

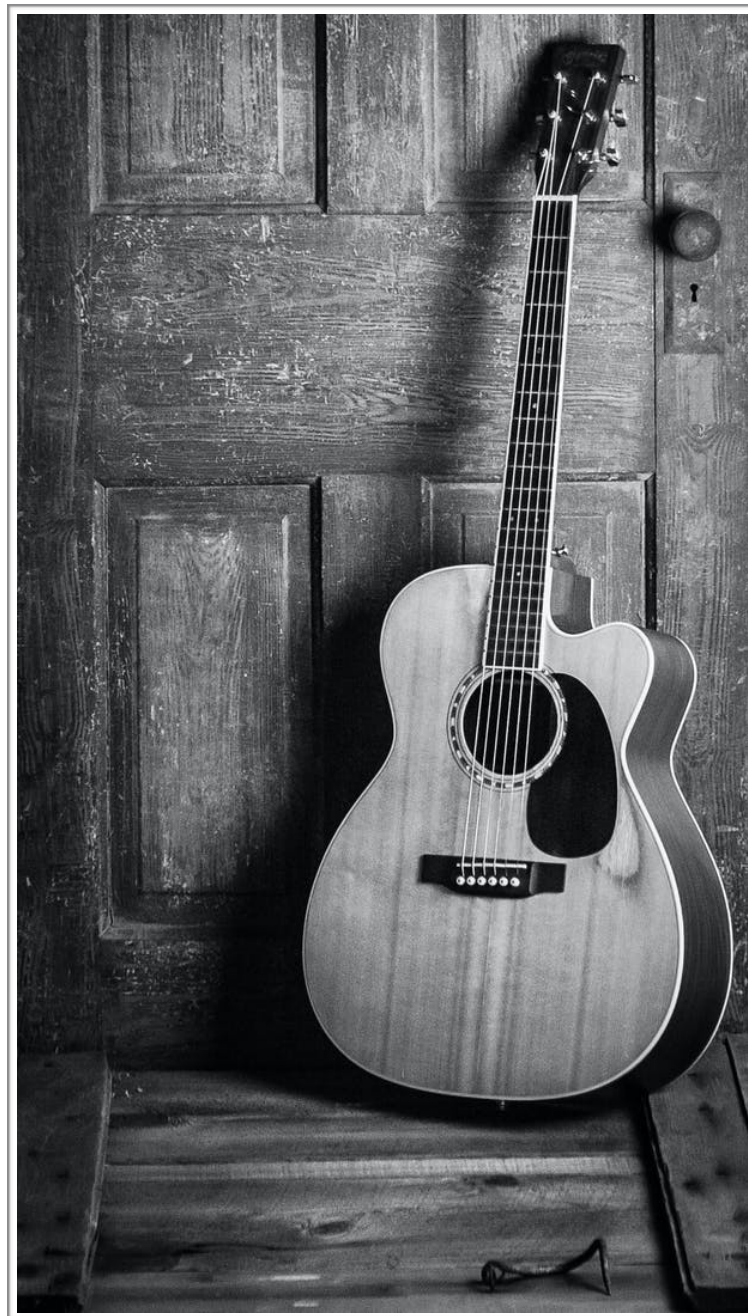
Beginner Guitar Lesson #1

Grade 1

**With
Hamish**

Welcome to Guitar 1.

In the following lessons, I will guide you through the first steps on your guitar journey. The experience and knowledge I've gained over the years as a musician have been summarized and refined into a comprehensive lesson program that I am confident will put you on the fast track to playing your guitar confidently and accurately. Let's begin!



A&D Chords

This handout will include all topics included in our lessons and is intended to be pair with an instructor. Refer to these pages for practice in between classes.

Tuning: Your string should be tuned to E A D G B E. There are many mnemonic devices for remembering your string note names. I like Extraterrestrial Adventure Dog Goes Beyond Extreme! But I encourage you to make something up for yourself.

Use a professional tuner for best results. There are several “online” tuners that rely on your ability to hear note synchronization, which is not difficult, but not suitable for beginners who haven’t trained their ear properly. Either way, a good physical tuner will be more accurate overall, so only use these online tuners in a pinch.

