

Pick-and-Strum Guitar: MIDI Files

A Selection of MIDI Files to Help You Get Started

Pick-and-Strum Guitar comes with a selection of MIDI files to help you get started.

If you are very new to digital music, MIDI* stands for Musical Instrument Digital Interface. The relevant thing here is that digital instruments allow a separation of the *instrument* that produces the sound and the *performance* that makes it play that sound. Pick-and-Strum Guitar is an example of such a digital instrument. It is the ‘instrument’, the sound-producing module. A MIDI file is the ‘performer’, the thing that tells the instrument what to play.

*For more information on MIDI you might like to read <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIDI>.

Once you have installed Pick-and-Strum Guitar, you can import one of the provided MIDI files into your Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) and it will ‘play’ the instrument. That is, it will give instructions to the virtual instrument telling it what to play and when.

The All-Chord MIDI Files

A good place to start is the **Basic All-Chord** midi files. Because of the way Pick-and-Strum Guitar is set up, you can use one and the same All-Chord midi file to play *any* chord. All you need to do is duplicate one of these files as many times as you like and simply put in the Chord Select Key Switches where you want the chord changes. That’s it. You don’t have to change anything else. It will strum the designated chord, and it will pick the bass notes relevant to that chord.

These All-Chord midi files are ideal for setting up rhythm tracks. You can get up and running with a complete backing track in a matter of minutes. Then you can sing or play along to it straight away. Although this might be all you need sometimes, more often you will want to put in some bass runs and some hammer-ons and pull-offs.

Adapting the Basic Track

Once you have this basic track set up, you can then go through bar by bar and put in some bass runs to add variety. When you do this you use the chromatic notes section at the top of the keyboard, going up from C5. You delete the auto-bass notes at C4 and C#4 and replace them with ‘custom’ bass notes in the Notes section.

You can then add some hammer-ons and pull-offs similarly, removing the relevant auto-bass notes or strums to allow room for them. At the same time you can add some judicious variety to the strumming.

Bars and Chord Changes: Clashes and Extensions

The All-Chord midi files provided have one chord per bar, but of course you might want to play more than one chord in a bar. The important thing here is to adjust the midi notes so that you don’t get a *clash* of a note or chord strum overlapping with the next chord.

As well as being mindful of the possibility of such clashes, you also need to see where you can *extend* a note or strum beyond the end of a bar. When you are playing the same chord for two or more bars, it is usually best to extend the strum midi note through to join up with the next strum, usually in the next bar. This reflects what real guitar playing is like. You let the chord keep ringing until it needs to change, otherwise you get more of a ‘stop-start’ effect than would usually be desirable.