

JUST OUTSIDE OF NORMAL

In Conversation with

STUARTHAMM

SCOTTSBASSLESSONS.COM

Stuart Hamm

In this interview with Jonathan Herrera, Stuart Hamm (who's notably played with Steve Vai, Joe Satriani, and Frank Gambale, among others) guides us through his warm-up routine, sharing some of the exercises he uses to get his fingers rock-ready.



Warm-Up Exercises

Experiment playing these exercises anywhere on the fretboard to get your fingers ready to go. The tempos shown reflect Stuart's playing in the video, but feel free to choose any tempo that you're comfortable with. Start slowly and work your way progressively faster.



"It's not about trying to play at 160 bpm it's about playing with precision and strength."

Warm-Up Exercise No. 1

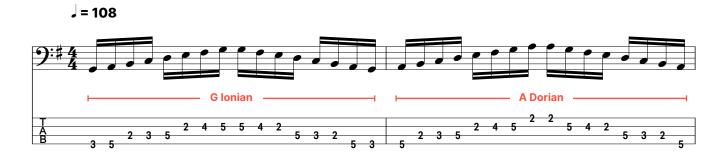
Tritones and Major Thirds

The first exercise is a great warm-up, and gets your fingers stretched out.



Mode Shapes

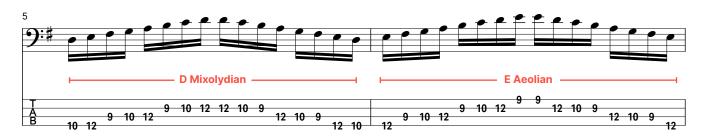
In this exercise, work your way up and down each of the modes of the major scale, here in G Major. Use only *three* postions over the fretboard: one where you'd play the \mathbf{I} chord, one where you'd play the \mathbf{V} chord.

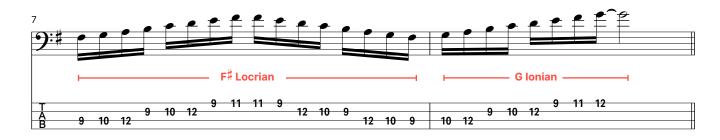


(Shift your hand position position)



(Shift your hand position position)





Sequenced Three-Note Patterns

Three-note sequences are great warm-ups.

Here we'll use a 1-2-3-1, 2-3-4-2, 3-4-5-3, etc. pattern:



Next, try a 1-3-2-1, 2-4-3-2, 3-5-4-3, etc. pattern:

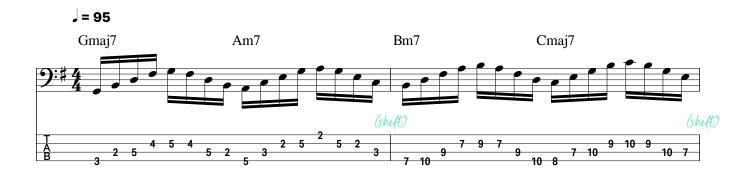


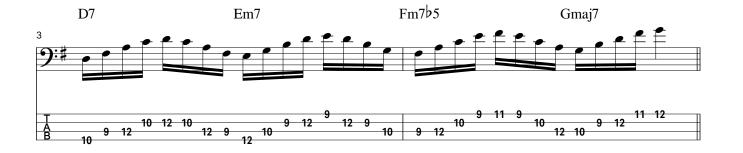
Feel free to create your own three-note patterns.

There aren't any bad ones!

Arpeggios

In this exercise, play each of the arpeggios of the major scale, again using G Major. Again, use only three positions for your fretting hand: where you'd play the \mathbf{I} , \mathbf{IV} and \mathbf{V} chords. (Here, the third, eighth and tenth positions.)

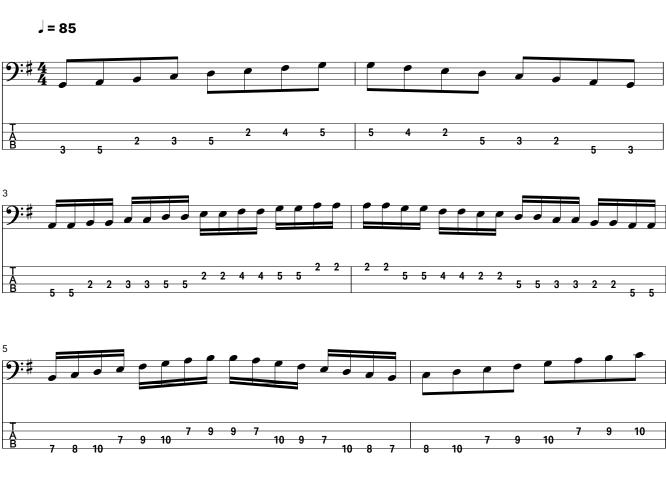




Vary the Note Lengths

Building on the previous exercises, vary the note lengths as you play them. Using Exercise 2 as an example, change the note lengths for each mode.*

Start at a tempo that's comfortable for you, then gradually increase as you'd like. Remember, the goal is smooth and precise articulation of each note.



