

# Tablature Guide

Tablature (TAB) is a music notation system designed to show guitarists at which fret to depress a string when picking it. It has been in existence for centuries: lutenists in the time of the European Renaissance used a distinctive form of tablature.

Tablature has two main advantages over standard notation: 1) it clearly indicates the position on the guitar neck of each note; and 2) it is much easier to learn to read. If you don't currently read either standard notation or tablature, I recommend that you learn to read tablature. You'll be playing the pieces in this book much sooner than if you take the time to learn standard notation.

Six horizontal lines represent the six strings of the guitar:

Ex. 1)

e'	T
b	
g	A
d	
A	B
E	

Notice in tablature that the bass string of the guitar is represented by the bottom line of the staff. The treble string is the top line. This is inverted from the way the strings actually lie on the guitar. The reason for the inversion is simply to make tablature look more like standard notation: the low-pitched notes are on the bottom lines of the staff, and the high-pitched notes are on the top lines.

A number on a line indicates at which fret to depress that string as you pick it.:

Ex. 2)

T				5				5
A	0	7	7		0	7	7	
B								

*D chord, using an A-triad fingering at the 5th fret.*

In Example 2 you pick the strings in this order:

- 1) fourth string open ("0" means an open string);
- 2) the third string fretted at the 7th fret;
- 3) the second string fretted at the 7th fret;
- 4) the first (treble) string fretted at the 5th fret;
- 5) then repeat the four notes.

The stems and beams underneath the notes denote the rhythm:

Ex. 3)

T				5				5
A	0	7	7		0	7	7	
B								

In Example 3, there are eight eighth-notes, each receiving one-half beat in 4/4 time. To produce the correct rhythm in Example 3, count evenly "1 & 2 & 3 & 4&" along with the notes as you pick them.

## Other Designations

"H" in the tablature designates a *hammer-on*, sounding a note by fretting a string sharply with a finger of the fretting hand. "P" stands for *pull-off*, sounding a note by plucking a string with a finger of the left hand. "B" stands for *bend*, stretching the string to the side as the note is ringing.

"S" stands for *slide*, sounding a note by sliding to it from another fret position on that string. An ascending diagonal line (↗) means to slide from a lower pitch to a higher pitch. A descending diagonal line means the opposite.

For all of its attributes, tablature certainly has disadvantages as well. The biggest deficiency of tablature is that it does not indicate how long to sustain each note. There are methods of indicating sustain in tablature, but they are difficult to read. The best solution to this problem is your sense of hearing. Listen closely to the recording to determine the duration of the notes.