

22) Use palm muting.

I always thought palm muting is a bit of a misnomer. Since the word “mute” in guitar playing is used to describe the sound of a dry, percussive attack, I always felt that palm muting should probably be called palm dampening. When you use this technique, you’re dampening the string vibrations a bit, by resting the side of your picking hand slightly on the edge of the bridge, slightly touching the strings where they meet the bridge. This dampens the string vibrations, producing dampened notes.

23) Have open string fun.

One thing that sets top world-class guitarists apart from lesser guitarists is the number of tricks and techniques they draw from and remember using in the heat of the moment. It’s interesting to note how, very often, guitar students forget to take advantage of the cool things one can do with the open strings, when I put them on the spot saying: “You, solo! Key of E!”

You can create fun open string pedal point melodies like Alex Lifeson, for example, does in the “YYZ” solo at 2:29 and at the end of the solo at 2:48.

Other examples that come to mind are AC/DC’s “Thunderstruck” or Joe Satriani’s ending solo in “Crystal Planet.”

24) Play melodies linearly on one string, hitting a neighboring open string.

You can also play cool open string double stops as Eddie Van Halen does in “Ain’t Talking ‘Bout Love” at 1:22. In that solo, Eddie plays melodies on the B string, doubling every melody note on the B string with an open E string.

25) Use chromatic passing notes.

Chromatic = moving by half step.

Passing note = a note that you pass by when moving from a chord tone (or scale note) to another successive chord tone (or scale note).

For example:

- In the key of C, for the melody **C C# D**. The C and D are scale notes, and C# is a chromatic passing note.
- Here’s a passing note example that is not a chromatic passing note but a scalar one. Over a C chord, the melody **E F G**. The E and G are chord tones, while the F note is a passing note (passing by from E to G).