

Notice how there is a constant eighth-note pulse on the 5th string throughout this example, and that an interval of one kind or another is only sounded at certain accents, when both notes are sounded. At that moment, the muting from the right hand is lifted so the chord can be heard. This brief moment is one reason the relatively dissonant interval of a major second (E and F#) works. If you were to sound the major second and let it ring longer, it sounds much more dissonant.

Example 3 and its accompanying mp3 use both lower and upper neighbors to create a more active line. Of special note is the last measure, where an F# was used because it is in the key. With the C below it, it creates an augmented fourth, which usually sounds like it should resolve upward by step to the fifth, which is the case here. The F# is also a passing tone, not a neighbor tone, and such a motion is discussed below.

Ex. 3

The image shows two systems of musical notation for guitar. The first system is labeled 'Ex. 3' and 'E m3'. It consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is an eighth-note pulse on the 5th string. The guitar tablature below shows the fretting for the 5th string: 5 7 7 5 7 7 7 4 7. The second system consists of three measures: 'D maj3', 'C maj3', and 'C5'. The tablature for these measures is: 4 5 5 5 4 5 5 3 5; 4 5 5 5 4 5 5 4; 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3; 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 4. Red circles in the standard notation highlight the intervals between notes in each measure.

Ornamenting Fifths

Just like thirds, fifths have both a lower and upper neighbor. The lower neighbor is usually a perfect fourth, while the upper one can be either a minor or major sixth, depending on where you are in the key. See Example 4.

Ex. 4

The image shows two measures of musical notation for guitar. The first measure has a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is a quarter note on the 5th string. The guitar tablature below shows the fretting: 9 7 9. The second measure has a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is a quarter note on the 5th string. The guitar tablature below shows the fretting: 9 10 9. Red circles in the standard notation highlight the intervals between notes in each measure.

In most of Example 5, the perfect fourth is used, but listen again for the augmented fourth (the F#) above the C, as expected by the key of E minor. It is possible to use the perfect fourth above C and introduce an F natural.

Ex. 5

E5

D5 C5

Connecting Thirds and Fifths

To connect a third with a fifth above the same root, such as E, another kind of non-chord tone is used: the passing tone; in this case, a fourth. A passing tone is approached and left in the same direction. For example, with E on the bottom continuously, G can pass through A on its way to B, moving from the interval of a minor third, through a fourth, to a fifth. The opposite direction works equally well. See Example 6.

Ex. 6

passing tones

T

A

B

Of course, it's not necessary to connect the third and fifth at all. You can simply alternate.

This final mp3 illustrates a riff connecting thirds and fifths as in Example 7.

Ex. 7

E5 E m3 E5 E m3

D maj3 D5 C maj3 C5 D5

Coda

Adding ornamentation is a good way to introduce melody to your rhythm guitar parts, but we've only scratched the surface of what can be done. In a future article, we'll explore counterpoint and see how to write two different lines for one guitarist to play alone.

Biography

Randy Ellefson is an instrumental guitarist with a Bachelors of Music in classical guitar, Magna Cum Laude. He holds endorsements from Alvarez Guitars and Peavey. His debut album was released in June 2004 and is featured on [Live365 Guitar!](#) The album's title, *The Firebard*, is a nod to his experience with [tendonitis](#), which took away his playing for five years before he fully recovered it and rose from his ashes. For more details, [mp3s](#), [tabs](#), [articles](#), videos and other cool stuff, visit the official site, www.randyellefson.com, or email Rand at mail@randyellefson.com.