

Guitar Kickstart - A Guide to Playing Songs on the Guitar



by Shawn Bradshaw
Start Jammin' on your Favorite Songs Today!



Cyberfret.com

“Decoding the Mysteries of Learning Guitar”

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Intro

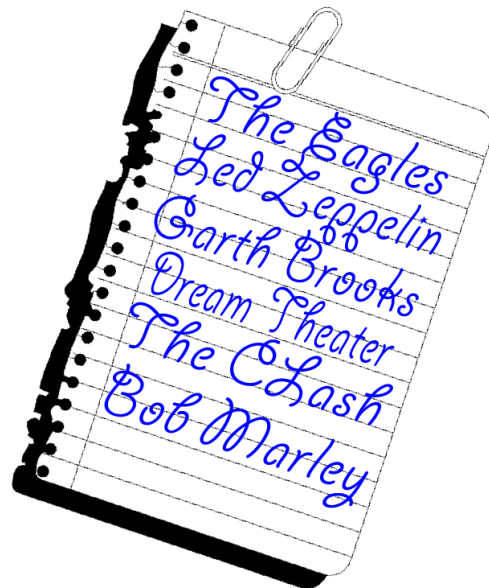
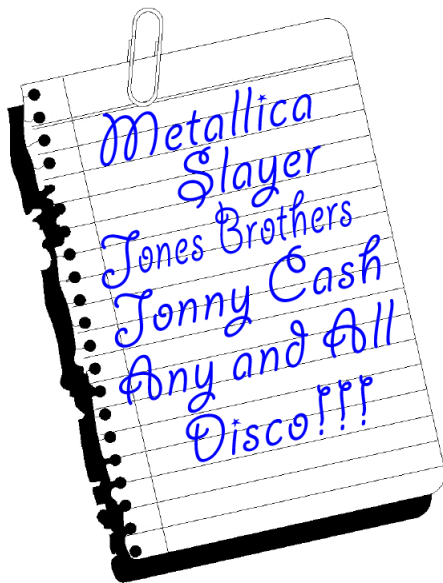
I can pretty much guarantee that just about everyone who picks up the guitar does so because they want to play some songs from their favorite bands & artists.

No one says, “man, I would love to learn some scales”. So what I'm going to focus on in this guide is how to go about learning songs on the guitar.

There are some songs you can play the 1st day you pick up the guitar, and there are some that would require years of study before you could even come close to playing them. But this guide will help get you jamming in short order.

For my new private students, one of their first assignments is to make a list of groups and artists they like to listen to. I teach the fundamentals of the instrument like reading, chords, scales etc., but in addition I get my students playing the songs they like as soon as possible. Nothing is a better motivator than to start making some real music, even if it's just a simple song.

So making a list of bands and artists you like may be a good starting point for you as well. It's a great way to brainstorm and get some ideas about what you might want to play.



"The Ya Gotta Learn More Than Songs Rant Page"
Skip This Page To Start Jammin' Now...
...Read This Page To Become a Better Guitar Player.

You cannot just play songs exclusively when trying to learn to play the guitar. My best analogy is this. How good do you think a football team would be if they just went out on a Saturday afternoon to play the game, and that was it? They would lose!

And even if the football team was to play multiple times during the week, they would still be missing out on key things that would make them a better team.

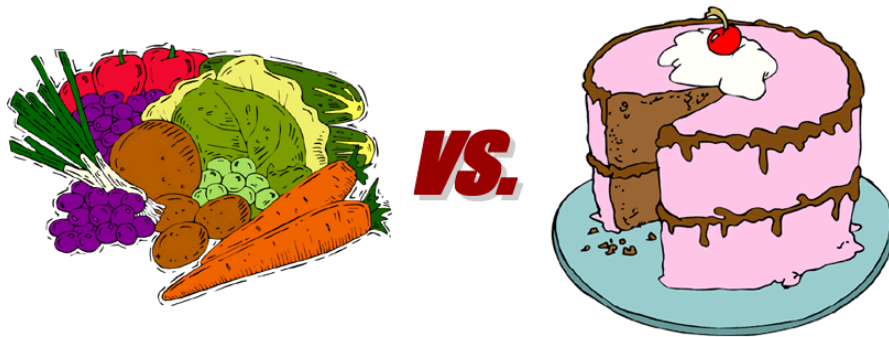
A football team breaks down the parts of the game and “practices”. For one, every team member lifts weights. You can't build the muscles necessary to play the game by just playing it. But the game requires those muscles, and the team would fail without them.

The team also memorizes plays, works on offence and defense drills etc. You get the idea. Playing songs is the game, and to play it well you need to approach it like that football team.

You need to lift the weights...practices scales and finger exercises. You need to practice chords, [learn how to strum](#), learn various techniques, learn about rhythms, etc. Then you will find that you can learn songs faster.

A lot of guitar players like to skip the fundamentals, as if that is the short cut. But that short cut leads to the swamp. I often get students who have played for years, but they hit a ceiling where they just can't get any better. Most of the time the reason for that lack of progress is they skipped some core fundamentals...or the “boring stuff”.

This guide is going to focus on the game, and not all of the things that are going to make it easier for you to play the game. So be sure that you eat your cake, and your vegetables and keep your diet balanced.



The 3 Main Ways of Learning Songs

If you want to learn how to play a particular song, you basically have 3 options. And often you will learn songs in a combination of these 3 ways.

By Rote

First you can have someone who knows a song teach it to you. This can be a friend or a private teacher that you hire. It could even be a video where someone is explaining the song and breaking it down into different parts. You watch their hands, follow the instructions, and you learn the song. That is learning by rote.

By Ear

The next way you could learn a song is to figure it out by ear. Just listening to a recording and decoding what the chords and melodies are. This is the most difficult method since it requires that you develop your ear to recognize sounds and duplicate them on your instrument.

Beginning efforts to learn songs by ear is a lot of times just hunting for notes by trial and error. But as you develop your ear it's even possible to play along with a song on first listen. Your ear instantly hears what the next chord is, and in a split second you can go to it.