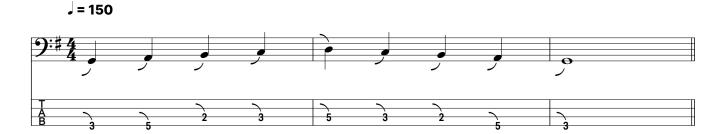


^{*}In the video Stuart describes the exercise as alternating between quarter notes, two eighth notes, single eighth notes, and back to quarter notes as he plays, but you can also think of the rhythms as eighth and sixteenth notes, as we have written above.

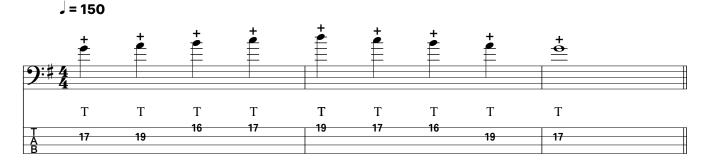
Tapping

Stuart is well known for his two-hand tapping technique on the bass guitar. Try to keep your fingers independent of each other, and be sure to sound each note crisply and clearly. This is not an easy technique, and may take some effort!

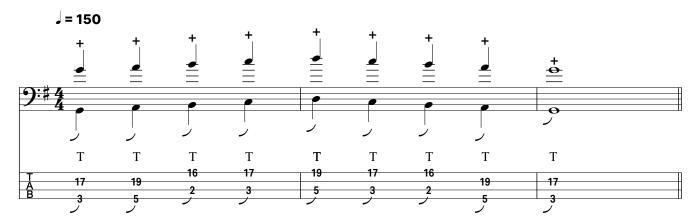
Start with just your fretting hand:



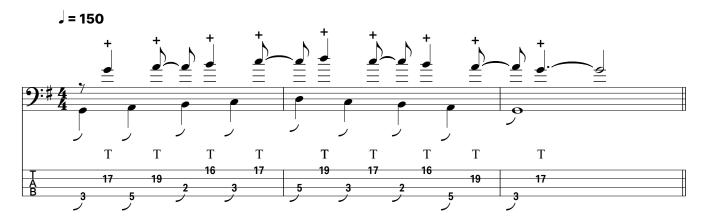
Then just your plucking hand:



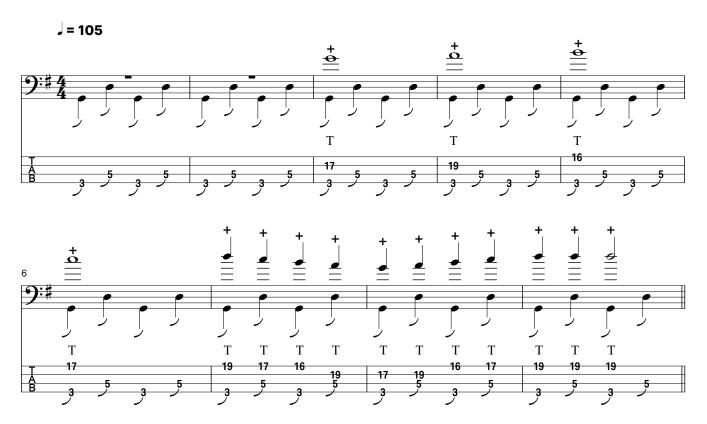
Then combine them:



And finally, alternate:



Once you're comfortable, try creating a groove with your fretting hand, and then add a melody with your plucking hand:



Experiment using different fingers on your plucking hand to fret the notes—you don't need to just use one!

Think Like a Drummer

An exercise Stuart has his students do is one that makes you "think like a drummer." It's a great exercise (at *any* tempo) to help you train your brain to treat your body independently:

- With your right foot, tap out the whole notes.
- With your left foot, tap out half notes.
- With your left hand, tap out quarter notes.
- With your right hand, tap out eighth notes.

Yes, it might sound easy, but it's trickier than it seems!



- Play things super slow. It helps you avoid muscle memory, and it just might expose any sloppiness you may have been getting away with.
- Breathe in time with the music.
- Relax and slow down while you're playing avoid getting tense!

Song Excerpt: "Simple Dream"

Finally, enjoy this excerpt of a breathing exercise turned into a soothing, relaxing piece from Stuart's debut album *Radio Free Albemuth*:

