

LUTHER'S WALK

THE LUTHER PERKINS-STYLE BACKUP LICK

Though the Luther Perkins lick is a *backup* technique, no lesson on Nashville lead style would be complete without it. Perkins was Johnny Cash's lead guitarist for many years and played on all of Cash's early hits, such as "I WALK THE LINE." The backup lick he popularized has become an essential C&W "sound."

The lick can be played using *first position* or *moveable* chords. The guitarist damps the bass strings, Travis style, and plays an alternating root and 5th in the bass. A clipped "down" stroke on the 4th or 3rd string takes the place of the Carter-style brush down-up. Add some Carter-style bass runs, damp every note, and you have the Luther Perkins-style lick. Here it is in two keys (using first position and moveable chords).

Key of E:

Fast two-beat

First system of musical notation for the Luther Perkins-style backup lick in the key of E. The treble clef staff shows a melody of eighth notes: E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4. The bass clef staff shows a bass line of eighth notes: E2, G2, E2, G2, E2, G2, E2, G2, E2. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 2/4. The system is labeled with 'E' above the first measure and 'A' above the third measure.

Second system of musical notation for the Luther Perkins-style backup lick in the key of E. The treble clef staff shows a melody of eighth notes: E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4. The bass clef staff shows a bass line of eighth notes: E2, G2, E2, G2, E2, G2, E2, G2, E2. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 2/4. The system is labeled with 'B7' above the first measure and 'E' above the third measure.

Key of C:

First system of musical notation for the Luther Perkins-style backup lick in the key of C. The treble clef staff shows a melody of eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The bass clef staff shows a bass line of eighth notes: C2, E2, C2, E2, C2, E2, C2, E2, C2. The key signature is no sharps or flats. The time signature is 2/4. The system is labeled with 'C' above the first measure and 'F' above the third measure.

Second system of musical notation for the Luther Perkins-style backup lick in the key of C. The treble clef staff shows a melody of eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The bass clef staff shows a bass line of eighth notes: C2, E2, C2, E2, C2, E2, C2, E2, C2. The key signature is no sharps or flats. The time signature is 2/4. The system is labeled with 'G' above the first measure and 'C' above the third measure.