

Thumbpick vs. Flat Pick ... the 'debate' goes on ... I have stated my opinion on this numerous times here at jamplay.com ... please keep in mind that this is my own personal preference and opinion, every player must find what works best for them in relationship to their creative goals with/on the guitar ... personal preference and creative choice ... I don't use a flat pick ... ever ... I use a Herco Blue Flex nylon thumbpick ... it's lightweight, and can be adjusted if it's too big or too small for your thumb, just squeeze the 'loop' together if it's too loose, and slightly bend it open if it's too tight. You can find the pick here; www.elderly.com/accessories/items/PK3.htm and at other online locations (google: Herco blue nylon thumbpick). Do not accept substitutes!!! Please do not buy a plastic thumbpick ... they're too big and 'clunky' and uncomfortable for most folks. I use a thumbpick so that my fingers are free to pick in a fingerpicking style (or use multi-finger arpeggios) whenever I feel like it in a song, and if I want to play single notes I can simply grasp the thumbpick like a flat pick by just bending my index finger and securing the pick's stability on my thumb, flatpick style. It takes about four hours of practice playing with a thumbpick before you get used to it being there and feeling natural ... whether you sit and practice it for 4 hours straight, or in smaller increments of time/practice ... it takes a few hours to get used to the pick being on your thumb and for you to learn to not think about it being there ... and feeling odd/uncomfortable, before it eventually feels like a natural extension of your thumb. Once you get past the 'conscious/'unnatural feeling' phase of having a thumbpick on your thumb, it's a great tool. Of course, electric guitar players and bluegrass players love their flat picks because they allow for more speed (primarily by using a rapid up/down picking technique) ... but for me, speed is not my goal, I like the variety in my music that a thumbpick allows, to play single notes or fingerpick at will while playing ... but to each his own. It's possible to use a flat pick (held in the standard fashion between your thumb and index fingers) and use your 2nd/3rd/4th fingers to fingerpick ... but it's not that easy to accomplish for most folks ... so, my recommendation is for folks who want to fingerpick the blues (or any type of music) and play single notes (lead), as well, is to use a nylon thumbpick. That's my personal opinion and preference ... whatever works for you is best. I hope you continue to enjoy the process of learning/making/creating music with a thumbpick, a flat pick, or just your bare fingers. Keep pickin' and grinnin' ;-)

Ron, thanks for your comment/question. I've answered this thumb pick question numerous times here at jamplay.com ... I guess you haven't run into those answers yet. National thumbpicks ... suck ... big time ... so do all plastic thumbpicks. In 1970 the great Doc Watson gave me a Herco Blue

Nylon thumbpick ... I have been using them ever since. Nylon is much loghter than plastic, eaisier to get used to and play with ... and if it's too tight on your thumb you can open it up a bit ... and if it's too loose on your thumb you can squeeze it tighter together. Accept no substitutes ... find it here <http://elderly.com/accessories/items/PK3.htm>or here ... <http://www.activemusician.com/item--MC.HE115> or google "Herco blue nylon thumbpick" ... accept NO substitutes ... everyone here at jamplay.com who has asked about and then purchased this item ... has sent me messages/ posts of gratitude and amazement.

I buy the picks in the bulk amount (50) because whenever I give a guitar workshop at a blues festival most folks complain about their funky/heavy/ clunky plastic thumbpick(s) ... and ask me about my choice ... so I tell them what I told y'all here ... and then give each person who wants one a Herco blue nylon thumbpick as a gift. When DOc Watson turned me on to this pick many years ago he said, as a joke ... "You have to loose them, 'cause they don't break." Well, that's pretty true, the nylon thumbpick might show some wear along the string contact edge after 6 months, depending on how much you play your guitar, and if you want you can take a file and smooth out the wear area and continue to use the pick ... or buy a new one ... I used to file them smooth and extend their life ... but no more, I just toss 'em when they get too worn. Thanks again for the kind comments and question.

