

I and M Alternation

(free strokes)

(reference notes for http://youtu.be/8Jat_Bxme5c)

I = index finger on right hand
M = middle finger on right hand

Off the guitar:

1. Clap fingers closed so that the fleshy pad of the fingertips land on the palm toward the wrists.
2. Turn hand palm up and look to make sure that the tip joint is straight, not curled in. The nails should not touch the palm at all.
3. Allow I finger to gently release out an inch or two, then come back to rest with the others.
4. Allow M finger to gently release out an inch or two, then come back to rest with the others.
5. Begin alternating I and M, such that one is always touching the palm, and the other is out.
6. Seek to keep the entire hand, arm, shoulder and body supple during the exercise, avoiding any excess tension. This should all be performed with as much ease as possible. While the action may be foreign at first, remember that it is through conscious ease of motion that you will most quickly get better at it.

Considerations:

-As fingers clap closed into the hand, be sure that the trajectory is aimed at the elbow, as if a string, tied to the I or M and extended through to the elbow, would maintain a straight line when pulled from the elbow.

-Keep the thumb gently resting beside the I finger.

-Avoid extreme angles in the wrists.

On the Guitar:

1. Perform clapping/closing hand motion as described for off the guitar. Loosely maintain the closed position.
2. Place RH thumb (P) on second string.
3. Let your wrist float out away from the guitar, keeping contact to the top/corner of the guitar with your arm. Think lots of space under the wrist.
4. Allow I finger to release out and come to rest on the first string. Remember: the I finger should be curved and able to depress the string up at an angle and towards the sound hole.
5. Allowing the tip joint to remain passive, bring finger through string and into all the way into the palm exactly as when performing this action off the guitar. Keep your thumb on the second string throughout.
6. Allow M finger to release out and come to rest on the first string. Proceed exactly as with the I finger.
7. Gradually, you can allow your follow-through to stop before you actually touch your palm. But make sure that the tip joint stays released and that you are leading the motion with the fleshy pad of your finger (instead of the tip and nail)

Considerations:

-You can always go back to performing the action off of the guitar and use the free motion as a reference as to how to move. We want our movements to be as close to the ideal (off guitar) as possible.

-If your nail ever touches your palm, you are doing it wrong and should reference the motion off the guitar and start over.

- If your middle knuckle ever moves away from the palm during a stroke, you are “bicycling”, and should stop, reference the motion off the guitar and start over. You can check for this by touching the middle knuckles with left hand fingers. The RH finger should move directly away from them without bouncing off of them.

- When alternating, ensure that one finger is always in and the other out. If both are out, stop and start over.

-Practice all this using open strings at first, so that your attention can stay on the RH.

-The RH thumb is always on the string just behind the one being played.

-When changing strings, make sure that you do not reach for the new string. Instead, perform the motion, letting the finger come out and to rest on the original string, then move the entire hand over a string, letting the thumb come to rest on the string directly behind the one to be played.

