

Reading Music for the Guitar

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For the Guitar Classes

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CHAPTER 1

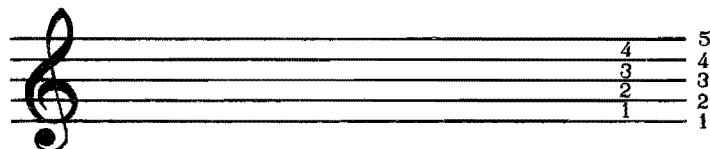
THEORY AND TECHNIQUE

Guitar Reading and Technique presents a carefully selected body of music literature; and if this literature is practiced consistently and conscientiously, musical reading ability will be markedly improved. This book is not devoted to any specific method of music theory and therefore may be used concurrently with practically any theory text. Scales, modes, intervals, and some elementary music theory have been incorporated throughout.

It will be helpful to study the following brief presentation of musical theory, especially if the student has had little previous musical training before actual practice on the guitar.

Traditionally, music for the guitar is notated with the treble clef (♩). This clef is placed on a staff consisting of five lines and four spaces, numbered from the *bottom* up:

1-1



In order to extend the range of the staff either higher or lower, short lines representing an extension of the staff lines are added to the notes both above and below the staff. These are called ledger lines.

1-2



Notes are placed on lines or spaces as shown in the following example and so indicate various *pitch* relationships. Pitch may be defined as a note's position on the staff.

1-3

Notes on the Lines



Notes on the Spaces



RHYTHM

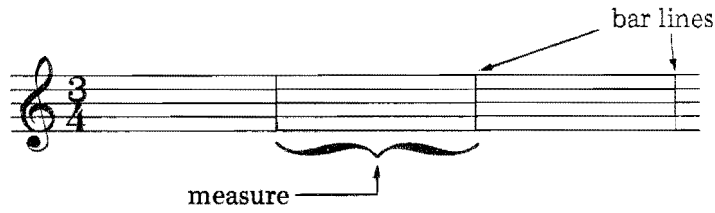
Rhythm measures the length, or *duration*, of notes and silences (*rests*). A thorough understanding of the principles of rhythm is an invaluable tool in reading proficiently on the guitar, or for that matter on any instrument. Sounds are organized into a set number of beats governed by a *meter signature* (or *time signature*) which has the appearance of a fraction—that is, one number placed on top of another:

1-4



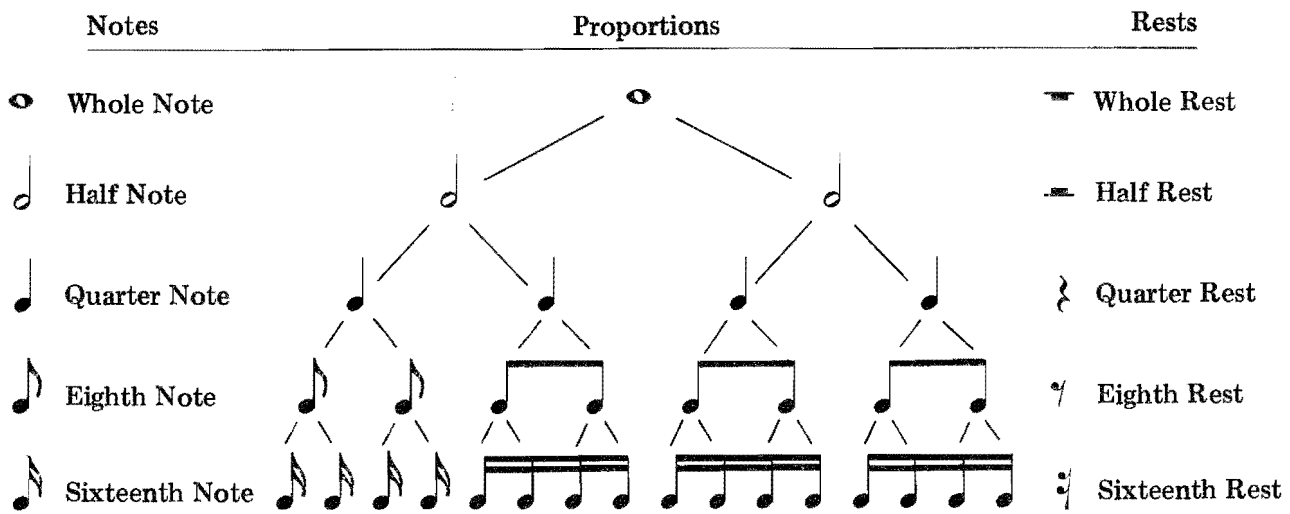
One of the most important rules which should be memorized concerning the function of a meter signature is that the upper number indicates the *number of beats occurring in each measure*, and the lower number indicates the *type of note which receives the beat*.

