MILE HIGH SHRED

Metronome Method

A Shred Guitar Player's Guide
for Increasing Speed and Accuracy
in the Shortest Amount of Time Possible

Just a heads up - there IS some NSFW language used in this eBook

Introduction

Before beginning this approach to increasing your guitar playing speed, there are some very important things I hope you will keep in mind.

Ever notice how some people seem like they were born holding a guitar? That's because there absolutely is a genetic factor at play here. Some people have a natural ability to play extremely fast, while others will struggle a great deal.

> *Not everyone can be an Yngwie Malmsteen.*
> *Not everyone can be a Paul Gilbert.*
> *Not everyone can be a Steve Vai, Michael Angelo Batio, Joe Satriani, etc. etc. etc.*

However, I firmly believe that everyone can become better, and improve no matter how good, or downright awful they are. Some people will have an easy time getting faster using the speed building method(s) in this eBook, and others (most of you) will need more time.

The biggest thing that will hold you back in getting faster is having shitty rhythm.

If your rhythm sucks, everything suffers!

Having worked with a lot of different students, time and time again, when speed work with the metronome falls apart, having a weak grasp of rhythm tends to be the culprit. Having control over what you play is absolutely essential if you wish to play as fast as you possibly can.

You can have the fastest car in the world, but if you can't control that car, you'll just keep crashing and never get anywhere.

If you can't tap your foot when you play, and follow a beat, then following the speed building advice in this eBook won't do you any good.

You don't have to be an expert in reading/playing crazy complex rhythm patterns. But, the better your rhythm comprehension skills, the better chance you have at pushing your speed boundaries to the max.

With all that being said, I'm a firm believer that proper use of the metronome is the quickest method in developing crazy fast speeds on guitar, and improving your accuracy in the shortest amount of time possible.

Metronome practice is how I'm able to play 16th note riffs/patterns/licks/exercises at 200 BPM and above. It's how I can speed pick 16th notes past 300 BPM.

Several students of mine who had been playing for years have seen huge jumps in their speed in just their first week of using the metronome properly.

If you follow the advice given in this eBook, you should begin to see improvements in your speed and accuracy almost right away.

I know that's a bold claim to make. But, from my experience, I've yet to see this metronome method fail, unless someone was literally practicing with a bunch of mistakes and didn't even realize it, and/or had sub par rhythm skills.

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The Basic Idea - How to Use Your Metronome

- Whatever it is you're going to work on, start your metronome at 60 BPM.
- Play your exercise/riff/lick/etc. correctly JUST ONE TIME and then increase the metronome speed by 5 BPM.
- Play what you're working on again, correctly, JUST ONE TIME, then increase your metronome by 5 BPM again.
- Keep doing this until you can't get any faster.
- Each practice session, no matter how fast you got before, START AT 60 BPM.
- You need to be able to play 8th notes at 240 BPM before you start working on 8th note triplets, 16th notes, or 16th note triplets (aka: sextuplets).
- Keep what you're working on to be around 1 - 4 bars (or measures) in length.

Okay, that was the very fast and simple way of explaining the process. For the most part, that's all there really is to it.

When I was taking lessons, around 1998-99 with Eric Morrison, I told him I wanted to play as fast as possible. Besides learning how to alternate pick the shit out of almost everything, he told me to use my metronome. Start at a low tempo, and then increase the metronome by only one or two clicks with each successful pass of whatever it is I was working on.

I had an old metronome with a dial on the front with preset tempos. Don't use one of those. Take advantage of what we have available to us now.

If you have an Android or iPhone, I recommend getting Tempo Metronome. The paid version is not even $2. I use it all the time.

If you want an actual metronome you can carry around, and is not a phone app, I recommend the Boss Dr. Beat DB-30. I used to use this all the time, but having the metronome on my phone is just far more convenient for me.

Both of those metronomes give you what you need in order to practice. There are fancier things out there, but I personally don't find them necessary.

And, if you prefer to practice with the metronome online, click this link.

All three of those options allow you to increase and decrease the tempo by one beat per minute increments.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO HAVE THAT FEATURE!!!

One method of metronome practice that will be discussed later on is increasing the speed by just 1 BPM instead of 5.

Now, as I was saying, my guitar teacher told me practice with my metronome and slowly increase the speed with each successful pass of whatever it was I was working on. For me, it was usually running scales, coils, or sweep picking.

This method worked like a charm. According to my teacher, Eric, I reached my goal of playing faster than Kirk Hammett within my first year or two of playing guitar. You may be thinking that he lied just to make me feel better about myself. Even if he was lying (which I highly doubt because that wouldn't make me a better player) I still managed to increase my speed and playing technique to the point that anyone who heard me playing back then thought I had started 10 years ago instead of just 1-2.

That REALLY fed my ego and caused my head to swell up SO LARGE that it's amazing I didn't herniate a disc in my neck.

Anyway, enough story time. Let's get into the nitty-gritty of metronome work.

As stated at the start of this chapter, I advise using 60 BPM as your starting tempo.

Why? Because you get a full second per click. Plenty of time to fit in however many notes you're trying to play (usually 2, 3, 4 or 6, and 7 is the highest I would recommend). It also makes you play slower than most people normally will, which in turn makes you better at following the beat and improves your rhythm.

And if you think having improved rhythm is not important because you're mostly concerned with playing lead, well that's too bad! In order to have killer lead and solo playing chops you NEED excellent rhythm skills, or what you play will sound like a hot sloppy mess.

Now, once you've played what you are working on CORRECTLY along with the metronome, move the speed up 5 BPM.

DO NOT PLAY THE SAME THING 100 FUCKING TIMES AT THE SAME SPEED BEFORE MOVING ON

DO NOT PLAY THE SAME THING AT 60 BEATS PER MINUTE FOR AN HOUR OR A WHOLE DAMN WEEK BEFORE INCREASING YOUR SPEED

I really want to emphasize that because this is something SEVERAL guitar players will do in an attempt to get fast and then wonder why they never get faster.

Well, you don't become a world class sprinter by walking, now do you?

If you want to play fast you HAVE to practice FAST. However, you need to work up to it, just like you work up to heavier and heavier weights when working to increase your bench press or squat.

It's foolish to just throw 300 lbs. on the bar and squat it if you've never squatted before. Not only will you probably injure yourself, but you've yet to build up the strength and technique necessary for handling heavy loads. Same thing applies to shred guitar.

Now, you'd have a hell of a time being crushed by heavy weights just because you tried playing something far faster than you are capable of, but you still need to gradually increase your speed in order to handle super fast playing.

When you build up your bench press, and let's say you started with 100 lbs. and wanted to work your way up to 200 lbs., the best way to get there is to add 5 or 10 lbs. with each workout you do until you reach your goal. This gives your body a chance to grow and adapt to the new stresses you put on it.

If you tried going from 100 to 150 right away, and 100 lbs. was tough for you, there's no way you'd be able to press the 150; it's just too big of an increase for your body to handle.

Same thing goes for those who try going from 60 BPM with a guitar exercise to 160 BPM after just a few tries. The reason why most people can't do this is because they haven't given their hands and their brains enough time to adjust to the new task.

This is why going up by 5 BPM is important. It's a small enough increase so you can better handle the change in speed instead of trying to double how fast you're playing right away.

You will be doing LOTS of small increases as you work your way up in speed using your metronome. Not only does this warm up your hands in order to handle the faster speeds, it warms up that brain of yours so you can follow a faster click.

For those of you who just play something slow a bunch of times, and then play it a little faster, and then a little faster, and so on, but you don't use a metronome, knock it off. Your ears can't tell the difference between 100 and 105 BPM. It's too small of a change. Chances are, your slight increases are closer to 20 BPM or more!

And, if you say you've had great success with that method, then why the hell are you reading this eBook?!

Now, there ARE going to be some exceptions out there. They are genetic anomalies. Some people just have a natural ability to play fast without ever having to work up their speed with a metronome. They could always just move quickly on the fretboard, or they just picked things up extremely fast. Shawn Lane is a perfect example of this. He admitted to having a "freak nervous system". CLICK HERE to watch the video where he talks about that.

People like Mr. Lane make up a VERY small percentage of the guitar population. I needed to work my way up with the metronome, and there's a really damn good chance you do to.

Becoming accustomed to making small adjustments in your picking mechanics at varying speeds is another benefit to slowly working your way up with a metronome. This is how I developed three types of picking and naturally became a two way pick slanter.

Because this eBook is about how to use a metronome to gain speed and improve technique, I won't be going into great detail regarding pick slanting, or the various ways I pick. However, I do feel it's important that you understand picking mechanics will be different when you play things at a slow pace VS a medium pace VS a fast pace.

The most important thing when you are practicing something is to make your notes sound as perfect as you can.

NEVER ALLOW SLOP WHEN YOU ARE WORKING ON IMPROVING YOUR TECHNIQUE AND ACCURACY!

There will be exceptions to that, which will be covered later on. But, for the most part, you need to practice like every take you make is being recorded for an album. Only perfect practice makes perfect. Sloppy practice keeps you sloppy.

Now, as I was saying, the most important thing to do is make your notes sound good when you practice. It doesn't really matter if you are using a downward or upward pick slant for the most part. As long as you achieve the sound you're going for, that's what matters. It doesn't matter if you use thumb picking, wrist picking, or elbow picking as long as the notes sound correct.

Some people spend way too much time trying to force a movement that is completely foreign to them instead of worrying about how their notes sound. Others try so hard to emulate every single movement from their favorite guitar player and hardly get anywhere. I believe that's because they're trying too hard to be someone else instead of working with their own body's natural movement patterns.

We all have different squat stances, varying deadlift setups, etc. That's because we have different limb lengths, different muscle lengths, etc. Regarding guitar, some people hit two whole step stretches with their 1st, 2nd, and 4th fingers, while others (like myself) hit the same stretch with the 3rd finger instead of the 2nd.

We're all built different. I naturally do upward pick slanting to play fast things. Yngwie Malmsteen uses downward slanting. It doesn't matter how you slant a pick, where you pick from (e.g. wrist, thumb and index, etc.). All that matters is you get the notes to sound good!

When I'm working something up to speed I will make small adjustments in pick placement, finger placement, etc. It's perfectly okay (and highly encouraged) to try out different positions and whatnot in

order to get a desired result. Let your body make adjustments when it tries to do so as you get faster and faster. This is how I developed two way pick slanting without having any clue of doing so until Troy Grady from Cracking the Code sent me a video using slow motion examples to explain what I was actually doing when I picked things.

Some people think it's okay to work your way up with a metronome part of the way, and then just jump way the hell up to the speed you ultimately wish to play your riff at. That CAN work for some people, but my main issue with this is you're cutting out a huge gap of tempos to practice at, which will be a disservice to anyone wanting to be able to play as efficiently as possible at any speed they can reach.

What's the point of playing really good between 60 - 125 BPM, and really good between 170 - 200 BPM, but really sloppy and out of control between 126 - 169 BPM? Seems stupid to me to cut all that out.

Yes, you run into brain fatigue, and even muscle fatigue when you go through all those tiny increments and steps, but so what? You'll just build a stronger brain, stronger hands, and more solid playing mechanics when you don't cut corners.

Speaking of fatigue, eventually you will reach a speed when mistakes become more and more frequent, and it becomes next to impossible to correctly play what you're practicing. What are you supposed to do now?

Don't Be a Bitch - Push Yourself

Far too many people who wish to be a top notch shred guitar player don't realize how much hard work and persistence is needed in order to make some serious progress.

One thing I learned from Arnold Schwarzenegger's book, the "Encyclopedia of Bodybuilding" is that the reps nearing the end of a set that hurt like hell are the reps that produce the most growth. I find this to be very true in terms of reaching your genetic potential in guitar playing.

Let's talk about the mental aspect of pushing yourself in guitar practice before we discuss the physical.

There will be SEVERAL times in your guitar practice where you are going to learn a brand new lick/riff/etc. and it feels like mental gymnastics. Once again, starting super slow with your metronome will be VERY helpful. It needs to be slow enough so you can actually know exactly what it is you're playing.

YOU NEED TO PLAY CONSIOUSLY BEFORE YOU MAKE IT SUBCONSCIOUS

As you progress in speed with your brain busting riff, you'll come to a point where you can physically move faster, but the coordination isn't good enough to move on. This is when you NEED to push your BRAIN more than your hands/fingers/arms.

For example, let's say you're working on a 16th note pattern riff and you have a goal of 180 BPM. However, you begin to really struggle when you reach 120 BPM. After about three tries you finally hit 120 BPM correctly. You should still try for 125 BPM.

Let's say it takes you ten tries to finally hit 125 BPM. You're still not done!

You may want to take a 1 or 2 minute break to let your brain catch its breath. Then, try 130 BPM.

Now, at this point you may need another ten tries, or more. Still keep at it until you hit that 130 BPM. Oh, and a sloppy, you kind of got it take DOES NOT COUNT!!!

If it takes you twenty tries to finally get 130 BPM, then it's a good place to stop. If you still can't get 130 BPM after trying for several minutes, give your brain another 1 - 2 minute break, and then try again.

If you get 130 BPM after that break, GREAT!

STOP THERE

If you still can't get 130 BPM, back it off to 125 BPM and get it there again, and THEN stop.

ALWAYS END YOUR PRACTICE SESSION BY PLAYING YOUR PRACTICE PIECE CORRECTLY

NEVER END ON A MISTAKE

Do yourself a favor, and WRITE DOWN how fast you got. If you track your progress you have a sense of accomplishment when you see your speed improving. And, if it doesn't go anywhere for a few days, or even goes backwards, you can use this feedback to try new approaches in order to begin making progress again (more on that later).

