

W o r s h i p M u s i c M i n i s t r y

T R A I N I N G C O U R S E

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Guitar Basics

Concepts

**** The majority of this information will apply to any kind of guitar (steel string acoustic, nylon string classical, or electric), but some of it is specific to a steel string acoustic guitar.**

Terminology

Headstock – The very top part of the guitar where the strings get wound up.

Tuning Keys – On the headstock. What you twist to tune the strings.

Nut – Usually a white piece of plastic with notches for the strings between the headstock and the finger board.

Neck – The portion of the guitar where the strings get pressed.

Fingerboard – The flat part of the neck upon which the strings get pressed.

Frets – The strips of metal in the fingerboard

Bridge – The piece of wood that the strings go into on the body.

Bridge pins – the small pins that hold the strings into the bridge.

Body – The hollow portion where the sound resonates.

Waist – The skinny part of the body

Cut Away – The portion on some guitars that allows extra access to the fret board.

Sound hole – The hole in the middle of the body.

Rosette – The decorated portion around the sound hole

String names and numbers

- ◇ String 6/E - The fattest, lowest string
- ◇ String 5/A –
- ◇ String 4/D –
- ◇ String 3/G –
- ◇ String 2/B –
- ◇ String 1/E – The smallest, highest

Finger numbers

- ◇ T = Thumb
- ◇ 1 = Index finger
- ◇ 2 = Middle finger
- ◇ 3 = Ring finger
- ◇ 4 = Pinkie

Tuning

- ◇ In any technique of tuning, you pluck your guitar string while turning the corresponding tuning key to make the sound match what ever you are tuning to.
- ◇ The most accurate way to tune the guitar is using an electronic tuner. They cost between \$15 & \$30 and I recommend getting one.
- ◇ But you should also know how to tune your instrument with out a tuner.
- ◇ If you have a piano, tune the strings to the proper notes on the piano. Use the above 'string names & numbers' section & the 'Music Theory – Basic' teaching to know what notes to play on the piano. Start with the 2nd E below 'middle C'.
- ◇ You can also tune the guitar to itself. If you do this, you may have problems playing with other people if you do not start out with your low 'E' string in tune to a piano or other accurate pitch reference.

- ◇ To tune the guitar to itself:
 - ◇ Fret the 6th string at the 5th fret. Match the open 5th string to that pitch (A).
 - ◇ Fret the 5th string at the 5th fret. Match the open 4th string to that pitch (D).
 - ◇ Fret the 4th string at the 5th fret. Match the open 3rd string to that pitch (G).
 - ◇ Fret the 3rd string at the 4th fret. Match the open 2nd string to that pitch (B).
 - ◇ Fret the 2nd string at the 5th fret. Match the open 1st string to that pitch (A).

Where to place fingers

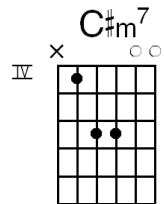
When fingering a note (or chord) place your finger(s) just behind the fret.

Hand position

- ◇ Your right hand should be over the center of the sound hole for most music.
- ◇ Keep your right shoulder relaxed and let your arm naturally rest on the body of your guitar.
- ◇ Your left hand should have gently curved fingers as it plays non-barred chords
- ◇ Try to keep your left wrist mostly straight. It should not be harshly bent at a 90 degree angle.
 - ◇ Try moving the head of the guitar up higher by angling the guitar up more or by shortening your strap. This will help your wrist angle.
 - ◇ Consider letting your thumb wrap around the back of the guitar neck. This helps make your hand position more natural, but also can be used to damp or mute unused bass strings for various chord voicings.
- ◇ Don't rely primarily on your hands 'clamping' power between your thumb and fingers. Instead, use your left arm's bicep muscle to pull back on the fret board & offset it with your right arm against the body of the guitar. This leaves the small muscles in your fingers more free to move with agility.

Reading a chord diagram

- ◇ The picture represents the guitar's fingerboard with the nut being at the top.
- ◇ If there is a roman numeral to the left, it is telling you that the diagram starts at that fret. If there is no roman numeral, the diagram starts at the nut.
- ◇ Place your finger on the fret board wherever the dots are on the diagram.
- ◇ An 'X' above a string means to not play that string. If you have a finger available, consider damping that string (barely touching it so it does not sound). The thumb wrapped around the back of the neck is often useful for this.
- ◇ An 'O' above a string means it is 'open'; let it resonate.
- ◇ If there is a solid line across more than one string, it means to 'bar' it. Use one finger (usually your index finger [1]) to smash all of those strings down.



Looking at the fingerboard

Only look at the fingerboard when needed to figure out something new. But try to get in the habit of not looking at it.

Amount of string pressure

Do not use unnecessary string pressure. Only use what is necessary. Using too much pressure can pull the instrument out of tune and make your fingers less agile.

Pick choice

I recommend using a medium gauge pick (Fender medium tortes shell picks sound the best to my ears). A light pick can give too much string clatter, and a heavy pick is sometimes too 'dark' sounding and is a little harder to get a 'jangly', loose wrist sound. I also find that it is harder to blend strumming and picking with a light gauge pick. But you can experiment to find out what you like the best.

Holding the pick

- ◇ Your thumb is parallel to the strings