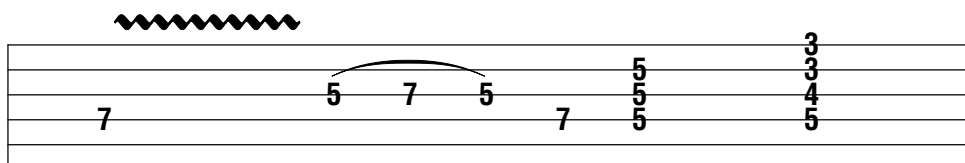


FENDER PLAYERS CLUB HOW TO READ GUITAR TABLATURE

Guitar Tablature

Tablature is the notation used to show the guitar parts for a piece of music. There are several different styles of tablature. The style described here is the one used by many music publishers today, including Hal Leonard, Cherry Lane, Berklee Press, Musicians Institute, and Centerstream Books.

Just like standard notation, guitar tablature is divided into **measures** that include a set number of **beats** per measure. However, while standard notation uses **notes** written on a **staff**, tablature uses **fret numbers** written on a grid that represents all the six strings of a guitar.



The top line represents the first string, or high E, while the bottom line represents the sixth, or low E string. The numbers indicate which fret to play on the given string, with a zero (0) indicating the open string.

In the example above, we see the fourth string fretted at the 7th fret, followed by the third string fretted at frets 5, 7, and then 5 again, and so forth.

When more than one string is played at the same time, the numbers are lined up like the 5-5-5 and 3-3-4-5 in the example.

You'll also notice the symbols  and , which mean "wide vibrato" and "hammer-on/pull-off." More on this later.

The main drawback to using fret numbers is that the numbers give you no indication of the **value** of each note -- that is, the length of time that note is held while being played. While standard notation employs half notes, quarter notes, sixteenth notes, and notes of other values, as well as **rests** that tell you when *not* to play, guitar tablature simply has numbers, plus figures that tell you to use special techniques such as sliding, hammering, pulling off, or bending.

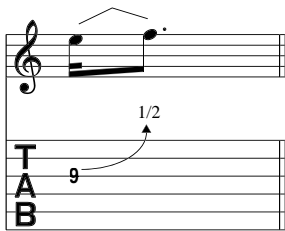
For this reason, it's very helpful to place guitar tablature just below the standard notation for a piece of music. This way, you can see the **note values** and **rhythm** of the music as you follow the tablature. Even if you don't read music, you can still follow along with the notes and measures.

Symbols in Tablature

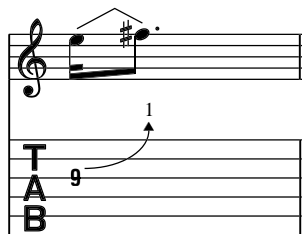
Because so much of guitar playing is about technique, it's very helpful to show all the important techniques that the player used in performing the piece. In guitar for popular music, the most common are bends -- that is, when you bend the string as you play it.

BENDS:

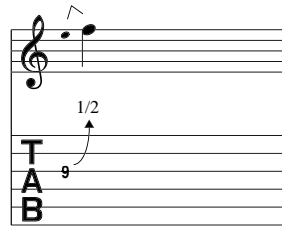
HALF-STEP BEND: Strike the note and bend up 1/2 step.



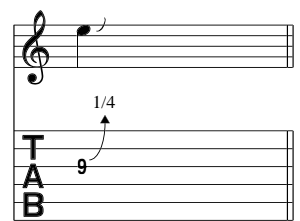
WHOLE-STEP BEND: Strike the note and bend up one step.



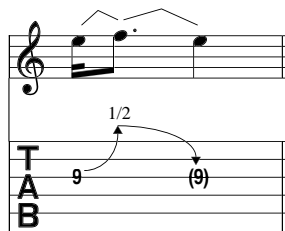
GRACE NOTE BEND: Strike the note and immediately bend up as indicated.



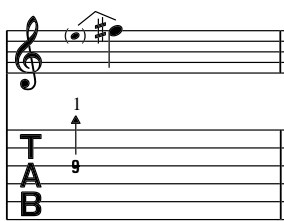
SLIGHT (MICROTONE) BEND: Strike the note and bend up 1/4 step.



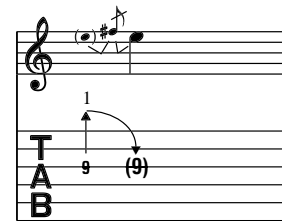
BEND AND RELEASE: Strike the note and bend up as indicated, then release back to the original note. Only the first note is struck.



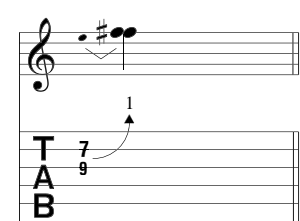
PRE-BEND: Bend the note as indicated, then strike it.



PRE-BEND AND RELEASE: Bend the note as indicated. Strike it and release the bend back to the original note.

