



**FREE STROKE – REST STROKE – ALTERNATION**

**Level 1**

## FREE STROKE - REST STROKE - ALTERNATION

The **free stroke** and the **rest stroke** differ in the tone and attack they produce - both are essential for a wide variety of colour and touch.

General technique is established around the free stroke - with the guitarist deciding when to use the rest stroke, which could be for occasional notes or for extended passages.



**Free stroke** - when a finger plays a string and in the follow-through, clears the adjacent string - as in RH Arpeggios and RH Chords. The free stroke is generally lighter in effect than the fuller toned rest stroke.

**Rest stroke** - when a finger plays a string and in the follow-through, comes to rest on the adjacent lower string.

**Alternation** - the fingers are alternated to achieve fluency and speed. Alternating *im* is most widely used.

## TECHNIQUE

The use of **rest stroke** and **free stroke** is very rarely indicated in the music and the performer decides which technique to use, according to the technical context, musical expression and tone desired.

### FREE STROKE<sup>i</sup>

- Move *im* to the first string with minimal adaptation of the right hand playing position for comfort and ease.
- Play the open first string by alternating *im*.
- Move the fingers through the string in their natural arc, clearing the adjacent lower string – smoothly, without tugging or hooking under the string.
- Become familiar with the technique on the other treble strings, too.

## REST STROKE

- As with the free stroke, move *im* to the first string<sup>ii</sup>.
- Play the string with an inward movement of the fingers so that you play through the string and come to rest on the string below. Playing the string inwards and in this way making use of the springiness of the string, will give a different timbre and attack when compared with the free stroke.
- It will be natural for you to either flex or not flex the first joint of the finger when playing the rest stroke. Either way is acceptable, so use whichever is easier for you at this stage<sup>iii</sup>.

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## Dos and Don'ts

### FREE STROKE

The **Dos and Don'ts** for the freestroke are similar to those shown in the RH Arpeggio tutorial in Level 1

### REST STROKE

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| ✘ Do not flatten the wrist against the guitar   | ✔ Play with minimal adaptation of the playing position  |
| ✘ Do not bring the forearm to the waist of the guitar   | ✔ Keep the elbow in the normal playing position - on the high part of the rim.                                |
| ✘ Do not use the same right hand finger when changing strings, especially when moving to a lower string | ✔ Alternate! Alternation requires concentration and can be frustrating to work on, but it pays huge dividends |

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## EXERCISES

Both free stroke and rest stroke are important and both need to be practised – one should not be practised to the exclusion of the other.

Be able to play the exercises without looking at your right hand.

Play the exercises at a moderate tempo, concentrating on the movement, the tone, the evenness of the rhythm - equal notes! - and of course, alternation.

Develop facility by repeating the exercises and becoming faster as you become more confident. Keep the hand comfortable and the notes even – this is how to judge progress.

Be creative and play at different dynamic levels.

### Free stroke, rest stroke and alternation exercise

Ex1: *m i m i*  
Ex2: *i m i m*

Play the exercise with both free stroke and rest stroke. Although not essential, the thumb may be rested lightly on one of the bass strings for greater stability.

<sup>i</sup> The Spanish word commonly used for the free stroke is *tirando*. Literally translated, it means ‘pulling’ and that is the last thing you should be doing! So we will continue to use ‘free stroke’. [The Spanish word for the rest stroke is *apoyando* which means ‘leaning’ – clearly more appropriate].

<sup>ii</sup> The adaptation of the right hand playing position should be minimal although it will adapt more in longer passages played with the rest stroke. A good technique is one that can adapt to the context.

<sup>iii</sup> Flexing and not flexing the first joint are both useful at a more advanced level, as they give different attacks and timbres. Developing the alternative will not be difficult.

## REST STROKE with *p*

### TECHNIQUE

Play the string with *p* and in the follow-through, come to rest on the adjacent higher string.

The full sound this produces can be used to project the notes that *p* is playing – for example, in a bass melody.

### EXERCISE

#### Rest stroke with *p*

Rest *ima* on the treble strings as you play the rest stroke with *p* - this helps keep the hand in a good playing position. The wrist may be slightly more angled than usual - enabling *p* to play inwards into the string - making use of the springiness of the strings without encountering too much resistance from them.

Be able to play the exercises without looking at your right hand.

4/4

*p* *p* *p* *p*

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

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W O R K S H O P



INTRODUCTORY

*Reference*

## **CONTENTS**

### **AN OUTLINE OF THE VIDEO TUTORIALS and ACCOMPANYING TEXTS**

#### **TABLATURE**

READING TABLATURE.  
THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF TABLATURE.  
AN OVERVIEW OF DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO TEACHING.

