

Strings? Why not!

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1 Philosophy

The idea of this method is to give you the tools to be creative with music. Concretely this means that instead of saying "The D chord is played using this shape", the following will be said: "A chord is constructed like *this*. So to play a D chord do *this* and you will end up with this shape". Where the "*this*" is some knowledge you will learn.

During the method you will notice that you will see certain constructs/symbols/etc. that you may not know yet and that are not explained directly. This is with intention. The idea is that by exposing you early on to something, while not consciously needing it yet, it is easier to learn the meaning of it later on.

When putting it in steps it looks as follows:

1. Expose you to new concepts so you have seen it, but not necessarily understand it yet.
2. Guided by exercises and songs, explain the previously shown concepts and how they work together.
3. Understand the theory of the concepts and be able to use them in playing.
4. Start at 1. again with new concepts.

2 Getting ready to play

2.1 Sitting/standing position



Figure 2.1: [1]



This method assumes a right-handed player. If you are left-handed, replace “right” with “left” and vice versa.

Even though it may look cooler to place the guitar on your right leg. You will be more comfortable and precise when you are sitting the classical way. The classical way of sitting also translates better to a standing position (see 2.1b).

In the classical position you place the guitar on your left leg and the left leg will be slightly raised. You can use a foot stool for this (see the left foot in 2.1a).

2.2 Tuning

Your guitar needs to be in tune. This means that each string has a certain pitch. Even though this is already implied, it is important to note that the relative pitch difference per string is important as well.

In 2.2 you see the names (letters) from the thinnest (*e*) to the thickest (*E*) string.



Figure 2.2: Names of the guitar strings

A mnemonic is (from low/thick to high/thin):

- 6) **E** ddie
- 5) **A** te
- 4) **D** ynamite
- 3) **G** ood
- 2) **B** ye
- 1) **e** eddie



Note that things is the standard tuning. Sometimes the guitar will be tuned differently. But that will then be explicitly mentioned

You use a tuner to tune (see 2.3). The tuner either gives a note value, and then you have to tune up or down to get the correct note on the screen. Or it shows a string number and you have to get the 'pointer' in the middle.

Be careful with tuning the string up (to a higher pitch). Especially the thinner strings can break if they are too tight.



Figure 2.3: Using a tuner on a guitar

Another tuning options relies on the previously mentioned difference in pitch between the strings. In 2.4 you see which positions on the neck have the same pitch as the thinner string next to it.

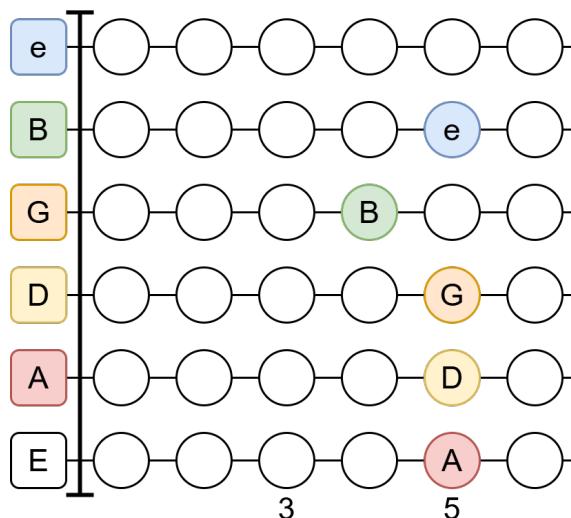


Figure 2.4: Relative tuning

3 First sounds

3.1 Fretboard

Each position on the neck has a different pitch. The metal bars on the neck are called the **frets**. For example, if someone asks to press the 2nd fret on the 3rd string, then you press your finger in the area of the green dot. Right next to the fret. See 3.1.