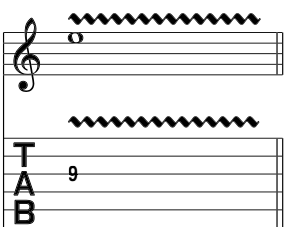


UNISON BEND: Strike the two notes simultaneously and bend the lower note up to the pitch of the higher.

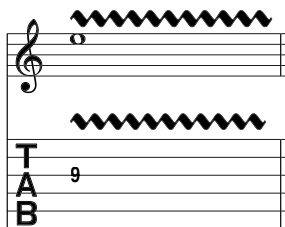


Other techniques, which fall under the category of **legato**, include vibrato, hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides, trills and tapping:

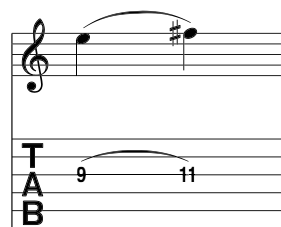
VIBRATO: The string is vibratoed by rapidly bending and releasing the note with the fretting hand.



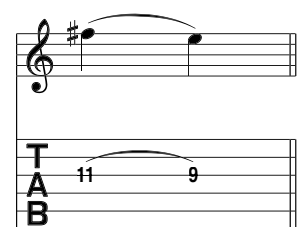
WIDE VIBRATO: The pitch is varied to a greater degree by vibrating with the fretting hand.



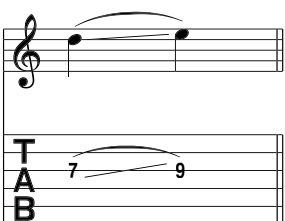
HAMMER-ON: Strike the first (lower) note with one finger, then sound the higher note (on the same string) with another finger by fretting it without picking.



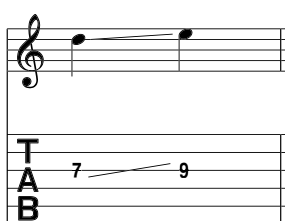
PULL-OFF: Place both fingers on the notes to be sounded. Strike the first note and without picking, pull the finger off to sound the second (lower) note.



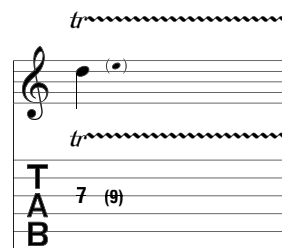
LEGATO SLIDE: Strike the first note and then slide the same fret-hand finger up or down to the second note. The second note is not struck.



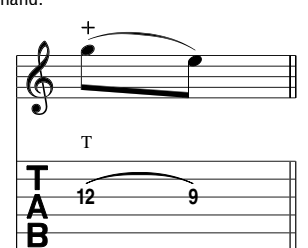
SHIFT SLIDE: Same as legato slide, except the second note is struck.



TRILL: Very rapidly alternate between the notes indicated by continuously hammering on and pulling off.



TAPPING: Hammer ("tap") the fret indicated with the pick-hand index or middle finger and pull off to the note fretted by the fret hand.



More tablature symbols

There are also symbols to tell you when to use different kinds of harmonics, scrapes, rakes, muting, vibrato bar techniques, and other picking techniques:

NATURAL HARMONIC: Strike the note while the fret-hand lightly touches the string directly over the fret indicated.

Harm.
T
A 12
B

PINCH HARMONIC: The note is fretted normally and a harmonic is produced by adding the edge of the thumb or the tip of the index finger of the pick hand to the normal pick attack.

P.H.
T
A 5
B

HARP HARMONIC: The note is fretted normally and a harmonic is produced by gently resting the pick hand's index finger directly above the indicated fret (in parentheses) while the pick hand's thumb or pick assists by plucking the appropriate string.

8va
H.H.
T
A 7(19)
B

PICK SCRAPE: The edge of the pick is rubbed down (or up) the string, producing a scratchy sound.

P.S.
T
A
B x

MUFFLED STRINGS: A percussive sound is produced by laying the fret hand across the string(s) without depressing, and striking them with the pick hand.

T
A x
B x

PALM MUTING: The note is partially muted by the pick hand lightly touching the string(s) just before the bridge.

P.M.
T
A
B 0 0 0 0

RAKE: Drag the pick across the strings indicated with a single motion.

rake
T
A x 5
B x

TREMOLO PICKING: The note is picked as rapidly and continuously as possible.

T
A 5 7
B

ARPEGGIATE: Play the notes of the chord indicated by quickly rolling them from bottom to top.

T
A
B

VIBRATO BAR DIVE AND RETURN: The pitch of the note or chord is dropped a specified number of steps (in rhythm) then returned to the original pitch.

w/ bar
T
A
B 0 (0)

VIBRATO BAR SCOOP: Depress the bar just before striking the note, then quickly release the bar.

w/ bar
T
A ✓ 4 ✓ 5 ✓ 7
B

VIBRATO BAR DIP: Strike the note and then immediately drop a specified number of steps, then release back to the original pitch.

