

# Teach Yourself How to Play the Bass Guitar Overnight!

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

First of all, we must forget everything we've ever thought about how complicated playing music is. I compare it to 'math anxiety'

Many people fear music and think that it takes a genius to be a good musician. To be a master it might take a genius, but to play songs on the bass guitar, sound good and have a great time is only a lesson or two away! I have been playing and teaching music professionally for many years and was a child piano prodigy myself. I play and teach: piano, guitar, bass, flute and drums.

I have taught many friends and family members how to get started playing songs on the guitar practically overnight. When you are dedicated enough and passionate about learning the bass guitar, it comes a lot easier than you may think. My fiancée is also excelling at the guitar and the bass guitar since I've shown her a few methods and tricks.

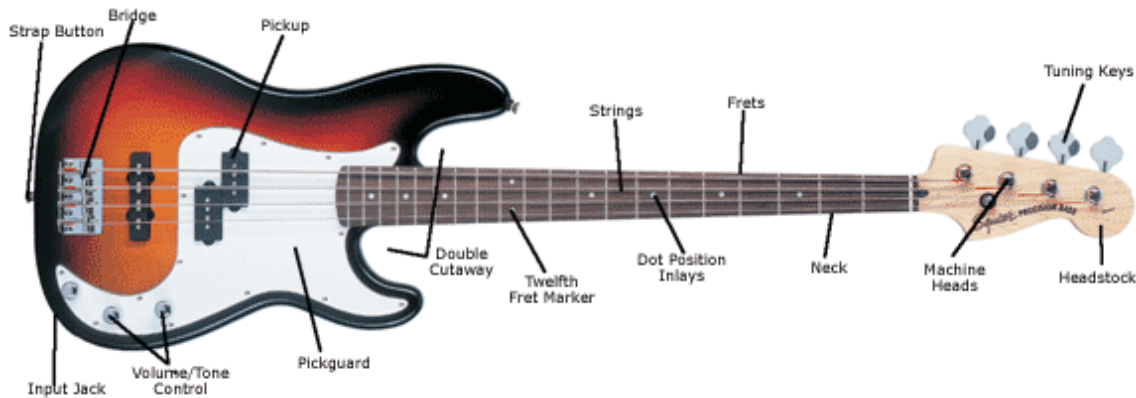
I hope this gives you the kick start you need to get started rockin' and rollin'! Enjoy.

## **What is a bass guitar?**

A bass guitar is like a guitar, but with only the lowest four strings. The strings are thicker and give you a lower sound than a guitar. The other difference with a bass is how it's played. The bass player's job is (usually) to "hold down the bottom end" and provide a "groove". What's that mean?

Well, first, it means your part in the sound mix is the low range -- you're giving it the deep sounds. Second, you're part of the rhythm section! That's right, if you play bass you stick with the drummer.

Together with the drummer, you provide a rhythmic base for the other instruments to play with: a groove. The groove you try to achieve is going to be much different depending on whether you're playing jazz, punk, country, pop, heavy metal, or any other style!



## **Anatomy of a Bass Guitar!**

### **LET'S LEARN!**

Grab your Bass! I am assuming that prior to reading this you have a pretty good idea of how to hold a bass guitar and pluck the strings either with your finger(s) or with a guitar 'pick'.

If **not** here's the rundown:

**(For Lefties, Do everything opposite i.e 'left upper thigh' etc.)**

Playing the bass for hours can strain your back if you do not maintain an upright posture. Pick up your guitar and place the back of the guitar

against your stomach. If you are right handed, the bass guitar neck should be pointing towards your left. Rest the body on your right upper thigh.

Now place your left hand around the neck and place your right arm around the body so that your hand is lying by the strings. Adjust your body positioning so that you are completely comfortable.

## **Hand Positioning**

If you're left handed, don't worry. You have two options here. The first option is to buy a right-handed guitar and re-string it, so that the order of the strings in figure 3 is reversed. The second option you have is to buy a left-handed guitar.

If you're right handed, you will use your left hand to construct chords.

The left hand fingers are bent and pressing down on the strings on the fret board. The back of the neck is curved, so that your hand molds into the shape of the neck. Your thumb is arching over the top of the neck. This is a common thumb position for constructing chords.

It is also ok to press your thumb into the back of the neck when playing.

## **Right Hand/Arm**

This is the hand that you will use to "pluck" the strings to make the different sounds/notes. Rest/Lie your right arm over the bass. Your right bicep should be resting on the top of the body of the bass. Your hand should be positioned directly above the pickups.