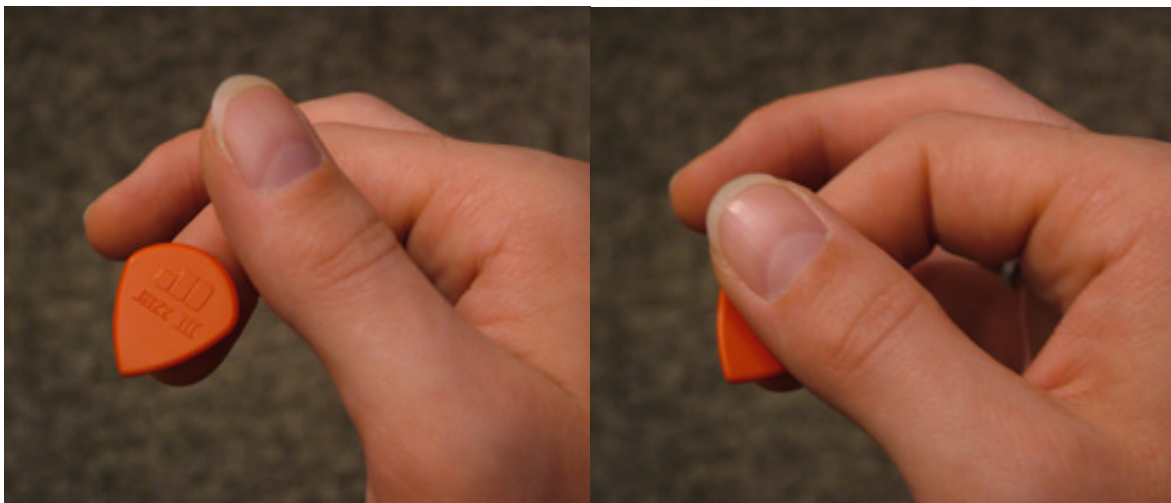
Another way to tune is by memory. Memory tuning is not very accurate unless you’re gifted, but a fun challenge is to tune your guitar to the best of your ability without a tuner, and then use a tuner and see how close you were. Daily challenges like this will gradually, but progressively, train your ears to identify and replicate notes.

You’ll also find that over time you will develop a tuning “Song” that is uniquely yours. It will materialize on its own, and it’s really interesting to listen to other guitarist’s tuning song that they play unconsciously. I’ll leave this vague for now intentionally so you don’t try to force one unnaturally (that would be like giving yourself a cool nickname), but you’ll notice it in other musicians now that I pointed it out. When you get jamming with people, pay attention to the song they play during and right after tuning.

How to Hold the Guitar: I will show you how to hold the guitar, but this is going to be one of many things that will vary from person to person. The most important thing to remember is to be relaxed and sit up straight(ish). Nothing should be (overly) uncomfortable. As for technically, just try not to use your chord hand to hold the guitar up. Your guitar should be placed between your leg and your picking arm in such a way that you can use your chord hand exclusively for playing and not supporting the guitar. I'll show you.

Correct Finger Placement: Finger placement on your guitar might be the most important and equally difficult thing for a beginner to learn. What must be understood, is that where you place your fingers on the frets, greatly influences the pressure necessary to hear the note, and the sound quality of the note itself. The goal is to have your fingers as close to the bottom of the fret (closest to you) as possible. We only want to apply **JUST** enough pressure on the string to hear the note ring out clearly. Too much pressure will make your fingers hurt and bend the note out of tune. This will become especially important when we move onto the electric guitar for the Blues Module in later lessons.

How To Hold The Pick: Following the guideline below, adjust as necessary.

