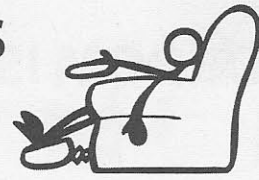


THE MOTHER OF ALL MINDLESS FRETBOARD EXERCISES



Here it is. It's as easy as one, two, three, four. Start at the 7th position (1st finger, 7th fret) on the 4th string. Starting higher up on the neck like this makes the one-finger-per-fret hand position easier to work with. When you finish on the 1st string, move up one fret position and begin again, working from the 1st string back to the 4th. Keep going up the neck. If you want to try it in lower positions, you may need to adapt the fingering or shift your hand position to stay comfortable. Learn this exercise using steady quarter notes (which are counted: "1, 2, 3, 4").

Once you get this exercise coordinated and can do it without having to stop and think about where to go next, it's time to bring in the *metronome!* This is an adjustable time-keeping device that clicks at a steady tempo, allowing you to regulate your speed, as well as increase it incrementally. If you don't have a metronome, get one, or get a metronome software app for the computer device of your choice.

THE "GOLDBLOCKS" PRINCIPLE APPLIED TO SPEED BUILDING

In the kids' story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, the fickle young diva Goldilocks tries three chairs. One is too hard, one is too soft, and one is just right. With that in mind, here's a three-stage approach to speed building using your trusty metronome.

1. **Practice too slow.** Set the metronome to a very slow speed and work on the exercise while focusing on timing, relaxation, and tone. Create the best-sounding notes you can at this stage.
2. **Practice too fast.** Find the highest metronome speed that still allows you to play the exercise perfectly. This is your *best fast speed*. For a short period of time, a few minutes or so, set the metronome a few clicks higher than your best fast speed. You won't be able to keep up perfectly, just relax and do the best you can. The purpose of this is to condition your brain to send the "playing instructions" to your muscles at a faster rate. It's okay if you don't have it perfect after a few minutes. Don't do this too long, or you may stress your muscles.
3. **Practice just right.** After you've practiced too fast for a little while, stop and rest a minute or so. Then dial the metronome back to the best fast speed you started with. Now, when you play at this speed, it should feel easier and more effortless than it did before. Gradually, over a period of days (or weeks or months), you'll find that your best fast speed keeps creeping its way up the metronome dial. Be patient. Your headroom is increasing!