### **You don't strum a bass like a guitar:**

You pluck, pick, pop, tap or slap the strings. Many bassists play strictly with their fingers, while others use a pick. This is not only a personal preference, but also affects what kinds of sounds you can get from your bass. For example, most punkers use a pick, while most jazzers use their fingers.

Plucking with the fingers is probably most common. And if you're looking to get funky, you're going to want to learn how to slap and pop!

## Using a Pick

You should grasp the pick between your thumb and forefinger of your right hand. A lot of bass players do **not** use picks. It is more common to play with your index and middle finger of your right hand (if your righty!)

## What is Bass Guitar Tab?!?

It is an alternative way of reading music. Instead of reading notes on staff paper which can be quite tricky, it is made up of a number system that is so easy my grandma can play 'smoke on the water' with ease!! NO joke.

The following 4 lines **do not** represent your typical 'music staff' which actually has 5 lines. These 4 lines **represent the 4 strings on your bass guitar**.

The Top Line represents the thinnest or 'highest pitched' string on your bass. The string that is closest to the floor. The bottom Line represents the **LOWEST SOUNDING** String on the bass and this one is the thickest. It also is the closest to the ceiling.

**\*\*CHECK OUT THE BASS ANATOMY PICTURE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE REPORT!**

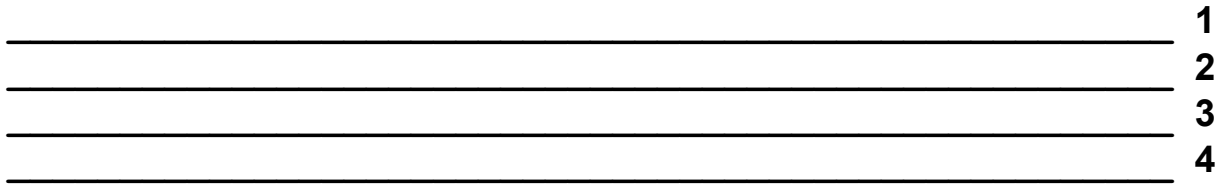
**High String** (Closest to Floor) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Low String** (Thickest) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

String #



## NOW.....

This is what blank Bass Tab looks like. Right now all you see are the 4 lines (4 Strings) I know you're thinking "why is it upside down?" I have no idea. That's how Tablature was invented. Just imagine the bottom line as being the top string that's closest to you. With that out of the way we can work on our next keyword. "**Frets**."

I am sure you have heard this term before: 'Frets.' If not, they are the metal strips that go up and down across the fingerboard of the guitar. They separate the notes (tones) on the guitar/bass. When you place your finger (from your left hand) in between two frets and hold down the string you are then prepared to strum or pick the string with your right hand. Strings aren't meant to only be played open.

When you hold down a string at a given 'fret' what you are actually doing is making the string shorter, thus making the pitch 'Higher' and changing the note (or tone).

There are usually about 20 something frets on a standard bass guitar. It doesn't make a big difference if you have 20, 22, or 24 frets on your guitar.

This just means that you can play a couple notes higher on the guitar and those notes are so high pitched they are pretty annoying to listen to anyway! You will stay in the lower range of the bass most of the time.

Now let's get this 'Higher' and 'Lower' thing straight. In music, the musical notes (tones, pitches, whatever you call them) are changed by pitch. We all know that pitch means the frequency of sound so something **high** pitched would be like an opera singing lady who breaks a wine glass with a super high note.

A **Low** pitch is similar to a Bass instrument or a man with a really deep voice. 'Deep' is the same as 'Low' when talking about pitch. On a slide whistle you blow into it and move the slide up and down to change the pitch.

The closer you bring the slide to you the higher the pitch gets and vice versa.

On the bass however it is not up and down. It is left to right. When you play a string open, that is the lowest (deepest) sound you will hear produced from that string. As soon as you place your finger on the First 'Fret' and then strike the same string again the pitch will be slightly higher. The more you move to the right the higher the pitch will get. (Because the string is getting shorter!).

There are usually dots on the fingerboard of your bass guitar to act as a guide when moving around and holding down different frets. Normally they are on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> frets.

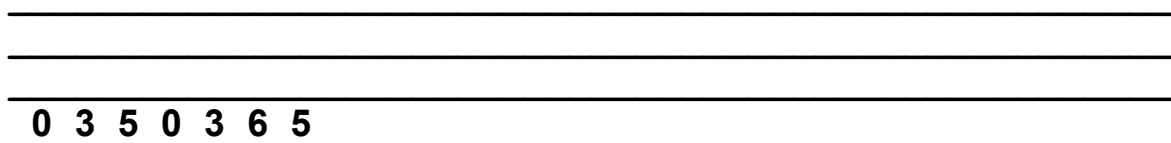
**\*TIP\*:**

You don't want to put your finger on the metal fret itself...but just slightly to the left of it produces the best sound.