Chances are, the next practice session you do will go even better because you practiced the crap out of the new thing, so your brain has a better understanding of what it is you're trying to do. With enough perfect practice and persistence, you will get up to that 180 BPM goal. But, stopping at your goal speed may not be the best thing to do in certain situations.

If you are working on something that is part of a song, and 180 BPM is how fast the song goes, I advise working it up to 200 BPM instead. This will make placing the difficult riff into the full song much easier to play. If you can play the riff faster than necessary, this should just makes things easier for you come show time.

But, what if the riff you were working on did NOT have a specific speed goal. What then?

I suppose the answer really depends on your personal goals. If you're like me, then your goal is to play as fast as humanly possible. With that goal in mind, you're going to play the riff/lick/exercise in question AS FAST AS YOU POSSIBLY CAN!

Now, having the goal of going as fast as you can might get out of hand. Eventually you will reach a point of diminished returns. This means that the faster you go, and the further you push yourself, the less progress you will make. (more on this idea later)

Continuing with the idea of pushing yourself as fast as possible, eventually you will be crossing over from a mental challenge to a physical one.

In my experience, you can't push your physical limits in playing something when you're still getting the piece of music you're working on into your subconscious and muscle memory. And, of course, gradually working up your speed with the metronome by 5 BPM increments will help you do just that.

Let's say you're working on a speed picking drill that involves very easy to play notes or chords with your fret hand. This drill is all about improving your picking speed.

If you push yourself correctly, you will reach a point where your picking hand/arm starts to get tired. If this doesn't happen then you're not pushing yourself hard enough.

And, for those who say you should never play with tension, or you should always stop playing when any sort of pain sets in, I have a question for you -

Do you remember what it was like to build up your calluses? Do you remember what it was like building up the hand strength to play barre chords? Those things hurt, didn't they?

Many times when you are looking to make your body stronger, pain is inevitable.

If you want to build strength, you'll need to lift heavier and heavier weights, and you'll have to push through the pain of lifting the heavier weights in order to force your body to adapt.

If you want to build up bigger muscles, you will have to perform several excruciating reps to tear down your muscles in order for them to be built back up and get bigger.

Even when it comes to getting faster at sprinting, you will have to run your ass off until it feels like your heart wants to explode and your lungs are on fire.

If you want to be the absolute fastest you can possibly be as a guitar player, you'll have to play fast enough to where your picking hand/arm begins to stiffen up and get fatigued to the point you'll get that burning sensation from performing an exercise for a long period of time.

Same thing when it comes to building up that fret hand. If you're playing a legato exercise with the intent to get as fast as possible, your forearm should eventually feel like it's turning into a rock.

Some people preach that you must avoid any sort of pain or tension when playing guitar in order to avoid injury.

I think some people are just being chicken shits.

If you're too scared of getting hurt from picking too fast or fretting too long, you'll never reach your full potential. Maybe you don't even care about getting as fast as you can. But, if you're reading this, I assume you DO want to get as fast as you can, so dealing with a little pain in order to grow is something you'll just have to live with.

And, if you're nuts like me, you'll even learn to enjoy the pain associated with getting faster!

Now, it is important to learn how to distinguish between muscle pain and fatigue VS joint pain and issues with your connective tissue. There is definitely a difference.

If people preached to avoid certain types of pain when practicing guitar, then I could get on board with that. But, so far, I only hear people saying avoid all pain, which is just bullshit as far as I'm concerned.

If you feel a dull, thickening type pain, even a pain that turns into a burning sensation, and you feel that

in your muscle - I believe you're fine.

Now, if you feel a sharp pain, or any kind of twinge in your wrist or elbow joint, that could very well be a joint or connective tissue problem. If you feel something like that, take a break. You may also want to try positioning yourself differently.

For me, my fret hand wrist needs to be held as straight as possible now. If I have it bent for too long then a repetitive strain injury acts up and then my wrists hurts worse and worse. I fucked up by not paying attention to the type of pain I was having.

If you want more information on the difference between muscle and joint pain, here are a couple articles on the subject:

Article One
Article Two

You really don't have muscles in your wrists or elbows. Muscles connect into and around the joints so the joints can move, but muscles are not literally within the joint itself. That's why I say if you feel weird pains in your joint(s), then it's time to take a break or reevaluate how you're positioned.

But, when it comes down to it, you're the one responsible for your own safety and self inflected injuries. So, use your best judgment. And that, dear reader, is my disclaimer.

Now that we got all the pain talk out of the way, let's get back to discussing how to physically push yourself and what you can expect.

Let's get back to the idea of playing a speed picking drill that is very easy on your fret hand.

Eventually you will reach a speed that starts to get difficult to keep up with. Let's say you started at the advised 60 BPM (you better have!) and then worked up to 160 BPM when your picking hand/arm starts to get a bit tired. It may even start to feel a little stiff.

And, let's say that after three attempts to nail your speed picking drill at 160 BPM you just can't do it. Go ahead and take a 1 - 2 minute break.

After that break, go again. Most likely your hand/arm will have recovered enough to hit the speed of 160 BPM. Just like in weight training, you'll need to take a break in between your sets in order to complete a new series of reps.
Now let's say you get up to 175 BPM and you're struggling again. Take another break. You may find you need to take a few different breaks before you finally hit this higher speed of 175 BPM.

Eventually you will come to a speed that seems to take everything you've got. Unfortunately, I can't tell

you what that speed will be for anything you practice. It really does come down to learning how your body responds to certain things, and understanding when it's time to stop.

For me, I know it will take several attempts to get something when I've hit a speed that is pushing my physical limitations. This goes for the mental gymnastic stuff too. Either my arms feel tired, my brain feels tired, or sometimes both.

Usually having to make around ten or more attempts to get something is when I know I'm at my limit. It will feel like it takes EVERYTHING I've got in order to nail what I'm practicing. And, as of the writing of this eBook, I've been playing for 21 years and my ability to understand myself better as a player keeps improving with each practice session.

This means you will continue to improve at not only your guitar playing, but improve at understanding yourself and how you operate.

I will take several breaks while working my way up to a max speed. Doing all those small speed increments will absolutely start to wear you down. But, I'm still a firm believer that all those steps are necessary to get the most out of your practice time.

What's wrong with building muscular endurance? What's wrong with building mental endurance?

NOT A DAMN THING!!!

In the weight room, it's important to do warm-up sets. This prevents injury and is also like practicing for the working sets where you go all out.

I view all the incremental speed increases as warm-up sets not only for your muscles and joints, but for your brain.

The faster and faster you play the harder it is to stay locked on to the beat. It's much easier to follow 100 BPM VS 250 BPM. I find that the small tempo increases help us follow the beat better.

So, take your breaks as you work your way up. Make sure you push yourself as hard as you can. Don't give up after just a few goofs. Make twenty or more goofs before you call it a day. But, make sure you

ALWAYS END WITH A PERFECT TAKE!!!

NEVER END ON A MISTAKE!!!

If you need to slow the metronome down in order to hit a perfect take again, then do that. It is FAR BETTER to end on a slower perfect take than a faster sloppy take.

Graduation Speeds - What Subdivision to Use

Knowing how many notes to play per click (or throughout the duration of one beat) is very important. There absolutely is such a thing as trying to play too many notes in one beat when you're building up your speed.

A lot of guitar players will hinder their progress simply because of trying to play too many notes per click, even when they start at the recommended 60 BPM and follow the 5 BPM increments.

If you're working on a 16th note pattern and you can't get past 100 BPM, you are playing too many notes per beat. You need to work up 8th notes first.

Some people may start a 16th note pattern at 60 BPM and then max out at 75 BPM. That's hardly any increase at all! This means you are already playing near your speed capacity for that particular piece of music. You need to improve your mechanics in order to get faster, and that means you need to play slower.

When you practice something that's a 16th note pattern, and you can't get to 120 BPM AT THE VERY LEAST then you need to work up 8th notes instead.

And, if you can't even get what you're working on up to 120 BPM using 8th notes on your first practice attempt, then you need to back off even further to quarter notes.

I use 240 BPM as a graduation speed for myself, and for my students. Basically, you need to get a particular subdivision up to 240 BPM before you double up the amount of notes you're trying to play per click.

Here's a simple way of looking at this idea:

You have to be able to play quarter notes at 240 BPM before working on 8th notes.
You have to be able to play 8th notes at 240 BPM before working on 16th notes.

When I say you need to be able to play a 16th note pattern at 120 BPM AT THE VERY LEAST, it's because 120 BPM with 16th notes is mathematically the same thing as 240 BPM with 8th notes.

Some people may think that once you hit 120 BPM with 8th notes then you can start working 16th notes up to speed because mathematically 120 BPM with 8th notes is the same thing as 60 BPM with 16th notes.

My reasoning against this is purely based on personal experience, and my experiences working with a lot of different students. Basically, I don't feel you've done enough repetitions at slower speeds when you automatically jump from 120 BPM using 8th notes to 60 BPM with 16th notes. Especially if what you're working on is brand new and you were having some struggle even getting your piece of music

up to 120 BPM.

Because once you jump the gun and go from working up 8th notes from 120 BPM to 16th notes at 60 BPM, increasing the metronome by 5 BPM increments is essentially doing 10 BPM increases with 8th notes. It's not a good idea to start doubling up your speed increases too early. Short cuts will only hold you back, not help you move forward.

You'll be far better off following the graduation speed method so you know when it's appropriate to change the subdivision you'll be using instead of trying to cram in too many notes per beat before you've built up solid mechanics.

Triplets can be tricky sometimes when following the graduation speed idea. When you want to work up a 16th note pattern, and you need to cut the notes per beat in half, you just convert what you're playing into 8th notes. But, what happens when you need to slow an 8th note triplet down?

Even though it may feel weird, you can usually take an 8th note triplet pattern and change it to straight 8th notes. If you're working on a full bar of 8th note triplets then you're working with 12 notes. That's divisible by 2.

If you want to work on an 8th note triplet pattern, and you can't get to 160 BPM, then you need to convert your triplet pattern into 8th notes and work that up to, yes, 240 BPM.

160 BPM 8th note triplets is mathematically the same thing as 8th notes at 240 BPM.

Now, if you're looking to work up a sextuplet pattern, and you can't get it to 120 BPM, then go down to 8th note triplets instead.

I wouldn't try converting a sextuplet pattern into 16th notes. That would most likely be SUPER confusing. Keep it simple, and just cut the speed in half and do 8th note triplets instead of sextuplets.

There was a half-whole diminished riff I wrote for a YouTube video demonstration in response to a viewer request. I used Guitar Pro to help me write the riff. Basically, I compiled the notes into the program as I was writing the riff even though I couldn't play the whole thing from start to finish.

That's one of the great things about a program like Guitar Pro; you can input the notes you want to play/hear and then Guitar Pro will play it back for you so you can confirm if you like the way your note choices sound. The hard part is actually practicing the thing up to speed.

Well, that riff was SO HARD for me that I had to work it up in several sections, and start with quarter notes, then move to 8th notes, and finally work with 16th notes. So, yes, I do this stuff I'm suggesting too.
Even though it may seem like playing the same thing hundreds of times while slowly increasing the metronome speed will take a long time to get something up to speed, I assure you it will save you time

to take this approach VS trying to cut corners and continue to sloppily play something at a speed that is too fast for you to handle.

Last thing I want to say about this topic is the highest amount of notes I recommend fitting into one beat.

The answer is 7.

Most likely you won't be working on septuplets (7 notes per beat) or quintuplets (5 notes per beat). Most of you will be working on 1, 2, 3, 4 or 6 notes per beat. Some of you may be asking, why not 8 notes per beat (aka: 32nd notes) ?

It has to do with making sure you have enough warm-up repetitions to build up to the top speed of what you're working on. That, and trying to hit a graduation speed of 240 BPM for a 16th note pattern in order to work on a 32nd note pattern is asking too much of most people.

If you do end up working on something involving 5 or 7 notes per beat, you're not going to be able to split those notes in half to make things easier on yourself while working your way up in 5 BPM increments.

So, if you do find yourself needing to work up a quintuplet or septuplet riff, I still advise starting at 60 BPM. But, instead of going up by 5 BPM, go up by 2 BPM instead. Or, it may even be better for you to just go up by 1 BPM increments instead!

Exercise Length and Making Mistakes

How long an exercise should be for speed work will differ from exercise to exercise depending on what you're working on. If it's a speed drill I typically give to students, it's usually around 4 - 8 bars (or measures).

Because the idea of a speed drill is to get faster, playing things in short bursts is far more appropriate than playing a 20 bar exercise. A 20 bar exercise is probably better for an endurance type of training.

Endurance training certainly has its place, but that's not the main premise of this eBook so I won't be going into much detail regarding endurance training. (however, it is talked about a bit in the Breaking Plateaus section coming up next)

For speed drills, I'll sometimes just do a single bar. If I'm doing a 16th note pattern, I may just do 4 full beats and then end with just one note in bar 2. The exercise is short, and I'm able to work my way up to top speeds in very little time.

Besides being able to quickly move up the metronome while working on a short exercise, another benefit is the decreased chance of making mistakes.

Let's say you want to work on a somewhat challenging song that lasts 5 minutes and is 160 BPM. Can you imagine how long a practice session would be if you worked the ENTIRE THING up from 60 BPM in 5 BPM increments?

Well, playing a 5 minute song that's played at 160 BPM slowed down to 60 BPM will now last over 13 minutes. If you want to do the math on adding up how long a practice session will be as you work up the entire song in 5 BPM increases, go right ahead! I'm going to pass on that one.

