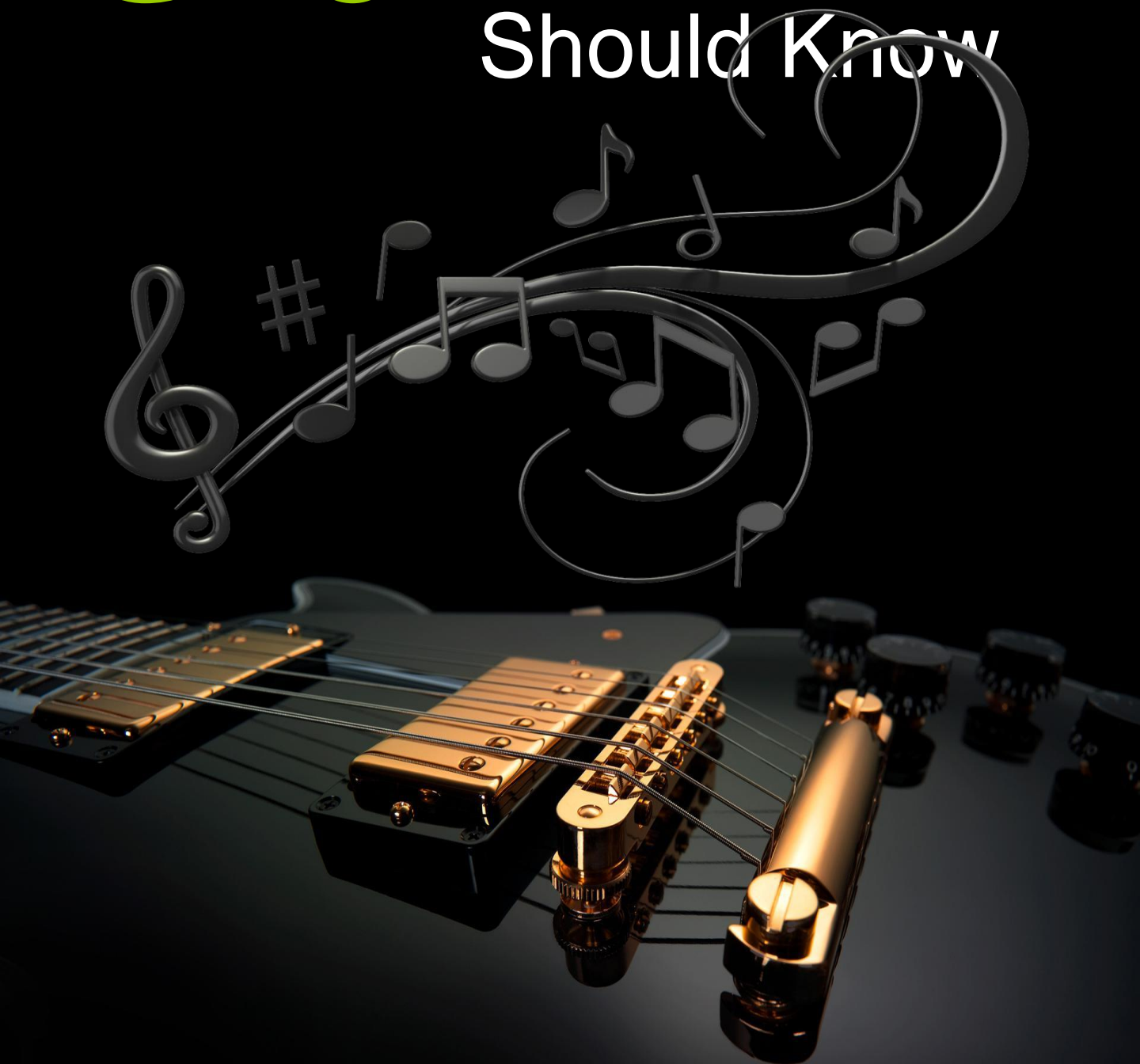


# 50

Guitar Riffs  
Every  
Guitarists  
Should Know



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

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# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “SWEET CHILD O’MINE”- GUNS AND ROSES

This riff is an arpeggio made up of three figures. All three figures are identical save for the starting note, which we’ve marked in red.

As for the fingering with the left hand, play it the way you feel most comfortable. My only suggestion would be to play the 15th fret on the B string with your ring finger.

If you listen to this riff in the song you’ll notice that each figure is played twice.

In other words, play figure 1 twice, followed by figure 2 twice, then figure 3 twice, and finally back to figure one twice,

E-----15-----14-----**Figure One**  
B-----15-----  
G-----14----12-----14-----14----  
D-----12-----  
A-----  
E-----

E-----15-----14-----**Figure Two**  
B-----15-----  
G-----14----12-----14-----14----  
D-----14-----  
A-----  
E-----

E-----15-----14-----**Figure Three**  
B-----15-----  
G-----12-----14----12-----14-----14----  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “ALL DAY AND ALL OF THE NIGHT”- THE KINKS

This riff is a great example of how to use power chords.

Distortion is essential to Rock and Roll. Dave Davies pioneered the distorted guitar sound when he sliced the speaker cone of his amplifier on purpose with a razor blade.

