

ACCESSIBLE METAL RIFFS IN A: FROM THE PALM TO THE FULL RIFF

Muting, picking hand and riffs, in 10 sheets

A metal sound is built as much from silences as from notes: ten sheets to learn muting, steady the picking hand, then play real riffs, entirely in A.

10 sheets · level 1 to 4 · 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

This guide does not pick up where the first power chords guide in E leaves off: it concentrates on what makes a metal riff sound clean, namely muting and a steady picking hand. Every sheet stays in the key of A (A5, C5, D5, then E5), so the fretting hand has only one map of the neck to memorise and attention goes to the gesture. The order is deliberate: first set the three shapes and learn to silence the strings (sheets 1 and 2), then a steady pattern and the palm on the bridge (3 and 4), then the picking-hand gestures on their own, alternate picking, accent contrast and syncopated rhythm (5 to 7), and finally three real riffs (8 to 10). The classic trap is to chase speed or gain before the muting is clean: without it, the heavier the sound, the more the stray noise stands out.

THE 10-SHEET PATH

01 Metal in A — chord change

LEVEL 1 · METAL

Set the three shapes used throughout the path (A5, C5, D5) and the changes between them, without worrying about rhythm.

02 Left-hand muting

LEVEL 2 · METAL

Learn to silence the strings: the basis of a clean metal sound, before playing a single note.

03 Metal in A — strumming pattern

LEVEL 1 · METAL

A steady strumming pattern over A5-C5-D5, to settle the picking hand before adding muting.

04 Metal in A — muted strums

LEVEL 1 · METAL

Add the palm to the same pattern: the sound becomes short and percussive.

05 Alternate picking with palm mute

LEVEL 3 · METAL

Isolate the picking hand: alternate-picked eighth notes on the muted low string, with no chords or changes.

06 Continuous rhythmic muting (chugging)

LEVEL 3 · METAL

Bring out a few open notes within a muted flow: the contrast creates the accent.

07 Metal in A — syncopated rhythm

LEVEL 3 · METAL

Return to A5-C5-D5 with accents on the off-beats, applying everything so far.

08 Rhythm groove riff — A minor

LEVEL 2 · METAL

First real riff: one note at a time in the A minor pentatonic, centred on the root.

09 stepped climb power riff — A

LEVEL 3 · METAL

A power chord riff that climbs in steps: A5, D5, E5, then back to A5.

10 call and response power riff — A

LEVEL 4 · METAL

End of the path: two phrases that answer each other, going through E5-D5 before returning to A5.

SUGGESTED PRACTICE PLAN

Week 1 — The shapes and the silence (sheets 1 and 2)

Place A5, C5 and D5 without rhythm, then practise cutting the sound with the fretting hand. End each session with a minute of clean silence between two chords.

Week 2 — A steady pattern, then the palm (sheets 3 and 4)

A single strumming pattern over the progression, first open, then muted. The goal is a stable tempo, not a fast one.

Week 3 — The isolated gestures (sheets 5, 6 and 7)

Alternate picking on a muted string, accent contrast, then syncopated rhythm. Start well below the tempo on the sheet and only speed up after three clean passes in a row.

Week 4 — Three riffs (sheets 8, 9 and 10)

A pentatonic riff, a riff that climbs in steps, a question-and-answer riff: apply everything above while keeping the muting clean.

01 · METAL IN A — CHORD CHANGE

Level 1

Metal

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

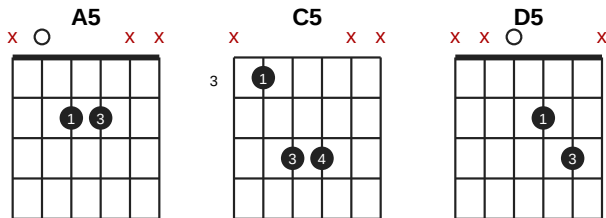
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Set the three shapes used throughout the path (A5, C5, D5) and the changes between them, without worrying about rhythm.

GUIDE TIP

Look at where each finger goes before changing chord: the power chord shape stays the same, only its position moves. The useful gesture is to move the hand as one block, not to replace the fingers one by one.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	III	IV	I	I	IV	III
A5	A5	C5	D5	A5	A5	D5	C5

Unlike open-chord grids, where 'chord change' means swapping one chord shape for a completely different one, A5, C5 and D5 are exactly the same two-finger shape: here, changing chord just means sliding that shape from one fret to another on the neck, never re-learning a new finger placement.

TIPS

First map out the fret distances between A5, C5 and D5 without playing, visualising the slide rather than hunting for each position at random.

Keep the same finger pressure and angle throughout the move: it's a slide, not a new placement.

Once the slides are reliable, add the rhythm gradually rather than aiming for the final tempo right away.

02 · LEFT-HAND MUTING

Level 2

Metal

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/left-hand-muting>

ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Learn to silence the strings: the basis of a clean metal sound, before playing a single note.