A set number of beats is divided into measures separated by bar lines as shown below in example 1 - 5. The distance between two bar lines is known as a *measure* or *bar*.



Example 1 - 6 identifies note values and their equivalent rests.

Relationships of Notes and Rests

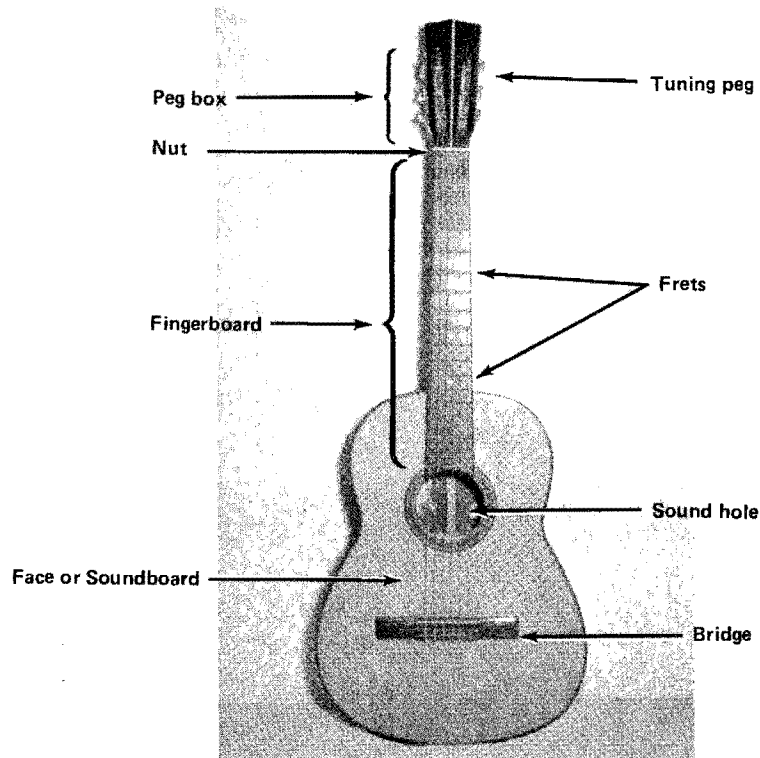


In common practice, the quarter note both plain (♩) and dotted (♩·)—as in compound meter, represents one beat more often than any of the other note values.

TUNING THE GUITAR

There are several acceptable methods currently in use for tuning the guitar. Eventually the guitarist should be able to tune the instrument by memorizing the sounds of the intervals—that is, the pitch differences—between the open strings. However, if the beginning guitarist has had little musical training, it is strongly urged that the student consult another musician and tune the guitar either to itself beginning with the E or sixth string, with the piano, or with a guitar pitch pipe. The guitar pitch pipe—available in most music stores—produces six tones which correspond to the six open strings of the guitar. The various parts of a guitar are shown in example 1-7 below.

1-7



(Greg Texido, Onondaga Community College Audio Visual Dept.)

Tuning the Guitar to Itself

When tuning a guitar to itself, the following procedure should be used. The thickest string (lowest in pitch) is the E or sixth string; the thinnest string (highest in pitch) is also identified as E, but is the first string. If the guitar is held by the student in a traditional sitting position, the string nearest the player's chin is the sixth string. All strings referred to are *open* strings,—that is, the strings are sounded without the left hand fingers touching the strings.

BEGINNING WITH THE SIXTH STRING AND PROCEEDING TO THE FIRST STRING, ALL OPEN STRINGS OF THE GUITAR ARE TUNED TO THE INTERVAL OF A PERFECT FOURTH EXCEPT FOR THE SECOND STRING WHICH IS TUNED A MAJOR THIRD UP FROM THE THIRD STRING.

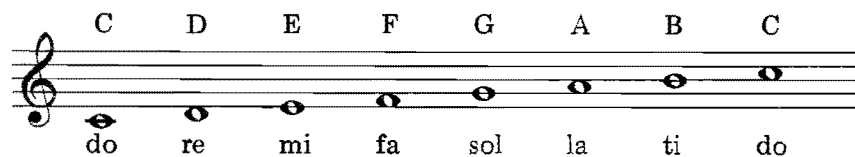
1-8

String Number:	6	5	4	3	2	1
String Name:	E	A	D	G	B	E

An *interval* is the distance between two pitches.

Sing the following scale with the proper syllables:

1-9



A *perfect fourth* is, for example, the distance from *do* to *fa* (C to F). The first two notes of the song "Here Comes the Bride" also contain this interval.

