GUITAR WORKOUT

BY KENNY MANN

Guitar Alliance Inc.
Ok, so you want to play faster. You've got a goal and I'm about to tell you how to go about it, but let's get a few things out of the way...

The main thing to remember is that building speed takes time. Lots of time. You may not notice marked improvement from day to day, but you will be making progress if you put in the time.

To really gauge your success, try making an audio recording of yourself playing some of the exercises in this book on your first day of playing them. You can make subsequent recordings in the weeks that follow. You'll find that your skills have been increasing all along.

It's kind of like a 'before' and 'after' shot from just about any fitness craze product- except this 'before' and 'after' will be sonic in nature and not visual.

The exercises in this book will help you develop confidence in your playing and will help make you aware of weak areas of your playing that need concentrated effort.

They are great way to start out a practice session as they help loosen your fingers and stretch your hand muscles to get you ready to practice other material.

These exercises should be part of your regular practice routine, but you don’t want to practice them to the point where you may injure your hands. If you feel a little too much discomfort or cramping
in your hands, by all means cut back a little. Like at the gym, your muscles and tendons need time to recuperate in between workouts.

You should always play each exercise at a speed that you are comfortable with. If cannot play the exercises smoothly and without mistakes, then you are going too fast and you need to slow it down a little. Start out slow and slowly build speed. We’re striving for good technique, not fast bad technique. Remember, speed comes with time.

I can't tell you how many students come up to me to show me how fast they've gotten only to mangle an exercise with terrible technique. You might fool some of the people, but you won't fool a musician. Just take your time and do it right. Don't worry about showing off at first.

Again, you may not see improvement overnight, but you will see improvement eventually. If you practice these exercises just 15 minutes a day for a week, at the end of the week you will have improved guaranteed. With practice you can only get better, not worse.

**Using A Metronome**

An invaluable tool is what is called a metronome. It's a simple device that keeps time by creating a regular beat.

You will find using one in conjunction with the Guitar Workout exercises very beneficial. To practice with a metronome simply play one, two, or three notes per beat. When you are able to play an exercise without error at one speed, then you just speed the metronome up a little.

You can get a metronome at any music store. They come in all shapes and sizes, most notable is the traditional piano metronome with it’s swinging pendulum. Prices range from about $10 all the way to $100+. There’s no need to spend more than $20 for one.
Guitar Workout

Illustration: The "old school", swinging pendulum metronome.

Illustration: A more modern metronome....
It's really important to use a metronome. Most of us lack the skill of keeping perfect time, so what will eventually happen is that you'll get stuck at a certain speed and then not be able to get any faster than if you don't use one.

I've got a video for those of you would like more help using a metronome with your exercises at the link below:

http://guitaralliance.com/guitar-exercises/the-metronome/
For our first set of exercises we will use a picking technique called alternate picking where you pick in an down, up, down, up pattern.

It allows you to play a series of picked notes fluently and cleanly. It helps develop a good sense of rhythm because the regular picking motion helps acquire an evenness of timing that is absolutely essential.
Guitar Workout

Some important point about alternate picking to remember are...

- Everyone holds a pick a little bit differently. Most people find that holding your pick with the tips of the thumb and forefinger sufficient.
- How you hold your pick to the strings is what is important here. You don’t want the top of your pick to lean too far towards the ceiling or towards the floor. You may want to position you pick at a slight angle.
- You should limit arm movement to your wrist. Your thumb, finger, elbow, or arm should not move when picking. Keep your wrist movement to a minimum to achieve maximum speed.

You're picking motion will look something like this:

Illustration: The down, up, down, up motion.

You can count along as '1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and'. You’ll pick down on each beat and pick up in-between.
Watch a video demonstration of alternate picking at the link below:

http://guitaralliance.com/guitar-exercises/exercises-1-4/

The Chromatic Scale

For these exercises we’ll be using the chromatic scale. It’s a fancy term for a scale that includes every note. These exercises will not have very much musical value to them in that they’ll sound like a song or anything you would normally play during a song.

The point of our exercises is to work technique, after all.
**Exercise 1**

For this exercise practice the down, up, down, up alternate picking pattern on the open high E string. Start slowly! You want the notes to be as even as possible. Once you’re able to play the pattern evenly slowly increase the tempo. This may seem like a boring exercise, but it’s very beneficial to build alternate picking skills.

