



Hammer Ons & Pull Offs!

Oh, the Wonderful Things You Can Do...

Hammer ons and pull offs are some of the most important techniques that you can do on guitar.

They add variety and interest and are the makings for great guitar parts. They are great for adding speed and flourish to your playing.

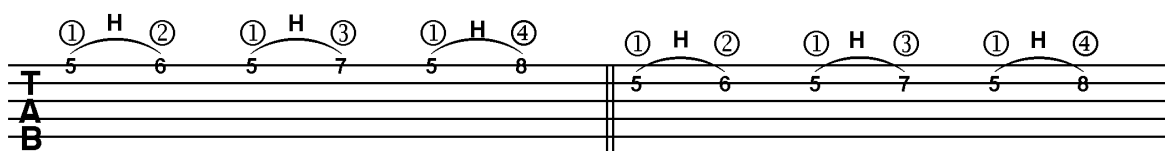
Hammer Ons with Single Notes

Let's first look at hammer-ons from a note that is fretted.

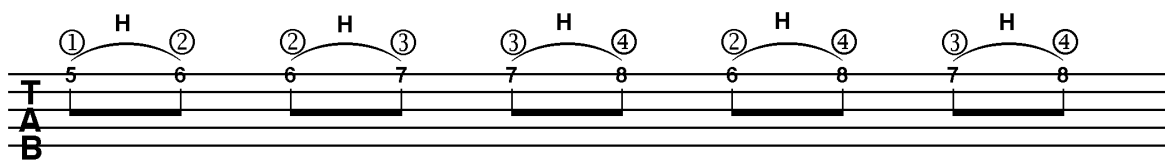
A hammer-on is when your fretting finger makes a quick strong movement onto the fretboard causing the note to sound.

You aren't plucking the note. The force of the fretting finger coming on the fretboard causes the note to sound. You want the note that is hammered on to be the same volume as a plucked note.

Hammer-ons are notated in written music with a slur line between the notes involved and an "H" is written above it. To give us some practice with these put all of your fingers on the first string at the 5th fret – also called the "5th" Position. The circled numbers in the music are finger numbers.



Let's practice some other fingering combinations for hammer ons.



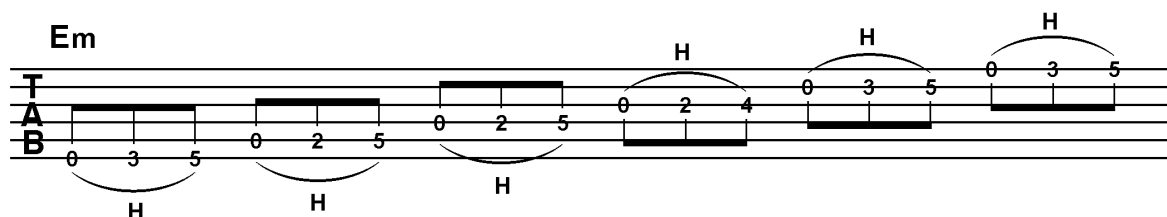
You can also hammer on from an open string.

For example, practice hammering on from 1st string open E to 3rd fret G, then from 1st string open E to 5th fret A.

You can also add two hammer ons together creating a triplet.

Play 1st string open E to G to A and other combinations.

Let's take an Em pentatonic scale form and hammer on from the open string.



Hammer Ons with Chords

So, we've used hammer ons with single notes but you can also do them with chords to give some chords some movement.

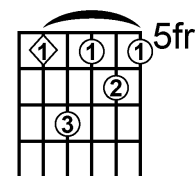
Let's use the 5th string barre Dm7 as an example.

Practice adding a few hammer-ons and pull-offs to some of the melody notes in this chord.

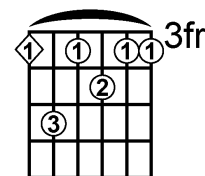
Here's another example, look at the 6th string barre G7.

You don't have as much room on this form because most of your fingers are busy but you still can hammer-on a few of the notes with your pinky or even the 2nd finger to get a bluesy sort of sound.

