

## INTRODUCTION TO STRUMMING

Learning chords in guitar is often coupled with learning strumming patterns. Strumming is the action of brushing your pick over multiple strings. The opposite of strumming is picking, where your pick strikes one string at a time. In this introduction, you will learn how to strum and read strumming patterns.

There are two basic movements we make when we **strum**. There is the **down strum** (down stroke) and the **up strum** (up stroke). The down strum strikes all the strings in the chord being played, while the up strum aims for the higher sounding strings.

When strumming, hold your pick lightly. This will ensure you don't scrape the strings. Brush your pick over your strings without resting your pick on any of them.

A **strumming pattern** is a series of down/up strums in a repeated rhythm. They may be indicated in standard music notation or written as arrows and counting. While there are numerous kinds of strumming patterns, we will only look at two examples.

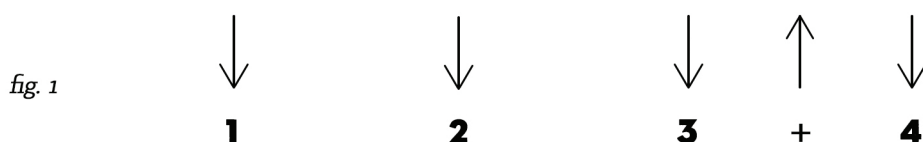


Figure 1 is an example of an **eighth note strumming pattern**. The eighth note is the note strummed on the and (+) of 3. This pattern consists of four down strums and one up strum, landing between the third and fourth count. The down strums all land on the quarter note beat while the up strum lands exactly between beats 3 and 4, thus doubling the strumming speed for that note. Counts 1, 2, 3 and 4 are emboldened to indicate the main pulse of the **time signature**.

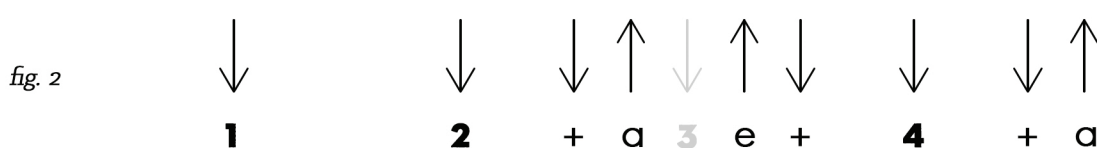


Figure 2 is an example of a **sixteenth note strumming pattern**. Sixteenth notes are counted with “e” and “a” (pronounced ee and ah). In this pattern, only the sixteenth notes are up strums, while the rest are down strums. Also notice the greyed-out 3 and the down strum above it. This indicates a **silent strum**. This is a downward motion with your right hand without touching the strings. Be sure to still count this strum as if you were actually strumming it.

Get in the habit of tapping your foot with the pulse when you strum. This will strengthen your sense of rhythm and will give coherence to your strumming patterns.