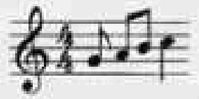¶ 6.1
Rhythm & The Steady Pulse
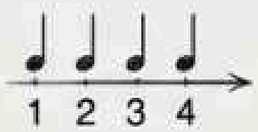
Rhythm & The Beat

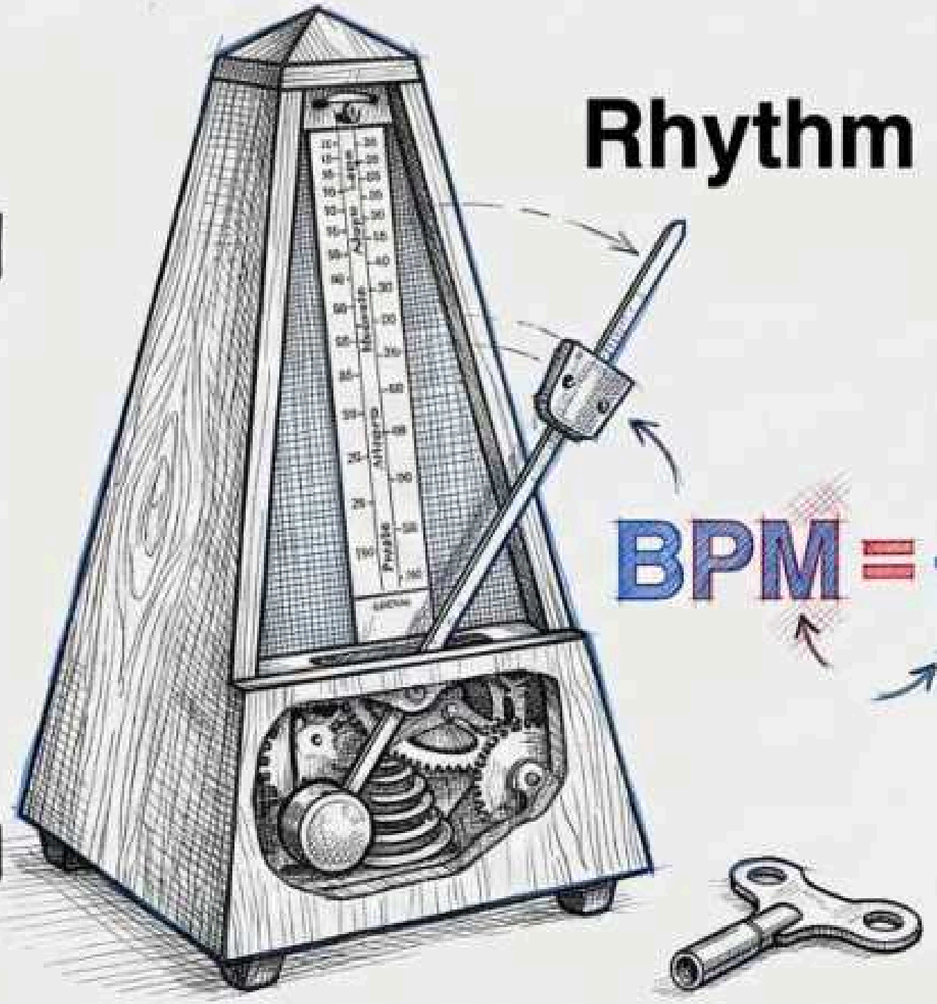
- Rhythm: The organization of music in time.



- The Beat: The steady, foundational pulse (the foot-tap).







$$BPM = \frac{Beats}{Minute}$$

Tempo (BPM)

The speed of the pulse.

Slow Ballad: ~70 BPM

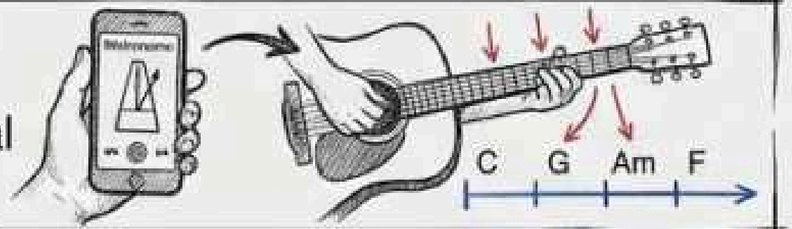


Brisk Strum: ~120 BPM



The Metronome Principle

Practicing with a metronome (or drum app) provides the mathematical **certainty** required to make **chord changes** land precisely in time.