When I first started speed training many, many moons ago, I used to practice my alternate picking (as in exercise 1) while doing common things like watching TV. It doesn't require much focus, so you can passively practice it whenever you like.
EXERCISE 2

Now we’re going to alternate pick on all 6 strings. This one isn’t as easy as it looks. Remember to keep the notes even. Once you can play through the exercise without a mishap and all the notes are even, try playing it faster and faster. Don’t get sloppy! Maintain a clean attack.

Illustration: Exercise 2

Once you get to the end try immediately playing the exercise backwards!
Let's get our left hand involved now!

Concentrate on keeping this exercise clean and even. It doesn’t matter if you have to go real slow at first. You’ll build speed with time. If you try to rush into playing fast before you are ready it will just sound sloppy.

Notice that there are 3 notes per string on this one and some strings begin with an upstroke. We don’t change the alternate picking pattern even when we switch strings.
**Exercise 4**

This is more of a challenge exercise. I don’t think you’ll be able to play this one very fast without a lot of practice. It’s a alternate picking string switching exercise. Instead of alternate picking on one string we’re going to alternate between to adjacent strings. Hard!

Visit the link below to see video demonstrations of exercises 1-4:

**Exercise 5**

This is simply a chromatic run up the 1st 4 frets on each string.

It’s a great warm-up exercise because it warms both your left and right hand, but it’s also great for building speed. Use all 4 of your fingers on your left hand.

Use your 1st finger for notes on the 1st fret, 2nd finger for notes on the 2nd, 3rd finger for notes on the 3rd fret, and 4th finger for notes on the 4th fret.

*Illustration 1: 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4...*
**Exercise 6**

This exercise is performed on a single string. It’s a 4 note ascending pattern. Use the correct fingerings as illustrated below:

*Illustration: Ascending*

The actual exercise is on the following page. Keep it as clean as possible. Make sure the notes are even!
Guitar Workout

[Music notation image]

[Music notation image]

[Music notation image]
**Exercise 7**

This one is pretty fun to play. You'll actually see several songs with licks played that are similar to this exercise. Keep a steady picking motion during this exercise. Don’t let the notes run into each other.

**Illustration: Exercise 7: It's got bounce!**

You should play around with variations of this exercise by changing the fretted notes, or playing a similar pattern on a different string. Be creative and see what you can come up with!
**Exercise 8**

This one is harder than it looks. It will give your left hand a good work out as well as develop your alternate picking. Play this exercise until you turn blue in the face. Repeat the same pattern over and over non-stop until your hands can’t handle it any more. Take a minute to recoup and then do it again. When you can play it cleanly and evenly, try the next exercise.

*Illustration: Exercise 8: Feel the burn!*

It might seem like torture, but we're building technique. Hand cramps are common, so fight through it! We're not only working our speed, but we're working our endurance. You don't want to cramp up during your big solo, do you? No one does, so you've got to train like it's a 12 round fight and be prepared.

We'll play off of the pattern presented in exercise 8 with our next exercise.
This one is a monster, but you can do it!

It’s the same pattern as the previous exercise, but we’re ascending up the neck and descending down the neck.

Notice that the tablature stops at the 15th fret. If you get brave you can go all the way up to the highest fret and then back down again. In fact, you can play it any way you want. Go as high up the fretboard as you dare. Go back down again. Go back in forth between two positions. Just have fun with it, but maintain that 3 note pattern.

It gets quite challenging to play fast because it’s a three note pattern being played in standard 4/4 time. A different note of the sequence is always falling on the beat.

Remember if you get frustrated while trying to play a hard exercise, take a break for a minute and then come back and try. Tension builds up in our neck, shoulders, hands, and arms. A lot of times when you come back after your break the tension will be not be as intense and you might find yourself performing the exercise 10 times better on the first try back.
For video demonstration of exercises 7-9, please visit the link below:

http://guitaralliance.com/guitar-exercises/exercises-7-9-single-string/
Here's a twist on the simple 1, 2, 3, 4. For each rising string we'll bump it up one fret. In the descent we'll bump it down one fret.

Illustration: Exercise 10: With a twist!
**Exercise 11**

You’ll just need your 1st finger to play this one, or you could play it using one of your other fingers. Just use the same finger throughout once you start.

