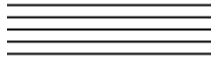


Reading Music on Guitar

Part I - Standard Notation Primer

Music is written on what is called a **staff**, which consists of five lines and the four spaces between those lines.



Music for the guitar is written in **treble clef**. Treble clef is also referred to as the G clef with the center of the clef circling the G note on the 2nd line up.



Music is divided into sections called **measures** by vertical lines called **bar lines**.



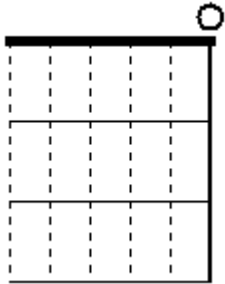
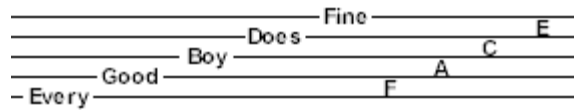
At the end of a song is a **final double bar line** which indicates the end of the piece.



A **repeat sign** is used to play a section of music again. (Looks the same as a final double bar line only with 2 dots.)



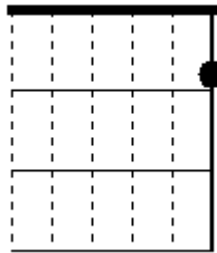
Here is the dumb little saying to remember the names of the notes on the staff. Avoid it as much as possible.



E 1st String, Open



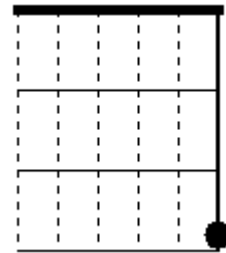
open



F 1st String, 1st Fret



first finger



G 1st String, 3rd Fret



third finger

The following are some basics of both right and left hand position.

1. Hold your pick between your first finger and thumb.



2. Your left hand thumb should be flat in the middle of the neck behind the 1st fret bar. Do not put the palm of your left hand on the back of the guitar at any time. Your thumb will move for different techniques, but in the beginning this allows all of your fingers to reach the notes easily.



3. Use the tips of your fingers and play as close to the fret bar as possible. (fig. 1) If your are to far back in the fret you will not get a good sound. (fig. 2) If you are on top of the fret bar you will not get a good sound. (fig. 3)



4. When playing from F to G keep your 1st finger down on the F note and stretch up to G.

5. Pick from your wrist and lightly touch the palm of your right hand near your thumb lightly on the lower strings (5th and 6th). This helps you keep your place with your right hand, and also helps control noise that can occur from the vibration of the lower strings. Your hand should eventually "float" on the surface of the strings and not anchor at any one place. (Ten different guitar teachers will tell you ten different ways to hold your hands, so in the end find what is most comfortable for you.)

6. Tap your foot on the beat. This is a good habit to get into from the beginning. That way later on when you are playing more complex rhythms, you can keep your foot tapping on a Under every exercise is a link to a MIDI file that you can use as a background to play along with.

getting started



mixed up



Quarter Notes receive 1 beat



Half Notes receive 2 beats



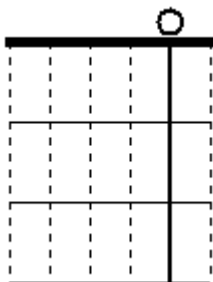
quarter and half note exercise



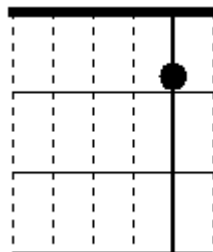
3 notes, 2 rhythms



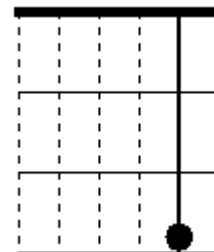
more 3 notes, 2 rhythms



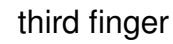
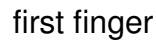
B 2nd String, Open



