

LESSON PLAN: Holding a Pick

Objective:

Students will be able to hold a pick comfortably and begin using it to play guitar.

Resources:

Picks

Procedures:

- 1 Show students the way you place a pick on your index finger, with the point of the pick pointing toward the tip of your finger. (Figure A) Show how you gently clamp the thumb down on top of the index finger, pinching the pick between your index finger and thumb. (Figure B)
- 2 Notice if you are holding the pick correctly that your thumb looks a little bit like a chicken with the pick being its beak. You can draw an eye on your thumbnail to make this silly point with younger children. (Figure C)
- 3 Pass out a bunch of thin picks to the students. They should be easy for you to bend, and if they don't say "thin" on them, use .50 millimeter or thinner. Thinner picks are easier to use in the beginning because they are more flexible and won't get dropped as often. Many guitar teachers recommend Dunlop "Tortex" picks for beginners because of their texture making them easier to hold onto.
- 4 Ask students to once again watch the way you place the pick onto your index finger and then clamp it down with the thumb. Ask them to do the same, switching back and forth between you modeling this for them and having them do it. After a couple of tries, ask who in the class understands it so that they can demonstrate for the others. Have the students who get it help the ones who don't. With a team effort like this you'll have everyone holding a pick successfully in no time. The other fingers should feel loose and relaxed, like they're just dangling off of the fingers holding the pick.
- 5 Once the pick grip looks secure, ask students to strum a chord you're working on. Have them play all down strokes in 4 steady beats over and over. You'll need to stop periodically to allow students to re-adjust their picks. Soon they'll be able to play for longer stretches of time without adjusting. Try integrating strum patterns that involve up strokes as well. This may be a good warm up to use for several days before using a pick to play a song, depending on the age and ability of your students. Keep reminding students that the strumming hand holding the pick should feel loose, relaxed, and free as it moves up and down.



Fig. A

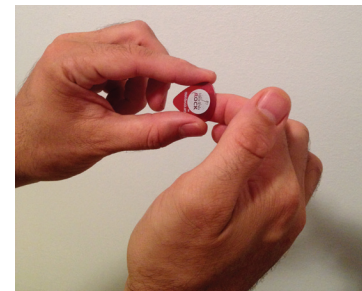


Fig. B

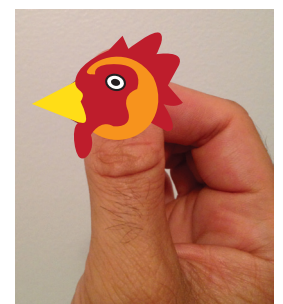
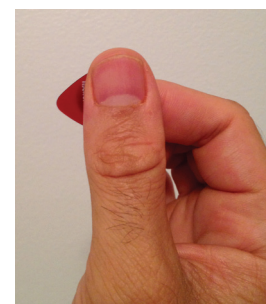


Fig. C

National Core Arts Standards (Music):

Anchor Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation. Example: Harmonizing Instruments MU:Pr5.1.H Rehearse, Evaluate, and Refine. Common Core Correlation: CCSS. ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