#### **FINGERING INDICATIONS**

#### **ADVICE ON PRACTISING**

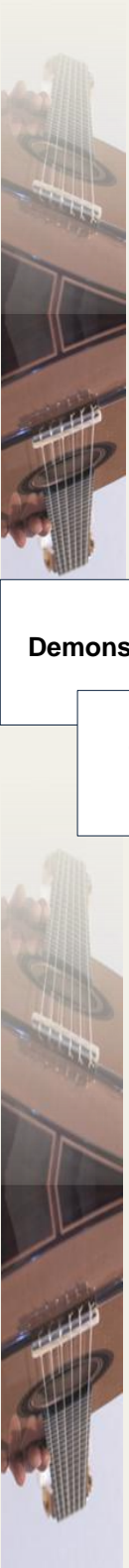
#### **TUNING THE GUITAR**

#### **tone PRODUCTION**

#### **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS and PARTS OF THE GUITAR**

#### **PUTTING ON NEW STRINGS**

*Reference*

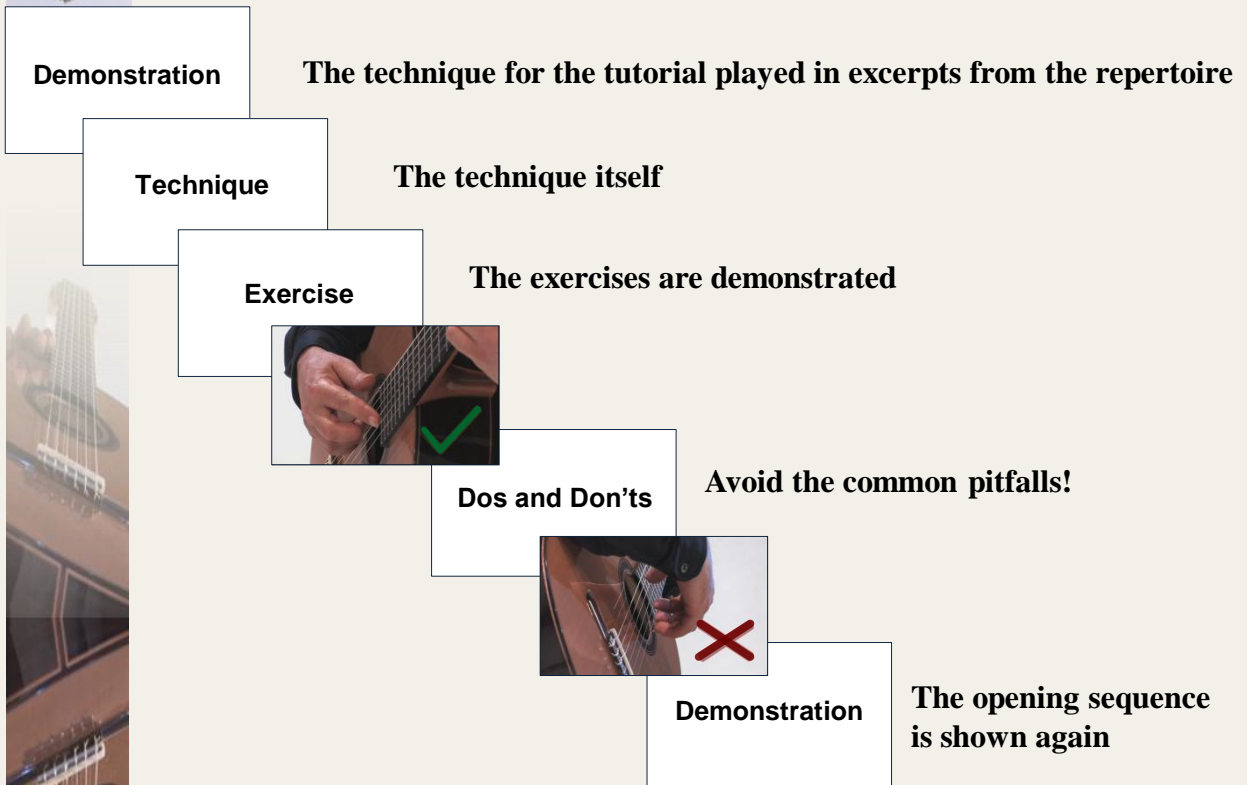


The **VIDEO TUTORIALS** for the first four levels of Maestro Workshop are in two main groups – **TECHNIQUE** and **REPERTOIRE**.

The accompanying **TEXT** documents complement the videos and often contain extra information and advice, as well as the exercises and pieces.

**THE TEXTS HELP EXPLAIN THE VIDEOS AND THE VIDEOS PUT FLESH AND BONES - AND SOUND! - ON THE TEXT.**

The **TECHNIQUE VIDEOS**, with some exceptions, have the following sections:



## WORKING ON THE TECHNIQUES

**Learn the mechanics** of the technique.

**Try it out, experiment, in your own time** – see how it works.

Once you are confident, **establish and develop the technique** in the exercises provided

~ AIM TO MAKE THE TECHNIQUES SECOND NATURE ~

**Note:** Both the videos and texts are presented from the perspective of a right-handed guitarist.



### REPertoire Videos



A performance of the piece is shown twice.  
The second time captures the performance from three different perspectives simultaneously

Technical advice  
and  
suggestions for interpretation

EXAMPLE  
Ostinato bass  
with the melody

EXAMPLE  
Making use of the open B string  
and 4<sup>th</sup> finger slides



Dos and Don'ts

What to avoid  
What to improve



The opening performances are repeated



### WORKING ON THE PIECES

Learn a short section of the piece - so that you know the notes, fingering and rhythm.  
Once you know that part without reference to the music or **TAB**,  
**practise it** to achieve fluency and consolidate the memory.  
When you feel ready, **move on**.

Build up the pieces in comfortable bite-sizes.

~ PRACTISE AFTER MEMORISING ~



The 6 lines represent the 6 strings . . . note that the first string - ①/E - is at the top.  
 The numbers show the frets to be played . . . they are written on the strings on which they are played.  
 The frets and open strings written directly above each other are played together.

Any other symbols written in the **TAB** e.g. harmonics, will be introduced in the relevant tutorials.

THE RHYTHM AND ALL OTHER INDICATIONS ARE ON THE **Staff** NOTATION  
 e.g. dynamics, fingering, articulation etc.

Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806 -1856)

Adagio

The **TAB** aligns vertically with the music.

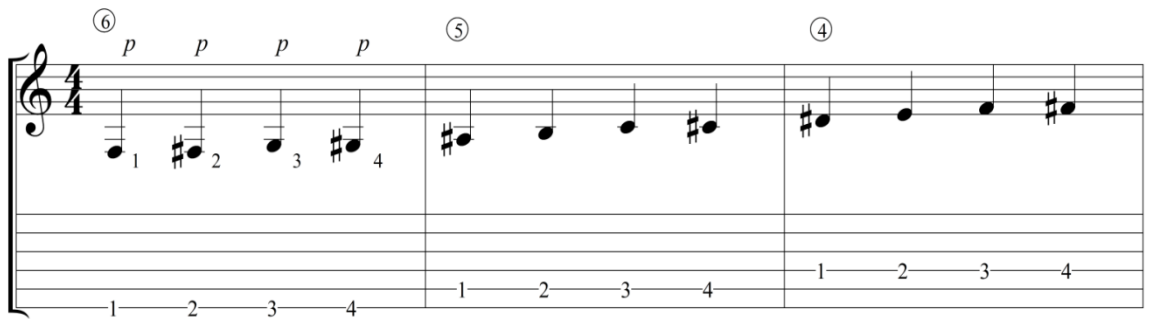


## THE ADVANTAGES OF TABLATURE

Tablature is a fast track way of learning the techniques and pieces at an early stage. The great advantage of tablature is that it is easy to understand. At a glance, it tells the player what frets to play and what strings to play them on.

