

The 20-Minute T.E.S.T. Method Routine

A Supplementary Guide To Fingerstyle 101!



By Dan Thorpe

This guide has been created to give you a simple, consistent practice plan designed to help you enjoy real progress on the guitar—without overwhelm or confusion.

Follow this routine for just **20 minutes a day**, and build the habits, confidence, and skill to fingerpick with joy and ease.

The T.E.S.T. Method stands for:

- **Technique**
- **Enjoyment**
- **Specific Plans**
- **Time Management**

We will cover all of the above in this guide.

By the way, I should say, this guide works best when used alongside *Fingerstyle 101*. If you have this guide, you should have *Fingerstyle 101*, but if you were forwarded this guide, go to **Fingerstyle101.com/eBook** to purchase.

Want more support, help and a supportive community to ask any questions and chat about all things guitar?

Join the: [**Fingerstyle 101 Facebook group**](#)

Your Daily 20-Minute Practice Breakdown

5 min - Technique

- Warm up slowly and gently. Focus on posture, relaxed movement, and proper fretting.
- Choose any exercise you know OR refer to pages 8-21 in *Fingerstyle 101* for technique tips and try any ONE exercise from those pages.

5 min – Enjoyment

Now that you've physically warmed up, it's time to get in the zone, both mentally, physically, and emotionally.

- Play a pattern from *Fingerstyle 101* (there are ten to choose from and all are found in Part 2).
- I recommend the “Going Up” (p42) or the “Outwards” pattern (p47).
- Choose one that sounds good to you. Practice it on open strings or any chords such as *G-Em-C-D*. Have fun and get “lost” in the music!

5 min - Specific Plans

Now that you're in the zone, focus on ONE key aspect of your playing to improve.

- Identify a challenge (e.g. chord changes, chord clarity, rhythm, coordination, etc.).
- Use any relevant exercise or an exercise from pages 22-38 to target specific skills.

5 min – Time Management

The final 5 minutes are a chance to check in with your time and reflect on your progress.

- Play something you love— e.g. a song or a fingerpicking pattern you enjoy.
- Be aware of the time spent on the previous sections and ensure you end on a positive note.

Example Weekly Tracker

Monday:

- **T (Technique):** The “Fingerpicking Tone Test” (page 14)
- **E (Enjoyment):** Pattern - "Going Up"
- **S (Specific Plans):** Work on one specific chord change.
- **T (Time Management):** Use a timer or watch to stay on track with each 5-minute section. If you find yourself getting lost in one section, use the timer as a gentle reminder to move on to the next. Finish with 5 minutes of playing something you love.

Tuesday:

- **T (Technique):** The “Minimum Pressure Required” exercise
- **E (Enjoyment):** Pattern - "Outwards"
- **S (Specific Plans):** Rhythm: Do the ‘Rhythm 101’ exercise
- **T (Time Management):** If time is running short, focus on the most critical area. If you have time, extend each section by an extra minute to reinforce your focus.

Wednesday:

- **T (Technique):** Pattern - "Ballad"
- **E (Enjoyment):** Play the pattern on any chords you like.
- **S (Specific Plans):** Work on a scale for finger fluidity (p17).
- **T (Time Management):** Choose one key thing you want to improve and play it five times in a row without making significant errors. Keep track of time to ensure each section stays balanced.

Thursday:

- **T (Technique):** Pattern - "Ultra-Flexible"
- **E (Enjoyment):** Relax and breathe as you play it.
- **S (Specific Plans):** Target accurate thumb placement and finger independence.
- **T (Time Management):** Leave a 2–3-minute buffer at the end of each practice session to reflect, wrap up, or transition smoothly into a fun part of your session.

Friday:

- **T (Technique):** Pattern - "Outside-In" (this is a Travis picking pattern)
- **E (Enjoyment):** Play it on your favourite chord.
- **S (Specific Plans):** Focus on thumb accuracy
- **T (Time Management):** Play every pattern you've worked on this week so far, for 1-2 bars each on one chord (e.g. Em). Focus on keeping the flow going without rushing.

Saturday: Recap Day

- Focus on fun, consolidation, and exploration. Play without worrying about perfect technique—enjoy the progress you've made so far.
- Experiment with new patterns or improvise.
- Focus on making the session enjoyable and relaxed. Don't aim for perfection—let creativity flow.

Sunday: Fun Day

- Keep it light and fun.
- Reflect on your practice week, but don't force any structured practice—just play for enjoyment. If you feel like it, review what worked well during the week and see if there's a specific area you want to revisit.
- Focus on playing what you enjoy most and let the music guide you.

Tips for Success

- **Repetition is powerful:** Stick with one pattern for a few days if need to build consistency. You can then change the pattern week to week.
- **Short on time?** Even 10 focused minutes is better than none—prioritize key skills.
- **Don't aim for perfection**—aim for progress and enjoyment. Mistakes are part of learning!
- **The book.** Use your *Fingerstyle 101* book to go deeper into each section.
- **Track your playing** and celebrate small wins! Even small improvements add up.