

FIRST POWER CHORDS AND ROCK RIFFS IN E

From hand shape to a full riff, in 10 sheets

A 10-sheet path to go from your first power chord to a riff that stands on its own, entirely in the key of E.

10 sheets · level 1 to 3 · at your own pace

Layout optimised for 7-inch e-readers (Kobo, Kindle, Boox...), also easy to read on phones and tablets.

WHY THIS PACK

A power chord contains only the root and its fifth (sometimes the octave), with no third: it is neither major nor minor, and its hand shape is the same everywhere on the neck. That is what makes it the best way into rock riffs: you learn a single shape, then move it. This guide stays in the key of E from start to finish, so your fretting hand builds one single map of the neck (E5, G5 and A5, then B5, D5 and C5 as the riffs go on). The order is deliberate: first the fretting hand (sheets 1 and 2), then the picking hand and muting (3 and 4), then riff rhythms (5 to 7), and finally moves along the neck and the melodic phrase (8 to 10). The classic trap is chasing speed before the hand shape is automatic: here, you give it time.

THE 10-SHEET PATH

01 Metal in E — power chords, getting started

LEVEL 1 · METAL

Learn the single hand shape used throughout the whole path.

02 Metal in E — chord change

LEVEL 1 · METAL

Move the shape along the neck without distorting it, without worrying about rhythm.

03 Metal in E — strumming pattern

LEVEL 1 · METAL

Add the picking hand: tight strokes, palm resting on the strings.

04 Metal in E — muted strums

LEVEL 1 · METAL

Refine the muting: the dry sound comes from the palm alone.

05 Metal gallop riff — E minor

LEVEL 2 · METAL

Isolate the gallop on a single string before applying it to chords.

06 gallop pedal power riff — E

LEVEL 2 · METAL

The gallop applied to E5, with a neighbouring chord (A5) to break the repetition.

07 syncopation power riff — E

LEVEL 3 · METAL

Shift the attacks: rhythm becomes the subject.

08 stepped climb power riff — E

LEVEL 3 · ROCK

The I–IV–V movement (E5, A5, B5): the logic behind blues and rock progressions.

09 Power riff — descending in E

LEVEL 3 · METAL

Find your way along the neck by ear and by feel, descending E5, D5, C5, B5.

10 Call and response riff — E minor

LEVEL 2 · METAL

Step away from the power chord: the same energy, applied to a melodic pattern from the E minor pentatonic.

SUGGESTED PRACTICE PLAN

Week 1 — The hand shape (sheets 1 and 2)

One single shape, moved around: E5, G5, A5. No rhythm, no speed: the goal is for your hand to find the shape without thinking about it.

Week 2 — The picking hand (sheets 3 and 4)

Tight eighth notes and the palm resting on the low strings. End every session with a slow, perfectly even eight-bar loop.

Week 3 — Gallop and syncopation (sheets 5, 6 and 7)

Rhythm becomes the subject. Start well below the tempo shown on each sheet and raise it in small steps, only once three passes in a row are clean.

Week 4 — Riffs on the move (sheets 8, 9 and 10)

Climb, descent, then question and answer: the power chord travels along the neck and the same energy applies to a melodic phrase.

01 · METAL IN E — POWER CHORDS, GETTING STARTED

Level 1

Metal

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/metal-e-power-beginner>

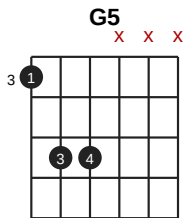
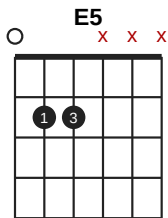
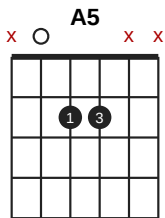
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Learn the single hand shape used throughout the whole path.

GUIDE TIP

Listen to E5: it sounds "open", neither major nor minor. That is normal — it is the power chord's signature, and why it fits everywhere.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	III	I	IV	IV	I	I
E5	E5	G5	E5	A5	A5	E5	E5

First contact with the catalogue's power chords: E5, G5, A5, played in tight eighth notes for a sound closer to metal/rock than a classic pop strum. A power chord only has two or three notes (the root, its fifth, sometimes its octave) and never a third — it's that missing third that makes it easier to move between than a full chord, but also faster to shift: once the hand shape is memorised on E5, that same shape moves almost as-is onto G5 and A5. Learning this one shape instead of three different ones is the whole point of this sheet.