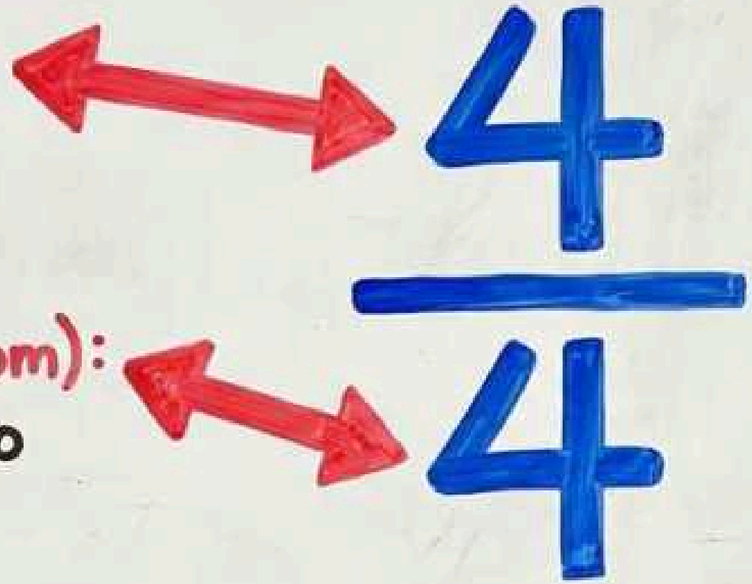


Organizing Beats: Time Signatures

¶ 6.2

Numerator (Top):
Number of beats per bar.

Denominator (Bottom):
Note value equal to one beat.

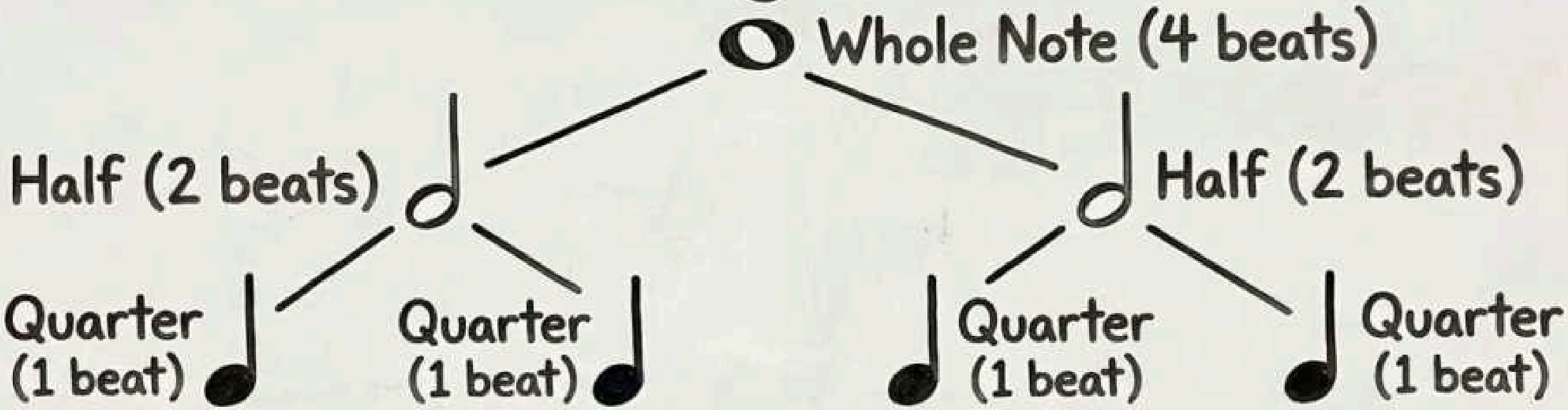


$$\frac{3}{4}$$

4/4 Time	3/4 Time
• 4 quarter-note beats per bar (1 2 3 4). The most common meter.	• 3 quarter-note beats per bar (1 2 3 4). • Waltz time.

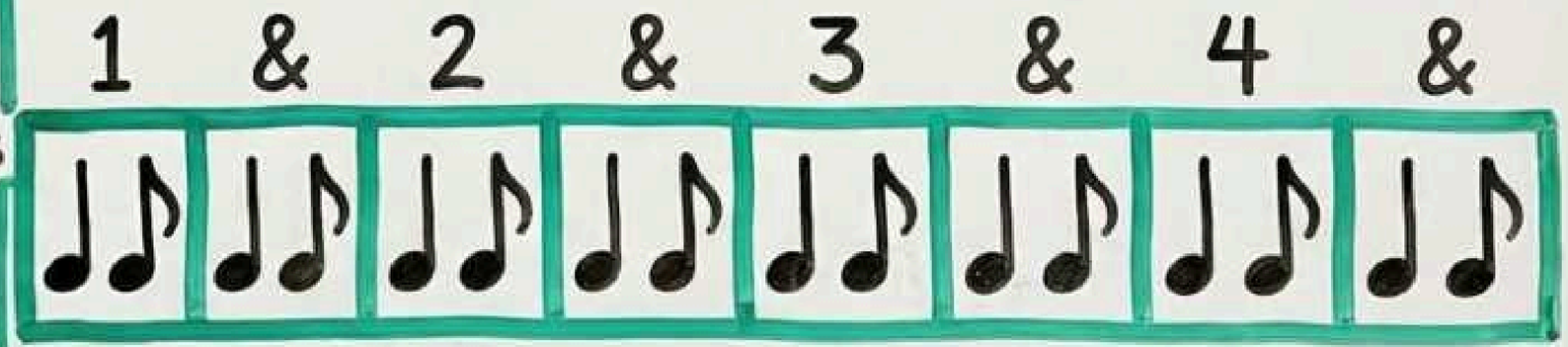
Bars (Measures): Groupings of beats.
Accent Rule: The 1st beat of each bar carries the heaviest accent.

Subdividing the Beat



$$1 = (\tfrac{1}{2} + \tfrac{1}{2}) = (\tfrac{1}{4} \times 4) = (\tfrac{1}{8} \times 8)$$

The 8-Slot Grid.
Two eighth notes fill one quarter-note beat. Most strumming patterns are mapped directly onto this evenly spaced mathematical grid.



The Rolling Feel of 6/8 Time

6/8 Time Structure

(1 2 3) + (4 5 6)

6 eighth notes per bar, felt as two large beats divided into three.

3/4 Time Structure

(1 2) + (3 4) + (5 6)

Divided into sets of two.

The Feel & The Rule

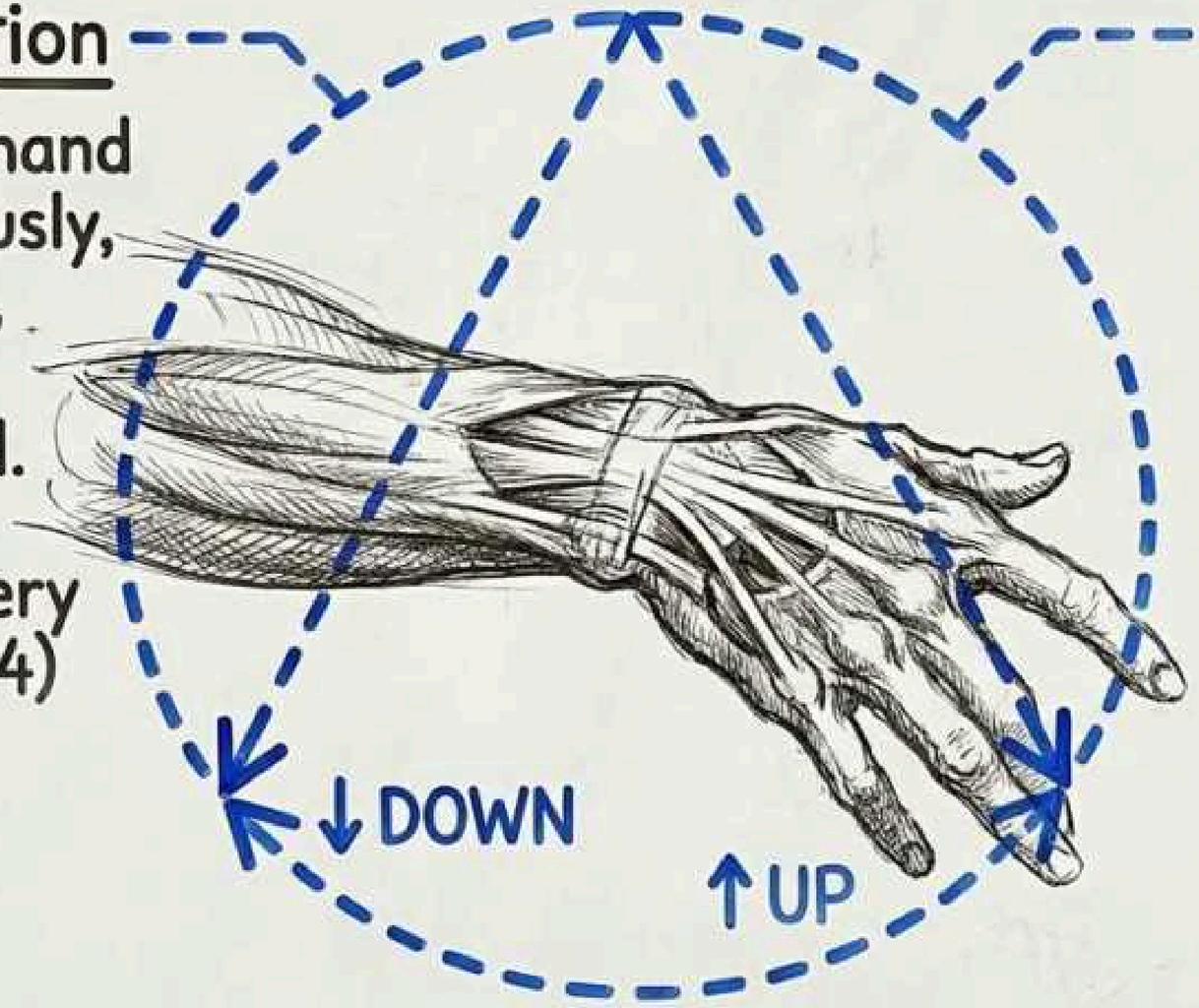
6/8 provides a lilting, rolling feel used in jigs, ballads, and many slow songs. Do not confuse 6/8 with 3/4. 6/8 mathematically divides into sets of three; 3/4 divides into sets of two.

The Pendulum Principle of Strumming

¶6.5

Continuous Motion

- The strumming hand moves continuously, like a pendulum, locked to the eighth-note grid.
- ↓ DOWN: On every number (1, 2, 3, 4)
- ↑ UP: On every "and" (&)



Creating Patterns

- Rhythms are formed by letting the hand touch strings on some motions and intentionally missing them on others.
- The uninterrupted motion keeps the rhythm steady.

The Island Strum & Missing the Beat

¶6.6

	1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&
Straight Eighths	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
The Island (Calypso) Strum	↓		↓	↑	(↓)	👻	↓	↑

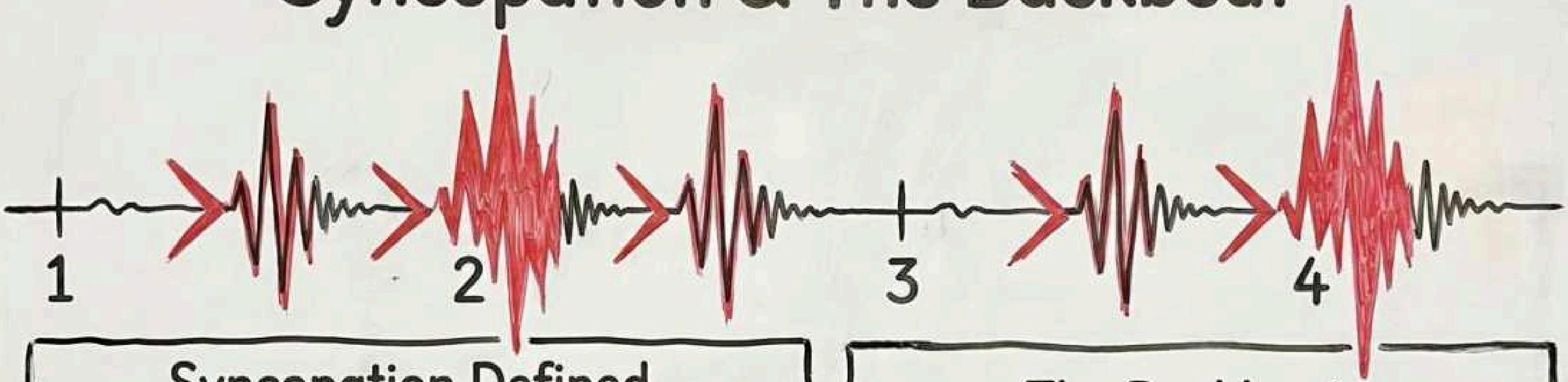
Solid, unbroken strokes.

The Syncopation Engine

Down on 1, Down on 2, Up on 2&, Miss beat 3, Up on 3&, Down on 4, Up on 4&. The deliberately missed down-stroke on beat 3 creates the pattern's characteristic syncopation.

Syncopation & The Backbeat

9/6.7



Syncopation Defined

- Accenting normally weak beats or off-beats (the "ands") rather than the main numbered beats.
- Purpose: Gives rhythm its push and swing; makes the island strum more interesting than straight eighth notes.

The Backbeat

- Accenting beats 2 and 4.
- Mimics the crack of a drummer's snare drum. The most common syncopation in popular music.

The Mathematics of Swing Feel

916.8

Straight Eighths (Evenly played)

½ Down	½ Up

Swing ≈ 2:1 Ratio

Down-stroke (Held longer on the beat)	Up-stroke (Late & short on the 'and')

Swing Eighths

Context

Essential for jazz, blues, and classic standards.
The exact same written strum pattern sounds completely different when played straight versus swung.

916.9

The Chuck: Percussive Drive

The Technique

- The strumming hand's palm or side lands on the strings simultaneously as it strums, muting them instantly.

The Sound

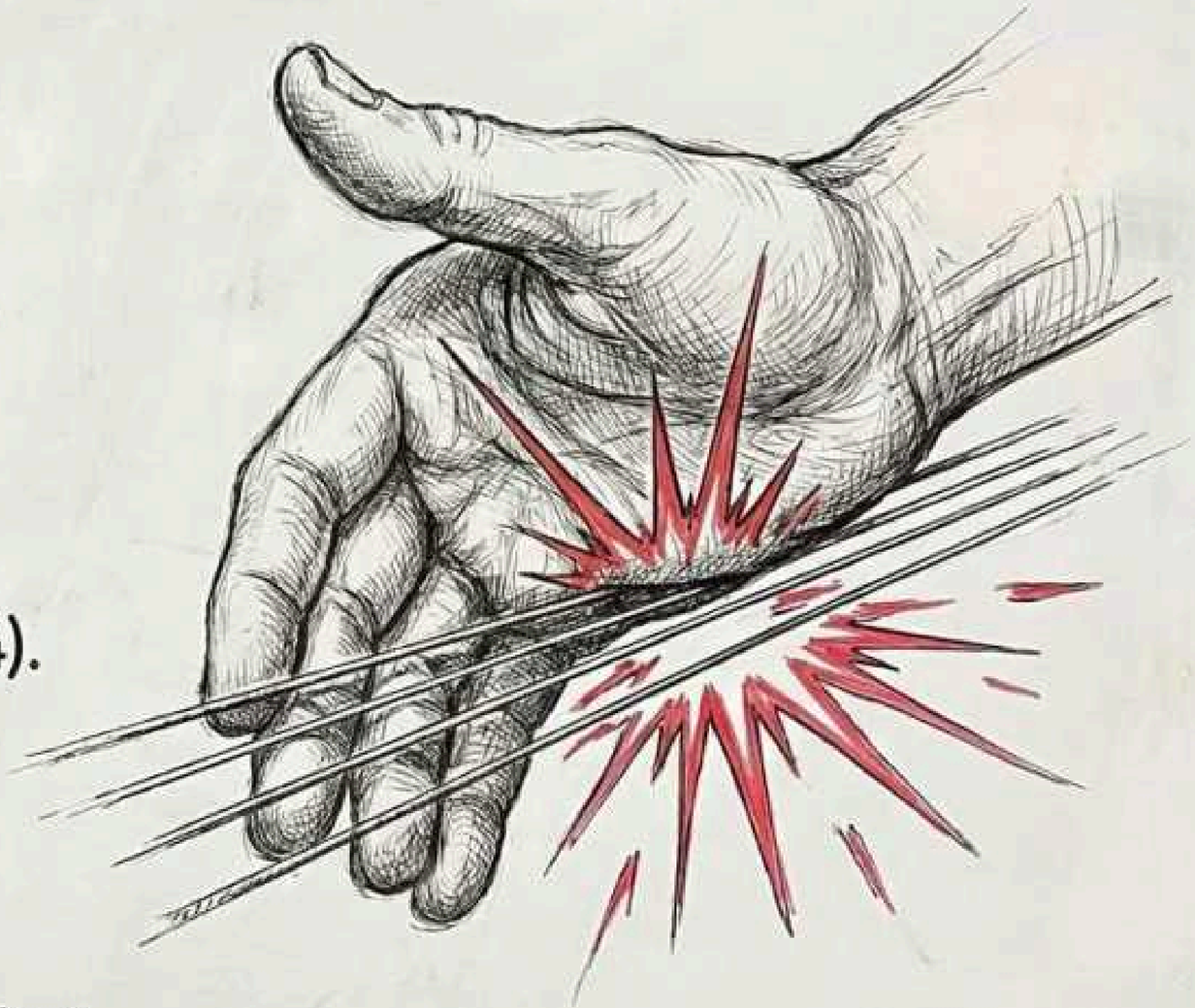
- A sharp, snare-like, percussive click.

Application

- Placed on the backbeat (beats 2 and 4).
- Pattern: D, [Chuck], D U, [Chuck].
- Adds drive without a drummer.