**Let's Play Already!!!**

Ok, Ok. Now that we know what frets are. We know how to play a note (playing either an open string, or pressing down a fret on that string and then plucking it) And we know what 'Blank' TAB music looks like. Let's learn how to read TAB and how it will help you.

**The Lines represent the strings.**  
**The NUMBERS represent the Frets.**



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

  0  3  5  0  3  6  5  

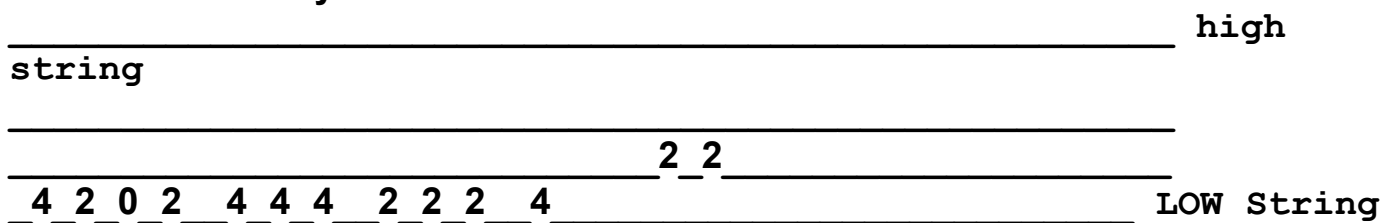
Music (and TAB) is read from left to right like English.

The 'TAB' above tells you to play on the Low string only (the thickest string) You know this because the numbers are only written on that string (the bottom line)

The number '0' means to play the string open. Then the number '3' means place your index finger of your left hand and hold down the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret on the low string (same string you played open). and then followed by the 5<sup>th</sup> fret and so on.

This is the main riff to the popular song 'Smoke on the Water.' If you are unfamiliar with this song you can see it and view at on Youtube. Type in 'Smoke on the Water.' this way you will know what it sounds like before you attempt to play it by reading it above. So if you play the string open (just pluck the string without touching it with your left hand) and then the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret and then the 5<sup>th</sup> and then open again, and then the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret 6<sup>th</sup> fret and 5<sup>th</sup> fret...you have you have just played smoke on the water! Try this next song...EVERYBODY Knows the tune from 'Mary Had a Little Lamb' so you shouldn't have any trouble with it.

### 'Mary Had a Little Lamb'



The first 4 notes (4,2,0,2) sound like "ma-ry had a"  
and then the three 4's (444) sounds like "lit-tle lamb"  
and then again with three 2's (222) is again "lit-tle lamb"  
and then the 4 on the low string and the two 2's on the next string sound like  
the final "lit-tle lamb"

Notice how the last two notes are on the next string. This would be the second string from the closest string to you. It is also the second thickest string on the guitar.

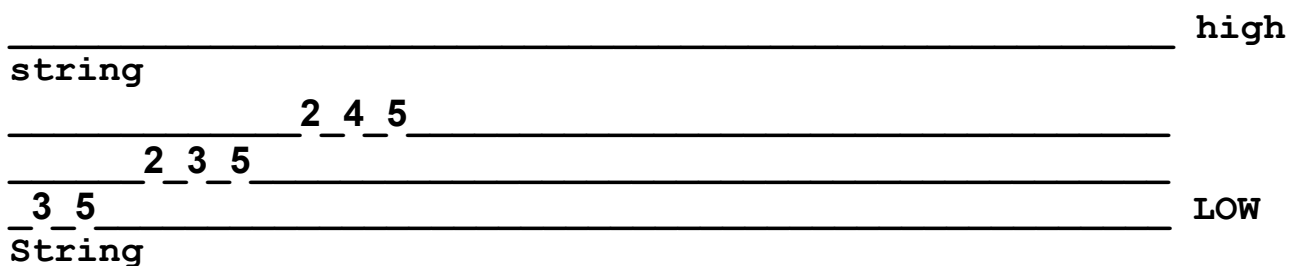
**REMEMBER:** With 'TAB' you must already be familiar with the melody and rhythm of the song because even though the TAB shows you which notes to play to make the song, it does not show you how 'long' to hold each note in order to make the song sound right. For example, reading the above song 'Mary Had a Little Lamb' by just playing all the notes in a row without giving the proper time for each note would not sound very much like that song at all! You know to put a pause in between 'little