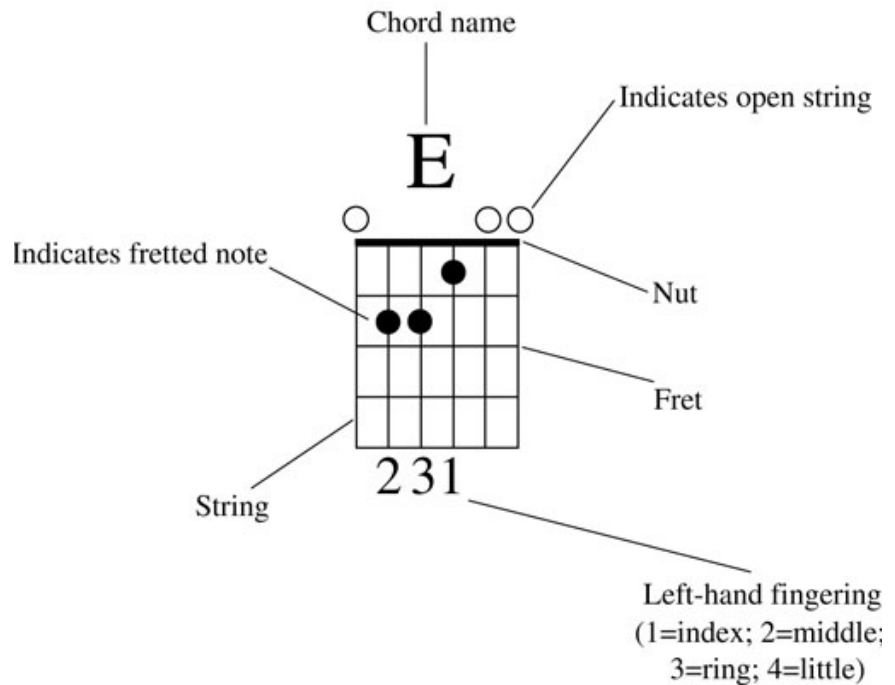


Step 2

How To Read a Chord Chart:

Luckily for guitar players, we don't need to understand music theory or read musical notation to easily learn the songs we love. Chord charts provide a direct picture of the guitar neck and where to place your individual fingers. Paired with "tablature" (we will get to that in a later lesson), we can learn any popular song fairly easily without

any music theory involved. That being said, I will be implementing and encouraging basic music theory as we go, which will become more important to understand as we start talking about more advanced topics such as musical "Keys" and "Scales".



E Maj Chord

Minimizing Finger Pain: It's going to hurt. Your fingers are not prepared for this, so your will needs to be strong. The reality is, is that your fingers will hurt for months before you develop a callous to act as a barrier. Think of it like you would if you went to the gym and hurt all over afterwards. It's a good thing, and will hurt less the more you do it as you get stronger.

There are several ways we can “minimize” the pain, and it’s going to be most important to do this early on in our lessons so that we have the endurance to complete each lesson without our fingers failing us. We also want to be able to practice daily, so if you are too sore to play, you can’t practice effectively.

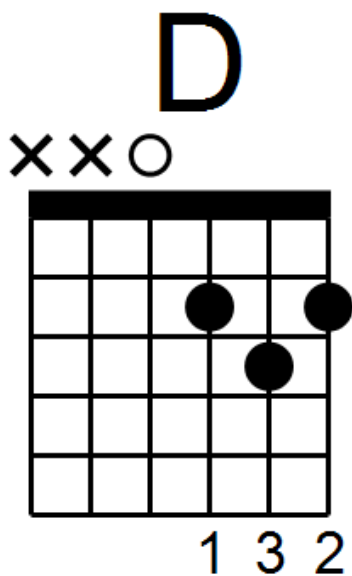
Here are the key things to remember:

1. Do NOT push too hard. It’s counterproductive in several ways to push the strings too hard on the fretboard. Your fingers will hurt more, and you will bend the intended note out of tune.

2. Don’t practice TOO much. Grey area here, but there is a point where your body and brain need to absorb the information and there is little else you can do that day that will retain. 20 Mins a day, 4 days a week is a good start (excluding lesson time).

3. Proper finger placement. Snuggling your fingers right up against the frets will save you a world of hurt, and improve your playing more than anything else.

When you press close to the fret, you need much less effort to make a sound. Experiment with it, you’ll see.



How to Play “D” Chord:

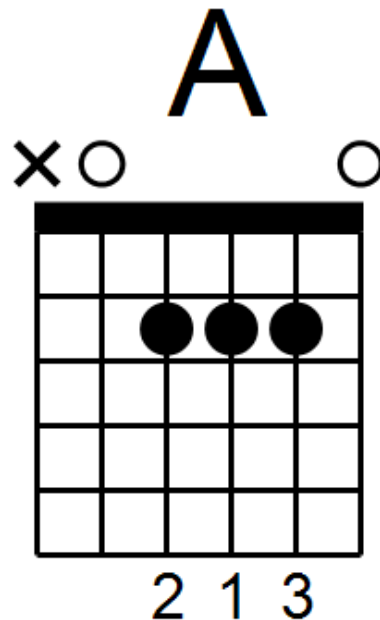
Leading with your pointer finger (1st) makes it significantly easier for your other fingers to find their mark. Note that we are not playing the top 2 strings (strings 5&6), and that we are including the open string “D” which is the ROOT note of the chord (we’ll talk a lot more about chord structure soon). Remember that “OK” is not good enough when practicing chords. We want our chords to sound perfect before we move on. It might sound te-

dious, but the future guitarist you become would thank you if they knew you did this for them. Breaking bad habits is difficult. Not to say it can't be done, but it's best to get it right the first time.