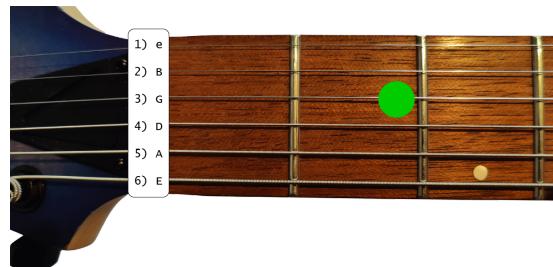


Figure 3.1: The green dot in the finger placement for the 2nd fret on the 3rd string

In music there are 12 different pitches before coming 'back around'. When you come back at the same note letter you are an octave higher. The 12 different notes are shown below.

A A♯ B C C♯ D D♯ E F F♯ G G♯

You may see that there are only **7** different letters and **5** letters with a **#**. These **#**symbols are called **sharps**. On the fretboard a **#**means you move one fret up (to the body of the guitar).

In 3.2 you see a music staff with underneath it tablature (TAB). In the next section we will learn to read the notes. For now you can try to read the tabs first to play the sequence.

Each line in the TAB section represents a guitar string, with the 6th (thickest) string on the bottom. The numbers indicate which fret should be pressed (a 0 means an open string). So the TAB in 3.2 says to first play an open A string, and then play each ascending fret up to the 12th fret.

Figure 3.2: An octave from A to A on the 5th A string using sharps

Remember the relative tuning? This means that we can play the same note in multiple places on the fretboard. This can be seen in 3.2.

Figure 3.3: An octave from A to A on the multiple strings using sharps

Besides sharps there are also flats. A flat (\flat) means to go a halve tone (one fret) down. Rewriting 3.3 with flats would look like 3.4.

In 3.4 also a new symbol is shown. The natural (\natural). This means that the note on which a \flat or \sharp was placed, now is 'normal' again. Whenever a \flat or \sharp is added to a note, it remains valid for this note up to the end of the measure. What a 'measure' is will be explained later.

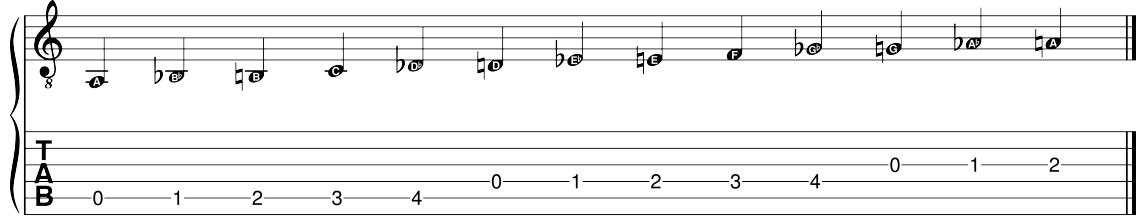


Figure 3.4: An octave from A to A on the multiple strings using flats and naturals

3.2 Finger names

When playing guitar, your fingers will be given a name. This makes it easier in music notation to indicate which finger should be used. The names are shown in 3.5.

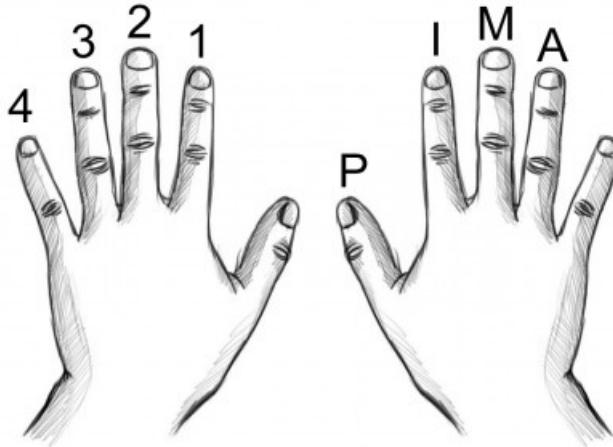


Figure 3.5: Names of the fingers [3]

3.2.1 Free and rest stroke

With a free stroke you hold your right hand in a relaxed position over the strings (see 3.6). To play a string, move your finger through the string without lifting the upper part of your finger. Your finger should slightly curl into your hand. Once you made the sound, move your finger back to the relaxed position.

