



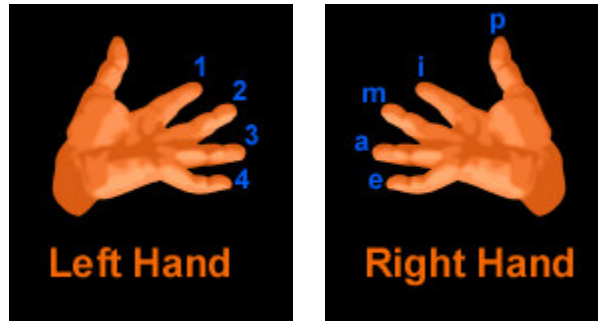
The Flamenco Guitar

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The right hand in flamenco is very special. Although flamenco hand is very similar to classic guitar playing, the right hand is where they part.

You base flamenco on what is called "up- and down strokes" with your fingers. The fingers on your right hand are named "p, i, m, a, e", thumb, index, middle, ring and little finger.



In order to play these flamenco techniques fairly well, you need strong finger nails. For this, you can use super glue and a piece of regular napkin. You first apply a layer the napkin and then apply drops of super glue until its all covered on the nail. If you want thicker nails, apply some more glue and repeat this with another layer of napkin. Finally, you file and polish the nails with a buffer to an oval shape. The length of the little finger should be longer than the others to compensate the length.

Your first exercise will be to do an up and down strokes with your index fingers. You let your thumb rest on the E-base-string. Then you bend your index finger up to the palm were your thumb starts. From there you flick out the index downwards across the strings. Then you come back, hitting the strings on your way up to the starting position. Here is how it looks like, written in notes:



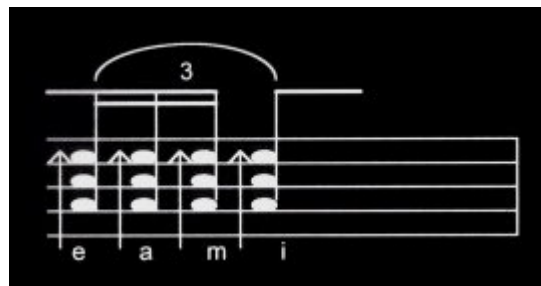
The first arrow marks the downbeat with the index and the second, the upbeat. Now you can practice this a few times. Notice that you don't drag your index across the strings. You hit them so it sounds like one beat. Do this continuously, down-up, down-up...etc. Now, you're starting to feel a rhythm. Then you increase the speed. This is where the flamenco

developed from. From here we go to the basic techniques used in flamenco.

The word "rasgueo" is used in flamenco and embraces all strumming techniques using one or more fingers. What you have just done was the index finger rasgueo.

4-STROKE RASGUEO

Next step is to do the 4-stroke rasgueo. You rest your thumb on the E-base-string. Then you flex all your fingers so they nearly touch the palm. You start with the little finger (e) so that it hits the strings downwards across the strings. Then follows, the ring finger (a), the middle (m) and the index finger (i). You can start doing this at a slow speed. Try to get equal force with each finger. Now this can be hard to do with the little finger (e) and the ring (a), so you need to practice. Notice that these are all down strokes. Here's how it looks like written in notes



5-STROKE RASGUEO

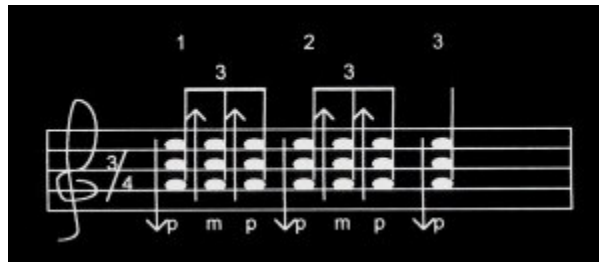
Next step is the 5-stroke rasgueo. There are two differences from the 4-stroke rasgues. The first is that the accent of the rasgueo falls on the first stroke made by the little finger (in the 4-stroke rasgueo, it falls on the final stroke with the index). The second is that the rasgueo ends with an index finger upstroke after the e a m i sequence of down strokes.

Here's how it looks like in notes and this time I will add some index finger down- and upstrokes.

ends with the triplet rasgueo technique. This technique is very difficult for beginners. It takes a lot of practice to master.

You only use two fingers in this technique, the thumb (p) and the middle finger (m). You start with your hand below the treble strings. Then you swing your thumb so it hits the strings on your way up (upstroke). When your thumb and hand is above the base string, you flex your middle finger up to the palm and then flick it out so it hits the strings on your way down (down stroke). When you have completed the down stroke with your middle finger, you continue by doing a down stroke with the thumb. So, you first have upstroke with the thumb, then down stroke with the middle and down stroke with the thumb. This one is a triplet rasgueo. Now, in order to have a rhythmic effect, you often continue by doing several triplet rasgueos. When your first triplet rasgueo is done, you start over again by doing the upstroke with the thumb etc. The triplet rasgueo is often executed in a fast speed, but you start practicing in a slow speed and then build up it up.

The accents of the triplet rasgueo always fall on the upstrokes with the thumb. Here is the notation:



The piece above is written in 3/4 time and notice that the accents on the upstrokes with the thumb lies on 1 2 and 3. It sounds like this:

1 2 3
One and a Two and a Three

This is, of course, at a slow speed. When the speed is faster, you don't mark the accents that much.

