

Douglas Niedt's

GUITAR TECHNIQUE

TIP OF THE MONTH

Yes, it's "Doug's Dirty Little Secrets"



(Doug subtitled his Tech Tip as "Doug's Dirty Little Secrets" after reading someone's posted message on a guitar web forum. The writer asserted that professional virtuoso guitarists all had secrets they kept to themselves and wouldn't tell anyone else, so no one would play as well as them!)



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Guitar Technique Tips of the Month

Rest Stroke Follow-through

By Douglas Niedt

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A basic part of a correctly executed rest stroke, is that after plucking the string, the finger must follow through and come to rest on the adjacent string. We know that. That's why it's called a rest stroke! But you might need to be reminded that if you are alternating "i" and "m" for example, **one finger should stay resting on the string until the other finger plucks a string.** In other words, **one of the fingers is resting on a string at all times.** That's why the rest stroke is often called the supported stroke—the finger resting on a string in effect supports the weight of the hand.

When I watch students (even excellent students) play a scale with "im," it is surprising how often I observe the finger that is supposed to be resting on the string, **lifting off its resting place BEFORE the other finger moves to play its stroke.** It is especially common at a change of string. For example, "i" plays the second string, follows through to come to rest on the third string, *but then comes off the third string before "m" plays the first string.*



[Watch this video for an overview of the topic.](#)

You want to be absolutely certain the resting finger remains "stuck," resting on its string, until the next finger plucks. If it lifts early, the fingers and hand have no contact or connection with the strings at all. This defeats one of the major advantages of rest stroke—**the stability and security of always having a finger resting on a string at all times.** **Not only does this resting finger lend tremendous security and stability, but also serves as a reference point or guide for the next finger to feel where the next string is.**

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Changing from one string to another presents the situation of string crossings. A string crossing can be a precarious moment for the right hand. It is often the cause of a missed note, cessation of finger alternation, or loss of synchronization between the hands. Any of these can cause complete breakdown of the execution of the passage. Unfortunately, it is precisely at the string change that many players fail to follow through on their rest strokes.



[Watch this video to see why rest stroke follow-through is so important at string crosses.](#)

If you're still having trouble understanding why rest stroke follow-through is so important, imagine yourself in a familiar room with absolutely no light to see. If you keep a hand in contact with a piece of furniture, lamp, etc. at all times as you walk through the room, you always have a reference point to feel or figure out where the next object might be. But if you only touch objects quickly and let go, not maintaining contact with anything, you will lose track of where you are and probably start bumping into things even though you are familiar with the room.



[To see how this technique is applicable to real repertoire, watch this video example of Francisco Tarrega's *Lagrima* and Fernando Sor's *Study No. 5*.](#)

Tarrega's *Capricho Arabe* anyone?



[Watch how the rest stroke follow-through is used on the theme.](#)

Play a scale rest stroke ascending AND descending with "im," "ma," and "ia." Watch your fingers very carefully (or have someone else watch your fingers) to see if they are working correctly.



[Watch me demonstrate rest stroke follow-through on a scale.](#)

When you play any passage rest stroke, watch your fingers very closely. Observe the follow-through of each finger. Make certain each finger "sticks" on the adjacent string until the other alternating finger executes its rest stroke. Rest stroke follow-through will make a huge difference in your right-hand security, stability, and accuracy when you do it right.

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