



Merle Travis Picking Pattern

"**Merle Travis** could write you a hit song and sing it; he could draw you a cartoon, play you a great guitar solo, or fix your watch." (Chet Atkins). ...

The influence of merle Travis on fingerstyle guitar is immeasurable. His style produced the likes of Chet Atkins, Jerry Reed, and a host of top name guitarists.

Travis Picking Pattern (4/4 Only)

The thumb plays on the beat in an alternating bass note fashion using the 6th, 5th, and 4th strings depending on what chord is being played and the root/bass note of that chord

5 4 6 4

Basic Alphabet A, A7, Am, whose root is the 5th string = 5 4 6 4

Basic Alphabet B7, C, and C7 are the same but you must rock the 5th string bass note finger to the 6th string above it to play the correct alternate bass note.

Bb Chromatic System chords also use the 5 4 6 4 alternating bass

6 4 5 4

Basic Alphabet E, E7, Em, G, and G7

F Chromatic System chords

4 3 5 3

Basic Alphabet D, D7, and Dm and Basic Alphabet F: 4th rocks to the 5th string

Adding In The Fingers

Example: Basic Alphabet A

5 4 6 4 Thumb
2 3 2
(m) (i) (m) Fingers used

1 2 3 & 4 Tempo count

Example: Basic Alphabet E

6 4 5 4 Thumb
2 3 2
(m) (i) (m) Fingers used

1 2 3 & 4 Tempo count

Example: Basic Alphabet D The pattern shifts down one string

4 3 5 3 Thumb
1 2 1
(m) (i) (m) Fingers used

1 2 3 & 4 Tempo count

Practice this pattern on each Chord System you know. Work for speed and clarity. When you become more literate in fingerstyle guitar you will find that the alternating thumb pattern will change, according to the notes needed and available, when playing a solo. The above will give you the basics that are needed to begin to develop as a fingerstyle guitarist and provide a track to run on.

Be sure to watch your hand positioning. Anchor the little finger and be sure the thumb "leads" the fingers. This will force the finger to work from the mid-knuckles down\ thus eliminating much of the right hand movement. This pattern must be "picked" and not "pulled" with the finger. The eventual speed you will need will only be accomplished with proper hand positioning.