*Illustration: Exercise 11: Pick a finger.*
Exercise 12

This exercise is built off of the pentatonic scale which you'll end up using a lot for solos.

Illustration: Exercise 12: It's a pentatonic thang...

For video demonstrations of exercises 10-12, please visit the link below:

http://guitaralliance.com/guitar-exercises/exercises-10-12-advanced-alternate-picking/
The set of exercises we'll learn in this chapter occur on the first 4 frets.

You'll use the following fingerings for each exercise:

- 1st fret = 1st finger
- 2nd fret = 2nd finger
- 3rd fret = 3rd finger
- 4th fret = 4th finger

It doesn't matter what string you're on. Just follow prescribed fingerings and you can't go wrong. It's as easy as that.
These exercises are easy in *concept*, but that does not mean they are just for beginners. Beginners can use them as well as advanced players. Everyone benefits because the playing difficulty is determined by the tempo you set.

For example, a beginner might practice the exercises at 60 beats per minute and work their way up from there. Advanced players might play them at speeds approaching 200 bpm (or more!). And if that’s too easy, you can always turn the eighth notes into sixteenth notes and go for a world record.

The best part about these isolation exercises is that we can find our weak spots and work on them. You’ll find that some of your fingers are faster than the others. You may find that your pinky acts as if it’s not attached to your body.

**Exercise 13**

Your 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} fingers are probably your most responsive fingers, so we’ll start with an exercise that uses them.

*Illustration: Exercise 13*
**Exercise 14**

Your 1\textsuperscript{st} finger and 3\textsuperscript{rd} finger will get a workout in this one. The 3\textsuperscript{rd} finger is actually the weakest finger in the hand (I bet you thought it was the pinky). You won't feel the weakness in your 3\textsuperscript{rd} finger as much in this exercise as you will in a subsequent exercise.

![Illustration: Exercise 14](image)

**Exercise 15**

This one is a bit of a stretch. 1\textsuperscript{st} and 4\textsuperscript{th} fingers only!

![Illustration: Exercise 15](image)
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**Exercise 16**

This time we won't lead with our 1st finger.

Illustration: Exercise 16

**Exercise 17**

A variation of exercise 14...

Illustration: Exercise 17
**Exercise 18**

Here we go with the pinky again...

Illustration: Exercise 18

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**Exercise 19**

Just use your 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} fingers. This one is pretty tough and highlights the weakness of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} finger.

Illustration: Exercise 19


Exercise 20

Try playing this one right after exercise 19. It's going to hurt!

Illustration: Exercise 20

Exercise 21

This one is not so bad compared to the last 2 exercises.

Illustration: Exercise 21
Exercise 22

This exercise focuses on the two most common weak spots. The 3rd and 4th finger.

Illustration: Exercise 22

Exercise 23

Ok, we're going to digress from our previous fingering formula. You'll use your 3rd finger for the notes on the 3rd fret and your 4th finger for the notes on the 5th fret. You'll feel a bit of a stretch.

Illustration: Exercise 23
Here's the last exercise of this chapter and probably the hardest to play. It's just a variation of exercise 23. Just use your 3rd and 4th fingers!

Illustration: Exercise 24
**WHAT IS LEGATO?**

Legato means that musical notes are to be played smoothly and connected. That is to transition from note to note with no intervening silence. On the guitar we can use hammer-ons and pull-offs to create legato. The following series of exercises uses legato throughout. That means that there will be lots of hammer-ons and pull-offs.

One of the main differences between this method and strictly picking throughout is that the hammer-ons and pull-offs require a little more strength to pull-off properly. If you don't pull-off hard enough the next note will not produce much of a sound, hence you would 'lose' a note.

You'll use the same fingering structure that we outlined in the previous chapter. Remember it's as easy as 1, 2, 3, 4.
**Exercise 25**

Make sure the even notes ring out as loud as the odd notes when you hammer-on.

Illustration: Exercise 25

**Exercise 26**

This will work that 1st finger 3rd finger connection.

Illustration: Exercise 26
**Exercise 27**

This one can be tricky. You really have to work at it to get enough momentum going to sound the notes on the 4\textsuperscript{th} fret. Keep at it, because it CAN be done.

