



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.

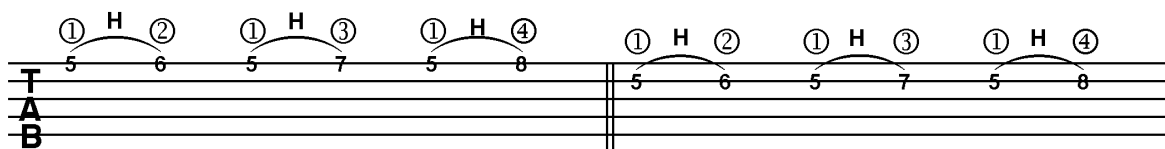
Hammer Ons with Single Notes

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

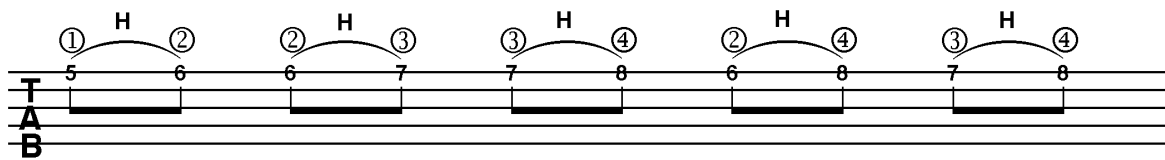
A hammer-on is when your fretting finger makes a quick strong movement onto the fretboard causing the note to sound.

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.



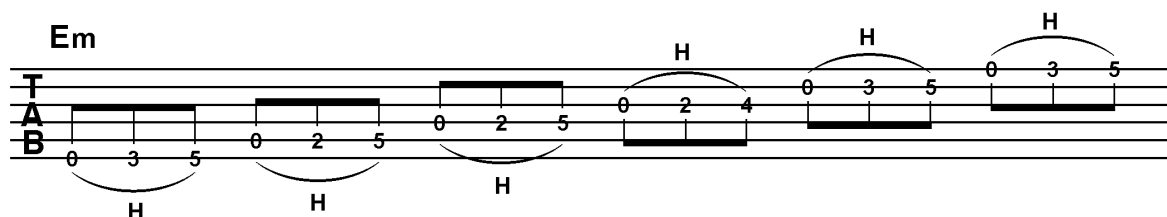
You can also hammer on from an open string.

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.

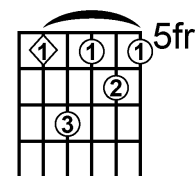
Let's use the 5th string barre Dm7 as an example.

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

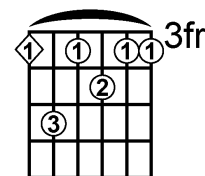
Here's another example, look at the 6th string barre G7.

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



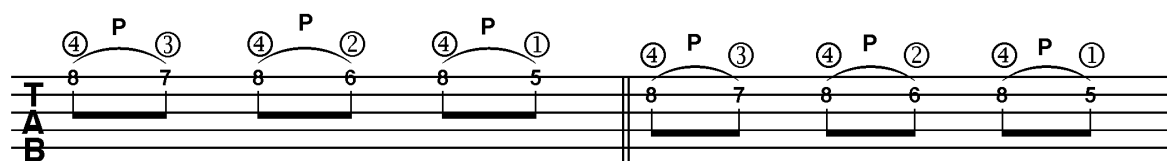
G7



Pull Offs

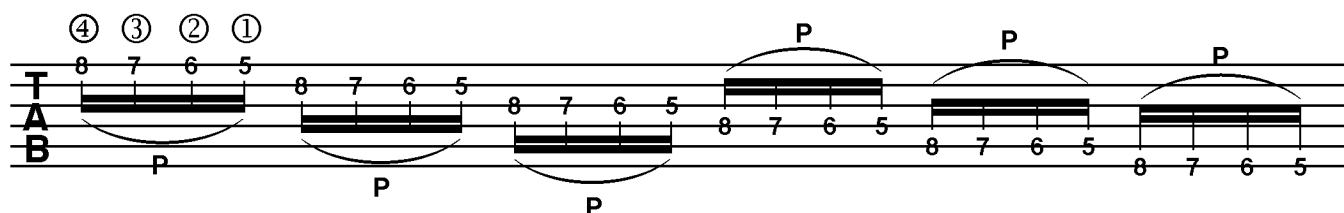
The reverse of hammer ons is a pull off.