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-----|
D--3-5----5-3----3-8-8-8-5--|
A--3-5----5-3----3-8-8-8-5--|
E--1-3----3-1----1-6-6-6-3--|
```

[www.riffriff.com/alldayallnight](http://www.riffriff.com/alldayallnight)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “ALL RIGHT NOW” - FREE

This classic riff from the 1970s is based on 3 open chords played on the first position of the neck.

The first chord is A major, a rather conventional chord.

The second two are very nice sounding yet not so conventional chords. Pay attention to the fingering explanations above the chord diagrams.

The third chord is the same as the second, only you lift your index finger off the 2nd fret on the G string and let the open string ring out.

### A Major

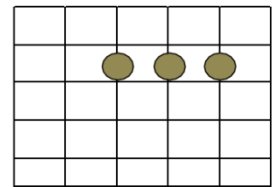
Do not play the low E string

2nd fret on the D string with your index finger

2nd fret on the G string with your middle finger

2nd fret on the B string with your ring finger

Play the high E string open, let it ring



Do not play the low E string

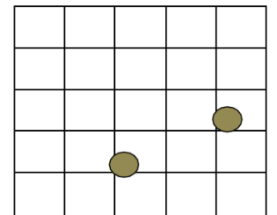
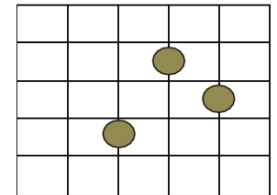
Play the A string open, let it ring

4th fret the D string with your ring finger

2nd fret the G string with your index finger

3rd fret the B string with your middle finger

Play the high E string open, let it ring



Guitarist Paul Kossof died of drug related heart failure whilst on a plane flying from Los Angeles to New York. He was only 25 years old.

E---0-----0-0-----0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-----|  
B---2-----3-2-----3-3-3-3-3-3-3-2-----|  
G---2-----2-2-----2-2-2-2-0-0-0-0-2-----|  
D---2-----4-2-----4-4-4-4-4-4-4-2-----|  
A---0---0-0-0-----0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-----|  
E-----|

[www.riffriff.com/allrightnow](http://www.riffriff.com/allrightnow)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “ARE YOU GOING TO GO MY WAY”- LENNY KRAVITZ

I suppose the hardest part of this riff is the strumming hand. As you can see there's a lot of string skipping, and you don't ever play the A string but you do play all the other strings.

Lenny Kravitz and Guns and Roses guitarist Slash attended the same high school.

```
E-----3-|
B-----3-|
G-2^0-----2^0-----|
D-----2-----0-2-----2-----0-2-----|
A-----|
E-----0-----0-----0-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/gomyway](http://www.riffriff.com/gomyway)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “BORN TO BE WILD”- STEPPENWOLF

This book is about the 50 best rock guitar riffs. However, sometimes a song has more than one great riff, and it's hard to decide on just one. Such is the case with Steppenwolf's 1968 classic 'Born To Be Wild'.

There's the verse that happens during the intro and during the 'pre-verse', and then there's the riff that 's played to accompany the vocal during the verse.

You'll notice they're very similar, and that they both have the same 'tail' or end part.

It's the first half of the riff that differs; in the 'pre verse' riff an E power chord is punched out on certain beats which we've indicated.

In the 'verse' riff the first half of the riff, which we've marked in **green**, are palm muted eighth notes (two strums to each beat of the measure).

'Palm muting' is a strumming technique in which you apply pressure to the strings with the palm of your strumming hand and play down-strokes.

This is how guitar players get that thick, distinctive 'chug-chug-chug' sound that is so popular in hard rock and heavy metal.

Speaking of 'Heavy Metal', the lyric 'I like smoke and lightning/ Heavy metal thunder' which occurs in the first verse of this song, is heralded as one of the first uses of the term 'Heavy Metal' in popular culture.

The song was inspired by motorcycle riding, and this song was included in the 1969 classic motorcycle film 'Easy Rider' starring Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper and Jack Nicholson.

[www.riffriff.com/bornwild](http://www.riffriff.com/bornwild)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

1      2      3      4      1      2      3      4

E-----| **Pre Verse**

B-----|

G-----|

D-9-----9-9-----9-9-----9-11-9-12-----|

A-7-----7-7-----7-7-----7-7-7-7-----|

E-----|

E-----| **Verse**

B-----|

G-----|

D-----9-9-----9-11-9-12-----|

A-7-7-7-7-7-7-7-7-7-7-----7-7-----7-7-7-7-----|

E-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-----|



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “CRAZY TRAIN” OZZY OSBOURNE

Start the riff on the low E string with your index finger on the second fret.

You will use your ring finger and pinky finger to play the fourth and fifth fret respectively on the A string.

Start off this riff by playing down strokes with your right hand on both the low E string and the A string.

When you arrive at the part of the riff which is marked in red, your right hand should begin to alternate between down strokes and upstrokes.

Notice that this main riff-which begins at 00:00:20 of the song- is a cycle that repeats three times.

On the fourth time through the riff ends in two bar chords, and these chords are marked in dark blue in the tablature.

To play the first bar chord (Which is a ‘D chord’), play the 5th fret on the A string with your index finger whilst laying your ring finger on the 7th fret across the next three strings.

Then slide this entire shape up two frets to play the next bar chord (an ‘E chord’).

[www.riffriff.com/crazytrain](http://www.riffriff.com/crazytrain)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

E-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A----- 4----- 5----- 4----- 2 0----- 0----- 2 0-----  
E----- 2 2----- 2----- 2----- 2----- 2----- 4----- 4----- 0-----

E-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A----- 4----- 5----- 4----- 2 0----- 0----- 2 0-----  
E----- 2 2----- 2----- 2----- 2----- 2----- 4----- 4----- 0-----

E-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A----- 4----- 5----- 4----- 2 0----- 0----- 2 0-----  
E----- 2 2----- 2----- 2----- 2----- 2----- 4----- 4----- 0-----

E-----  
B----- 7----- 9-----  
G----- 7----- 9-----  
D----- 7----- 9-----  
A----- 4----- 5----- 4----- 5----- 7-----  
E----- 2 2----- 2----- 2-----

[www.riffriff.com/crazytrain](http://www.riffriff.com/crazytrain)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “DAY TRIPPER”- THE BEATLES

So far in this book we’ve been covering riffs.

Riffs are just part of the song, and they’re often the catchiest, most recognizable part of a song.

This is main repeating riff to “day tripper”, and if you listen to the song you’ll notice that to play the next riff all you have to do is move the entire riff, the entire structure, up one string so that it starts on the A string instead of the E string.