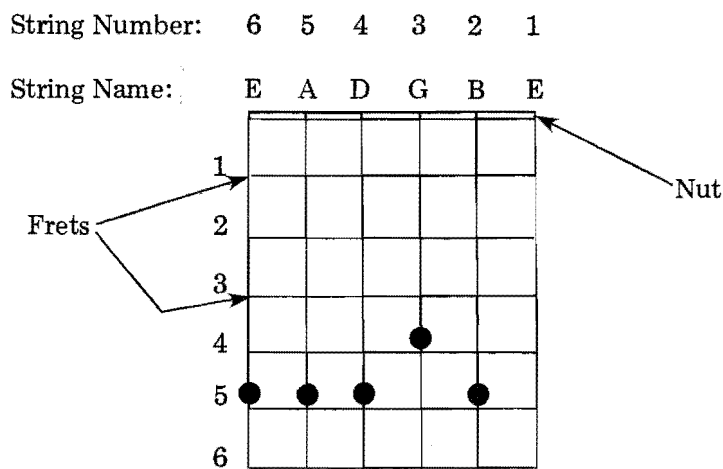
A *major third* (the distance from the third to the second open string) consists of the syllables from *do* to *mi* or C to E. The first two notes of the "Marine's Hymn" ("From the Halls of Montezuma") comprise this interval.

Tuning the E or sixth string. Begin tuning the guitar by making sure the E or sixth string is not tuned too high—that is, this string should not have too much tension.

ALL OTHER STRINGS WILL BE TUNED TO THE E OR SIXTH STRING.

Tune the guitar according to the following diagram:

7-10



Tuning the A or Fifth String. On the E or sixth string place the third (ring) finger of the left hand directly behind the fifth fret without touching it. Press down firmly and sound the string. Tighten or loosen the tuning peg for the open fifth string until it sounds identical to the pitch of the sixth string "stopped" on the fifth fret. Play the open sixth string and then the open fifth string. These two strings must produce the interval of a perfect fourth (as in *do* to *fa*, or the first two notes of "Here Comes the Bride")."

NOTE: WHEN MAKING A FINAL TUNING, LOOSEN THE STRING SLIGHTLY BELOW THE CORRECT PITCH, AND THEN BRING THE STRING UP TO THAT PITCH. THIS ADJUSTMENT TAKES UP ANY SLACK IN THE TUNING PEG GEAR MECHANISM.

Tuning the D or Fourth String. Follow the same procedure that was used for tuning the fifth string. Place the third finger of the left hand behind the fifth fret on the A or fifth string, press down firmly and sound this string. Tighten or loosen the tuning peg for the open fourth string until it sounds identical to the pitch of the fifth string stopped on the fifth fret. Play the open fifth string and then the open fourth string to see if they produce the interval of a perfect fourth.

Tuning the G or Third String. Follow the same procedure used for tuning the fifth and fourth strings. Begin by placing the third finger of the left hand behind the fifth fret on the D or fourth string and proceed accordingly.

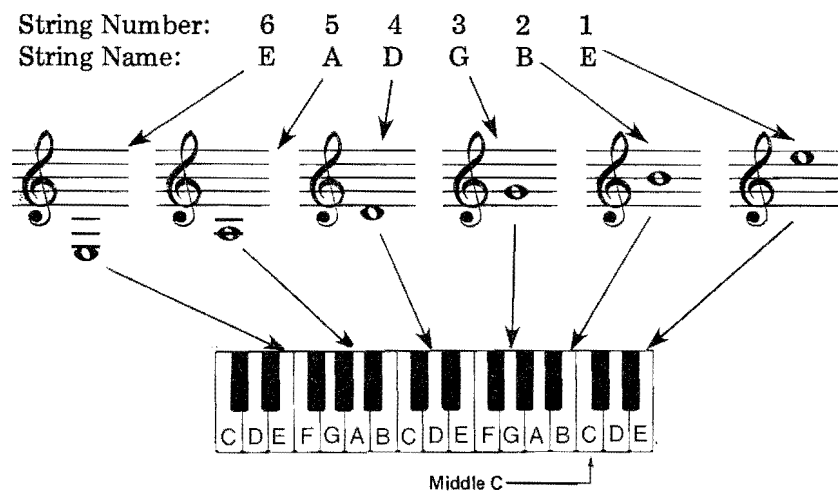
Tuning the B or Second String. The procedure is the same, but the interval and fret is different. Place the third finger of the left hand behind the fourth fret on the G or third string, press down firmly and sound this string. Tighten or loosen the tuning peg for the open second string until it sounds identical to the pitch of the third string stopped on the fourth fret. Play the open third string and then the open second string to see if they produce the interval of a *major third* (as in *do* to *mi*, or the first two notes of the "Marine's Hymn").

Tuning the E or First String. Follow the same procedure used for all strings except the tuning of the B or second string. Begin by placing the third finger of the left hand behind the fifth fret of the second string and proceed accordingly.