Alternative

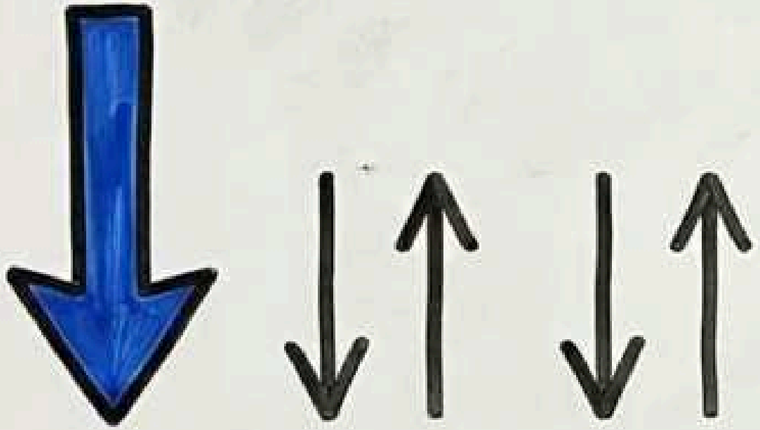
- Lightly lifting fretting fingers off the fretboard achieves a similar muted effect.



Strumming in Triple Meters

916.10

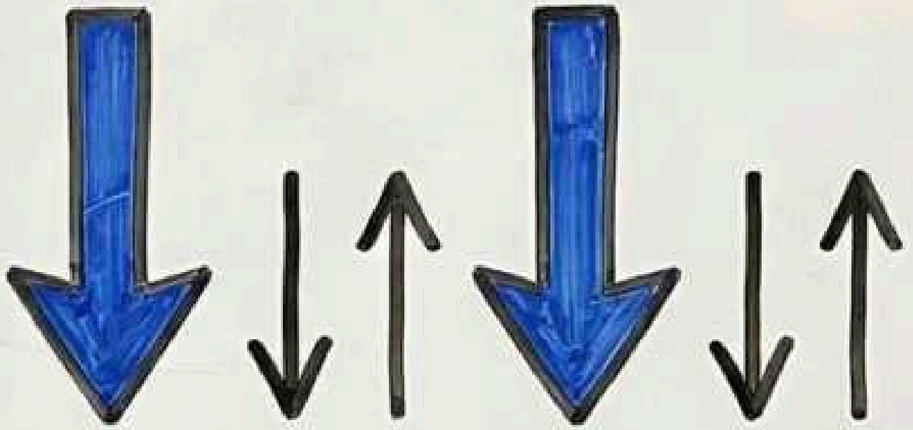
Waltz Time (3/4)



Pattern: D, D U, D U

Feel: Heavy weight on beat 1 creates the distinct ONE-two-three momentum.

6/8 Time

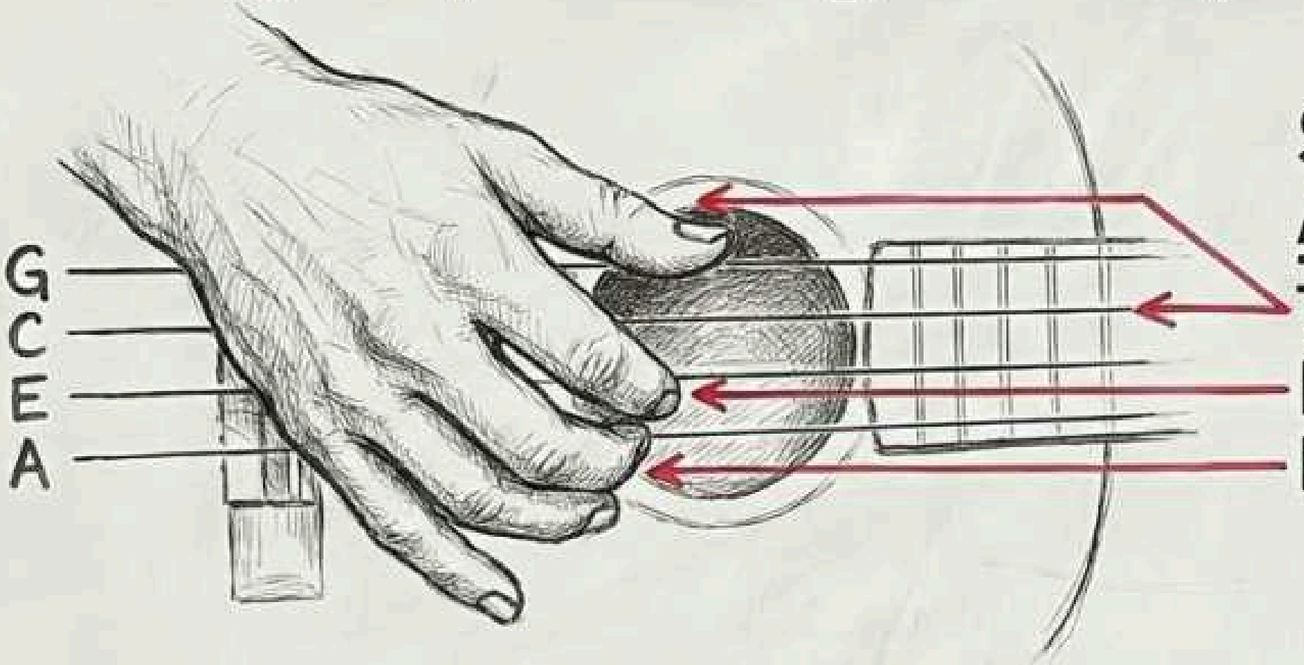


Pattern: D D U, D D U

Feel: Accenting the first note of each three-note grouping provides the rolling, wave-like rhythm.

