

# Embellishment

This lesson is entirely focused on **common techniques used by guitarists in order to enhance their melodies and solos**. All the techniques you will discover or re-discover here really define every guitarist playing style.

Each guitarist may focus on some techniques and less on others. They may use some techniques in a very specific, original and sometimes distinguishable way.

Throughout your musical journey you will find out what you like and do not like. This will make you unique ! I really encourage you to learn the common embellishments. If you feel like you need more techniques because you of course already master the common ones, you can explore the more advanced ones.

## Common embellishments

- **Vibrato** : I put this one first on purpose. This is the most important one since you will use it for almost every single note you play. It will really characterise your playing. Vibrato is a musical effect consisting of a regular, pulsating change of pitch. It is used to add expression to vocal and instrumental music. Vibrato is typically characterised in terms of two factors: the amount of pitch variation and the speed with which the pitch is varied.
- **Slide** : It involves sliding on one string from a lower fret to a higher target note, or from a higher fret to a lower target note.
- **Hammer-on** : technique performed on a stringed instrument by sharply bringing a fretting-hand finger down on to the fingerboard behind a fret, causing a note to sound. This technique is the opposite of the pull-off.
- **Pull-off** : is a stringed instrument playing and articulation technique performed by plucking or "pulling" the finger that is grasping the sounding part of a string off the fingerboard of either a fretted or unfretted instrument. This technique is the opposite of the hammer-on.
- **Bending** : guitar technique where fretted strings are displaced by application of a force by the fretting fingers in a direction perpendicular to their vibrating length.
- **Double-stop** : A double-stop is nothing more than two notes that you play at the same time. It falls somewhere between a single note (one note) and a chord (three or more notes). You can play a double-stop on adjacent strings or on nonadjacent strings (by skipping strings). You can actually be creative and play more than just to note and combine it with bends, slides or hammer-ons.
- **Ghost notes** : it is a percussive hit on the guitar with no pitch. So, when you mute the strings with your fretting hand, and strike them with the plectrum, that is a ghost note.
- **Leaving space** : this may sound stupid, but I take this time to hammer on the fact that not playing anything can sometimes be very musical ! Never be afraid of leaving space in your solos or melodies. This can actually greatly improve them ! Never underestimate the power of silence.

## Advanced embellishments

- **Pre-bending** : bend a note up a half step – or even a whole step (or whole tone) – before picking the string. Once the string is bent upward in pitch (let's say from C to C#) it's picked, then brought down to the actual pitch (in this example, C natural).
- **Legato** : describes the collection of techniques used to change between notes in a quicker, more expressive way. These include hammer-ons, pull-offs and slides.
- **Tapping** : short name of fretboard tapping or finger tapping, a technique where the fingers hammer down (tap) against the strings in order to produce sounds rather than striking or plucking the strings. If both the left and right hand are used then it is called two-handed tapping.
- **Harmonics** : "Playing harmonics" on guitar is actually playing "artificial harmonics." Basically, it is a way of eliminating the fundamental and the other overtones. It produces a nice effect that many guitarists like to use.
- **Alternate Picking** : guitar playing technique that employs alternating downward and upward strokes in a continuous fashion. If the technique is performed at high speed on a single string or course voicing the same note, it may be referred to as "tremolo picking" or "double picking".
- **Hybrid Picking** : guitar-playing technique that involves picking with a pick (plectrum) and one or more fingers alternately or simultaneously.
- **Sweep Picking** : plays single notes on consecutive strings with a 'sweeping' motion of the pick, while using the fretting hand to produce a specific series of notes that are fast and fluid in sound. Both hands essentially perform an integral motion in unison to achieve the desired effect. Also called "economy picking".