Dm7



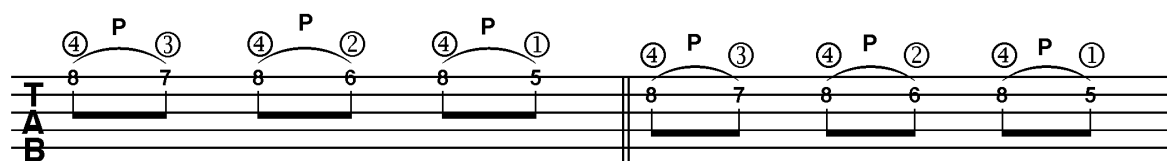
G7



Pull Offs

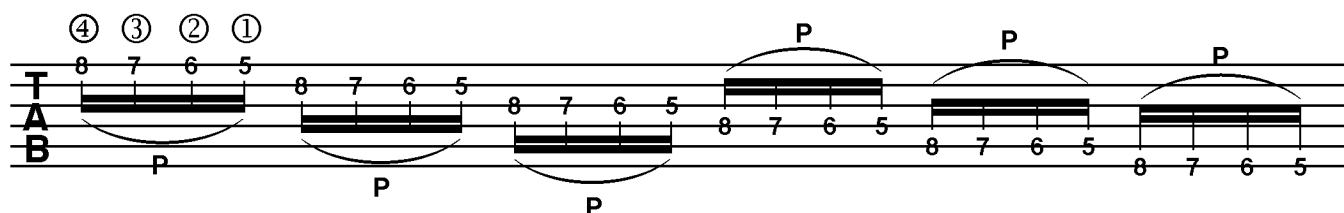
The reverse of hammer ons is a pull off.

A pull-off tugs on the string with the fretting hand finger in a downward motion causing the note to sound without actually plucking the string.



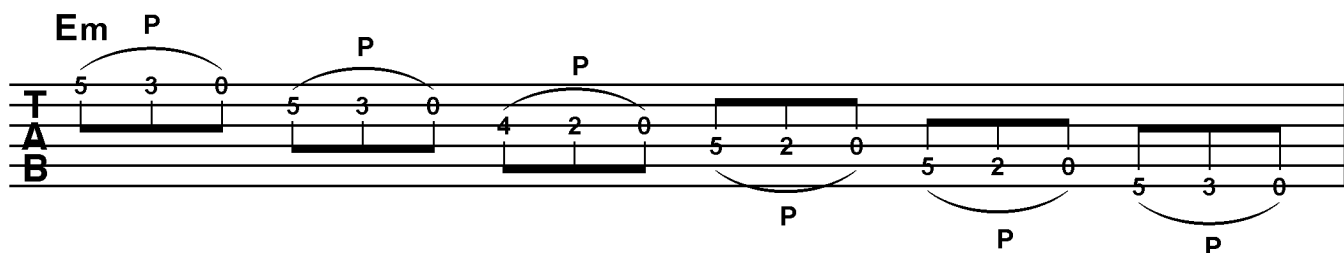
The key to a good pull off is the downward tug as you pull off.

Let's practice going from each finger on each string as shown here.



Remember to give counter pressure with the other finger so that you don't pull the string out of tune.

Let's apply pull offs to the Em pentatonic scale example we used before – pulling off to the open string as we descend.



Hammer Ons and Pull Offs with Open Strings

Open strings - one of the coolest things you can utilize in your playing to get some great sounds relatively easy!

Combining open strings with hammer-ons and pull-offs can create a wide variety of sounds that only a guitar could make happen.

Let's cover several ideas using open strings that can be worked into your own playing to create sounds ranging from Fingerstyle to Celtic!

These type of musical ideas work best in keys that use a lot of open strings like the keys of E, A, D, G, C, Em, and Am.

Let's look at the key of E major.

E Major Scale on First String

To get started, play the E major scale ascending and descending using only the first string.