Fingerpicking & Arpeggios

916.11



Standard String Assignment:

Thumb: G and C strings
Index: E string
Middle: A string

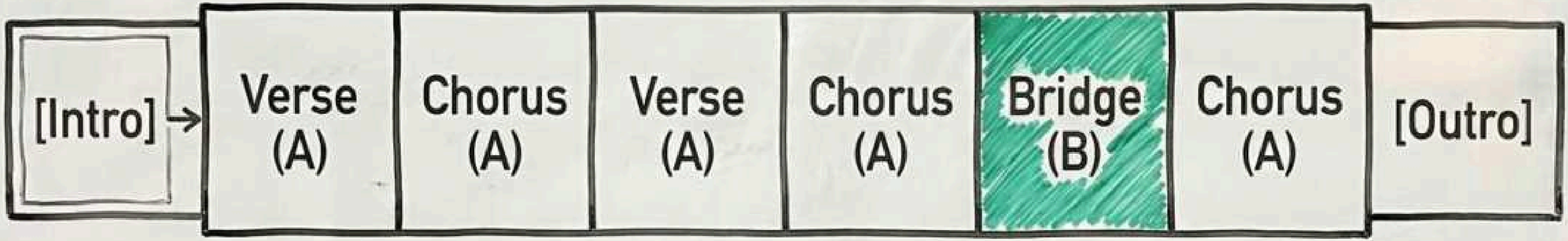
Fingerstyle: Playing strings individually rather than strumming them together.

Arpeggio (Broken Chord): Plucking one string at a time in sequence over a held chord shape.

Example Pattern: Thumb (C string) → Index → Middle → Index (creates a gentle, cascading texture).

The Architecture of Song Form

916.12



Verse: Carries the story. Same music, changing lyrics.

Chorus (Refrain): The anchor. Same music, same lyrics. Usually the most memorable section.

Bridge: The contrast. Introduces a different key area or new chords before resolving into the final chorus.

Intro / Outro: The frames that start and end the piece.

Standard 32-Bar Form: AABA (Three similar sections, one contrasting bridge).

Decoding Chord Charts

¶ 6.13

C G
Well, I'm standin' on a corner
Am F
in Winslow, Arizona

What a Chart Provides:
- Harmony (Chords)
- Form (Structure)
- Changes (Mapped directly above the exact lyric syllable)

What YOU Provide:
- Rhythm
- Melody
- Strumming feel (the time signature dictates the strum)

✅ Pre-Flight Checklist:

Before playing, scan the chart to identify:

- ☐ 1. The Key
- ☐ 2. Any unfamiliar chord shapes
- ☐ 3. Repeated sections

Working Out a Song by Ear

¶ 6.14

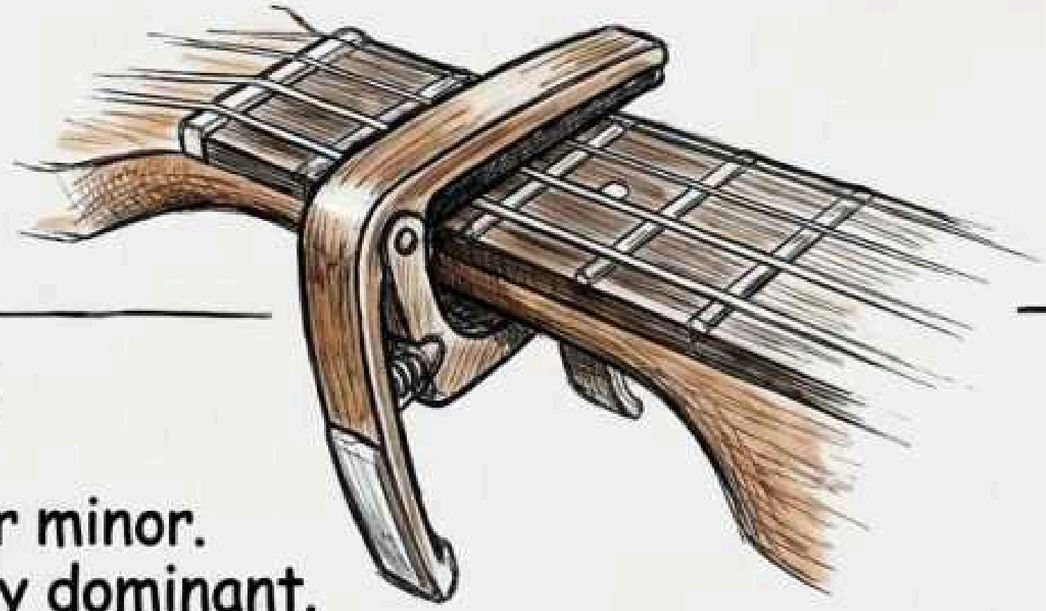
1. Find the Key (I)

