

Metal Riff Builder

Roll a die (or just pick) for each table, then build a 2 bar riff. Maxim's Guitar Workshop, Darwin.

How to use: roll one six sided die for each of the four tables below, or pick the row you like. Write your result on the My roll line at the bottom, then sketch the riff in a grid on page 2. Use the low string as your pedal note and keep it to two bars.

Table 1: Scale (on the low E string, E as root)

Roll	Scale	Frets on the low string (E root)
1	Natural minor (Aeolian)	0 2 3 5 7 8 10 12
2	Phrygian	0 1 3 5 7 8 10 12
3	Harmonic minor	0 2 3 5 7 8 11 12
4	Phrygian dominant	0 1 4 5 7 8 10 12
5	Minor pentatonic plus b5	0 3 5 6 7 10 12
6	Chromatic cluster	0 1 2 3 (then back to 0)

Table 2: Rhythm cell (one beat)

Roll	Cell	Count it
1	Gallop	1 . & a: an eighth then two sixteenths
2	Reverse gallop	1 e & . : two sixteenths then an eighth
3	Straight sixteenths	1 e and a
4	Eighth and rest	1 (rest) and
5	Syncopated push	rest on 1, accent on the "and"
6	Triplet	1 trip let

Table 3: Pedal note

Roll	Pedal	Feel
1	Open low string	Classic chug
2	Open low string, palm muted	Tight and percussive
3	Fret 1 (b2 in E)	Tense and dark
4	Fret 5 on the next string up	Higher drone
5	Octave pedal (fret 2, string 4)	Brighter pulse
6	No pedal: melody only	Open and spacious

Table 4: Variation move (bar 2)

Roll	Move	How
1	Displace	Start the same notes one sixteenth later
2	Octave	Play the last beat an octave up
3	Chromatic pass	Walk up or down by frets into the next bar
4	Rest	Replace one beat with silence
5	Accent shift	Move the accent to a different beat
6	Change ending	Keep beats 1 to 3, write a new beat 4

My roll: Scale _____ Cell _____ Pedal _____ Move _____ Tuning _____ Tempo _____ BPM

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Page 2: blank 2 bar riff grids and a variation checklist.

Riff grids (one column per sixteenth; write fret numbers, X for muted, R for rest)

Riff 1, bar 1

Str	1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
e																
B																
G																
D																
A																
E																

Riff 1, bar 2 (variation)

Str	1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
e																
B																
G																
D																
A																
E																

Riff 2, bar 1

Str	1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
e																
B																
G																
D																
A																
E																

Riff 2, bar 2 (variation)

Str	1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
e																
B																
G																
D																
A																
E																

Variation checklist

Move	Tried?	Keep it?	Notes
Displace			
Octave			
Chromatic pass			
Rest			
Accent			

Check: Can you hum it? Does it repeat well 4 times? Does it still work over a drum loop at the target tempo? Record it and listen back the next day.