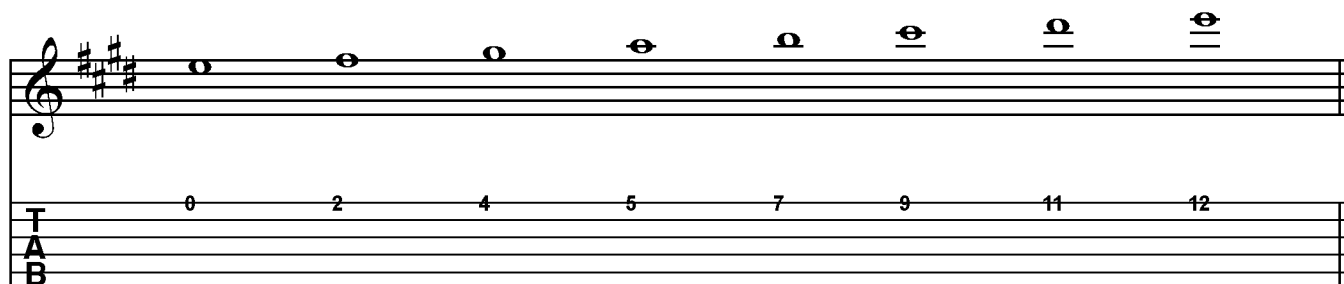


Diagram showing the E major scale on the first string, ascending and descending. The scale is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are E (open string), F# (2nd fret), G# (4th fret), A (5th fret), B (7th fret), C# (9th fret), D# (11th fret), and E (12th fret). The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers: 0, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12.

E Major Trills

Trills can be done on each of the E major scale notes. A trill is a rapid alternating of two notes that are relatively close to each other. In this case the two tones are going to be the E major scale tones that are next to each other - either major or minor seconds.

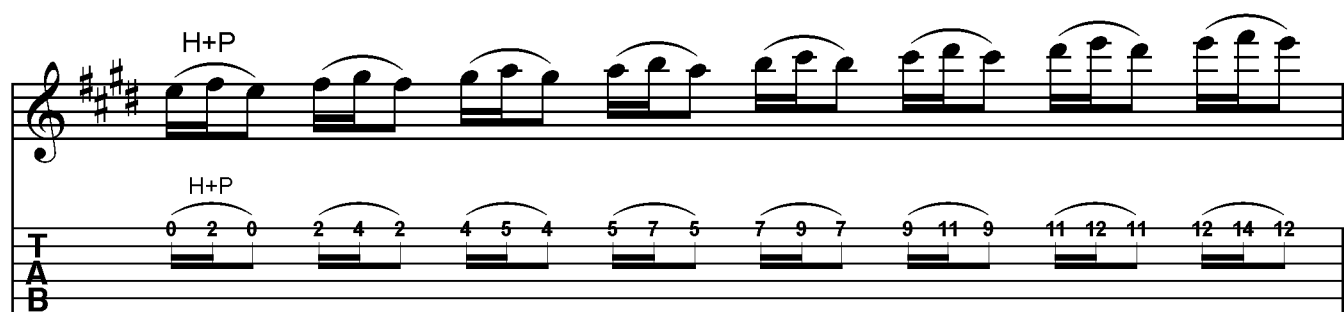


Diagram showing E major trills on the first string. The trills are written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are E (open string), F# (2nd fret), G# (4th fret), A (5th fret), B (7th fret), C# (9th fret), D# (11th fret), and E (12th fret). The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers for the trills: 0 2 0, 2 4 2, 4 5 4, 5 7 5, 7 9 7, 9 11 9, 11 12 11, 12 14 12.

E Major Trills with Open String

The next example adds an open string 1st string E note at the end of each trill.