When this song was released as a vinyl 45, it was a double A side with “We can work it out”

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-----|
D-----2-0-----4-----0-2-|
A-----2-----2-----|
E---0-----0-3-4-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/daytripper](http://www.riffriff.com/daytripper)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “EYE OF THE TIGER”- SURVIVOR

This riff begins with punchy power chords. To play a power chord, you play the bottom note with the your index finger, then on the next string up you play two frets up with your ring finger, and then on the next string up from that, play the same fret with your pinky finger. For instance, to play the first chord in this riff- a C power chord- you place your index finger on the 3rd fret of the A string, your ring finger on the 5th fret of the D string and your pinky finger on the 5th fret of the G string.

From there you move this shape up and down according to the tablature.

E-----  
B-----  
G---5-----5-3-5-----5-3-5-----5-----  
D---5-----5-3-5-----5-3-5-----5-5-6-----  
A---3-----3-1-3-----3-1-3-----3-5-6-----  
E-----3-4-----

E-----  
B-----  
G---5-----5-3-5-----5-3-5-----5-----  
D---5-----5-3-5-----5-3-5-----5-5-6-----  
A---3-----3-1-3-----3-1-3-----3-5-6-----  
E-----3-4-----

E-----  
B-----  
G---5-----8-7-8-----8-7-8-----5-----  
D---5-----8-8-8-----8-8-8-----5-5-6-----  
A---3-----3-5-6-----  
E-----3-4-----



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

E-----

B-----

G---5-----8--7--8-----8--7--8-----5-----

D---5-----8--8--8-----8--8--8-----5--5--6-----

A---3-----3--5--6-----

E-----3--4-----

[www.riffriff.com/tiger](http://www.riffriff.com/tiger)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “IRON MAN”- BLACK SABBATH

This is the main riff of the song “Iron Man” by Black Sabbath. This is the guitar part that happens during the verse part of the song. If you listen to the song closely, you’ll notice that when there’s no vocal, no singing, the guitar plays power chords. Then, when the vocals enter the guitar plays the same root notes as the power chords, but only single notes. Furthermore, if you listen to the recording the guitar plays with vibrato. What’s vibrato? It’s when you wiggle your finger on the fret so the pitch wavers slightly. Play the whole song with down strokes. The part marked in **red** is a slide; you strum the first chord and slide your left hand down the fret board. In the second part (The singing part) this same part is a hammer-on.

### Power Chords-No singing

E-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D--4-----7-----7-----9--9-----12=11--12=11--12=11-----7-----7-----9--9-----  
A--2-----5-----5-----7--7-----10=9--10=9--10=9-----5-----5-----7--7-----  
E-----

### Single Notes With Vibrato- With Singing

E-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A--2-----5-----5-----7--7-----10^9--10^9--10^9-----5-----5-----7--7-----  
E-----

[www.riffriff.com/ironman](http://www.riffriff.com/ironman)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “JOHNNY B. GOODE”- CHUCK BERRY

This riff is arguably one of the most influential and most important riffs in the history of rock. So much so that it is in fact referred to by guitar players as ‘the chuck berry riff’, and variations of it have been used by tons of bands such as The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Eagles of Death Metal, ACDC, The Sex Pistols and the list goes on and on and on.

We’ve also included the tab to the intro solo that starts off the song, which is admittedly a bit on the complicated side (see the video), but it’s the riff that we care most about.

So how do you play the classic “Chuck Berry Riff”? First, you make a power chord: you play the root note with your index finger, and then play two frets up on the next string with your ring finger. Strum this power chord twice with two strong down-strokes. Now, keep your hand in the power chord shape, but place your pinky finger 2 frets up above where your ring finger is on the same string (this is going to feel like a bit of a stretch at first but you’ll get used to it). Again, strum this new shape with two strong down-strokes. Now repeat the process: two down-strokes on the power chord followed by two down-strokes with you pinky finger down two frets up. Eventually it’ll just feel like you’re alternating between dropping your pinky finger on for two down-strokes, and lifting it off for another two.

```
E-----5/6-6-6-5/6-6-6-5/6-6-6-9-6----- Intro Solo
B-----6-5/6-6-6-5/6-6-6-5/6-6-6-----9-----6-8-----
G--7-----6^7-----7-7-8-8^6--
D-8-----8-7/8-8-8-7/8-8-8-7/8-8-8-8-----8-
A-----7/8-8-8-7/8-8-8-7/8-8-8-----
E-----
```

[www.riffriff.com/johnny](http://www.riffriff.com/johnny)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

After the intro solo, the pattern is as follows: play Figure One twice, then Figure Two twice, then Figure Three once, followed by Figure One once, and then Figure Two twice. After that the song is a standard 12 bar blues. Listen to the song carefully to figure out the changes.

E-----| **Figure One**  
B-----|  
G-----|  
D-8-8-10-10-8-8-10-10-|  
A-6-6-6-6-6-6-6-6-|  
E-----|

E-----| **Figure Two**  
B-----|  
G-----|  
D-----|  
A-8-8-10-10-8-8-10-10-|  
E-6-6-6-6-6-6-6-6-|

E-----| **Figure One**  
B-----|  
G-----|  
D-10-10-12-12-10-10-12-12-|  
A-8-8-8-8-8-8-8-8-|  
E-----|



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “LAYLA”- DEREK AND THE DOMINOS

Pay attention to the hammer-ons marked in **green** and the slide-down marked in **red**.

The ‘Layla’ who the song is based on is a woman named Patti Boyd. Boyd was married to Beatles’ guitarist George Harrison until 1977 when they divorced.

Thereafter she married Cream/Derek and the Domino’s guitarist Eric Clapton in 1979.

