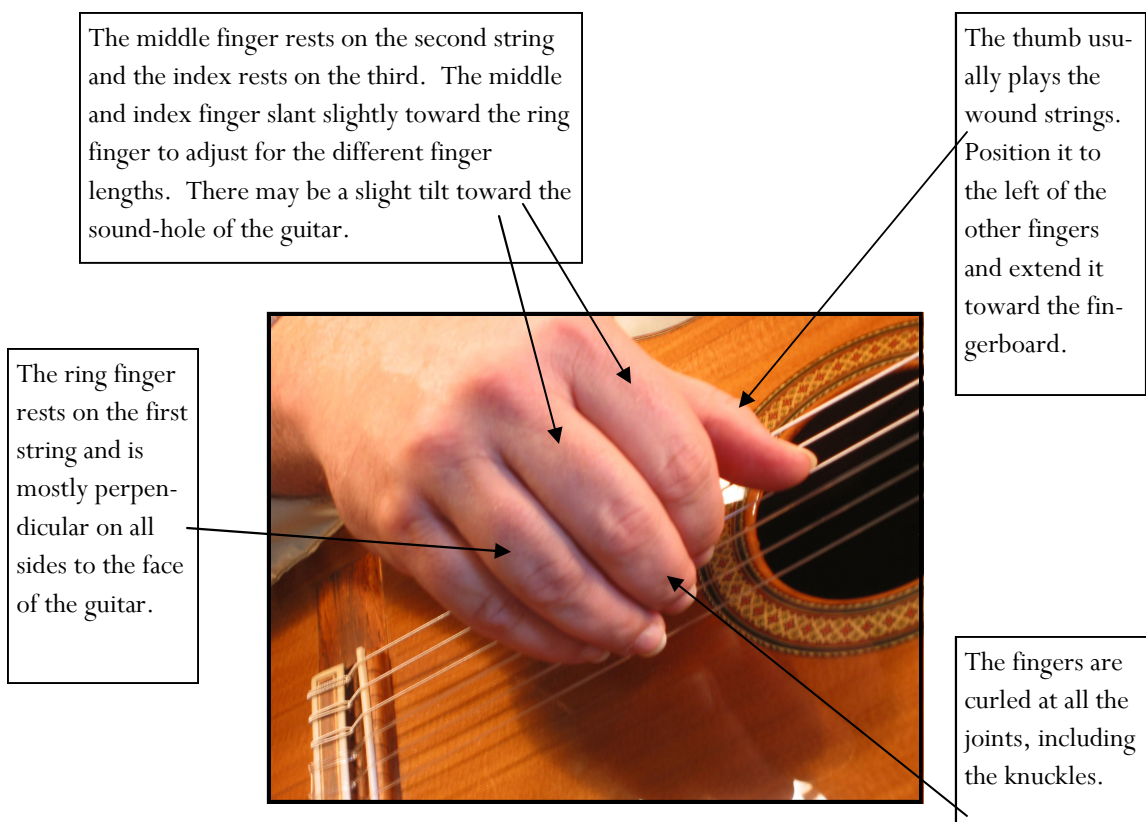


Right-hand Default Position

The guitarists' right hand is the hand of the artist. It is from this hand that sound is produced and music is made. Elegant, cultured right-hand technique is a pursuit that will continue for many months, even years. Be patient, play slowly, and enjoy the small improvements with the great leaps of success. We will begin the study of the right-hand by establishing a default position. The following guidelines should be carefully considered.

The picture below shows the default right-hand position.



The fingers of the right hand are often indicated on the musical score. They are lettered in Spanish.

- The thumb is indicated with a "p" (pulgar).
- The index finger is indicated with an "i" (indice).
- The middle finger is indicated with an "m" (medio).
- The ring finger is indicated with an "a" (anular).

Avoid resting a finger on the face of the guitar. Be prepared for a significant number of refinements from your teacher.