TIPS

Memorise the hand shape on E5 (root + 2 strings) before thinking about the other chords: it's that same shape, shifted, that gives you G5 and A5.

Keep the fingers that aren't playing resting lightly on the neighbouring strings, without pressing: that stops them ringing by accident and ruining the tight effect you're after.

Don't chase speed yet: a poorly muted power chord sounds just as wrong as a badly placed chord, even played slowly.

02 · METAL IN E — CHORD CHANGE

Level 1

Metal

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/e-metal-chord-change>

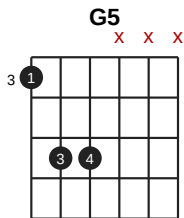
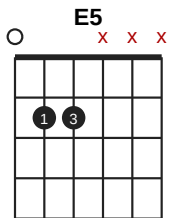
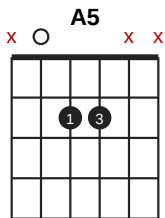
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Move the shape along the neck without distorting it, without worrying about rhythm.

GUIDE TIP

Aim for three clean passes in a row over eight bars rather than one fast pass: consistency beats speed at this stage.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	III	I	IV	IV	I	I
E5	E5	G5	E5	A5	A5	E5	E5

Same grid as the arpeggio version (E5-G5-A5), but here the goal is reversed: the picking hand stays simple (strummed chord, no note-by-note picking), while all the difficulty shifts to the fretting hand, which has to relocate the power-chord shape from string to string while keeping the same gap between the two fingers. That's why this sheet is rated easier (level 1) than its arpeggio cousin (level 2): sliding a fixed shape takes less coordination than picking two separate notes in rhythm.

TIPS

Keep the exact same finger spacing across all three chords: it's a power chord, the shape never changes, only its position on the neck moves.

Anticipate the move to A5 one beat ahead: it's the biggest jump of the three chords, the one that breaks the rhythm if the hand leaves too late.

Once this change feels smooth, move on to the arpeggio version of the same grid to put the picking hand to work on the same chords.

03 · METAL IN E — STRUMMING PATTERN

Level 1

Metal

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/e-metal-rhythm>

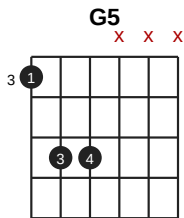
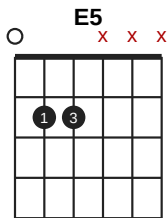
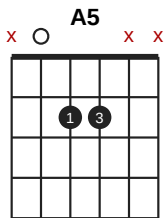
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Add the picking hand: tight strokes, palm resting on the strings.

GUIDE TIP

Record yourself with your phone: the evenness of the eighth notes is easier to hear on playback than while playing.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	III	I	IV	IV	I	I
E5	E5	G5	E5	A5	A5	E5	E5

A strumming pattern applied to the E5-G5-A5 sequence, with one key difference from the pop or blues rhythm exercises already covered: the goal here isn't a fully ringing sound but tight pick strokes, slightly muted by the heel of the palm, for the dry, percussive attack characteristic of rock/metal. Another technical difference: E5 is played on the open low E string (root) followed by two fretted notes at fret 2, while G5 and A5 require repositioning the whole hand further up the neck, with no open string to rely on.

TIPS

Keep the heel of the palm resting lightly on the bass strings at all times, to get that dry attack — a sound that rings too clearly signals a palm lifting off between strokes.

Drill the E5→G5 shift on its own first, slowly on a loop: it's the only move that leaves the open string, so the one that needs the most feel-based positioning.

Keep the wrist loose on the tight eighth notes: a stiff wrist tires quickly and throws off timing long before the fingers do.

04 · METAL IN E — MUTED STRUMS

Level 1

Metal

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/e-metal-muted-strums>

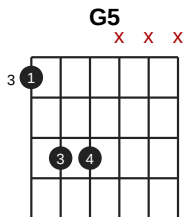
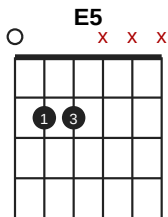
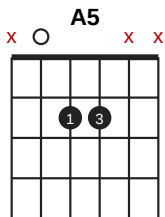
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Refine the muting: the dry sound comes from the palm alone.