With Music

The last method of learning a song is to use written music. There are many formats of written music, and we are going to cover the essential ones in this guide. This is the method of learning songs that I am going to start with, and put a lot of emphasis on in this guide since there are so many songs available in written format.

Chapter 1 – Guitar Music Notation

By far the largest resource to learn how to play different songs on the guitar is with music notation. I'm going to be covering both free music sources as well as printed music that you can purchase.

Many of the free forms of music are not licensed, and many of those are not even accurate. But I'm going to let you know about all of the options available to you and not pretend that these forms of free online music don't exist.

Published Music

The most neat and accurate form of guitar music you can find is in the form of published books and magazines. The downside is that usually publishers only print books for the most popular artists. So if you are looking for some more obscure bands, you will probably not find printed music available.

Sometimes books are only in print for a short period of time. Today's hottest band may be in print for a year...or less. But then as their popularity wanes, the book will go out of print.

Music Formats

Printed music comes in many formats. You might be able to find the same song in multiple formats, or only one. It just depends on the artist. There is not one perfect format for every song. Some songs are better in certain formats vs. others. That doesn't mean it's even offered in the ideal format, but sometimes you have to take what you find and work with it.

Piano Vocal Guitar Books

One of the most popular formats publishers print music in is called a "Piano Vocal Guitar Book". The publishers figure that it's a way to print one book that will appeal to piano players, singers and guitar players. But don't be fooled by the name, the "Guitar" part of the book is very limited, and this is not a format that I would recommend for the most part.

The format is made up of a line of music that shows the vocal melody and lyrics, and a piano arrangement of the song. This is not the piano part that was played in the original recording. It's the basic harmony (chords), melody and bass line all rolled into one. So if someone was to play the piano part it would sound like the whole song with no other instrument or vocal needed.

The only part of this format of music that applies to the guitar is the chord charts written above the piano arrangement. These are not the actual chord voicings that were in the original song, just chord forms that work with the piano arrangement.

Often they are more difficult chords than might have been in the original song, especially if a capo was used. (A capo is a clamp that you can use on different frets of the guitar to change the pitch of the open strings.) Sometimes they are simplified from the original chords.

Here is an example of the format of Piano Vocal Guitar Music.

Deck The Halls

The image shows a musical score for 'Deck The Halls' in Piano Vocal Guitar format. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The vocal line is on a single staff with lyrics: "Deck the Halls with boughs of hol - ly, Fa la la la la la la la la". The piano accompaniment is on two staves (treble and bass clef). Above the vocal staff, guitar chord diagrams are provided for D, A7, D, A7, and D.

On the plus side - This is one of the most widely available formats of music. So you may be able to find music from the artist you are looking for.

On the minus side - Besides the fact that the guitar chords indicated may not be the same as the original song, there are also no strums or other important guitar parts indicated.

Because there is a line for the vocals, and 2 lines for the piano part, this means a lot of page turns. One song may be 20 pages long. Which makes playing a song a pain in the butt without having someone there to turn pages for you.

Lead Sheets and Fake Books

A lead sheet consists of just the bare bones information needed to play a song. This consists of the melody, lyrics, chords, style and tempo. The chords are indicated by name only and there are no chord charts and no other notation is provided. A fake book is just a book of lead sheets.

If you have a knowledge of chords, and can come up with an accompaniment pattern or strum that fits the style of the song, this format can work well.

For instance in my "Deck The Halls" example of a lead sheet below, this would really be one of the best formats for this type of song. You will need to come up with your own intro and ending for songs in lead sheet format. Often you can play the chords for the last 2 or 4 measures of the song as an easy intro.

Deck The Halls

D D A D D A7 D

Deck the Halls with boughs of hol - ly, Fa la la la la la la la la

Developing your strumming skills is a must

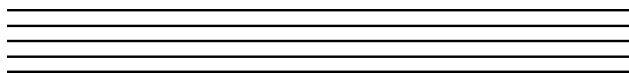
If you want to learn how to develop your strumming and accompaniment skills on the guitar so that you can turn lead sheets into music, but sure and check out my video lesson course called [Rhythm Guitar Mastery](#).

This course covers everything you need to know about rhythms and strumming.

Standard Music Notation

The notation used in Piano Vocal Guitar music and Lead Sheets is what is referred to as *Standard Music Notation*. This is a universal system of notation that is used for all instruments.

Music is written on what is called a staff, which is made up of 5 lines and 4 spaces in-between the lines.



Different notes are either written on a line, or in a space.

Having at least a very basic understanding of how to read standard notation will help you in your quest to learn songs.

For instance if you were trying to learn a song from a lead sheet, you could play the notes of the melody to help you learn the correct pitches to sing. Or you could just play the melody instead of singing. Either by yourself, or with another guitar or a piano accompanying you.

It really depends on the style of music you want to play how much standard music notation you will be reading.

If you want to play Classical or Jazz...it's essential for you to learn to read music well. If you are a Blues or Country player...you are probably going to be doing very little reading of standard music notation. Although an understanding of the basics will give you a big advantage.

There are a ton of basic guitar books and courses that teach the fundamentals of reading music. One of the best ones out there is a course called "Gibson's Learn and Master Guitar". It's 20 DVD's, 6 CD's, and a printed book.

It's more than just teaching you how to read music, but it does teach guitar with a focus on learning to read.

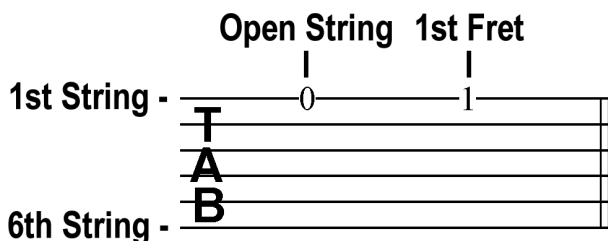
You can check out my review of the course on Cyberfret.com below.

[Gibson's Learn and Master Guitar - Cyberfret.com Review](#)

Guitar Tablature

While standard music notation is universal for all instruments, the next type of notation we are going to look at is only used for guitar or bass.