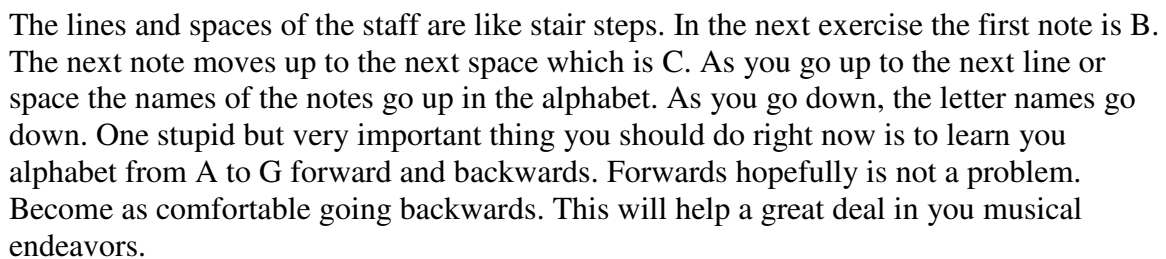
C 2nd String, 1st Fret



D 2nd String, 3rd Fret



Getting Started on the 2nd String



scale on strings 1 and 2



thirds on strings 1 and 2



first melody



Dotted Half Notes receive 3 beats

Whole Notes receive 4 beats



A **dot** placed after a note will increase it's value by half the original.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{quarter note} & + & \text{dot} & = & \text{dotted quarter note} \\ 2 & + & 1 & = & 3 \end{array}$$



A **time signature** consists of two numbers placed at the beginning of a piece of music.

The top number tells you how many beats are in each measure.

The bottom number will tell you which rhythm gets one beat. (The 4 stands for the quarter note getting one beat)

In the beginning the only numbers you will see in the top are 3 or 4. In the bottom you will only see a 4 at this point. (more on time signature later)

$\frac{3}{4}$ time rhythm exercise



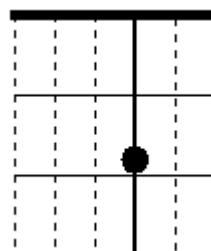
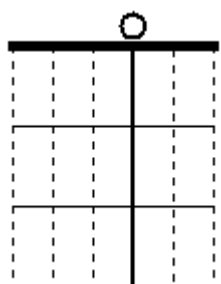
$\frac{4}{4}$ time rhythm exercise



the waltz



$\frac{4}{4}$ tune



G 3rd String, Open



open

A 3rd String, 2nd Fret



second finger

Under every exercise is a link to a MIDI file that you can use as a background to play along with.

Getting Started on the 3rd String



scale on strings 1 thru 3



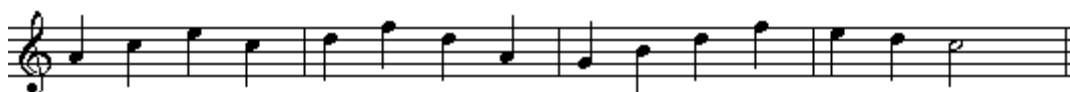
exercise on the 2nd and 3rd strings



thirds on strings 1 thru 3



jumping around

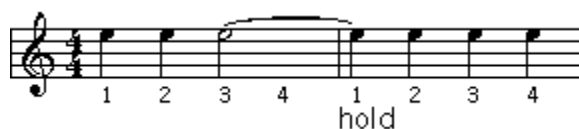


3rd string etude



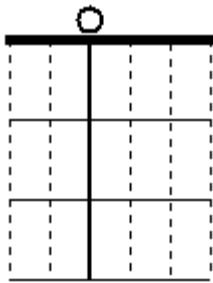
Pickup notes are notes that lead into the first full measure of a song. They are counted like the end of a normal measure. The other beats that are missing are sometimes found in the last measure of the piece. If you count the number of beats in the first and last measure, together they equal one complete measure.

A **Tie** is a curved line that connects two notes of the same pitch. The note is held for the value of both rhythms added together. (The second note is not played) In this example a half note is tied to a quarter note, equaling a value of 3 beats. The reason that a dotted half note is not used here is because you can't have more than 4 beats in a measure in 4/4 time, so you have to split the 3 beats between 2 measures.



When The Saints Go Marching In

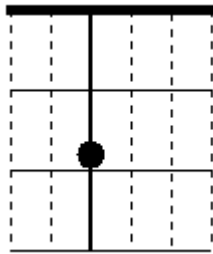




D 4th String, Open



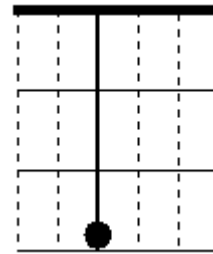
open



E 4th String, 2nd Fret



second finger



F 4th String, 3rd Fret



third finger

Under every exercise is a link to a MIDI file that you can use as a background to play along with.

