

THE GUITAR WORKBOOK

A Fresh
Approach to
Exploration and
Mastery

SCOTT A. SEIFRIED



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For Laura, Abby, and Amelia

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Introduction

Welcome to guitar! This text has been designed to help you become a better guitarist, and increase your understanding of basic music concepts. Here are a few tips to ensure a satisfying and productive experience:

- Be patient! Playing guitar is a skill that relies on the development of fine motor skills and muscle memory. It will take a while for your fingers and hands to get used to moving in new ways—you may understand concepts long before you are able to execute them.
- Be persistent! The best way to “get good” is through daily practice. If you play a little each day, you will make progress.
- Details matter! Pay close attention to seemingly little things like hand position and suggested fingerings; they are the key to effortless playing.
- Maintain an open mind and positive attitude! There will be some exercises and topics in this book you don’t like, and some you do, but all of them will help you become a better guitarist. Try not to get hung up on a particular genre or style of music—take what you can from each lesson, and move on.

Types of Guitar

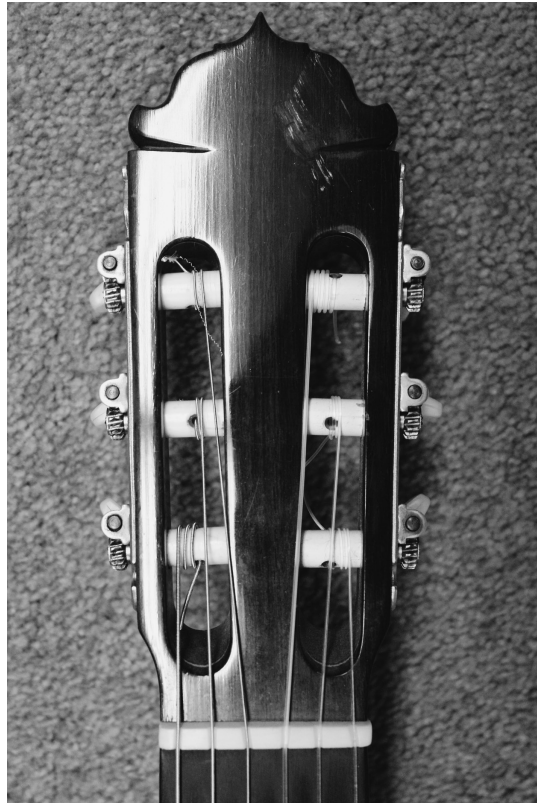
There are three main types of guitar; the playing style differs a little for each, but for the most part, the information in this book is applicable to all of them.

- The *classic guitar* is the oldest type. Classic guitars have nylon strings that are tied at the bridge, wider necks, and slotted headstocks.
- Steel-string *acoustic guitars* are similar to classic guitars, but use steel strings, which result in a brighter sound. Steel strings have ball ends that are anchored at the bridge with bridge pins. Generally, the neck of a steel-string acoustic guitar is thinner than the neck of a classic guitar.
- *Electric guitars* require amplification to make a sound. There are many types of electric guitar—hollow body, semihollow, solid body—and each has a distinctive sound.

Parts of the Guitar

The guitar can be divided into three main sections: the headstock, the neck, and the body. Tuners, also known as tuning machines, are located on the headstock. The strings are wound around the barrels of the tuning machines; turning the knob of the tuning machine away from you as you hold the guitar makes the string tighter and raises the pitch; turning the knob toward you loosens the string and lowers the pitch. Classic

Figure I.1



guitars have slotted headstocks (fig. I.1); steel-string acoustic and electric guitars do not (fig. I.2).

The guitar neck connects the headstock to the body. Six strings run along the neck horizontally as you hold the guitar, and wire frets are placed vertically along the neck. Pressing a finger directly behind a fret on the headstock side of a fret shortens the string and makes the pitch higher. Classic guitar necks (fig. I.3) are usually wider than steel string acoustic or electric necks. A typical classic guitar neck is 2 inches wide, while steel-string acoustic and electric guitar necks (fig. I.4), are typically 1.72 and 1.7 inches wide respectively.

The body of the guitar is the largest part of the instrument. A few important features are the bridge, which is where the strings are anchored; sound hole (classic and steel-string acoustic guitars) or pickups (electric guitars); and the waist, where the body of the guitar curves inward. Compare the images of a classic guitar body (fig. I.5) and an electric guitar body (fig. I.6).

