## Parts of The Guitar:



## Holding Your Guitar:

The easiest way to hold your guitar when first learning is to sit down. Most people sit when they practice and stand when they are performing. The exception is when playing classical guitar, where it is common to sit while performing.

## Sitting Position:

Hold your guitar so that it rests on your right thigh (if you are left handed please switch to the opposite). Use the inside of your forearm to keep the guitar in place. You should have your guitar and body positioned so that the neck of your guitar does not tip towards the ground. Your guitar should be balanced comfortably without the use of your left hand for support. Make sure your body is comfortable and relaxed without hunching over.


## Standing Position:



You will need to use a guitar strap when standing. Adjust the length of the strap to your desired comfort and preference, usually where the bridge is about waist high. Make sure both ends of the straps are securely fastened to prevent the guitar from slipping out of the strap and falling. Make sure that it is easy and comfortable to play your guitar. After several weeks of practice, you can always lower your strap like legendary rock stars do.

## Left Hand Fingers \& All Six Strings:



## Notes Of The Guitar:

Below is a diagram of the first 12 frets of a guitar fretboard. The notes repeat themselves after the first 12 frets. Depending on what key or scale you are in will determine whether you call notes sharps or flats. This diagram shows all sharps (\#), however, every sharp can also be a flat (b). For example F\# is also Gb, G\# is also $\mathrm{Ab}, \mathrm{A} \#$ is also $\mathrm{Bb}, \mathrm{C} \#$ is also $\mathrm{Db}, \mathrm{D} \#$ is also Eb .


## Right Arm Position:

When you rest your right arm on the guitar below the elbow, your hand should be in between the pick ups.


## Left Hand Placement:

Hold the neck of your guitar firm enough to form the chords, but not too tight. You will want to be able to move your hand up and down the fretboard effortlessly. When fretting some chords and notes, it is acceptable to move your thumb above the neck. If you are experiencing some difficulties reaching some notes, this may be due to poor hand position. Make sure you are not "hooking" your thumb too far over the fretboard. Avoid holding your palm diagonal to the neck.


## Finger Placement:

When you place your fingers on the fretboard, make sure that they are on their tips and placed just behind the frets. Press hard enough to avoid buzzing. The strings should ring out nice and clear.


## How To Hold A Pick:

When holding your pick you want approximately $20 \%$, or about a $1 / 4$ inch of the pick showing. Place the pick between your first and second finger at an angle. Rest your arm against the guitar naturally so your hand lands in between the pickups. When you strum the string it should be a comfortable and natural feeling. Make sure that you do not dip or dig the pick to far below the strings, this causes the pick to get caught up between strings.



## How to String a Guitar:

## About Guitar Strings:

Strings come in many gauges. The gauge tells you the thickness of the strings. The lower gauge indicates thinner strings, and the higher gauge indicates thicker strings. The most common, or popular gauge for the electric guitar is .009 . This size is thinner and easier to bend when playing lead guitar.

The method used in this book is a general example of how to string your guitar. There are hundreds of different guitar styles that may require different methods of changing strings. It is a good idea to start with the Low E , which is the thickest, and work your way up. The most important thing to remember is to use the right string in the right place.

## Step 1:

Run the string through the bridge of the guitar. Make sure that the ball of the string is snug. Depending on the type of bridge you have, you may need to wiggle the string around to get it to feed properly.


## Step 2:

Pull the string through the post holes of the tuning pegs. Leave approximately 2 inches of slack in the string (the loose string should be about 2-3 inches away from the neck). The rest of the string should be pulled through the post hole.


## Step 3:

Bend the string to the right and under itself. Next, bend it over the string so it points to the tip of the head stock. As you tighten the string, it will loop over itself, which prevents the string from slipping when played.


## Step 4:

Wind the string counter clockwise while keeping tension on the string. Make sure that each wind of the string is snug with the first (do not wind the string around the post more than three times).

You may want to use a speed winder. They are well worth the minimal investment.


## Step 5:

When you are finished, cut off the excess string.


Now you are ready to tune your guitar.