On average, in my opinion, it takes between 4 and 6 hours of playing with any 'new to you' pick to get used to it and have it feel like an extension of your thumb ... my suggestion is to be patient ... how long did it take you to get used to using a flatpick really effectively??? Were you in total control of the flatpick the minute you began using it ... doubtful ;-) ... and remember that a pick ... any pick ... flatpick or thumbpick ... must be manipulated to stroke the strings at the proper slight angle when playing/strumming down and up ... of course, many flatpickers keep the pick at a constant 90 degree angle to the strings ... but with a thumbpick ... because of its relative thickness compared to a thinner flatpick ... needs to have the angle to the strings adjusted 'dynamically' as you play down and up ... or it can get hung up on the strings/dig in too deep ... so try adjusting the angle slightly as you play ... you'll see what I mean if you give it a try. I hope you have good success. Thanks so much for traveling with me on the 'blues highway' here at JamPlay.com

Thanks for the question. I use a Herco Blue Nylon Thumbpick all of the time ... acoustic and electric. That's MY choice ... that's what I like ... each player must make such 'gear related' decisions on their own, according to their needs, likes, and the sound they want to achieve on the instrument.

Your question regarding the thumbpick is the most frequently asked question I get ... please be aware that there is a forum area here a JamPlay for each of the instructors to discuss general concepts, rather than information on specific lessons.

Discussions and my answers/explanations on the choice of picks one uses can be found here:

<http://www.jamplay.com/forums/hawkeye-herman/4476.htm> <http://www.jamplay.com/forums/hawkeye-herman/9284.htm> <http://www.jamplay.com/forums/hawkeye-herman/3924.htm> <http://www.jamplay.com/forums/hawkeye-herman/9580.htm>

I will not play with any other thumbpick ... I accept no substitutes for what works for me ... that's my choice ... and if you're interested in trying out this thumbpick, here is a good place to order the Herco Flex Blue Nylon Thumbpick, if you can't find it in your local music store:

<http://elderly.com/accessories/items/PK3.htm>

I hope this information is helpful to you. Thanks again for taking the time to ask. Cheers and Best, Hawkeye



Hi Sarah,

Thanks for the question.

The choice of using a thumbpick or flatpick, or no picks is up to the individual player and the sound they wish to create. Many acoustic blues players use a thumbpick to free up their fingers from holding a flatpick and allowing them to use their fingers to pick the strings. Some acoustic players use a flat pick. Most electric guitar blues players use a flat pick, but some use a thumbpick. There are no rules.

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<http://www.jamplaytalk.com/showthread.php?9580-Blue-Herco/page2&highlight=herco+blue>

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Please do check out the forum links I've supplied, as there you'll find my opinions restated, as well as the responses and opinions of others.

I hope this information is helpful to you. Thanks again for taking the time to ask.

Cheers and Best, Hawkeye

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My wife & I saw Doc & Merle in concert two times in 1971 at the Family Dog venue in San Francisco. Once in early in the year/Jan., & again in the fall/Sept./Oct. Both times we sat on the floor, 'first row', middle, about 3ft. in front of them, right at Doc & Merle's feet. We were fortunate to be able to go backstage to meet/visit with them backstage after both concerts. After the second concert, backstage, when I asked Doc about the blue thumbpick he was using he said, "It's a Herco Blue Flex Nylon thumbpick. NOT plastic. They're the best, lightweight and durable. Here, take this one. I think you'll like it." And Doc handed me the thumbpick. I thanked him profusely. I couldn't wait to get home & try it out. I pulled out my guitar to try out the thumbpick Doc gifted me as soon as we got home after the concert. Doc was so right. I loved it right away. It felt really comfortable, lightweight, & never gets 'hung up' on the strings. I've been using Herco Blue Flex Nylon thumbpicks exclusively ever since. I buy them in a bag of 50 at a time, & for the past 49 years I've given them away to everyone who attends my guitar instructional workshops ... I've given away many hundreds of them in gratitude for, & in honor of, Doc having 'changed my 'guitar picking life' by giving me one so many years ago.

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