Besides the song now lasting twice as long at this slow speed, you now have to play without making any mistakes for over 13 minutes. Fuuuuuuck that!

Yes, I did say play WITHOUT making mistakes. Any time you make a mistake when you're doing metronome speed work you need to stop what you're doing and start over.

Now, that does not mean if you get to 120 BPM and then you make your first mistake you have to go all the way back to 60 BPM. No. Just start your practice take at the 120 BPM again.

Too many times guitar players will keep on playing their scale run even if they make a mistake or two. As far as I'm concerned, this just reinforces the idea that it's okay to fuck up while you play.

When you're practicing something that takes 10 seconds or less to play and you let mistakes slide, either you just don't know any better or you're being lazy. And, now that you know it's not okay to let the mistakes slide, DON'T BE LAZY!!!

Now, when it comes to band practice where you're preparing to go on stage and do a show, THIS is a situation where it's okay to let mistakes happen and keep on playing. It's kind of a different practice perspective in this situation though. This is because you can't have the band stop in the middle of a song just because someone hits a bum note. You'd have a VERY unhappy crowd!

When you're playing on stage you need to know your material so well that even when a mistake happens you are able to continue on as if nothing happened. And, practicing your material in small chunks with NO mistakes will make this much easier to pull off.

Mistakes are inevitable. They're going to happen. And that's fine. However, how you handle those mistakes and what you do when you make them makes a big difference!

Now, let's get back to the idea of practicing things in small pieces so mistakes are less likely to happen with a question that has an obvious answer.

Can you sprint for a long time? No. No you can't!

Running as hard and fast as possible simply can not last for a long period of time.

Here's a good quote from an article about sprinting/running:

> *"Human beings are able to do amazing things when they train hard for them. Usain Bolt is a shining example of that. But there are limits to what our species can accomplish. After 10 to 20 seconds, it becomes exponentially harder to maintain the same average power output that one was able to achieve up to that point in an all out sprint. It just so happens that the fastest people in the world sprint the 200 meters in almost exactly 20 seconds, and the 100 meters in under 10 seconds. But, for 400 meter runners, an all out maximal sprint is not a good strategy. The body simply can't maintain that pace for long."*

Read the full article by CLICKING HERE.

Playing guitar as fast as you possibly can is akin to sprinting - you simply can't do it for a long period of time. Same thing with hitting the weights super hard. If you are lifting something so heavy where you have to go all out and give it all you've got, and you can only muster 3 reps, you won't be lifting that same weight for very long that day.

I feel it's very important to remember that playing your guitar as fast as you can means that you won't be able to sustain it for very long. However, it does kind of seem like a waste of ability if you can only play fast for just a few seconds, doesn't it?

So far, this eBook has been geared towards building your speed. However, I do find it's important to have some endurance type of training mixed in to help maintain playing at high speeds for longer periods of time.

Keep in mind that this doesn't mean you'll be able to play at your top speed for a long period of time. Again, you can't sprint for a long time, but you can certainly jog for a lot longer, right?

How to Keep Your Speed Gains

Just like you can't always lift heavy weights in the 1-3 rep range, you can't always practice short exercises at crazy high speeds.

It's important to work in the higher rep ranges at the gym for overall strength, endurance, and healthy mobility. Same thing applies to playing guitar.

Even when maximum speed is your goal, it's still important to play/practice at speeds less than your max.

In weight training, there is a term called submaximal training. This basically means training at a certain percentage below your one rep max effort. I would also say you can do this by staying slightly below a max effort in any rep range. Basically, you don't go to failure - but you can still get somewhat close it.

Making sure you get in some submaximal guitar speed practice is essential to your overall playing skill. This is something I did with metronome speed practice back in my first few years of playing, and I didn't even realize it until fairly recently.

One of the main things I did with metronome practice was running through all of the 3 notes per string scale shapes/modes in the key of G/Em. This lead to my playing all 7 of the different scale shapes/modes plus repeating the G Major scale an octave higher.

Now, seeing as how this was nearly 20 years ago, it's not easy for me to remember everything I practiced. I can't remember how often I would work up one scale at a time with the metronome method prescribed in this eBook, but I definitely remember doing it with all of the scale shapes.

Now, because of how many notes you'd play doing this, there is no way you could ever reach your maximum speed and sustain it throughout all of the different modes. Not gonna happen.

Doing metronome practice this way forced me to do submaximal speed practice. I had no idea I was doing this at the time. But, I do believe this is how I gained the ability to play faster than most people for longer periods of time.

Another thing I practiced in a similar way to this was sweep picking. I do remember working up the individual 3 and 5 string shapes I was taught, and then putting them all together in the key of Em/G.

So, I did the short speed burst stuff first, then I did the longer submaximal style of training. I also like to call this volume training, because it's such a large amount of work being done without any stopping in the playing.

I didn't always do this with everything though. I didn't have enough experience back then to put together a real plan. I just wanted to be fast, so I followed my teacher's advice of speeding things up

while using the metronome as a guide.

Any time I'd come across something I wanted to play, or write something I couldn't play at the speed I wanted to, I would just metronome it up to speed. Every time.

Throughout my years of teaching guitar students, I've changed how I approach metronome work with them.

In the beginning, I was very lax with it. I didn't enforce metronome practice. I let the student decide if they'd like to use one or not. My main concern was that they can just play whatever I gave them reasonably well after each week of practice. This was a stupid mistake on my part.

Everyone I teach now works with the metronome. It's mandatory. This is because I want those who come to me for help to improve in the shortest amount of time possible. My students learn how to improve their playing, and learn how to do it on their own so they can continue improving long after our lessons together have stopped.

One problem that seemed to keep coming up with a lot of people was frequently hitting plateaus. Even though they followed the rules of starting at 60 BPM and then increasing by 5s, too many people kept getting and staying stuck.

> *There IS a section on breaking plateaus coming up in this eBook, and one of the ideas mentioned is akin to this submaximal type of guitar practice/speed training.*

Now, plateaus are going to happen. It's inevitable. You can't always go faster and faster and faster. There's only so much speed you can develop.

The problem with the students' plateaus coming up, was that I felt they were coming up too soon, and too often. I believed they all had the potential to do more, but it just wasn't happening.

What I discovered is there was too much sprinting work, and nowhere near enough jogging/endurance work. They couldn't handle the speed as the tempo got more and more intense. They needed more time with their personal submaximal speeds. In weight lifting terms, they needed to improve their form in order to handle heavier loads.

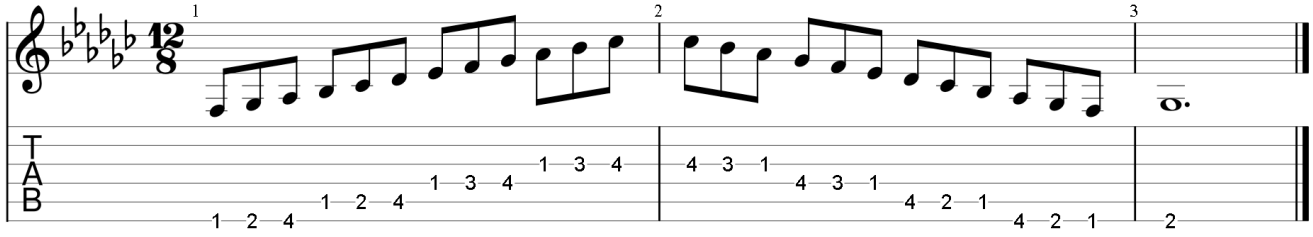
Once I began writing short etudes for them (short practice songs that focus on something specific like a particular technique), and had them do more volume work that was about 20 - 40 BPM slower than the speed they maxed out on with something short, they began to improve! Their speeds started going up again.

This told me that there MUST be a combination of speed work AND endurance work in order to improve overall playing.

Some people will need more of this type of practice in order to get as fast as they can. Some people may need very need little, and others will need a lot of it. This will take some experimentation on your part to figure out what works best for you.

Let's take a look at an example of how this idea can work.

First, let's start with something short:



Let's say you work that up to 200 BPM.

Now, play this next thing at 160 BPM:

MILE HIGH SHRED METRONOME METHOD

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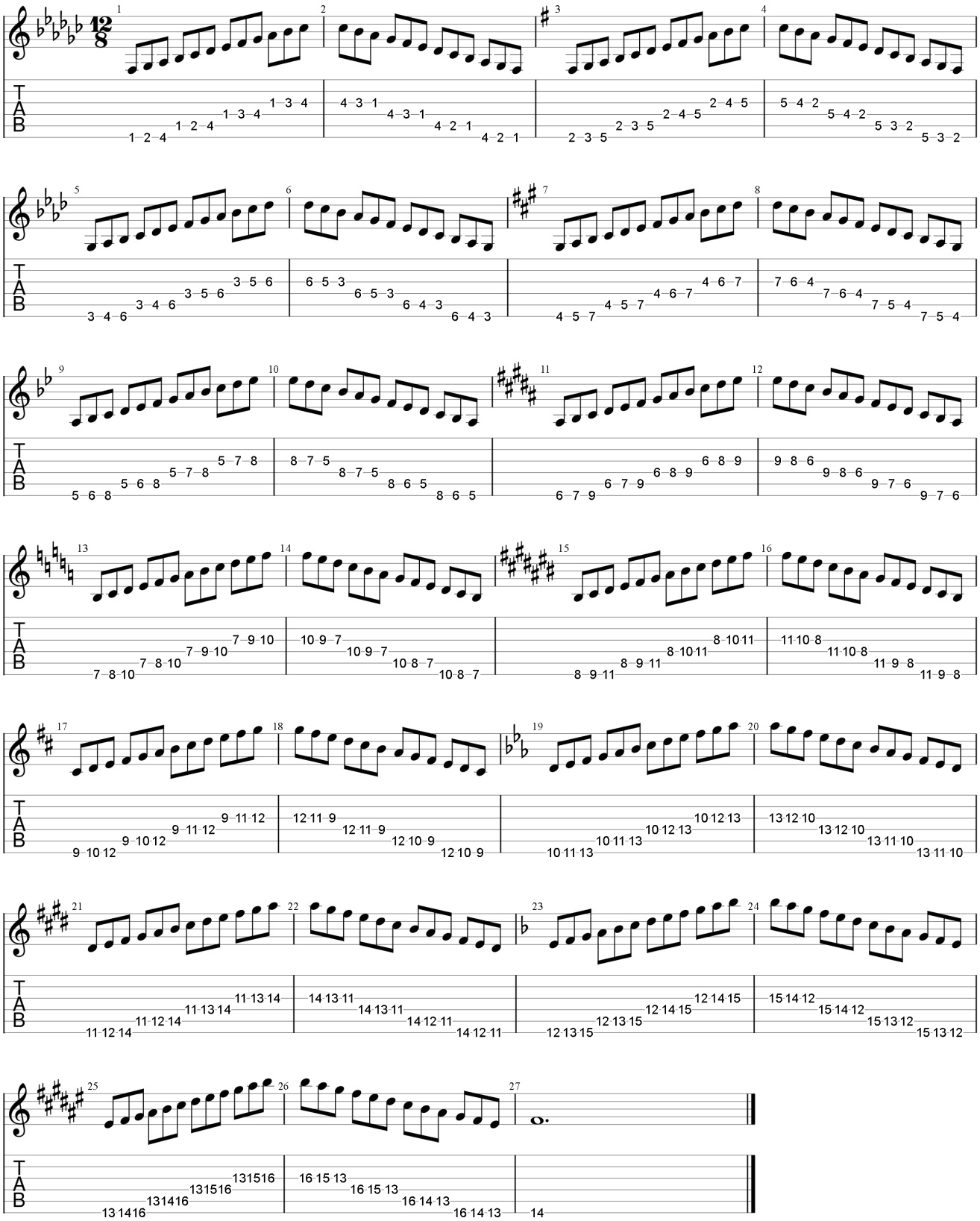

See how much longer that was? For those who didn't notice, the pattern you maxed out your speed with is the same pattern being used in the long exercise just moved up one fret at a time.

160 BPM is fairly close to the maxed out speed of 200 BPM. Backing off the speed to something more manageable, yet still close to your max will allow you to play for longer periods of time and really drill in the ability to play at this speed.

