

Expanding Your Rhythm Repertoire – Ivan Rosenberg © 2018

1. Emulating rhythm guitar

- The basic "boom-chick" on guitar is root-strum-fifth-strum. Learn to do the basic version before moving on to more complicated rhythm patterns.
- This usually sounds best if the bass notes are picked near the bridge for a tighter, more defined sound.
- The strum part can be done with a metal pick or your thumb. Learn to do both.
- For very fast music, fake the strum by gently hitting the high string only.
- When you add some upstrokes, generally it sounds best if this is intermittent, not all the time—it's easy for this to sound too busy and clanky. We want to support the music, not distract from it.
- Experiment with walk-ups and bass runs.
- Listen to the rhythm guitar greats—bluegrass guitar is bass-note heavy with a more subtle strum. I try to emulate the sound Larry Sparks, Chris Jones, and Del McCoury. We'll never sound just like a guitar, but we can fill that role in a bluegrass band.

2. Shuffle rhythm

- This can be effective on classic country music. To do this you keep your hand pretty stiff in one shape. As you pick the bass note with your thumb, try to half-mute it with the side of your hand near the palm rest. At the exact same time you pick the thumb note, your metal picks land on strings 2 and 3. They're quietly picked as you lift your hand away in the recovery motion to do another thumb note.
- Try to have a rhythmic, muffled sound to this so it sounds good in the background.
- Remember to count this in triplets with the accent on "three-one" for the proper effect: "one two **three one** two **three one** two three..."

3. "Sensitive New-Age Dobro" Rhythm

- Thumb on the low string, thumb on the 4th string, tap strings 2 and 3 with your metal picks, and then just lift them away without trying to pick them. The 'tap' and following notes should be subtle.
- This technique can be mixed and matched with the 4-note partial-bar arpeggios as needed.
- For the arpeggios, practice doing them with very relaxed fingers so the sound is smooth and flowing (as opposed to rigid and staccato). No pick blocking—let the notes flow together.

4. The Chop

- Go for a dry, crisp sound. Aim for the higher strings in most cases. If you're hearing notes, your hand isn't falling on the strings soon enough (or it's not at all).