

Parts of a guitar

From buying a guitar for the first time to mastering it, it is crucial to know about the different parts of the guitar. When purchasing, if you know about the various parts of the guitar and what they do, you will really understand what you are getting, and it will help you make a better decision. When learning the instrument, if you know the proper vocabulary, it will also be easy to understand what your instructor is referring to and where exactly you should be placing your hands. It will also be vital when you want to talk to your fellow guitarists. So, the anatomy of guitars is the first thing that any aspiring guitarist should know.

Now, there are different types of guitars, and every guitar has some unique parts to them. But, most components are commonly seen in all guitars. In this article, we will first know about all the common parts, and then we will see the unique parts that an acoustic guitar and an electric guitar have.

A guitar has fundamentally three parts - the headstock, the neck, and the body. These parts and their components from top to bottom are all discussed below.

Headstock

The headstock or the head is the section that sits at the top of the neck. This is where you adjust the tension of the strings to tune your guitar. One end of the guitar strings is attached to the headstock. The headstock is where the tuning machines and the nut are located.

- **Tuning machines:** The tuning machines are the mechanism that we use to tune our guitar strings. These include tuning posts that hold each string and tuning pegs used to adjust the tuning or the tension of the strings. You rotate the tuning pegs, which in turn winds the strings through the tuning posts, loosening (tuning down) or tightening (tuning up) the strings.
- **Nut:** The nut is a notched white strip responsible for seating the strings as they pass from the headstock to the guitar's neck. The slits in the nut keep the string aligned on the fretboard and play a vital role in maintaining the string height. Nuts are made from a variety of materials. It is usually made of molded plastic or corian for a beginner's guitar, whereas a higher grade guitar has a nut made of bone, brass, or graphite.

Neck

The neck is the long thin section of wood between the headstock and the body of the guitar. When holding the guitar, you place your thumb on the back of the neck and fingers in front of the neck (the fretboard). The neck is where the fretboard, frets, and

the position makers of the guitar are located. Some guitars also have a truss rod underneath the fretboard.

- **Fretboard:** The fretboard or fingerboard is a long thin piece of wood attached on top of the neck. They are made of tonewoods such as maple, rosewood, or ebony. The fretboard is not the same as the neck. It is a separate piece of wood from the neck which may be made from similar or different types of wood. The fretboard is where you press the guitar strings against the frets to create different chords or tones.
- **Frets:** The frets are the many small metal strips that run across the length of the fretboard. You press the strings behind each fret on the fretboard to create a different note. The frets on a guitar are very precisely distanced to help produce a number of different notes. Most guitars have 19 to 24 frets.
- **Position makers:** The position makers are the series of dots found on the fretboard between the frets. They are also known as fret markers as they point to specific frets. They usually point to the 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, 12th, 15th, 17th, 19th, 21st, 24th frets. The 12th and 24th frets are marked with double dots or some other variations from the other markers.
- **Truss Rod:** A truss rod is a metal rod made of steel or graphite that runs through the neck just under the fretboard. This metal rod is a reinforcement for the neck. When tuning up or strumming the guitar strings, the strings put a lot of pressure on the neck enough to bend it. The truss rod helps to keep the neck from bending. They are usually made from steel or graphite.

Body

The body is the big curvy section underneath the neck of the guitar. This is where we strum or pick the strings to create sounds. A body of a guitar has many components. And this is where in general, we see the differences in components of many different types of guitar. Below, we will first see the common parts of a guitar's body, and then we will see the various other components specific to acoustic and electric guitars.

- **Cutaway:** The cutaway is the guitar's upper body section that is cut out to allow easier access to the higher frets on the neck. Generally, an acoustic guitar has a single-cutaway on the underside of the neck, and an electric guitar has a double-cutaway on both sides of the neck.
- **Pick guard:** The pick guard is the shield that is generally located under the strings to protect the guitar from scratches as you pick or strum the guitar. This is also used for cosmetic purposes, as they are usually in a different color or finish from the body. They can also be easily removed or swapped for a different design on most guitars.
- **Bridge:** The bridge is the bit that holds the other end of the guitar strings on the body of the guitar. The function of this component is to handle the tension of the

strings. The bridge of an acoustic guitar is made of solid wood, whereas the bridge of an electric guitar is made of metal. There are different styles of bridges, but the two main designs are fixed bridges and whammy bridges.