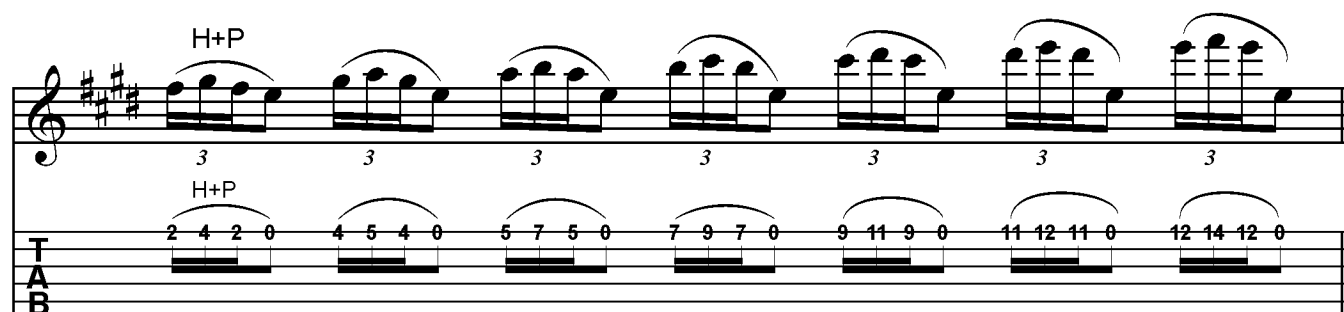
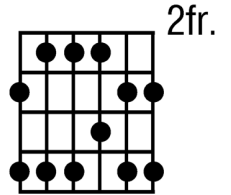
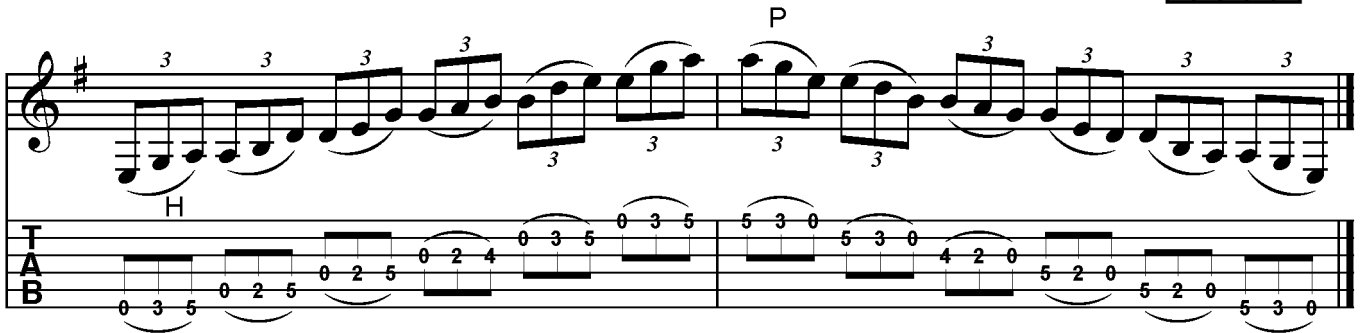


Diagram showing E major trills with an open string 1st string E note at the end of each trill. The trills are written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are E (open string), F# (2nd fret), G# (4th fret), A (5th fret), B (7th fret), C# (9th fret), D# (11th fret), and E (12th fret). The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers for the trills: 2 4 2 0, 4 5 4 0, 5 7 5 0, 7 9 7 0, 9 11 9 0, 11 12 11 0, 12 14 12 0.

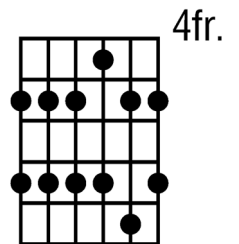
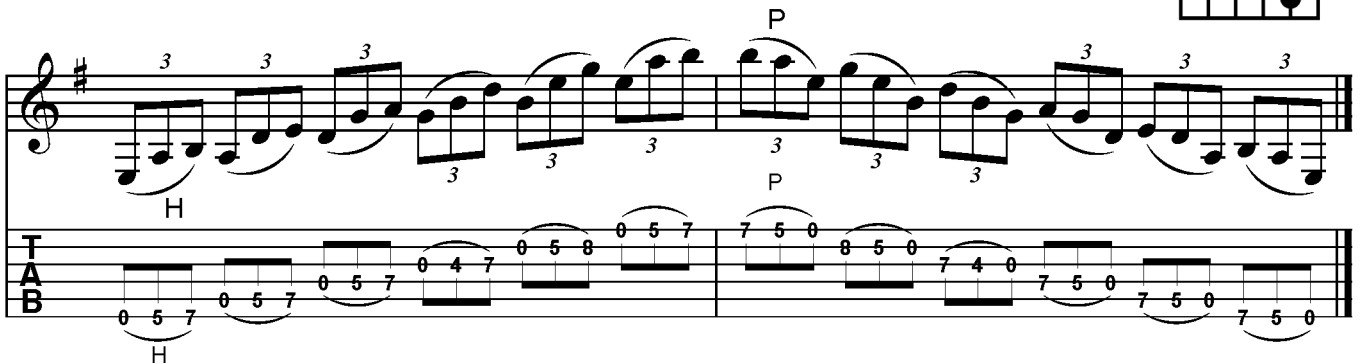
E Minor Pentatonic Scale with Open Strings

Now, let's switch to an idea using an E minor pentatonic scale form.

The form is shown on the right. An open string precedes each note of the form. Ascend using hammer-ons and descend using pull-offs.