Tuning the Guitar to the Piano

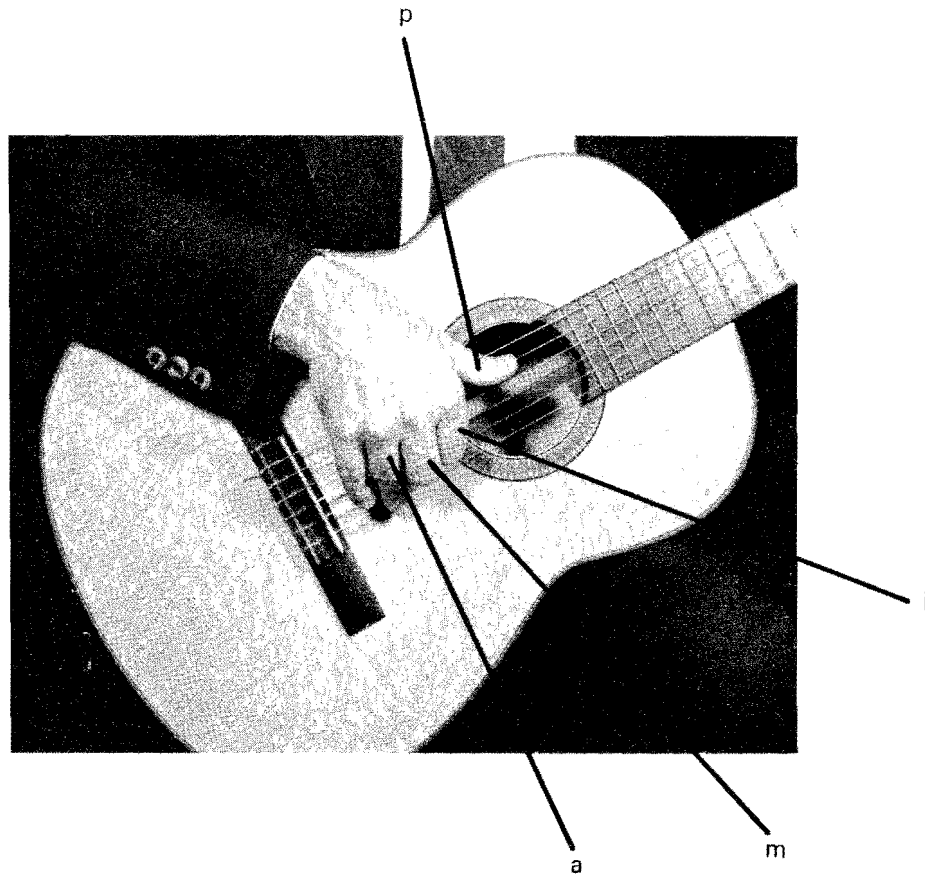
If a piano is used to tune the guitar, follow the diagram as shown in example 1-11. Begin tuning with the sixth string and proceed to the first string until all strings are identical to the corresponding notes on the piano.

1-11



The notation shown above in example 1-11 for the open strings is that which is written for the guitar. Music for the guitar is written in the treble clef, one octave higher than sounding pitch. An octave is the interval between the first and eighth tones of the diatonic scale.

Example 1-12 illustrates the correct sitting position for classic (finger-style) guitar. This position may also be adopted for plectrum (pick) guitar. However, the more common sitting position for pick guitar shows the guitar supported on the right thigh (with or without the right leg crossed over the left leg) and the guitar neck somewhat parallel with the floor.



(Greg Texido, Onondaga Community College Audio Visual Dept.)

Suggested Posture of the Right Hand

1. Keep the knuckles parallel with the strings.
2. Place the hand slightly behind the sound hole, with the right forearm positioned on the front edge of the body of the guitar.
3. Note that the thumb (p) as shown in example 1-13 is well in advance of the fingers.
4. Maintain a curved wrist position which is as relaxed as possible and which permits the knuckles of the right hand to remain parallel with the strings.

There are two strokes commonly used by the right hand of the classic (finger-style) guitar. These two strokes are the rest stroke (also called the *Apyando*) and the free stroke (known also as the *Tirando*).

The Rest Stroke

This stroke is executed by striking a string with a finger or thumb and immediately resting on an adjacent string. For example, if the first finger (i) strikes the first string, it immediately comes to rest on the second string. In contrast to this, if the thumb (p) strikes the sixth string, it immediately comes to rest on the fifth string. It should be emphasized that in the early stages of guitar technique, the thumb more frequently uses the free stroke.