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.



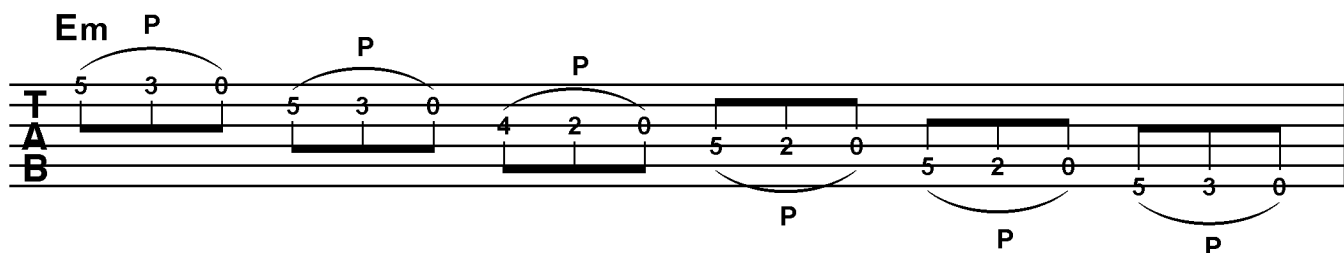
The key to a good pull off is the downward tug as you pull off.

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.

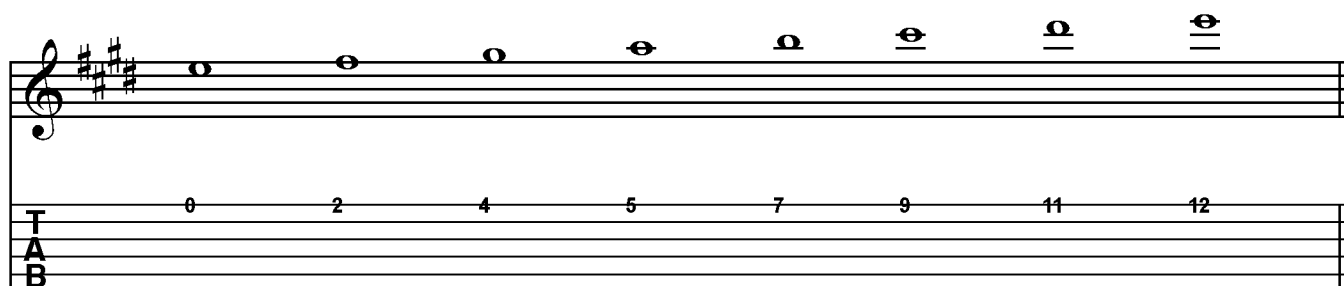


Diagram showing the E major scale on the first string, ascending and descending. The scale is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are E (open), F# (2), G# (4), A (5), B (7), C# (9), D# (11), and E (12). The fret numbers are indicated below the notes.

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.

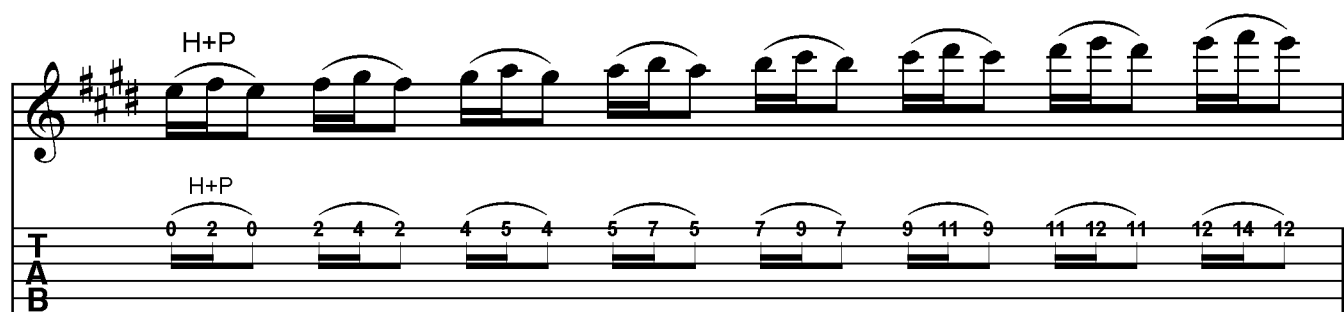


Diagram showing E major trills on the first string. The trills are performed using hammer-ons and pull-offs (H+P) between adjacent notes of the E major scale. The fret numbers are indicated below the notes.

