

**BEGINNING BASS**  
**RIGHT HAND SPEED FINGERING TECHNIQUES**  
 By Steve DiGiorgio  
 For Speed/Death/Thrash Metal Bass

Right hand speed fingering isn't that difficult to achieve conceptually. The biggest thing is the amount of time it takes to master playing high speed rhythms. A long time ago I was intimidated by the ease in which guitarists double picked; and the probability of keeping up. When speed/death metal was in its early days every band had drummers that could fly on double bass drums and guitarists that could pick so fast their hands looked blurry. But unless the bassist was using a pick the not-so-fleeting fingers trudged along half speed. So I was forced to come up with a way to equal the pace. Not willing to abandon the finger style in favor of a pick, I worked on developing my speed.

The exercises I have here are meant to aid in building dexterity for right handed finger style. Naturally start slow with a metronome, drum machine, or sequencer set at a comfortable pace and gradually increase the tempo. Concentrate on these four rules:

1. Placing the notes precisely in between the beats as well as right on the beat (i.e., pulse, click, etc.).
2. Pay attention to which finger is contacting the string.
3. Keep the attacks even for each strike (because of different lengths between the fingers don't hesitate to pivot your wrist to accommodate the shorter or weaker attacking fingers).
4. Remember to use good muting techniques with your left hand so the notes don't blur together.

Since I don't have much use of the littlest finger on my right hand (and coincidentally most other bassists I talked with don't either) these examples are based on my three finger style. The first finger being the index, second the middle finger, third the ring finger of the right hand.

Ex 1 starts it by alternating two fingers: 1-2 1-2 2-1 2-1 etc. Mainly this is to work on getting the notes to sound even no matter which finger is used. Something this simple can be increasingly difficult at faster tempos.

RH 1 2 1 2 2 1 2 1

Ex 2 is an example of the "gallop" using three fingers. Traditionally this is fingered 3-2-1 3-2-1.

RH 3 2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1

Ex 3 will get you away from the galloping or raking habits. Play the sixteenths as evenly as possible, avoiding galloping. You can start by going 3-2-1-2 3-2-1-2 etc. After you get used to the repetition, you'll feel the even flowing and then it won't matter what finger you start on. This is necessary when jumping strings. Just remember start slow - where you can do it precisely and accurately. Then gradually speed up - advancing to each level only after you've done it according to four rules I've listed. When you're not practicing on your instrument, tap the patterns on a table or something. It's not a mystery to play fast, only developing muscle memory. **\*\* The main thing is repetition and patience.**

RH 3 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 3 2 1 2

Ex 4 is a combination of 1 and 3. Remember to keep the notes evenly spaced apart and mute the string with your left hand, so it gets that "chunky" guitar like picking quality.

RH 1 2 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 2 1 2

A good example of how I apply these techniques are in this chart I made from the song Aggression that's on the latest Sadus album Elements Of Anger (Mascot/Flex). It's the bass line for the verses beginning at 1:12 into the song. It's not the fastest bass line on the album but it's a good example of the right hand techniques discussed here. Have fun with it, I hope it helps you achieve a faster right hand. My thanks go to Ron Jarzombek for the software and the help sorting it out. Until next time: Crank it up and Dig in!

Tuning: Eb Ab Db Gb

♩=170

Right Hand 1 2 3 2 1 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 1 2 3 2 1 2

T A B 0 0 8 7 5 0 0 0 6 5 3 0 0 0 4 3 1 0 0 4 3 1

RH 1 2 3 2 1 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 1 2 2

T A B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 3 3 1 1

RH 1 2 3 2 1 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 1 2 3 2 1 2

T A B 0 0 8 7 5 0 0 0 6 5 3 0 0 0 4 3 1 0 0 4 3 1

RH 1 2 3 2 1 2 1 3 2 1 2 1 3 2 1 2 1 1 1

T A B 3 3 6 5 3 4 3 6 5 3 4 3 6 5 3 4 3 3 3

RH 2 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 1 2 1

T A B 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 3 1 3 4 1 1 1 1 1 1 3 1 3