![Illustration: Exercise 27](image)

**Exercise 28**

Now we'll lead with our 2\textsuperscript{nd} finger.

![Illustration: Exercise 28](image)
**Exercise 29**

The pull-offs in this exercise are tough at first. Remember that the 3rd finger is the weakest and you really have to work on it to get a good sounding pull-off using it.

Illustration: Exercise 29

**Exercise 30**

If you thought exercise 27 was tough, wait till you try this ...

Illustration: Exercise 30
**Exercise 31**

Here's the hardest series of hammer-ons you'll play.

Illustration: Exercise 31

**Exercise 32**

And now, the hardest pull-offs. Ouch!

Illustration: Exercise 32
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**Exercise 33**

Don't cheat and use your 1st and 3rd fingers. Use your 2nd and 4th fingers only!

Illustration: Exercise 33

**Exercise 34**

Here's a workout for the two weakest fingers.

Illustration: Exercise 34
**Exercise 35**

Ok, now use your 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} fingers only for this one.

Illustration: Exercise 35

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**Exercise 36**

And your 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} fingers for this one as well. If you didn't already hate me enough at this point...

Illustration: Exercise 36
Are you ready to play something that doesn't hurt quite as much? This exercise is a series of three notes. You can play this one all the way up the fretboard if you wish.

Here's an exercise that plays around with the pentatonic.
This exercise might sound like something you've heard in a song. Just use your 1st and 3rd fingers to play the fretted notes. The open string helps you move to the next note.

You can move it all the way up the fretboard or all the way down. Just maintain the pattern throughout.

Iillustration: Exercise 39
Here's a series of hammer-ons that will challenge you. Use your 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd}, and 4\textsuperscript{th} fingers for fingerings.

\textit{Illustration: Exercise 40}
Here you'll find a slight variation on the last exercise. 1\textsuperscript{st}, 3\textsuperscript{rd}, and 4\textsuperscript{th} fingers only!

Illustration: Exercise 41
Here's a tough one. Use your 1st, 3rd, and 4th fingers. It's going to hurt going up, but it will hurt more going down.

Illustration: Exercise 42
Exercise 43

You'll use all four fingers for this exercise. Try to play so that each note rings out clearly.

Illustration: Exercise 43
**Exercise 44**

This variation on exercise 43 will throw a little bit of finger confusion in the mix.

*Illustration: Exercise 44*
**Exercise 45**

This one is a monster! It's quite a stretch for you poor fingers, so if you're don't feel agile enough to tackle it, please don't trouble yourself just yet. We don't want you to damage your hand.

I'm just give you fair warning, because you're using your 1\textsuperscript{st} finger for the notes on the 1\textsuperscript{st} fret, 2\textsuperscript{nd} finger for notes on the 3\textsuperscript{rd} fret, 3\textsuperscript{rd} finger for notes on the 4\textsuperscript{th} fret, and your 4\textsuperscript{th} finger for the notes on the 6\textsuperscript{th} fret.

Illustration: Exercise 45
Here's an exercise that doubles as a cool lick. It's an ascending pattern I've seen many players, such as Randy Rhoads, use. You can continue to play it all the way up the fretboard if you wish.

Illustration: Exercise 46

Once you go up as in exercise 46, you've got to come down...

Illustration: Exercise 47
The word pentatonic gets its name from the Greek word “penta” which means 5 and tonic which stands for tone. That’s what pentatonic scales are: 5 tone scales.

The pentatonic scales are widely used for guitar leads and solos. Practicing the pentatonic scale patterns is a great exercise that provides technical training as well as helps you memorize practical scales that have a use in the real world.

You won’t find much in the way in variation in this chapter. Just 12 pentatonic scale patterns, so let's get started...
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**Exercise 48**

Illustration: Exercise 48: G pentatonic

**Exercise 49**

Illustration: Exercise 49: G# pentatonic
**Exercise 50**

Illustration: Exercise 50: A pentatonic

**Exercise 51**

Illustration: Exercise 51: A# pentatonic
**Exercise 52**

Illustration: Exercise 52: B pentatonic

**Exercise 53**

Illustration: Exercise 53: C pentatonic
**Exercise 54**

Illustration: Exercise 54: C# pentatonic

**Exercise 55**

Illustration: Exercise 55: D pentatonic
**Exercise 56**

Illustration: Exercise 56: D# pentatonic

**Exercise 57**

Illustration: Exercise 57: E pentatonic
**Exercise 58**

Illustration: Exercise 58: F pentatonic

**Exercise 59**

Illustration: Exercise 59: F# pentatonic
Exercise 60

Illustration: Exercise 60: G pentatonic
The exercises in this chapter are designed to bring the pain. You’re hands will be cramping! The purpose is to develop stamina. Fingers and hands get tired quickly, so you’ve got to train the muscles for endurance.