Want to push things further? Go up and then back down, like this:

MILE HIGH SHRED METRONOME METHOD

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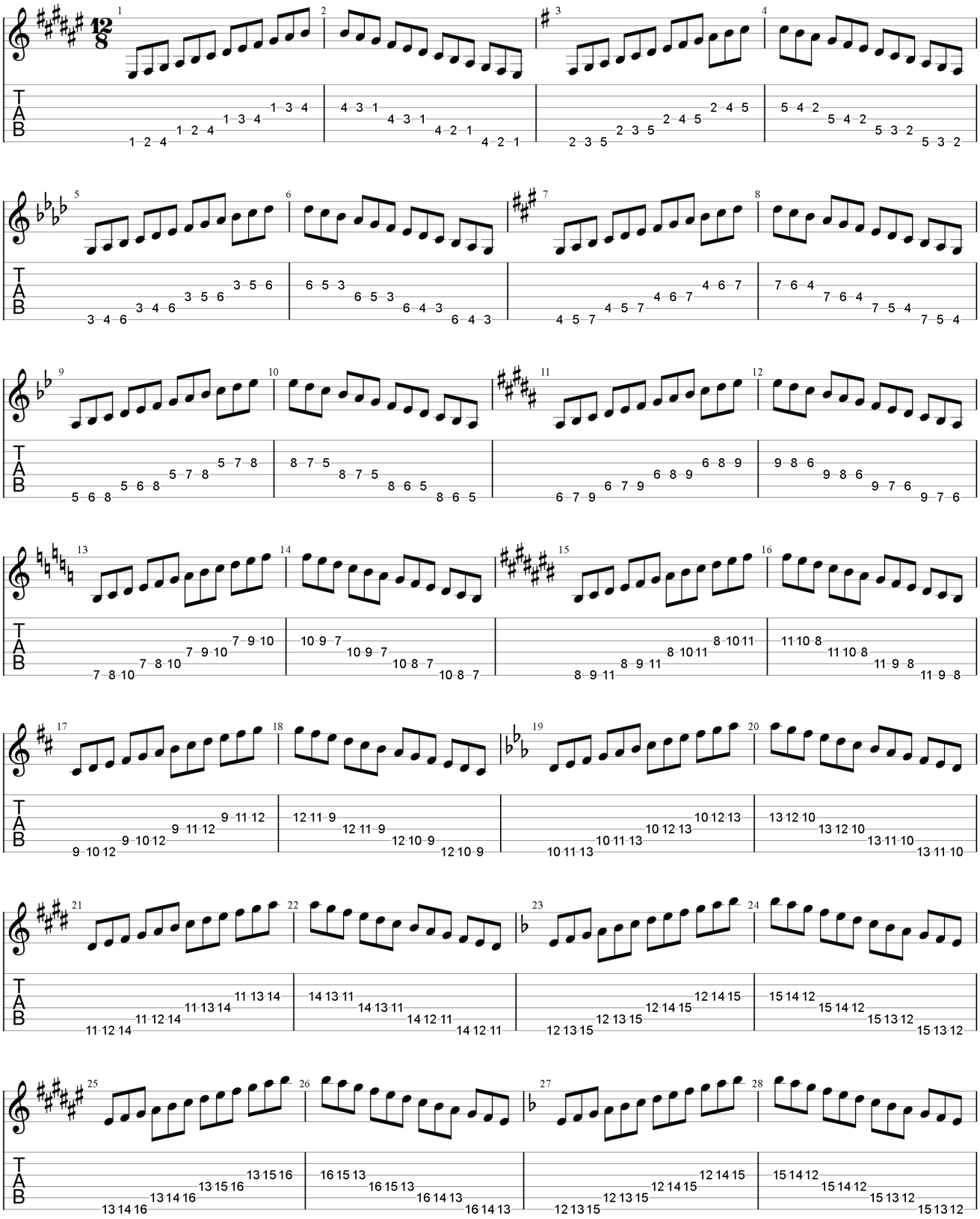

MILE HIGH SHRED METRONOME METHOD

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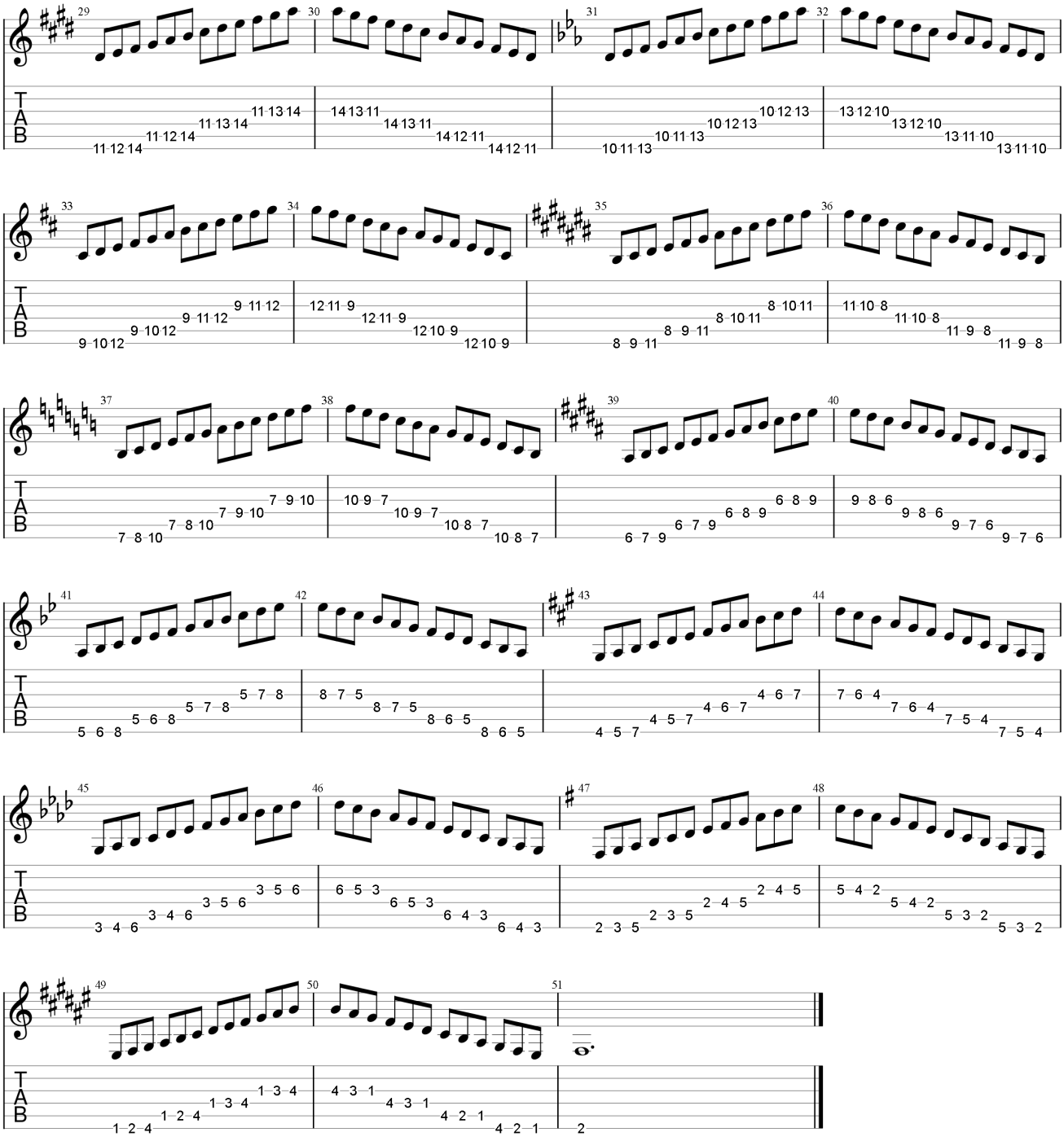


Keep in mind, that was just one example. There are all kinds of things you can do in a similar fashion, but I wanted to keep this example simple so that you can better understand the idea I'm trying to convey.

As mentioned earlier, the amount of this large volume submaximal type of training/practice that needs to happen will vary person to person.

You may have someone that benefits best from 75% pure speed drills/25% submaximal volume training.

Another person may work very well with an even 50/50 split.

Others may need to take it much further the other way and do 10% pure speed drills/90% submaximal volume training.

If you find yourself getting stuck a lot, try doing more submaximal volume training. There will be a section later on giving an example of how you can structure a practice routine so you can get an even better idea of how to approach all the ideas talked about so far, including the plateau breaking ideas just ahead.

Breaking Plateaus

Eventually, without a doubt, you WILL get stuck in your speed gains. Let's talk about some strategies in overcoming plateaus.

• THE 1 BPM METHOD •

If you have all the time in the world to practice, you may want to try this method every time you do a metronome session even if you haven't hit a plateau. However, most of us have jobs, or families, school, and other obligations that prevent us from being able to play guitar for 8 hours everyday. This is one reason I advise starting with the 5 BPM increases instead of going up by 1 BPM.

However, you may be working on a particular lick/riff/exercise that causes you to get stuck at the same speed for several days in a row. Maybe even weeks! This may be a good time to try going up by 1 BPM increments instead of 5.

Going up by 1 BPM increments will have you performing the riff in question a LOT more times VS going up by 5 BPM. This will help reinforce the playing mechanics necessary for playing what you're trying to play. Going up this slow will get you far more familiar with what you're working on as opposed to going up by 5 BPM.

5 BPM is usually good enough for most things. However, we're talking about what to do when you're stuck. So, in an effort to minimize practice time, I still say start with going up by 5 BPM. But, if I had the time to do so, I'd always go up by 1 BPM instead (even though it will take a lot longer to work something up).

Sometimes, this can even make getting something take LESS time than going up by fives. This is because you get all those extra repetitions in while climbing up to a higher speed.

I did this recently when working up Dave Murray's guitar solo in Hallowed Be Thy Name for a Patreon requested lesson.

The fast legato section was such a pain in the ass for me, that after a couple days of working it up by fives, and not having it up to speed fast enough (I had a deadline to keep), I decided to just go up by ones. It worked like a charm!

Another thing you can do is a combination of going up by fives and ones.

Let's say you have a goal speed of 200 BPM and you've been going up by fives but seem to keep getting stuck at 180 BPM. You're VERY close to the goal, but you're sick of getting stuck in the same place several days in a row. You also don't have a lot of time to practice, so going up by ones starting at 60 BPM may not be the best thing for you.

So, do both!

I would go up by fives starting at 60 BPM until you get to 120 BPM, then start going up by ones. Or, whatever speed feels like it starts getting just a little tricky.

That's basically how I gauge things when I decide to go up by ones if I'm not going to start at the bottom speed. Whatever speed starts to become even the slightest bit challenging, I'll go up by ones when I feel I need that extra help in breaking my own plateaus.

• TEN UP FIVE DOWN •

This is a method I've had a few students do in order to shake things up a bit when they've been stuck at the same speed for multiple lessons of covering something challenging for them. I don't use this one myself very often, but that's because I haven't really felt the need for it. But, it's still something to try if you're stuck.

You still start at 60 BPM with this method. But, instead of going up by fives, you go up 10 BPM, then down 5 BPM, then up 10 BPM, down 5 BPM, repeat, repeat, repeat.

For example, metronome speeds using this method will look like this:

60, 70, 65, 75, 70, 80, 75, 85, 80, 90, 85, 95, 90, 100, etc. etc. etc.

You end up hitting most of the same speeds twice. The first speed that gets hit twice is 70 BPM. Only 60 BPM, 65 BPM, and the highest speed you reach do not get played twice. All of the other speeds will get played twice.

The idea behind this is to give your brain little breaks as you go. In other words, you go to a harder speed, then an easier speed, harder, easier, harder, easier, etc.

Give this method a try if you hit a plateau and see if you like it!

• UP AND DOWN (AND MAYBE UP AGAIN) •

This is a pretty straight forward idea, but may take up far more time than most people are willing to put in. Even if you ARE willing to do it, you simply may not have the necessary time.

As the title suggests, you work your way up to your highest speeds by 5 BPM increments, and then all the way back DOWN in 5 BPM increments. And, if you really have plenty of time on your hands, go back up again!

For those of you who have tons of time (and patience), go up by ones instead of fives. And then back up again!

This idea will really help reinforce your mechanics and timing. A lot of times I will find that it's actually harder to hit a slower speed after I've gone through the steps of getting a riff really fast. I believe the slower speed (like 20 - 40 BPM slower than the high speed) is harder because now I'm used to the fast speed.

This method is one I've rarely done, but my logical brain KNOWS it's a good idea. If I had the extra time, perhaps I'd do it more. I know I'd GREATLY benefit from doing this metronome method!

• BACK OFF •

This method has a similarity to the previous one, because it has you slow down after reaching a high speed.

Something I've found very helpful, is to decrease the metronome speed by 20 BPM after getting stuck at a high speed you're trying to hit (you can do more if needed) and then play the same thing for several repetitions. Perhaps the same thing for about 5 minutes.

For example, if I'm working something up to 200 BPM, but I just can't seem to get past 180 BPM and I've already taken several breaks, I'll go back down to 160 BPM and play the hell out of what I'm working on (for about 5 minutes - maybe longer), take another short break, then work back up to 180 BPM from the 160 BPM I was doing. But, I'll go up by ones, and then HOPEFULLY I'll at least hit the 180 BPM that was kicking my ass.

Usually, this will do the trick. I'll tend to stop once I finally hit that speed I was struggling with as to not get stuck at a higher speed. I'll save going past 180 BPM for the next practice session (usually the next day).

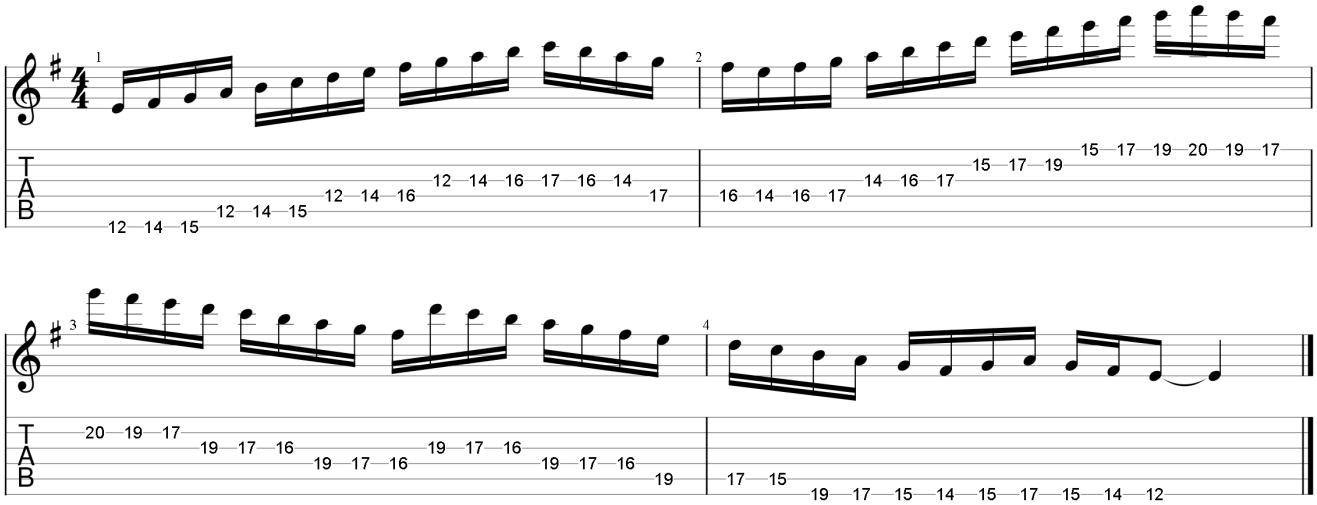
• STICKING POINT FOCUS •

Guthrie Govan talked about doing this in a video you can watch by CLICKING HERE.