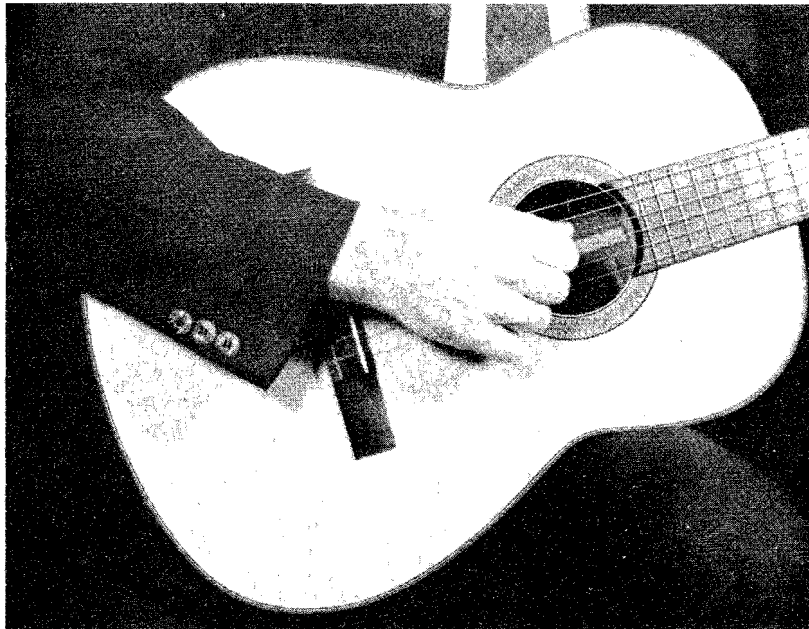
The Free Stroke

In this stroke, a string is struck with a finger or thumb; but rather than allowing the finger or thumb to rest on an adjacent string, the finger or thumb moves freely above the string. Tip segments of the fingers should be relaxed with both strokes but there should be some resistance for the sake of volume and accuracy. In the following chapters, both free strokes and rest strokes are used.

THE RIGHT HAND (PLECTRUM GUITAR)

The plectrum guitar is known by various names, among the most common being the pick-style guitar or the single-string guitar. Right hand technique and hand placement differs considerably from that of the classic (finger-style) guitar although the tuning of the instrument remains the same. In the majority of cases, the strings are steel rather than the nylon commonly found on the classic (finger-style) guitar. Example 1-14 shows suggested right hand placement.

1-14



(Greg Texido, Onondaga Community College Audio Visual Dept.)

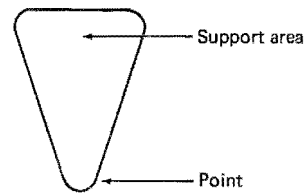
Suggested Posture of the Right Hand

1. Keep the knuckles almost perpendicular to the strings.
2. Note that the right forearm assumes a much lower position than that shown for the classic (finger-style) guitar (see example 1-13). Naturally, this lower forearm position is mandatory if the knuckles are to remain nearly perpendicular to the strings.
3. Since the plectrum or pick is placed between the thumb and index finger, the wrist must remain relaxed to permit the pick to travel freely over all six strings.
4. With the exception of the modification of right arm and hand positions, the guitar is held in the same manner as shown in example 1-12.

The Plectrum

Picks exist in many shapes and sizes but perhaps the most common type is that which is shown in example 1-15 below.

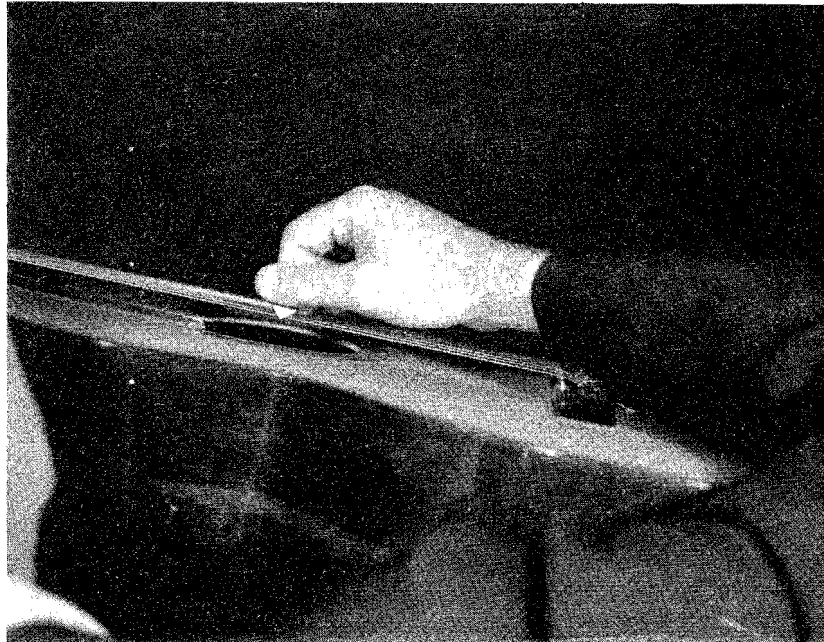
1-15



Holding the Plectrum

Place the pick between the thumb and index finger as shown in example 1-16.