These exercises are meant to be played for as long as you can. Each contains a repeating pattern. Just repeat the pattern over and over until you just can't stand it anymore.

Also, keep in mind that you can only pick the very first note. Each note after that must be executed with hammer-ons and pull-offs only.
**Exercise 61**

Keep the trill going for as long as you can. Eventually you'll start missing notes and hand cramps will invade. Use your 1\textsuperscript{st} and 4\textsuperscript{th} fingers for fretting purposes.

Illustration: Exercise 61

**Exercise 62**

This one is similar to the last, but just use your 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} fingers to fret it. You won't be able to play it as long as the last one.

Illustration: Exercise 62
**Exercise 63**

Use your 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} fingers. Fight through the burn for a few seconds before you stop.

**Exercise 64**

This one is really hard to keep going. Use your 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} fingers.

Illustration: Exercise 63

Illustration: Exercise 65
Here's you'll use your 1st and 4th fingers. This one is also hard to keep going for very long.

Illustration: Exercise 65

Here's a slight variation using three fingers.

Illustration: Exercise 66
**Exercise 67**

This one is similar to the last. Only in this one we'll ascend the fretboard. Go as high or as low as you want.

*Illustration: Exercise 67*

**Exercise 68**

Keep repeating the three measures below. See how long you can last. You can also play it going up or even add your own variations.

*Illustration: Exercise 68*
I've just got a trio of exercises in this chapter. They are extremely challenging, so proceed with caution!
This is probably the weirdest exercise in this book. You'll play the 3rd fret with your 1st finger, the 5th fret with your 3rd, and use your 4th finger to slide from the 7th fret to the 9th. Use similar fingerings throughout the exercise and you'll have it made!

Illustration: Exercise 69
**Exercise 70**

This is the exercise I like most. You cross the string quickly and it sound real cool. It's tricky to play at first. You'll end up playing on the wrong strings and hitting the wrong notes, but it's worth the effort as I have noticed how it's improved my playing, and and other's playing, throughout the years.

**Illustration: Exercise 70**
Our last strength building exercise doesn't look too difficult at first, but upon a further look we'll realize that it's a doozy.

We're going to perform a series of hammer-ons and pull-offs, like a trill, but we're going to shift the high note.

The basic patter is 5th fret, 7th fret, 5th fret, 8th fret, 5th fret, 10th fret, and then back down again. It's very tough to reach for a higher and higher note. Just keep your 1st finger glued to the 5th fret.
Your fingers sometime seem like they have a brain of their own, but it’s the brain in your head that is getting confused. These exercises challenge you by playing weird finger combinations. They will stress your concentration, but don’t let it get to you!
**Exercise 72**

Play through this one slowly at first to determine if you're actually playing it right. I've had several students look at it and assume things about it and then go on to play something totally different.

Just use the old 1, 2, 3, 4 fingerings, but pay attention to where the hammer-ons and pull offs are and what notes you're actually using.

*Illustration: Exercise 72*
Our last few exercises use a lot of hammer-ons and pull-offs. You can also play a variation of it by just picking the notes.

Use the same fingerings as before and concentrate on clearly sounding each note.
**Exercise 74**

Illustration: Exercise 74

**Exercise 75**

Illustration: Exercise 75
ON THE WEB

You'll find resources for this e-book on the web at the link below:

http://guitaralliance.com/guitar-exercises/

Feel free to use the comments system at the website to leave comments or to suggest any additions to Guitar Workout.

You can also download any revisions of this e-book as they become available.

IN CLOSING

Well, that's about it for now. I'll certainly revisit this topic in the future to add even more exercises, so check the website out frequently to scout for updates.

Sincerely,

Kenny Mann
Guitar Workout