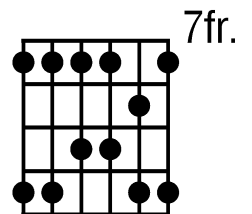
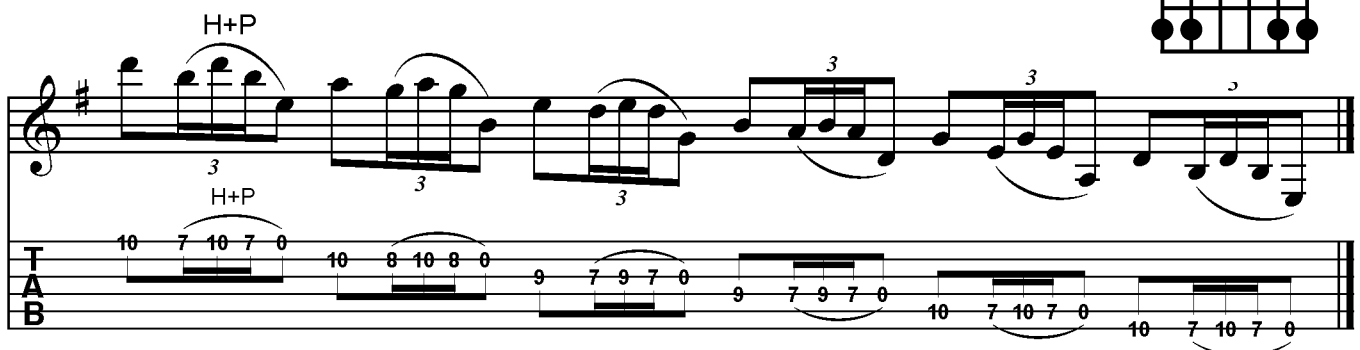



The same idea can be applied to the next pentatonic form up the neck.

E Minor Pentatonic Trills with Open Strings

Move up to the next pentatonic form in Em and descend starting on the highest note of the pattern on the string, do a trill between the two notes then pulling off to the open string.

When playing patterns like this remember to have the open strings as notes within the key.

Celtic Triads with Open Strings

This final example is in the key of E major and uses triads combined with open strings to form arpeggios. Combining these in triplets gives a Celtic sound.



The image displays two identical systems of guitar notation for a piece in E major. Each system consists of three staves: a standard musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#), a guitar-specific staff with a 6/8 time signature, and a TAB staff. The musical notation features triplets of eighth notes, some marked with 'H+P' (hammer-on/pull-off), and open strings. The TAB staff shows fret numbers (7, 4, 7, 4, 0, 9, 5, 9, 5, 0, 2) and open string indicators (0, 2).

Hammer Ons and Pull Offs with Scales and Licks

Have you ever heard a guitarist just rip through a fast run as he plays some solo or song?

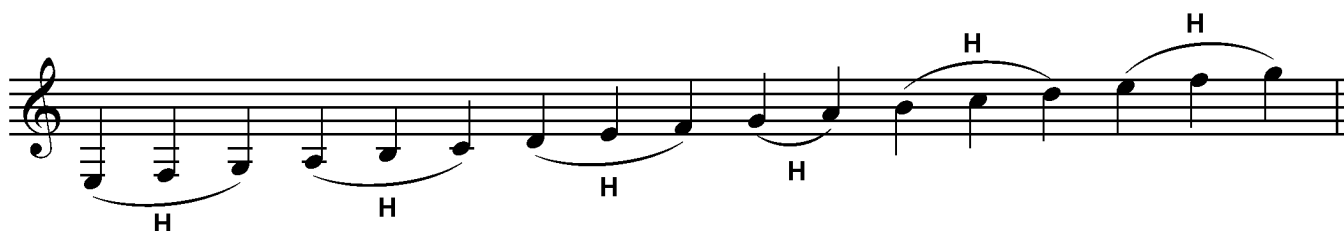
You may wonder “How is he doing that?” “What notes is he using?” Or “Is he actually thinking about all of those notes or is it some pattern?”

Well, the answer is that you can create fast and impressive sounding runs with a simple technique incorporating major scales, open strings, and hammer-ons and pull-offs.