1-16



(Greg Texido, Onondaga Community College Audio Visual Dept.)

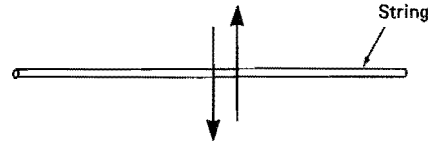
1. The pick should be held firmly but not rigidly between the thumb and index finger at the support area.
2. Notice that the thumb is almost parallel with the string.
3. It is also important to note that the first joint of the index finger remains close to a right angle to both the string and the thumb. This position assures a consistent and smooth right hand technique when perfected.

There are two suggested strokes for use with the plectrum. The first may be used at all levels of development; the second is a modification of the first and is probably more successful when used by an advanced player.

The Down-Up Stroke

This is perhaps the most widely used stroke for plectrum guitar. The pick, at the support area, is held firmly but not rigidly and executes a down and up motion.

1-17



The down-up motion shown in example 1-17 is identified by the following commonly used symbols:

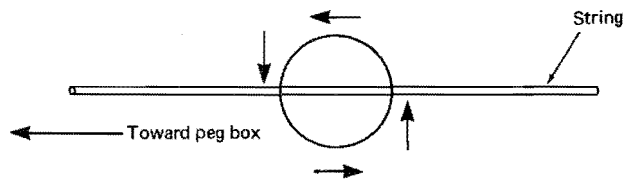
▣ = Down Stroke

∨ = Up Stroke

The Circular Stroke

A modification of the down-up stroke is the circular stroke. Begin this stroke in the same manner as the down-up stroke, but rather than making a vertical stroke, make a small, circular, clockwise motion with the point of the pick. The same symbols (▣ ∨) will be used for both strokes.

1-18

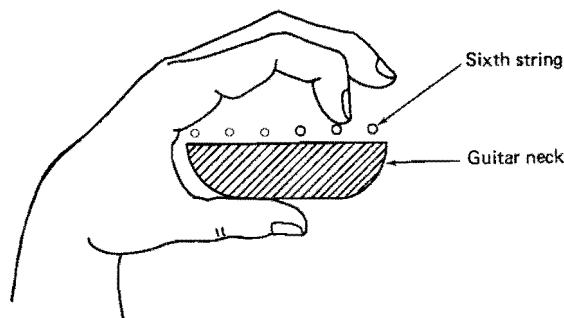


THE LEFT HAND

The left hand position for both finger-style and pick guitar should remain essentially the same. The following example illustrates the correct placement of the left hand, thumb, and fingers on the neck and fingerboard of the guitar:

1-19

Cross Section of the Guitar Neck



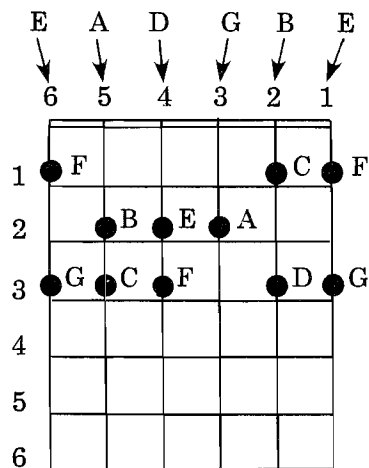
Suggested Posture for the Left Hand

1. Keep the wrist sufficiently away from the guitar neck to permit the finger tip to be placed on the string slightly behind the fret. In general, one finger's width between the palm of the hand and the guitar neck may be used as a guide.
2. As shown in example 1-19, each finger should maintain a curved arch, not only for clarity of tone, but also to avoid a blurring of the tone and to prevent striking adjacent strings.
3. Once a left hand finger is placed, do not lift that finger until a lower note on the same string or a note on another string is played. (Use this method for sustained legato [smooth] passages; it is not a good idea to always leave the left hand fingers down.)
4. The thumb should remain flat with the flesh opposite the thumb nail supporting the neck of the guitar. Do not allow the thumb to jut forward over the sixth string. (However, in some circumstances it is necessary to use the thumb in this manner—for example, when producing certain jazz chords.)
5. In general, it is a good idea to slightly arch the palm of the left hand, approximately as would be created by grasping a baseball in the left hand. This position creates better finger placement and reach.