## Tuning Your Guitar:

Tuning your guitar is essential. A well played chord that is out of tune, sounds far worse then a chord that is played improperly, but is in tune. We use the most common tuning method for both the Electric and Acoustic guitar, starting from the low $E$ or sixth string. It can seem overwhelming and frustrating in the beginning. An electronic tuner is highly recommended to guide you through the
 process while you are learning.

If you have another instrument such as a Keyboard, you can tune the High E string of your guitar to the $E$ note just above or to the right of middle $C$ (the low $E$ can be found on the second $E$ below or to the left of middle $C$ ). If you use an electronic tuner, it is important to also take some time and learn how to tune your guitar by ear. If you have nothing to tune your guitar to when practicing alone, you can simply tune your guitar to itself (or visit www.iconsofrock.com to access our free virtual tuner). When you are playing with other instruments, you will want to make sure every instrument is in tune with each other.

## The Low E String:

Pick the Low E and listen to how it sounds (you can also listen to the sound of each string in the tuning section of the DVD). Adjust it higher or lower until you reach the desired pitch. When you have the Low $E$ in tune, you are ready to tune the $A$ string.

## The A String:

Place the first finger of your left hand behind the fifth fret of the Low E string. That is an A note. Pick the fifth string and then the sixth. Adjust the fifth string higher or lower until both the open A string and the A note played on the sixth string sound the same.


## The D String:

Place the first finger of your left hand behind the fifth fret of the A string. This is a D note. Pick the open D string (fourth string) and tune the same way you tuned the A string.


## The G String:

Place the first finger of your left hand behind the fifth fret of the D string. This is a G note. Pick the open $G$ string (third string) and tune the same way you tuned the other strings.


## The B String:

This time, place the first finger of your left hand behind the fourth fret of the $\mathbf{G}$ string. This is a B note. Pick the open B string (second string) and tune the same way you tuned the other strings.


## The High E String:

Place the first finger of your left hand behind the fifth fret of the $B$ string. This is an E note. Pick the open E string (first string) and tune the same way you tuned the other strings.


Now is a great time to break-in your strings to prevent them from falling out of tune right away. You can do this by playing some notes throughout the fretboard. Bend the notes up and down (do not worry about how the bends sound right now). Play and bend random notes throughout the fretboard on each string, then retune. After a few times of playing and retuning your guitar it should stay in tune. You should now be ready to play your guitar without the worry of your guitar going out of tune too soon.

## Reading Music Notation

It is helpful to know how to read music, especially if your goal is to play with other musicians. Understanding the basics will help you along in your musical journey. You can compare reading music to reading a foreign language. It is relatively easy to learn how to say some basic words in a foreign country, however, when they are written down, it takes more time to learn how to read them. This introduction to reading music notation will be less complicated to understand with the use of graphic examples and written explanations. With a little time it will all make sense.

## The Staff:

The Staff or Stave (Staves when used in the plural) is a grid of five horizontal lines representing seven notes. The notes are symbols used to indicate pitch, and how long each note is played. The stems of the notes below the B note, point up and the stems above B, point down. Stems on the B note can point up or down. Ledger lines are used when additional notes are to be played that are above or below the standard staff's range. When a note goes off the staff, additional lines are used for that note only.


## Measures Or Bar Lines:

Bar lines are drawn across the staff to divide the sections of music called measures, or bars. A double bar line indicates the end of the section, or the end of an important part of the music.


## Clefs:

There are two kinds of basic clefs: the treble clef and the bass clef. Depending on what instrument you play, you may see only one, or both at the same time. The treble clef has higher notes, and the bass clef has lower notes.

Here are the names of the notes for both clefs:

The treble clef:


A simple phrase to help you remember the notes on the lines of the treble clef are:
Every Good Boy Does Fine. The notes on the spaces spell the word FACE.


The bass clef:


Simple phrases you can use to remember the notes on the bass clef are:
Good Boys Deserve Fun Always for the notes on the lines, and A Cow Eats Grass for the notes on the spaces.


## Sharps And Flats:

Flat "b" or Sharp "\#" symbols shown on the staff indicate that the note is being raised or lowered a half step. The notes played on the same line, or space within a series of notes following a sharp or flat, will remain sharp or flat even if the sharp or flat symbol is not used. A natural " $\ddagger$ " symbol is needed to allow the note to revert to its original pitch within the bar.