Guitar Tablature is a system of notation where there are 6 lines instead of the 5 lines that are used in standard notation. Each line represents a string of the guitar. The bottom line is the 6th string, and the top line is the 1st string. The numbers represent the fret that you should play a particular note. This notation is sometimes referred to in these variations; "tablature", "tabs" or just "tab"



Tablature has been around for hundreds of years and started as lute notation, but it has only gained popularity since the late 1980's for guitar. One advantage of tablature for beginning guitar players is you can learn to play songs using notes all over the neck right away. It could take years of study to gain the ability necessary to read standard music notation all over the neck.

A lot of tablature for songs that you will find is a transcription of a recording. That means that the music was never originally written down like a Beethoven piano piece. The musician who recorded the song may have no idea how to notate music on paper. For a transcription, another person listens to the recording and translates the sounds they hear into notation.

Published Tablature

Not all published tablature is created equal. If you go to a music store and buy a book from your favorite band in tablature form, you could be disappointed in what you end up getting.

Most of the time what you are going to want from tablature is an actual transcription of the song the way the guitar player in the band played it. So look for words like "Artist Transcriptions" or "Recorded Version". Something to let you know that you are going to learn the actual guitar parts from the recorded song.

There are other ways that publishers put out tablature books. Another way that you might see tablature for a song is in a form like a lead sheet, where there is the melody you would sing and the basic chords. But the tablature that is offered is just the vocal line in tablature form. This is OK if you just want to play the vocal melody of a song, but doesn't help you at all if you want to play the actual guitar part.

The Tablature Transcription Dilemma

Like I mentioned before, there is no one perfect format for guitar music. What happens with tablature transcriptions is that the person who transcribes the music writes down ...to the best of their ability ...exactly how the guitar player played on the recording.

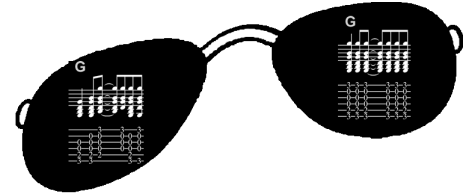
If the guitar player on a recording was just strumming a G chord to a C sloppily back and forth for 10 minutes, then the transcriber will transcribe the sloppy part as is. If the guitarist made "mistakes" then they will be notated. That sometimes makes simple songs very difficult to look at, read and play depending on the artist or band.

A great example of this is Nirvana. (Nirvana fans, do not be offended). Kurt Cobain, the guitar player in Nirvana, was a great songwriter...but was a fairly sloppy guitar player. And that's OK, that was part of the Grunge music style. If he played flawless virtuoso style guitar playing, it would not be Grunge.

But because of that "sloppiness", Nirvana tablature books can really look like a mess. Simple songs look more complicated, and beginners who are very capable of playing Nirvana songs give up in frustration after looking at the music.

Looking at Tablature through Filtered Glasses

The way you want to approach playing music that is derived from someone "transcribing" a recording of a song is this. It's what I refer to as looking at the music through filtered glasses.



You cannot play everything that is written down on the paper exactly as is. Again, this does depend on the artist you are trying to play. For instance if you are trying to play Metallica, well then you are pretty safe to just follow the music as is. But if you are trying to play a Grateful Dead song... or Nirvana, well then you're going to have to use the music as a guide and not the exact map of what to play.

You need to try and get into the mind of the guitar player. Were they really "thinking" about playing everything that's notated on the paper, or were they just thinking about strumming from a G to a C chord. This concept will really drive you crazy if you have had experience with another instrument where you read music. Reading tablature is not like reading the saxophone music you read in marching band.

Here is an example of what I mean. If you were to see the next music example, you might think that you need to play only 4 strings on the first strum of the chord, and then 5 strings on the next...then 5 different strings on the next strum. If you tried to play this example literally, then you would be working on the song for a very long time...if not forever.

That's really not what the guitar player was thinking about. Sure, you can strum on different combinations of strings, but in this case it's more of the transcriptionist being a little "anal" in his or her job :) The guitar player was really just strumming a G and a C chord.

G **C**

	3	3	3	3-3	3-3	0	0-0-0	0-0-0	0-0
T	0	0	0	0	0	1	1-1-1	1-1-1	1-1
A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-0	0-0	0-0
B	2	2	2	2	2	2	2-2-2	2-2	2-2
	3	3	3-3	3	3	3	3-3	3-3	3

So here is the same music only looking through our "filtered glasses". It's homogenized. The inconsistencies removed, and only the basic essence of what was being played is left.

The image shows a musical score for guitar. It consists of a treble clef staff with a 4/4 time signature and a corresponding guitar tablature below it. The score is divided into two sections: G major and C major. The G major section has four measures of music, and the C major section has four measures. The tablature is simplified, using only the numbers 0, 1, 2, and 3 to represent frets. The G major section uses the fingering 3-3-3 for all notes. The C major section uses 0-0-0 for the first fret, 1-1-1 for the second fret, 2-2-2 for the third fret, and 3-3-3 for the fourth fret. The treble clef staff shows a complex melody with many notes and fingerings, which is being simplified in the tablature.

The filtered glasses can't be purchased; they can only be obtained via experience. Partly you have to use your ear and use the music along with the recording. So you are interpreting the music, and not playing it literally.

Too often people get caught up in trying to play every detail as written and lose sight of playing the song. The question is then, "why did they write it that way if I'm not supposed to play what's written"? As I mentioned before, this is a transcription. Someone is decoding the sounds they are hearing into music notation. It depends on the transcriptionist, some actually do filter the music a little to make it easier to read. But most of the time that's your job.

Other Formats Of Published Music

Hal Leonard is one of the biggest music publishers. They have a page on their website that goes through some of the different formats they publish music in and gives examples. It's worth a look. (<http://www.halleonard.com/musicNotationGuide.jsp>)

Where to Buy Music

You can purchase music at your local music store, bookstore, or online at [Sheet Music Plus](#), or [Amazon.com](#).

Don't Forget Libraries Have Books...

Besides purchasing books, remember your tax dollars allow you to borrow books from your local library. You may be surprised that your local library system has a lot of music available for you to check out for free. As long as your return it on time :)

Chapter 2 – Online Music Sources

So in the last chapter I talked about some basics forms that published music comes in. In this chapter I'm going to focus on the types of music available online. Mostly free sources, but also some that require you to pay for either the software, or the music source itself.