GUIDE TIP

Strum open strings while sliding your palm a few millimetres toward the neck, then toward the bridge: find the zone where the sound turns dry without going dead.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	III	I	IV	IV	I	I
E5	E5	G5	E5	A5	A5	E5	E5

Unlike the catalogue's Drop D barre chords, where the barre finger can ease its pressure slightly to help with the muting, E5, G5 and A5 are played with two independent fingers, with no barre at all: there's nothing to ease on the left-hand side. Muting therefore depends entirely on the palm, just like on a fully open chord, but for a different reason — here the left hand simply has no role to play in the muting, it only handles the fretting.

TIPS

Don't try to help the muting with the left hand here: unlike a barre, there's nothing to ease off.

Focus all your work on the palm: its position needs to stay stable while the fingers change position from one chord to the next.

Compare with a Drop D barre chord from the catalogue: the left-hand feel is completely different, even though the sound you're aiming for is the same.

05 · METAL GALLOP RIFF — E MINOR

Level 2**Metal**Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/riff-e-metal-gallop>

ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Isolate the gallop on a single string before applying it to chords.

GUIDE TIP

Alternate one minute of even eighth notes and one minute of gallop with the metronome: if the click no longer lands on the first note of the group, slow down.

A gallop-style riff on the low E string alone: you alternate the root with a neighbouring note over a rhythm of one eighth note followed by two sixteenths, repeated across eight bars. It's the minimal metal riff par excellence - two notes, one string, everything is in the picking hand. The gallop is a rhythmic pattern, not a speed: it's built slowly, last, once the pick's alternate motion is perfectly even.

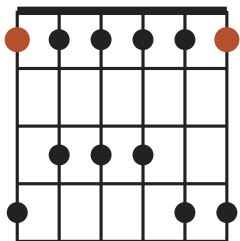
TIPS

Fretting hand relaxed: all the effort comes from the right wrist in a steady alternate motion.

Palm mute resting continuously on the bass string - that's what gives the gallop its 'chugging' sound.

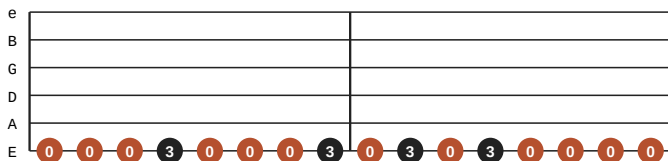
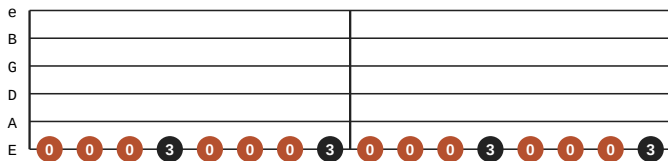
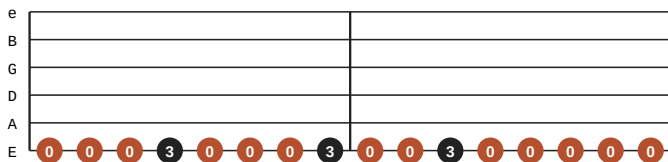
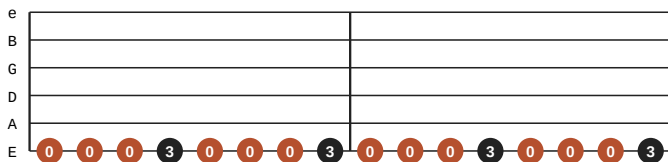
Start very slowly in even eighth notes; only add the gallop pattern once the eighths are clean.

FRETBOARD POSITION



Pentatonique Mi mineur — pos. 1

TABLATURE



06 · GALLOP PEDAL POWER RIFF — E

Level 2

Metal

~140 BPM

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/power-riff-e-gallop-pedal>

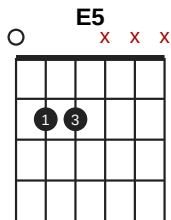
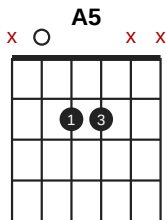
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

The gallop applied to E5, with a neighbouring chord (A5) to break the repetition.