A strum is easy. However, for a six-string strum written in staff notation, the player would have to read six notes and find them on the guitar - a disparity between the knowledge of reading required and the skill demanded by such a straightforward technique - a technique that should be learned early on.

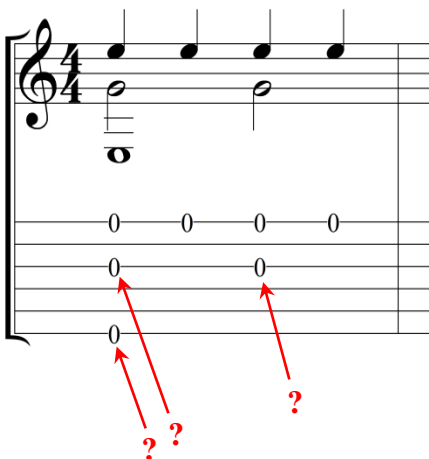
Another example of this disparity would be this important entry level exercise:




## THE DISADVANTAGES OF TABLATURE

Tablature is only useful for the instrument it is written for and the musical information it conveys is relatively limited.

On the other hand, staff notation conveys the pitch and the length of the notes in detail.



In this example, the **TAB** does not contain any information on how long the arrowed notes should be sustained. During the Renaissance and Baroque periods, when tablature was the accepted form of writing music for fretted instruments such as the lute and the vihuela, players used their common sense, musicality and knowledge of tradition to interpret issues such as these.

**In Maestro Workshop, the use of tablature has enabled us to provide a thorough technical grounding as well as repertoire at all levels, which we believe will always remain a pleasure to play, with the student's efforts being amply rewarded by the quality of the music.**

#### OTHER APPROACHES – AN OVERVIEW

- **Some methods, usually the more modern ones**, concentrate on reading music on the guitar straight away. Unless well designed, this often results in students playing single line music, with formal technique - right hand arpeggios and chords, chord shapes etc. - taking a back seat.



**Not being introduced to the formal techniques because of issues with reading is akin to saying “Don’t speak until you can read!”**

- It can also be argued that playing only single lines can and does lead to bad technical habits. For example, students using the rest stroke only - which many default to because of the nature of the material – later find that playing right hand arpeggios and chords requires significant adjustments of the right hand playing position.
- The sonority of the guitar is less gratifying when playing only single line melodies. To compensate for this, duets are sometimes written for teacher and pupil. This is more musically satisfying and has the inestimable value of the student having to play in time! However, between lessons, the student is still left with the same single lines as before.
- **Other methods, often older ones**, require the student to learn to read music *before* playing the guitar. The advantage is that the student, when finally ready, can play pieces that are not only satisfying in sonority, but are also sound in their technical requirements at an early stage, encouraging good hand positions because of the checks and balances in the pieces themselves. The disadvantage is that waiting to read staff notation before playing must be disappointing!



**How discouraging would it be to ask a guitarist friend how to play a chord and get the following reply, “Yes! Put the guitar away. Learn theory and reading first. Then you can play the chord” instead of “Have a go! Do it like this.” ?**

One of the reasons tablature works is because the guitar is so visual – chord shapes, for instance, are easily recognisable by simply looking. This attribute should be celebrated, rather than be treated with suspicion. It is one of the reasons why the guitar is one of the most popular instruments in the world – from Jazz bands to Rock groups, from the flamenco players of Spain to the great traditions of Central and South America and its burgeoning popularity in Asia.

In **SEGOVIA – AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE YEARS 1893-1920**, the Maestro recounts how he had felt diffident about asking Miguel Llobet for his arrangement of the Catalan folksong ‘*EL Mestre*’ and his transcriptions for guitar of Spanish Dances by Granados. When he did finally ask, the master told him that he had not yet written them out and instead invited Segovia, who was then in his mid-twenties, to come to his home and join a group of others learning the pieces directly from him. He would ‘pass them on’ by playing them phrase by phrase – from guitar to guitar.

In this way, in a few days, Segovia learned Llobet’s ‘*El Mestre*’, two Granados Dances and a piece that would become one of his most loved performances, the *Tonadilla ‘La Maja de Goya’*, also by Granados.

Needless to say, neither Miguel Llobet nor Andrés Segovia had any trouble reading music! ..... and they and others, could not have done so much to establish the guitar and its concert repertoire without that skill.

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### EVERYTHING COVERED . . . . .

Ideally, students should be developing their reading of staff notation whilst at the same time enjoying the benefits of tablature at the start.

Enjoy playing the pieces and learning the techniques in **TAB** and conscientiously learn to read music as an almost separate skill,<sup>1</sup> until the reading is good enough to replace the tablature because in the long run, **tablature cannot replace staff notation.**

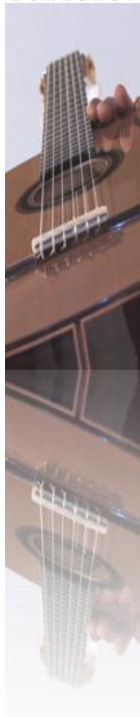
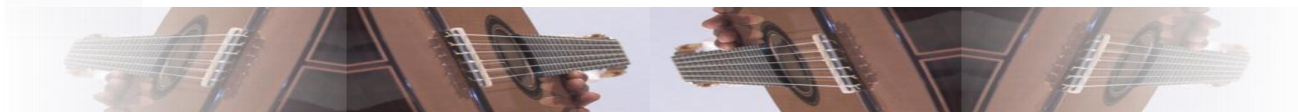
This helps to overcome the main objection to tablature, which seems to be that using it in the early stages can cause students to be resistant to the extra effort required to read music, when the time comes.