Getting Started on the 4th String



4th String Only



Scale on strings 1 thru 4



3rd and 4th Strings



Thirds on strings 1 thru 4



Strings 2 thru 4

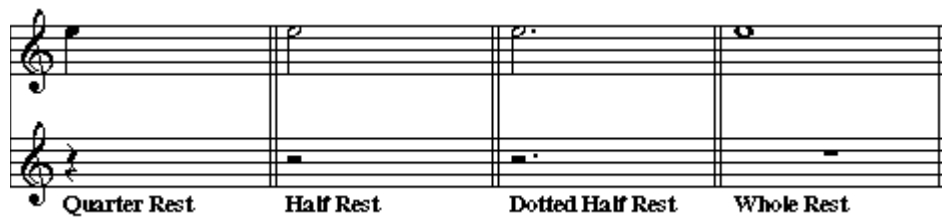


4th String Etude



Symbols used to indicate silence in music are called **rests**. When a rest is used the string must be stopped from ringing for the indicated period of time. There are two ways that this can be achieved:

1. Place your right hand on the strings that need to be stopped.
2. Use your left hand fingers to stop the strings from ringing. If you are fretting a note lift your finger up so that is still touching the string but not pressing down against the fret.



Rest Exercise 1



Rest Exercise 2



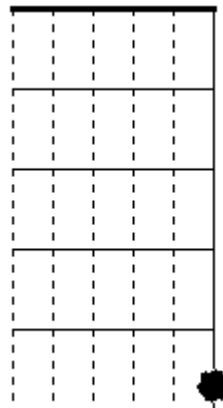
12 bar blues in G



A 1st String, 5th fret

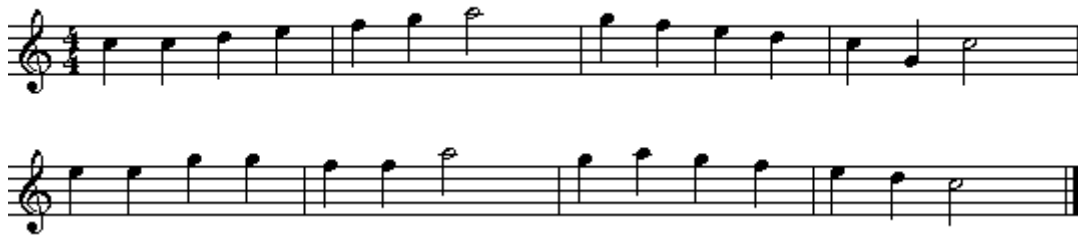


3rd or 4th finger

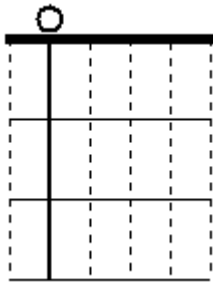
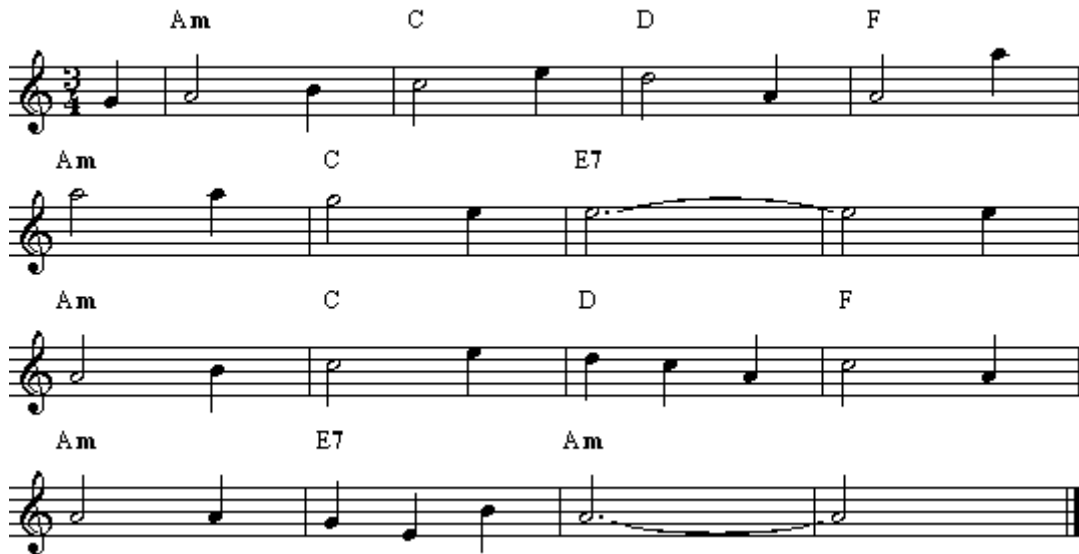


Under every exercise is a link to a MIDI file that you can use as a background to play along with.