Internet Tablature, Text Tabs, or ASCII Tabs

Text tablature is music that's notated using just the characters available on a computer keyboard. It started with various newsgroups and bulletin boards in the late 1980's and became extremely popular with guitarists as the Internet began to grow in the 1990's.

A big plus of Internet tablature is that you can find just about any song, even small independent artists...and for free.

A big minus is that a lot of the music found for free on the Internet is very inaccurate. Anyone can submit a tab to a website. Sometimes these transcriptions are created by very unskilled players who just want to have something of theirs posted on a website.

Also the music doesn't show any rhythms, only where to put your fingers on the neck. So you will definitely need to have a recording of any song you are working on.

Below is an example of this type of tablature. Here you see measures indicated, but most often they are not.

Deck The Halls

```

E | |-----|-----|-----|
B | |-----|-----|-----|
G | |*--0-----|-----|-----|
D | |*-----3--2---0---|-----0---2-----|--0--2--3--0--2-----0---|
A | |-----|-----3-----3---|-----|
E | |-----|-----|-----|

```

```

-----|-----|-----|
-----|-----|-----|
-----*-----|-----0-----|
-----*-----|--0-----2--3---0---|--2-----3-----0---|
--3---2---3-----|-----|
-----|-----|-----|

```

Some Internet tablature does attempt to give indications of rhythm. The next example has the left hand fingering written above, and then little ^ marks below to show where the beat is. So there are not exact rhythms, just a guide where the beat is.

DECK THE HALLS

INTRO:

(A)

```

      4           3
      3     1 3   2     2     1 2   3           4   2
+-----+-----+-----+
| |---3-----1-0-----| |---3-----1-0-----| |-----0-----|
| | .---0-----2---| |---0-----2---| |---0---0-2---0---|
| | .---0-----0---0-| |---0-----0---0-| |---4-----0---0-|
| |-----| |-----| |-----|
+-----+-----+-----+
      ^ ^ ^ ^     ^ ^ ^ ^     ^ ^ ^ ^
  
```

The next example uses a system of letters to indicate the rhythms. So an E is an 8th note, a Q is a quarter note. Very difficult to read, but it gives the information.

DECK THE HALLS

Gtr I (E A D G B E)

Intro

2/4

Gtr I

```

      H           H           E . S E E   E E E E   S S S S E . S   E E Q
|-----|-----| |-----|-----| |-----|-----| |-----|
|-----|-----| |---3--1-0---|-----0---| |----1---0---| |-----|
|-----|-----| |-----2-|---0h2---0-|---2h4---2---2-| |---0---0---|
|---0---|---0---| |---0---|---0---| |---0---|---0-4---| |---0-4---|
|-----|-----| |-----|-----| |-----|-----| |-----|
|---2h3---|---2h3---| |---3-----|---3-----| |---3-----|---3-----|
      a H           a H           H           H           H           H
  
```

```

      E . S E E   E E E E   S S S S E . S   E E Q   E . S E E   E E E E
|-----|-----| |-----|-----| |-----|-----| |-----|
|---3--1-0---|-----0---| |----1---0---|-----| |---0-1---|---0-1-3---|
|-----2-|---0h2---0-|---2h4---2---2-|---0---0---| |---2---2-|---0---2-|
|---0---|---0---| |---0---|---0-4---| |---0---|---0---0---| |---0---0---|
|-----|-----| |-----|-----| |-----|-----| |-----|
|---3-----|---3-----| |---3-----|---3-----| |-----|-----|
      H           H           H           H           H           Q   Q
  
```

Chord & Lyrics Only in Text Format

Sometimes you will just find the lyrics of a song with the chords indicated. In the example below there are the lyrics, and then at the end of each line of lyrics there are all of the chords that are used in that line.

So there is not even an indication of which word or syllable you are going to switch chords on. But this is better than having nothing to go on, and if you know the song...or have a recording, this format could be of use if no other is available.

DECK THE HALLS
Old Welsh Air

Deck the halls with boughs of holly, [D Bm]
Fa la la la la, la la la la [A7 D, D A D]
Tis the season to be jolly, [D Bm]
Fa la la la la, la la la la [A7 D, D A D]
Don we now our gay apparel, [A7 D]
Fa la la la la, la la la la [D Bm, A E7 A]
Troll the ancient Yuletide carol, [D Bm]
Fa la la la la, la la la la [G D, D A7 D]

The next example is just the lyrics and chords, but the chords are written above the syllable in the lyric where you need to change chords. A little more helpful than having them at the end of the line.

DECK THE HALLS

D
Deck the halls with boughs of holly,
G D A D
Fa la la la la, la la la la
D
Tis the season to be jolly,
G D A D
Fa la la la la, la la la la
A D
Don we now our gay apparel,
D Bm E7 A
Fa la la la la la, la la la
D
Troll the ancient Yuletide carol,
G D D A D
Fa la la la la, la la la la

Important Tip When Dealing With Text Tabs

All text tablature needs to be written using a "fixed width" or "monospace" font Like Courier New. For a fixed width font, every letter or number takes up the same amount of space on paper or your computer screen.

Here are five 1's and five 9's in a variable width font...Times New Roman in this case.

IIII
99999

Now look at the same numbers in a fixed width font...Courier New in this case.

11111
99999

See how the numbers line up on top of each other when the font is a fixed width. This is essential for text tablature, otherwise the frets on the different strings will not line up in the correct place.

And if you look at the chord and lyric example below...on the right I might change chords on the wrong "la" if a variable width font is used :)

Fixed Width Font (Courier New)	Variable Width Font (Time New Roman)
D Troll the ancient Yuletide carol, G D D A D Fa la la la la, la la la la	D Troll the ancient Yuletide carol, G D D A D Fa la la la la, la la la la

So if you run into text tablature on the Internet that looks like it might not be formatted correctly using a fixed width font, do this. Copy the text tab from the website, and paste it into your word processing program. Then change the font to Courier New and you will be good to go. Where the chords change often needs a little tweaking anyway.