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-----|
D-----0^3-0-0-7=5-3-----5-----7-|
A-0^3-----3--5=3--1-0--3-0-3-5-|
E-----3-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/layla](http://www.riffriff.com/layla)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “LOVE ME TWO TIMES”- THE DOORS

This riff has a trill in it. What’s a trill? It’s a type of hammer on, but instead of just hammering a finger onto a fret and leaving it there, you repeatedly put the finger on the fret and take it off, and you do it quickly. The sound created is a very distinctive, wavering, tremolo effect. The trill is marked in green.

The Doors famously had no bass player when they played live and keyboardist Ray Manzarek would play the bass lines on the keyboard. Nonetheless, on their albums they would have session musicians play. One of them was Jerry Scheff, who also played with Elvis Presley during the 1970s.

E-----|  
B-----|  
G-----Otr1-----Otr1-----|  
D----0----2----0-2-----|  
A---2-----2-----2-----|  
E-----0--0-----0--0-----|

[www.riffriff.com/twotimes](http://www.riffriff.com/twotimes)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “PRETTY WOMAN”- ROY ORBISON

This riff is the riff at the start of ‘Pretty Woman’, before the vocal begins. It’s a fairly simple riff, with perhaps the only tricky part being the interplay with the drums. For that reason, we’ve included the beats for each measure.

This riff, like the majority of rock riffs, is in 4/4 time. So there are 4 beats per measure. The song starts off with the drums, and the guitar comes in on the 4th beat of the first measure. Then the drums continue and the guitar comes in again on the 3rd beat of the third measure. That’s Figure One (Play Once). By the time the 5th measure rolls around the guitar pattern starts comfortably on the first beat. This is Figure Two. It repeats 4 times and then the riff ends and the verse/vocals begin.

Van Halen covered this song on their 1982 album ‘Diver Down’.

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

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

**Figure One**

1 2 3 4

E-----| **Figure Two**  
B-----|  
G-----|  
D-----0-4-2-0-|  
A-----2-----|  
E-0-0-3-----|

[www.riffriff.com/prettywoman](http://www.riffriff.com/prettywoman)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “SATISFACTION”- THE ROLLING STONES

This three note riff is a minor third-the first three notes of the minor scale, in this case the b minor scale.

Keith Richards originally recorded this guitar riff intending it to be replaced by horns later. He was, however, outvoted by the rest of the band who liked the guitar sound. It was recorded with a Gibson Maestro Fuzzbox guitar pedal. The sales of this particular pedal went through the roof after this song was released in 1965.

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-----|
D-----|
A-2-2---2-4-5---5-5^4-4-|
E-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/satisfaction](http://www.riffriff.com/satisfaction)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “SEVEN NATION ARMY”- WHITE STRIPES

This song is in dropped-D tuning.

This song- the entire song- is essentially three riffs. It's one riff played entirely on the low D string (the 6th string). Then it's 2 chords that occur before the “heavy part” and then it's the heavy part itself, which essentially functions as the song's chorus.

The heavy part is played with a slide. Keep the slide on your ring finger, you'll have to play the other 2 riffs with your index finger.

When the White Stripes first appeared on the scene it was believed that the duo, guitarist/vocalist Jack White and Drummer Meg White, were brother and sister. That's how they billed themselves. However, it was eventually revealed that they were in fact ex-husband and wife.

[www.riffriff.com/7nationarmy](http://www.riffriff.com/7nationarmy)

E-----|  
B-----|  
G-----|  
D-----|  
A-----|  
D---14-----14--17--14--12--10-----9-----14-----14--17--14--12--10-----9---

E-----|  
B-----|  
G-----|  
D---5--5--5--5--5--5--5--5--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--|  
A---5--5--5--5--5--5--5--5--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--|  
D---5--5--5--5--5--5--5--5--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--|

E-----|  
B-----|  
G-----|  
D---14-----14=17=14--12--10-----9===14-----14=17=14=12--10=12=10--9---|  
A---14-----14=17=14--12--10-----9===14-----14=17=14=12--10=12=10--9---|  
D---14-----14=17=14--12--10-----9===14-----14=17=14=12--10=12=10--9---|



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “SMELLS LIKE TEEN SPIRIT”- NIRVANA

This riff is made up of barr chords.

What do Kurt Cobain, Tony Iommi, and Jimi Hendrix have in common? They're all left handed.

```
E--1---1-1-----4--4-4-----|  
B--1---1-1---3-3-3---4--4-4---6-6-6--|  
G--2---2-2---3-3-3---5---5-5---6-6-6--|  
D--3---3-3---3-3-3---6---6-6---6-6-6--|  
A--3---3-3---1-1-1---6---6-6---4-4-4--|  
E--1---1-1-----4--4-4-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/teenspirit](http://www.riffriff.com/teenspirit)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “SUNSHINE OF YOUR LOVE”- CREAM

These are the two main figures during the verse of Cream’s “Sunshine of Your Love”. The notes marked in **green** are to be played with the ring finger. The thirds marked in **red** are played with the middle finger and the index finger.

While he was in Cream, guitarist Eric Clapton played a Gibson SG that was adorned with bright, psychedelic imagery designed by the Dutch art collective “The Fool”.

E-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D--12--12--10--12-----  
A-----12--11--10---8-----  
E-----10----10--

E-----  
B-----  
G--11--11--9--11-----10-----  
D--12--12--10--12-----12----12--  
A-----12--11--10-----  
E-----

[www.riffriff.com/sunshine](http://www.riffriff.com/sunshine)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “WALK THIS WAY”-AEROSMITH

This is one of the most recognizable guitar riffs ever.

The cover version of this song performed by rap group Run DMC (on which Aerosmith’s Steven Tyler and Joe Perry appear) is credited as the song that broke rap music into the main stream.

Tablature for the first system of the riff:

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-----|
D-----2-----2-----2-----2--2---|
A--0-1-2---0-1-2-----0-1-2---0-1-2-----|
E-----0-----3-----|
```

Tablature for the second system of the riff:

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-----2-----|
D-----2-----2-----2-----2---2---|
A--0-1-2---0-1-2-----0-1-2---0-1-2-----0---|
E-----0-----=-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/walkthisway](http://www.riffriff.com/walkthisway)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “WHOLE LOTTA LOVE”- LED ZEPPELIN

This is a relatively easy riff to play. The tablature below just repeats, over and over again. But something doesn't have to be complicated to be great, and this riff is an absolute classic.

