

Lesson One : Basic Plucking Skills

Techniques

└ read as “**tu**” = thumb plucks a string forward and inward toward your palm

∖ read as “**mo**” = index finger plucks a string inward toward your palm

⤿ read as “**go**” = middle finger plucks a string inward toward your palm

Guzheng fingerings are written above the number notation. Before you pluck a string, make sure you relax your whole body, shoulder, elbow and the wrist. The hand should be relaxed as well. Make sure no muscle has tensed up. To relax your hand, you can hold a fist first, and release to a half open shape. To start pluck, rest the tip of the pick perpendicular to the string first, make sure the pick is fully contacting the string. Pluck with your first finger joint moving inward heading your palm. After you pluck, the finger is bending toward your palm. Then release your finger back to the original position.

Let's start plucking with index finger and get familiar with the strings.

Tip 1: Green strings are the 5 (sol).

Tip 2: After you remember the 5s, try to get the 1s that are one string apart from the 5. The rest will be a lot easier.

Drill 1

∖ 1 2 3 | ∖ 5 6 1 | ∖ 2 3 5 | ∖ 6 1 2 |

∖ 3 5 6 | ∖ 1 2 3 | ∖ 5 6 1 | ∖ 1 - - ||

Play **Drill 1** using index finger first. Rest your index finger pick perpendicular to the string, make sure the pick is fully in contact with the string across the pick. Also make sure no muscle has tensed up. Then bend your finger joint inward and upward heading the palm to pluck the string.

Try to do **Drill 1** with middle finger and thumb as well.

Pluck the middle finger like you pluck the index.

Thumb plucking is harder than the other fingers. It's easy to pluck to the right instead of forward and inward to the palm. Stick out your elbow and turn your wrist to side way so the thumb pick can rest fully in contact with the string. Bend your thumb joint inward and upward heading the palm to pluck the string.

Blossom

1=D 2/4

Carol Chang

$\underline{\underset{\cdot}{5}} \ \underline{\underset{\cdot}{6}} \ \underset{\cdot}{1}$ | $\underline{\underset{\cdot}{2}} \ \underline{\underset{\cdot}{3}} \ \underset{\cdot}{2}$ | $\underline{\underset{\cdot}{1}} \ \underline{\underset{\cdot}{2}} \ \underset{\cdot}{3}$ | $\underline{\underset{\cdot}{5}} \ \underline{\underset{\cdot}{6}} \ \underset{\cdot}{5}$ |

$\underline{\underset{\cdot}{3}} \ \underline{\underset{\cdot}{5}} \ \underset{\cdot}{6}$ | $\underline{\underset{\cdot}{6}} \ \underline{\underset{\cdot}{5}} \ \underset{\cdot}{3}$ | $\underline{\underset{\cdot}{6}} \ \underline{\underset{\cdot}{3}} \ \underset{\cdot}{2}$ | $\underline{\underset{\cdot}{5}} \ \underline{\underset{\cdot}{6}} \ \underset{\cdot}{1}$ |

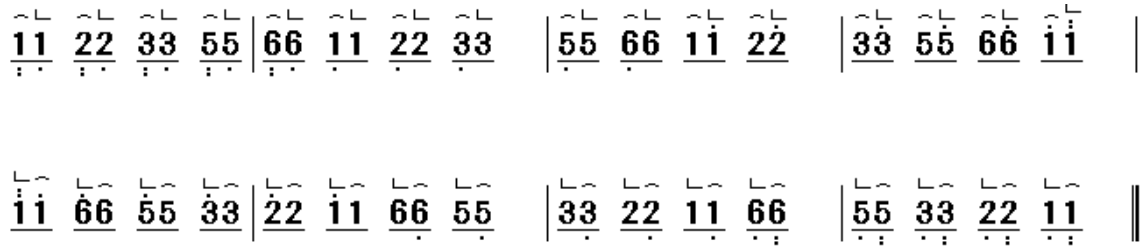
$\overset{\frown}{\underline{\underset{\cdot}{5}}} \ \overset{\frown}{\underline{\underset{\cdot}{6}}} \ \overset{\frown}{\underset{\cdot}{1}}$ | $\overset{\frown}{\underline{\underset{\cdot}{2}}} \ \overset{\frown}{\underline{\underset{\cdot}{3}}} \ \overset{\frown}{\underset{\cdot}{2}}$ | $\overset{\frown}{\underline{\underset{\cdot}{1}}} \ \overset{\frown}{\underline{\underset{\cdot}{2}}} \ \overset{\frown}{\underset{\cdot}{3}}$ | $\overset{\frown}{\underline{\underset{\cdot}{5}}} \ \overset{\frown}{\underline{\underset{\cdot}{6}}} \ \overset{\frown}{\underset{\cdot}{5}}$ |