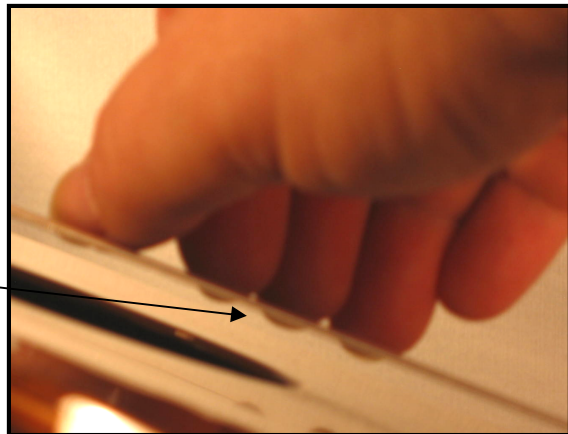
Fingernails

Some teachers prefer that beginners play with no fingernails. If the right-hand fingernails are used, they should extend past the flesh and are initially shaped the same for each finger. Traditionally, classical guitarists set the string in motion with the left edge of the nail coupled with the fleshy tip of the finger or thumb. The string contact travels along the finger nail for approximately $\frac{3}{16}$ ths of an inch. Because the angle from which the fingers approach the strings is not uniform, the contour of the nails may be slightly compensated to make the tone consistent. The thumb nail is normally trimmed slightly longer than those of the fingers. The nails of the left hand are trimmed short enough so that they do not touch the fingerboard while pressing a string.

When trimming the right-hand nails, use a fine file or emery board. A 400 -grit wet/dry sand paper also works. A coarse file or nail clipper will leave a rough edge with a resulting scratchy and annoying tone. It is a common for guitarists to "do their nails" before each practice session. Never bring "scratchy" nails to a lesson.



In this picture, you can see how much of the nail extends below the string when you are in the default position.



Left-hand Default Position

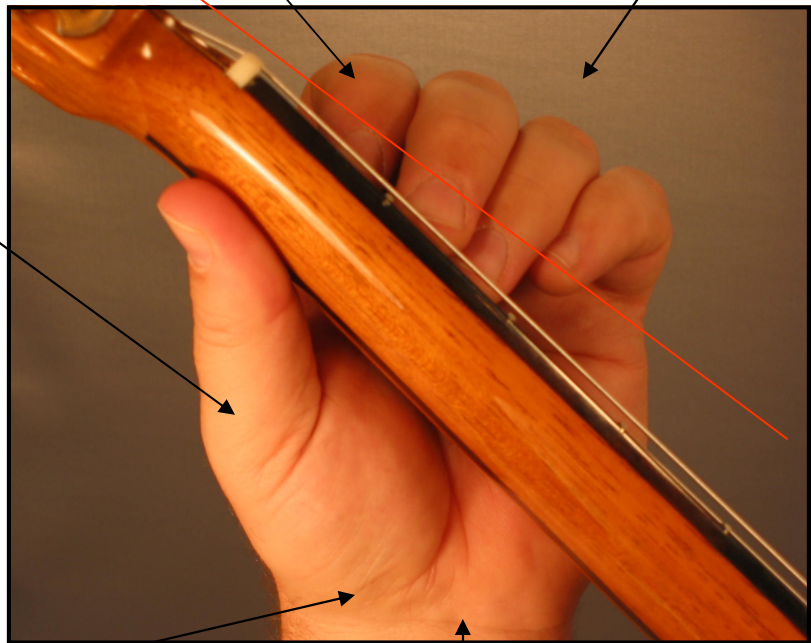
Several general guidelines exist for developing left-hand technique. Though many, many other guidelines and opinions exist, these can serve a starting point for discussion by the student and instructor.

For the early lessons, keep the palm of the left-hand parallel to the guitar neck. The knuckle of the fourth finger can be slightly elevated from the plane of the finger-board. This neutral "un-rotated" position is the default position for the left hand. While rotating away from the default position for some notes is common, return to the default parallel presentation once the need for an adjustment has passed.

Keep your fingers curled, especially the tip joints. Never allow a joint to hyper-extend (bend backwards).

Place your thumb in the center of the guitar neck behind the first finger. The thumb should not flex. Do not press too hard; it adds unnecessary stress and can cause the guitar to play out of tune. Use just enough thumb pressure to "counter-poise" the fingers.

Let the weight of the entire arm assist you in keeping the left hand secure after placing your fingers on the fingerboard. Play as close to the upper fret as comfortably possible.



Keep the left wrist in line with the forearm. Side-to-side "adduction" of the wrist should be omitted. Some wrist arch is needed to play the lower strings, but should be kept to a comfortable minimum.