

# Free Ebook for Beginner Guitarists

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# Guitar Strings

The strings are numbered 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.

The 1<sup>st</sup> string is the thinnest and 6th string is the thickest.

The strings are more commonly known by the name of the note that we hear when the string is played.

So the 1<sup>st</sup> string is often called the “high E string”.

2<sup>nd</sup> string is called the “B string”.

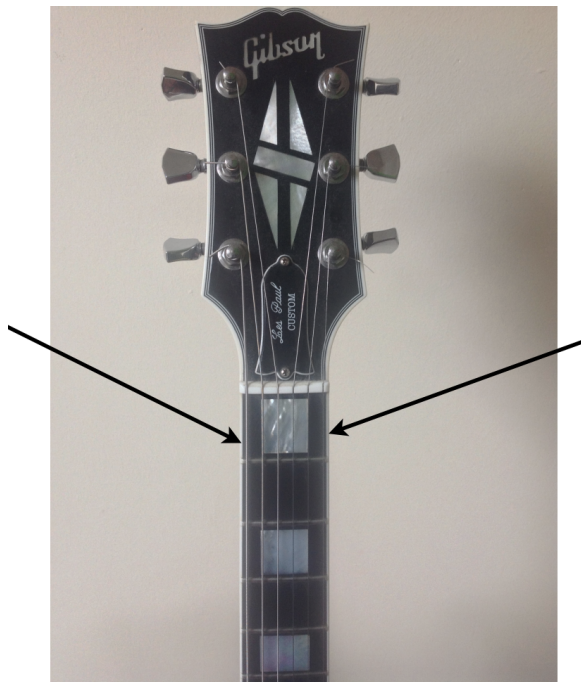
3<sup>rd</sup> string is called “G string”.

4<sup>th</sup> string is called the “D string”.

5<sup>th</sup> string is called the “A string”.

And the 6<sup>th</sup> string is the “low E string”

6th string  
Low E string  
(thickest string)



1st string  
High E string  
(thinnest string)

# Tuning

You will need to tune your guitar regularly if you are learning to play. This will be done by developing your listening skills and by learning how to use digital tuners.

## Use Your Ears.

Even if you have a good tuner, the tuner may not work if your guitar is very out of tune. For this reason it is a good idea to learn to tune by listening carefully to the sound of the strings. You can then use the tuner to fine tune afterwards.

There are a few free apps and websites that will play the sound of perfectly tuned guitar strings for you and you can then compare these sounds to your own strings and try to decide if your string sounds higher or lower in pitch.

A free app called "guitar tuning notes" will do this or you can use the audio samples on my website. Listen to the sound of the low E string on the App. Now play your own low E string and see if it sounds higher or lower or the same. If it's too high or too low, turn the tuning peg for that string a little bit and see if your string sounds closer to the one on the app. If it sounds closer then keep turning the tuning peg until it sounds the same. If it sounds even worse than before then turn it the other way. Only turn the pegs very slowly or you might break your strings.

Repeat this for all 6 strings until you feel like they are roughly in tune.

Most tuners have a meter display like this:

In this picture the arrow is to the left, which means the string is too low.





If it is too high then the meter will be to the right like this:



When the string is in tune the arrow will be in the middle and most tuners will also use a green light to tell you the string is in tune:



If the string is very out of tune then the tuner may not know which sting is being played and may display the wrong note.

For example if the E string is too low then the tuner may say D or D# and if it's too high then it may say F or F#.

It's not important to learn about notes yet but use this table below to help you get the string in tune.

String	Too High	To Low
1st String: High E	F or F#	D or D#
2nd String: B	C or C#	A or A#
3rd String: G	G# or A	F or F#
4th String: D	D# or E	C or C#
5th String: A	A# or B	G or G #
6th String: Low E	F or F#	D or D#

# Getting Started

Before we carry on, there are just a few things I feel I should mention. Firstly make sure you are holding your guitar correctly. Hold it so the back of the guitar is flat against your body. In their first lesson, many beginners seem to want to tilt their guitar forward so they can see what they are doing; but tilting it forward will make it impossible to get your hands into the right position.

**Good**



**Bad**



## **Left Handed Guitarists.**

I've taught many left-handed guitarists. Some of them learn using left-handed guitars and others prefer to learn on a right-handed guitar. You will be learning new skills with both hands anyway so it actually makes very little difference. Despite the efforts of great left handed musicians such as Jimi Hendrix, Kurt Cobain and John Lennon, left-handed players get a bit of a raw deal when it comes to guitars. Left-handed guitars are hard to find and all the books are written for right-handed guitar. If you are learning with a left-handed guitar then the info in this booklet will still apply to you but just remember that when I refer to the right hand then I'm talking about your left hand and vice versa.