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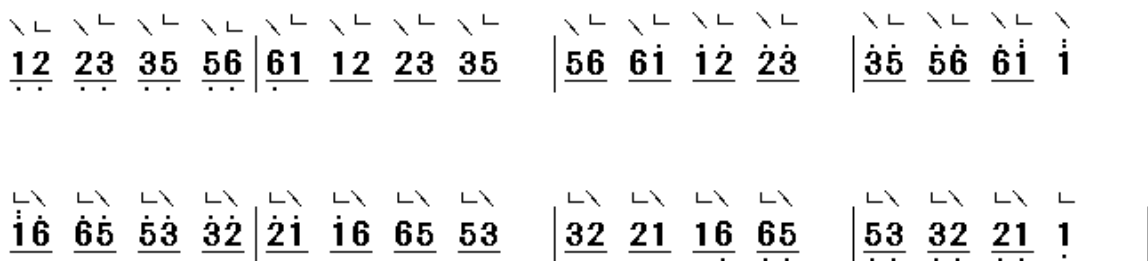
Drill 2



Drill 2 works your thumb and middle finger in the octave position. Each octave is 5 strings apart, or 4 strings in between. Pluck each string slowly and get familiar with the guzheng octaves.

Start plucking with your middle finger, follow by the thumb. When you pluck your middle finger, your wrist position is straight. When you move on to pluck the thumb, make sure you turn your wrist side way so the thumb pick can face forward and rest fully in contact with the string instead of facing to the right side. Turn your wrist back to the normal position when you pluck the middle finger again.

Drill 3



Drill 3 works on index finger and thumb plucking one string apart.

Again, pluck your index finger first, follow by plucking your thumb. When you pluck your index finger, your wrist position is straight. When you pluck your thumb, turn your wrist side way, so the thumb pick can face forward and rest fully in contact with the string.

Drill 4

\backslash $\overset{\frown}{1}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{2}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{3}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{5}$ | \backslash $\overset{\frown}{5}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{6}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{1}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{2}$ | \backslash $\overset{\frown}{2}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{3}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{5}$ $\overset{\frown}{6}$ | $\overset{\frown}{1}$ $\overset{\frown}{6}$ $\overset{\frown}{5}$ $\overset{\frown}{3}$ |

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Drill 4 works on thumb and index finger plucking two strings apart. Do not raise up the hand between consecutive half beat notes. Raise up the hand and breathe at the end of each phrase.

Flower or not Flower 花非花

1 = D 4/4
 \bullet = 72

Chinese Folk Song

\backslash $\overset{\frown}{5}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{6}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{5}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{3}$ | \backslash $\overset{\frown}{1}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{2}$ $\overset{\frown}{1}$ $\overset{\frown}{6}$ | \backslash $\overset{\frown}{5}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{5}$ $\overset{\frown}{6}$ $\overset{\frown}{5}$ | $\overset{\frown}{3}$ $\overset{\frown}{2}$ $\overset{\frown}{1}$ - |

\backslash $\overset{\frown}{2}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{3}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{6}$ $\overset{\frown}{5}$ | \backslash $\overset{\frown}{5}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{2}$ $\overset{\frown}{1}$ $\overset{\frown}{6}$ - | \backslash $\overset{\frown}{1}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{6}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{5}$ \backslash $\overset{\frown}{3}$ $\overset{\frown}{5}$ | $\overset{\frown}{6}$ $\overset{\frown}{2}$ $\overset{\frown}{3}$ $\overset{\frown}{1}$ - ||

The Rainbow Sisters 虹彩妹妹

1 = D 4/4
♩ = 80

Chinese Folk Song

6 5̣ 3̣ 6 5̣ 3̣ | 6 6 5 6 - | 6 5̣ 3̣ 6 5̣ 3̣ | 2 2 1 2 - |

3 3̣ 5̣ 6̣ 1̣ 6̣ 5̣ | 3 3 5 1 - | 3 3̣ 3 3̣ 3̣ | 6̣ 6̣ 5̣ 6̣ - ||

Drill 5

1̣ 1̣ 5̣ 1̣ 1̣ 5̣ 1̣ 5̣ | 2̣ 2̣ 6̣ 2̣ 2̣ 6̣ 2̣ 6̣ | 3̣ 3̣ 1̣ 3̣ 3̣ 1̣ 3̣ 1̣ | 5̣ 5̣ 2̣ 5̣ 5̣ 2̣ 5̣ 2̣ |