-1/2 -1/2 -1/2
w/ bar
T
A -1/2 -1/2 -1/2
B 7 7 7

Navigating your way through the music

D.S. al Coda • Go back to the sign (%), then play until the measure marked "To Coda," then skip to the section labelled "Coda."

• Repeat measures between signs.

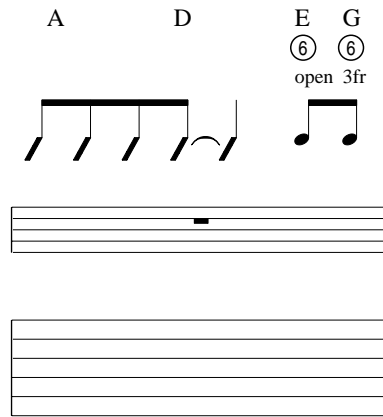
D.C. al Fine • Go back to the beginning of the song and play until the measure marked "Fine" (end).

• When a repeated section has different endings, play the first ending only the first time and the second ending only the second time.

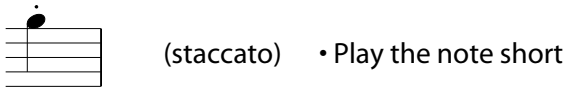
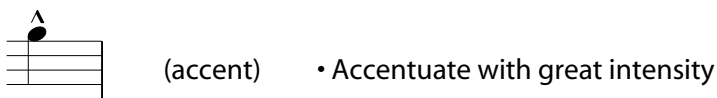
More Tablature Symbols and Conventions

Rhythm Slashes

Rhythm slashes are written above the staff, and show you the strumming pattern to play. Strum the chords according to the rhythm indicated. A round notehead in the rhythm slashes means to play a single note instead of a chord: in this example, you play the notes E and G on the 6th string, open and 3rd frets.



Accents



Picking/Strumming



Abbreviations and Directions

tacet Instrument is silent (drops out).

w/slide Use a slide (bottleneck).

w/o slide Use fingers instead of slide.

**** Chord symbols reflect implied tonality.** Chords shown are not actually played in this version, but are provided so that you can play chords if you wish.

Parentheses (8) Numbers in parentheses indicate a note that is either a) sustained (held over) from the previous measure, b) sustained while another note is subsequently played, or c) a barely-audible "ghost" note.

Examples of Tablature

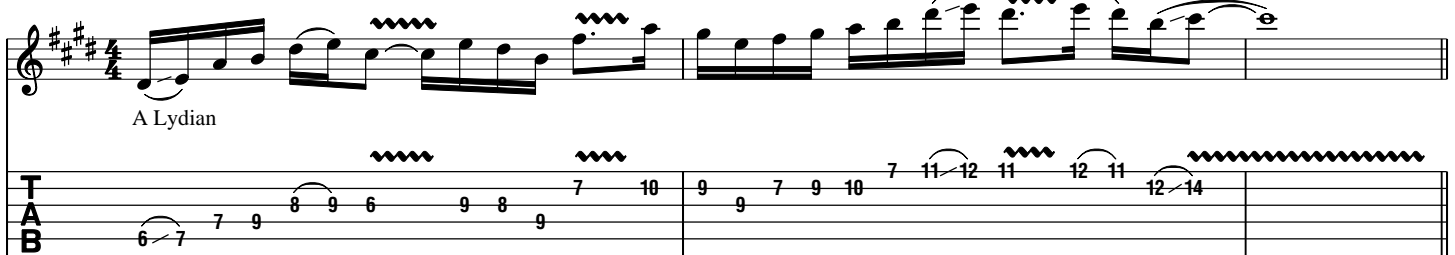
In the following example, note the symbols for "slide" and "vibrato" and how they are played on the audio track. Also note the tempo ($\text{♩} = 112$), chord symbols, and how the notes of the standard notation show you the rhythm of what to play:

AUDIO CLIP

$\text{♩} = 112$

A B7/A C#mi/A B7/A A

A Lydian




In the second example, you'll see some muffled strings (indicated by Xs), upstroke and downstroke symbols, and some additional directions: N.C. (No Chord), **B** Verse (the B section of the piece, which is the Verse), and below the tablature, there are numbers telling you which fingers to use in fretting the notes (1=index, 2=middle, 3=ring, 4=pinky). Also note the direction "let ring," which tells you to let that note ring until the end of the dashed line.

AUDIO CLIP

B Verse

N.C.(D) (C) (G) (D) (C) (G)

Rhy. Fig. 2 End Rhy. Fig. 2



There are two other important things to note in this example. First, notice the **repeat signs**, which tell you to repeat the music between them. Second, you'll notice the directions "Rhy. Fig. 2" and "End Rhy. Fig. 2".

This tells you that this section is a **rhythm figure**. Often, a guitar part is repeated several times in a song, so instead of writing it out over and over again, it is presented as a rhythm figure. Within the piece, you'll be directed when to play the rhythm figure -- simply play it until it says to end.