## **How To Use This Book**

Now that you are sitting correctly and your guitar is in tune I'd like to make it clear that learning guitar is not strictly a "linear" process. By this I mean you don't have to work through this book in the order it is written. You could learn the riff first, then practise strumming then learn chords afterwards or practise a bit of each section at a time. My aim with this book is simply to provide free advice and information to beginner guitarists so that they can learn at their own pace in their own way.

# Frets and Fingers

## Frets

“Frets” are the bits of metal that go across the neck of the guitar.

They are also numbered.



1st Fret

2nd Fret

3rd Fret

## Left Hand Fingers

You will also need to know which fingers to use for each note.

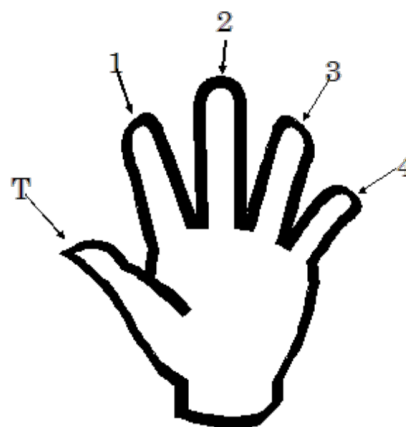
Your index finger is called your “1st finger”

Your middle finger is called your “2nd Finger”

Your ring finger is called your “3rd finger”

and your little finger is called your “4th finger”

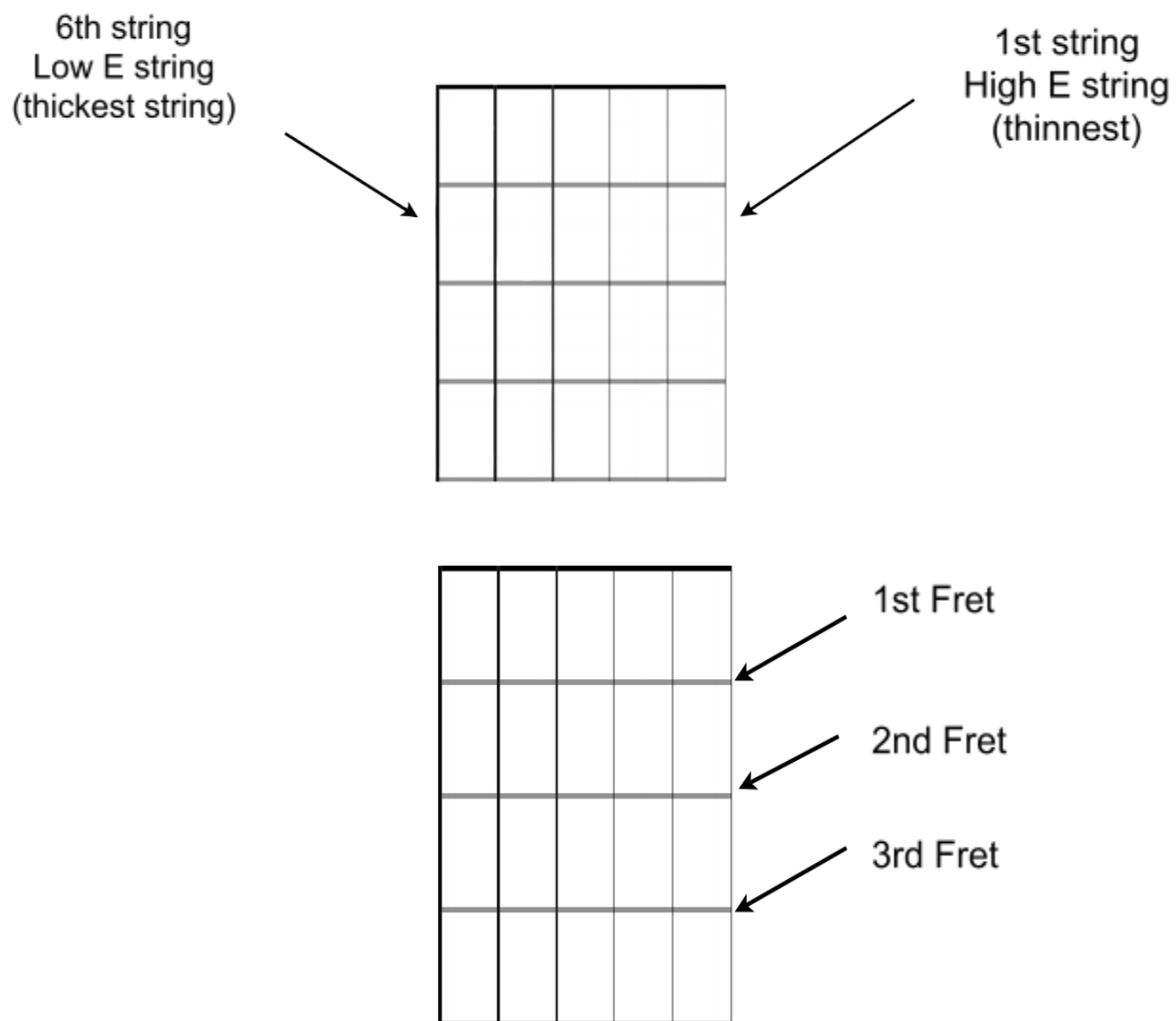
Very occasionally the thumb is used. This will be marked as a “T” anywhere it is written.