6̣ 6̣ 3̣ 6̣ 6̣ 3̣ 6̣ 3̣ | 1̣ 1̣ 5̣ 1̣ 1̣ 5̣ 1̣ 5̣ | 2̣ 2̣ 6̣ 2̣ 2̣ 6̣ 2̣ 6̣ | 3̣ 3̣ 1̣ 3̣ 3̣ 1̣ 3̣ 1̣ |

5̣ 5̣ 2̣ 5̣ 5̣ 2̣ 5̣ 2̣ | 6̣ 6̣ 3̣ 6̣ 6̣ 3̣ 6̣ 3̣ | 1̣ 1̣ 5̣ 1̣ 1̣ 5̣ 1̣ 5̣ | 1̣ - - - ||

Drill 5 works on plucking thumb, index and middle fingers comprehensively. It is a combination of **Drill 2** and **Drill 4**. This is a common practice drill in guzheng which it has a name as “4 points” or “go tuo mo tuo”. Always remember to turn your wrist side way when pluck the thumb.

Purple Bamboo 紫竹調

1 = D 4/4

♩ = 84

Chinese Folk Song

$\begin{array}{cccc|cccc|cccc|cccc} \backslash & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge \\ 5 & \dot{1} & \underline{65} & \dot{3} & \underline{52} & \underline{32} & \dot{1} & \dot{1} & \underline{6\dot{1}} & \underline{35} & 6 & \dot{3} & 5\cdot & \underline{5} & \underline{5} & \underline{5} & & \\ \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge \\ \underline{16} & \underline{36} & 5 & \underline{5} & \underline{65} & \underline{36} & 5 & \underline{5} & 5 & \dot{1} & \underline{65} & \dot{3} & \underline{52} & \underline{32} & \dot{1} & \dot{1} & & \\ \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge \\ \underline{11} & \underline{13} & 2 & \underline{2} & \underline{61} & \underline{61} & 2 & 6 & 5\cdot & \underline{5} & 5 & \underline{5} & \underline{11} & \underline{13} & 2 & \underline{2} & & \\ \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge \\ \underline{6\dot{1}} & \underline{6\dot{1}} & 2 & 6 & 5\cdot & 6 & \underline{23} & \underline{56} & 5\cdot & \underline{5} & 5 & \underline{5} & & & & & & \parallel \end{array}$

Drill 6

$\begin{array}{cccc|cccc|cccc|cccc|cccc} \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - \\ \underline{1} & \underline{2} & \underline{3} & & \underline{2} & \underline{3} & \underline{5} & & \underline{3} & \underline{5} & \underline{6} & & \underline{5} & \underline{6} & \underline{1} & & \underline{6} & \underline{1} & \underline{2} & & \underline{1} & \underline{2} & \underline{3} & & \\ \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \\ \underline{2} & \underline{3} & \underline{5} & & \underline{3} & \underline{5} & \underline{6} & & \underline{5} & \underline{6} & \underline{1} & & \underline{1} & \underline{6} & \underline{5} & & \underline{6} & \underline{5} & \underline{3} & & \underline{5} & \underline{3} & \underline{2} & & \\ \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \wedge & \wedge & \wedge & - & \\ \underline{3} & \underline{2} & \underline{1} & & \underline{2} & \underline{1} & \underline{6} & & \underline{1} & \underline{6} & \underline{5} & & \underline{6} & \underline{5} & \underline{3} & & \underline{5} & \underline{3} & \underline{2} & & \underline{3} & \underline{2} & \underline{1} & & \parallel \end{array}$

When pluck strings that are close to each other, you can keep the fingers closer as well. Don't open up your hand like plucking the octave position in Drill 2 and 5. Keep your hand in a half fist shape, start plucking middle finger, index and thumb. At the end of one cycle, you can breathe (inhale) and raise your hand from the wrist to help your fingers relax. At the start of a new cycle, slowly exhale and play out the phrase.