The problem with tablature sometimes, as opposed to conventional sheet music that is a lot harder to read, is that it doesn't really give you an exact picture of the phrasing/the rhythm of a piece of music. So you have to listen to the song.

But come on!!! Everybody who loves rock knows this riff.

The only technical note here regards the right hand: play all down - strokes.

```
E-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----9-----9-----9-----  
A-----5-----5-----7-----7-----7-----  
E-----7-----7-----0-0-----0-0-----
```

[www.riffriff.com/lottalove](http://www.riffriff.com/lottalove)

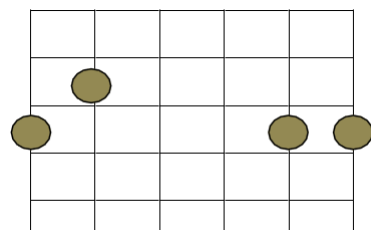
# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “YOU SHOOK ME ALL NIGHT LONG”- AC/DC

This riff is based off of open chords in the first position: G major, D major and C add 9.

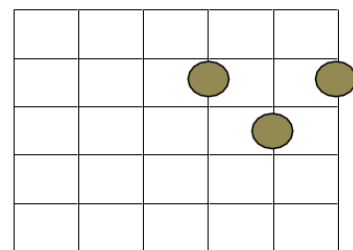
### G Major

- 3rd fret on the E string with your ring finger
- 2nd fret on the A string with your index finger
- Play the D string open
- Play the G string Open
- 3rd fret on the B string with your ring finger
- 3rd fret on the E string with your pinky



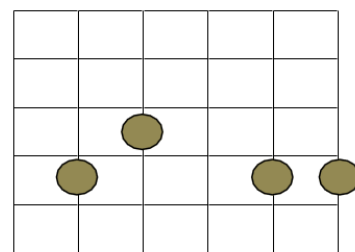
### D Major

- Do not play the low E or A strings
- 2nd fret the G string with your index finger
- 3rd fret the B string with your ring finger
- 2nd fret the E string with your middle finger



### C add 9

- The same as G Major only move your middle and index fingers up a string
- Do not play the low E string



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# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

We've included tablature for the famous, instantly recognizable intro and the riff during the verse.

E-3-----5-3---3-3-2---2-----2----- Intro  
B-3-----3-3---3-3-3---3-----3-----3-----  
G-0-----0-0---0-0-0---2-----2-----  
D-0---0-0-0-0-0-0-0---0-----0-0---3-0---3=4---3-0---  
A-----  
E-----

E-3-----5-3---3-3-2---2-----  
B-3-----3-3---3-3-3---3-----  
G-0-----0-0---0-0-0---2-----  
D-0---0-0-0-0-0-0-0---0-----0-0-----  
A-----  
E-----

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

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# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “WOMAN FROM TOKYO”-DEEP PURPLE

Notice that this riff has a couple of hammer-ons.

This was the hit single from Deep Purple’s 1973 album “Who Do We Think We Are”. The band recorded this album with the Rolling Stone’s mobile studio.

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-----2--2^1-----2--1-----2--2^1-----2--1-----|
D-----2--2^2-----2--2--2-----0-----2--2^2-----2--2-----|
A-----2--0^2-----|
E--0-----0-----0-----0-----0-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/womanfromtokyo](http://www.riffriff.com/womanfromtokyo)

## “AMERICAN WOMAN”- THE GUESS WHO

So far we’ve been covering riffs, not entire songs. A riff is the main, most recognizable part of a song, but it’s not the entire song. This classic riff, however, repeats pretty much constantly throughout the entire song with a few variations. The part in red is strummed with loose alternating down-strokes and upstrokes. Keep your right hand loose and get into the groove.

This song was covered by Lenny Kravitz years later.

```
E-----|
B-----9--9--9--9--9-----7--9--7--9-----|
G-----9--9--9--9--9-----7--9--7--9-----|
D-----9--9--9--9--9-----7--9--7--9-----|
A-----5-----7--7--7--7--7-----5--7--5--7-----|
E-----7-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/guesswho](http://www.riffriff.com/guesswho)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “ACE OF SPADES” - MOTORHEAD

This is another example of a song where it's hard to single out one riff as the riff. So we've included two: the main riff that plays during the intro and the chorus, and the bluesy lick that guitarist Fast Eddie Clark plays between the sung phrases in the verses.

What's a 'lick' exactly? Well, guitarists use that term typically to describe any melodic phrase that is played higher up on the neck in the higher registers of the guitar. Often times this is a fill or maybe a short solo. A riff is a melodic motif that repeats (it's often the part of a rock song that gets stuck in your head). So the bluesy lick is also a bluesy riff because it repeats.

Motorhead bassist, vocalist and chief songwriter was once a roadie for Jimi Hendrix.

```
E-----| Main Riff
B-----|
G-----|
D-----9-9-8-7-|
A-7---7-5-7-5-7-----|
E-0---0-0-0-0-0-----|
```

```
E-----| Bluesy lick
B-15--14--12--14--12-----15--14--12-----|
G-15--14--12--14--12-----15--14--12-----|
D-----14-|
A-----|
E-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/aceofspades](http://www.riffriff.com/aceofspades)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “BACK N’ BLACK”- ACDC

The riff begins with an E major chord. To play this chord, place your index finger on the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret of the A string, and your middle finger on the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret of the D string. Play this chord with a strong, pronounced down-stroke. The next chord is a D major variation. To play this chord, place your index finger on the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret of the G string and your ring finger on the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret of the B string. For this part of the riff, you want to start with a down stroke and then alternate between down-strokes and upstrokes rapidly (listen to the song). The next chord is A major. To play this chord place your index finger on the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret of the D string, your middle finger on the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret of the G string, and your ring finger on the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret of the B string. Strum this chord with the right hand the same way as the previous chord – down-stroke, upstroke, down-stroke.