How to Play “A” Chord:

I find leading with the ring finger (3rd) is best for this chord. Make sure to snug that 1st finger as close to the back of the fret as possible (closest to you). It won't be possible to get it directly against the fret due to the nature of the chord being all on one fret. Note that we are not playing the 6th string, and we have 2 open strings (1st & 5th strings). Also take note that this fingering is non traditional and you will likely find different fingerings if you were to look online. There are a few reasons I prefer this fingering; It's easier to get all the fingers closer to the fret, so it's easier to play, and its shape transfers well with the “Pivot Finger” approach.

Pivot Finger: Changing between chords in a fluid manner is another difficult hurdle at the beginning. Nothing is going to help your chord development more than practice. Next to that is Pivot Finger. The idea is to keep one of your fingers on the same note shared between chords while changing between them. Without knowing too much about chord structure yet, we need to know that all chords are made up of several notes and some notes are shared between different chords. In the example of “D” to “A”, we have “D”= D, F#, A and “A”= A, C#, E. Notice that the two chords share a note, the A. In practice, this means that you don't need to lift your 1st finger when you change chords from D to A (and D to A) because it's already on the right note. This gives you the “Pivot” to form the rest of the chord around. Try switching between these two chords as many times as you can using this technique. You don't need to strum the strings, just focus on changing the chord.



Quick Changes: Quick Changes is a practice technique used to increase chord change speed. Very simply, we want to see how many times we can change between chords within 1 min. Keep track of how many you get, and aim to beat it. Do your best to make them accurate too, but we are focusing on speed for this exercise.

Introduction to 4/4 Time and Strumming: In order for musicians to play music in harmony, everyone involved needs to be ticking an internal timer synchronized with everyone else. 4/4 time is the most common timing we encounter by far, and that's convenient for everyone, because it's very simple and intuitive. You will hear musicians "count in" before they start (1...2.... 1,2,3,4!) and then everyone starts playing. That's 4/4 time. The beat is going to usually land on every second count starting from 1 (ONE and two and THREE and four and). Your foot should tap to the same rhythm, hitting the floor on the 1&3 and rising on 2&4. For now we are going to strike the chord only on the 1st beat and let it ring out for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th. Then we will play the next chord on the next round starting on 1 (ONE two three four, ONE two three four). Jamming to your favourite songs will be the best way to establish your timing.

Songs to Jam With That Only Have 2 Chords: Applying what you learn is the goal, and it's the most fun part. These particular songs are just "A" and "D" repeated throughout the entire song. Note how just 2 chords can be applied to create diverse music across different genres. Look these songs up on YouTube and jam along. A capo will be required to make these songs playable, but all you need to do is slap it on the fret indicated and play your chords normally. I'll show you how to apply the capo.

Lou Reed - Take a Walk on the Wild Side (Capo on 3rd)

Bruce Springsteen - Born in the USA (Capo on 2nd)

Joe Cocker - Feelin Alright (Capo on 3rd)

Practice Routine: In between lessons, you will need to practice. I've arranged a routine that will focus on developing the topics covered in this lesson.

3 mins "A" Chord Practice. Slowly, and repeatedly form and strum the chord perfectly. Take your time. Clean notes with no buzz. If you find notes are muted, it means another finger is touching the string. I find it usually easier to restart the chord if it's messy rather than try to alter it once you've placed it.

3 mins "D" Chord Practice. Same as above with "D" Chord

2 mins "D" to "A" Pivot Finger practice. No need to strum, just use the anchor point to repeatedly switch between the chords on the fretboard. Remember that the Pivot note is the A note played with your pointer (1st) finger shared between the 2 chords.

1 min "D" to "A" Quick changes. Focus on speed, but also get your fingers on all the right strings and frets. Keep track of how many you can do in one min.

1 min "A" to "D" Quick changes.

10 Mins Song Practice. The three songs I suggested will be more than 10 mins together, so just play all three and you're done. Just do your best to play the chord once every 4 counts (ONE two three four, ONE two three four). Using YouTube, you can slow songs down in the settings, this makes it a very useful practice tool. Try slowing songs down to 50% and gradually speed up as you improve.