

own combinations of up and down...but keep your rhythms even and maintain a tempo that is reasonable. And remember—watch your hand when you practice. Be aware.

By now you probably have a sound like down/down/down/“twang”/down. Try lifting your finger on different beats. Or reverse the process: Strum with the strings open and mute whichever beats you want. Either way, notice the emphasis or accent you are giving. Try increasing the force with which you strike the strings on that upbeat without lifting your finger. It’s the same effect, but with a little different tone.

Speaking of tone, that’s another way to accent. Tone refers to the quality of the sound. We started playing four to six inches up from the bridge, but if you strum closer to the bridge, the tone sharpens until finally, when you are playing almost on top of the bridge itself, you get a very metallic “twanging” sound. The strings are more rigid there and resist vibrating to their fullest capacity.

In strumming, what we’re striving for is a lateral swinging motion of the arm and wrist that uses the different sound colors produced by strumming anywhere from right on the bridge to four to six inches up from the bridge, where the tone is very blended and mellow. You probably won’t be using this lateral strumming technique immediately, but you might begin exploring the variety of subtle sound colors you can achieve.

Additional tonal quality and string emphasis can be added by changing the angle at which you strike the strings. If you roll your hand slightly toward you as you strum, you get treble (unison string) emphasis; if you roll your hand away from you, emphasizing the bass string, the bass becomes dominant. When using this wrist-roll technique, you bisect the plane of the strings from about a 30-degree angle either way and accent whichever string you want.

Practice your strumming... it’s the only way you’ll be able to play with a fluidity that will be a part of your music. You first lay down a basic strum. So it