<sup>1</sup>Used in this manner, the single line methods provide good material for learning to read staff notation.

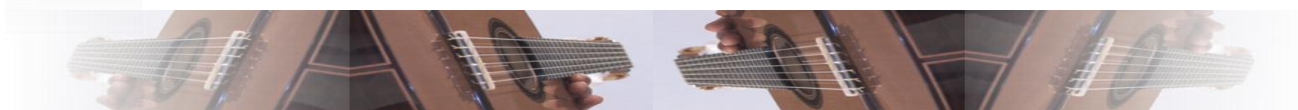
## FINGERING INDICATIONS



The fingering indications for the **RIGHT HAND** are derived from the Spanish names for the fingers - *pulgar, indice, medio, anular*. Traditionally, the little finger is not used for the classical guitar. *When the little finger is used, as in flamenco playing, it is indicated by the letter 'c' from dedo chico*



## LEFT HAND FINGERING

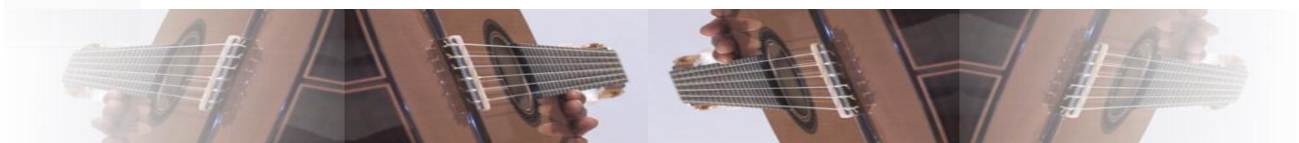


*Fingering indications continued ...*

## THE STRINGS



The strings are indicated by either a number in a circle  
or by their note names – **E A D G B E**  
Open strings - strings played without any fretted notes - are shown by a **0**



②		
$\sharp$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$
$\overset{m}{i}$	$\sharp$	$4$
$-4$		
$\overset{p}{0}$		$\overset{p}{1}$ ⑥
5	7	8
6		7
0		7

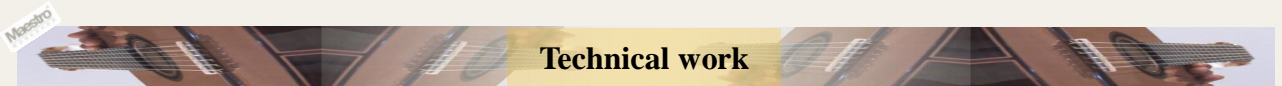
Note that fingerings and most other indications are on the staff notation.  
Further indications, such as those for barrés, are introduced in the relevant tutorials.

# PRACTISING

*“I am doing ..... every day! ..... every day!  
..... the same that I used to do when I was thirteen..... every day!  
..... the scales and arpeggios, the thirds and all those .... every day!  
..... and then, I finish with a Bach Suite .... every day!”*

**Pablo Casals (Cellist, 1876 –1973)**

## A suggested framework

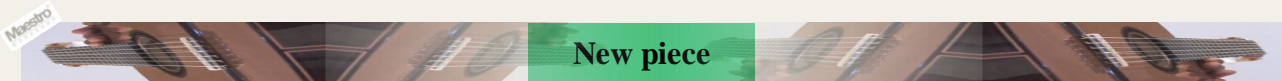


Practise the fundamentals daily and continue to develop them by playing the exercises.  
Learn and practise the new techniques.

Evolve a warm-up routine that both improves and energises you  
for the next part of the practice session.

In **Level 1**, it is strongly recommended that the techniques are learned and practised before working on the repertoire pieces. Tambora aside, the techniques in Level 1 are at the heart of guitar playing and will always be important - they are fundamental, not basic.

A great performer playing in one of the world’s great concert halls will still be using them.



This should probably be the longest part of the practice session.

Play through what you already know of the new piece.  
Teach yourself and practise the next part you have chosen to work on.

It is better to work on small sections and be successful,  
than to work on larger sections which remain uncertain and tentative.  
A sponge can hold only so much water and any excess will drip off it – the brain is the same.



**Daily – continue to play through the most recently learned piece,**  
until you are happy for it to join the rotation of your repertoire.

## Upkeep of the repertoire

As your repertoire grows larger, play through the pieces in rotation - one or two of them daily.  
Pieces improve when played over time and developments in your playing will be incorporated.

This is how artists develop the ability to be able to play so much music in their concert programmes  
- by keeping the pieces in their repertoire **‘under the fingers’**.

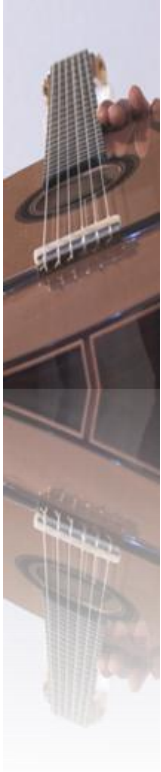
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How long should a practice session be?

Set yourself targets, rather than time yourself. For example, when learning the new piece, decide how much of it you are going to do in that session - achieving that goal may take five minutes or fifteen minutes or ....



# TUNING



**DIGITAL** tuners have visual indicators which simplify the process of tuning and players of all levels can be confident in the results.

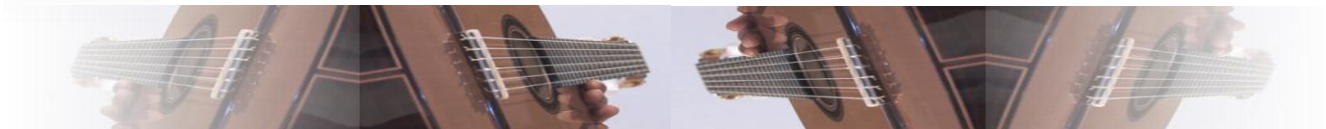
Many different types are available. Some can be attached to the guitar and some double as metronomes.

