

# Sweep Picking

By Neal Nagaoka

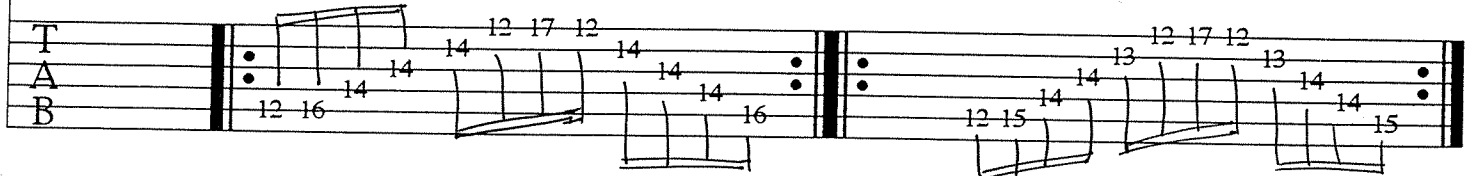
This is a technique that was adapted to guitar from violin. A commonly used technique that is used to execute arpeggios. Many people tend to think that this technique sounds very Classical sounding which it can if used with a Classical sounding progression. Well hopefully this will break that myth but I suggest we take these in steps so we will start with the typically generic sounding Classical examples first.

Lets start with the basic triads. Major shape and the Minor shape. I usually tend to relate them with open chord shapes. What I mean by this is for example, take 1a. This pattern is a A major Arpeggio but if you look closely, the pattern reminds of an A Barre chord at the 12th fret or you can look at it as an open A chord but 12 frets higher. Example 1b. is an A minor arpeggio that looks similar to an open A minor chord. Example 2a looks like an E chord and 3a looks like a D chord while 2b looks like an E minor chord and 3b looks like a D Minor Chord.



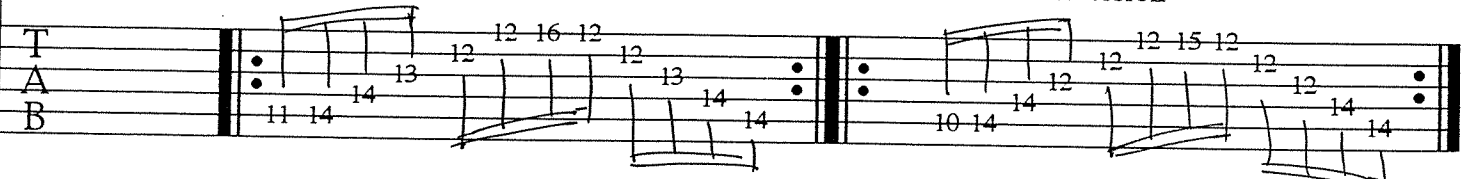
1.a A Major Root Position

1.b A Minor Root Position



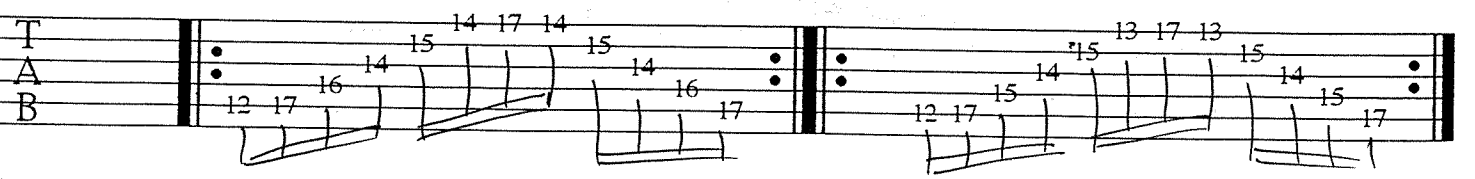
2.a E Major 1st Inversion

2.b E Minor 1st Inversion



3.a D Major 2st Inversion

3.b D Minor 2st Inversion



The key to executing these cleanly is basically to do them over and over but I highly recommend practicing these with a metronome at a slow speed. The object of making the sweeps sound good is to make sure they are even and in tempo. Let's take example 1a. Since this pattern contains 12 notes, we have to systematically break them up into 2 groups of 6s. Think of the ascending half as group one and the descending half as group two. Another thing to keep in mind is when there are 2 notes on a string, pick just the first note and hammer on the second note. The only exception to this is when you are actually using the second note as a pivot point like in the 7th note in the example below. Once you have mastered this, the technique will gradually become much easier to do with any arpeggio.

4a. A Major Root Position

Group 1                      Group 2

Exercise 4b. shows the actual direction of the picking and which notes to hammer on and pull off. Just remember when you practice these to keep them as even as possible and in time.

Λ = Up stroke      H = Hammer On  
 V = Down stroke    P = Pull Off

4b. A Major Root Position

V   H   V   V   V   V   Λ   P   Λ   Λ   Λ   Λ

So now you have the basic idea of how to sweep an arpeggio but the next question usually follows, "How do I use them when I am playing a song or when I am improvising?". One common way to use them is to follow a chord progression. Lets take example 5 with a generic I vi IV V progression in the key of C Major.

C                      Amin                      F                      G

Example 5a Generic progression in C Major

The next step is to decide which arpeggios to use to follow this progression. This ones up to you but for practical purposes, I reccomend mixing different inversions around so you dont have to jump around the entire fretboard to follow a progression. Below, I have given several possibilities to follow the progression so try to find one that you think feels most comfortable for you at first and then try experimenting.

Example 5b. Parallel motion

# Warmup 17

8<sup>va</sup>

20—15—17—17—15—18—13—15—15—13—15—12—13—12—13—10—11—10—11—10

Loco

12—8—8—9—8—8—10—6—6—7—6—6—8—3—5—5—5—3—6—1—3—3—3—1

5—5—3—8—3—5—7—6—6—10—6—6—9—8—8—12—8—8—10—11—10—13—10—11

8<sup>va</sup>

12—13—12—15—12—13—15—15—13—18—13—15—17—17—15—20—15—17—19—18—18—22—18—18—17