

A photograph of a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a blue button-down shirt, looking upwards and to the right. He is holding a dark wood acoustic guitar over his shoulder. The background is a bright, slightly cloudy sky.

RAFAEL AGUIRRE'S TOP 10 TECHNIQUE EXERCISES

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Rafael Aguirre's Top 10 Technique Exercises

| *"Rhythm gives you coordination."* - Rafael Aguirre

Exercise Outline

1. "Climbing"
2. Triplet scale
3. Pinky arpeggio
4. Pinky "tremolo"
5. "Go to sleep"
6. Five finger tremolo
7. Thumb rasgueado
8. Advanced rasgueado
9. Apoyando arpeggio
10. Paco de Lucia scale

Introduction

The following ten exercises are broken up into groups of two. Each group addresses one of the following technical areas: **left hand, pinky, right hand, rasgueados,** and **apoyando**.



1. "Climbing"

This exercise is for **developing strength in the left hand**. Start the pattern in the first position and move all the way up the fretboard, even past the twelfth fret! When in the air, make sure the fingers are always as close to the fretboard as possible. Focus on one finger at a time and keeping the movements as minimal as possible.

Pos. I

Pos. II etc.

2. Triplet scale

Rafael originally learned this scale from listening to flamenco guitarists. He enjoys it because the triplet rhythm differs from traditional classical scales that are usually duplets. Start this exercise around the 7th fret. When practicing, focus on the rhythm - as Rafael says, **"rhythm gives you coordination."** Trt varying the exercises by using different finger combinations.



3. Pinky arpeggio

Early in his career, Rafael discovered that **developing the pinky finger (c) in the right hand really makes your overall hand a lot stronger**. Since then, he has devised many different exercises, such as this one, for developing the often forgotten finger.

When performing this exercises, make sure all the movements are controlled and relaxed. If you want to increase speed, the movements need to be small. Do this exercise every day, but make sure it's not for too long.

↓ ↑ ↓ ↑
c c c c a a a a m m m m i i i i p p p p

4. Pinky "tremolo"

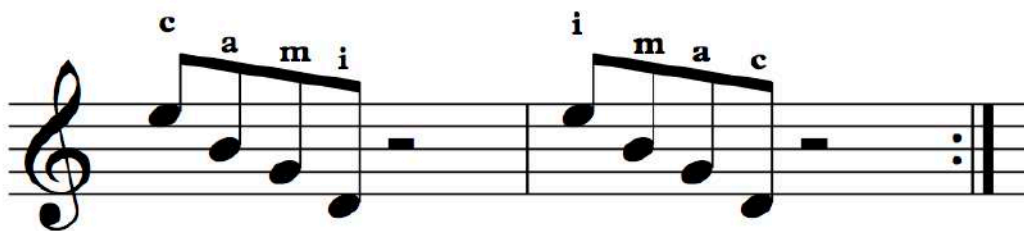
Here is Rafael's second exercises for the pinky. Make sure you **don't leave too much distance from the string** and do this exercises *piano*.

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑
c a m i c a m i



5. "Go to sleep"

This is a deceptively difficult exercise that improves flexibility in the right hand and **helps you have a better position**. Rafael recommends not doing this exercise more than a couple of minutes.



6. Five finger tremolo

This exercise is a continuation of Rafael's pinky "tremolo," just now with the thumb. As a general principle, Rafael recommends practicing tremolo as if you were a singer - **listen to every note and give it importance**. Once you feel confident with this exercise, try practicing some tremolo pieces with it!

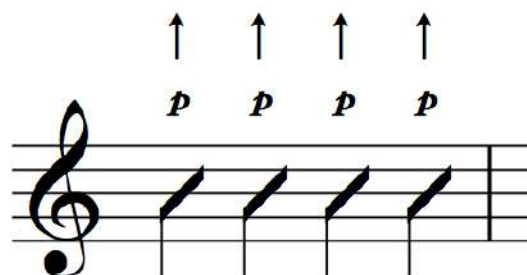




7. Thumb rasgueado

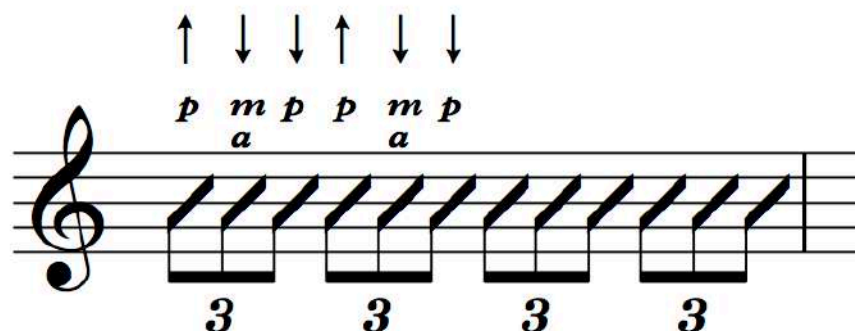
Rasgueados are great for not only scales, but also for developing other parts of the hand. In the following two exercises, Rafael teaches you the “alzapua” technique that is a similar motion to playing guitar with a pick.

To start, this first exercise is great for strengthening the thumb. Rafael stresses the importance of the thumb joints being flat at the end of the movement. Also, **make sure you’re releasing tension once each rasgueado is finished.**



8. Advanced rasgueado

Once you feel confident with the thumb alone, try adding the other movements.





9. Apoyando arpeggio

Try playing this exercise for 5 minutes a day, **focusing on rhythm not speed**. Do the first line starting with your pinky and later switch to the second line starting with your index finger. All of this should be done apoyando or “rest stroke.”

10. Paco de Lucia scale

This final exercise comes from a specific scale Rafael heard on a famous Paco de Lucia recording. Take it slow at first focusing on groups of four or even two, but **as you go faster, focus on larger groups of eight or even sixteen**.



Additional Resources

Try incorporating these exercises into your daily practice routine. We swear by their effectiveness for giving your overall technique a dramatic boost! You can find more exercises and insights on guitar technique in the lessons on tonebase below. Happy practicing!

1. Pepe Romero's lesson on his **Daily Routine**
2. Thomas Viloteau's lesson on **Right Hand Technique**
3. Tengyue Zhang's lesson on **Warming Up**
4. Scott Tennant's lesson on **Tremolo**
5. Marco Tamayo's lesson on his **Essential Principles**

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