

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

By now you have learned a good number of the chords, arpeggio, and modes in this book. This section will show you how to apply your musical knowledge together to improvise a song. On the facing page is a 12-bar chord progression like you might find in a pop or jazz tune. This exercise shows you how easy it is to improvise. Build your proficiency over time following these steps:

1. Learn the chords. *Become familiar with the chords so you can strum each chord four times per bar and change from one chord to the other while keeping time with a metronome. Set your metronome at whatever speed you can without making a mistake.*

2. Learn the Arpeggios. *Instead of strumming the chord, play the chord arpeggio. Play one note for each beat. That means you will play four notes of each chord. (Example: For Cmaj7 you would play C, E, G, and B.) Do this until you can play at your desired speed and change from one arpeggio to the next without skipping a beat. You want to make it flow.*

3. Learn the Modes. *Play the modes associated with each chord. First, play eight notes per bar. When you get proficient with this, try playing 16 notes per bar. That is two octaves. Remember, speed is not as important as accuracy. Play at a tempo at which you can play smoothly. This may take some time to master. But if you practice regularly, eventually you'll get it.*

4. Noodle Around the Mode. *Play the modes associated with each chord but play the notes out of order, so to speak. Play them randomly or try to create the hint of a melody. Just keep your fingers moving playing notes of the modes. Not all of the notes of the modes have the same importance. The most important ones are the first (the root), the third, and the seventh. Accent these while you play.*

5. Play with Recordings. *If you have a way to record yourself do this. Strum the song all the way through and repeat it several times. You are laying down what will become a rhythm track to your guitar solo.*

Play back the recording of you strumming. While it's playing, play the arpeggios and modes that go with each chord. You are now improvising. Keep doing this and experiment with different rhythms. That is, not all notes need to be held the same length of time. Playing along with yourself is great practice. Do it as much as you can.

Now, find the sheet music to some songs you like and perform the exercise using them. You can record yourself strumming the rhythm or you can get a friend to play the chords for you while you play the arpeggios and modes on top of them.

6. Learn Common Chord Progressions. *The next step is to become familiar with some of the more common chord progressions. A chord progression is the musical skeleton of a song. You can find these in music theory books or on the Internet. When you know the key of a song you can use your knowledge of chord progressions to play along with a song even if you have never heard it before.*

7. Practice! *You have to teach your mind and your fingers everything in this book. Yes, teach your fingers. Play as often as can. The more your practice, the faster you improve. You will one day literally watch your fingers jamming. What a feeling!*

You are now on your way to soloing and improvising. Congratulations on getting this far. When you master this skill, you will feel confident about your playing. You will be able to jam along with anyone. Your ear will develop tonal discernment and you will be able to pick out simple melodies on the spot. You will play like you never have before. Enjoy!