

Sound Before Sight: Playing by Ear

Children learn to speak by listening to those around them and by attempting to emulate those speech patterns. Only much later, when they have a grasp of the language do they begin to read and write. Thus, language acquisition precedes symbol systems of language notation. So too, with music, a strong case can be made that beginners should acquire musical skills through aural and visual models first and then learn to read write with notational symbols. With this in mind, this section of the course will deal with musical transmission through aural and visual modeling. Your job is to emulate or copy what you see and hear.

Here are a couple reasons to learning by ear:

- 1) It's one thing to learn how to hold the guitar correctly, how to position your hands, and how to move your fingers to find the correct frets; it's quite another thing to do so while decipher a new symbol system. Learning by ear lessens the cognitive load.
- 2) Listening to the tune in your head (known as “audiation”) will guide you when practicing—your ear will tell you if you’re playing the piece correctly or not.

When learning to play by ear we usually employ common folk songs because you most likely have them inside your head. This week we will learn *Hot Cross Buns*.

Lesson

Use a finger to string assignment for the plucking hand; place P on 4, I on 3, and M on string 2.

It’s important to know that notes can move by step to either the next lower or higher note. All the notes in *Hot Cross Buns* move by step, like the example below. Play the below example while saying the letter name.



Now watch the video of me modelling how to play “*Hot Cross Buns*”. Use your ear—remember that the piece uses only three pitches G (open 3rd string), A (2nd fret 3rd string) and B (open string 2).