

Guitar Sight-Reading

Introduction

Music for the guitar is written using two forms of notation.

The first is called **STANDARD MUSICAL NOTATION**, and the second is called **TABLATURE**, or **TAB** for short.

Standard musical notation uses a staff of five lines.

Music for the guitar is written in the **TREBLE CLEF**, which is used to write music for instruments with a higher range. Notes can either be placed on the staff lines, or in the space between the lines.

Each line and space represents one note.

Tablature uses six lines. Each line represents a string of the guitar.

The highest line represents String 1, which is the thinnest string, tuned to high E. The lowest line represents String 6, which is the thickest string, tuned to low E.

When a number is written on a line, it means that string is to be plucked, with a finger pressing at the fret indicated by the number.

0 (zero) means the string is to be plucked with no finger, which is called "open."

Below are the six open strings of the guitar, written in standard musical notation and Tab. Play each note, and count 4 beats.

Treble Clef

8

E A D G B E

T
A
B

0 0 0 0 0 0

The notes A B C D E F G are called the MUSICAL ALPHABET.

We can play the notes of the musical alphabet by moving up the 5th string.

The note after G is another A. Open A and 12th fret A sound similar, but open A is deeper, while 12th fret A is higher.

Notice that there are two frets between every note except B to C and E to F, which are only one fret apart.

Musical notation for the 5th string scale from A to A. The top staff shows a treble clef with a 5 below it. The notes are A (open), B (2nd fret), C (3rd fret), D (5th fret), E (7th fret), F (8th fret), G (10th fret), and A (12th fret). The bottom staff is labeled 'TAB' and shows the fret numbers: 0, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12. Dashed lines connect B to C and E to F.

The tuning of the guitar means that we can play the notes of the musical alphabet without going higher than the 3rd fret. We do this by switching strings.

Musical notation for the musical alphabet across strings. The top staff shows a treble clef with a 5 below it. The notes are A (open), B (2nd fret), C (3rd fret), D (open), E (2nd fret), F (3rd fret), G (open), and A (open). The bottom staff is labeled 'TAB' and shows the fret numbers: 0, 2, 3, 0, 2, 3, 0, 2.

The notes of the musical alphabet are also called NATURAL NOTES.
 We can play all of the natural notes below the 3rd fret by switching strings.

Notice that after playing E F G on the sixth string, we go through the musical alphabet twice.

Say the note names as you play through all the notes from low to high.

Musical notation showing the ascending sequence of natural notes on the sixth string. The notes are E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G. The notes E, F, and G are played on the sixth string (0, 1, 3). The notes A, B, and C are played on the fifth string (0, 2, 3). The notes D, E, F, and G are played on the fourth string (0, 2, 0-2, 0-1-3, 0-1-3).

TAB

0-1-3	0-2-3	0-2-3	0-2	0-1-3	0-1-3
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Say the note names as you play through all the notes from high to low.

Musical notation showing the descending sequence of natural notes on the sixth string. The notes are G, F, E, D, C, B, A, G, F, E, D, C, B, A, G, F, E. The notes G, F, and E are played on the fourth string (3-1-0). The notes D, C, and B are played on the fifth string (3-1-0). The notes A and G are played on the sixth string (2-0). The notes F, E, and D are played on the fifth string (3-2-0). The notes C, B, and A are played on the fourth string (3-2-0). The notes G, F, and E are played on the sixth string (3-1-0).

TAB

3-1-0	3-1-0	2-0	3-2-0	3-2-0	3-1-0
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