

Open String Hammer On Tricks

Open strings—one of the coolest things you can utilize in your playing to get some great sounds relatively easily! Combining open strings with hammer-ons and pull-offs can create a wide variety of sounds that only a guitar could make happen.

This lesson covers several ideas using open strings that can be worked into your own playing to create sounds ranging from Fingerstyle to Celtic!

These type of musical ideas work best in keys that use a lot of open strings like the keys of E, A, D, G, C, Em, and Am. Let's look at the key of E major.

E Major Scale On First String

To get started, play the E major scale ascending and descending using only the first string.

E Major Trills

Trills can be done on each of the E major scale notes. A trill is a rapid alternating of two notes that are relatively close to each other. In this case the two tones are going to be the E major scale tones that are next to each other—either major or minor seconds.

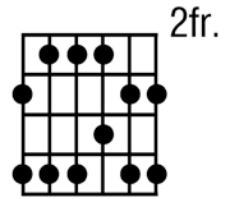
E Major Trills with Open String

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

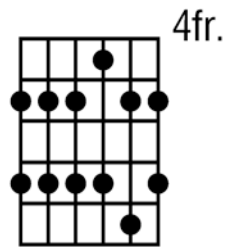
E Minor Pentatonic Scale with Open Strings

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

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

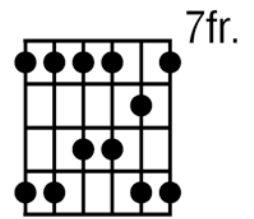


The same idea can be applied to the next pentatonic form up the neck.



E Minor Pentatonic Trills with Open Strings

Move up to the next pentatonic form in Em and descend starting on the highest note of the pattern on the string. Do a trill between the two notes then pulling off to the open string.



When playing patterns like this remember to have the open strings as notes within the key.

Celtic Triads with Open Strings

This final example is in the key of E major and uses triads combined with open strings to form arpeggios. Combining these in triplets gives a Celtic sound.

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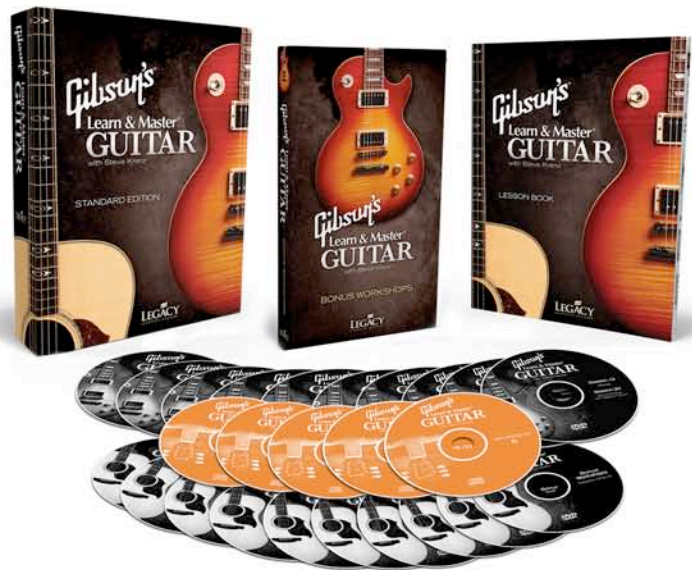
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