

How to Read Guitar Tablature

(See the “Reading Guitar Tablature” chapter on the DVD for the video examples)

Guitar Tablature also known as “guitar tabs” or “tabs” is an easy way to demonstrate how to play a riff, lick or song on guitar. Learning how to read tablature is much easier and faster than learning how to read standard sheet music as you’ll be able to read tablature and start playing songs after reading this lesson whereas reading sheet music can take years to master.

The biggest difference between tablature and standard sheet music is that sheet music is self-contained, a trained person can play a song from sheet music without having heard the song before. Guitar tablature requires that you listen to or know the song in your head and then match up the tablature with how you hear the song.

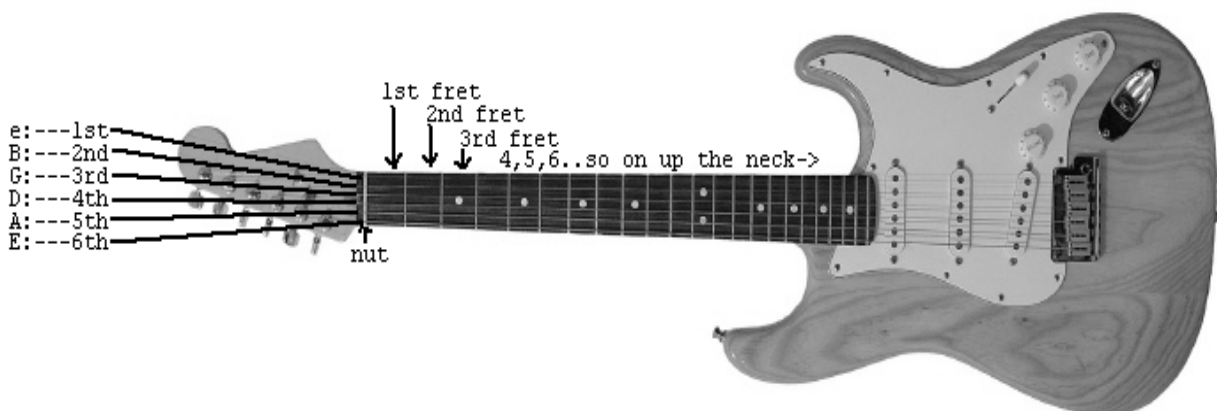
Guitar tablature combined with an instructor showing you how to play a song step by step is the ultimate way to learn. That is how lessons from www.dvdguitarlessons.com are designed.

6 lines = 6 strings (Video Example 1)

Tablature consists of 6 lines, one for each string of the guitar. The top line represents the 1st string (the string closest to the floor) and the bottom line is the 6th string (the string closest to the ceiling). The letters on the left are the notes of each string when played open (unfretted).

```
e:----- --> 1st string thinnest, highest sounding
B:----- --> 2nd string
G:----- --> 3rd string
D:----- --> 4th string
A:----- --> 5th string
E:----- --> 6th string thickest, lowest sounding
```

A view of a guitar as if you were holding it on your lap. (Video Example 2)



Numbers in Tablature (Video Example 3)

The numbers in tablature indicate the frets where you will place your left hand fingers. In the guitar photo above, the strings are shown vertically and the frets are shown horizontally. If a piece of tablature states that you should play the 2nd fret of the B string you would simply press your finger down right before the 2nd fret wire on the 2nd (B) string . (See diagram below to see how that would be written out in tablature).

```
e:-----
B:----2-----
G:-----
D:-----
A:-----
E:-----
```

The order in which notes get played (Video Example 4)

You read tablature from left to right. Simply play the notes in the order you see them. Try the tablature below:

first play the 5th string...0
 then the 5th string...4th fret
 then the 4th string...2nd fret
 then the 4th string...4th fret
 then the 3rd string...2nd fret
 then the 4th string...4th fret
 then the 4th string...2nd fret
 then the 5th string...4th fret
 then the 5th string...0

```

e:-----
B:-----
G:-----2-----
D:-----2--4-----4--2-----
A:--0--4-----4--0--
E:-----
    
```

Note: a zero in tablature means to pluck the string open without pressing down on any frets.

What fingers will you use? (Video Example 5)

Tablature will not tell you which finger you use to fret a note. The general rule is that you should use one finger per fret in a four fret area (this rule will vary but it's a good starting point). Try the tablature below using your 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th fingers:

5th fret – 1st finger (index)
 6th fret – 2nd finger (middle)
 7th fret – 3rd finger (ring)
 8th fret – 4th finger (pinky)

```

e|---5--7--8-----|
B|-----5--5--6--8-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    
```

Playing more than one note at a time (Video Example 6)

When 2 or more notes are stacked up on top of each other, you play them at the same time. Here are two examples:

Press your index finger on both the 2nd and 3rd strings at the 3rd fret. Strum both at the same time.

```

e|---3-----|
B|---3-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    
```

Multiple notes played at the same time are typically chords. This is a tab of an (F) chord.

```

e|--1-----|
B|--1-----|
G|--2-----|
D|--3-----|
A|--x-----|
E|--x-----|
    
```

(x) indicates: do not play that string

Symbols used in tablature (Video Example 7)

Certain symbols are used in tablature to indicate “playing techniques” that are used in licks, riffs and chords.

(/) indicates to slide

(b) indicates to bend

(h) indicates hammer-on

(p) indicates pull-off

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|--5/7-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    
```

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|---7b9-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    
```

```

e|-----|
B|--5h8-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    
```

```

e|--8p5-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    
```