

# Creating Rhythmic Variations for Improvisational Phrases

In this lesson, we will be discussing how to change the rhythm of one or more phrases that we play while improvising so that we can tap into more or sometimes, even better musical phrases than when we started. Like a miner in a gold mine, we want to follow the sounds that appeal to our ears and emotions so that we can find the very best musical ideas.

When improvising, the ultimate goal for many guitarists is to play music that very accurately creates the emotions, ideas, or concepts that is intended or felt by the person playing their instrument in real time. To be able to develop the skills to do that, a methodical approach to the technical elements of creating new ideas should be practiced until it becomes second nature (natural).

Using, applying and revisiting the technique in this lesson as well as other techniques for improvising that you will learn in future lessons, will greatly help you and make you appear to others to “play naturally” and indeed, there will be times that you will surprise yourself with the ideas you come up with.

To apply rhythmic variations to your phrases, first you will need to start with a simple phrase. On the next page you will see an example of this, I have created a 2-bar phrase that utilizes 7 notes. Under the original phrase you will also see 6 variations that use the same 7 notes. Listen to the audio file “audio rhythmic variations” to hear what these phrases sound like.

Notice after listening, how even with the same 7 notes you can create some really interesting ideas. This is what you should practice for the remainder of the hour you have dedicated for this class as well as the improvisation practice for the week.

1) Use the backing track provided with this class to create a phrase in A minor (or A minor pentatonic). You can make the phrase as long as you like however I recommend starting with a phrase no less than 6 notes and no more than 8.

2) Write down on tab or sheet music your phrase and practice playing it for 5 minutes, you will need to know the notes of your phrase very well before moving on to the next step.

3) Using the backing track provided record yourself playing the phrase using different rhythms. You do not have to have a laid out rhythm such as what you see on the next page, just experiment but **be sure to record the audio of your improvised rhythms.**

This audio will serve as an indicator of your progress for you to see that you can in fact make rhythmic variations. If in one hour you can make three or four original ideas and in 2 months' time you can make more than that in the same period of time, you will know that you are making progress.

4) If you find a particular rhythm or rhythms that you really like, make a note of exactly where that is on your recording so that you can hear it back and use it in later improvisations.

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**Original Phrase**

Original Phrase musical notation (Measures 1-2). Treble clef, 4/4 time. Measure 1: Quarter note G4 (fingering 1), quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Measure 2: Quarter note D5 (fingering 2), quarter note C5, half note B4. Fingering 1 is above the first G4. The guitar TAB below shows fret numbers: 7, 5, 7, 5 for measure 1, and 7, 5, 7 for measure 2.

**Variation 1**

Variation 1 musical notation (Measures 3-4). Treble clef, 4/4 time. Measure 3: Quarter note D5 (fingering 3), quarter note E5, quarter note F5, quarter note G5. Measure 4: Quarter note A5 (fingering 4), half note G5. Fingering 4 is above the A5. The guitar TAB below shows fret numbers: 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7 for measure 3, and (7) for measure 4.

**Variation 2**

Variation 2 musical notation (Measures 5-6). Treble clef, 4/4 time. Measure 5: Quarter note A5 (fingering 5), quarter note B5, quarter note C6, quarter note D6. Measure 6: Quarter note E6 (fingering 6), half note D6. Fingering 6 is above the E6. The guitar TAB below shows fret numbers: 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5 for measure 5, and 7 for measure 6.

**Variation 3**

Variation 3 musical notation (Measures 7-8). Treble clef, 4/4 time. Measure 7: Quarter note E6 (fingering 7), quarter note F6, quarter note G6, half note F6. Measure 8: Quarter note E6, quarter note D6, quarter note C6, quarter note B5 (fingering 8). Fingering 8 is above the B5. The guitar TAB below shows fret numbers: 7, 5, 7, 5 for measure 7, and 7, 5, 7 for measure 8, with a (7) in parentheses for the final measure.

**Variation 4**

Variation 4 musical notation (Measures 9-10). Treble clef, 4/4 time. Measure 9: Quarter note B5 (fingering 9), quarter note C6, quarter note D6, quarter note E6. Measure 10: Quarter note F6 (fingering 10), half note E6, half note D6. Fingering 10 is above the F6. The guitar TAB below shows fret numbers: 7, 5, 7, 5, 7 for measure 9, and 5, 7 for measure 10.

**Variation 5**

Variation 5 musical notation (Measures 11-12). Treble clef, 4/4 time. Measure 11: Quarter note E6 (fingering 11), quarter note F6, quarter note G6, quarter note A6. Measure 12: Quarter note B6 (fingering 12), quarter note A6, half note G6. Fingering 12 is above the B6. The guitar TAB below shows fret numbers: 7, 5, 7, 5 for measure 11, and 7, 5, 7 for measure 12.

**Variation 6**

Variation 6 musical notation (Measures 13-14). Treble clef, 4/4 time. Measure 13: Quarter note A6 (fingering 13), quarter note B6, quarter note C7, quarter note D7. Measure 14: Quarter note E7 (fingering 14), quarter note D7, quarter note C7, quarter note B6. Fingering 14 is above the E7. The guitar TAB below shows fret numbers: 7, 5 for measure 13, and 7, 5, 7, 5, 7 for measure 14.

# Creating Rhythmic Variations for Improvisational Phrases

Your variations can be simple, if you are a beginner focus do not overdo your rhythmic capabilities. Play to the 60BPM backing track provided and make sure to stick to the 2 bars of music for each phrase.

Understanding, applying and repeating the concept of rhythmic variation is one of the most essential skills to being able to create amazing music “naturally”. Practice this regularly within your playing and you will see an improvement in your improvising.

## **What Should I Do Now?**

What you should for the next 7 days is practice creating a phrase and then making 3 variations on that phrase and recording it.

If you have finished doing that then create a new phrase with new notes and repeat the process of creating 3 variations.

At a minimum before the end of the next 7 days you should have at least one original phrase that you have created along with the 3 variations recorded to audio.

Happy Practicing