How to Read Internet Tablature

A while ago I wrote an in-depth guitar lesson on how to read text tabs found on the Internet on Cyberfret.com. You can find that lesson here.

[How to read Internet tablature](#) - a comprehensive reference to help you decode guitar tabs found on the Internet.

Better Internet Tablature

There is tablature that can be found on the Internet that both looks like published sheet music, and is more accurate than text tabs. This type of tablature does require you to install software on your computer in order to be able to view it, or even create it if you desire. The 2 most popular programs are the "Power Tab Editor", and "Guitar Pro".

Power Tabs

The Power Tab Editor is a freeware program for the Windows operating system, and can be downloaded here.

[Power Tab Editor @ Download.com](http://www.download.com)

Unlike other "free" programs that are available for download out there, this one is not loaded with "spyware", or "adware". It's a nice clean program that's a small download and stable. It is fairly old software, and has not been updated in many years, but it does its job and is free.

Here is an example of what Power Tab music would look like if you printed it out. You can just read the music on the screen within the program as well.

If you are reading the music within the program, you can have it play back the music using your computer's internal sounds. So it can sound kind of cheesy, but it helps you hear the rhythms that you need to play. It also indicates where you are in the music so you can follow along.

DECK THE HALLS

As recorded by Christmas Music

Arranged by Stephen C. Siktberg

A Intro **B** Verse 1

Gtr I

T			3	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	2	4	1	2	0	2	0	4	0
A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Guitar Pro

Guitar Pro is a paid program that's available for Windows, and the Mac platform. Currently as of the time I'm writing this guide, it's about \$60 US...and well worth the price for the features, and the ability to access a lot of music for free online. You can purchase Guitar Pro here.

<http://www.guitar-pro.com/>

Below is an example of how the music would look printed from the Guitar Pro software.

Deck The Halls

♩ = 120
Deck the hall with boughs of ho- ly Fa la la la la la la la la. 'Tis the sea- son

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Deck The Halls'. It features a melody line in 4/4 time with a tempo of 120. Below the melody is a guitar tablature with five lines labeled T, A, B, G, and D. The tablature includes fret numbers and fingerings for the first five measures of the piece.

Just like with the Power Tab Editor, the Guitar Pro software will play the music for you. It does use some different technology and sounds much better than the Power Tab Editor. Since this is software that you buy, it's also updated more often.

Where to Find Tablature on the Internet

The number of sites where you can find free tablature on the Internet has continued to shrink over the last few years. The reason for this is most sites that offer tablature are violating copyright laws to do so. Some run under the radar for years, only to later be shut down by the "copyright police". So I am going to mention basically 2 sites where you might start looking for Tablature.

Ultimate-Guitar.com

This site basically has become a guitar tablature monopoly. In part because a few years ago the "copyright police" shut down many of the main guitar tab site that were based in the United States, or other countries they had easy legal access to. Ultimate-Guitar.com is based in Russia...so the legal difficulty of going after them at the time gave a big advantage. And since they were one of the few left standing, they became the biggest tab site on the Internet. They are now working within the copyright system by taking down music when requested by the copyright owners. So you may find some artists are hard to find because of this.

<http://www.ultimate-guitar.com/>

Ultimate guitar hosts text tabs, Power Tabs, and Guitar Pro Tabs. Towards the top on the left

of every artist page you will see this... "TYPE FILTER". Then the following options...All, Tabs, Bass tabs, Chords, Power tabs, Guitar pro tabs, Video lessons, Drum Tabs. So if you are looking for just power tabs, select "Power tabs". If you want just guitar pro tabs, then select "Guitar pro tab".

911tabs.com

911tabs.com is a guitar tablature search engine. The site does not actually host any music files. But it does search many other sites that have tablature. One downside is they sometimes index sites that have removed their music because of lawsuit threats. So can end up with some dead ends to searches. But it still can be useful.

<http://www.911tabs.com/>

Google it, or Bing it

If you can't find the song you are looking for on either of those 2 websites, just type the name of the song and the word "tablature, tabs or tab" into your search engine of choice. Search engines can often dig up that obscure piece of music you are looking for.

Chapter 3 – Guitar Magazines

If you head down to your local music store, book store or even grocery store, you will find some guitar magazines that have tablature available in them. In this chapter we will take a look at some of the most popular magazines available, and their websites where you can find out more info, or subscribe. Some even offer free music on their website.

I will be concentrating on the ones that offer music. There are a lot of magazines that offer artist interviews or guitar lessons...but don't offer music as the main part of their magazine.

Guitar World Magazine

The most popular US magazine with tablature is called "Guitar World". It caters to a younger rock oriented audience, and has artist interviews, gear reviews, lessons, and usually from 4 to 6 songs transcribed out with both the guitar and bass parts.

<http://www.guitarworld.com/>



Acoustic Guitar

Acoustic Guitar is a monthly magazine that obviously caters to acoustic guitar players. There are lessons and artist interviews, as well as guitar arrangements of finger picking and strumming songs that would be of interest to acoustic guitar players.

<http://www.acousticguitar.com/>



Fingerstyle Guitar

Fingerstyle Guitar Magazine publishes 6 issues per year, and contains lessons and music geared toward acoustic fingerstyle players. There is a companion CD as with music as well video features as well. A nicely done magazine, I have subscribed in the past.

<http://www.bassics.com/>



Just Jazz Guitar

Just Jazz Guitar is....umm, well focused on jazz guitar :) It is a great magazine. I have subscribed to this in the past as well. There are great transcriptions and arrangements of jazz guitar tunes.

<http://justjazzguitar.com/index.php>



Premier Guitar

Premier Guitar has a print version that you can buy, but also has a full online digital version available for free. While this magazine is not focused around transcriptions of songs, it's worth checking out because there is music available in the issues.

