

Skips

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

Instead of inventing a new symbol for a "skip", I've decided to follow the lead of recent clawhammer methods and use a tie symbol to indicate where to "skip". A tie can easily be confused with a "slur" (hammer-on or pull-off) but can be identified by consecutive notes of the same pitch "tied" together. Eventually 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 are played exactly the same way, 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]

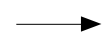


[With Ties]

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

Exercise #3

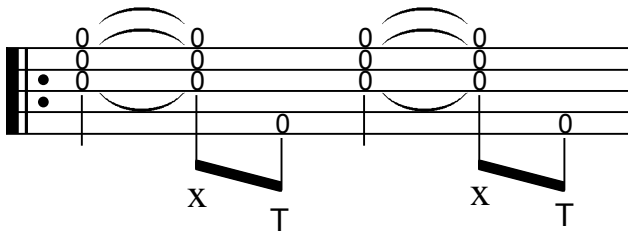
[With Rests]



[With Ties]

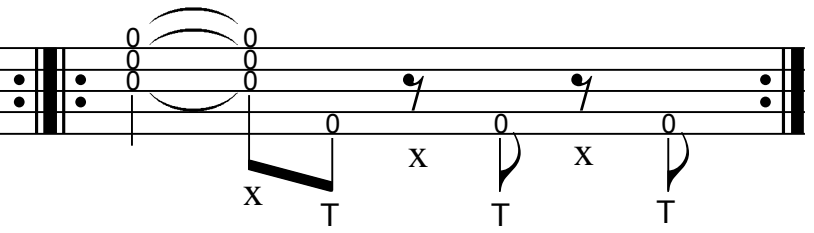
Try the following examples utilizing the "skip" technique. These are all strum patterns that I use frequently. I'm particularly fond of using this idea to "soften" the sound of the banjo when playing chords behind a vocalist.

Example #1



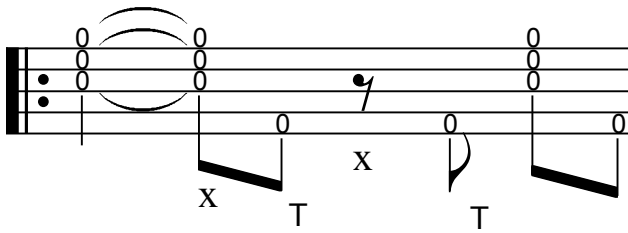
Musical notation for Example #1: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It shows two measures. The first measure contains a half note chord with a flat sign below it, followed by a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it. The second measure contains a half note chord with a flat sign below it, followed by a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it. The notes are G2, Bb2, D3, F3, G3, Bb3, D4, F4, G4.

Example #2



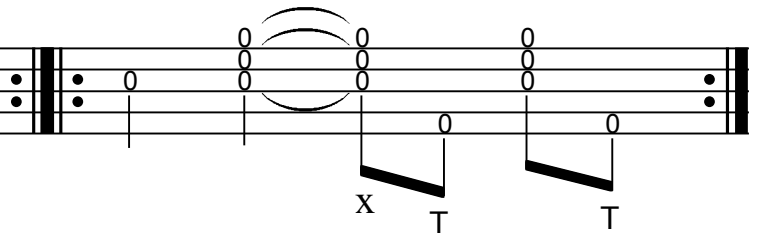
Musical notation for Example #2: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It shows two measures. The first measure contains a half note chord with a flat sign below it, followed by a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it. The second measure contains a half note chord with a flat sign below it, followed by a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it, and then two eighth notes with flat signs below them. The notes are G2, Bb2, D3, F3, G3, Bb3, D4, F4, G4.

Example #3



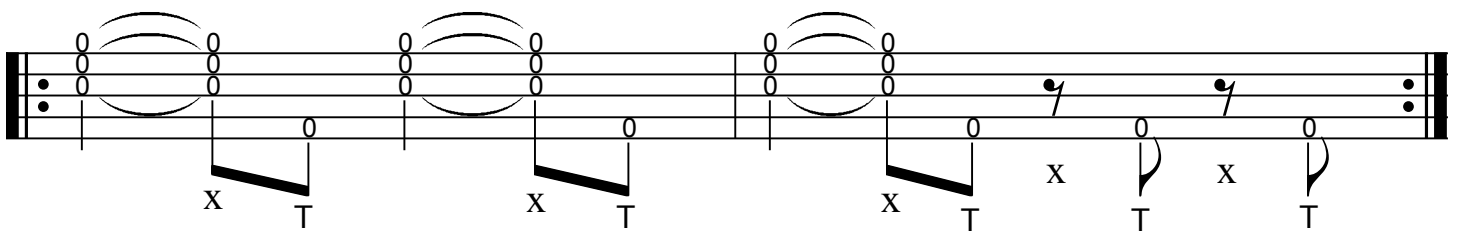
Musical notation for Example #3: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It shows two measures. The first measure contains a half note chord with a flat sign below it, followed by a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it, and then a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it. The second measure contains a half note chord with a flat sign below it, followed by a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it, and then a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it. The notes are G2, Bb2, D3, F3, G3, Bb3, D4, F4, G4.

