

Brush Skips

As the name implies, a brush skip is a technique in which the right hand purposely misses the strings instead of brushing. The right hand technique remains the same you just "brush air"! This takes practice to master but is necessary for executing syncopated sections in clawhammer pieces. There are two methods for notating skips. You will encounter both in my arrangements; ties when the note is sustained through the skip and rests when the note isn't sustained through the skip (such as when the thumb follows consecutive skips on the same string).

Instead of inventing a new symbol for 'brush skips', I've decided to follow the lead of recent clawhammer methods and use a tie symbol to indicate where to "skip" the brush stroke. A tie can easily be confused with a "slur" (hammer-on or pull-off); watch for the same note being "tied" together. Once you learn to recognize ties you will intuitively know when to "skip" and when not to. I've placed an "X" symbol under the tied note or rest where the "skip" takes place.

Some methods use eighth rests to notate brush skips. While this isn't usually accurate, it is easier to read! In the exercises below, I've written out the phrase without the skips followed by the same phrase using brush skips. The skips are written out first with rests and then with ties; both "sound" exactly the same they're just written differently! You need to be familiar with both methods.

Exercise #1

[With Rests]



[With Ties]

Apply this technique to the 'basic strum'.

Exercise #2

[With Rests]



[With Ties]

Now try the brush skip in place of a 'single note brush' in this double thumbing pattern.

Exercise #3

[With Rests]



[With Ties]