Using a **TUNING FORK** is the traditional way of tuning a guitar.

Hold the tuning fork by its handle without touching the prongs. Tap one of the fork prongs sharply - for example, on a book or the heel of your shoe – NOT on the guitar itself! As the fork vibrates, place the tip of the handle on a resonant surface, or place it carefully on the fingerboard between the strings or on the bridge of the guitar.

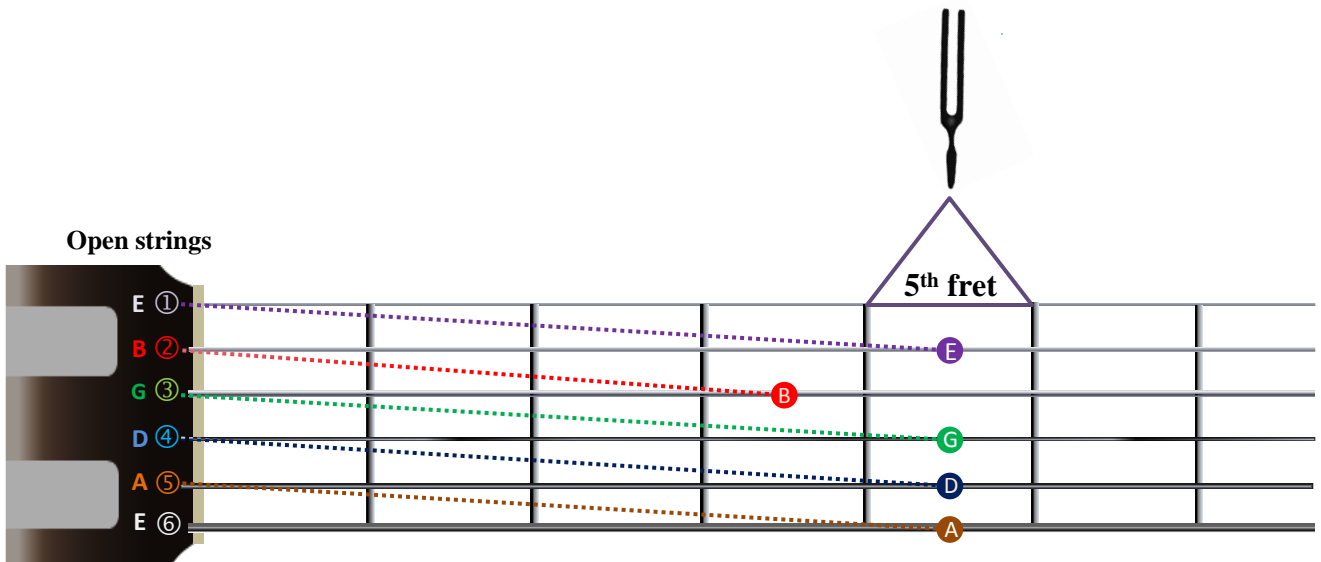
The tone it emits is standardised **Concert Pitch A 440 Hz**.

Once the **5<sup>th</sup> fret/1<sup>st</sup> string**, which should also be concert pitch A, is matched to the tuning fork, all the other strings can be tuned in sequence.



The following is a graphic illustration of the explanation which follows it.

## TUNING FORK AT CONCERT PITCH A 440 Hz





Match **5<sup>th</sup> fret/1<sup>st</sup> string (A)** to the note produced by the **tuning fork**.

A correct 5<sup>th</sup> fret /1<sup>st</sup> string (A) means that the open 1<sup>st</sup> string (E) is also correct and can now be used to tune the 2<sup>nd</sup> string.

- Play open **1<sup>st</sup> string (E)** and match the note on **5<sup>th</sup> fret/2<sup>nd</sup> string (E)** to sound the same – adjust the 2<sup>nd</sup> string only.
- Play open **2<sup>nd</sup> string (B)** and match the note on **4<sup>th</sup> fret/3<sup>rd</sup> string (B)** to sound the same – adjust the 3<sup>rd</sup> string only.
- Play open **3<sup>rd</sup> string (G)** and match the note on **5<sup>th</sup> fret/4<sup>th</sup> string (G)** to sound the same – adjust the 4<sup>th</sup> string only.
- Play open **4<sup>th</sup> string (D)** and match the note on **5<sup>th</sup> fret/5<sup>th</sup> string (D)** to sound the same – adjust the 5<sup>th</sup> string only.
- Play open **5<sup>th</sup> string (A)** and match the note on **5<sup>th</sup> fret/6<sup>th</sup> string (A)** to sound the same – adjust the 6<sup>th</sup> string only.

Once you feel the guitar is tuned, strum a chord – for example, E major (*See Level 1/Chord Shapes*) - to check that everything is sounding as it should.

Note: Not having a tuning fork or digital tuner at hand need not stop the guitar being **in tune with itself**. Simply choose a start note and follow the tuning procedure.

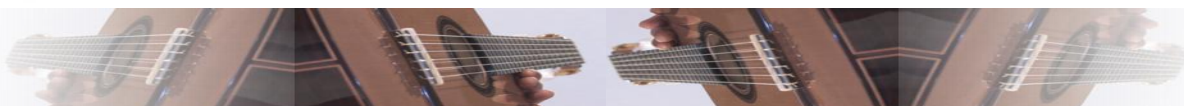
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Develop a routine and leave enough time to carry out the tuning process with patience and discipline.

For example:

- Play the control note. (*The note that has already been tuned*)
  - Stop the control note from sounding and keep its pitch in the mind's ear.
  - Play, compare and adjust the note to be tuned.
- 
- If after trying, the notes are still not quite matched and you are uncertain on how to proceed, tune down the **string being adjusted** by approximately a quarter turn of the peg – and try again.
  - Always check the result of having adjusted a tuning peg before moving on!

*For another method of tuning, see Natural Harmonics, Level 2.*



## TONE PRODUCTION

The guitar can be played with or without fingernails on the **right hand**.

