

Pickin' can be broken down into four separate styles:

- 1 Strumming
- 2 Flat-pickin'
- 3 Finger-pickin'
- 4 Beating, Scraping, Banging, and Other Specialty Styles

We've already started with strumming. To further your strumming techniques, try different kinds of picks—different thicknesses, shapes, or materials, such as felt, tortoise shell, whittled wood, or “Appalachian style” with the quill end of a goose feather.

In this section, we're going to concern ourselves with the three other kinds of pickin'.

FLAT-PICKIN'

To flat-pick, you strike the individual strings within different rhythmic schemes. The pick is held as if for strumming; however, the motion comes entirely from the wrist, with the pick descending in small arcs to pluck each individual string according to the sequence.

For example, call the unison strings “position one,” the middle string “position two,” and the bass “position three.” A simple flat-picking sequence is like this:

1 – 3 – 1 – 2
1 – 3 – 1 – 2
1 – 3 – 1 – 2
1 – 3 – 1 – 2...and so on

The “one” stroke is picked away from you and the “two” and “three” strokes are picked toward you so that you achieve a fluid motion and maintain a rhythm. Another common practice sequence is:

1 – 1 – 3
1 – 1 – 3
1 – 2 – 1 – 2 – 1 – 2 – 3...and so on