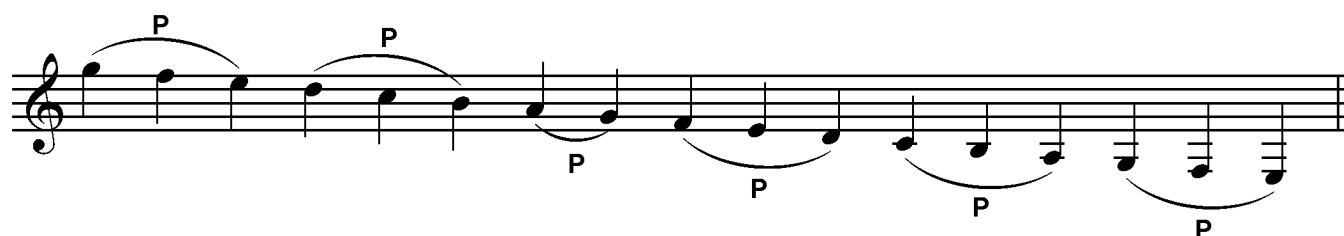
Let’s use these hammer-ons and pull-offs in some scales as we build up to playing fast open position runs. We’ll start with the key of C.

Scales and Licks in C or Am

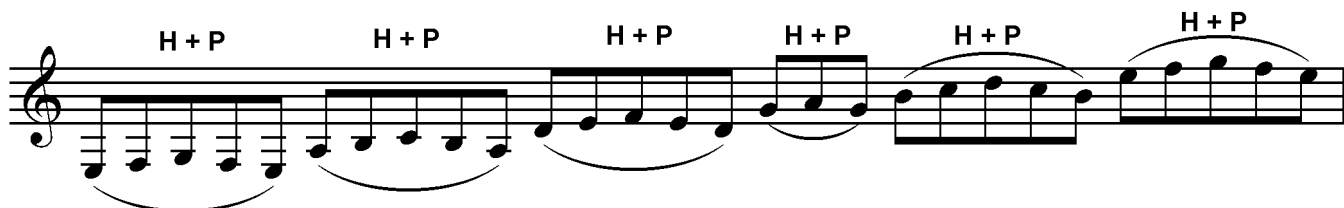
Here is an ascending C major scale starting on a low E. Use hammer ons on the notes in each string set. Try to make each note the same volume.



Try to play it descending in pull offs.

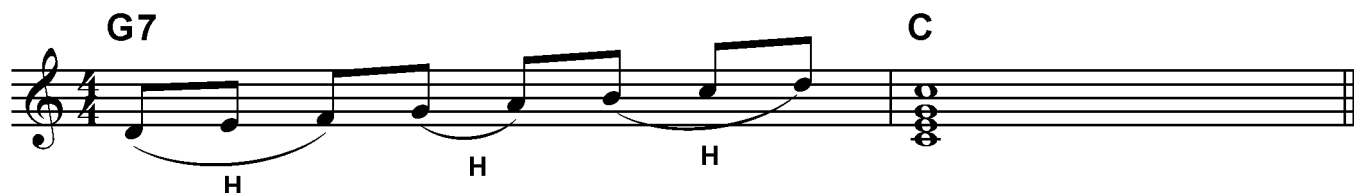


Now, let’s do some patterns using hammer-ons and pull-offs for each string set.

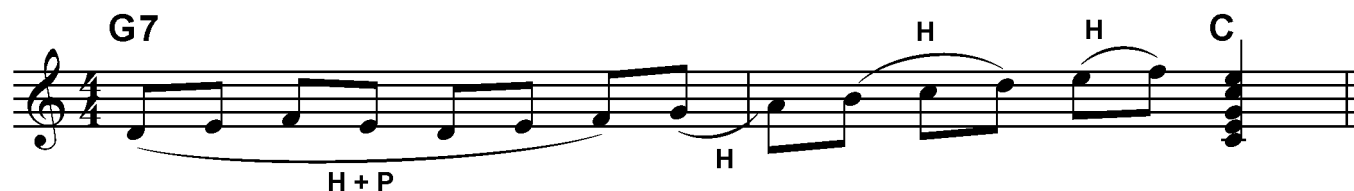


By now, you've had a lot of practice on getting the scale forms under your fingers, now let's put them together into some usable licks for you.

Let's put this open position scale into a basic lick that you can use when going from a G7 to a C—the V to the I in the key of C.