# Using Diagrams To Learn Chords

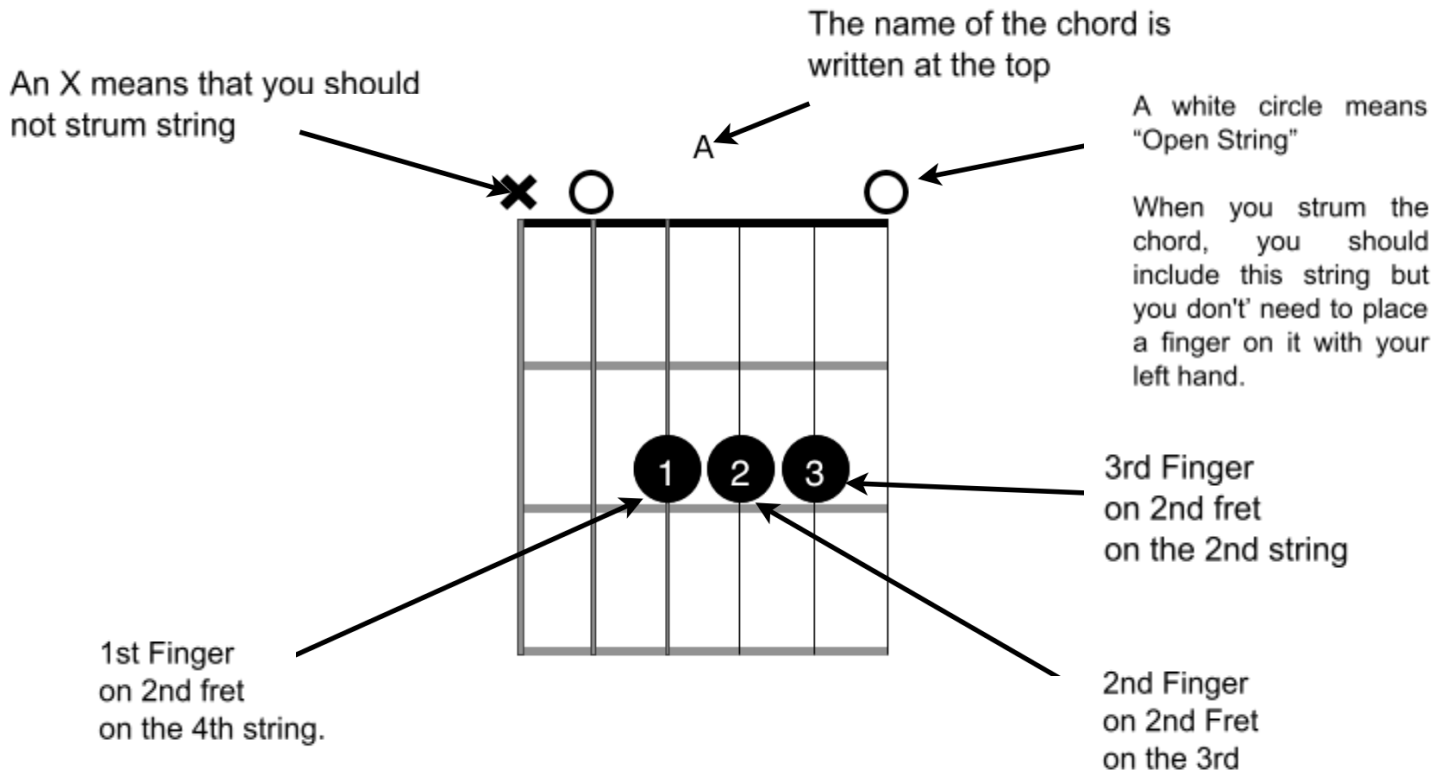
## Chord Diagrams

Instead of using an actual picture of a guitar, the information about where to put your fingers to play a chord is easier to read when using a diagram like this:



# Your First Chord

Here is an example of a full chord diagram. The diagram shows an “A Chord.” The full name for this chord is “A Major” but it will usually just be written as “A.”

