

Muscles Most Used by Guitarists

Fingerpicking, strumming, and fretting require coordinated use of **extrinsic** (forearm) and **intrinsic** (hand) muscles. Below is a breakdown by function and location:

□ 1. Extrinsic Muscles (Forearm)

□ Flexors (anterior compartment)

- **Flexor digitorum superficialis** – Flexes middle phalanges (PIP joints) of fingers.
- **Flexor digitorum profundus** – Flexes distal phalanges (DIP joints); enables full finger flexion.
- **Flexor pollicis longus** – Flexes thumb.
- **Flexor carpi radialis** / **Flexor carpi ulnaris** – Flex wrist (radial and ulnar deviation respectively).

□ Extensors (posterior compartment)

- **Extensor digitorum** – Extends fingers.
- **Extensor indicis / digiti minimi** – Extend index and little fingers individually.
- **Extensor pollicis longus / brevis** – Extend the thumb.
- **Abductor pollicis longus** – Abducts the thumb (moves it away from the hand).

□ 2. Intrinsic Muscles (Hand)

□ Thenar muscles (thumb control)

- **Abductor pollicis brevis**
- **Flexor pollicis brevis**
- **Opponens pollicis**
- **Adductor pollicis**

1. > Used heavily in picking, opposing thumb to fingers, and fast thumb articulation.

□ Hypothenar muscles (little finger control)

- **Abductor digiti minimi**
- **Flexor digiti minimi brevis**
- **Opponens digiti minimi**

1. > Assist in grip and hand positioning on the fretboard.

□ Lumbricals and Interossei

- **Lumbricals** – Flex MCP joints and extend IP joints; fine motor control.
- **Dorsal interossei** – Abduct fingers (spread).
- **Palmar interossei** – Adduct fingers (bring together).

1. > Critical for chord formation, finger independence, and precise articulation.

□ Other Relevant Muscles

- **Wrist stabilizers** – e.g. *extensor carpi radialis longus/brevis*
- **Forearm rotators** – *pronator teres*, *supinator* (rotate hand position)
- **Elbow flexors** – *biceps brachii*, *brachioradialis* (support posture and positioning)

Note: Repetitive stress in these muscles is common in guitarists and may lead to conditions like tendinitis or carpal tunnel syndrome. Proper technique and stretching are essential.

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Last update: **2025/05/09 20:24**