The next part of the riff starts on the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret of the high E string. Play this note with your ring finger. The next note is an open high E string, and that is followed the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret on the B string, which you should also play with your ring finger. Play these three notes down-stroke, upstroke, down-stroke. The next part of the riff, which is marked in **red**, involves pull-offs. On both the G string and the D string, play the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret with your index finger, play a down-stroke and ‘pull off’ so the open string rings out as well.

As you’ll notice from the tablature, the second half of the riff is identical. You play the same three chords the same way. The last figure, which is marked in **blue** is played by placing your index finger on the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret of the A string. This note is the ‘anchor’ so to speak. Pluck this note a down-stroke, ring finger with alternating upstrokes on the low E string beginning with the ring finger on the 4<sup>th</sup> fret, and then the pinky finger on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> frets. This will seem like a big stretch at first, but practice makes perfect.

[www.riffriff.com/backinblack](http://www.riffriff.com/backinblack)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

```
E-----0-0-0-----3-0-----
B-----3-3-3-----2-2-2-----3-----
G-----2-2-2-----2-2-2-----2^0-----
D--2--0-0-0-----2-2-2-----2^0-----
A--2-----0-0-0-----
E--0-----
```

```
E-----0-0-0-----
B-----3-3-3-----2-2-2-----
G-----2-2-2-----2-2-2-----
D--2--0-0-0-----2-2-2-----
A--2-----0-0-0-----2-----2-----2-----2-----
E--0-----4-----5-----6-----7-----
```

## “BORN TO RUN”- BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

This riff is the melody that opens the Bruce Springsteen song ‘Born to Run’. It sounds the way it does on the recording because it’s played on the guitar in unison with a saxophone.

Springsteen’s guitarist Steve Van Zandt later became one of the main actor’s on the tv series ‘The Sopranos’.

```
E-----
B-----
G-----2--1-----2--1-----
D-2-----2-----2--4-----2-----2--4-----
A-----4-----2-----4-----
E-----
```

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “CAT SCRATCH FEVER”- TED NUGENT

This riff starts out with a double stop. What’s a double stop? It’s when you play a fret on the B string with your index finger, you play 2 frets higher up on the G string, and you bend the G string until the note on the G string is the same as the note on the B string. And you have to bend it, otherwise it will be discordant and won’t sound good at all.

This song’s lyrics obviously have a sexual bent to them. Some have even speculated that it’s about syphilis as supposedly “cat scratch fever” was a slang term for syphilis in some parts in the 1970s.

E-----  
B--2-0-----2-0---  
G--4--2-2--4--5-5-----2-4--5-----2--4--5-5---5-4--2--4--2--  
D-----2--4--5-5-----2-4--5-----2--4--5-5---5-4--2-----  
A-----0--0-----0-0-----0-----0--0-----0-0-----0-----  
E-----

E-----|  
B-----|  
G--2--4--5-5-----2-4--5-----2--4--5-5---5-4--2-----|  
D--2--4--5-5-----2-4--5-----2--4--5-5---5-4--2-----|  
A--0--0-----0-0-----0-----0--0-----0-0-----0-----|  
E-----0-3-4-----0-3-4-----|

[www.riffriff.com/catscratch](http://www.riffriff.com/catscratch)





# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “CHINA GROVE”- THE DOOBIE BROTHERS

So what's up with the all the Zs in the tablature? Well, we've used the z to represent that these are 'dead notes'; notes/chords where you barely apply pressure to the strings with your fretting hand and you palm mute with your strumming hand. That's how to achieve the almost toneless, rhythmic 'waka-waka' sound that you hear on the recording of 'China Grove' by the Doobie Brothers. Also, you'll notice that we've included the notes in brackets; it's an A power chord. However, to repeat, DO NOT APPLY PRESSURE TO THE STRINGS. You don't want to play the chord. Instead, you want to just barely touch the strings in order to get the correct sound.

The Doobie Brothers were somewhat of a 'House Band' for the motorcycle gang The Hells Angels, and would often play unadvertised, impromptu shows at one of the gang's clubhouses in the Santa Cruz mountains in Northern California.