<http://www.premierguitar.com/>

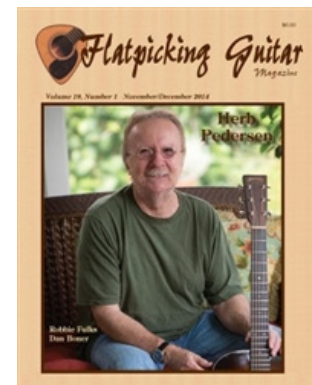


Flatpicking Guitar Magazine

Flatpicking Guitar Magazines is published 6 times per year as a digital download. This magazine focuses around acoustic country, bluegrass and Celtic music styles.

The website does offer some free song arrangements as well. The digital download also has optional audio files that you can download at an additional cost.

<http://www.flatpick.com/>



Guitar Player Magazine

Guitar Player Magazine has artist interviews, gear reviews, lessons and more. But it does not focus on teaching songs. Sometimes you will find 1 song transcribed in the magazine, or a solo.

Their website is worth checking out for free online content as well.

<http://www.guitarplayer.com/>



Guitar Player Vault

While Guitar Player magazine does not have song transcriptions, their free online magazine called "Guitar Player Vault does". Guitar Player Vault also pulls content from past Guitar Player issues. Kind of a best of over from the last 40+ years Guitar Player has been published.

But the big part of this digital only magazine that is of interest to us in this “Guide to Playing Songs” is that they offer free tablature transcriptions. And at least at the moment you are able to get not only the current issue, but past issues as well. So it is well worth checking out.

<http://www.guitarplayer.com/gp2>



Total Guitar

Total Guitar is a guitar is a European based magazine with guitar tablature as well as lessons, gear reviews and more. You can also buy a digital version of this magazine from iTunes as well.

<http://www.musicradar.com/totalguitar>



Special Editions

Often you will find special issues of magazines available on the rack. Issues you would not get if you were a subscriber. You might find an issue that specializes in a certain style. Like Metal Mania...where they might have 10 metal songs transcribed. Or Southern Rock or any number of other specialized styles.



Libraries

Don't forget that libraries have magazines available as well. So be sure and check out their guitar magazine selection.



Chapter 4 – Learning Songs by Rote

In this chapter we are going to look at learning songs by rote. Watching a guitar player play something, and then you try playing it back. This is definitely a short chapter, but learning by rote can be a great way to learn new songs.

Learning Songs from Friends

Getting together with friends and jamming is a great way to learn songs. You can share songs you know, and they can show you the songs they know. How accurate the songs are just depends on where your friends learned them.

I have had many students come into a lesson and show me a song that one of their friends taught them...only to have me show them the “correct way” to play the song :). But even if the accuracy lacks sometimes, it's still a good experience.

Private Guitar Teachers

Find a good private guitar teacher. There are good teachers, and there are bad teachers out there. If you are a beginner, it's sometimes hard to tell what to look for. First, don't just price shop. Cheaper is not better. A more expensive teacher may have more experience and be able to help you learn much quicker than someone who has not taught guitar for very long.

So if you are looking for a private teacher, first look for teaching experience. Ask, “How long have you been teaching guitar”. Not, “How long have you been playing guitar”. Teaching guitar and playing guitar are 2 different skills. There are some great guitar players who are lousy teachers. And there are some mediocre players who are great teachers.

Don't look for the guitar player in the hot local band to take lessons from. Because if someone is playing out all of the time, guess what...your lessons are going to be canceled all of the time because of gigs. And if you are going to take private lessons, having consistent weekly lessons is a must.

Of course any good teacher will not just be teaching you songs, but teaching guitar and music fundamentals as well. And they will also not just be teaching you songs exclusively by rote, they will be using printed music, and may also teach you how to learn songs by ear. They will be giving you the tools you need to teach yourself songs accurately.

Instructional Videos – Online Sources

There are both free and paid websites where there are instructional videos on how to play different songs.

YouTube.com

<http://www.youtube.com/>

If you are looking for videos of any kind, YouTube.com has now become the main place on the Internet to go. There is just about anything imaginable available, and learning how to play different guitar songs is no exception.



In the YouTube search form just type in the name of the song or artist that you would like to learn, followed by the words “guitar lesson”.

If there is a video available, that is the way to find it. If you do find a video lesson for a song, you may want to take the time and learn it right then rather than book marking it for later. It’s possible the video may be removed because of copyright issues.

Now be warned that a lot of the song lessons on YouTube are just wrong. Since anyone and their brother can put up a video...usually they do. So you get people who really have no idea what they are doing teaching things. So you have to do some sorting to filter out the good stuff from the crap.

Learn From the Actual Guitar Player

Another great thing about YouTube is that you can find concert footage of your favorite artists playing. You can then watch their hands to help you figure out how to play the songs. Kind of mixing learning songs by rote, and by ear...which we will talk about in the next chapter.

I learned a ton during the early days of MTV...when they actually had music videos. It was a chance to not only hear a song, but watch the guitar players play them. Now you can do the same thin on demand from YouTube and other online video sites.

Instructional Videos – DVD’s

There are DVD’s available for you to learn songs by rote. They often contain notation as well, but the instructors talk you through what to play. But you will probably only find the most popular artists. You can find DVD’s available at a website called [Sheet Music Plus](#), as well as on [Amazon.com](#).

Guitar Song Courses from Cyberfret.com

Cyberfret.com currently has 5 courses available to help you learn how to play different songs.

[60s Rock Strumming](#) - Learn how to play 18 classic 60s rock tunes

[70s Rock Strumming](#) - Learn how to play 20 classic 70s rock tunes

[80s Rock Strumming](#) - Learn how to play 20 classic 80s rock tunes

[90s Rock Strumming](#) - Learn how to play 20 classic 90s rock tunes

[Modern Country Strumming](#) - Learn 16 Top Country Songs



Websites with Video Song Lessons

Below are 2 really great websites for both general video guitar lessons, and specifically to learn songs. They are both paid websites with a monthly fee...but it's pretty cheap to become a member of either.



JamPlay.com



GuitarTricks.com

Chapter 5 – Learning Songs by Ear

Learning songs by ear is probably the most difficult way to learn...and a little bit of a dying art. But well worth the effort

Warning...Geezer Talk Ahead!