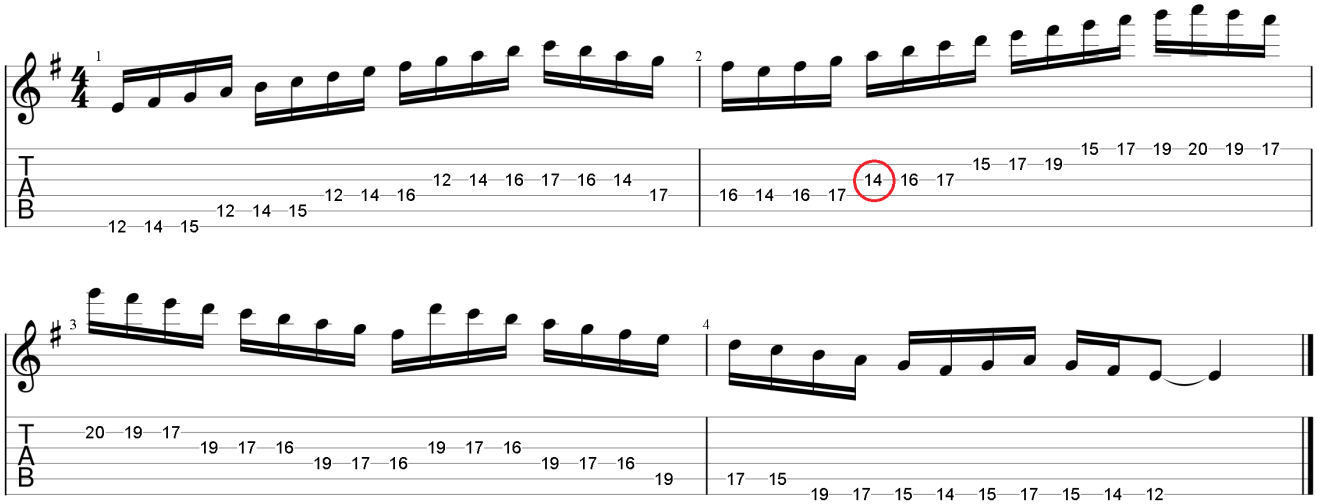
Basically, he says when you're playing something and you come to a note that may trip you up then make it a point to stop on that note and make it a feature.

How I look at his advice in terms of building up maximum speed with a riff is that whenever you come across a difficult section, or a very tough transition note, you land on that note and end the riff/lick/exercise early.

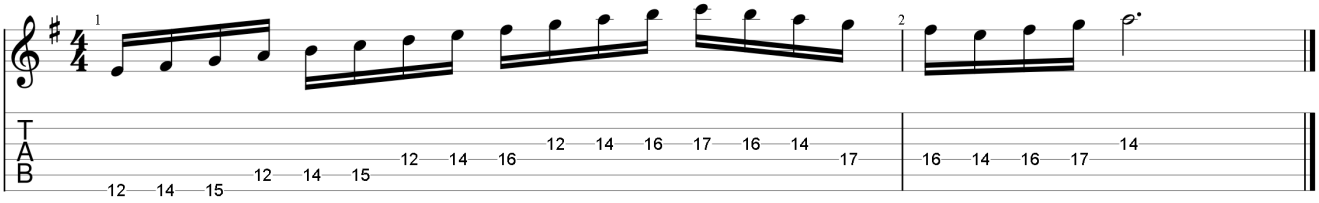
I think seeing a visual example will make this idea easier to understand. Let's use a scale run I was recently working on to show you how to use this sticking point method.
Here's the full scale run:



One tricky part for me was cleanly landing the first note of beat number two in bar number two.



So, in order to focus on that particular note, I just shortened the exercise to end there in order to work on the weak point. Now, it looks like this:



From there, I would work up this shortened version of the scale run until it's at my goal speed, and then go back to playing the full thing.

You can do this with anything you're having trouble with. Shorten things to a point you're able to focus on your trouble spots. Simplify as much as needed.

• THE CHEERS METHOD - HEAVY VOLUME APPROACH •

This method helps me a LOT when it comes to breaking plateaus. It's basically an extreme version of the submaximal volume training talked about earlier. The problem with this plateau method is how god awful BORING it can be. But, there's a way to stave off the boredom, and I'll tell you how in just a moment.

Basically, you will be skipping the slow speed incremental approach. You're going to take the piece of music you've been struggling with, set your metronome speed to about 40 - 50 BPM slower than your top speed, and you're going to play your riff/lick/exercise NON STOP for 20 - 30 MINUTES!

See why I said this approach can be super boring? That's why I put on an episode of Cheers when I first tried this. Having something mindless on like a sitcom can be quite helpful in keeping you from being super damn bored.

If you want to try this method, you should really know the piece of music you're working on by heart. In other words, you should have it committed to muscle memory, and the only thing you're really struggling with is getting it faster. This is because you don't want the TV show, or YouTube video you put on to distract you from what you're playing to the point you keep screwing up.

So, if you're in the process of learning something, DO NOT try this approach!

Also, the suggested 40 - 50 BPM slower than your top speed while trying this method is just that, a suggestion. The idea is to pick a speed you know you can do, do it well, but still need a little bit of effort to pull it off.

Now, I said you're going to play your riff/lick/exercise non stop for 20 - 30 minutes. However, your hands/arms won't let you do that. Your brain may not either.

This means that, if you are physically pushing yourself hard enough, your hands/arms are going to stiffen up after a bit and you will no longer be able to keep up with the metronome. When this happens, take a minute or two to let your muscles get loose again, then resume your volume training.

I call it volume training because you're doing a large amount of repetitions of the same thing.

I've had some pretty awesome success with this method. I remember using it for getting the intro to Trilogy by Yngwie Malmsteen up to speed, among other things.
I believe this method works so well because the crazy high amount of repetitions at a speed that is somewhat fast but still totally doable makes your body and brain get used to playing at a faster than normal tempo and vastly improves your mechanics used in playing what you're working on.

In other words, let's say your base level tempo for what you're working on is 120 BPM (your comfort speed) but you can still play it at 180 BPM but it's a huge struggle and can barely pull it off like only 10 percent of the time.

The idea of the Cheers Method (or volume training approach) is to raise your base tempo from 120 BPM to 140 or 160 BPM. And if playing your riff in question becomes comfortable at 160 BPM, you'll more than likely have a MUCH easier time playing it at 180 BPM.

• CHEAT •

This method might have some people calling me a hypocrite after I made it very clear to never practice mistakes.

The cheating method will have you playing at a speed you can't play yet. It will be sloppy. It will be a hot mess. But, there's a reason for it, and it really doesn't break the rules of practicing without making mistakes.

Let's say you're stuck at 180 BPM and you're trying to get to 200 BPM. Well, put the metronome at 200 BPM and try it a few times. Then go back down to 180 BPM and play it again.

Sometimes, using this approach, you'll actually hit the speed you were stuck at and be able to move on.

When you play at a speed you can't do, you're basically telling you hands and brain, "HEY!!! Move THIS fast!!!".

Think of this as doing cheat curls for guitar. For those who don't know what a cheat curl is, that's when you see people using their backs to help swing the weight up for a biceps curl. This bad form can help you move weights far heavier than your biceps can normally lift, which can spur new growth.

Always relying on cheat curls is probably not the safest thing to do, and should be used sparingly.

Using this cheat method of plateau breaking, I feel, should also be used sparingly.

And, don't forget, do NOT end your practice session with a mistake! In other words, make sure you go back down to a playable speed after you've done some sloppy takes at speeds faster than you can handle.

• REST DAYS •

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, you're still stuck. You've tried all these plateau breaking methods and you just can't get any faster.

If what you're working on doesn't have a deadline for you to get up to speed, you may find taking a day or two off to be helpful.

Taking a day or two (or three?) away from something you've been busting your butt on could be a much needed (and welcomed) break for your brain. Sometimes we just get burnt out on doing the same thing everyday, so it can be very refreshing to step away from what is causing you so much trouble for a little bit.

I've found this to be quite helpful during times I'd get insanely frustrated working on something that was for a project I was creating like a song, or video lesson.

When we exercise with weight training, we need rest days to recover. I don't know of any exact science behind rest days when it comes to something like practicing an instrument, but if you feel like your brain wants to explode from the anger of working on a particular piece of music, I think it would be a good idea to give yourself a break for a day or two.

WHAT METHOD(S) SHOULD YOU CHOOSE?

You may be wondering which plateau breaking method to use for different situations. I really don't think it matters. The only way to know for sure which method works for you is to try it. Try combining a couple of them. Track your results and see how things go.

I like using the 1 BPM Increases, Sticking Point Focus, and the Cheers Method. Those are my favorite, and I've had really good results in overcoming plateaus by using them.

Reader Submitted Ideas

One objective of this eBook, besides giving you guidance on how to properly use a metronome for building speed, is to equip you with every possible idea in order to help you reach your guitar goals. And, because I can't think of everything by myself, this section will be comprised of reader submitted ideas that I believe can be beneficial to helping you improve as a guitar player and musician.

So, if there's something in this eBook you feel is left out, I want to know. Send a message to John@MileHighShred.com

Your idea could make into an eBook update!

• SHADOW BOXING •

Idea Submitted by Paolo - Patreon Supporter

I don't know a heck of a lot about boxing. I did use to take karate classes when I was a kid though. So, I'm pretty sure I get the idea behind shadow boxing. But, feel free to correct me if what you're about to read is totally wrong!

Basically, when you shadow box, you're practicing your fighting moves without an opponent. Even though you may not be hitting a physical person or object, shadow boxing can still help you hone your skills as you visualize how things might go in a fight and respond accordingly by still throwing your punches and moving around.

You can apply this same idea to your guitar playing. Whether you have a guitar or not, you can air fret! I know I've done tons of air drumming over the years, and we've all seen people playing air guitar. Why not air fret with a purpose?

To help reinforce fretting movements, you can just move your fingers without actually touching your guitar.

Here's what Paolo shared with me to help further explain this approach:

> *"Once you have a particular finger pattern down, you can play it in the air as if you are playing an air guitar. This loosens up your muscles and tendons. Your goal is to reach a feeling of total looseness and zero resistance. Once you have this feeling, go back to the real fretboard and try to play the same pattern maintaining the same feeling in your hands."*

I can see using this approach when you need to take one of your breaks. I believe it can be quite helpful in resetting your mind as well as your hands.

And, yes, trying this while following a metronome is absolutely doable!

One thing I could see happening though is that air fretting for too long will be counterproductive and actually cause you to stiffen up instead of becoming looser. So, probably best not to air fret to the point of causing the same stiffness you'd get by actually fretting something for a long period of time.

• BREATH •

Idea Submitted by Paolo - Patreon Supporter

Ever notice yourself holding your breath when you play really difficult things on guitar? I know I'm guilty of this.

Here's what Paolo said about this:

> *"A martial arts application to playing guitar is to keep a conscious relaxed and fluid breathing once you are under stress. On guitar, it means to be aware not to hold the breath or create any useless tension when you are pushing your limits. All unwanted muscle tension works as a brake for the final movement, and impairs efficiency."*

Because the idea of tension was brought up, let's talk more about that.

Many times people will say you have to play with zero tension. Paolo does say "useless" tension. This is something I completely agree with. However, for those who think they are doing something wrong when tension creeps as you are pushing your limits, you're probably fine.

Look, it's really not possible to pick as fast as you can with zero tension. You can't sprint with relaxed legs, and you can't shred your ass off with relaxed hands and arms! Tension is inevitable when you're pushing your limits.

Having controlled tension seems to be the key here. Imagine walking down the road but you're flexing the shit out of your legs with each step. That is very unnecessary tension. Take it a step (pun) further and keep flexing those legs and now try running. Probably not going to work so well, is it?

I feel this is a pretty hard concept to fully understand until you've gained some real life experience by pushing your limits in shredding it up on guitar. However, I think the best thing to remember is to keep breathing while you play, don't tense up your whole body like you're about to get punched, and remain as calm as possible.

Many times I'll swear like a sailor and play nonsense on my guitar to release some built up tension when I keep screwing up. That's some tension you definitely want to get rid of! You will absolutely play better with a calm mind VS a frustrated and angry mind.

• SEE IT BEFORE YOU PLAY IT •

Idea Submitted by Paolo - Patreon Supporter

The mind is a powerful thing. As trite as that may be, it is very true. Something as simple as just visualizing what you are trying to play can actually help you play better.

I believe the title of an audio book I listened to several years ago was called "The 60 Second Sale". Amazon shows two books from two different authors of the same title, and I lost the audio book sometime ago because I used to live like a damn pig. So, I can't confirm which one it was. (it also may be "The One Minute Sales Person", but I really can't remember)

But, the title of the book (or audio book) isn't too important. A story in the book IS.