## Time Signatures:

Music is divided into units called measures. Each measure has a certain number of beats. The numbers found to the left of the staff is the time signature. The top number tells you the number of beats per measure. The bottom number tells you what kind of note is used for each beat.

A common time signature is $4 / 4$. That means there are 4 quarter notes per measure. Any combination of notes that equal 4 quarter notes can be used to fill up the measure. For example, you can have 4 quarter notes per measure or 8 eighth notes, or two quarter notes and 1 half note. You can even have one whole note in a $4 / 4$ measure that you play once but let it ring out through 4 quarter notes worth of time.


If the music is written in $3 / 4$ time, you will play 3 quarter notes per measure or any combination that equal 3 quarter notes. If you are playing in $6 / 8$ time you will play 6 eighth notes per measure or any combination equaling 6 eighth notes. There are many different time signatures.

## Notes And Their Values:

Each note is worth a certain number of beats. You can count each beat in four four time as follows: A whole note has four beats so it gets four counts, a half note gets two counts, a quarter note gets 1 count, an eighth note gets a $1 / 2$ count and a sixteenth note gets $1 / 4$ of a count.


## Counting:

Every beat in $4 / 4$ time is a quarter note.
You can count a quarter note out loud like this: 1, 2, 3, 4.
An eighth note gets half the time and is counted: 1 , and, 2 , and, 3 , and, 4 , and (don't forget to count the "and" after the 4).

A sixteenth note is counted as follows:
1, ee, and, ah, 2, ee, and ah, 3, ee, and, ah, 4, ee, and, ah.

If you have a metronome, you can count along to the click. (you can also access our free online metronome at www.iconsofrock.com). Counting with a metronome will keep you in perfect time. You can adjust the tempo, or speed, of the beat faster or slower and count along. Every click, or beep, is worth 1 beat or count. We will cover counting methods in more detail in the next few chapters.

## Rests:

Rests are counted the same way as if you were counting regular notes. They are used to create breathing room within the arrangement. Even moments of silence are a vital element when playing music.


## BEAMS:

Beams group notes of the same value together to make reading music easier. A sixteenth note beam consists of two horizontal beams.


## Dotted notes:

A dotted note is a standard note followed by a dot. The dot lengthens the note by half its value. For example, a quarter note would normally receive 4 beats. If you add a dot it will get 6 beats.


## Ties:

Ties have a similar effect as dots and are shown by using a curved line. The curved line links the notes together creating one longer note. The second note is NEVER played. The tie simply shows that the first note is sustained longer.


## Chords:

A chord is a combination of three or more notes that blend harmoniously when played together. Each of the chord notes are placed vertically on the staff to indicate that all of the notes are to be played at the same time.


## Reading Tablature:

Tablature, or TAB, is a simple method of writing down music played on guitar and bass. TAB will show you where notes and chords are played, however, it does not tell you the rhythm or time each note or chord should be played. It is best to use TAB for practice exercises or when learning how to play songs with which you are already familiar.

## Basic Tab Notation:



Am Chord Am Arpeggio


As you learn chords and scales, refer back to this section. When reading tab books, try to identify arpeggios and scales before you start playing, so you will get an idea of correct finger placement. See the examples below:

G Chord
G Arpeggio


Am Pentatonic Scale


## Introduction To Strumming:

Imagine your right arm as your built-in drummer, or metronome that keeps time. It is a good idea to practice with a metronome or drum machine if you can (visit www.iconsofrock.com to access our free online metronome). Another way to help keep time is to count 4 beats out loud or in your head as follows: 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and. Say the numbers and the "ands".

## Helpful Tips:

- When strumming, use a long wide stroke to strum through all of the strings.
- Keep the pick perpendicular to the string when you strum up and down, do not tilt the pick.
- Avoid dipping or digging your pick too far under the strings.
- You may want to rest your left hand slightly across the strings to mute them when practicing.

Practice the following exercises strumming open strings. Each exercise consists of 4 beats per measure. When you reach the end, immediately repeat, or loop the exercise without losing your rhythm or time.

A great strumming exercise to get you started is to strum down on the numbers and up on the "ands".