Now I get to give you my "back in the day" speech :) Back in the day when I was first learning guitar, we didn't have no YouTube on the "Intererweb", and you couldn't use "The Google" to find information on anything at the click of a button. There was not even much printed guitar music available. And yes this was not very long ago; don't make me out to be older than I am.

If I wanted to learn how to play a song, I had to learn it by ear. I remember the first songs I learned, I slaved over the parts for days. Only making small bits of progress every day. Sometimes what I figured out ended up being wrong, but the process helped me train my ear so the next song I tried was easier, and I was able to learn songs faster and faster.



These days you have a great advantage of having more resources to learn songs easily than at any other time in history.

You also have a disadvantage in that you will probably never learn to develop your ear as well as the guitarist who came before you, unless you make an extra effort to do so.

The quick and easy fix of just being able to download the music in 5 seconds and

start playing has a greater appeal than slaving away at trying to figure out a song by ear for days.

So take some time and try and work on being able to learn songs by ear. Try learning a song that you have some music to. Then you can check yourself to see if what you figured out by ear was correct.

...End of Geezer Rant

Key #1 To Learning Songs by Ear

Part of being able to learn songs by ear actually starts with songs you already know. Very often when you learn a new song, it's just made up of common melody fragments and chord progressions that have been used in thousands of other songs as well. So you may hear a new song and say to yourself "hey, this part is very similar to this other song I know".

So knowing more songs, gives you a greater vocabulary of common material that may be used in all kinds of other songs.

Key #2 To Learning Songs by Ear

Learning about [music theory](#), the nuts and bolts of how music is put together will help you learn songs by ear as well. Once you understand keys, and scales, and intervals (the distance between 2 notes)...then this opens up more doors to you.

There are also specific exercises you can do to help train your ears. These exercises help you learn what different types of chords sound like, or train you in common chord progressions, and melody identification. There are always ways that you can train and improve your ear's ability to recognize different elements in music.

Key #3 To Learning Songs by Ear

Have some tools to help make your job easier. You can buy different hardware or software tools help you slow down and isolate guitar parts to help you learn them by ear. But before you go spending money, give these free tools a shot.

Your Stereo or MP3 Player

You can start with just the most basic tools...your stereo or MP3 Player. But here are a couple of things to know that will help you out.

The first is that you should experiment with listening to the right or left channel of the music to see if you can hear the guitar part easier. In a stereo mix, you can often hear the guitar part you are trying to learn more in one side vs. the other. Or other instruments that might distract you are stronger in one side of the other.

If you are just using your MP3 Player, that means taking the ear bud out of one ear or the other.

The next is to adjust the EQ settings. The problem with most MP3 players and lower end stereos...this means choosing from some style presets. Like Rock, Jazz, Classical etc. You could scan through these presets and see if you can hear the guitar clearer with any of them.

If you actually have real EQ setting on your stereo, try boosting the mid range settings. This will help you hear the guitar better since it lives for the most part in the midrange of the mix.

Your Computer

Using your computer and various media players will give you more options than your stereo or MP3 Player.

Windows Media Player

If you have a Windows PC, then you already have Windows Media Player installed on your computer. You can use Windows Media Player to listen to CD's in your computer, but the real power comes from using it to play digital audio files...like MP3's or WMA's.

If you have the files on your computer, then you are good to go. But if they are on a CD, then you will have to rip them to your computer. Windows Media Player will do this for you. If you don't know how to do this, it's beyond the scope of this guide...but you can do a web search or look in the help documentation. Once you have a file like an MP3, there are a few things that you can do to help you learn a song.

One is that you can easily pan to the left or right like I already talked about. The next is that Windows Media Player has a 10 band equalizer. So you can fine tune the frequencies that you are hearing more so than most basic home stereos. There are some presets, but you can then adjust any of the 10 bands up or down. Remember the guitar is in the mid range.

One of the most powerful parts of Windows Media Player is the slow down feature. You can slow a song down to half speed if you want. And it actually does a pretty good job of it. This really helps in figuring out fast guitar parts. Or even slower ones that may be buried a little by other instruments or the vocal line. Read the help file to help you get to the "Enhancements" settings of the player. The EQ Enhancement and the Play Speed Enhancement are what you are looking for.

Apples Quicktime Player

If you are a Mac person, have no fear. Apples Quicktime Player has all of the same basic features for slowing down and EQ. iTunes which is also from Apple does not have these features. So if your computer is automatically set to use iTunes for digital audio files, you may need to open them manually with the Quicktime Player

Audacity

Audacity is a free cross platform audio editor and recorder. Here are a couple of ways you might use the program in learning songs.

Cut out only the part of the song you want to work on. That makes it a lot easier to work with. So if you want to work on just one lick of a solo, just cut that part out and create a separate file for it.

You can also alter the play speed just like with Windows Media Player and Quicktime. The option you want to choose from the "Effect" menu at the top of the program is "change tempo". This keeps the pitch the same. If you choose "change speed" this would change the pitch and speed.

You can change the pitch of a song. One reason you might want to use this feature is to play a song where the band is turned down a half step, and you would rather keep your guitar in standard tuning.

There are other features of the software as well. You can use it to record your own music. Or record yourself playing along with a jam track. It's a full featured program for an unbeatable price. Free.

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

Now Go Start Jammin'

All right, you now have plenty of ways you can start to play some songs. That is the good news. The bad news is that you might not have developed the music and guitar skills you need in order to play some of those songs. You may have the music, but if you don't understand the rhythms that are written it may be too difficult to hack your way through it.

So spend some time having fun and playing songs. And also spend a little time developing your skills on the instrument, which is fun as well :) One way to develop your skills is to go through some of the online guitar lesson at Cyberfret.com.

If you want to learn more about chords, strumming & accompaniment patterns, check out my Rhythm Guitar Mastery course.

Rhythm Guitar Mastery

- ✓ 24 hours of comprehensive rhythm guitar video guitar lessons covering chords, strumming and rhythm.
- ✓ A 236 pg and 180 pg manual with full text explanations, tablature, notation and diagrams.
- ✓ 394 High Quality Jam Tracks
- ✓ A 116 page Chord Dictionary with 1640 chords in Standard, Drop D, Double Drop D, Open D, and Open G tunings
- ✓ **Instant Download** or full physical 20 DVD version.