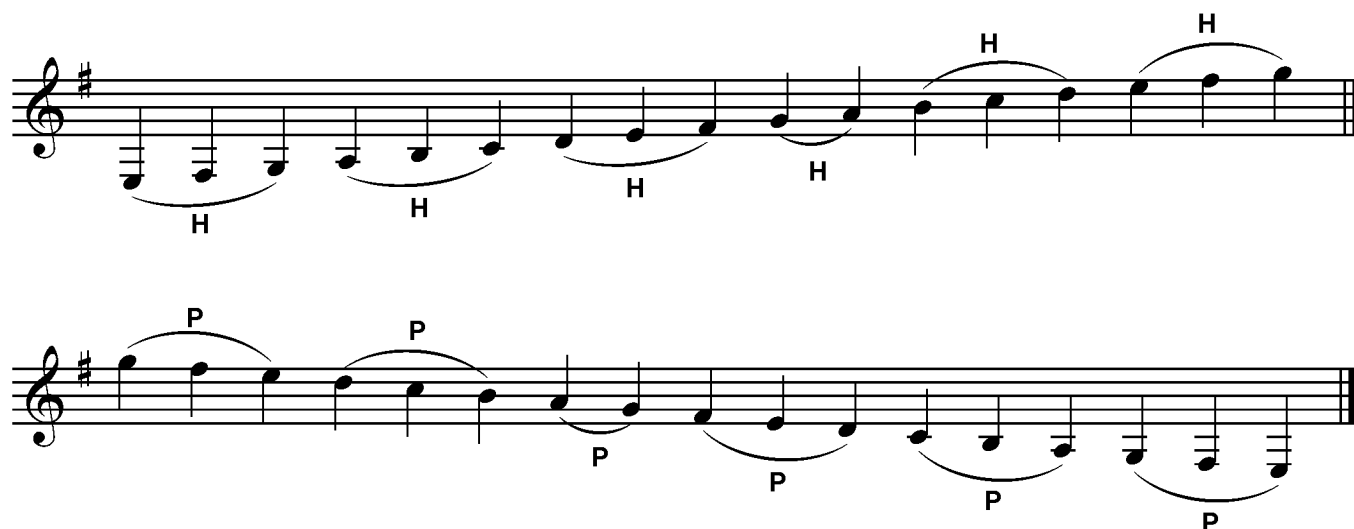


Here is an advanced version of this lick that flips around on the notes a little more. Remember when playing this lick to let any notes possible to ring out—like the F, A and C.

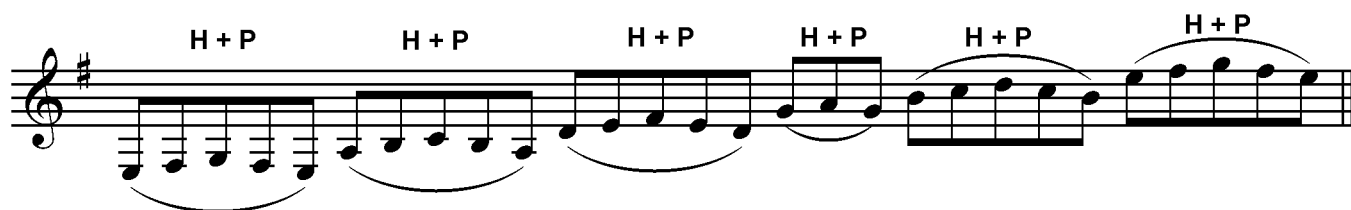


Scales and Licks in G or Em

Now, switch to the key of G which has 1 sharp – F#. Remember, with each of these keys there is a major key and it's relative minor. So, patterns in the key of G major also work for the key of Em. Play the G/Em scale ascending and descending.



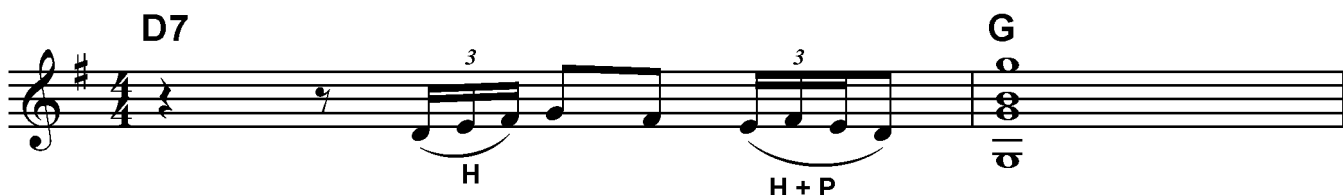
Play these G/Em scale notes in a hammer on and pull off pattern for each string.