The trick now is, to not hit the other strings, and to not 'pluck' the string (making a buzzing sound).



(a)



(b)

Figure 3.6: Free stroke position [2]

A rest stroke may sound a bit louder (but with some practicing a free stroke can be as loud). Like the name suggests, a rest stroke means that you move your finger through a string to play it, but now you let your finger rest on the next string.

3.2.2 Exercises

In the exercises below you see some symbols above the notes. The numbers with circles around them indicate on which string the note should be played (this can also be seen from the TAB). The *i* and *m* indicate which right-hand finger should be used to play the note.

Play exercise 3.7 first with a rest stroke and then with a free stroke to feel the difference.

Figure 3.7: Exercise: rest and free strokes

This second exercise (3.8) is similar to 3.7, but a bit more challenging.

Figure 3.8: Exercise: changing strings with *i* and *m* fingers

To make use of all PIMA fingers, try to play the intro of *Nothing Else Matters* from *Metallica*. Play 3.9 with a free stroke.

Nothing Else Matters - Metallica

Intro

Figure 3.9: Exercise: PIMA with Nothing Else Matters - Metallica intro

In 3.10 you will also use your left hand. The numbers above the notes indicates which left-hand finger should be used to press the fret. Play this exercise using alternating *i* and *m* fingers.

Figure 3.10: Exercise: fretting on 1st string

Exercise 3.11 is adds another string to the exercise.

Figure 3.11: Exercise: fretting on 1st and 2nd string

4 Music notation

4.1 Music notation anatomy

4.1.1 Note names

You have already seen the music staff from 4.1 in the previous exercises. However, the meaning of it was not explained yet.

The letters A-G on the staff show which line on the staff has which note value. The notes that are in between the lines nicely spell out "FACE", making it easy to remember. The notes that are on the lines can be remembered with the mnemonic "Every Good Boy Does Fine". But another important thing to see is that the notes go up alphabetically (starting again with A after G).

The most left symbol () is called the G clef. Note that the curl of the G clef is on the line of the G note.

The vertical line in the middle indicates the start/end of a new measure. and the thinner vertical line in at the end indicates the end of the piece.

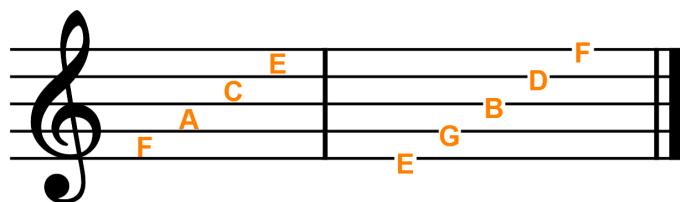


Figure 4.1: Note names on the staff in two measures

Note that the clef shown in 4.1 is different than the ones seen in earlier exercises. For guitar notation you sometimes see a little 8 under de clef. This means that the original position of "middle C" (C4) with treble clef sounds an octave lower. This Results in the C that you see in 4.1 to be the middle C (C4) when there is a little 8 below the clef.

4.1.2 Time signatures

So far we have also only seen one type of note. The quarter note. However, there are more. See 4.2. The $\frac{4}{4}$ means that there can fit 4 (top number) quarter notes (bottom number) in a measure.



Figure 4.2: Note duration

Important: A whole note (o) equal 4 quarter notes (J). It does **not** equal a whole measure.

There are also other time signatures. But they all have the meaning. The top value indicated how many notes of the bottom number's duration fit in a measure. So a $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature can fit 3 quarter notes per measure. And a $\frac{6}{8}$ time signature can fit 6 eighth notes per measure. Note that $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$ actually indicate the same duration per measure, but they indicate a different feel. This is indicated in 4.3

In 4.3 you also see a new duration notation. In the first measure with $\frac{6}{8}$ timing, there are dots next to the notes (P). This means that the note has a duration of 1.5x its original duration.