GUIDE TIP

Listen for the arrival of A5: anticipating the chord change stops you from tripping over the gallop.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	I	IV	I	I	I	IV
E5	E5	E5	A5	E5	E5	E5	A5

A power chord has only two or three strings and no third: it says neither major nor minor, all its expression comes from rhythm. This riff is the most direct metal template: a pedal on E (E5) that keeps coming back, with a single neighbouring chord (A5) breaking the repetition every two bars, over a gallop pattern - one eighth note followed by two sixteenths. At 140 BPM it's a picking-hand exercise: alternate-picking accuracy and tight, constant palm muting.

TIPS

Work the E5 pedal alone in gallop, without the neighbouring chord, until the rhythm is mechanical.

Tight palm mute on the pedal, released on the accented chord: that muted/open contrast is what gives the riff its relief.

The gallop tightens on its own as the tempo climbs - count '1-e-and-a' out loud to keep the sixteenths evenly spaced.

07 · SYNCOPATION POWER RIFF — E

Level 3

Metal

~130 BPM

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/power-riff-e-syncopation>

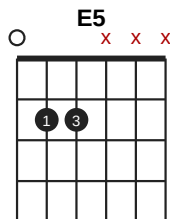
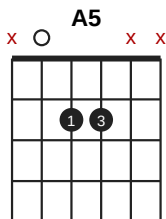
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Shift the attacks: rhythm becomes the subject.

GUIDE TIP

First play the syncopation on E5 alone, without changing chords, before bringing in A5: one variable at a time.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	IV	I	I	IV	I	IV	IV
E5	A5	E5	E5	A5	E5	A5	A5

A syncopated power-chord riff on E5-A5: the hits deliberately land off the beat, breaking the steady binary feel expected of a metal riff. Unlike the gallop (power-riff-mi-pedale-galop), which keeps a regular strong beat with a fast subdivision between hits, here it's the very placement of the hits that shifts — as much a rhythmic-perception exercise as a picking-hand one, since the ear first has to accept that the accent doesn't land where it expects.

TIPS

Isolate the rhythm alone, no guitar, tapping your foot on the beat and clapping the syncopated hits.

Keep the wrist loose and the arm moving constantly: the displacement comes from the choice to strum or not, never from a pause in the arm.

Compare with power-riff-mi-pedale-galop once it's solid: two different ways to break the monotony of a repeated power chord.

08 · STEPPED CLIMB POWER RIFF

— E

Level 3

Rock

~115 BPM

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/power-riff-e-stepped-climb>

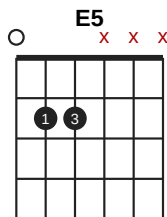
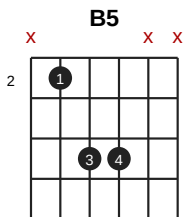
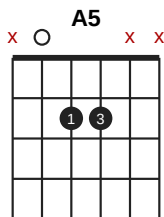
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

The I–IV–V movement (E5, A5, B5): the logic behind blues and rock progressions.

GUIDE TIP

The hand shape is the one from sheets 1 and 2: only the starting fret changes. If in doubt, go back to sheet 2.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	IV	IV	V	V	I	I
E5	E5	A5	A5	B5	B5	E5	E5

A power-chord riff that climbs in steps from E — E5, then A5, then B5 — before settling back on the root, instead of the plain pedal that keeps returning to the same chord. It's an I-IV-V harmonic movement, the same one found in a blues or a classical cadence, but played in power chords and tight eighth notes: the usual functional progression, run through the rhythmic filter of a rock riff.

TIPS

Isolate the chord change alone, in a slow loop, before putting it back into the full rhythm of the riff: that exact moment is usually where the tempo gets lost.

Hear the climb as rising tension (E to A to B) and the final root as its resolution — it helps place the energy of the picking hand.

Compare with power-riff-mi-descente: same principle of moving the power chord along the neck, opposite direction.