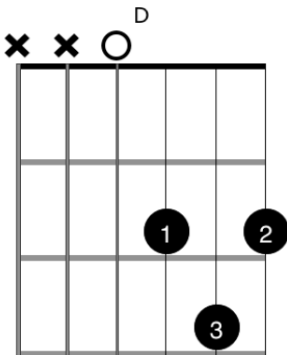


So to play the A chord, your 1st finger will press down behind the 2nd fret on the 4th string, your 2nd finger will press down behind 2nd fret on the 3rd string and your 3rd finger will press down behind 2nd fret on the 2nd string. When you strum the strings, strum all the strings except for the 6th string. Here's a photo of what the A chord shape should look like when you hold it properly.



# Two More Chords

You will be able to play some basic songs using just three chords. Here's two more chords that are often in the same songs as the chord.



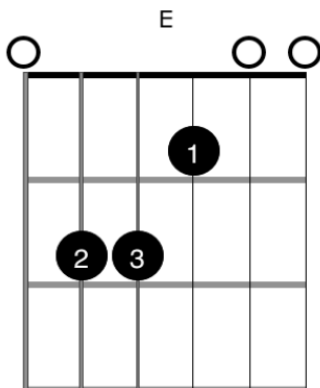
D Major Chord:

1st Finger, 2nd Fret, 3rd String

2nd finger, 2nd Fret 1st String

3rd Finger, 3rd Fret 2nd String

Strum all strings except the 5th.



E Major Chord:

1st Finger, 1st Fret, 3rd String

2nd finger, 2nd Fret 5th String

3rd Finger, 2nd Fret 4th String

Strum all 6 strings





# Clear Sounding Chords

Now that you know where to put your fingers for three chords, the next step is to try to get each chord sounding nice and clear. Here are a few tips to help get your chords sounding good.

## Very Short Finger Nails



Sorry ladies. if you want to play guitar you will need to keep those fingernails very short.

Being able to play guitar is much more impressive than pretty nails anyway :)

## Keep your fingers close to the frets

If your fingers are too far away from the fret then you will have to press down really hard to get a clear sound. Make things easier for yourself by positioning your fingers as close to the fret as possible. Your fingers should be right behind the fret but not on the fret. For the A chord this is particularly difficult as you have to put all your fingers at the same fret but you should still try to keep them as close to the fret as you can.

### Good

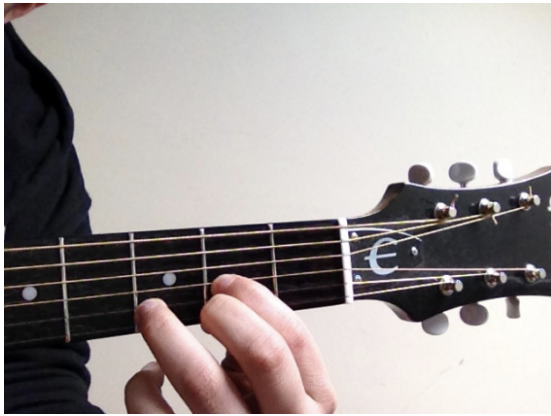


### Bad



## Each finger should only touch one string

**Good**



**Bad**



Aim to let only the very tip of your finger touch the strings. If you press the string with the side of your finger then your finger is likely to touch one of the other strings. This will stop the string from making the right sound when you strum the chord. Keep your fingers on their tips and don't let them touch the other strings.

## Think about the position of your thumb and wrist

**Good**



**Bad**



The position of your thumb and wrist will make a huge difference to the sound of your chords. You should aim to bring your thumb downwards and move your wrist away from you. This might feel awkward at first but it will make it much easier to position your fingers correctly.

# Chord Practice Tips

Here are a few tips to help you master your chords as quickly as possible:

## **Repeat Repeat Repeat...**

Whenever you learn a new chord use this method to memorise it: 1. Put your fingers in place one at a time, 2. Strum the chord, 3. Lift your fingers off, 4. Repeat.

Do this 10 times in a row, twice a day, every day with all three chords. This will only take a few minutes and you'll get to know the shape really well.

## **Play the strings separately:**

Once you feel like you know the three chord shapes really well, start playing each string one at a time instead of strumming them. This will show you which strings you are playing clearly which ones you aren't. Start by trying to get one or two clear notes in each chord and take it from there.

## **Find the most efficient way to switch between chords.**

Switching between chords is the one of the hardest obstacles for a beginner guitarist but it's also one of the most important things to master so take the time to get it right straight away so you can start learning songs as soon as possible.

Follow the step by step process below to make sure you are switching between chords correctly.

## **Switching from A to D.**

In both the A chord and the D chord your 3rd finger is on the 2nd string. As a general rule, when playing guitar, do not move your fingers more than you need to. This means that when switching from the A chord to the D chord you should not lift your 3rd finger off the string. Instead, you should lift your 1st and 2nd fingers off and slide your third finger along the string and then put your 1st and 2nd fingers back on.