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-9--9-----9--9-----7----6-----9--9-----|
D-9--9--z(7)z-z-z-9--9--z-z-z-z--7----6----7-----9--9- z-z-|
A-7--7--z(7)z-z-z-7--7--z-z-z-z--5----4----7-----7---7- z-z-|
E-----z(5)z-z-z-----z-z-z-z-----5----- z-z-|
```



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “COME AS YOU ARE”-NIRVANA

To play this song you have to tune the guitar down a whole step, every string. The song starts off with the first figure, and then the repeating, main riff part is the second figure.

Nirvana were sued by the British punk band Killing Joke who claimed that the riff to “come as you are” was practically identical to their song “eighties”.

Figure 1	Figure 2
D----- -----	D----- -----
A----- -----	A----- -----
F----- -----	F----- -----
C----- -----	C----- -----
G-----	G-----
D-0-0-1-2-	-0-0-----2-----2-----
-----2-----2-1-0-0-0-0-1-2-	

[www.riffriff.com/comeasyouare](http://www.riffriff.com/comeasyouare)

## “ELECTRIC EYE”- JUDAS PRIEST

Start this riff off by playing down strokes on the A string and upstrokes on the E string. From there the strumming pattern should be obvious. Refer to the video.

The lyrics to the song were inspired by George Orwell’s novel ‘1984’, where ‘electric eye’ refers to government spy satellites.

E-----
B-----
G-----9-
D-----9-
A-7-9-10-7-9-10-0-7-0-9-0-10-9-10-7-
E-0-0-8-0-0-----7-7-7-

[www.riffriff.com/electriceye](http://www.riffriff.com/electriceye)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “COWBOYS FROM HELL”- PANTERA

This is a very fast, blistering riff with alternating down-strokes and upstrokes. Pay attention to the hammer-ons marked in red, and to the pull-off (the opposite of a hammer-on) marked in blue.

The guitar player was Dimebag Darrell, a brilliant guitar player who was tragically shot and killed on stage. When he was buried, Eddie Van Halen placed one of his guitars in the casket.

Tablature for the first system of the riff. The strings are labeled E, B, G, D, A, E from top to bottom. The notes are: E (open), B (open), G (open), D (open), A (0), E (0-3-0-3-3-3-3-3). The A string has two hammer-ons marked in red: 1^2 and 1^2. The D string has two pull-offs marked in blue: 0 and 0.

Tablature for the second system of the riff. The strings are labeled E, B, G, D, A, E from top to bottom. The notes are: E (open), B (open), G (open), D (open), A (0), E (0-3-0-3-3-3-3-3). The A string has a hammer-on marked in red: 1^2. The D string has a pull-off marked in blue: 1^0.

[www.riffriff.com/cowboys](http://www.riffriff.com/cowboys)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “DON'T FEAR THE REAPER”- BLUE OYSTER CULT

This riff is a good example of a riff that is based purely on arpeggios. The open G string is the common note to all 3 chords that are arpeggiated, and the way it rings out on each upbeat creates a beautiful, chime like effect. Play each note with a down-stroke, except for the note that's marked in red. That's an upstroke.

The song features a cowbell prominently on the recording. A Saturday Night Live skit in 2000 featured a “Behind The Music” style program with a fictionalized Blue Oyster Cult recording this song. The “more cowbell” sketch is considered to be one of the best SNL skits of all time, and “more cowbell” has become a pop-culture catch phrase.

E-----|  
B-----|  
G-----2--0-----0-----0-----0-----|  
D-----2-----0-----0-----0-----|  
A-----0-----2-----3-----2-----|  
E-----3-----1-----3-----|

[www.riffriff.com/reaper](http://www.riffriff.com/reaper)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “ENTER SANDMAN”-METALLICA

This main repeating riff of the song Enter Sandman consists of one part that repeats three times followed by a fourth ending part, or tail. The two notes marked in red are actually the same note (the point where the cycle repeats).

In a documentary about the making of “The Black Album” it was revealed that guitarist Kirk Hammett originally wrote the riff as two alternating parts, and then drummer Lars Ulrich suggested two repeat the first part 3 times and then tag on the second part as a tail at the end. Collaboration is so important in music.

E-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----5-----5-----5-----4--2--4--2--4--5--4-----  
A-----7-----7-----7-----4--2--4--2--4--5--4-----  
E--0-----6-5--0-----6-5--0-----6-5--2--0--2--0--2--3--4--0--

[www.riffriff.com/entersandman](http://www.riffriff.com/entersandman)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “HALLOWED BE THY NAME”- IRON MAIDEN

More than any other band, Iron Maiden is famous for its “Twin Guitar Attack”. The part of this song actually has three guitars: two high flying guitars harmonizing and another guitar playing chords underneath. It is possible to play the harmonized guitars together on one guitar however, and that’s what we’ve transcribed here. It’s also a good example of how to play thirds on a guitar, which is essential for lead guitar players. Bruce Dickinson, in addition to being the lead singer of Iron Maiden, is also a competitive fencer and licensed commercial pilot.

```
E-----|
B-15--13--12--10^12--10--8--10--15--13--12--10^12--10--8--7-|
G-16--14--12--11^12--11--9--11--16--14--12--11^12--11--9--7-|
D-----|
A-----|
E-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/hallowedbethyname](http://www.riffriff.com/hallowedbethyname)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “HELLS BELLS” - ACDC

To play this riff properly you have to let the open A string drone out. That’s what really makes the riff sound like church bells.

As far as the fingering is concerned, you start off with you index finger on the 7th fret on the D string and then switch to the pinky finger for the parts that are marked in green. You have to then also play the 5th fret on the G string with your index finger.

A lot of people are aware that the guitar players in ACDC are brothers, the brothers Malcom and Angus Young. What a lot of people don’t know, however, is that there was an older Young brother, George Young, who had had enormous success playing in a group in the early 60s called “The Easybeats”.

E-----|  
B-----|  
G---9--7-----5-----7-----9--7-----5-----7-----|  
D---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---5-4-|  
A-0-----0-----0-----0-----0-----0-----0---3-2-|  
E-----|

[www.riffriff.com/hellsbells](http://www.riffriff.com/hellsbells)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “HOLY DIVER”- DIO

This riff is a great example of the galloping rhythm that was so popular and so typical of Heavy Metal in the 1980s (DUM dum dum DUM dum dum DUM etc...). Pay close attention to the right hand strumming pattern in the video. The left hand is pure power chords.

Dio started when vocalist Ronnie James Dio and Drummer Vinnie Appice quit the early 80s version of Black Sabbath and wanted to start their own band. Before the first Dio lineup was rounded out by guitarist Vivian Campbell (Whitesnake, Def Leppard) and bassist Jimmy Bain (Rainbow), Dio and Appice would jam as a two piece. Although Dio's known exclusively as a vocalist, during these early rehearsals he would play guitar. The first song they wrote was "Holy Diver".

