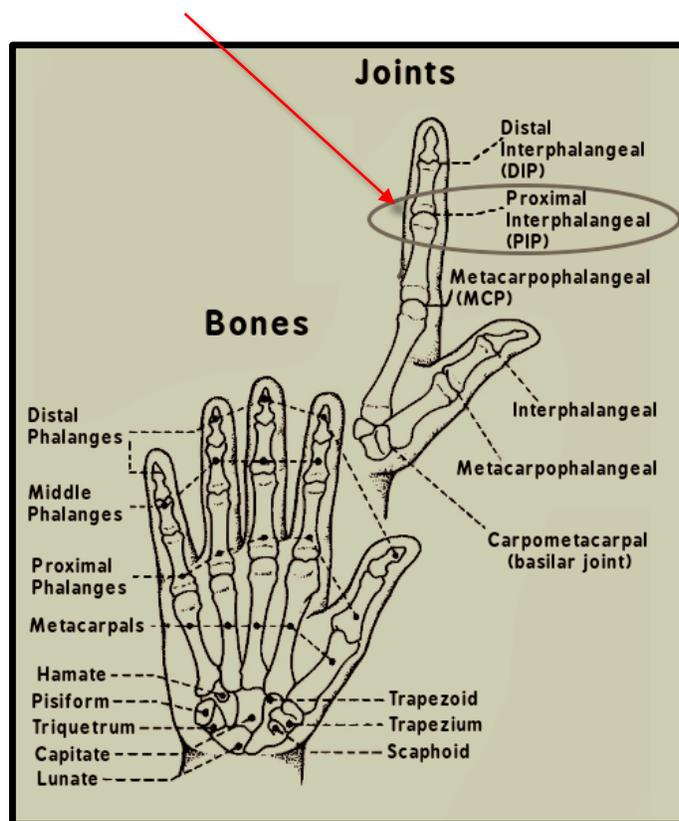


## Lesson 1 Notes

- **1-2-3-4 Finger Exercise**

- Hand Position

- Keep thumb behind 2<sup>nd</sup> finger (this applies to single-note lines and scale runs).
- Use the “sweet spot” on your pink to fret the string.
- Keep fingers less than ½ inch from the fretboard.
- Maintain a “balanced hand”.
  - The PIP joint on your 1<sup>st</sup> finger should be pointing outward at ~45° angle.
  - The PIP joint on your 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> fingers should be pointing outward at ~15° angle.
  - The PIP joint on your 4<sup>th</sup> finger should be pointing outward at ~60° angle.



- How to practice this exercise:

- Set a metronome for 60bpm and play one note per click.
- Play through each string 4x before moving onto the next.
- Begin on the 1<sup>st</sup> fret and work your way up to the highest position on the neck.
- Repeat the process, working your way back down the fretboard.
- Focus on efficiency of motion and effortlessness.

- **String Bending & Vibrato**
  - String bending and vibrato require the same technique because vibrato is essentially a series of rapid bends and releases in succession.
  - Technique & Hand Position
    - Wrap your thumb over the top of the neck.
    - Create a seal between the neck and the webbing of your thumb and index finger.
    - Don't allow your palm to touch the neck—doing so will lock your hand in place and will prevent you from twisting at the wrist.
    - Use as many fingers as you have available to assist in bending the string.
    - Your fingers should have a natural curve to them, the angle of which will be maintained throughout the string bend .
    - Bend from the wrist—not the fingers.
  - For extra credit: use a guitar tuner to gauge the intonation of your bends!
  
- **How to Learn to Play a Song Effortlessly and Flawlessly**
  - A song is generally comprised of several sections (ex. intro, verse, pre-chorus, chorus, bridge, interlude, outro, etc.)
  - Of course, not all songs follow the same structure. The point is, it's made up of several pieces.
  - Learn and practice each section as a separate entity.
    - Aside from browsing through to see what you're up against, don't try to play from beginning to end.
    - Give a letter name to each section (ex. Intro = "A", Verse 1 = "B", Pre-Chorus = "C", etc.)
    - Number each measure within each section (ex. measure 1 of the intro = "1", measure 1 of the verse = "1", measure 1 of the pre-chorus = "1", etc.)
    - Practice one measure at a time
      - Focus on every aspect of your technique and play with as little tension as possible.
      - Even if you've already learned this part of the song, double check with a critical eye, ear, and hyper-awareness of any tension in your body (not just your hands)
        - I've seen students flexing their ankles while trying to play a difficult passage and it actually hinders their playing. How do I know? Because when I pointed it out and had them relax their playing suddenly improved!
    - Once you've practiced two adjacent measures, try playing through them without stopping
      - Do you notice a "hiccup" at the transition point between the measures?

- If so, it's because you practiced each measure without yet having practiced the transition.
- Practice the point of transition between the two measures.
  - Smoothly connect the last 2-4 notes of the 1<sup>st</sup> measure with the first 2-4 notes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> measure.
  - You'll want to spend as much time on this point of transition as you did on each individual measure.
    - Yes, it's tedious and I hate it too, but I know it works. That's why I recommend using a timer and setting it for 2 minutes. Repeat the transition over and over, playing slowly, carefully, and RELAXED.
    - If you're tempted to speed up and see if you can do it faster, stop immediately because you're likely reinforcing bad habits. This is a sign that you'll want to start using a metronome while practicing.
- Once you've smoothed out the transition, play through both measures only as fast as you can play perfectly and effortlessly.
  - Remember: speed is a byproduct of accuracy; not the other way around. You can be the fastest racecar driver in the world, but if you can't control the car then you're going to crash every time...and that won't win many races. (The tortoise and the hare still holds true.)
- Continue this process for each pair of measures in section A.
  - After doing this, you will be able to play smoothly, effortlessly, and flawlessly from the first note to the last note of the section
- If you're still having trouble...
  - Start linking 3 measures together (ex. 1-3, 2-4, 3-5, 4-6, 5-7, 6-8).
  - Then link 4 measures together (ex. 1-4, 2-5, 3-6, 4-7, 5-8).
  - Now try playing all the way through the section.

### **A few words on mindset:**

This may seem like a lot of work, but it can actually be a very meditative and stress-relieving experience if you let go and surrender to the process knowing that IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.

Whenever I feel anxious or frustrated with my playing, I've learned to take a few deep breaths (while I'm repeating a phrase or exercise) and say to myself, "I'm allowing it to happen."

What exactly am I allowing to happen? I'm allowing my hands and fingers to move effortlessly.

As Classical guitar virtuoso Pepe Romero famously said, "To play the guitar well is easy, to play the guitar poorly is difficult."