### **1. Play the A Chord**



### **2. Lift off your 1st and 2nd fingers**



**3. Slide your 3rd finger over to 3rd fret**



**4. Put your 1st and 2nd fingers in Place to play the D chord.**



Repeat this process in reverse order to switch back to the A chord.

### **Switching From D to E.**

A similar method can be used to switch from the D chord to an E chord. When switching from D to E it will be the 1st finger that slides along the string.

**1. Play the D chord**



**2. Lift off your 2nd and 3rd fingers**



**3. Slide 1st finger down one fret**



**4. Put 2nd and 3rd fingers in place to play the E Chord**





## Switching from A to E

When switching between E and A, we do actually need to lift all of our fingers from the strings. However you might notice that in both chords your 2nd and 3rd fingers are next to each other. This means that we can move both the 2nd and 3rd finger together.

### 1. Play the A chord



### 2. Lift all 3 fingers but keep 2nd and 3rd fingers together.



### 3. Place 2d and 3rd finger in position for the E chord.



### 4. Place the first finger in position for the E chord.



## Practise Chord Changes Against The Clock:

See how many times you can switch back and forth between two chords in one minute and try to beat your score each time. You'll be amazed how quickly your chord changes will improve if you do this.

# Strumming

As well as switching between chords with your left hand, you will need to learn how to keep a rhythm going with your right hand and how to strum with the right technique.

## Eight Note Strumming

When learning to strum chords on a guitar, the best place to start is "eighth note strumming." This means there will be eight strums in a bar. There are four beats in a bar of music and we are strumming two on each beat which gives us eight in total.

Start by strumming down and up and counting "one and two and three and four and" as you play. The strumming should match up with the counting like this:

One	and	Two	and	Three	and	Four	and
down	up	down	up	down	up	down	up

## Making it sound like music.

Try to play the first down strum of the bar a bit louder than the others:

"ONE and two and three and four and ONE and two and three and four and"

This is called "accenting the first beat of the bar" and it will help hold the song together.

When strumming downwards try to strum the right number of strings. Eg 5 strings for the A chord ,6 strings for the E chord and 4 strings for the D chord. When strumming upwards, try to strum about 3 or four of the strings. This will naturally make the down strums louder than the up strums, which makes it sound more musical.

It is important to try to make sure that each strum lasts for an equal amount of time and that you don't speed up or slow down while you are playing.

## How Strum Patterns are Written Down

As long as you can strum up and down with a solid rhythm and count the strums as you play, it isn't particularly important to learn the notation used for reading and writing strum patterns.

However, I thought I'd include a bit of info on this subject as some people will find it useful, particularly if you have played other instruments before. It will also help avoid confusion when you are trying to learn songs from a book.



There are two pieces of information required to learn a strum pattern.

1. Which strums are up strums and which are down strums.
2. How long each strum lasts for.



A downwards strum will be written like this:



and an upwards strum will be written like this:

You'll probably notice that the symbol for an up strum looks more like a down strum and vice versa. This is because this notation was originally used for violin bowing. Guitarists have kind of drawn the short straw when it comes to notation and a lot of our symbols are backwards. This won't make much difference in the early stages of playing. For now just focus on getting used to strumming up and down and counting the rhythm as you play.

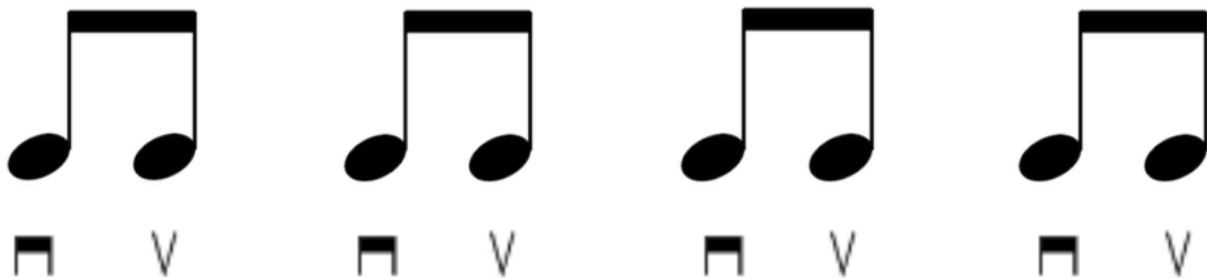
For this strum pattern all the strums last for the same amount of time: one eighth of a bar.



An eighth note is sometimes called a "quaver" is written like this:



A pair of eighth notes looks like this:



So a whole bar of eight note strumming looks like this:

one      and                  two      and                  three      and                  four      and

# Strumming Practice Tips

## **Strum from the Wrist, Not From The Elbow.**

You will get a smoother sound if you try to keep your elbow and forearm still as you play and allow the movement to come from your hand and your wrist instead

## **Relax Your Wrist**

Remember to keep your wrist loose as you strum. It should feel like a stroking or flicking action rather than a pushing action.

