

# 4/4 Triplets – Jig Picking

## Picking Patterns in General

When it comes to flatpicking on mandolin or guitar, I prefer *alternate picking* in general, and I firmly believe that music in 4/4 and 2/4 time are best played using alternate picking, to get the right *GROOVE* into the picking hand. But, whenever I'm playing jigs in 6/8 time, or slow ballads in 12/8, or blues and swing triplets in 4/4 (especially where the triplets are a-plenty!), using the common DUDDUD type of pattern is best for my playing. At this stage in my own musical journey, alternate patterns (DUDU) and jig patterns (DUDDUD) are firmly ingrained in my playing, and I fall into whichever is needed pretty much on autopilot.

## Alternate Picking

I would describe "alternate picking" (as I use the term) by way of example: In standard, 4/4 time, I alternate downstrokes and upstrokes as follows: Downstrokes occur *on the beats*, while upstrokes occur *between the beats*. Since 4/4 time indicates four beats to the measure, there are generally four downstrokes to a measure. Where eighth notes occur between beats, they are played with upstrokes.

If D = downstroke, and U = upstroke, a measure of 4/4 with eight eighth notes would be picked DUDUDUDU ... each D occurring on the beat, and each U occurring between the beats.

This is merely a short, quick, general description of alternate picking given by example as looking at a piece of music in 4/4 time. To best understand the alternate picking concept though, the picker should feel the rhythm of the music and get the alternate picking groove into his or her picking hand. But since this lesson is aimed at picking triplets, and jig picking, enough said about alternate picking for now.

## Jig Picking

Jig picking, as I understand and teach it, has two strong beats ... each followed by two weaker beats ... in each measure. Again, this is a grand generalization, but must be understood when playing either jigs, or swing triplets!

Most jigs are written in 6/8 time, which means that there are six beats to each measure, and the eighth note gets one beat. I play jigs using the following picking pattern for each measure: **DUDDUD**

While this is not the only method of playing jigs, it is the best way in my opinion. There are plenty of opposing opinions. Some people play jigs with *alternate picking*, so that a measure would be played **DUDUDU**.

A simple internet search for the terms "jig picking" brings up a good number of lesson videos by Baron Collins-Hill (mandolelessons), David Benedict, Tony O'Rourke, as well as a number of popular threads from the Mandolin Café. I'll share some of those at the end of this lesson.

## Picking Swing Triplets and 12/8 Ballads

I often encounter a lot of swing triplets in my blues playing. Sometimes, in lessons I record and post video commentary on, I have great difficulty speaking about my pick direction unless I spend time beforehand analyzing it thoroughly. This is because I automatically fall into an alternate picking groove

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when I'm playing, and when runs of triplets are encountered, I automatically segue into jig picking. I glide effortlessly between the two styles without thinking about it.

My picking technique and right-hand groove didn't just come without some work and practice, and didn't just happen overnight, either. It required some time and attention over the years. But it also isn't all that difficult for most musicians after a little attention and study and a few years of experience.

Here, in general, are the pick patterns I use:

*4/4 with all eighth notes, one measure:*

D U D U D U D U

*4/4 with all triplets, one measure:*

D U D D U D D U D D U D

*6/8 with all eighth notes, one measure:*

D U D D U D

*12/8 with all eighth notes, one measure:*

D U D D U D D U D D U D

A good example of 6/8 jig would be *Irish Washerwoman*. A good example of 12/8 ballad would be Bob Dylan's *Just Like A Woman*.

Next, our exercises for this lesson are excerpts from Bo Carter's *Ways Like A Crawfish* and Charlie McCoy's *Gypsy Woman Blues*.

## Exercises: 4/4 with Swing Triplets

### Ways Like A Crawfish – Intro

Blues by Bo Carter

The following piece is the intro for Bo Carter's *Ways Like A Crawfish* in four measures, plus a pickup measure. It combines alternate picking with Jig picking. Arrows indicate pick direction. Gray arrows indicate jig picking (DUDDUD) while black arrows indicate alternate picking.

The image shows a musical score for the intro of 'Ways Like A Crawfish' by Bo Carter. It consists of a melody line in 4/4 time and a guitar tablature below it. The melody line starts with a pickup measure followed by four measures. The first measure has a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) with a black arrow pointing down and a black arrow pointing up. The second measure has a triplet of eighth notes (C5, B4, A4) with a black arrow pointing down and a black arrow pointing up. The third measure has a triplet of eighth notes (G4, F4, E4) with a black arrow pointing down and a black arrow pointing up. The fourth measure has a triplet of eighth notes (D4, C4, B3) with a black arrow pointing down and a black arrow pointing up. The fifth measure has a triplet of eighth notes (A3, G3, F3) with a black arrow pointing down and a black arrow pointing up. The sixth measure has a triplet of eighth notes (E3, D3, C3) with a black arrow pointing down and a black arrow pointing up. The seventh measure has a triplet of eighth notes (B2, A2, G2) with a black arrow pointing down and a black arrow pointing up. The eighth measure has a triplet of eighth notes (F2, E2, D2) with a black arrow pointing down and a black arrow pointing up. The ninth measure has a triplet of eighth notes (C2, B1, A1) with a black arrow pointing down and a black arrow pointing up. The tenth measure has a triplet of eighth notes (G1, F1, E1) with a black arrow pointing down and a black arrow pointing up. The guitar tablature below the melody line shows the fretting for each note, with triplets indicated by a '3' above the notes. The pick direction arrows are shown below the tablature: gray arrows for jig picking (DUDDUD) and black arrows for alternate picking.



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Irish Jig Picking Pattern – David Benedict <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKWuPtHGJRM>

Jig Picking Method – Tony O'Rourke <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McwtCBGF8-M>

## **Mandolin Café threads:**

Jig Picking - How important is DUDDUD? <https://www.mandolincafe.com/forum/threads/80806-Jig-Picking-How-important-is-DUDDUD>

Jig picking pattern DUD DUD vs. DUD UDU <https://www.mandolincafe.com/forum/threads/102485-Jig-picking-pattern-DUD-DUD-vs-DUD-UDU>

celtic jig picking patterns <https://www.mandolincafe.com/forum/threads/93918-celtic-jig-picking-patterns>

More from Mandolin Café

<https://www.google.com/search?q=jig+picking+site:www.mandolincafe.com&newwindow=1&client=firefox-b-1-d&sxsrf=ALiCzsa2QtpG9x9nlk6lIMsKAANo3tFwFQ:1662579789072&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwIP1vOtuIP6AhVJmmoFHeBeCb4QrQIoBHoECAoQBQ>