

Thinking Out Loud chord melody

This lesson is on how to work out how to play the melody and chords of a song together, as a solo guitar arrangement.

There are many ways of doing this, but the approach we're going to take here focuses on the principle that you don't have to play a different chord for every melody note, nor do you have to play the melody and chords simultaneously all the time.

We're going to use Ed Sheeran's song "Thinking Out Loud" as our example, but the principles apply to any other song you'd like to do this with.

Work on one section at a time. Most rock/pop songs have some or all of the following parts: intro, verse, bridge, chorus. Focus on one of these (you don't have to start at the beginning of the song).

Melody is King

Always.

THE most important part of a song is the melody. Chords and bass lines serve to support and enhance the melody.

So, the first thing you need to do is work out and learn to play the melody. I would suggest doing this by ear from the original song (you'll learn how it is phrased and remember it better if you do this). It can be helpful to have a lead sheet (melody and chords written out) to help you if you get stuck.

Once you've worked out the melody, try playing it in different octaves and different areas of the guitar. Can any of it be played using open strings?

Chords

Learn to play the chords for the song. Again, you'll want to look at different ways of playing the chords – open chords, barres, triads etc. You want to be flexible in your approach so that you can make the best choices to support the melody.

Assignments

- Refer to the “melody sketch” (and use your ear – listen to the original song) to work out the melody for the Verse.
- Check out the chords and listen to the MP3 for how I play the verse and chords together.
- Use this to come up with your own version which combines chords and melody.
- Do the same with the chorus.