Figure I.2



Alphabet Soup

There are several groups of letters you will need to know. Here is a list:

- ABCDEFG—music alphabet
- EADGBE—standard guitar tuning, strings 6–1
- EGBDF—lines on the treble staff
- FACE—spaces on the treble staff

Tuning the Guitar

The standard guitar has six strings. The strings are numbered from 6 (the thickest string closest to the ceiling as you

hold the guitar) to 1 (the thinnest string closest to the floor as you hold the guitar). Standard tuning for a guitar from the lowest pitched (6th) string to the highest pitched (1st) string is EADGBE.

There are many tuning apps and electronic tuners available to help you tune. The guitar can also be tuned to itself:

- Using a tuner or other reference pitch, tune the 6th string to E
- Press your finger down on the headstock side of the fifth fret 6th string and pluck the string; adjust the 5th string until it sounds the same.
- Repeat the process until you reach the 2nd string; for the 2nd string, press your finger down on the headstock side of the fourth fret 3rd string; adjust the 2nd string until it sounds the same.
- Use the same procedure for the 1st string that you used for strings 5–3.

**Figure I.3****Figure I.4**

Figure I.5



4

Figure I.6



Holding the Guitar, Making a Sound, and Reading Tablature

Holding the Guitar

There are many ways to hold a guitar, depending on the style of music you are playing and the type of guitar you use. For now, we'll keep it simple; these are the main points (fig. 1.1):

- Rest the waist of the guitar on your right thigh.
- Cross your right arm over the guitar body above the bridge.
- Angle the guitar neck upward.
- Your right forearm and hand should NOT touch the instrument.



Figure 1.1

Striking the guitar strings creates sound; this can be accomplished by using your right hand (RH) fingers or a pick. For now, the focus will be on using a pick. Grasp the pick **FIRMLY** between your thumb and forefinger; place the pick directly above the 1st string, and push the pick through the string (fig. 1.2):

Figure 1.2



Left Hand Position

Pressing a string into the fretboard with your left hand (LH) finger changes the pitch of the string. Place your finger slightly behind (to the left, or headstock side) of the fret. Left hand fingers are numbered as follows: index—1, middle—2, ring—3, pinky—4. Here are some tips for maintaining correct left hand position (figs. 1.3 and 1.4):

Figure 1.3



- Place your thumb behind the neck between the first and second frets.
- Relax your wrist and maintain space between your palm and the neck of the guitar.
- Position your fingers over the frets (finger 1 over fret 1, finger 2 over fret 2, etc.) with your nail perpendicular to the fret.
- Use the tip of your finger to press down on the string.

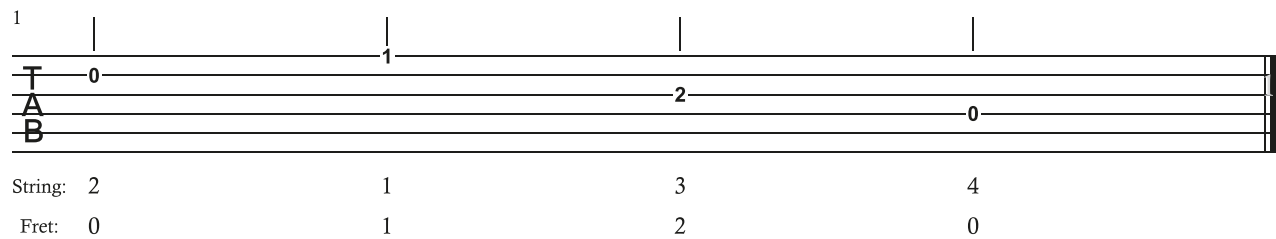
Reading Guitar Tab

Guitar tablature, or “tab,” is a common way of notating guitar music. The tab staff has six lines, and each line represents a string. The top line of the staff (sixth from the bottom)



Figure 1.4

Figure 1.5



represents the 1st string (the thinnest string, closest to the floor as you hold the guitar in playing position); the bottom line (line 1) represents the 6th string (the thickest string closest to the ceiling). Numbers placed on the lines indicate which fret to press down, as in figure 1.5.

