

Playing with Rhythm

This lesson will focus on taking the standard Minor scale riffs learned so far and playing them along with accompanying rhythm tracks. The objective will be to hear how these riffs ‘blend’ or harmonize along with a backing rhythm played in the same key. This will be the first step in to what is often referred to as ‘*jamming*’, which is the classic combination of playing ‘lead’ guitar (*riffs*) along with rhythm guitar.

Preparing To Play

The objective here will not be to actually improvise or be creative, but instead to simply hear how the standard riffs harmonize with a backing rhythm. For a beginner, playing riffs simultaneously along with a rhythm may throw off one’s concentration, so setting a pre-arranged ‘*running-order*’ of riffs beforehand makes things easier. A suggested ‘running-order’ of riffs in ‘A’ Minor is shown right. Rehearse the running order first before attempting to play along with a rhythm track.

‘Running Order’ of Riffs

1. ‘The Minor Scale Riff’
2. ‘Low-Strings Riff’
3. ‘Hammer-On Riff’
4. Play Box Pattern

Playing With Backing Rhythms ‘A’

All riffs played with the ‘A’ Minor scale will harmonize with the audio rhythm track in ‘A’ Minor. Simply repeat the ‘running-order’ of riffs (*previous section*) until the track ends. These standard Minor scale riffs are ‘winner riffs’, meaning they will sound good played at any speed as long as they are played ‘verbatim’ (*correct*) and with clarity. Also, the timing of when each riff is played will not initially be an issue as each riff will harmonize when played at any point during the rhythm track.

Finish With a Root Note

Most rhythm progressions in the Key of ‘A’ Minor will end with some type of ‘Am’ chord. The audio rhythm track in ‘A’ Minor, for example, ends with an ‘Am’ chord. For the soloist, playing an ‘A’ root note along with the final ‘Am’ chord produces a cohesive, *harmonized ending*. Of the three fundamental root note positions to play for the ending, the higher-pitched first and fourth string root notes ‘sing-out’ more compared to the lower-pitched sixth string root note. If the ending occurs while in the middle of playing one of the standard riffs, simply abandon the riff and play a root note to produce a harmonized finish. Having a harmonized ending between the lead and rhythm guitars sounds better than having the lead guitar ‘meander’ too long to finish a riff once the rhythm track has finished.

‘Mix & Match’ Riffs

Once the ‘running order’ of riffs can be played along with the rhythm track without difficulty, the next step will be to rearrange or ‘*mix & match*’ riffs in any preferred order one wishes to play. This will be one of the first initial steps to actual improvisation, because even with each individual riff being played ‘verbatim’, the guitarist has the option to decide the ‘running order’ in which the riffs are played.

Rhythm Tracks In Other Keys

There are other audio rhythm tracks to practice ‘jamming along’ with in other keys. (*shown right*). When played in the same key, all of the standard Minor scale riffs will blend in or harmonize with either track.

Audio Tracks

Flamenco Rhythm in ‘A’ Minor
Flamenco Rhythm in ‘D’ Minor
Flamenco Rhythm in ‘G’ Minor