Most guitarists prefer to use fingernails because they feel that the crisp, clean attack of the harder surface of the nail produces a brighter, clearer tone and that the guitar responds more readily to the player's variety of touch, with the contrast in timbres between *tasto*, *ponticello* and all the colours in between, enhanced. Also, the action of the fingernail through the string is quicker than with the softer flesh of the finger tips, making it easier to play rapid passages.

Some players prefer the feel of flesh on string and the mellower tone it can produce, as well as dispensing with the burden of having to take care of the fingernails. It may also prove unreasonable to expect young guitarists, for example, to grow their fingernails.

**Fernando Sor** and **Francisco Tárrega**, two of the most influential guitarist-composers, are reputed to have played without fingernails.



The **left hand** fingernails need to be kept short.



## Playing with fingernails

Everyone's fingernails and technique are different and the length and shape of the fingernails depends on what works for the individual player.

**It is a matter of trial and error – of discovering what feels and sounds good.**

When starting, allow your fingernails to grow to their natural shape, making sure that the corners are rounded, and shape them as needs must – filing off a little here and there, where they are catching on the strings.

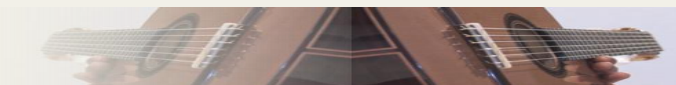
There may be no need to have them very long. Many like to play with a mix of flesh and nail at the contact point with the string, rather than just the fingernail. A little longer than the thickness of the sixth string is a good starting length to work with.

The action of the nails through the strings should be smooth and they should not make things more awkward by hooking or catching on them. The edges of the fingernails need to be shaped to have no ridges or nicks that the strings could catch on.

Use a fine nail file to do the general shaping, one that will not tear at the edges – never cut or clip them. Finish them by polishing the filed edge with some very fine grade Wet & Dry<sup>1</sup> sandpaper or other similar product, like Micromesh<sup>1</sup> abrasive cloth.

**As you play, notice when they feel and sound good!  
Become aware of where the sweet spots are on your nails and aim for them.**

Fingernails need constant maintenance - not only do they grow, but playing can also wear them in places and the edges need to be re-shaped.



<sup>1</sup> Recommended: Wet and Dry sandpaper –1500 grit; Micromesh – 4000/6000 grit.

The two types of abrasives are graded differently. In both cases, the higher the number the finer the grit.

Kits containing different grade sandpapers are sold by some guitar suppliers.



## SEAT

Preferably not too cushioned and either flat and horizontal or ergonomically sloping downwards a little towards the front.



**ADJUSTABLE FOOTSTOOL**  
Easily obtainable from guitar suppliers.  
Start with the footstool at approximately ankle height, until you develop your own personal preference.



## ORIENTATION

**Become acquainted with the geography of the guitar.**

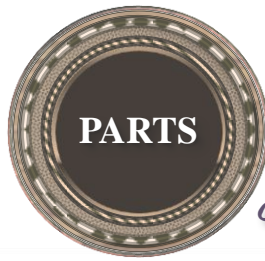
**Frets 12, 7, and 5** are important locations on the fingerboard.  
(Some guitars have these frets highlighted with inlays.  
However, it is better not to become reliant on them)



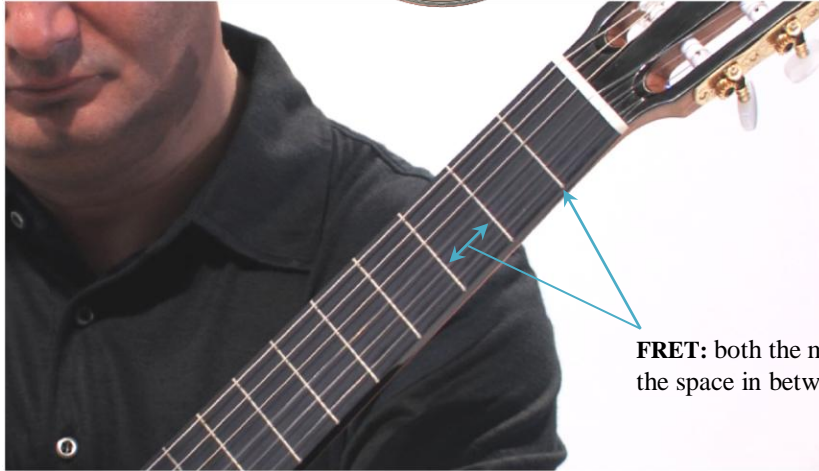
*Note that fret 12 is where the fingerboard meets the body of the guitar.*

Because the strings of the guitar are tuned to specific pitches, pieces are often written in keys that are technically congenial to play and which therefore make extensive use of these locations. The open string keys, such as E major, E minor, A major, A minor, etc..... are often used.

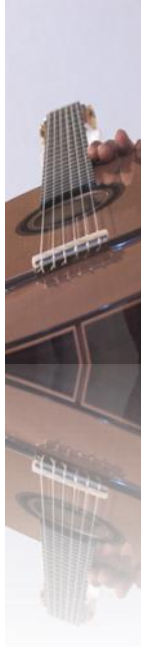
*... a synthesis of the forest' -  
Andrés Segovia*



