



Three-Chord Rock-and-Roll

You will hear the expression “three-chord rock-and-roll” often. It refers to songs based entirely on the **I**, **IV**, and **V** chords—and there are hundreds of them. Following are some examples of rock-and-roll classics based on the **I**, **IV**, and **V** chords. The main difference between the guitar parts for these songs is the strumming rhythm.

The following examples may seem challenging at first. You won’t learn to play them smoothly at tempo in just a few hours. But stick with it—in a few weeks you can master these patterns and you’ll be well on your way to playing some great songs.

The following example uses the rhythm from the Troggs song “Wild Thing.” Use all down-strokes for the strum (it is common for rock guitarists to use all down-strokes for rhythms like this). Listen to the recording and play along. The counting is shown below. Notice the **eighth-note rest** on beat 3 and the **repeat sign** at the end.

The “Wild Thing” Pattern CD 1:41

An eighth rest equals an eighth note.

Repeat sign: Return to the beginning and play again.

The next example uses the rhythm from “Hang On Sloopy.” You can see how similar this one is to “Wild Thing.” This one is played at a medium tempo. All down-strokes are suggested for a good solid feel; as an option, try alternate strumming as well.

The “Sloopy” Pattern CD 1:42