For more info and to grab your copy today, go to...

<http://www.cyberfret.com/rhythm-guitar-mastery/>

Have a good one!

Shawn Bradshaw



Learn Complete Strumming Songs...

One question I often get asked is this...

"How can I play complete songs? I can play many of the basic chords, and know some common strum patterns. But I just can't seem to put it all together and play whole songs."

If this sound like you, then there is good news. I have created 5 strumming song courses that do just that...teach whole songs. From intro to ending. You will learn all of the chords and strum patterns you need for each song. As well as the video lessons, each course included detailed sheet music for each song.

Grab a copy of one of my song strumming courses today.

60s Rock Strumming Course

<http://www.cyberfret.com/60s-rock-strumming>



60s Rock Strumming – Volume 1

"Space Oddity" from David Bowie
"White Rabbit" from Jefferson Airplane
"Magic Carpet Ride" from Steppenwolf
"Only The Lonely" from Roy Orbison

60s Rock Strumming – Volume 2

"Pinball Wizard" from The Who
"Bad Moon Rising" from CCR
"Brown Eyed Girl" from Van Morrison
"Like a Rolling Stone" from Bob Dylan

60s Rock Strumming – Volume 3

"Both Sides" from Joni Mitchell
"California Dreamin'" from The Mamas & The Papas
"For Your Love" from The Yardbirds
"A Whiter Shade Of Pale" from Procol Harum

60s Rock Strumming – Volume 4

"While My Guitar Gently Weeps" from The Beatles
"Nights in White Satin" from The Moody Blues
"Do Wah Diddy Diddy" from Manfred Mann
"(Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay" from Otis Redding
"Wild Thing" from The Troggs (& Jimi Hendrix)

Bonus Song – "Evil Ways" from Santana

70s Rock Strumming Course

<http://www.cyberfret.com/70s-rock-strumming>



70s Rock Strumming – Volume 1

"Crazy On You" from Heart
"Margaritaville" from Jimmy Buffet
"Peace Train" from Cat Stevens
"Dreams" from Fleetwood Mac
"Wildfire" from Michael Martin Murphey

70s Rock Strumming – Volume 2

"Born To Run" from Bruce Springsteen
"Take It Easy" from The Eagles
"Sweet Baby James" from James Taylor
"Still The Same" from Bob Seger
"Heart Of Gold" from Neil Young

70s Rock Strumming – Volume 3

"Give a Little Bit" from Supertramp
"Lonely People" from America
"Have You Ever Seen the Rain" from CCR
"Walk On The Wild Side" from Lou Reed
"Summer Breeze" from Seals & Crofts

70s Rock Strumming – Volume 4

"Ridin' The Storm Out" from REO Speedwagon
"Show Me The Way" from Peter Frampton
"Maggie May" from Rod Stewart
"Highway To Hell" from AC/DC
"Pink Moon" from Nick Drake

80s Rock Strumming Course

<http://www.cyberfret.com/80s-rock-strumming>



80s Rock Strumming – Volume 1

“Jack and Diane” from John Cougar Mellencamp
“What I Like About You” from The Romantics
“Stuck With You” from Huey Lewis And The News
“Hit Me With Your Best Shot” from Pat Benatar
“The Tide Is High” from Blondie

80s Rock Strumming – Volume 2

“Patience” from Guns N’ Roses
“Southern Cross” from Crosby, Stills & Nash
“Every Rose Has its Thorn” from Poison
“I Love A Rainy Night” from Eddie Rabbit
“About A Girl” from Nirvana

80s Rock Strumming – Volume 3

“Tempted” from Squeeze
“Living After Midnight” from Judas Priest
“Roxanne” from The Police
“I Melt With You” from Modern English
“Against the Wind” from Bob Seger

80s Rock Strumming – Volume 4

“Jessie’s Girl” from Rick Springfield
“Don’t Dream It’s Over” from Crowded House
“Should I Stay or Should I Go” from The Clash
“Redemption Song” from Bob Marley
“Free Falling” from Tom Petty

90s Rock Strumming Course

<http://www.cyberfret.com/90s-rock-strummin>



90s Rock Strumming – Volume 1

“Wonderwall” from Oasis
“Lightning Crashes” from Live
“Drive” from Incubus
“Fly Away” from Lenny Kravitz
“Elderly Woman Behind The Counter In A Small Town” from Pearl Jam

90s Rock Strumming – Volume 2

“Good Riddance” from Green Day
“Smooth” from Santana and Rob Thomas
“Tom” from Natalie Imbruglia
“How’s it Going To Be?” from Third Eye Blind
“Run-Around” from Blues Traveler

90s Rock Strumming – Volume 3

“Karma Police” from Radiohead
“Plush” from Stone Temple Pilots
“Brother” from Alice in Chains
“Runaway Train” from Soul Asylum
“Save Tonight” from Eagle-Eye Cherry

90s Rock Strumming – Volume 4

“Crash Into Me” from Dave Matthews Band
“Mr. Jones” from Counting Crows
“The Way” from Fastball
“Disarm” from Smashing Pumpkins
“Doll Parts” from Hole

Modern Country Strumming Course

<http://www.cyberfret.com/modern-country-strumming>



Modern Country Strumming – Volume 1

“Cowboys and Angels” from Dustin Lynch
“You” from Chris Young
“Love Like Crazy” from Lee Brice
“Dancin’ Away With My Heart” from Lady Antebellum

Modern Country Strumming – Volume 2

“No Hurry” from Zac Brown Band
“I Hope You Dance” from Lee Ann Womack
“What About Now” from Lonestar
“Wanted” from Hunter Hayes

Modern Country Strumming – Volume 3

“19 Somethin’” from Mark Wills
“My Wish” from Rascal Flatts
“Woman Like You” from Lee Brice
“Lovin’ You Is Fun” from Easton Corbin

Modern Country Strumming – Volume 4

“Austin” from Blake Shelton
“Even If It Breaks Your Heart” from Eli Young Band
“Where I Come From” from Montgomery Gentry
“Over You” from Miranda Lambert