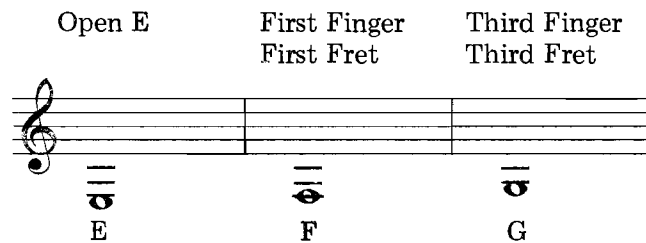
Let us now proceed to the study and playing of the guitar, beginning with the lower neck.

CHAPTER 2

THE LOWER NECK

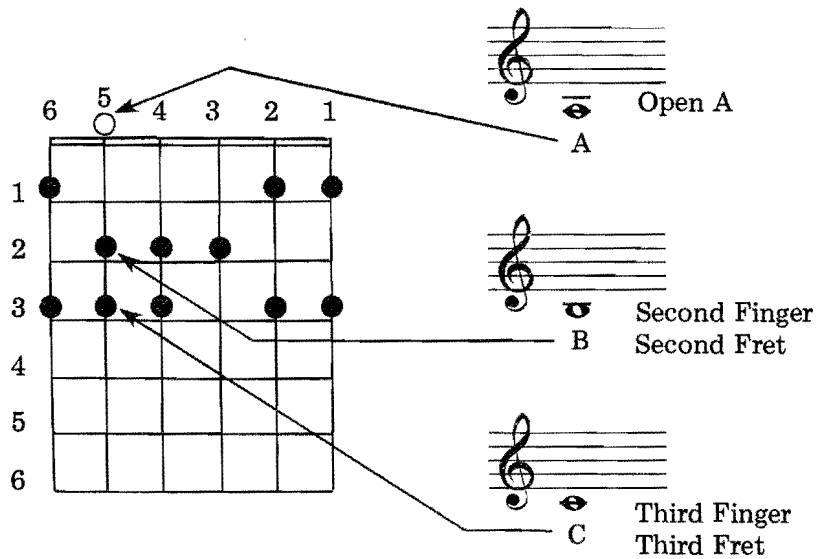
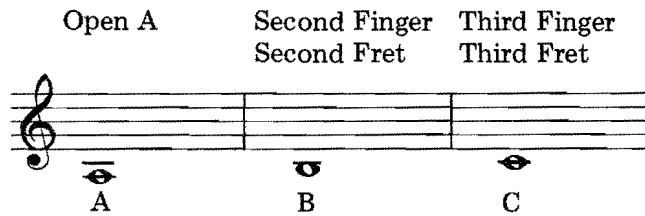


NOTES ON THE SIXTH STRING





NOTES ON THE FIFTH STRING (LOWER NECK)



PROCEDURE FOR PRACTICE

1. Follow the same method for practice as that recommended for the sixth string.
2. Note that A to B is a whole step and B to C is a half step.
3. Leave the second finger (B) down when playing C.

The Tie

These measures sound the same.



2-3

i m i m i m (Use the rest stroke whenever possible)
also i a i a i a

NOTES ON THE FOURTH STRING (LOWER NECK)

Open D Second Finger Third Finger
 Second Fret Third Fret

6 5 4 3 2 1

1 ● ● ● ● ● ●
2 ● ● ● ● ● ●
3 ● ● ● ● ● ●
4
5
6

D Open D
E Second Finger Second Fret
F Third Finger Third Fret

PROCEDURE FOR PRACTICE

1. While practicing, say out loud the finger numbers of the left hand. For example:
open, open; 2, 2; 3, 3.
2. Leave the second finger (E) down when playing F.

Dotted Quarter Note

These measures are played exactly the same.

Count: 1 2 & 3 1 (2) & 3 1 (2) & 3

2-4

i m a i m a, then a (Continue to use the rest stroke)

COMBINING NOTES ON THE SIXTH, FIFTH, AND FOURTH STRINGS

E F G A B C D E F

⑥ ⑤ ④

Sharps (\sharp), flats (\flat), and naturals (\natural) are called *accidentals*. A sharp before a note raises that note's pitch by one-half step; a flat lowers a pitch by one-half step; and a natural cancels a sharp or a flat. The following note is F-sharp:

Second Finger
Second Fret, Sixth String



2-5

St. Anne

Duet. If two or more players are not available, play each part separately.

1
 m a m
 also: i a i

2
 m a m a m
 also: i a i a i

⑥

1
 ④

2

3

1

2

• Circled numbers indicate the string. Numbers without a circle refer to fingers of the left hand.

NOTES ON THE THIRD STRING

Open G Second Finger
Second Fret

PROCEDURE FOR PRACTICE

1. Employ the same procedure which applied to the study of the lower three strings.
2. In addition, the best tone will be produced by keeping each finger of the left hand curved and by placing the tip of the finger just behind the fret.