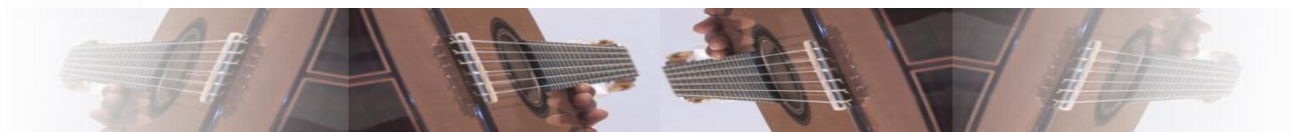
OF THE **GUITAR**



**FRET:** both the metal wire and the space in between are called frets.

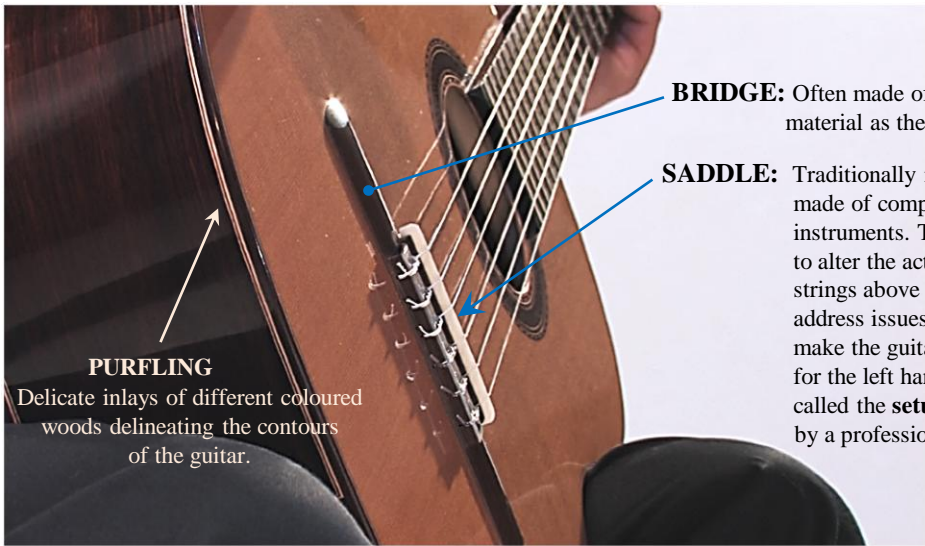
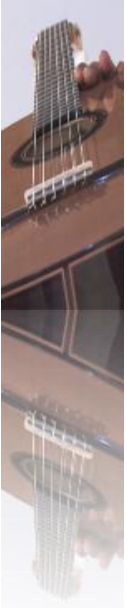


**FINGERBOARD**  
(or fretboard):  
Often made in  
black ebony.



## PARTS OF THE GUITAR ...continued

Maestro  
WORKSHOP

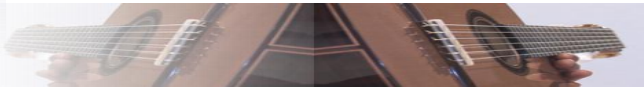


### PURFLING

Delicate inlays of different coloured woods delineating the contours of the guitar.

**BRIDGE:** Often made of rosewood, or of the same material as the back and sides.

**SADDLE:** Traditionally made of bone though often made of composite material in lower cost instruments. The saddle can be adjusted to alter the action (the height of the strings above the fingerboard) in order to address issues with buzzing strings<sup>1</sup> or to make the guitar easier to play, especially for the left hand. This is part of what is called the **setup** and is best carried out by a professional. (see **Nut**)



BRAZILIAN and INDIAN ROSEWOODS are favourites for the **BACK** And **SIDES**



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### TUNING PEG

### HEAD or HEADSTOCK

**MACHINE HEADS:** It is a good idea to occasionally put a drop of oil between the cogs and the tuning peg screws, e.g. when changing strings, as part of general maintenance, being careful not get any oil on the wood .

**NUT:** Like the saddle, the nut is traditionally made of bone. It can be adjusted in order to address issues of buzzing on open strings as part of the setup of a guitar. (See **Saddle**)

<sup>1</sup>These kind of 'buzzes' can happen when the vibrating string touches and rattles against one of the frets above the fret being pressed.



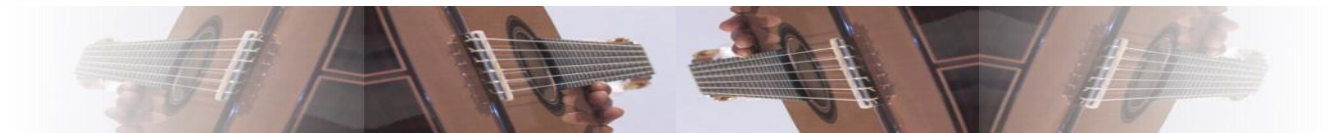
## PARTS OF THE GUITAR ...continued

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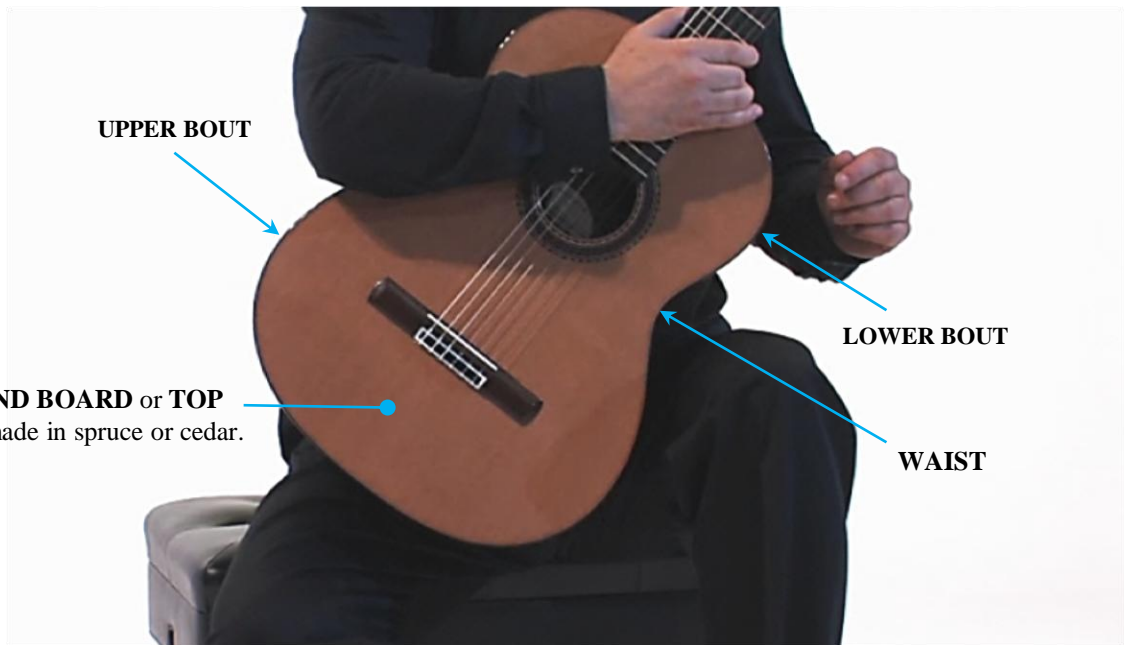


**ROSETTE:** Luthiers often develop their own emblematic designs for this decorative mosaic of different coloured woods.

In lower cost guitars, rosettes are sometimes printed onto the wood.