Basically, the audio book talked about a study where a bunch of people were placed into various groups to work on improving free throws. One group just practiced shooting free throws, one group just visualized shooting them, and another group both practiced AND visualized shooting free throws.

This audio book said that the group who both practiced AND visualized shooting free throws made the most improvement.

The "60 Second Sale" or "One Minute..." whatever the hell it was told this story because one piece of advice to improve your selling was to imagine yourself kicking ass at selling!

So, the point I'm trying to get to is basically what Paolo said here:

> *"Create a clear movie in your mind of how you would like your hands to move, and how you will feel once you correctly play what you are trying to play. Once the picture is clear, go straight to the guitar and play with that picture in mind."*

In other words, visualize yourself playing what you want to play, and then play it.

I've tried this a few times, and oddly enough, it makes playing pain in the ass things a bit easier. This is something you can try when you are getting stuck at a high speed while working your way up with the metronome. I would also try visualizing what you want to play while the metronome is going.

Diminished Returns

Like it or not, we all have our own genetic limitations. Some people are simply born to be faster than others. Some people will have a far easier time learning to play guitar than others. It may not be fair, but it is the truth.

Because of our genetic limitations, there really is only so far we can push ourselves. Accepting this, and understanding what happens as you reach your own limits may help you keep your sanity, and prevent you from beating yourself up too much when you're not able to play a certain lick at 280 BPM (most people can't).

Before I go into diminished returns, I'd like to share an idea with you that has helped me in another area of my life that may very well help you in any struggles you come across in reaching your guitar speed goals.

As you may have guessed due to the comparisons made in this eBook between shred guitar and weight lifting, I have a very serious passion for weight training.

I had a goal to get as big as Arnold. I am not even close to making that happen. Besides the fact I don't (and won't) take steroids, I don't have his genetics. Even if I DID go down the steroid road, I still wouldn't end up as big as Arnold.

It's pretty interesting how something like steroids will affect different people in different ways. Some guys NEVER get huge, even when they take steroids. Their genetics will not allow them to get bigger!

So, instead of always comparing myself to everyone else, I just started focusing on myself and improving upon what I've already done.

If I go up at least one rep on a certain lift, I've made progress. If I'm able to lift just one more pound than the previous week for a given exercise, then I've made progress.

It doesn't matter how much the other people in the gym are lifting, or how long they've been doing it. What matters is that I do my best to better myself in my training. And, that's what I hope you will do when you work on becoming a better guitar player.

It is unreasonable to expect yourself to be JUST LIKE Yngwie Malmsteen, Michael Angel Batio, Steve Vai, Buckethead, etc. It is even MORE unreasonable to try and be just like all of them! Yet, very often, plenty of aspiring guitar players want to perfectly emulate 3 or more of the most skilled guitar players to ever live.

It's one thing to work your way up to being good enough to play a lot of the material you like, but it's another to think you'll be so damn good that you'll be able to play anything and everything from all of your favorite guitar players with ease. It's just not going to happen.

YOU are YOU and that's okay.

Now, with that being said, you may be questioning just how fast you can expect yourself to get.

Playing 16th notes around 180 - 200 BPM is considered pretty damn fast for most people. Going above 200 BPM is where the best of the best speedy players are going to get, and I do believe genetics will determine what percentage of guitar players can actually get past 200 BPM.

I use that BPM range due to a poll conducted on the Troy Grady Cracking the Code site where people submitted their fastest picking speeds. Between 180 - 200 BPM is where most people are at. Troy has also talked about 180 BPM being a speed where a lot of the fast flashy lines done by Malmsteen and Batio are at. (It may have even been as low as 170 BPM)

I'm pretty convinced damn near ANYONE can get to, at least, 180 BPM while picking 16th notes. So, going far past that is where the discussion of diminished returns is important.

For those of you unfamiliar with what diminished returns means - diminished returns means that the progress you make in getting faster and faster will become less and less.

THE FASTER YOU GET = THE MORE WORK IS NEEDED TO GET FASTER

Noobie gains is a gym term used to describe how fast newcomers to weight lifting make progress. When you've never done weight training before, you'll make a significant amount of progress in a short period of time. However, the longer you train, and the more experienced you get, the slower your progress becomes.

Here's an example to help put this in a clearer perspective - It is far easier to increase your bench press from 100 to 200 lbs. VS going from 200 lbs. to 300 lbs.

This principle of diminished returns applies to shred guitar.

It is far easier to build your speed from 100 to 200 BPM VS going from 200 to 300 BPM.

For example, in working with getting certain riffs up to speed I've never touched before, I may fumble around with learning it at around 120 BPM. Then I metronome the thing up to 160 BPM on the first day. Then, the next day up to 175 BPM. The next day only to 180 BPM. The next day, no increase (maybe even a decrease!). So, then I'll bust out one of the plateau breaking methods, then get back to the regular practice the following day and only get up to 185 BPM.

That's how diminished returns works. Lots of progress in the early stages, then progress slows down. So, in order to go any further, you have to put in a lot more effort just to squeeze out a little bit more progress.

This leads to the question of how much effort should you put in to getting something faster. How many days, weeks, months, or even years should you devote to getting something faster? Depends on your goal.

I, for one, will not spend every damn day practicing something for a year or more. FUCK that!!! That sounds AWFUL!!!

If I'm doing something for personal gain, like doing a particular scale run, and I find I'm hardly getting anywhere after a week, I throw in the towel. When I start to dread practicing something, and it becomes god awful boring and irritating, then I'm done.

Yes, sometimes when we are working to learn certain things on guitar there will be moments of frustration. I get frustrated a LOT when practicing new things and I'm working to get them up to speed. But, if I'm still making progress, the frustration is worth it, and I keep going. When no progress is being made other than an increase of misery, then I'm done.

When I worked on the intro to Trilogy by Malmsteen, it took over a month for me to get it up to speed. I also took a few days off to work on other things before returning to practice. I kept plugging away at this because I knew it was possible to be played, and I had wanted to play this thing for almost 20 years.

What I'm trying to say here is that if it's just for personal gain and isn't really song or project related, I would stop when it starts to become too frustrating, and maybe come back to it at a later date IF you really want to.

If it's for a project that you feel needs to be done, then you'll have to have some patience and be prepared for the long haul. Hopefully you won't have a deadline so you can take your time. If you do have a deadline, well, you may not be ready in time. I know that's a shitty thing to read, but it is the truth.

There is only so much we can ask of ourselves. We all have our limitations. We all have different schedules and different lives that can play a HUGE factor in how we progress.

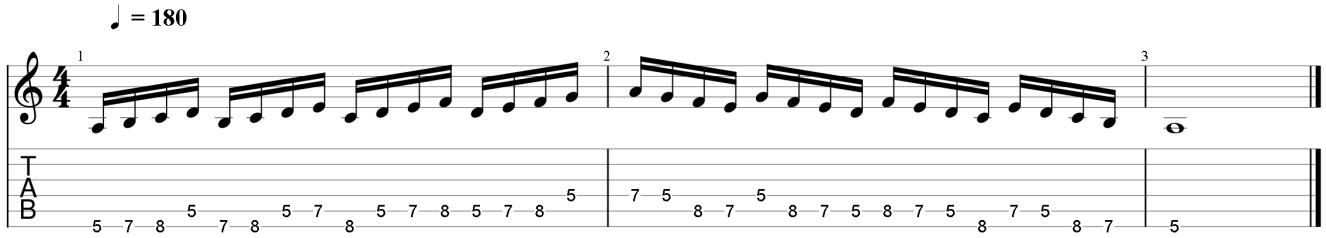
When it comes down to it, there is no real single answer to tell you or anyone just how long they should stick to a piece of music they want to get to a certain speed. You will have to use your own judgment for that.

But, understanding that the more progress you make means you'll need to put in more and more effort to make less and less progress is a VERY important fact to know, understand, and accept.

Practice Routine Example

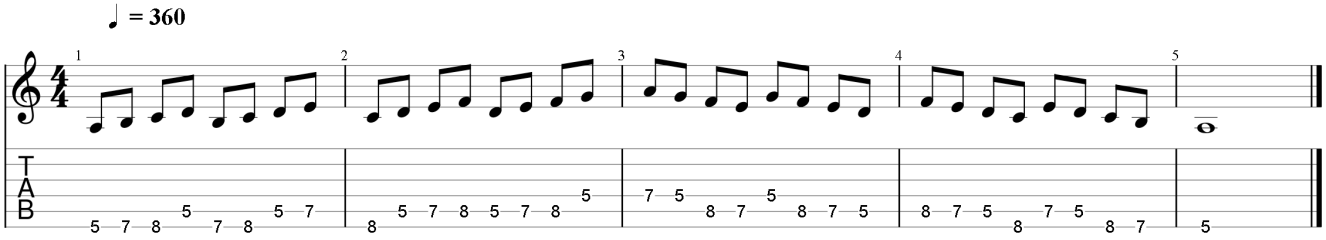
Let's use four note coils to demonstrate how you can apply several of the ideas talked about in this eBook.

This is going to use the A minor scale, and the goal is to play it at 180 BPM using 16th notes.



I'll use myself to describe how I'd approach learning this. Let's just say I totally suck at this. I stumble through it, and there's no chance I could even get a decent playthrough at 100 BPM.

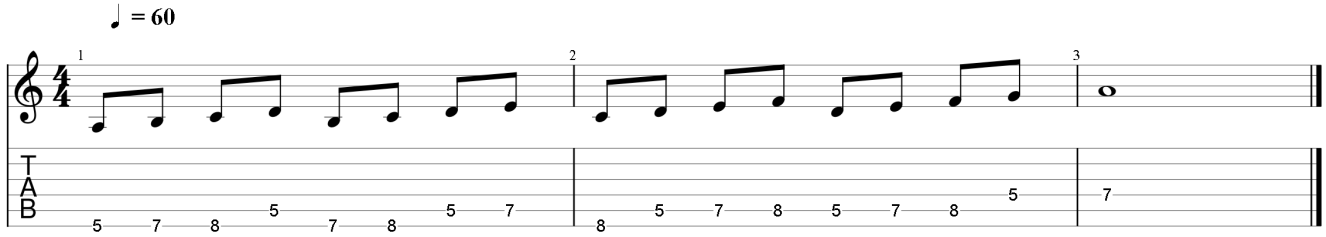
The first thing I do is look at this as 8th notes, instead of 16th notes.



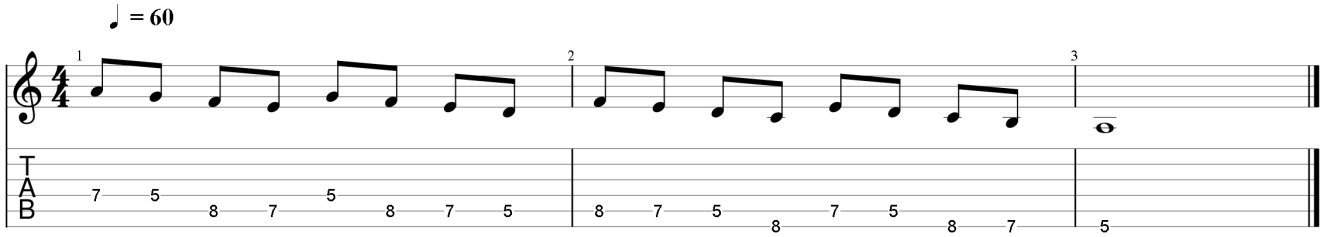
If I were to play the 8th note version at the same speed as the 16th note version, then it would be at 360 BPM. Not the easiest speed to follow! When it comes to practicing this, I will be using the graduation speed of 240 BPM. In other words, I will work up this 8th note version to 240 BPM and then begin working up the 16th note version starting at 60 BPM.

To make learning and practicing this easier, I will first break it into smaller pieces. I'll work the ascending and descending parts separately.

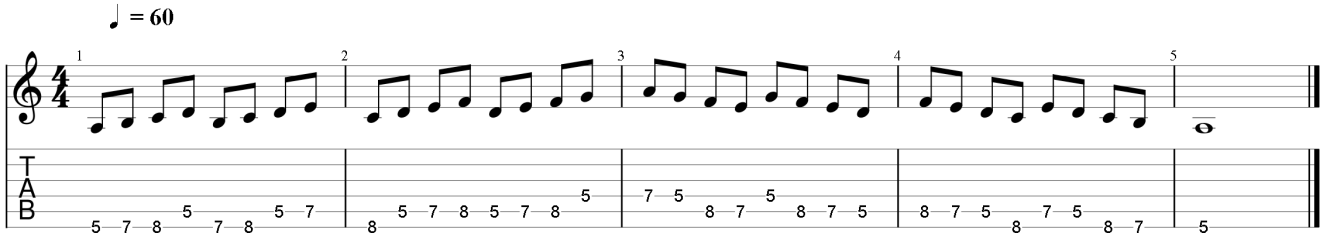
My first goal is to get the ascending part from 60 BPM up to 240 BPM. Every time I play it correctly, just one time, I will increase the metronome by 5 BPM.



Next, I will work up the descending portion the same way.



Once both the ascending and descending portions have been worked up to 240 BPM, it's time put them back together and work the whole thing up from 60 to 240 BPM using 5 BPM increments.