$\frac{6}{8}$ meter: six beats to each measure, the eighth note receives one beat.

2-7

i m i m i, then
 m a m a m, etc. (Use the rest stroke)

COMBINING NOTES ON THE THIRD AND SECOND STRINGS

Open G	Second Finger Second Fret	Open B	First Finger First Fret	Third Finger Third Fret
--------	------------------------------	--------	----------------------------	----------------------------

G A B C D

PROCEDURE FOR PRACTICE

1. At this level of reading, use only the designated fingerings as shown above for the left hand.
2. Review earlier examples and continue to call the names of the notes out loud when practicing.
3. Practice by calling out the finger numbers of the left hand out loud (for example, open, open, 2, 2).

2-8

Fairest Maid*

Changing Meter—some measures are written in $\frac{2}{4}$, others in $\frac{3}{4}$.

Welsh Folk Song

Musical score for 'Fairest Maid' in treble clef. The piece features a changing meter, alternating between 2/4 and 3/4. The first line includes a count: 'Count: 2 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 (3) &' with syllables 'a i a i a' underneath. The score consists of three staves of music.

2-9

Canon for Two Guitars

The example below should be played by two guitars as shown.

D. M.

Musical score for 'Canon for Two Guitars' in treble clef, 3/4 time. It is a canon for two guitars, labeled '1' and '2'. The first staff (1) has lyrics 'i m i m i a i a' and includes the instruction 'Use the rest stroke'. The second staff (2) has lyrics 'i m i m i a i a' and also includes 'Use the rest stroke'. The score consists of two staves of music.

* Reprinted with permission of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. from *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, Peter Kennedy, ed. Copyright © 1975 by Peter Kennedy, p. 155

- *Ritardando*, abbreviated *rit.*, is an indication to gradually reduce speed.
- The *fermata* (◡), or pause, directs the performer to hold a note longer than its full rhythmic value.

NOTES ON THE FIRST STRING

Open E	First Finger First Fret	Third Finger Third Fret
E	F	G

6 5 4 3 2 1

E Open E

F First Finger
First Fret

G Third Finger
Third Fret

PROCEDURE FOR PRACTICE

1. Recite out loud the numbers of the left hand fingers while playing.
2. Leave the first finger (F) down when playing G.

2-10

Practice very slowly until learned well. Review page 20, regarding $\frac{6}{8}$ rhythm.

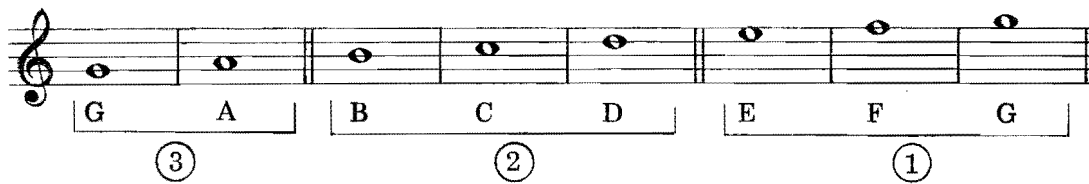


i m i m i m, then
m a m a m a, etc.
Use the rest stroke.



• ♪ = eighth note rest

COMBINING NOTES ON THE THIRD, SECOND, AND FIRST STRINGS



PROCEDURE FOR PRACTICE

1. Refer to the lower neck finger chart, if necessary, to reinforce fingering and memorization.

2-11

Duet in Mixolydian Mode

Canadian Folk Song *



- Read all chords from the lowest note up. Choose an appropriate right hand fingering.
- For further study of the modes, see Chapter 5.

* "Anti-Confederation Song" reprinted by permission of Mrs. Gerald S. Doyle, St. John's, Newfoundland. Reprinted from *The Penguin Book of Canadian Folk Songs* compiled by Edith Fowke (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, Ltd.), p. 28

COMBINING ALL NOTES OF THE LOWER NECK

F-sharp is to be played on both the sixth and fourth strings:

Sixth String	Fourth String
Second Finger	Fourth Finger
Second Fret	Fourth Fret

A key signature indicates which sharps or flats are always to be played. All other notes are natural unless otherwise marked. In the following duet all Fs are sharp.

2-12

The Lonesome Scenes of Winter*

Duet in Mixolydian Mode

Canadian Folk Song

- The student should play both parts separately if a second player is unavailable.
- Use only fingerings shown.

* *The Penguin Book of Canadian Folk Songs* compiled by Edith Fowke, p. 134

1

2

1

2

1

2

1

2

New Rhythm: sixteenth notes (♩)

Count: 1 2 3 4 5 6 1 (2) 3 & 4 5 6 &

New Accidental: C-sharp

Fifth String
Fourth Finger
Fourth Fret