



How to Read Guitar Tabs

Here you will learn how to read guitar tabs in seconds.

A **Guitar Tab** (or tablature) is a system of music notation involving symbols and letters to show how a series of notes is to be played. Six horizontal lines represent the six guitar strings, from top to bottom starting with the 1st string, then the 2nd, down to the 6th. While the lines represent the strings, the numbers indicate on which fret you should press or fret the string. Guitar tabs are read from left to right.

When learning how to read guitar tabs you only need to remember the basic 4 or 5 symbols to get started.

These are:

Hammer on: h

Pull of: p

Bending: b

Release Bending: r

Slide: / and \ (slide to a higher or lower note, respectively)

Vibrato: v or ~

Review the following examples.

Example 1:

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E ----- (1st String)
B ----- (2nd String)
G ----- (3rd String)
D -----7----- (4th String)
A -----7----- (5th String)
E ---5----- (6th String)
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The above example means pressing the 6th string on the 5th fret, then the 5th string on the 7th fret and lastly the 4th string on the 7th fret. If the numbers were aligned vertically, it would indicate that the notes be played simultaneously as guitar chords are played (see example 2). This would form an A chord.

Example 2:

E ----- (1st String)
B ----- (2nd String)
G ----- (3rd String)
D ---7----- (4th String)
A ---7----- (5th String)
E ---5----- (6th String)

The following examples (3, 4 and 5) show you step by step how the most common symbols and letters are placed in a guitar tablature and how to interpret them.

Example 3:

E ----- (1st String)
B ----- (2nd String)
G ---5h7p5-----5---7/9\7--- (3rd String)
D -----7----- (4th String)
A ----- (5th String)
E ----- (6th String)

The first action is to hit the 3rd string at the 5th fret and hammer on the 7th fret, then go back to the 5th fret with a pull of motion (without hitting the string again). Hit the 4th string at the 7th fret. Hit the 3rd string at the 5th fret. Then make a slide on the 3rd string from the 7th fret to the 9th and go back using a slide from the 9th fret to the 7th.

Example 4:

E -----12----- (1st String)
B ---15b17-----15--14--12h14p12----- (2nd String)
G -----14v----- (3rd String)
D ----- (4th String)
A ----- (5th String)
E ----- (6th String)

First hit the 2nd string at the 15th fret and make a bending up to the 17th fret. Then hit the 1st string at the 12th fret. Hit the 15th and 14th frets on the 2nd string. Make a hammer on from the 12th to the 14th fret and go back with a pull of from the 14th to the 12th fret. Finally, play the 3rd string at the 14th fret and apply a vibrato.

Example 5:

E ----- (1st String)
B ----- (2nd String)
G ----- (3rd String)
D ----5-----5-----7-----2---- (4th String)
A ----5-----5-----7-----2---- (5th String)
E ----3-----3-----5-----0---- (6th String)

Remember, when the notes are vertically aligned they should be played simultaneously with a single stroke.

First play a G chord, pressing the 6th string at the 3rd fret while playing the 5th and 4th strings on the 5th fret at the same time. Repeat this twice. Then play an A chord, pressing the 6th string at the 5th fret while playing the 5th and 4th strings on the 7th fret at the same time. Lastly, play an open E string, while playing the 5th and 4th strings on the 2nd fret at the same time.

Note: in some cases, when chords are being tabbed, the letter of the chord is placed below or above to help you read the tablature faster. Also upward and downward arrows are sometimes used to indicate if you should hit the strings in an upward or downward motion.

Although a guitar tablature has several weaknesses when compared to reading music from a pentagram, the learning curve is way faster. One basic weakness of guitar tabs is that there is no time reference between notes. You need to listen to the music to get a feel of the rhythm and tempo. That's why every exercise, song and solo on the website is explained using video.

Now you're all set! Continue with the guitar lessons and practice the exercises and licks slowly, gradually moving them up to a higher tempo. Don't try to play at super high speeds right away. Master the licks and techniques slowly and be a clean player. When you feel confident with your playing and have mastered the basic techniques (bending, vibrato, slide...etc.) start downloading your favorite guitar tab songs.

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