High A Note Exercise



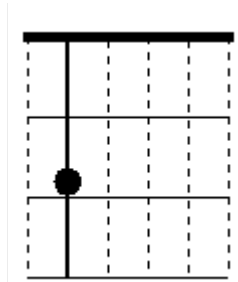
The House of the Rising Sun



A 5th String, Open



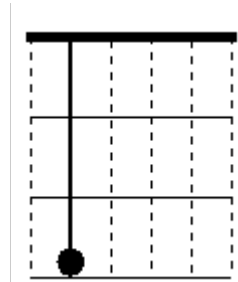
open



B 5th String, 2nd Fret



second finger



C 5th String, 3rd Fret



third finger

Under every exercise is a link to a MIDI file that you can use as a background to play along with.

Getting Started on the 5th String



5th String Only



Scale on strings 1 thru 5



Strings 4 and 5



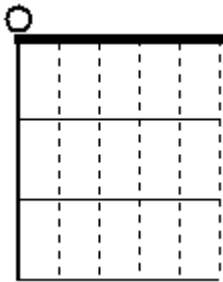
Strings 3 thru 5



12 Bar Blues In A



	*
	*



The first staff of music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with a series of eighth notes: F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, and F#5. This is followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note F#4, and a quarter note E4. The staff concludes with a double bar line.

6th String Only



Scale on strings 1 thru 6



Strings 5 and 6



Strings 4 thru 6



A **sharp** (#) is a sign placed in front of a natural note which raises the pitch a half step (1 fret). There is a half step between **E-F** and **B-C** naturally, so that E# sounds the same as F, and B# sounds the same as C. For now think of these notes by there natural names only (F and C).

A sharp remains in effect for the entire measure, or until it is canceled by a **natural sign** (♮). Once you cross into the next measure the sharp is canceled out.

Sharps, flats and natural signs that temporarily change the pitch of a note are known as **accidentals**.



* Note that a **courtesy accidental** in parenthesis is often used in the next measure after a sharp of the same letter name is used. This is not necessary but is often done to avoid confusion.

In the following exercise play the last 2 notes (G# and A) with you 4th finger. For all other notes use 1 finger per fret (1st finger=1st fret, 2nd finger=2nd fret etc...) Be sure to name the notes to yourself as you play.

first position sharps



Below are the 5 most common major keys that guitar is played in. That does not mean that you should neglect the other keys, just make sure you know these first. As well as playing these as written, also try holding each root note (letter name C G D A E) of the scale for twice as long. This will help establish the root in your ear, and how all of the other note relate to the root.

Key of C Major



A **key signature** is used when certain notes are consistently sharp or flat in a piece of music. For example rather than placing a accidental in front of every occurrence of F# in the following scale the following is key signature that is placed just after the treble clef. This indicates that every F will be sharp (in all octaves)

G major



the F line goes right through the center of the sharp sign.

In this scale sharp the following (F)

Key of G Major



In this scale sharp the following (F, C)

Key of D Major



In this scale sharp the following (F, C, G)

Key of A Major



In this scale sharp the following (F, C, G, D)

Key of E Major



A flat ($\flat$) is a sign placed in front of a natural note which lowers the pitch a half step (1 fret). A lower case B ($\flat$) is used to indicate a flat sign in text documents. There is a half

step between E-F and B-C naturally, so that Fb is the same note as E, and Cb is the same as B. For now think of these notes by their natural names only (E and B).

A flat remains in effect for the entire measure, or until it is canceled by a **natural sign** (♮). Once you cross into the next measure the flat is canceled out.

Flats, sharps and natural signs that temporarily change the pitch of a note are known as **accidentals**.



* Note that a **courtesy accidental** in parenthesis is often used in the next measure after a flat of the same letter name is used. This is not necessary but is often done to avoid confusion.

