



Thomas Viloteau – On Warming Up

“I’m not a firm believer in technical exercises. You should always be careful not to spend too much time doing something that won’t be useful.” – Thomas Viloteau

Outline

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Doing condensed exercises instead of etudes

It is important to have a set of exercises – for both right and left hands – that can be used for daily warm up purposes. Each of these exercises are designed to **target multiple aspects of the right and left hand at once**. Thus, they are highly effective and efficient time-wise as opposed to long traditional etudes.



The ultimate exercise

This exercise involves **any combination of 2 fingers from the right hand and 3 fingers from the left**. For example, you can combine i and a fingers with 1, 2, and 3 from the left hand, or m and a fingers with 1, 2, and 4 from left, and so on.

The execution of this exercise involves starting on the first string and playing all three fingers (of your choosing), then moving to the second string, third, fourth, etc. Once you reach the sixth string, you shift the whole thing up when fret and make your way back to first string. This exercise is done all the way up the fretboard and then back down.

Basically, you are moving chromatically up and down and sideways on the fret board using different combinations of fingers from the two groups mentioned earlier. At first you can play triplets (3 notes per metronome beep), then you can differ the rhythm by doing dotted rhythms. For example, long-short-long or short-long-short, etc.

Throughout the exercise make sure your fingers, hand, arms and body are **completely relaxed**. Use very little pressure and minimize the movements of the fingers as much as possible.

This exercise will serve as **self-check tool** as well. If you happen to have a wrong hand position or bad habits such as pressing too hard or squeezing specific fingers, this exercise will reveal those areas. After 10 to 20 minutes of playing it you will start having pain if you have a wrong hand position.

This exercise can be used in lieu of most other etudes and exercises. It covers many aspects of technique that if you have limited time to practice you can choose to focus solely on playing this exercise and maintaining descent technique.



Involving the thumb and speeding up

At this point, you can **add bass notes on the open 6th string**. Using the same combinations of your choosing, add an open bass E to each triplet you play. Go up and down the fretboard and use different colors on the thumb for every group of triplets. Try using nail only, flesh only, and nail and flesh.

Next, you can really challenge yourself by playing the **bass every four notes**. this will be a little complicated because you will shift every three notes.

You can **increase the tempo gradually** as you go to increase the agility and flexibility of your right and left-hand fingers.

Left hand stretch and flexibility exercise

This is a very good exercise to increase the **left hand's flexibility and stamina**. You begin by holding E on the first string with 4, Bb on the second string with 3, F on the third string with 2, and B on fourth string with 1. Your right-hand plays block chords.

Play each chord four times, then move you first finger down to Bb and play the chord 4 times again, then move the second finger to E and play four times, etc. Repeat the same process all the way down the neck until you reach the first 4 frets.

As you go, make sure you don't buzz, your left hand is placed nicely, and your fingers are curved. Keep your thumb relaxed and close to the bottom edge of the neck. This way your wrist will be in good position too. The exercise will cause fatigue of the muscles and **you will feel some burn**. However, make sure the pain you feel is not injury or tendinitis pain.



Finger independence and control

Independence exercises can be very helpful when applied to both hands. For example, playing **rasgueados with the left hand** is very effective to teach the fingers independence. Also, you can flip the guitar around and play like a lefty.

In addition, you can play **“barre scales.”** For example, hold a full bar on the second fret, and with the rest of the fingers, play a 2 octave G major scale.

How and when to stretch

In conclusion, after such long warm up session filled with playing many different exercises, it is very important to stretch the hand and the fingers. **Do stretches at the very end of the day** when you will not have to practice any more. Afterwards, your fingers should feel very loose and relaxed.

Additional Resources

Try implementing these ideas and exercises in your warm up routine tomorrow. If you're interested in learning more about **warming up**, you can check out the additional resources to this lesson below or ask Thomas question by emailing us at **team@tonebase.co!**

1. [Tariq Harb's lesson on **Warming Up**](#)
2. [Tengyue Zhang's lesson on **Warming Up**](#)

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