- **Saddle:** The saddle sits on the bridge. Just like the nut, this is the only other contact point of the strings. They help to hold the strings at a certain height and pass the vibrations of the strings through the bridge to the body of the guitar. On an acoustic guitar, the saddles are a strip made of plastic or bone. But on an electric guitar, each string has a saddle of its own. Most electric guitars also have the feature to adjust the height of the string by raising or lowering the saddles.
- **End pin:** The end pin is located at the bottom of the guitar. It is used to connect your strap so that you can play the guitar while standing. Most guitars have two strap pins, and the one at the bottom of the guitar is called the end pin. On most acoustic-electric guitars, the end pin is hollow and contains the output jack.
- **Sounding board (Acoustic guitars):** The sounding board or the top of the guitar body of an acoustic guitar plays a vital role in the quality or tone of the sounds that the guitar produces. The sounding board is made from different kinds of wood, and each of them produces a different quality of sound. For example, mahogany produces a warm, sweet tone, while cedar or redwood has a bell-like sound quality.
- **Sound hole (Acoustic guitars):** An acoustic guitar has a hole on the top of the guitar or on the sounding board, which is called a sound hole. Its function is to amplify the sounds that the strumming of the guitar produces.
- **Bridge pins (Acoustic guitars):** The bridge pins of an acoustic guitar are generally located on the bridge below the saddle. They are used to secure the strings into the bridge. They can be removed using a bridge pin puller if one wishes to replace the guitar strings.
- **Pickups (Electric guitars):** The pickups on an electric guitar, generally located under the strings between the bridge and the fretboard, are the magnetic parts responsible for picking up the vibrations from strumming the strings and producing the sounds that we hear. An electric guitar has from one to three pickups. The position of these pickups plays a vital role in the kind of sounds an electric guitar produces. The pickup closer to the bridge, known as the bridge or lead pickup, produces bright and chimy sounds,

whereas the pickup closer to the neck, known as the neck, rhythm, or jazz pickup, produces warmer and bassier sounds.

There are two main types of pickup - single coil and humbucker coil. The single coil pickups have a thinner, brighter sound, whereas the humbucker pickups have a fatter, warmer sound.

- **Pickup selector (Electric guitars):** Electric guitars have pickup selector switches that let you choose which pickup or combination of pickups are currently active. This allows you to produce a wide range of tones. A standard electric guitar, such as the Fender Stratocaster, has 5-way selectors for three pickups.
- **Volume knob (Electric guitars):** The volume knob is generally located below the pickup selector. This knob or pot allows you to control the overall output volume of the guitar.
- **Tone Knob (Electric guitars):** The tone knob is located together with the volume knob. An electric guitar usually has a tone knob per pickup. The tone knob(s) works like the bass/treble controls on a speaker. They control the tone, pitch, frequency, or brightness of the guitar sound.
An acoustic guitar with electronics may also have volume and tone knobs or sliders.
- **Whammy Bar (Electric guitars):** You can find whammy bar on some specific styles of electric guitars that have a whammy-style bridge (tremolo bridge), for example on a Fender Stratocaster. A whammy bar, also known as a tremolo bar, is a metal bar attached to a whammy-style bridge. This metal bar is used to move the bridge up or down to loosen or tighten the strings, which allows you to raise or lower the pitch of the strings.
- **Output Jack (Electric guitars):** The output jack, also called the jack socket, is usually located below the control knobs (volume and tone knobs). This is where you plug in your wire to send signals from the guitar to your pedals, amplifier, or recording interface.

Strings

The strings are the most fundamental component of a guitar because strumming or picking the strings is what creates the sounds. Strings come in different thicknesses and materials. For example, steel strings are used for electric guitars, and steel, bronze, or brass strings are used for acoustic guitars. The thicker the string, the lower the pitch it produces.

A guitar has six strings of different thicknesses. While holding a guitar on your thighs, the strings from up to down go from thickest to thinnest. The strings are numbered serially up from the thinnest string being the 1st string to the thickest string being the 6th string. The strings are also named E, A, D, G, B, and E from the 6th string to the 1st string.

Hopefully, this article was very informative for you, and it helped you to know your guitar better. Knowing your guitar is the first and essential step to learning it, and now you know about most if not all of the components of your guitar.