Another exercise to try is alternating between strumming the strings and missing the strings, also known as "ghost strums". Remember to keep your arm moving up and down on the numbers and "ands" to keep good time, even when you do not hit the strings. You can count it out like this: 1 Ghost 2 Ghost 3 Ghost 4 Ghost.


Now let's add a ghost strum on every "and" between the 2nd and 3rd beat as well as the last "and" after 4 . So you would count 1 and 2 Ghost 3 and 4 Ghost.


In the next exercise we will use the ghost strum on the 1 st "and", as well as the " 3 ". You can count it like this: 1 Ghost 2 and Ghost and 4 and.


Always practice using a metronome when you can. You can increase the tempo with the metronome as well as learn to count "in time". Have fun and mix up the strumming pattern any way that sounds good to you. After awhile you can keep time with your foot or in your head without moving your arm on the ghost strums.

Come back to these exercises after you learn how to play your chords. Then strum full chords in place of muted strings.

## Whole Steps And Half Steps:

Each fret on the fretboard is equal to a half step. A whole step moves two frets on the fretboard. The distance between two pitches is called the interval between them. In Western music, the small interval from one note to the next closest note higher or lower is called a half step or semi-tone. If you go up or down two half steps from one note to another, then those notes are a whole step, or whole tone apart. The exception to this rule falls between the notes $B$ and $C$, and $E$ and $F$. These notes are natural half steps which means it only takes a half step to move a whole note or tone.

It takes 12 chromatic, or half steps on the fretboard between octaves. An octave is the same note value, only higher or lower in pitch. For example, the High E is one octave higher than the Low E. Also, you can play an open string on the guitar and then play the same string with your finger pressing the 12th fret to find the octave.

Use this diagram to help identify the steps, and notes.


Remember the natural half steps between $B$ and $C$, and $E$ and $F$.

## Open Chords:

Chords are made by playing specific notes from a scale simultaneously. In most common cases, open chords are made from the root note, a third and a fifth note of a scale.

## C Major Scale



Based on the previous diagram, to construct a C Major chord you would need a Root (C), a 3rd (E) and a 5th (G). The diagram below will illustrate an open C Major chord.


C Major

The " $X$ " at the top of the diagram indicates which strings not to play and the "O" indicates which open strings should be played.

The most common cases of open chords you would use are Major, Minor and 7th chords. By using the previous chord example, you can construct a minor chord by simply lowering the 3 rd ( E ) one half step.

C Minor


To create a 7th chord, you would replace your 5th (G) with a 7th (B)

## Chord Finger Placement:

The correct finger placement of a chord is just behind the fret where the strings ring out nice and clear. You want to make sure the tip of your fingers land straight down on the appropriate string without touching the other strings.

## Open Chord Diagrams:

Below are diagrams of the chords explained in detail on the Learning Guitar Step 1 DVD.

E Major

E minor

E7

A Major

A minor
xO O O

A7
XXO

D Major
XXO

$\times \times \bigcirc$



## Open Chord Exercises:

Exercise 1:
In this exercise we use the 1,4,5 progression. It is common to make the five chord a 7th. You can strum these chords using the method explained earlier in this book, or you can rest or hold on some of the ghost strums.
(The $\mathrm{V}=\mathrm{a}$ regular strum, the $[\mathrm{v}]=$ a ghost strum.)

Strumming option 1 :
$\vee[\wedge][\vee] \wedge[\vee] \wedge \vee \wedge$

Optional Strumming Pattern:
$\vee$ Hold $[\wedge] \quad \vee$ Hold $\wedge \vee \vee$


## Exercise 2:

Try this exercise using both strumming patterns too. As you become comfortable playing and switching chords you can begin to count naturally without having to ghost strum as often and still play in time.
$\vee$ [ $\wedge$ ] $\vee \wedge$ [ V$] \wedge \vee$ [ $\wedge$ ]

Strumming Option 1 :
$\vee$ Hold $\wedge$ V [^] V $\wedge$ Hold
Optional Strumming Pattern:


## Major Scales:

Major scales are made up of seven distinct notes, plus an eighth ( the eight note is an octave higher than the root note). To construct any major scale, start with the root, or starting note. Move up a whole step (two frets) for your second note. Move up another whole step. This is the third note of the scale. Next, move up a half step (one fret). This will be the fourth note. Move up another whole step, for the fifth note. Again, move a whole step, for the sixth note, and up again a whole step for the seventh note. One more half step completes the scale.

