

Beautify Your Chords

With Hammer-Ons & Pull-Offs

Beautify Your Chords with Hammer-Ons & Pull-Offs

One of the prettiest ways to **make a specific chord more interesting** is to “get into it” with a hammer-on into one of the notes, or add some hammer-ons and pull-offs riffs on top of it. (After you’ve already played it once) In this lesson you’ll learn practically how to do it.

The Main Takeaways from the Lesson:

- Like many other techniques, there’s a good chance that you’ve already “toyed around” with this in the past, but if you’ll listen to the last songs that you’ve played – it might not be there at all. The reason is that you need to **remember** to use it, and the best way to actually do it is to get very familiar with some “**go-to riffs**” that just work great in most of the common open chords scenarios that we play so often. Then – it will start coming to you almost “automatically”. In the two video lessons I supply you with a “large bank” of such go-to riffs.

- Besides a hammer-on into the root note itself (for example, “entering” a G chord with a hammer-on from the 0-3rd fret on the 6th string) – hammer-ons usually work well into most of the other notes of the chord.

- However, also remember that hammer-ons and pull-offs sound best when you use them for a “distance” of **no more than 1-2 frets away**. (half step / whole step) More than that may not sound very smooth. (Which usually rules out the 0-3rd hammer-on on the 1st fret into a G chord, for example)

- Also, besides the basic notes of the chord, hammer-ons will usually also work great into any of the other notes around you – that are part of the *pentatonic scale* that the song is on.

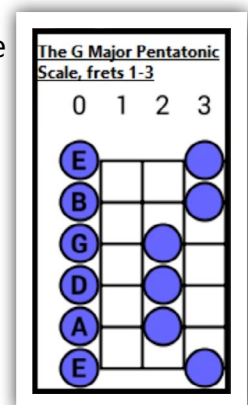


Jimmy Page (Led Zeppelin) is signed on the most challenging song in the list below. Bonus: Try to also sing while playing it...

We can get now into some music theory, ([here](#) to learn on how to find the key of a song, and then [here](#) to learn more about the pentatonic scale) but my bottom line here is that at least as a beginning - **trial and error, combined with what I show in the video**, will tell you most of the answers that you need.

How come? Because almost always you’ll come back to the same hammer-ons and pull-offs riffs in the same open chords that I show in the video. (And there are usually just two “optional notes” that you may want to hammer-on into, one will work and one won’t, so it’s rather simple)

- As always – remember not to overdo this technique. Every once in a while it’s nice, but if you use it too much, it will easily take away the attention from the singing.



- Another way that will usually work - to think of good notes to hammer-on into – is to think of **“spiced up” versions** of the basic chord that you’re playing, and hammer-on into them. For example, a hammer-on from a D into a D4, (as shown in the examples video, over the song “Time of Your Life”) or from a D into a D6. (You can learn more about “spiced-up” types of chords in the sections that are dedicated to them in the course)
- You can perform the hammer-ons and pull-offs in **“different styles”**. The example list below will show you how musicians have put this technique into action in rock songs and funk songs (where it adds to the groove), in folk songs (where it can add a **“dreamy” vibe**, at least to my ears), in R&B, (Where again, it adds to the groove and makes you wanna dance...) etc.
- Hammer-ons can work great when you use them to enter barre chords, as I show in the video, over the example of “Just the Two Of Us”. It’s definitely not just a technique for open chords.
- Sometimes it can sound great if you **add a vibrato** on the note that you just “hammered-on” to.

Examples of Songs That Use Hammer-Ons & Pull-Offs

🎵 = This example is shown at the lesson

See the lesson itself for more examples of many “go-to” common riffs for most open chords, including tabs. It will show you “go-to” riffs that you can apply on most songs.

In the following list I will link to songs / covers that make use of the hammer-ons & pull-offs techniques. Also included are links to the tabs, if you want to go ahead and learn these ideas yourself. (Which I recommend, because learning more usable examples will get you used to adding those riffs yourself, in your own song-playing)

Bob Dylan – Girl from the North Country (Tabs) | Rich in hammer-ons that give this beautiful dreamy-folky vibe. (also – a great song for practicing interesting chord voicings)

Jeff Buckley – Hallelujah (Tabs) | Beautiful fingerpicked arpeggio playing, where every now and then Buckley throws a hammer-on to make a chord more interesting. For example, at 1:31, when he’s going from a D chord into a D4 chord.

The Waifs – Gillian (Chords) | Extraordinary guitar playing here, on a song that’s harmonically simple. A big part of what makes it sound so special is that there’s plenty of use of hammer-ons and pull-offs. (Also – lots of **bass walk-ups & walk-downs** – which you can learn about in its own dedicated section)

Tupac – Thugz Mansion (Acoustic Version) (Tabs) – You might have not expected to see Tupac here, but this gorgeous acoustic version will show you the best of the best of using this technique. (And while it’s mostly used by the lead guitar, which is strictly just decorating and not playing the entire chords, I still wanted to include it here as a “showcase” of the technique)



Van Morrison – Into The Mystic (Tabs) | LOTS of examples of how the rhythm guitar can combine hammer-ons and pull-offs in the accompaniment, especially over Suspended chords. 🎵

[John Mayer – Free Fallin’ \(Tom Petty Cover\) \(Tabs\)](#) | An example of a riff that uses a pull-off, which is rarer to hear than those using hammer-ons. ▶

[John Mayer – Why Georgia \(Tabs\)](#) | Another example where the main rhythm guitar riff that drives the song is with several hammer-ons.

[Doobie Brothers – Long Train Runnin’ \(Tabs\)](#) | A great way to work on barre chords hammer-ons in a fast rock rhythm.

[Adikara Fardy - Just the Two of Us \(Grover Washington Jr. Cover\)](#) | Great example of hammer-ons using 7th barre chords. There are no available tabs for this sweet YouTube cover, but in the video lesson I show you how to play it yourself. ▶

[Led Zeppelin - Over the Hills and Far Away \(Tabs\)](#) | A very challenging example to try playing at home, of a song that’s built almost entirely on hammer-ons and pull-offs.



The Waifs. Another acoustic band from Australia - with great vibes, gorgeous guitar playing, and funny accents. (Hey, but who am I to talk about funny accents...) (;