Now that you're familiar with the scale, let's use it for a basic lick that works between a D7 and G.



Just like before, the advanced lick adds more flipping on and off of these notes.

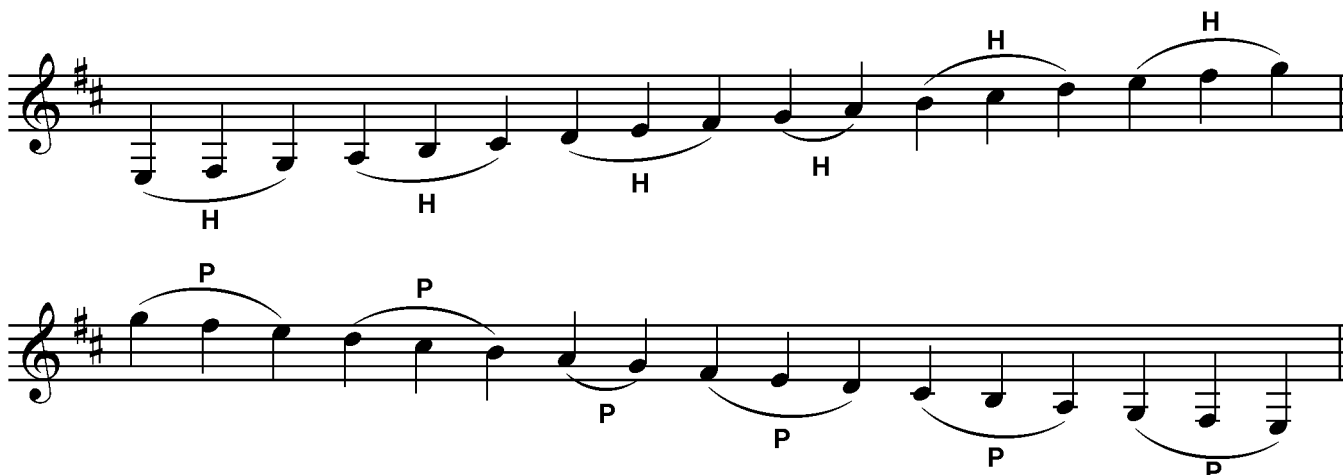


These licks work great at the end of any song in the key of G. Practice all of these and make up others on your own. These are great little tricks to have in your arsenal.

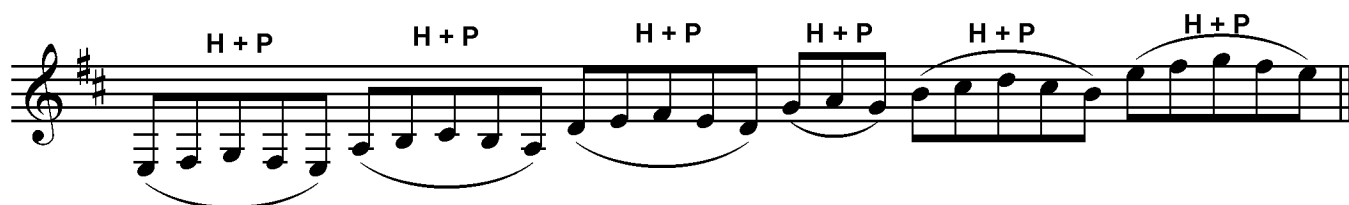
Scales and Licks in D or Bm

Let's do one more key – the key of D. D major and its relative minor Bm have 2 sharps – F# & C#.

Play the scale ascending in hammer ons and descending in pull offs.



Play these scale tones on each string set.



Now, let's put this to work in a basic lick that works between an A7 and a D chord.



The advanced form of the lick adds more flipping on and off of the notes inside the lick.



Putting it All Together/Application

Look at the D/Bm scale tones that appear on each individual string and view them as a subset that can be played with various finger patterns of hammer-ons and pull-offs.

Here is an example of the notes on the 4th string and various ways they could be played. These techniques can be applied to the set of D major scale notes on each string.



4th string notes Hammer-ons Pull-offs Hammer-on & Pull-off Adding Triplets

When adding a run over a particular chord make sure to end the run on a chord tone.

Individual string patterns can be chained together to create longer patterns across many strings.