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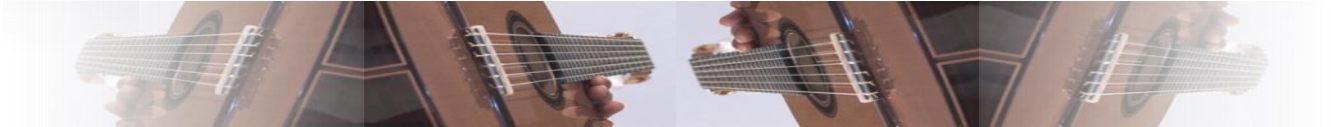


**UPPER BOUT**

**LOWER BOUT**

**SOUND BOARD or TOP**  
Often made in spruce or cedar.

**WAIST**



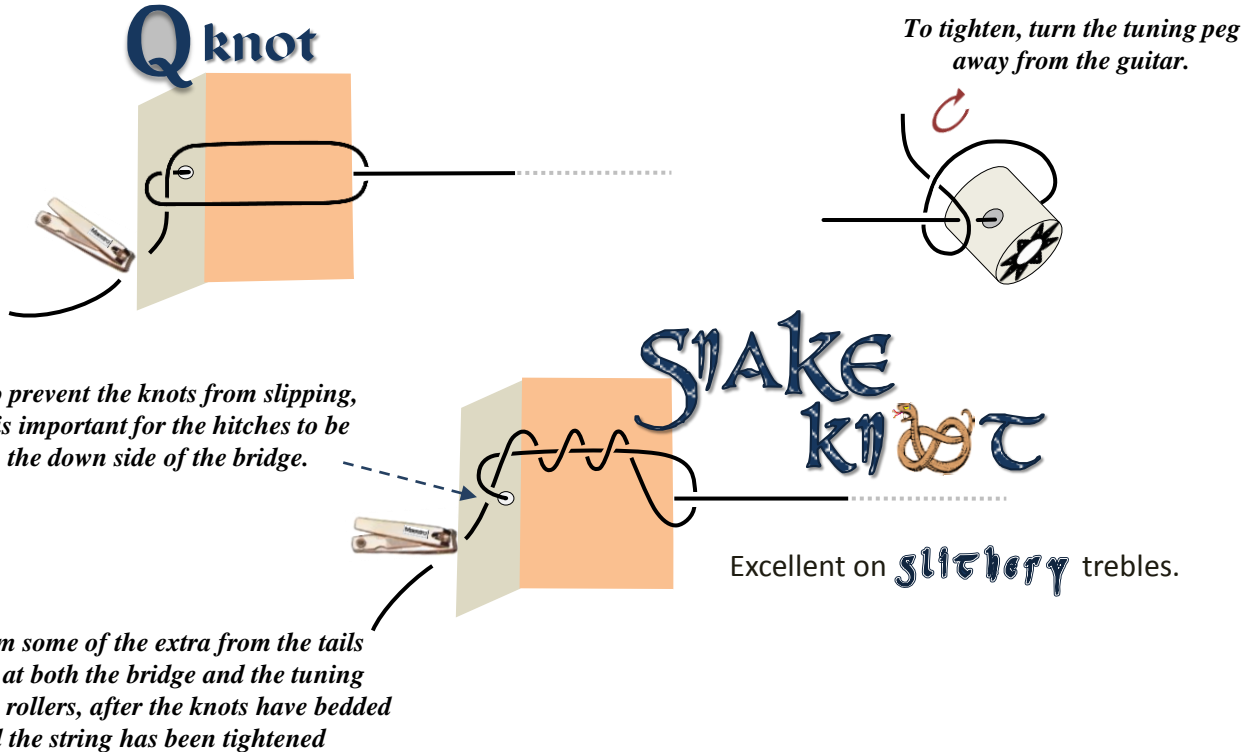
## PUTTING ON NEW STRINGS

Strings will eventually wear and need replacing.

They are available in different **tensions** (*tautness*) - *light, normal (medium), high and super-high* - **gauges** (*thicknesses*) and **materials** that range from the more traditional nylon to high-tech composites.

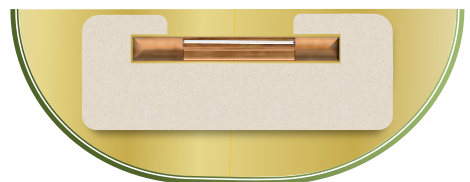
This wide choice provides guitarists with the opportunity to select strings which suit their style, technique and instrument.

Normal tension is recommended, until you have a preference.



- It is a good idea to protect the soundboard from scratches when changing the strings.

For example, with card cut to fit round the bridge



- Unwind the strings to remove them. Do not cut them and risk personal injury or damage to the guitar from the whiplash of the strings that the sudden release of tension causes. In any case, old strings can still be useful in an emergency.
- New strings take some time to settle and stay in tune. They can be stretched by tuning them approximately a semitone higher than their intended pitch and allowing the pitch to drop as they stretch. This can be done a few times, until the strings show signs of settling.
- Bass strings wear more quickly than trebles. They discolour, sound dull and in some instances, the winding can break and unravel - most often the thinner winding of the fourth string. Changing only the basses is an option, if the trebles are in good condition. New basses can sound quite different to old ones and so it is advisable to change all three of them at the same time.

**Q knot** - a variation of the Half Hitch.

**Snake Knot** - a variation of the Timber Hitch.