Now, these rasgueos that I have shown are the most common of the strumming techniques used in flamenco. Of course there are hundreds of variations of these used in different patterns, but I won't get in to that! Instead, I will show you some other techniques that are not strumming. They are the "alzapúa", "tremolo" and "picado".

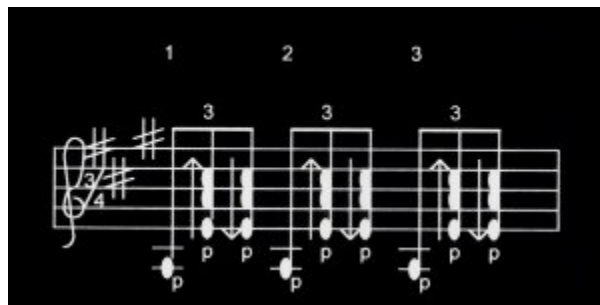
THE ALZAPÚA

If you look at the Gipsy Kings or any flamenco guitarist, you soon notice that they use their thumbs very much in different techniques. One of these techniques is called alzapúa. The name alzapúa (from alzar="lift" or "raise" and púa="point" or "pick") comes from the use of upstrokes with the thumb in this very flamenco technique.

In its most typical form today, alzapúa consists of a rapidly repeated pattern of three types of strokes with the right hand thumb. The thumb-stroke is played in the following order:

1. First, the thumb plays a down stroke chord across the strings from a well-defined note as the lowest note of the chord that is sounded. The note belongs to the melody and is the most important part of the chord.
2. Next, the thumb plays a strong upstroke on the same chord, hitting the strings with the edge of the nail. It is the emphasis on this upstroke which gives the rhythm its characteristic syncopation and urgency.
3. Thirdly, the thumb plays a single melody note with a firm stroke on a bass string. This string is either the same as the one the next down stroke of the thumb starts from or, commonly, it is the next one lower.

The notation could look like this:



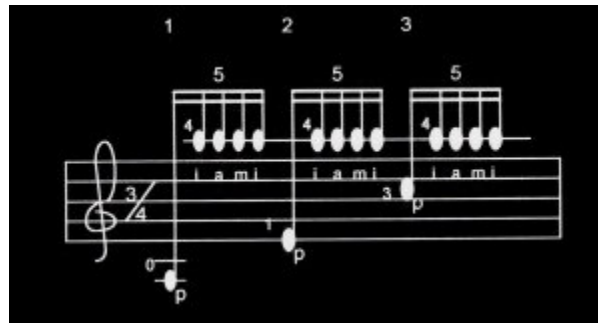
If you don't read notation, the chord above is A. Here, we start with the single thumb stroke (normally you start on the down stroke with the thumb as mentioned above on the A base string).

THE TREMOLO

This technique is more like classical guitar playing. But there is a difference between the flamenco-tremolo and the classical tremolo. In flamenco you have 5 notes to one beat and in classical you have 4 notes to one beat. It is played with an initial thumb stroke on a bass note first, followed by four tirando strokes with the fingers on the treble. It is

therefore written p i a m i (the classical is p a m i). *Tirando* means that your striking finger does not touch an adjacent string. The opposite is *Apoyando*, where you thumb or fingers come to rest against the next adjoining string at the completion of the stroke. The rhythm is important and that you strike each note with equal force and length in order for it to sound unbroken, like running water.

Here is the notation:



Now you have a lot of numbers and letters, let me explain. This is also written in 3/4 time and the numbers 123 at the top mark that. The number 5 above the notes marks that it is 5 notes to one beat. The other numbers, at the left of each note, mark the position of your left hand fingers (The figures on the first page shows the fingers' numbers). You already know the letters I guess.

Let me explain more of the left hand finger position. This is an Amoll chord and the first stroke with the thumb is on the loose A base and the number 0 marks that it is a loose string. The four following strokes (i a m i) is made on fifth fret on the E treble string and the number 4 marks that you use you fourth finger (the little finger).

The next beat starts with the thumb stroke on the note E and the position is on the second fret on your D string (first base string) with your number 1 finger.

The following i a m i sequence is the same as before. The last base note is taken with the third finger (3) on the fifth fret on your G string (third treble string). That note is C

PICADO

In picado (literally `picked`) playing, passages of single notes are played with apoyando (I explained this on page 8) strokes of alternative right hand fingers. The commonest method is to use alternatively with the index and middle finger. With practice, the technique can be developed to achieve brilliant speed and attack in playing runs of single notes. It is also used for

slower passages of melody. In flamenco, single melody notes are always played apoyando rather than triando.

Your thumb rests on the E-base string and your index and middle finger are fairly straight with the movement coming from the knuckles. You kind of press your index finger and string downwards towards the soundboard. After the pick, you slide over and come to rest on the lower string above. Then follows the middle finger doing the same thing. Then gain with your index etc.

Remember to do this with alternate strokes. You should not pick a note with the same finger twice. For example, if your last pick was with the index and you should go from a higher string to a lower, it's easy just to let your index slide over to the lower. THIS IS DEAD WRONG! You should use the middle finger for this.

Well, I guess that's all for flamenco right hand techniques, most of what you commonly hear in flamenco music are improvisations on these basic techniques. With practice, you will become to make your own improvisations.