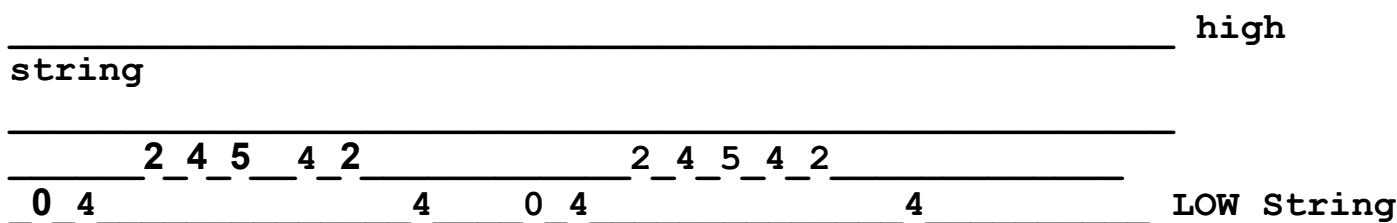
lamb' and the next 'little lamb'. Also, you know that the last 'lamb' is held for a slightly longer amount of time than the rest.

Here is a scale study for the bass guitar. This will sound like (Do-Re-Mi-Fa-Sol-La-Ti-Do) It is know as the 'Major Scale' and plays a HUGE part in music in general. It is also a great finger strengthening exercise for the guitar player. This requires you to play on **three** strings.

Frets # 3 and 5 on the LOW string. Followed by Frets # 2, 3 and 5 on the very next string. Lastly, frets # 2, 4, 5 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> string. Executed correctly it should sound like Do-Re-Mi-Fa-Sol-La-Ti-Do.



### Boogie Woogie Bass Line!:



As stated in the beginning of this report, it is not intended for you to become a master overnight. But, with this information and the fabulous world of the internet and countless resources available you can take this as far as you want. Many famous musicians **to this day** do not know how to read music and **99%** of them know TAB and can learn a song or solo quickly by reading the TAB.

There are SO many **FREE** websites that have the TAB to almost **every song!** Go to google and type in Guitar Tab for (song you want to learn) and it will surely pop right up. Remember that the bottom line is the string closest to you...

**DON'T** let that fool you. The TOP Line is the guitar string closest to the floor. We didn't even play on that string this lesson.

## CONGRATULATIONS!

You now know how to hold the bass guitar

You now know how to play the very popular riff for 'Smoke on the Water'

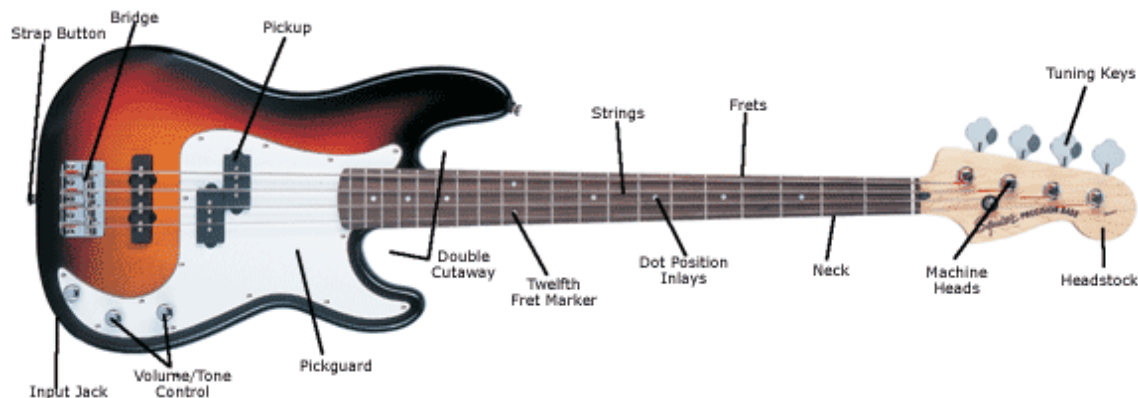
You know how to play a 'major scale' which is the foundation for modern music.

You know how to play 'Mary Had a Little Lamb'

You know how to play the famous 'Boogie Woogie' Bass Line!

You know how to read TAB!!!!!!!!!!

You can now go look up the TAB for any song you want to learn for FREE online!



**GOOD LUCK AND HAPPY PLAYING!!!!**

*Terri Seymour*

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