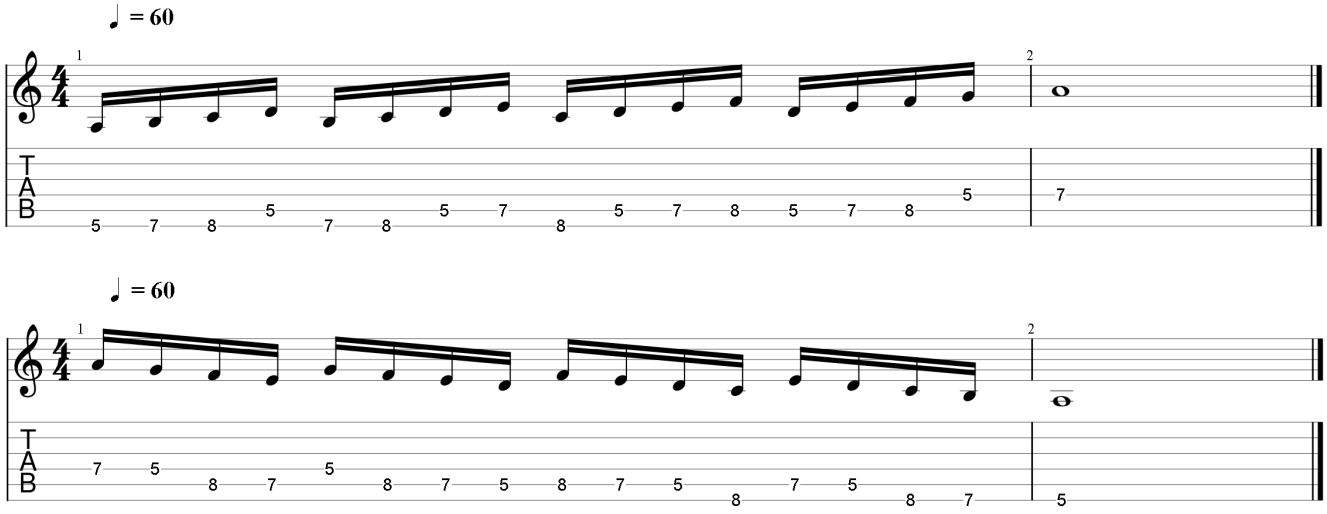


After getting that up to 240 BPM it's time to work on the 16th note version.

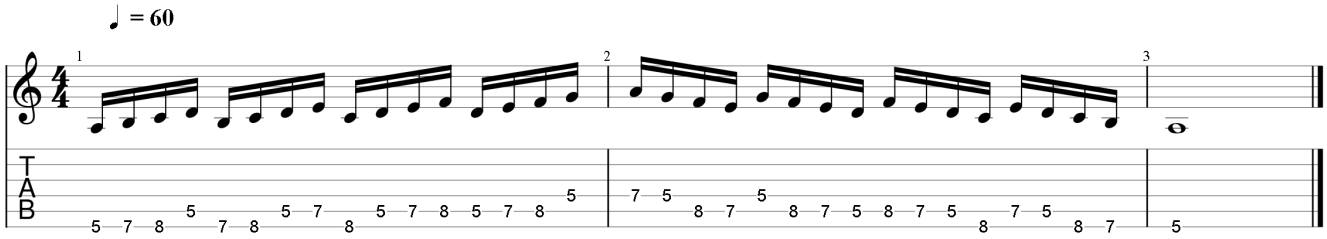
I'm going to break the whole thing in half again to make it easier for me to get used to playing 4 notes per beat instead of 2 notes per beat.

It's VERY important to always make things easier on yourself
when possible to help you progress faster.

The goal speed for the whole exercise is 180 BPM. I will work towards getting both the ascending and descending portions up to 200 BPM before putting them together. I do this to make it easier to play the entire thing. If I can play each half of the exercise 20 BPM faster than the goal speed for the full exercise, then I have a much better chance of hitting that speed goal for the whole thing.



After getting both of those parts up to 200 BPM, it's time to work up the whole thing.

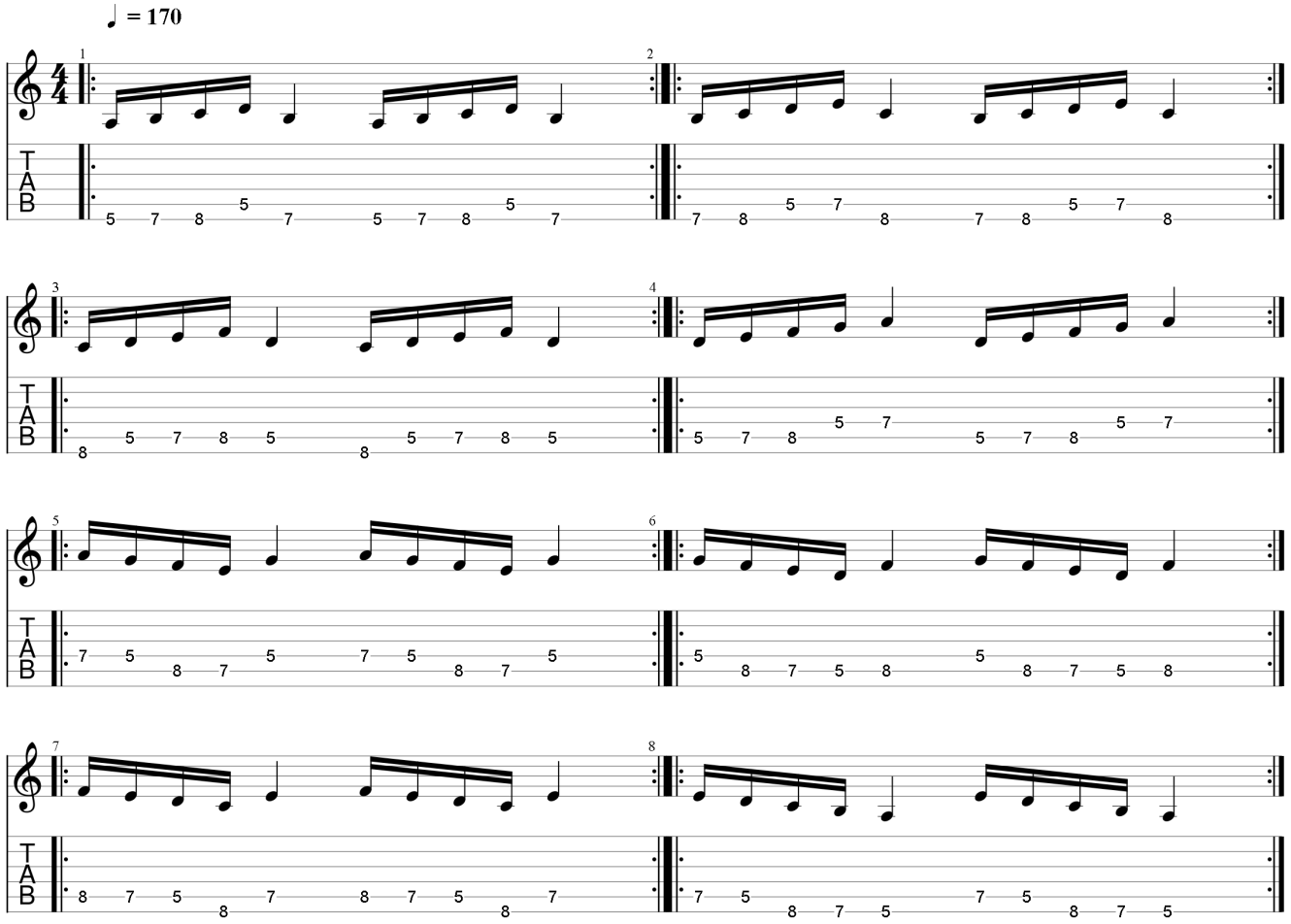


Even though I managed to get the ascending and descending portions past the goal speed, I end up struggling when I get to 160 BPM. I just keep fucking up over and over and over again.

The first thing I do in this situation is to go up by 1 BPM increments. Yes, starting at 60 BPM.

Let's say this gets me up to 170 BPM, but anything past that is just a no go. At this point I will opt for a supplemental exercise to really drill home the various things happening in the exercise I'm trying to get to 180 BPM.

I'm going to practice this now:



What's happening in this supplemental exercise is I'm basically playing one full beat at a time followed by the first note of the next beat. I'm also doing this four times to really solidify every single part of the full exercise.

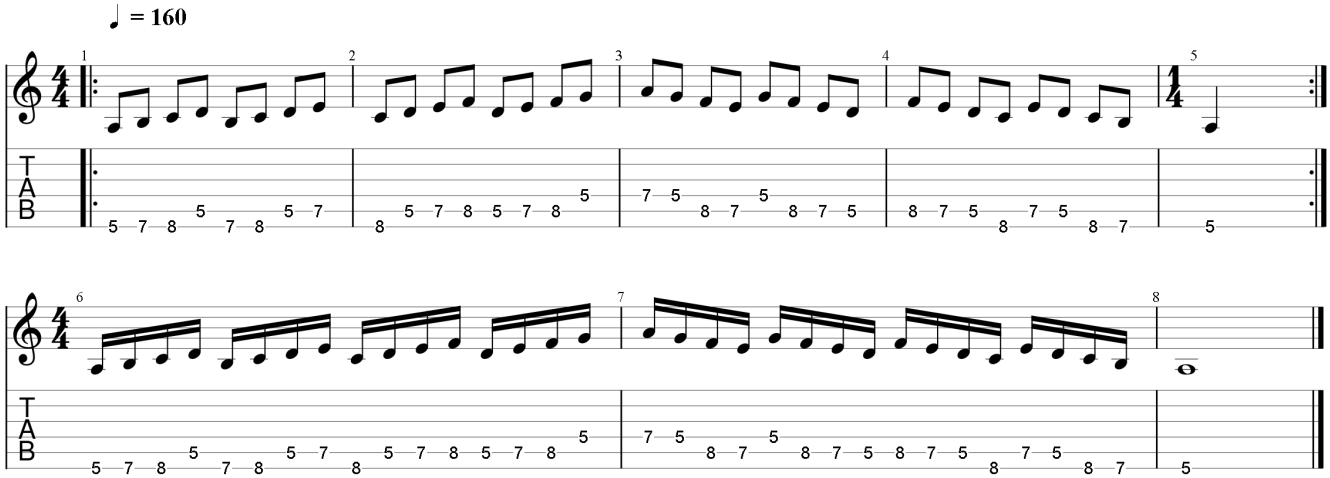
Breaking things down like this can be a tremendous help in allowing you to go even further with your playing.

I will play this longer supplemental exercise at the speed I keep getting stuck at - 170 BPM. If you do something like this, and find that the speed you were stuck at is too fast for even the supplemental approach, then back the speed down by 10 or 20 BPM and see if that helps.

Although you COULD work this whole thing up from 60 BPM using the 5 BPM incremental approach, it would take a rather long time. That's why I opt for just playing it at the higher tempo right away. I don't have all day to work that long ass thing all the way up from 60 to 170 BPM or faster.

After this supplemental exercise, let's say I get to 180 BPM and it feels better than I expected. Now I want to go to 200 BPM!

Getting past 180 BPM may sometimes feel a bit fast for my brain. So, I'll throw in some 8th note work when the speed feels high to help ground myself. That will look like this:



The tempo just shown doesn't really matter. This method can be done at any tempo whenever things start to feel shaky.

I like playing things at half speed a couple of times before jumping right back into full speed. This gives me a better feel of what I'm trying to play, and allows me to keep pushing myself further.

Well, now that I've accomplished my speed goals with this exercise, what should happen next?

Let's say I'd like to sustain this new speed with four note coils. This would be a good time to use the submaximal volume training approach.

I COULD just play the same pattern something like 10 - 20 times in a row. But, I think it would be more practical to apply this coil pattern to all of the scales in the key of A minor. Something like this:

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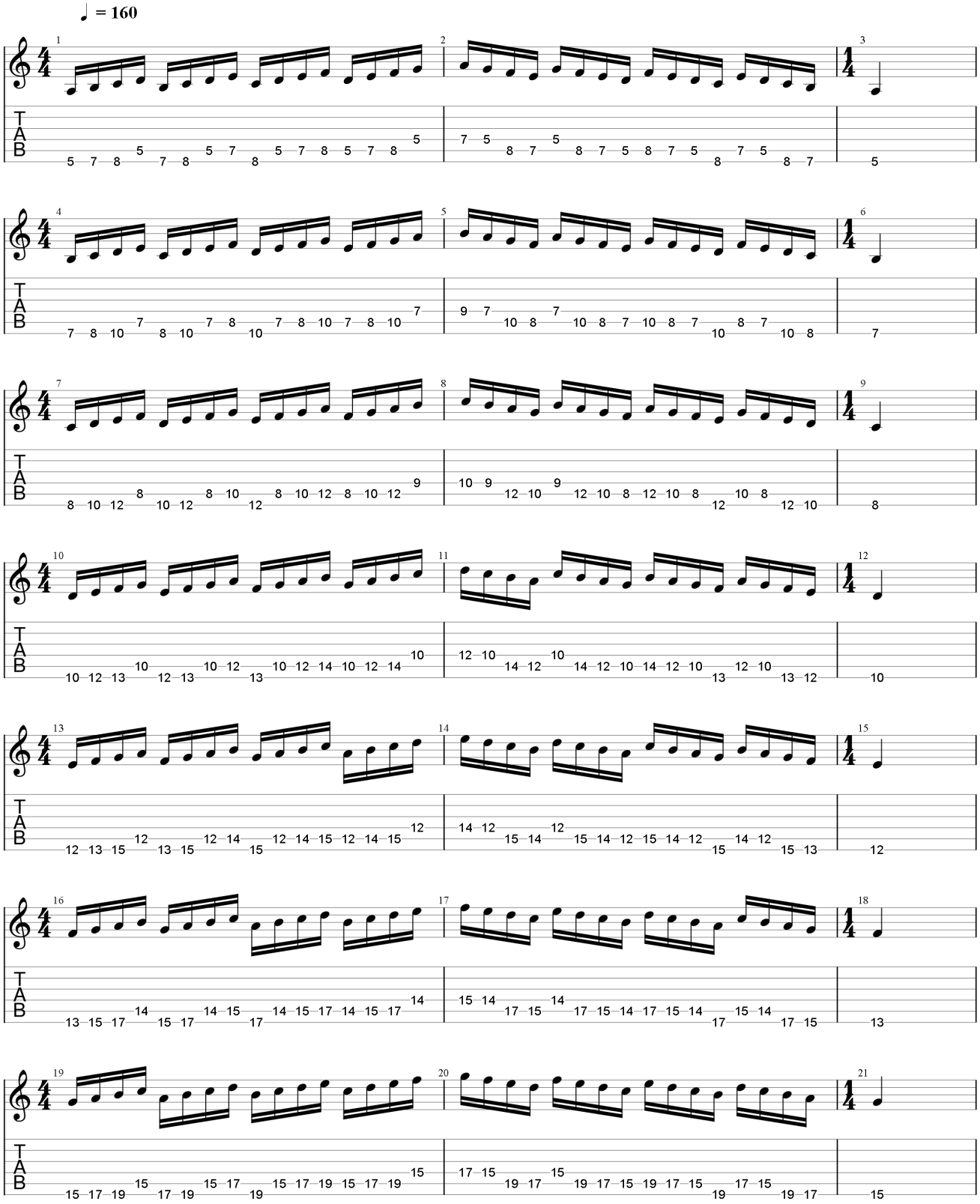