The Great Wall 萬里長城

1 = D 4/4
♩ = 72

Liu Xue'an

$\hat{5}\hat{5}$ $\hat{3}\hat{5}$ $\hat{3}\hat{3}$ $\hat{5}\hat{5}$ | $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\hat{1}\hat{6}$ $\hat{5}\hat{5}$ $\hat{5}\hat{5}$ | $\hat{5}\hat{5}$ $\hat{6}\hat{1}$ $\hat{3}\hat{3}$ $\hat{5}\hat{3}$ | $\hat{2}\hat{2}$ $\hat{2}\hat{6}$ $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ |

$\hat{5}\hat{5}$ $\hat{3}\hat{5}$ $\hat{3}\hat{3}$ $\hat{5}\hat{5}$ | $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\hat{1}\hat{6}$ $\hat{5}\hat{5}$ $\hat{5}\hat{5}$ | $\hat{5}\hat{5}$ $\hat{6}\hat{1}$ $\hat{3}\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}\hat{2}$ | $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ |

$\hat{2}\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\hat{2}\hat{2}$ | $\hat{5}\hat{5}$ $\hat{5}\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}\hat{2}$ $\hat{2}\hat{2}$ | $\hat{3}\hat{1}$ $\hat{2}\hat{3}$ $\hat{5}\hat{3}$ $\hat{5}\hat{6}$ | $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\hat{1}\hat{6}$ $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ |

$\hat{5}\hat{5}$ $\hat{3}\hat{5}$ $\hat{3}\hat{3}$ $\hat{5}\hat{5}$ | $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\hat{1}\hat{6}$ $\hat{5}\hat{5}$ $\hat{5}\hat{5}$ | $\hat{5}\hat{5}$ $\hat{6}\hat{1}$ $\hat{3}\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}\hat{2}$ | $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\hat{1}\hat{1}$ ||

The Great Wall uses a combination of the fingerings in Drill 2, Drill 3 and Drill 5, focusing on Drill 5. Most of the song is done in Drill 5 fingering. Remember the 4 points: middle, thumb, index and thumb order.

Drill 7

$\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\backslash\hat{5}\hat{1}$ $\backslash\hat{5}\hat{1}\hat{5}\hat{6}$ $\hat{1}\hat{1}$	$\hat{6}\hat{6}$ $\backslash\hat{3}\hat{6}$ $\backslash\hat{3}\hat{6}\hat{3}\hat{5}$ $\hat{6}\hat{6}$	$\hat{5}\hat{5}$ $\backslash\hat{2}\hat{5}$ $\backslash\hat{2}\hat{5}\hat{2}\hat{3}$ $\hat{5}\hat{5}$	
$\hat{3}\hat{3}$ $\backslash\hat{1}\hat{3}$ $\backslash\hat{1}\hat{3}\hat{1}\hat{2}$ $\hat{3}\hat{3}$	$\hat{2}\hat{2}$ $\backslash\hat{6}\hat{2}$ $\backslash\hat{6}\hat{2}\hat{6}\hat{1}$ $\hat{2}\hat{2}$	$\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\backslash\hat{5}\hat{1}$ $\backslash\hat{5}\hat{1}\hat{5}\hat{6}$ $\hat{1}\hat{1}$	
$\hat{6}\hat{6}$ $\backslash\hat{3}\hat{6}$ $\backslash\hat{3}\hat{6}\hat{3}\hat{5}$ $\hat{6}\hat{6}$	$\hat{5}\hat{5}$ $\backslash\hat{2}\hat{5}$ $\backslash\hat{2}\hat{5}\hat{2}\hat{3}$ $\hat{5}\hat{5}$	$\hat{3}\hat{3}$ $\backslash\hat{1}\hat{3}$ $\backslash\hat{1}\hat{3}\hat{1}\hat{2}$ $\hat{3}\hat{3}$	
$\hat{2}\hat{2}$ $\backslash\hat{6}\hat{2}$ $\backslash\hat{6}\hat{2}\hat{6}\hat{1}$ $\hat{2}\hat{2}$	$\hat{1}\hat{1}$ $\backslash\hat{5}\hat{1}$ $\backslash\hat{5}\hat{1}\hat{5}\hat{6}$ $\hat{1}\hat{1}$		

Drill 7 is an advanced version of Drill 5. It focuses on the dexterity of your index and thumb. Practice this drill slowly with a metronome.