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**Principles of Guitar Strumming**

Over the years I’ve played guitar, I made several adjustments to my strumming hand that greatly improved my strumming technique and my overall rhythm guitar playing. You’ll see different players do different things with their strumming hand and you’ll sometimes see good players who do things in a way that’s opposite to what I describe and recommend. However, making these specific changes allowed my rhythm playing to significantly improve and I’ve also seen a great deal of improvement in my students who have been able to successfully implement the changes I recommend.

* **The movement of your strumming hand should originate from your wrist - not from your forearm or your elbow.**

Many players, including me at first, have their strumming motion come primarily from their forearm or elbow. I recommend having your strumming motion originate from your wrist. That’s not to say that you won’t move your forearm or elbow at all. You want all of the movement in your forearm and elbow to come as a result of the movement of your wrist – not the other way around. You also want to keep your elbow and forearm as still as possible and let your wrist do the work. In fact, I pretty much keep my elbow and forearm ‘anchored’ in the area above the low E string so that my strumming motion comes from my wrist.

There are several reasons I recommend doing this. The strumming motion coming from the wrist is a natural movement for your wrist to make. The motion coming from your elbow and forearm isn’t natural. I often liken it to the movement of the blade of a windmill. It’s not natural for your elbow and forearm to move that way and you’re more likely to injure yourself strumming in that manner.

You also have more dynamic and volume control over your strumming hand if you strum from your wrist. These are extremely important aspects of rhythm guitar playing and you are able to go much further as a player and sound better overall if are able to strum with dynamics and with more purpose.

Also, your guitar tone is also better due to the way the pick hits the strings and the more dynamic way you play when you use your wrist to strum.

* **Keep your wrist (and the rest of your arm) loose and relaxed.**

This is a key aspect of strumming from your wrist that can’t be overlooked. You want your wrist to be as loose as it possibly can. Think of it like having a ‘dead’ hand. I also describe the motion as what is used to distinguish the flame of a match without blowing it out by shaking the match.

The loose wrist may feel funny at first but it will become a natural feeling and movement for you over time.

* **The direction of the pick moving across the strings follows the natural curvature of how your wrist moves.**

Since you keep your elbow and forearm anchored near the low E string, you will notice that the way the pick moves across the strings follows how your wrist naturally moves. You want to strike the high E string in a different place than the low E string.

* **Always keep your strumming hand moving!**

This is another huge principal for rhythm guitar playing. If you are playing eighth note based music, you want your strumming hand to move up and down directly in relation to the up beat and down beat. If you are playing 16th note based music, you want to keep your hand moving right along with the 16th note groove. This will immensely help your overall sense of rhythm and your internal sense of keeping time. I can’t recommend doing this highly enough. Many guitar players struggle with their time and if you keep your strumming hand moving, you will get much better in that area!

* **Practice thoughts!**

In order to get the maximum benefits of strumming from your wrist, you want to practice in different tempos, different rhythms (alternating between quarter notes and eighth notes for example), and different dynamics. You want to be able to have enough control with your strumming hand so that you can easily control whether you strum powerfully, normally, or softly.

Also, try practicing in front of a mirror. This will allow you to see exactly what you’re doing and to easily make adjustments and improvements.

* **Questions or comments?**

If you have any questions or comments, please email me at eric@ericstoneguitar.com. Be patient with this strumming method as it can take weeks or even months to fully master it. If you feel that you need additional guidance in this area or if you want to learn about other aspects of guitar playing or music, I teach private lessons and classes in person in the Denver/Boulder area in Colorado and I also teach worldwide via Skype.