The >symbol means that this note should be played with a more powerful accent. The bold numbers above the notes indicate the counting of the notes. A bold number means to put an accent on it, but played less accented than the ones where there is also an >symbol.

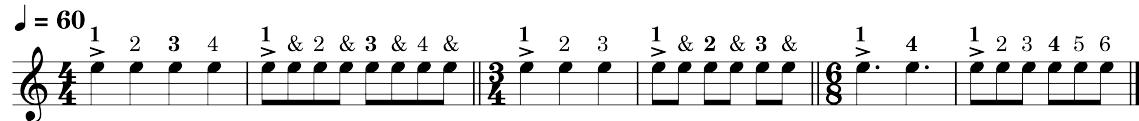


Figure 4.3: Time signatures

Remember exercise 3.9 (Metallica - Nothing else matters (intro))? That is also in $\frac{6}{8}$.

4.1.3 Exercises

As a first tune that uses multiple note durations, and to learn the first notes on the guitar, Jingle bells will be played (4.5). The notes used for this tune are shown in 4.4.

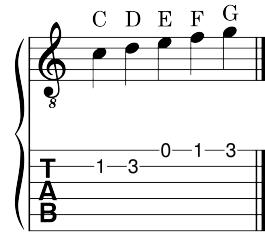


Figure 4.4: Notes used in jingle bells

Now Jingle bells can be played as shown in 4.5.

Jingle bells

Figure 4.5: Jingle bells

To learn a few more notes, the "Tetris" tune will be played. The notes from 4.6 should be used in this tune. The only new notes are A and B.

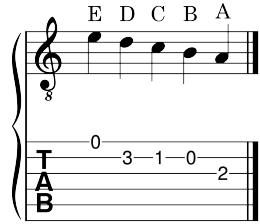


Figure 4.6: Notes used for the first part of the Tetris tune

In 4.7 the first part of the Tetris tune is written. Note the dotted note in measure 3.

Tetris (first part)



Figure 4.7: First part of the Tetris tune



The "Tetris" tune is actually derived from a Russian folk song called "Korobeiniki", which is based on a similar named poem written by Nikolai Nekrasov.

We have now played all non-sharp/flat notes. But each note can be placed in different positions, and with different pitches.

Let's take the melody of "Memory" from the musical "Cats" 4.9. It uses most of the notes we already learned, but also uses a lower G, F, and E (4.8).

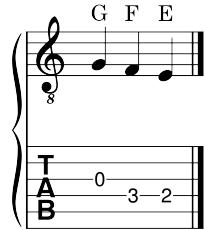


Figure 4.8: The G, F, and G, notes on the 3rd and 4th strings

It also uses a new symbol. The **tie** symbol (seen to connect notes from measure 5 and 6 in 4.9). This symbol indicates that the duration of the first note that starts the tie has the summed duration of all consecutive identical note. All identical notes after the note that starts the tie are therefore not played

Memory - Cats

Figure 4.9: Memory from the musical Cats

Another song that you know that uses all the notes that you've learned so far is Happy birthday 4.11. This notation also introduces a new symbol. The rest symbol .

Just like there are multiple durations for notes, there are also multiple durations for rests. Before playing happy birthday, lets have a look at the different rest symbols in 4.10.

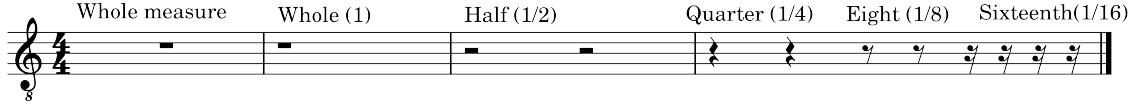


Figure 4.10: Rest symbols

Happy birthday

Two staves of musical notation for 'Happy birthday'. The top staff starts with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. It consists of eight measures, each containing a note or a rest. The bottom staff starts with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature, with the number '6' written above it. It also consists of eight measures, each containing a note or a rest.

Figure 4.11: Happy birthday

Bibliography

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