

TAKE CARE OF THE ENDING OF NOTES

Every note has a beginning and an ending.

You must pay as much attention to the ending of notes as to their beginning, in other words, you must stop each note deliberately after you've played it.

Over the years, I've developed my own very unsystematic approach to damping notes.

And that is to use every resource at our disposal. (Echoing that famous military strategy "you go to war with the army you have.")

The guitar is a relatively primitive instrument. Compared to the piano, which has an intricate mechanism to damp strings, the guitar has no such mechanism, so we do what we can with what we have.

That means using both hands to damp notes.

DAMPING WITH THE RIGHT HAND

1. The most efficient way to damp a note is to do it with the finger that's going to play the next note.

If you've just played with the *i* finger, stop the note with the *m* finger, by bringing it to the string and stopping it.

This accomplishes two things, preparation as well as termination.

Here's a great staccato exercise to practice terminating notes with the next finger.



Play the first E. Stop it *immediately* with the *m* finger, then play the next E with the *m* finger, stop it immediately with the *i* finger. Keep on alternating them.

Do it slowly at first. The point is to make the notes as short as possible.

It doesn't matter how long the rests are between them.

In fact, at the beginning, you should take all the time you want, and keep the gap between the notes as long as you need.

As you gain confidence, you can slowly reduce the gap.

You'll find that the shorter the gaps between the notes, the faster the notes become. Eventually all you'll hear is a stream of fast notes.

An exercise in stopping notes has become an exercise in speed!

This is not hard to understand. A precondition to speed is the ability to move quickly to the strings, and this exercise is all about moving as fast as you can to the string to dampen it.

So one exercise – three benefits; damping, preparation, and speed.

2. Stop with the right hand thumb.

It's important to keep unwanted notes from ringing on. They cause a muddy effect.

In variation 1 of the Mozart Variations, I use the thumb to stop any ringing notes especially in the the open Bs.



As soon as you play the open B, stop it immediately with the right hand thumb.

When playing arpeggios, make sure you stop the bass notes from ringing beyond their durations by damping them with the thumb.

This requires good independence in your thumb.

Here's an exercise to practice damping with the thumb while playing other notes.

You must be able to do it in at least three ways.