

Resources for practice

# 5 ESSENTIAL RIGHT-HAND PATTERNS



**ALLEN  
MATHEWS**

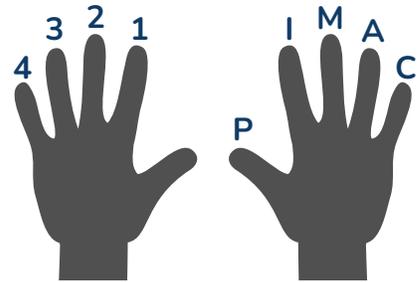


# Introducing: Essential Right-Hand Patterns for Guitarists

---

Your right hand creates and controls your sound on the classical guitar.

It shapes the tone. Controls the swells and fades. Brings out the melody while keeping the accompaniment soft underneath.



When your right hand form, positioning, and movements are solid, music flows smoothly instead of sounding choppy or uneven. Your fingers know where to go without having to think about it.

The five patterns on the following page show up in thousands of pieces. Get them comfortable now, and you'll be ahead of the game and save yourself frustration later.

Here are some guidelines and common mistakes to help you with your right-hand form, positioning, and movement. Review these often to remind yourself of the dos and don'ts. A mirror will help you recognize what is working (or isn't). Have fun!

## Guidelines for Right-Hand Classical Guitar Technique

1. Touch the strings and pause (for secure placement, consistent sound, and control)
2. Keep the big knuckles approximately over the strings played
3. Close the hand from the big knuckle, aiming for your elbow
4. Keep the tip joints soft
5. The thumb plays from the wrist (not the tip joint)
6. Play the strings at an angle (not straight across)

## Common Mistakes

1. Playing immediately upon touching (not preparing each stroke)
2. Bracing the little finger (touching the guitar top)
3. Pulling up on the strings (hooking with the fingers and bouncing the wrist)
4. Hand and wrist too far back (forcing the hooking motion)
5. Wrist too low (forcing the hooking motion)
6. Splaying the fingers (excess tension)



# Pattern #3: PAMI

Musical notation for Pattern #3: PAMI in 2/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a sequence of notes: 0 (open), 1 (first fret), 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 3 (third fret), 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 4 (fourth fret), 3 (third fret), 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 5 (fifth fret), 4 (fourth fret), 3 (third fret), 2 (second fret), 0 (open). The notes are grouped into four measures, each labeled 'a m i'. The bass clef staff shows a simple bass line: 0, 0, 0, 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2, 0. The strings are labeled T, A, B.

Here we have the inverse of Pattern #2. Like the previous patterns, the bass falls on the downbeat (first big beat) of each measure, with the upper notes filling in the rhythm. The hand closes in a different direction, giving a slightly different technical challenge.

Aim for even sound (tone and volume) in all the strings.

And if we play all the fingers (A,M,I) on the same string, we have the famous tremolo technique.

# Pattern #4: PIMAMI

Musical notation for Pattern #4: PIMAMI in 6/8 time. The treble clef staff shows a sequence of notes: 0 (open), 3 (third fret), 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 1 (first fret), 0 (open), 2 (second fret), 1 (first fret), 0 (open), 3 (third fret), 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 4 (fourth fret), 3 (third fret), 2 (second fret), 0 (open), 5 (fifth fret), 4 (fourth fret), 3 (third fret), 2 (second fret), 0 (open). The notes are grouped into four measures, each labeled 'i m a m i'. The bass clef staff shows a simple bass line: 0, 0, 0, 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2, 0. The strings are labeled T, A, B.

PIMAMI is a favorite pattern in the 6/8 feel (like a jig). Similar to the above patterns, we expand it to rise and fall. Perhaps the most famous popular song to use this pattern is *House of the Rising Sun*.

When accompanying other instruments, this pattern adds texture and interest, while giving a solid bass structure. As with all patterns, maintaining a steady rhythm and focusing on good form and movement will make this a success.

# Pattern #5: Romanza

The image displays musical notation for a guitar pattern. The top staff is a treble clef in 3/8 time, showing a melody line with notes marked 'a', 'm', and 'i'. The notes are: a quarter note (circled 1), an eighth note (circled 2), and an eighth note (circled 3). This sequence is repeated four times. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature with three lines labeled T, A, and B. The first line (T) has a '0' in each measure. The second line (A) has a '0' in each measure. The third line (B) has a '0' in the first measure, a '2' in the second and fourth measures, and a '2' in the third measure.

Unlike the other patterns above, here we play the thumb and finger together on first beat. This creates a new challenge. Continue to push from the big knuckle with the finger, rather than pulling up or pinching.

A famous example of this one is *Romanza*, also called *Spanish Romance*. The melody falls on the first beat (played by *a*). It's wonderfully effective at providing three complete parts: melody, bass, and accompaniment. And all with a steady rhythm and clear pulse.

The melody note will naturally be heard, because it is the highest note and it lands with the bass. These two attributes make it strong, so it usually needs no extra emphasis. If you want to bring the note out, don't play it louder. Instead, play the *m* and *i* fingers quieter. This is a more graceful solution.

# Your Next Steps on Classical Guitar

If you've enjoyed exploring the Right-Hand Patterns in this guide, you're ready for more.

Most adult guitarists practice without clarity. They repeat exercises but struggle to hear what needs attention. Progress feels random.

**What transforms repetition into art is awareness.** When you practice with clear intention, knowing exactly what to listen for, everything changes. Your tone improves. Confidence grows. The pieces you've dreamed of playing become accessible.

Our full classical guitar program gives you a structured path that turns practice itself into something beautiful.

Inside the Program:

- Step-by-step organized lessons for reliable progress
- Clear video demonstrations and practice routines for each skill
- Friendly, expert support to keep you motivated
- A vibrant, supportive community of guitarists
- A proven path forward from beginner to confident musician



*"My tone has improved. Greater clarity with fewer buzzes. I practice every day, sometimes it is short, sometimes longer, but consistency is my goal. I focus on technique first, then pieces. I have recently memorized 'Greensleeves'... Great program. I am so glad my husband encouraged me to try it. As a former professor, I adore your organization and attention to how adults actually learn. You had me at syllabus."*

—Leah Holmes



*"I've been a guitar hobbyist for over 30 years, and signing up for The Woodshed has revolutionized my playing. I'm learning good technique, playing relaxed and producing beautiful sounds. Even five-minute practices are enjoyable, and I'm finally building a repertoire."*

—Brian Yates



*"I've tried a lot of programs online and personal teachers, and no one compares to Allen. He's truly a master teacher. All of his lessons are sequential and progressive, and all of the components are of the highest quality - from the exercise sheets to the videos to the practice logs. It is money well spent and truly the best gift I give myself every year."*

—Paulette Hummel



[Click Here to Learn More & Join →](#)