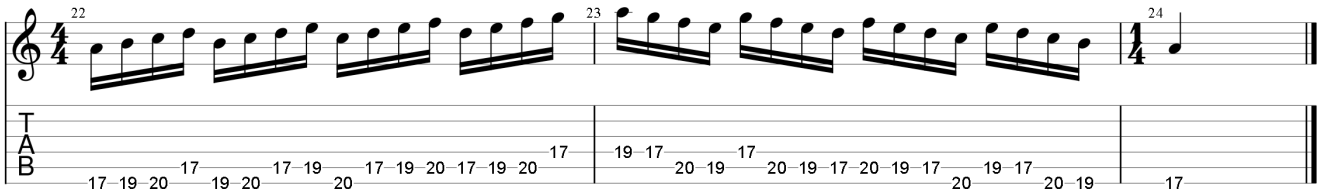

The tempo of 160 BPM is listed at the start of that MUCH longer exercise. This is 40 BPM less than the top speed of 200 BPM that was reached with just the four note coils of the A minor scale. 160 BPM is close to the max speed, but not so fast that playing for longer periods of time would be impossible.

You can take things even further by getting rid of those quarter notes that finish each scale run, and pick 16ths notes from beginning to end, like this:

MILE HIGH SHRED METRONOME METHOD

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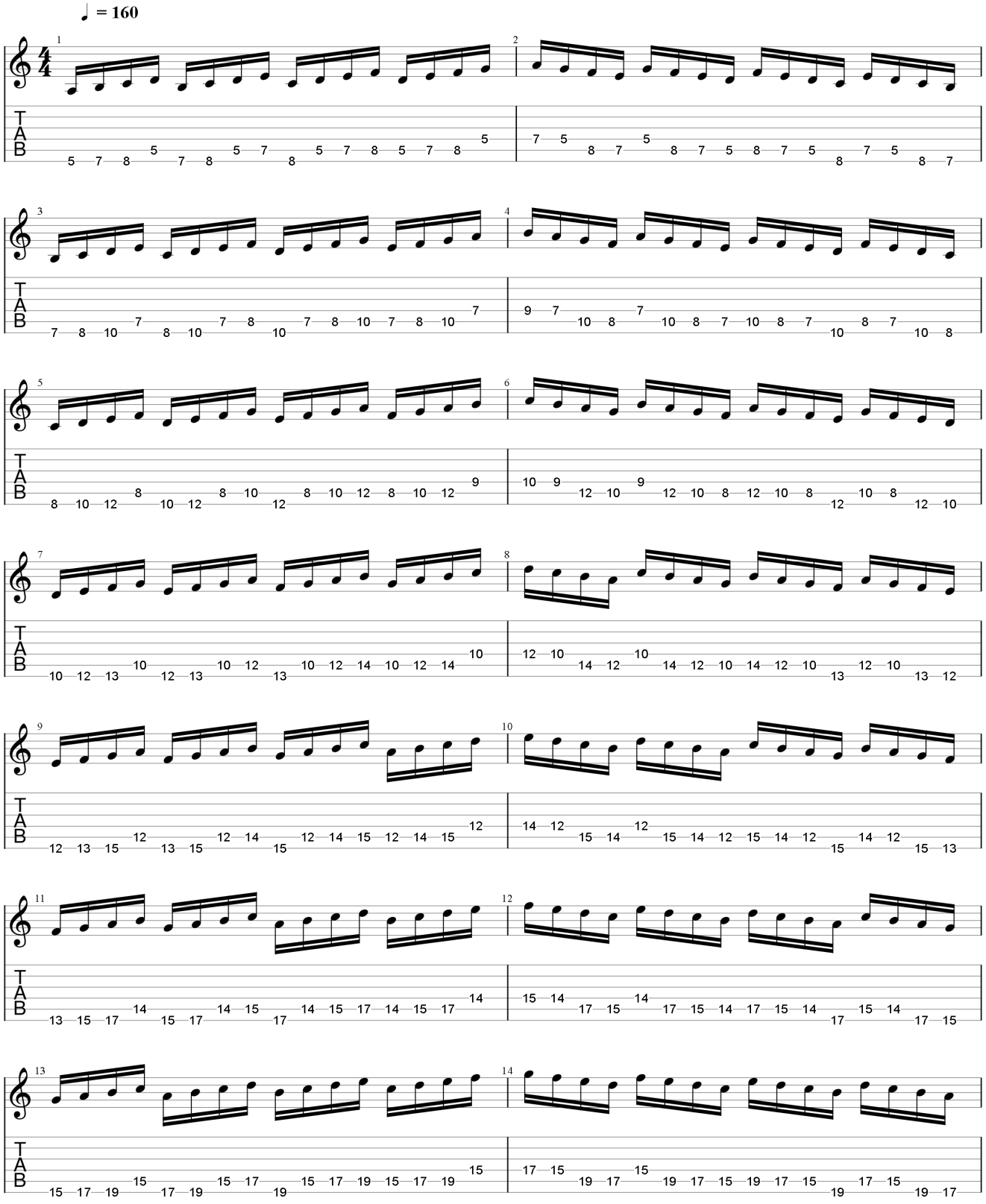

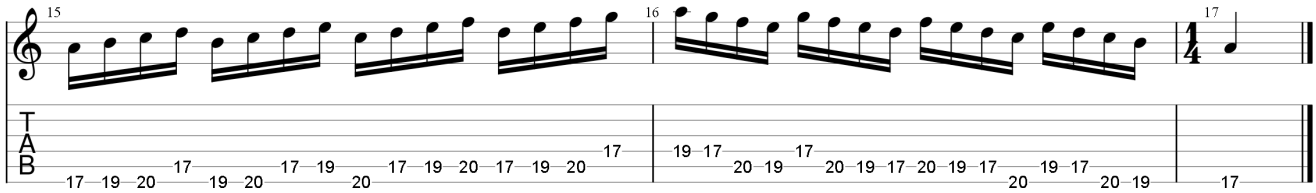

You could also go back down after working your way up through all those scales for a REALLY big endurance challenge.

Although this section of the eBook was hypothetical in how a practice routine may go, this was based on personal experience with getting things up to speed, and helping several students get up to speed.

I hope the ideas shown in this section help give you a better understanding of how you can approach the material you choose to work on.

Troubleshooting

I've had a few students who have followed this metronome approach, and still remained stuck at certain tempos even after trying all kinds of different exercises to address issues and weaknesses.

I had them film some practice sessions to see if I could figure out when things start to go wrong, or if anything wrong was even happening. Sure enough, the same thing showed up with everyone.

MISTAKES WERE BEING MADE AND THEY EITHER DIDN'T KNOW IT
OR THEY ALLOWED THEM TO HAPPEN

So far, when people follow all the steps laid out in this eBook, the only thing I've seen that prevents this metronome method from working is when people play things incorrectly as they practice.

When you make a mistake, and you don't correct that mistake, you're asking for trouble.

If you make a mistake, and you know you did, DO NOT increase your metronome speed!

FIX YOUR MISTAKE BEFORE MOVING ON

This is why I say practice doesn't mean a damn thing. Only perfect practice makes perfect. You won't magically become a great guitar player by playing like garbage 6 hours a day. You need to play things correctly in order to become better at playing things correctly.

So, when you're practicing, and when you're working your way up the metronome, do NOT allow mistakes to happen without correcting them.

Some people have told me that after making a mistake they decide to just move on to the next speed even though they knew full well a mistake is made, because they wanted to hurry up and get to the faster speeds. This is HUGE mistake!

When you're working on your squat, and you want to lift heavier and heavier, it is extremely foolish to add more weight on the bar if your technique isn't correct. If you lift something that is heavy for you, and you have bad form, you have a high risk of injury.

If you're building a house, and you allow a poor foundation to be built just because you want to see the final product as soon as possible, that house is likely to fall over.

The slow speeds are very important in building solid movement mechanics and timing/rhythm. This is building your foundation. If your foundation is weak, it will become obvious when you try going faster.

You must be strict with yourself when you practice. You must be disciplined if you want to be the best

guitar player you can be. Don't settle for half assed playing. Whole ass that shit!

Now, as I mentioned a little earlier, these same students also didn't realize mistakes were being made as they got into the higher speeds. This can be a tough thing to catch on your own.

If you have a way to record yourself, I recommend doing so. It can be quite eye opening (ear opening?) to hear just how you are really playing things.

How we hear ourselves play is different when we listen back to ourselves. Sometimes, thankfully, what we hear being played back can actually sound better than what we assumed it would be. But, the opposite is also quite true.

I think I will always remember a recording experience I had when working with my friend who has a great ear for rhythm. It was a very humbling experience to learn how shitty my timing really was. And, if I hadn't been able to listen back to my performances and have somebody point out to me why my playing was off, I would have missed out on a tremendous learning experience.

Recording yourself on video is also helpful. Sometimes seeing what you do can reveal issues in your playing that you didn't know were there.

Of course, for some of you, even if you do record yourself playing, be it just the audio or on video, you may still not realize you're making mistakes or be able to identify what is going wrong.

This is where having a guitar teacher can come in handy.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm sure someone just rolled their eyes or cussed me out because they've been waiting for some kind of sales pitch throughout this whole eBook.

Well, it's true though! Either having a guitar teacher watch your performance, or even a skilled musician you know can be very beneficial.

In fact, I'll do you a favor...

Everyone who gives the info in this eBook a real try, meaning you followed EVERYTHING in it, and tried the plateau breakers, and you are STILL STUCK, send me a video where you record a practice session. I'll give you an evaluation on what I see. No charge. *Just one time though!*

You have to record a real practice session though. You can't cut corners just to make the video shorter. If you do that, then I can't give a full evaluation because I couldn't see how you truly practice.

If you want to send me your practice session video, send it to John@MileHighShred.com

Conclusion

I hope you found some value in this eBook. I accredit my speed and technique to all the countless hours of metronome practice I've put in over several years. I firmly believe that following my teacher's advice of using the metronome is what made me the guitar player I am today (from a technical standpoint), and I am truly grateful I did what he told me to do.

Any time you have questions regarding the material in this eBook you are welcome to send a message to John@MileHighShred.com

If you think I left something out of this eBook that should have been covered, I'd love to know! I want this eBook to be as complete as possible.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and I wish you the best of luck on your guitar journey and all your musical goals!

And, special thanks to my student and Patreon supporter, Dean C. for taking the time to proof read this eBook for spelling errors (and lord, I can't believe some of the DUMB ones I made). You made this better!

Good ol' Endorsement Section

Monson Guitars - Easily the best feeling guitar I've ever used. Every student who has bought one of Monson's hand made custom guitars they love what they get. I can't recommend these guitars enough!

DistroKid - Easily the EASIEST way I've found to get music released online. Dirt cheap to use, and they do all the legwork for you to get your stuff out to ALL major online music retailers. If you want people to hear your music, you've GOT to use DistroKid!

Gravity Picks - These picks make playing guitar EASIER. I've been using the 6 mm thick Stealth standard size body design for a while now. The pick just GLIDES right over the strings making the notes come out sooooo much easier than a traditional flat pick. I fucking hate flat picks now. HATE 'EM! Also, one of my students had a pick snagging problem with his Jazz III. The snagging went away INSTANTLY when he tried my Gravity Pick. Just make sure you get grip holes when you get some picks or else they will be too slippery after you play for a while.

Studio One - My recording software (DAW) of choice. Learning how to use Studio One was pretty simple. Any time I'd have any kind of weird issue pop up (which is SUPER rare) I always had good help with their customer service. If you're looking to get started with recording, I highly recommend Studio One because not only is it easy, it's far more affordable compared to Pro Tools, AND their customer service team actually give a damn about you!

Cracking the Code - Troy Grady has been rather instrumental in helping me become more accuracy focused over the past few years. The pick slanting info he's given me and tons of others players has been highly valuable. It's amazing how slight nuances in pick positioning and movement paths can affect how well you can play certain pieces of music. Pick slanting knowledge can DEFINITELY take your metronome practice to a whole new level!

You can check out other stuff I like and gear I recommend by CLICKING HERE.