GUIDE TIP

After each power chord on the following sheets, briefly lift the fingers to cut the sound: a metal riff is defined as much by its silences as by its notes.

A pure technical exercise, no chord or scale involved: rest the left-hand fingers on the strings without pressing down to the fretboard, then strum: the sound should be completely muted, with no note ringing out.

TIPS

Unlike palm muting (right hand near the bridge), here only the light contact of the left-hand fingers cuts the sound: keep your picking hand normal to isolate the technique properly.

03 · METAL IN A — STRUMMING PATTERN

Level 1

Metal

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

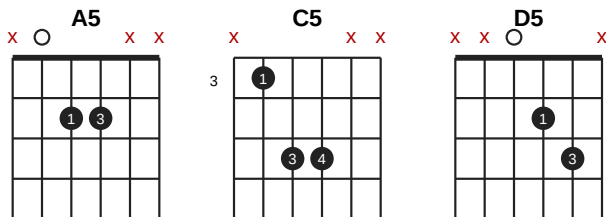
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

A steady strumming pattern over A5-C5-D5, to settle the picking hand before adding muting.

GUIDE TIP

Record yourself for thirty seconds with a metronome: listening back reveals the unevenness that playing live hides.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	III	IV	I	I	IV	III
A5	A5	C5	D5	A5	A5	D5	C5

This grid is the entry version of the catalogue's only three-chord power-chord family built as a mirror (the last two chords swapped between halves), unlike the E, D and G families, which return regularly to their tonic. Even with no syncopation or muting, this asymmetry is worth spotting from level 1 onward.

TIPS

Break the grid into two halves of four chords from this entry level onward: it's easier to memorise than counting eight chords one by one.

Play each chord for several beats before moving to the next, and only speed up once the sequence is clean.

Once this structure is in mind, the catalogue's syncopated or muted versions will only add a technical difficulty, not a new structure to learn.

04 · METAL IN A — MUTED STRUMS

Level 1

Metal

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

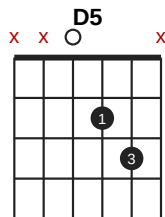
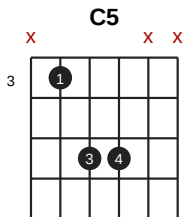
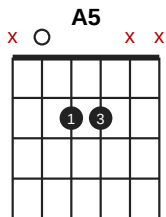
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Add the palm to the same pattern: the sound becomes short and percussive.

GUIDE TIP

Shift the palm by tiny amounts near the bridge as you play: the zone where notes stay audible yet tight is narrow, and you have to find it by ear.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	III	IV	I	I	IV	III
A5	A5	C5	D5	A5	A5	D5	C5

Unlike the catalogue's version in B, which has only two chords to mute, this one in A has three (A5, C5, D5): the palm motion stays identical, but it has to repeat for one more chord each loop, with an extra slide to negotiate.

TIPS

If the catalogue's B version is already solid, this grid only adds one new slide to fold in, not a new technique.

Mute each chord separately before chaining all three: the palm motion is the same on all of them, only the left-hand position changes.

Keep a moderate tempo until the three positions flow together without hesitation.

05 · ALTERNATE PICKING WITH PALM MUTE

Level 3

Metal

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/alternate-picking-palm-mute>

ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Isolate the picking hand: alternate-picked eighth notes on the muted low string, with no chords or changes.

GUIDE TIP

Keep the forearm and wrist relaxed: tension is the first cause of lost consistency after a few minutes.

A pure technical exercise, no chord or scale involved: on a palm-muted low E string, play eighth notes with strict alternate picking (down-up-down-up), never two downstrokes in a row.

TIPS

Keep the palm mute constant even as speed increases: leave your picking hand resting in the same spot near the bridge rather than readjusting it on every pass.

06 · CONTINUOUS RHYTHMIC MUTING (CHUGGING)

Level 3

Metal

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/rhythmic-chugging>

ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Bring out a few open notes within a muted flow: the contrast creates the accent.

GUIDE TIP

Before speeding up, count the bars out loud: the accent must land in exactly the same place every cycle.

A pure technical exercise, no chord or scale involved: on the low E string with heavy palm muting, play steady eighth notes, inserting one or two open (unmuted) notes every two bars to create rhythmic contrast.

TIPS

Keep the palm mute constant even around the unmuted notes that follow: only lift the palm at the exact moment of the accented note, then rest it back down immediately.

07 · METAL IN A — SYNCOPATED RHYTHM

Level 3

Metal

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

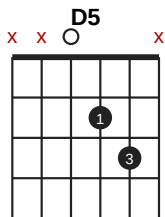
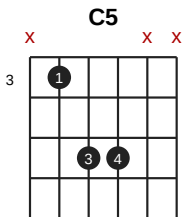
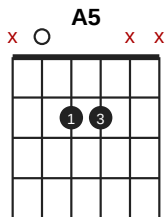
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Return to A5-C5-D5 with accents on the off-beats, applying everything so far.