1 -W- 2 -W- 3 -H- 4 -W- 5 -W- $6-W-7-H-8$


## Minor Scales:

A natural minor scale also has seven distinct notes, plus an eight note octave.
To construct minor scales follow this interval pattern:
whole-step, half-step, whole-step, whole-step, half-step, whole-step, whole step.

1 -W- 2 -H- $3-\mathrm{W}-4-\mathrm{W}-5-\mathrm{H}-6-\mathrm{W}-7-\mathrm{W}-8$-W

$\bigcirc=$ Root Note

## Major Pentatonic Scale:

Pentatonic scales are the staple of rock and blues guitar. You can also hear them used in jazz, country, and bluegrass music. Pentatonic Scales are made up of a series of 5 notes. Penta means five, and tonic means tones.

The major pentatonic is built from these intervals:
1 (root)-2-3-5-6

In the key of G, it would be:
G-A-B-D-E
Repeat the same 5 notes on all six strings.

$\bigcirc=$ Root Note

## Minor Pentatonic Scales:

Relative minor pentatonic scales use the $1,3,4,5$, and 7 notes of the natural minor scale.

The minor pentatonic is built from these intervals:

$$
1 \text { (root) - b3-4-5-b7 }
$$

In the key of G, that would give us:
G-Bb-C-D-F
Repeat the same 5 notes on all six strings.


## Minor Pentatonic Scale


$\bigcirc=$ Root Note

## Barre Chords:

Barre chords are movable chords played on the 5th and 6th strings. For example, you can play a 6th string barre chord on the 3rd fret which is " $G$ " and then move the same chord shape up a whole step and play an "A" without moving your finger positioning.

To Create a barre chord, hold all six strings down with your first finger.

## 6th String Barre Chords:

6th string barre chord shapes are similar to the open E Major, minor, and 7th chords.


E Major shape


E minor shape


E7 shape

## 5th String Barre Chords:

5th string barre chord shapes are similar to the open A Major, minor, and 7th chords.


A Major shape


A minor shape


A7 shape

## Barre Chord Exercise:

In this $1,4,5$ progression we will use the $G(1), C(4)$, and D7 (5) chords.

## Strumming Option 1:

$$
\vee[\wedge] \quad \vee \wedge \quad[\vee] \wedge \quad \vee \quad[\wedge]
$$

## Optional Strumming Pattern:

```
    V Hold ^ V Hold ^ V [^]
```



## Power Chords:

If you listen to rock, metal, and blues then you have heard power chords. Power chords are the easiest chords to play. They are often referred to as 5th chords (G5, C5, D5) because they are made of the root note and fifth note. The root and 5th note can be played on the 6th and 5th strings. Power chords are movable just like barre chords. An additional octave can be added on the 4th or 3rd string as shown.

## 6th String Power Chords:



## 5th String Power Chords:



In this exercise we add the 6 note which is one step (2 Frets) above the 5 note. Alternate from the 5th to 6th notes with your fourth finger. Can your hear the thousands of songs that use this method?


## Power Chord Rock Progression:

In this exercise you want to play a muted 6th and 5th string, which gives this a rock or metal quality. This is known as "palm muting". Rest the heel of your picking hand lightly on the strings close to the bridge. Muffle, or mute the sound slightly so you can still hear the string somewhat. Practice this muting technique by picking the 6th string in an up down motion. Now try it on the 5th string. The up-down picking method is like miniature strumming. Make sure your pick is gliding over the individual string. While picking, be careful not to place your pick too far below the string. Practice up down picking on each string individually, with and without palm muting.


## Chord Formula:

The major scale formula will help you identify the best chords to play together, and can be used in any key.