## **Make Sure You are Holding Your Pick in the Best Way.**

The two most important things to remember when holding your pick are:

1. Hold your pick between your thumb and index finger.
2. Hold your pick very close to the tip.

### **Good**



### **Bad**



Even if it feels more comfortable to hold it differently at first I highly recommend sticking to the two points I mentioned above as it will make things much easier for you in the long run.

## **Develop your sense of rhythm.**

Strumming will come much more naturally if you have a good sense of rhythm. When you are listening to music, try to tap your foot with the pulse of the song and count “one and two and three and four and” as you do. Some songs are easier to do this with than others so try it with a variety of different types of music.

# Putting Chords and Strumming Together to Play Songs.

If you can strum an 8th note strum pattern and switch between chords at the same time then you will be able to play a few songs.

You will be playing a simplified version of the song but it will be something that you or other people can sing along with and it will be enough to make you sound like a real guitarist.

Here are the chords for “Chasing Cars” by Snow Patrol.

| : A | A | E | E |

| D | D | A | A : |

Play this sequence round and round in a cycle using the 8th note strum pattern that you've learned. There are two bars of each chord, so if you are playing 8 strums per bar you will play 16 strums on the A chord then 16 strums on the E chord then 16 strums on the D chord then 16 strums on the A chord then the sequence starts again with 16 more strums on the A chord.

Don't worry if your chord changes are still very slow at this point. It's more important to keep your right hand moving.

Remember to keep your right hand strumming constantly even if the left hand hasn't formed the chord shape in time

Also make sure you practise this very slowly at first.

# Using Guitar Tablature To Learn a Riff

As well as strumming chords on the guitar, you can also play one note at a time to make a “Riff.” A “Riff” is a short catchy phrase that is repeated several times in different parts of a song.

Most guitarists use a form of notation called “Tablature” or “TAB” for short. Using TAB and listening to a riff repeatedly is the quickest and easiest way to learn a riff.

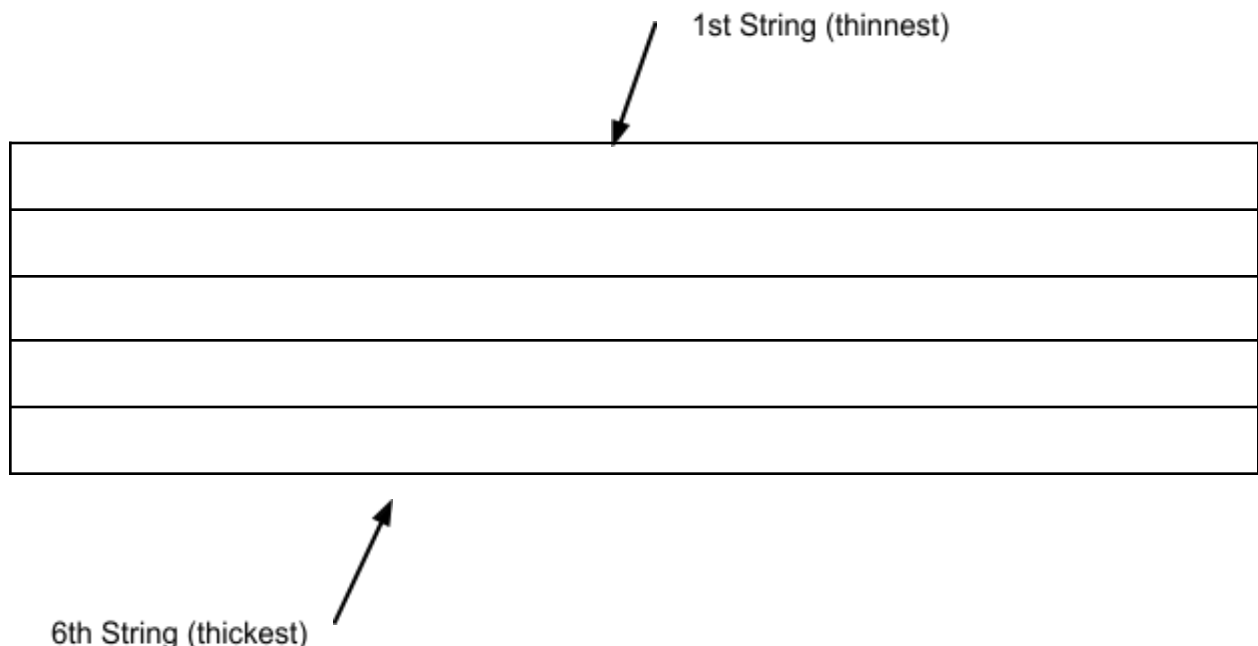
Using TAB will tell you exactly where to put your fingers to play the right notes for the riff you are learning. However, you will need to listen to it over and over again so you can learn the rhythm and the overall sound of the riff. Whilst listening, try to pay attention to how long each note is played for and see if you can hum along or clap along to what you are hearing. This will mean the sound of the riff will be firmly stuck in your head so you will know what you’re aiming for when you are practising.