GUIDE TIP

Tap the rhythm with your foot or hand on a table first, then add the guitar: you do not learn an off-beat while hunting for the chords at the same time.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	III	IV	I	I	IV	III
A5	A5	C5	D5	A5	A5	D5	C5

This grid's degree pattern isn't a simple repeat: i-i-III-iv then i-i-iv-III, with the last two chords swapped between halves. It's a common compositional device in rock and metal (a phrase that closes in a mirror rather than an identical loop), which makes the syncopation harder to memorise: the ear has to spot exactly where the path reverses.

TIPS

Break the grid into two halves of four chords and compare them: only the last two chords swap places.

Memorise the reversal point (after the fourth chord) as a landmark, rather than mechanically counting eight chords.

Once the structure is understood, the syncopation itself is worked the same way as on any power-chord grid: isolated slides first, then add the rhythm.

08 · RHYTHM GROOVE RIFF — A MINOR

Level 2

Metal

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/riff-a-rhythm-groove>

ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

First real riff: one note at a time in the A minor pentatonic, centred on the root.

GUIDE TIP

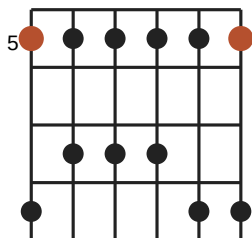
On a repetitive riff the challenge is consistency: play it eight times in a row without changing the attack, aiming for the same intensity on the first and the eighth.

A repetitive, rhythm-driven riff centred on the A root, designed to train picking-hand steadiness rather than position shifts.

TIPS

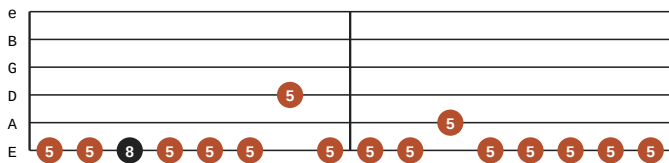
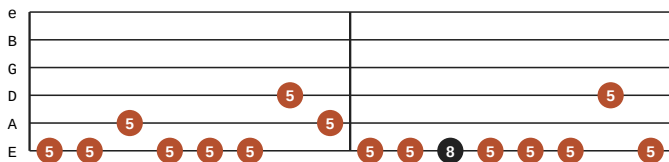
Play very slowly, without a metronome at first, until you can move through all 12 box positions without hesitation before adding tempo.

FRETBOARD POSITION



Pentatonique La mineur — pos. 1

TABLATURE



09 · STEPPED CLIMB POWER RIFF — A

Level 3

Metal

~125 BPM

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

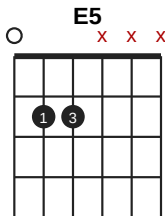
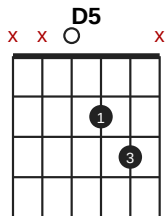
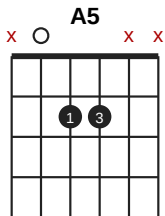
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

A power chord riff that climbs in steps: A5, D5, E5, then back to A5.

GUIDE TIP

Prepare the fingering of the next chord already in the previous bar: it is not finger speed that loses the tempo, it is hesitation before the change.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	IV	IV	V	V	I	I
A5	A5	D5	D5	E5	E5	A5	A5

A power chord riff that climbs in stages from A (D5-E5) before settling back on the root: a wider harmonic movement than a simple pedal, typical of a bridge or chorus riff.

TIPS

Loop just the chord change on its own, slowly, before dropping it back into the full riff rhythm: that exact moment is usually where the tempo slips.

10 · CALL AND RESPONSE POWER RIFF — A

Level 4

Metal

~120 BPM

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/power-riff-a-call-and-response>

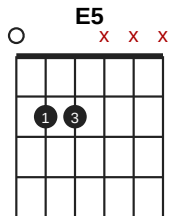
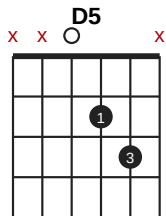
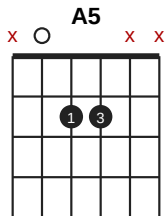
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

End of the path: two phrases that answer each other, going through E5-D5 before returning to A5.

GUIDE TIP

Hum the question and then the answer before playing them: if you can hear them in your head, the hands follow, and playing them without a pause comes naturally.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	V	IV	I	I	IV	I
A5	A5	E5	D5	A5	A5	D5	A5

A call-and-response power chord riff on A: a first phrase that reaches for a more distant chord (E5-D5), followed by a shorter second phrase that closes back on the root.

TIPS

Once both phrases feel secure on their own, play them back to back with no pause or slowdown: it's that unbroken question-and-response flow that makes the riff work.

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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