symbols. How many times each chord is fingerpicked is shown in () below each chord. The best approach to learning the complete progression will be to memorize **one section at a time**.

<u>Section 1</u>	<u>Section 2</u>	<u>Section 3</u>
G - C - G	D - C - D - C	G
(fingerpick) (4x) (2x) (2x)	(2x) (2x) (2x) (2x)	(3x) (strum 'G' to end)

Changing Chords

The primary challenge in playing the '**G-C-D Progression**' will be **changing chords**. Developing the ability to change chords swiftly will take time and practice. One approach to improving the speed of a chord change is to focus specifically on where each individual finger shifts to. For example, when switching from a 'G' to a 'C' chord, focus on how the third finger alone shifts from the first string/third fret of the 'G' chord to the fifth string/third fret bass note of the 'C' chord. This focus can be applied to any finger. With attention to detail and repetitive practice, **muscle memory** eventually develops with the fingers to the point where all fingers will simultaneously move together on chord changes.

Focus on a Steady Tempo

For beginners, the chord changes will initially be slow and challenging, so the '**G-C-D Progression**' is designed to be played at a slow and even **tempo**. To keep an even tempo, fingerpick each arpeggio slowly in order so the 'empty' silent gap that occurs between chord changes will not stand out as much.

Three Challenges in One

Playing the '**G-C-D Progression**' involves three new challenges for the beginner: **fingerstyle technique**, **chord changes**, and **memorization**. For beginners, changing chords will be the most-challenging of the three, however, taking the time to learn and play the complete progression by memory should also be set as a priority. Memorization is essential to live performance (*or at least showing off to friends*), as well as in learning more complex songs.

Additional Notes

- Make sure the thumb plucks the **correct bass note** for each chord.
- For the final strummed 'G' chord, provide a more 'mellow' ending by strumming all six strings gently with the thumb.
- Even though it is more of an exercise than an actual song, the '**G-C-D Progression**' may sound familiar since many popular guitar songs feature 'G', 'C', and 'D' chord arrangements.