

HOW TO UNDERSTAND AND READ GUITAR TABLATURE

Guitar or Bass Tab is a system of placing numbers on frets to represent the notes in a melody or the notes in a chord. It was first used by Italian classical guitarists in the 16th Century to be able to communicate with their Spanish counter parts.

How to "Read" Guitar Tab:

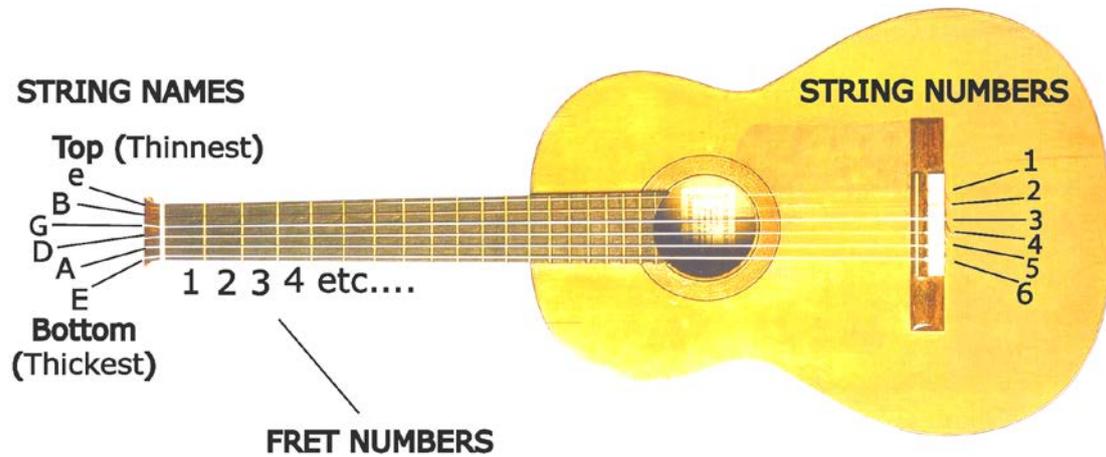
Firstly – imagine your guitar turned "upside down" in your mind - now the "Low" (Thickest) strings are on the bottom and the "High" (Thinnest) strings are at the top.

All Guitar Tab diagrams whether for rhythm or lead/single note playing either on acoustic or electric guitar; are written in this way.

The strings all have names and numbers (see below)

It is important to learn the string names and numbers to make it easier to read and play guitar tabs.

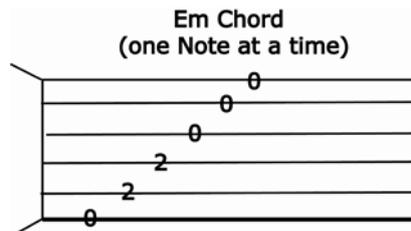
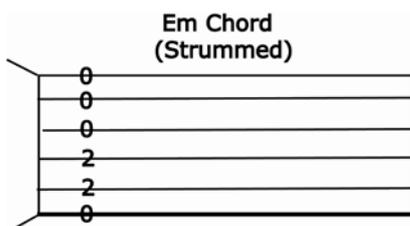
GUITAR STRING NAMES, NUMBERS AND FRETS



Notes are either played one at a time on the same string or on different strings or played (strummed) altogether as when playing a "chord". When playing a chord from a "tab" the notes will appear to be "stacked" up on top of each other – even if there were only 2 notes that looked this way – they still should be "strummed" together at the same time.

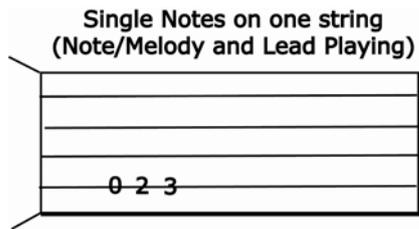
Below are pictures of what an Em chord looks like when written in tab when "strummed" and also what it looks like when "picked" i.e, one note at a time. As the 2nd fret on the A string is a "B" note and the 2nd fret on the D string an "E" note the notes being played here for an Em Chord are:

E A D G B E (from the thickest string to the thinnest)
6 5 4 3 2 1 (strings)



If the tab has been written correctly it will have the chord to be "picked" at the top so you know to hold down a chord shape.

One other way of playing from a "tab" is when the notes are played one a time on the same string (when playing scales or lead guitar/melodies etc...)and look something like this (below):



Here the same string is used (The A string) to play three different notes:

- The 0 = an open A string
- The 2 = 2nd Fret on the A string (B note)
- The 3 = 3rd Fret on the A string (C Note)

Some lead guitar tabs also have symbols to represent making other sounds from notes rather than simply placing a finger down and "striking" one note – common symbols used are:

SL = Slide a note

PO = Pull Off (usually from a higher note to a lower one)

HO = Hammer On (from a lower note to a higher one)

Vib (or a squiggly line) means Vibrato

BU or BD = Bend a note up or down (to change the "pitch" of that note)

