

8 ESSENTIAL RHYTHM PATTERNS

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Introduction

The 8 Essential Strum Patterns that we give you here are some of the most popular rhythms in pop music.

Concentrate on the right hand strum pattern at first by playing on one chord only. When you are comfortable with the rhythm you can then move on to changing your chord shapes.

Let's get started:

Bit of Musical Theory

We will try not to bore you with unnecessary stuff just the basics to get you on your way.

Three Essentials Facts to Know:

1. Quarter Notes

The quarter note receives one beat. If we were to count a steady 1 2 3 4 and play a chord on each count, then we would be playing quarter notes.

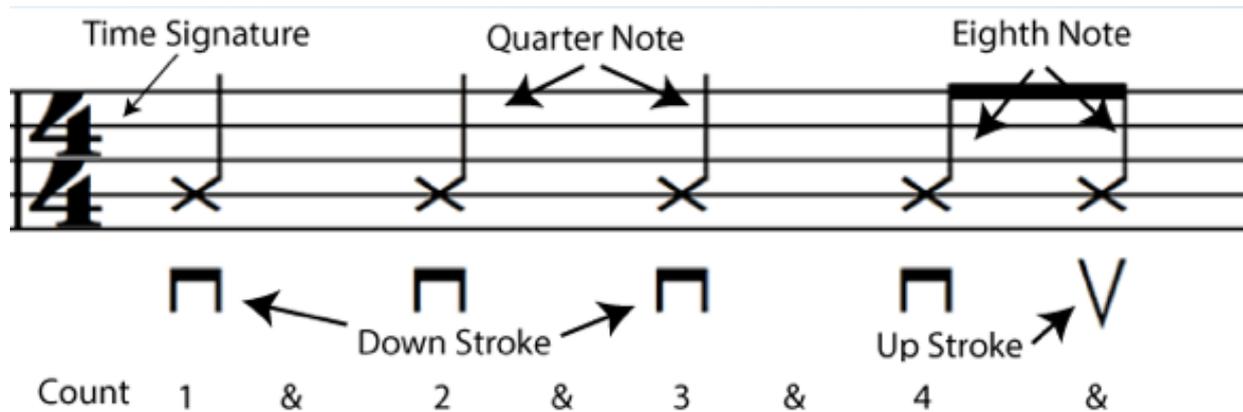
2. Eighth notes

An eighth note receives a half of one beat. Similarly if we were to count 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & and likewise play a chord on each count, we would be playing eighth notes. You would have noticed we actually played eight chords.

3. Time Signatures

Time signatures are placed at the beginning of a piece and tell you two things. The top number tells us the number of beats in each measure or bar. In our example the top number is four therefore our piece will have four beats in each measure. The bottom number tells us the type of beat. In the case of our example the bottom number is four so the Quarter note is the beat unit.

The time signature in the following example therefore suggests that each measure should equal the value of four quarter notes.



Symbols for Picking

Down Stroke

The string is struck with a downward motion of the pick.

Up Stroke

The string is struck with an upward motion of the pick.

Playing Up And Down Strokes

The right hand acts as a type of metronome when playing a continuous eight-note pattern. Even though some of the down up movements don't require the strings to be struck - the right hand continues with its eight-note pattern - effectively keeping the time. Down strokes will be on the beat. For example they fall on the 1 2 3 4. Up strokes will be off beat. They are played as the picking hand returns for the next down beat.

Rhythm Pattern 1.

This one is great for rock ballad type songs. You may notice a slight accent on beat one to help move the rhythm forward – careful that you don't let the rhythm run away on you - keep the beat nice and steady. Once you are confident with this strum pattern you make like to try Bob Dylan's "Knocking on Heavens Door" over at our songs section.

□ □ □ □ V
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

Rhythm Pattern 2.

This rhythm is an eight note pattern that includes a tied note between beat 2 & and beat 3. A tie combines the value of both notes therefore the two tied eight notes receive one full beat. You will notice that the first of the tied notes are played on the upbeat after the second count. This actually creates an accent on the weaker up beat giving the rhythm its character.

Remember not to play the downbeat on beat three because of the tie, put keep your right hand moving in the eight beat rhythm just missing the strings on the upbeat.

□ V □ V V □
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

Rhythm Pattern 3.

This pattern uses two tied note combinations therefore as you would expect the created upbeat adds a lot of interest to the rhythm.

You will notice that we have three upbeats in succession, so take this slowly at first and count out the rhythm using the 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & syllables.

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

Rhythm Pattern 4.

Only one tie in this one. Remember to hold the pick lightly - in fact it might be a good idea to try different diameter picks. Say from .75mm through to 1mm.

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

Rhythm Pattern 5.

Pay particular attention to beat one in this pattern. As it takes up a full beat the tendency often is to race on to the second beat. Keep the eighth note down up momentum even when you don't strike that eighth note after beat one.

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

Rhythm Pattern 6.

Notice the dot attached to the first note - this sign adds half the value of the note that it is attached, therefore the first note in this rhythm is worth one and a half counts (three eighth notes).

This one may take a little time, but work through slowly through the example using our counting method, and it should all fall into place.

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

Rhythm Pattern 7.

The final patterns both three beat patterns. The time signature at the beginning of the music tells us there are three quarter notes per bar therefore instead of eight eighth notes to each bar we now have only six.

Still use our counting method set out in earlier lessons and keep the right hand playing eight note patterns.

1 & 2 & 3 &

Rhythm Pattern 8.

Another pattern in three beats to the bar. Music in three to the bar is not as common as four beat rhythms but it does add an interesting feel to a song and it's well worth the effort to master.

1 & 2 & 3 &