Example #4



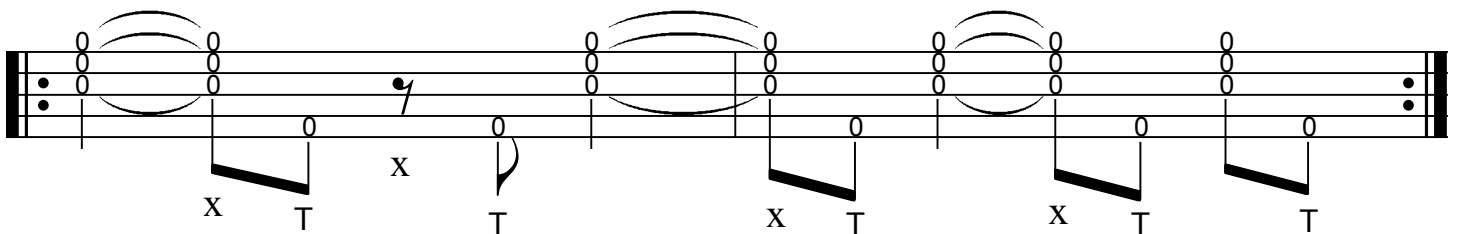
Musical notation for Example #4: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It shows two measures. The first measure contains a half note chord with a flat sign below it, followed by a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it, and then a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it. The second measure contains a half note chord with a flat sign below it, followed by a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it, and then a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it. The notes are G2, Bb2, D3, F3, G3, Bb3, D4, F4, G4.

Example #5



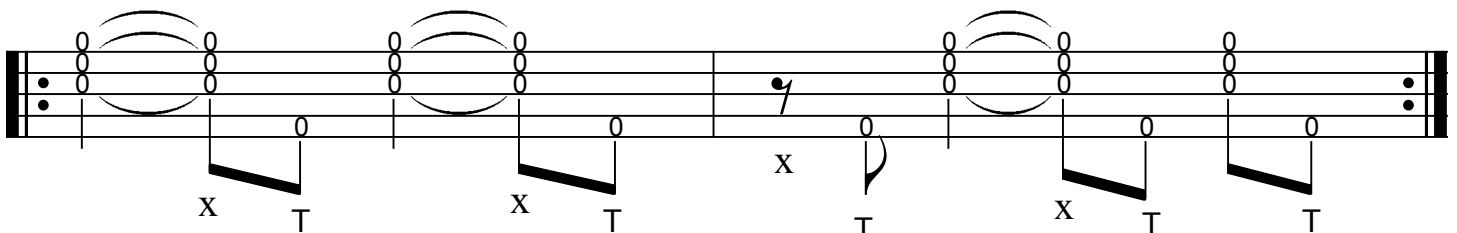
Musical notation for Example #5: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It shows two measures. The first measure contains a half note chord with a flat sign below it, followed by a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it, and then a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it. The second measure contains a half note chord with a flat sign below it, followed by a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it, and then a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it. The notes are G2, Bb2, D3, F3, G3, Bb3, D4, F4, G4.

Example #6



Musical notation for Example #6: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It shows two measures. The first measure contains a half note chord with a flat sign below it, followed by a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it, and then a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it. The second measure contains a half note chord with a flat sign below it, followed by a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it, and then a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it. The notes are G2, Bb2, D3, F3, G3, Bb3, D4, F4, G4.

Example #7



Musical notation for Example #7: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It shows two measures. The first measure contains a half note chord with a flat sign below it, followed by a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it, and then a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it. The second measure contains a half note chord with a flat sign below it, followed by a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it, and then a quarter note chord with a flat sign below it. The notes are G2, Bb2, D3, F3, G3, Bb3, D4, F4, G4.