Look to the final chord of the song, or the chord where the chorus feels most "at rest".

$$\text{Key (I)} = \text{IV} + \text{V} + \text{vi}$$

2. The Diatonic Formula

Most songs rely on a predictable mathematical family of chords. Test the IV, V, and vi chords of that key against the recording.



3. Troubleshooting

If a chord fails, try:

- Swapping major for minor.
- Testing a secondary dominant.
- Using a capo to align unfamiliar recorded keys with familiar finger shapes.

The Practice Plan Matrix

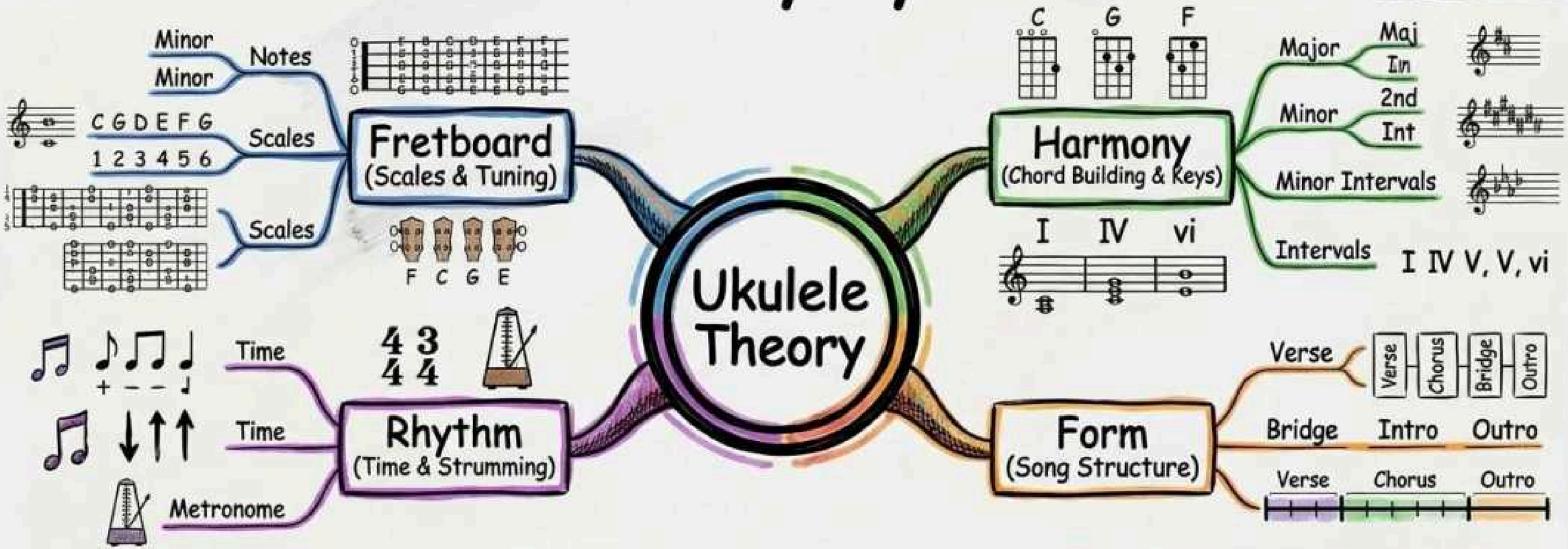
¶ 6.15

The Golden Rule: Short, daily practice mathematically beats long, occasional sessions.

Theory Daily Goals	Playing Daily Goals
☑ Learn notes on one string at a time. ☑ Play C, G, and F major scales daily.	☑ Drill chord changes in one key with a metronome (start slow). ☑ Learn one song per common progression. ☑ Transpose a known song to a new key. ☑ Work out one simple song entirely by ear.

Core Theory Synthesis

¶ 6.16



The Core Foundation

You now possess the complete blueprint of ukulele theory—from major scales and chord construction, to rhythm mechanics and structural form.

The Cheat Sheet

Keep the summary page in your case as your essential reference guide.

Final Principle

Let the theory follow and explain your playing—never let it replace the joy of playing itself.