E Major Trills with Open String

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

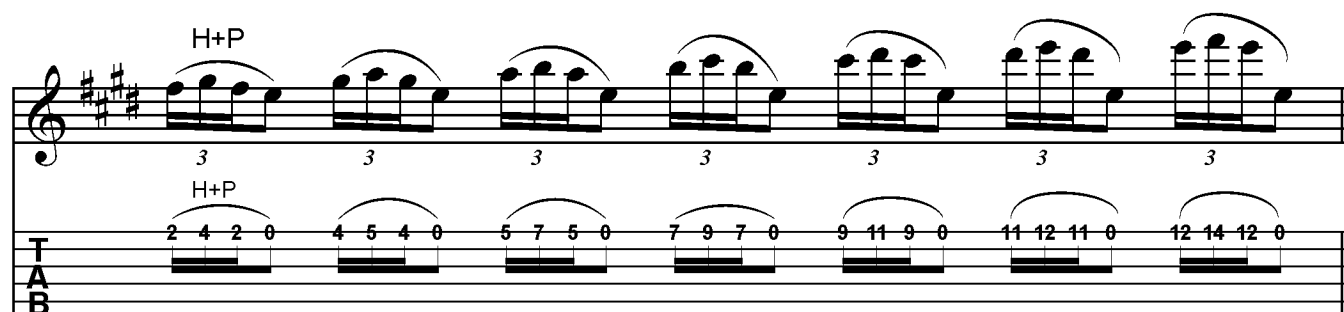


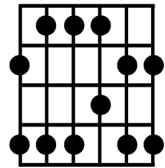
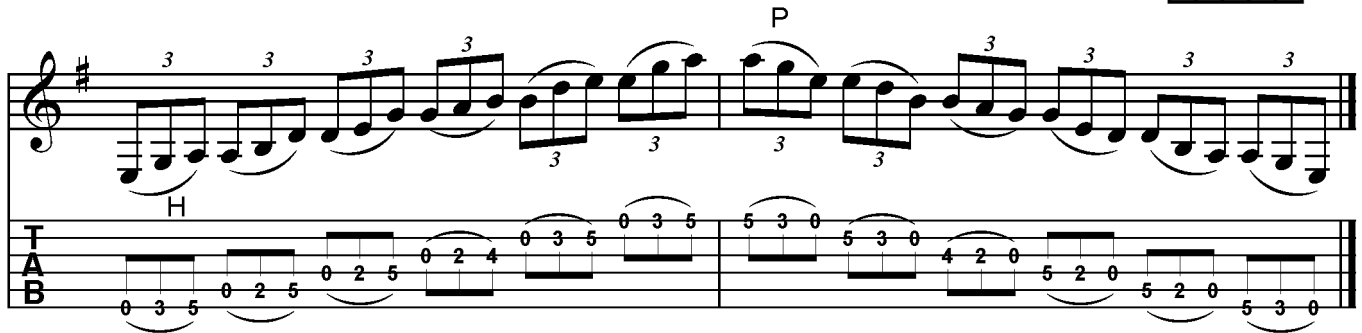
Diagram showing E major trills on the first string, including an open string E note at the end of each trill. The trills are performed using hammer-ons and pull-offs (H+P) between adjacent notes of the E major scale. The fret numbers are indicated below the notes.