Guitar TAB contains two pieces of information:

1. Which string to play
2. Which fret to play.

If you are playing the right fret on the right string then you are playing the right note.

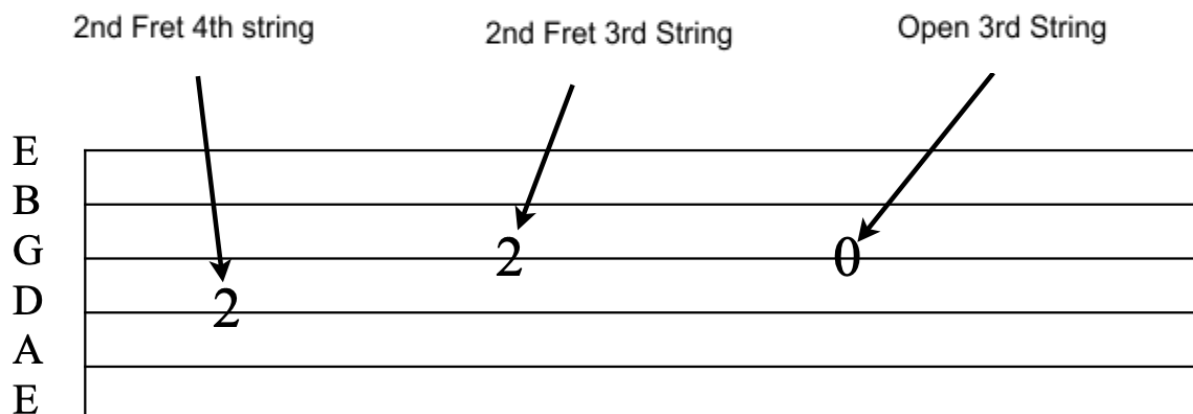
TAB is displayed using six horizontal lines. Each line represents a string. The only confusing part is that the top line on the tab represents the thinnest string on your guitar which is actually at the bottom of your guitar. When I was first learning I would write “thickest” and “thinnest” on my TABs to remind me. I do this for my beginner students now and it helps a lot. The names of the strings (E A D G B E) will often be written at the side, which also helps.



Numbers will be written on the lines to tell us which fret to play: so if we see a 2 written on the 4th line down then that means we play the 2nd fret on the 4th string (the D string).

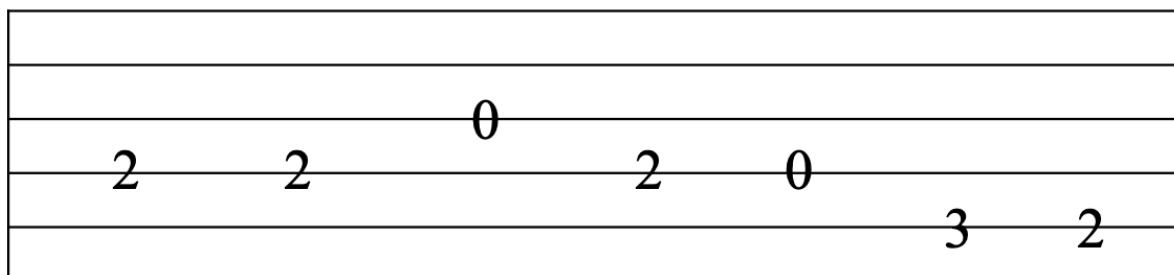
If we see a 2 written on the 3rd line down then that means we play 2nd fret on the 3rd string (the G String)

An open string is written as an "O". So if we see an O written on the 3rd line we would play an Open 3rd string (open G String). Just to clarify, an "open string" is when you play a string without pressing down a fret.



## Seven Nation Army Riff

Here is the riff from "Seven Nation Army" by The White Stripes.



If you're reading the TAB correctly then you should be playing:

2nd fret on the fourth string,  
 then 2nd fret on the 4th string again  
 then open 3rd string,  
 then 2nd fret on the 4th string again,  
 then open 4th string,  
 then 3rd fret on the 5th string,  
 then 2nd fret on the 5th string.

It's a great riff to get started with. Once you've practiced it enough try to play along with the song.

# Riff Practice Tips

## Hitting the right string

When you're first starting out, you might find it difficult to hit the right string with your pick.

Positioning your right hand correctly will help a lot here. When you're playing one string at a time you will need to position your hand differently from when you are strumming.

