

Rest Strokes

A very helpful technique in developing accurate control on the intrinsic fingering motion of the classical tremolo is to *practice tremolo using rest strokes (apoyando)*. The famous flamenco guitar teacher **Juan Martin** illustrated this tremolo practice technique to me during one his masterclasses. This creates a more intense sound on the a-m-i part, making the transition to free-stroke later on much easier to undertake. It also makes the rhythm of the tremolo feel more natural and is a great warm-up exercise! Here's the example Juan Martin used to illustrate this technique:

Exercise #2

Tremolo Rest Strokes

The first system of musical notation consists of a treble clef staff and a guitar tablature staff. The treble staff begins with a repeat sign and contains two measures of tremolo. The first measure is labeled 'p a m i' with accents (>) over each note. The second measure is also labeled 'p a m i' with accents. This is followed by two measures of tremolo on a single note. The tablature staff shows the corresponding fretting: 0 0 0 for the first measure, 0 0 0 for the second, and 0 0 0 for the next two measures. The final two measures of the system show a transition to a different note with fretting 3 3 3, 3 3 3, 3 3 3, and 3 3 3.

The second system of musical notation consists of a treble clef staff and a guitar tablature staff. The treble staff begins with a treble clef and contains two measures of tremolo on a single note. This is followed by two measures of tremolo on a single note. The final two measures of the system show a transition to a different note with fretting 3 3 3, 2 2 2, and 3 3 3. The tablature staff shows the corresponding fretting: 1 1 1, 1 1 1, 1 1 1, 1 1 1 for the first four measures, and 0 0 0, 0 0 0, 0 0 0, 0 0 0 for the last four measures.

In the following example, the ring finger will be playing on the second string. Again, make sure to keep repeating the outlined pattern for at least a few minutes, in order to train the p-a alternation!

Exercise # 5c

Thumb-Ring finger Alternation - Part II

p a p a p a

T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	7	9	10	7	9	10	7	9	10
B									10

T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	7	9	10	7	9	10	7	9	10
B									

T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	7	9	10	7	9	10	7	9	10
B									

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

Scales with middle-ring finger alternation

The “a”-“m” (ring finger to middle finger) movement is the second trouble spot when executing the classical guitar tremolo. A very effective way to increase the autonomy of these fingers is to **practice scales using strict alternation of “a”-“m”**, both free-stroke & rest-stroke.

Here is the E Phrygian scale in the 1st position played using **strict alternation of “a”-“m”**. Take your time with these exercises! Try to project a clear, well-rounded sound from your instrument.

Exercise #6

Middle-Ring finger Scales - Part I

a m a m a m a m a m a m a m a m

T
A
B

0 1 3 0 2 3 0 2 3 0 2 0 1 3 0 1

a m a m a m a m a m a m a m a m

T
A
B

3 1 0 3 1 0 2 0 3 2 0 3 2 0 3 1

Variable Accents

Another way to greatly improve the rhythmical evenness of your tremolo technique is by using **variable accents**. The most practical way of doing that is *to practice it slowly with a slight but obvious accent on "m"*. This will subdivide the usual 16th note pattern of the tremolo into two distinct groups of two 8th notes each. After considerable practice, when the tremolo is sped up, the accent on the middle finger tends to dissolve, leaving an even tremolo technique. There is significant physiological association between the middle & ring fingers, and this practicing technique helps considerably in creating more independence between these them. Use the metronome to mark time points on "p" and "m". We will see a very similar concept to this recommended by classical guitarist *Sharon Isbin*.

Exercise #9

Variable Tremolo Accents

The musical notation for Exercise #9 consists of a treble clef staff and a TAB staff. The melody is written in a 4-measure phrase, repeated. The notes are eighth notes, and the rhythm is a tremolo. The first two measures have accents on the middle finger (m), and the last two have accents on the ring finger (i). The TAB line shows fret numbers: 0 for open strings and 2 for the second fret on the second string.