09 · POWER RIFF — DESCENDING IN E

Level 3

Metal

~135 BPM

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/power-riff-e-descending>

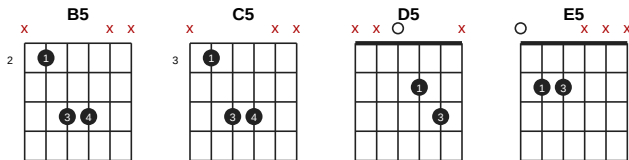
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Find your way along the neck by ear and by feel, descending E5, D5, C5, B5.

GUIDE TIP

End every session with a pass while looking away from the neck: it is the real test of memorisation.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	VII	VI	V	I	VII	VI	V
E5	D5	C5	B5	E5	D5	C5	B5

Instead of the eternal back-and-forth between two power chords, this riff drops through four: E5, D5, C5, B5, one per bar, moving steadily away from the root before looping. So the fretting hand has to relocate the whole power chord every bar, keeping the same shape (root plus fifth) and the same palm mute. It's a fretboard-mapping exercise as much as a rhythm one: by the end, the E-D-C-B descent should happen without looking, by ear and by feel.

TIPS

Memorise the order of the four chords first by playing them as whole notes, one per bar, no rhythm: the mental map before speed.

Keep the edge of the palm resting on the strings near the bridge through the whole move: the palm mute must not jump between chords.

The descent moves by a tone or a semitone: feel the interval under your fingers rather than counting frets.

10 · CALL AND RESPONSE RIFF — E MINOR

Level 2**Metal**Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/riff-e-call-and-response>

ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Step away from the power chord: the same energy, applied to a melodic pattern from the E minor pentatonic.

GUIDE TIP

Take one of the riffs from this path, treat it as a "question" and invent its answer the way this sheet does.

This riff is built as call and response: a first phrase states an idea - it climbs through position 1 of the E minor pentatonic then falls back to the root - and a shorter second phrase answers it with a slight variation. It's the basic building block of almost every blues, rock or metal solo: you learn to hear a phrase as a question that calls for a continuation, not as a plain string of notes. The fingering never leaves this spot on the neck; the whole difficulty is making the two phrases talk to each other.

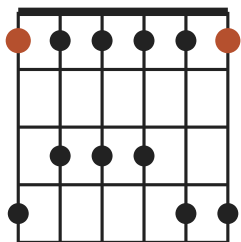
TIPS

Sing the call before you play it, then sing an answer: if you can't sing it, your hand won't play it in tune either.

The answer shouldn't be a transposed copy: change a note, a rhythm, the length - enough that it reads as a dialogue.

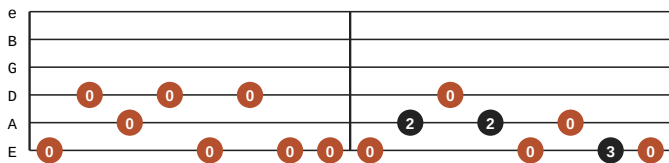
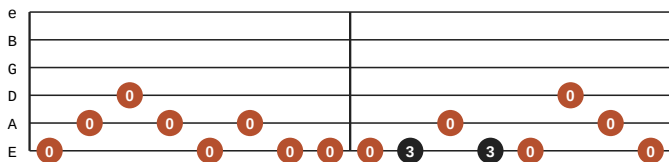
Leave a silence between the two phrases; the gap is part of the phrasing.

FRETBOARD POSITION



Pentatonique Mi mineur — pos. 1

TABLATURE



HOW TO USE IT

1. Print the sheets in order, or keep them as a PDF on a tablet near your guitar.
2. One sheet per session is enough: better to replay it for several days than run through all ten at once.
3. Note the date and the tempo reached on the back of each sheet: playing is refined by ear, but progress is measured with a metronome.
4. Once you've gone through all the sheets, the same path exists in other keys on the site to transpose what you've learned.

WHAT IS GUITARSHelf

Guitarshelf is a guitar exercise sheet site, free and with no account to create:

- A catalogue of sheets sorted by style, level (1 to 6) and exercise type (grid, riff, scale, technique...).
- A generator that creates a brand-new exercise sheet on demand, based on chosen criteria.
- A glossary and gear guides to understand the vocabulary and upkeep of the instrument.
- A personal songbook: build your own selection of sheets and export it as a PDF, like this one.

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