Q. Hey cyberfret dude... how do I go down 1 fret from an open string (e.g. E down to Eb)?

A. First you have to have a basic understanding of how the guitar is tuned (see basic tuning) You can't go down 1 fret from an open string, but you can go down 1 fret from the same note played on a different string. For example when you tune the 1st string on the guitar, you will play the 5th fret on the 2nd string. The first string open and the 5th fret on the second string are both E. If you want to play an E flat, just move down 1 fret from the E on the 2nd string.

In the following exercise play the first 2 notes (A and Ab) with your 4th finger. For all other notes use 1 finger per fret (1st finger=1st fret, 2nd finger=2nd fret etc...) Be sure to name the notes to yourself as you play.

first position flats



Part II- Rhythm

Even if you plan to only read tablature, or just playing by ear for that matter, you will still need to have a basic understanding of rhythms.

Quarter Notes receive 1 beat



Half Notes receive 2 beats



Dotted Half Notes receive 3 beats



Whole Notes receive 4 beats



A **dot** placed after a note will increase it's value by half the original.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{Quarter Note} & + & \text{Dot} & = & \text{Dotted Quarter Note} \\ 2 & + & 1 & = & 3 \end{array}$$



A **time signature** consists of two numbers placed at the beginning of a piece of music.

The top number tells you how many beats are in each measure.

The bottom number will tell you which rhythm gets one beat. (The 4 stands for the quarter note getting one beat)

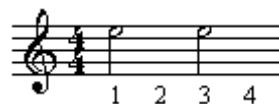
In the beginning the only numbers you will see in the top are 3 or 4. In the bottom you will only see a 4 at this point. (more on time signature later)





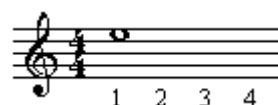
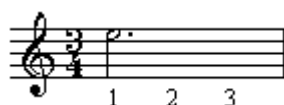
Quarter Notes receive 1 beat

Half Notes receive 2 beats



Dotted Half Notes receive 3 beats

Whole Notes receive 4 beats



A **dot** placed after a note will increase it's value by half the original.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{Quarter Note} & + & \text{Dot} & = & \text{Dotted Quarter Note} \\ 2 & + & 1 & = & 3 \end{array}$$



A **time signature** consists of two numbers placed at the beginning of a piece of music.

The top number tells you how many beats are in each measure.

The bottom number will tell you which rhythm gets one beat. (The 4 stands for the quarter note getting one beat)

In the beginning the only numbers you will see in the top are 3 or 4. In the bottom you will only see a 4 at this point. (more on time signature later)



All of the exercises are demonstrated along with a metronome click.

Eighth Notes receive a 1/2 beat

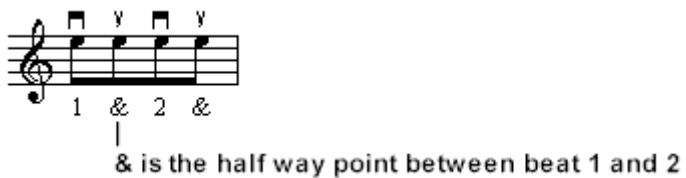
 --- 2 or more 8th notes are **beamed** together

 --- single 8th notes use a **flag**

▣ = the symbol for picking down

∩ = the symbol for picking up

8th notes are counted like below (1 & 2 & etc..)



When picking 8th notes pick down on the beat (1 2 3 4) and up on the "&".

8th note exercise



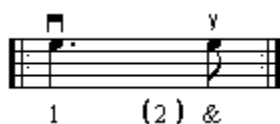
Dotted Quarter Notes receive 1 1/2 beats

A **dot** placed after a note will increase it's value by half the original.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{Quarter Note} & + & \text{Dotted Quarter} & = & \text{Dotted Quarter} \\ 1 & + & 1/2 & = & 1 1/2 \end{array}$$

The easiest way to get a grasp on rhythms is to start to recognize pattern that reoccur. Below are 2 different 2 beat rhythmic patterns that use dotted quarter notes. If you can start to see these patterns instead of just a mess of different rhythms, then you are on your way.

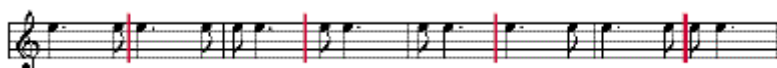
Pattern #1



Pattern #2



The following exercise uses these 2 patterns. In the top line, half the measure is one of the 2 patterns, and half is either a half note or 2 quarter notes. In the bottom line the are only the 2 patterns. It can look like a big mess until you are able to see the patterns.



dotted quarter note exercise