When you're strumming chords, your hand will be moving up and down freely like this:



When you're playing single notes, it will need to be resting on the guitar. This can be done in two ways.

### Method 1:

One way is to rest the base of your palm on the bridge of the guitar. It doesn't matter if your palm touches some of the strings, as long as it doesn't touch the string that you are playing.





## Method 2

You can rest one or two of your right hand fingers below the strings



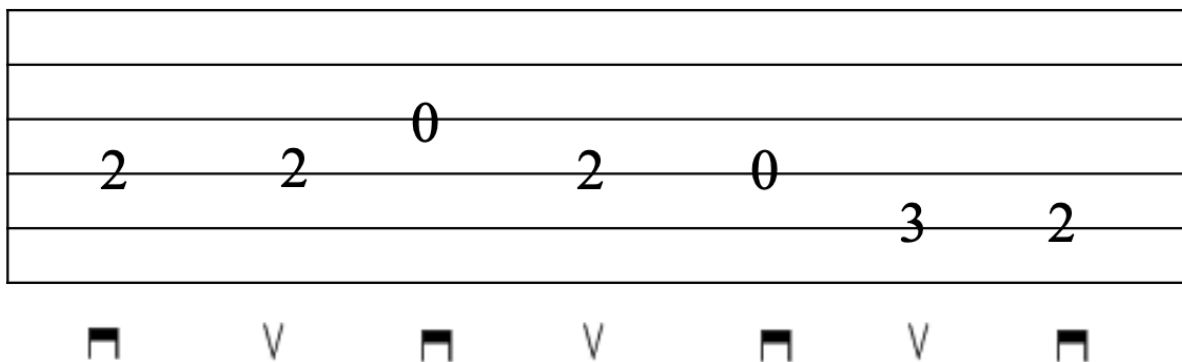
Both of these methods will work fine for playing one note at a time.

## Alternate picking

Most people instinctively play every note with a downwards picking motion. This will slow you down in the long run so try to get used to "alternate picking"

This means playing the first note as a down stroke and the second note as an up-stroke and alternating between the two.

The same symbols used for the up strum and down strum will sometimes appear in music books to tell you which notes are down strokes and which notes are up strokes.

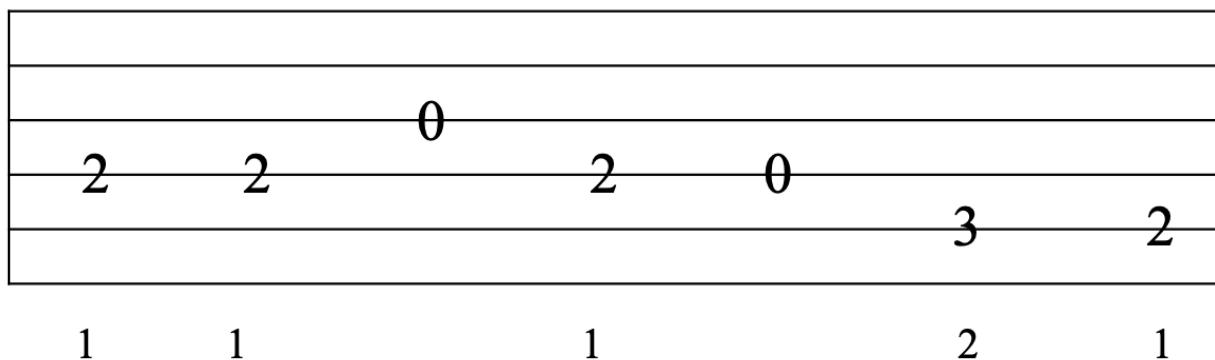


### One finger per fret:

many beginners either try use one finger to play every note or just randomly choose a finger for each note. This will cause you to move your hand too much and will slow you down.

For every riff you learn, try to decide which finger is best for each note. For the Seven Nation Army riff we are only using 2 frets (2nd fret and 3rd fret). This means we will use two fingers to play the riff. Use your first finger to play the notes on the second fret and use your 2nd finger to play the 3rd fret note.

Sometimes the recommended fingers will be included in the TAB underneath the corresponding note Like this:



### Final thoughts

Firstly congratulations on deciding to become a guitar player. Now there's one more of us, one less of them!

If you are struggling to master the material covered in this booklet then don't worry and try not to get frustrated, that's all part of the process. Just keep persevering and you will reach your goal eventually. Just be patient and work hard and you can learn anything.

This E book should help you make sense of the many other great free learning recourses out there that have been contributed by people all over the world.

## Videos Links

[Tuning](#)

[First Lesson](#)

[Your First 3 Chords](#)

[Beginners Strumming](#)

[Finger Stretches](#)

[Switching Between Chords](#)

[5 Tips For Faster Chord Changes](#)