E Minor Pentatonic Scale with Open Strings

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

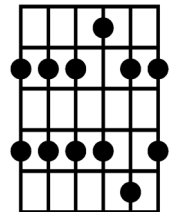
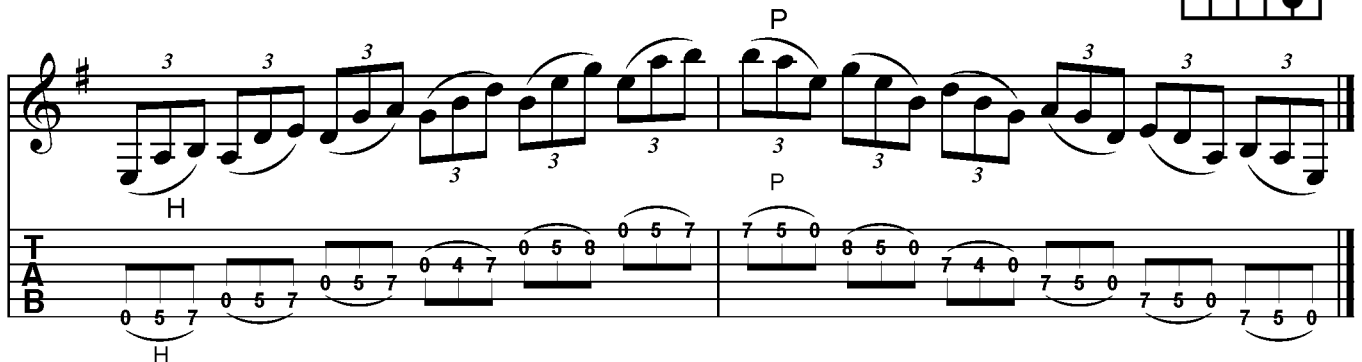
The form is shown on the right. An open string precedes each note of the form. Ascend using hammer-ons and descend using pull-offs.

2fr.

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

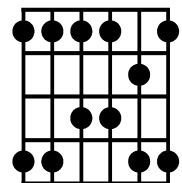
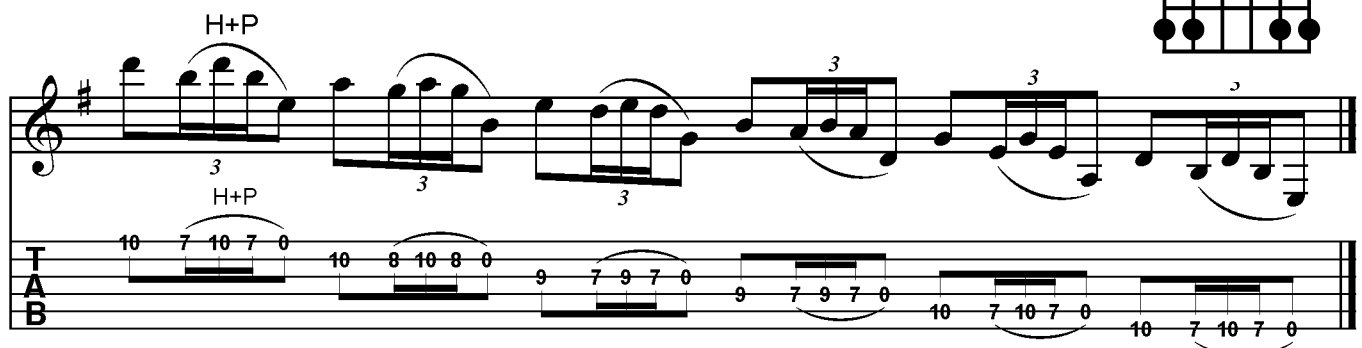
4fr.

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.

7fr.

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 systems of guitar notation for a piece in E major. Each system consists of three staves: a treble clef staff with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#), a guitar staff with fret numbers, and a bass staff with fret numbers. The notation features triplets of eighth notes and hammer-ons/pull-offs (H+P) over open strings.

System 1:

- Treble Staff:** Starts with a triplet of eighth notes (E4, F#4, G#4) marked 'H+P'. This is followed by a series of triplets of eighth notes, each marked with a '3' and a slur. The notes are: (E4, F#4, G#4), (F#4, G#4, A4), (G#4, A4, B4), (A4, B4, C#5), (B4, C#5, A4), (G#4, A4, F#4), and (E4, F#4, G#4).
- Guitar Staff:** Fret numbers are 7 4 7 4 0, 7 4 7 4 0, 9 5 9 5 0, 9 5 9 5 0, 7 4 7 4 0, 7 4 7 4 0, and 4 2 4 2 0 2.
- Bass Staff:** Fret numbers are 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, and 0 2.

System 2:

- Treble Staff:** Similar to System 1, but the final triplet is (E4, F#4, G#4) marked '3'.
- Guitar Staff:** Fret numbers are 7 4 7 4 0, 7 4 7 4 0, 9 5 9 5 0, 9 5 9 5 0, 7 4 7 4 0, 7 4 7 4 0, and 2 4 2 4 2 0.
- Bass Staff:** Fret numbers are 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, and 2 0.