Maintaining a Steady Pulse

Music is organized into measures, with each measure having the same number of pulses. The time signature, which is located at the beginning of the piece, tells you how many pulses are in each measure. Figure 1.6 represents one measure of music in 4/4 time. There are four pulses in this measure. The zeros written on the top line of the staff indicate that you should play the 1st string open: that is, without fretting any notes. The 1st string should be played four times:

Figure 1.6

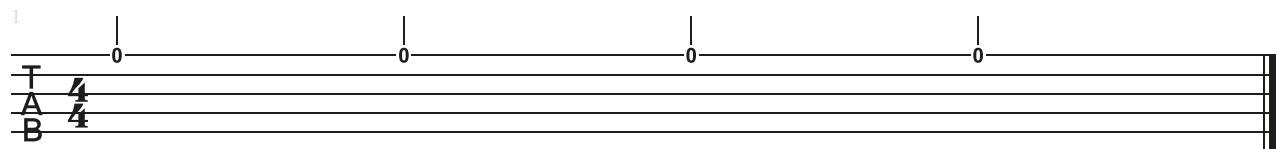
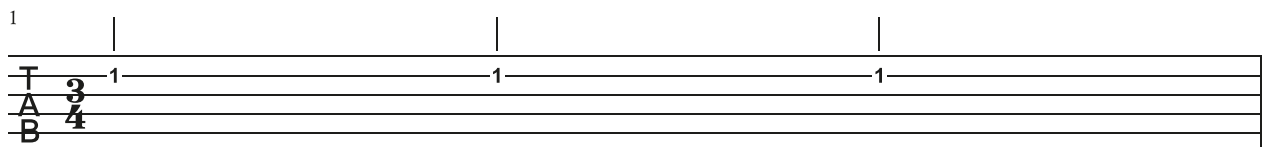


Figure 1.7 is one measure of music in 3/4 time. The numeral 1 written on the fifth line of the staff indicates that the first fret 2nd string should be played three times:

8

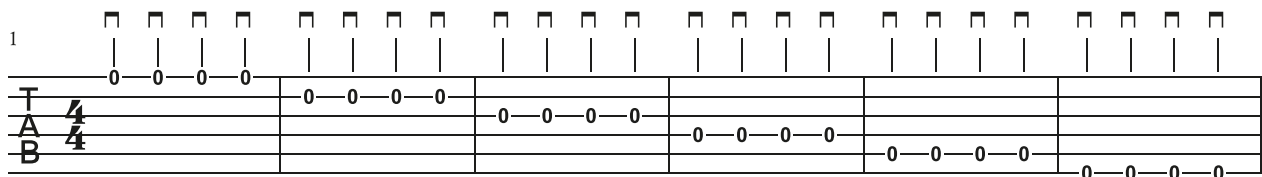
Figure 1.7



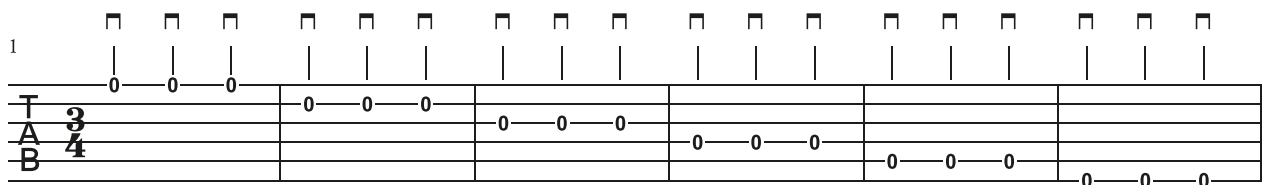
Down-strokes should be used when there are one or fewer strokes per pulse. To execute a down-stroke, position the pick above the string, and push downward through the string. Exercises 1.1 and 1.2 are notated in tab, and are an opportunity to practice down-strokes and tab reading. Note the down-pick indications, which resemble a staple, written above the staff.

Down-strokes; one stroke per pulse, open strings:

Ex 1.1



Ex 1.2



Alternate picking is commonly used when there are two or more strokes per pulse. In alternate picking, the player alternates between down-strokes and up-strokes; to execute an up-stroke, position the pick below the string and pull upward. The symbol for an up-stroke is *v*.