## Major Chord Formula:

Step 1: Write out the notes starting with the key in which you want to play. If you would like to create a song in the key of D here are the steps to do so.
D E F G A B
C
D

Step 2: Use the Major scale formula to identify major, minor,and 7th chords. You will also identify what sharps or flats you may need. Remember: two whole steps, one half step, three whole steps, and one half step (or 2-1, 3-1).

| D-E | E-F\# | F\#-G | G-A | A-B | B-C\# | C-D |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Step | Step | $1 / 2$ step | Step | Step | Step | $1 / 2$ step |

Notice that the F and C notes need to become sharp to make a whole step because " $E$ and $F$ ", and " $B$ and $C$ " are natural half steps.

Step 3: Number the chords.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| D | E | F\# | G | A | B | C\# | D |

Step 4: Identify the 1, 4, 5 chords and change the five chord to a 7th.

## D G A7

These are the primary chords in the key of $D$ major.

Step 5: Finally, identify the 2, 3, and 6 chords and make them minor.

## Em Fm Bm

These are the secondary chords.

You will end up with D, G, A7, Em, Fm, and Bm which will all work well together in the key of D Major. Now try this formula on your own in other keys.

## Minor Chord Formula:

If you would like a darker, or bluesier song, work in the Minor scale. The most common keys in minor are A minor and E minor. Below are the chords that work well in both of these keys. It also includes new chords for you to learn and play. You can always use a $1,4,5$ progression. Come up with exercises of your own in both $1,4,5$ progression, and also the $1,2,5$ progressions.

## Key of Am

## 1,2,5 Progression:

A minor is your 1 chord, B minor 7 b5 is your 2 chord, and E7 is your 5 chord.

Am

Bm7b5

E7

The finger placement for the Bm7b5 is to use your first finger on the 5th stringsecond fret, your 3rd finger on the fourth string-third fret, 2nd finger on the third string-second fret and your 4th finger on the second string-third fret.

You do not play either E string. Because there are no open strings, this is a movable chord. You can simply change chords by moving up the fretboard without changing your finger placement. If you move up a half step, you will be playing a Cm7b5 or a step and a half to Dm7b5 and so on.

## 1,4,5,Progression:

Am is your 1 chord, Dm is the 4 chord, and Em is the 5 chord.


## Key of Em:

## 1,2,5 Progression in Em:

In the key of E minor, the Em is your 1 chord, F\#m7b5 is your 2 chord, and B7 is your 5 chord.


Em


F\#m7b5


B7

The easist way to play the F\#m7b5 is by placing your second finger on the 6th string (slightly bend your second finger to mute out the 5th string), your third finger on the 4th string second fret, your fourth finger on the 3rd string second fret, and your first finger on the $2 n d$ string first fret.

Notice again that you do not play any open strings, therefore this is also a movable chord.

## 1,4,5 Progression in Em:

Em is your 1 chord, Am is the 4 chord, and Bm is the 5 chord.
$\bigcirc \mathrm{OOO}$


Em


Am


Bm

Congratulations! When you have mastered the chords covered so far in this book, you will be able to play most of your favorite Rock, Blues, Country, and Metal songs. The best way to practice the chords you have learned is to purchase a sheet music book featuring your favorite artist, and jam with friends.

## Octaves:

An Octave is a series of eight notes, starting and ending with the same note. Moving up the fretboard, the octave note has twice as many vibrations per second. Moving down the fretboard the octave note has half as many vibrations per second. If you play the open E string you can find it's octave on the 12th fret which is another E note. Standard guitars have a three and a half octave range.

A great way to find octaves on the guitar is as follows: On the 6th and 5th strings, move up the fretboard two strings and over (or up) two frets. Notice how the pattern repeats itself over and over with every note. This is an effective way to learn the notes of the fretboard.

On the 4th and 3rd strings move up the fretboard two strings and over three frets.

6th and 5th String Octaves


Up Two - Over Two

4th and 3rd String Octaves


Up Two - Over Three

## Octave Exercises:

Octaves add fullness to chords and also sound great played as individual notes. Try the following octave exercises, then make up your own. Reference the notes of the fretboard chart while you use the formula for the octaves to become more familiar with the location of each note or key in which you want to play.

## 6th String Octave Exercise



5th String Octave Exercise


4th String Octave Exercise


## 3rd String Octave Exercise