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-5-----5-----|
D-5-5-5-5-5-5-5-7-8-5-5-5-5-5-7-8-8-5-5-5-5-5-7-8-8-5-8-5-|
A-3-3-3-3-3-3-3-5-6-3-3-3-3-3-5-6-8-3-3-3-3-3-5-6-8-3-8-3-|
E-----6-----6---6---|
```

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-5-----5-----|
D-5-5-5-5-5-5-5-7-8-5-5-5-5-5-7-8-8-5-5-5-5-5-7-8-8-5-8-6-|
A-3-3-3-3-3-3-3-5-6-3-3-3-3-3-5-6-8-3-3-3-3-3-5-6-8-3-8-6-|
E-----6-----6---6-4-|
```

[www.riffriff.com/holydiver](http://www.riffriff.com/holydiver)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “JUMPING JACK FLASH”- THE ROLLING STONES

This riff is pretty simple, and like a lot of great rock riffs it's anchored around a power chord.

The Rolling Stone's bassist Bill Wyman married model Mandy Smith when she was 18 and he was 47.

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-4-4----2----2----2-|
D-4-4---2-4---2-4---2-4-|
A-2-2-----|
E-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/jackflash](http://www.riffriff.com/jackflash)

## “KEEP ON ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD”-NEIL YOUNG

This riff is technically very simple, but to play it right you're going to have to have a lot of attitude, and distortion! You really want to emphasize the “chug-chug-chug-chug-chug-chug-chug-chug” of the E power chord, and then let the D and C power chords ring out. Play this riff entirely with down-strokes.

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-----|
D-----7-----5-----7-----5-----|
A---2-2-2-2--2-2-2-2---5---3---2-2-2-2--2-2-2-2---5---3---|
E---0-0-0-0--0-0-0-0-----0-0-0-0--0-0-0-0-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/freeworld](http://www.riffriff.com/freeworld)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “MONEY FOR NOTHING”- DIRE STRAITS

As far as rock riffs go, this one is one of the more complicated. You're really going to have to look closely at the accompanying video. Not to worry though, I've broken the riff down, I've filmed both my hands, and I've played it slowly and carefully. Be patient, avoid getting frustrated, and you'll figure it out. I love this riff.

You want to make sure to play this riff in a short, punchy, staccato style. However, you'll notice certain parts of the riff are marked in red. These are notes/chords that you want to let ring out. Listen to the riff and you'll see what I mean.

E-----  
B-----6-----  
G-7-7-----5-7-----7---5-5-3-----0-0-0-----3-0-0-----3-3-5-3-0--  
D-5-5-----5-5-----5---5-5-3-----0-0-0-----3-0-0-----3-3-5-3-0--  
A-----  
E-----

E-----|  
B-----8-----8-----8-----8-----|  
G-5-7-----5-7---5-7---5-7---5-3-----0-0-0-----3-0-0-----|  
D-5-5-----5-5---5-5---5-5---5-3-----0-0-0-----3-0-0-3-3-5-5--|  
A-----3-3-5-5--|  
E-----|

[www.riffriff.com/m4nothing](http://www.riffriff.com/m4nothing)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “NO QUARTER”- LED ZEPPELIN

Make sure to slide your index finger up from the 2nd fret to the 4th fret on the A string. There’s a slightly “off time” filter to the rhythm. It’s brilliant the way guitarist Jimmy Page and drummer John Bonham lock in with each other on this song.

The recorded version of this song is seven minutes long. However, when Led Zeppelin played this song live there would be extended improvised passages and sometimes the song would stretch to thirty minutes or more.

[www.riffriff.com/noquarter](http://www.riffriff.com/noquarter)

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-----|
D-----6-6-6-----6-6-6-----6-----2-----|
A--2=4-----2=4-----2=4-----2-----4--|
E-----0^2-2-2-2-0--2^4-4-----|
```

## “REBEL REBEL”- DAVID BOWIE

This classic riff is slightly unconventional as far as rock riffs go because it’s played on the top four strings and it has an open e string that rings out.

David Bowie’s real name is actually David Jones, but his record company asked him to change his name in order to not confuse him with Davy Jones, a member of the then very popular Band/T.V. Show “The Monkees”. He took the ‘Bowie’ moniker from the bowie knife.

```
E-----0--0--0-----0--0--0-----|
B-----5--3--2-----0--2--0-----|
G----2-----4--4-----1-----|
D----0-----2--2-----2--|
A-----|
E-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/rebel](http://www.riffriff.com/rebel)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “PANAMA”- VAN HALEN

First off, if you're listening to the actual studio version of this recording to help you learn the riff (and you should be) you'll notice that you have to tune your guitar down a half-step (one fret). So, whereas when you usually tune a guitar by matching the 5th fret on the B string to the open high E string, match the highest string to the 4<sup>th</sup> fret on the B string. That's E flat (Eb). Tune the rest of the guitar accordingly.

This is another song where it's hard to single out just one riff to focus on. Here is the entire introduction, which is actually a sequence of riffs. We've also included the riff that repeats at the start of the verses.

Eddie Van Halen played the guitar solo on Michael Jackson's colossal hit single "Beat it". Legend has it that he declined any payment for doing so, believing it was enough just to be credited in the liner notes.

Eb-----  
Bb---9-----10-----7-----9-----10---7---7-----8-----7-----  
Gb---9-----9-----8-----9-----9---8---7-----7-----6-----  
Db---9-----9-----9-----9-----9---9---7-----7-----5-----  
Ab---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---5---5---5-----5---5-----  
Eb-----

Eb-----  
Bb---9-----10-----7-----9-----10---7---7-----8-----7-----  
Gb---9-----9-----8-----9-----9---8---7-----7-----6-----  
Db---9-----9-----9-----9-----9---9---7-----7-----5-----  
Ab---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---7---5---5---5-----5---5-----  
Eb-----

[www.riffriff.com/panama](http://www.riffriff.com/panama)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

Eb-----0-----  
 Bb--5-----4^5-4-4-2-2-2-----5-----4-^5-4-4^5-4-4-2-2-2-----  
 Gb--6-----4^4-4-4-2-2-2-----6--5-----4^4-4-4-2-2-2-----  
 Db--6-----2-2-2-----6-----2-2-2-----  
 Ab--4-----0-0-0-----4-----0-0-0-----  
 Eb-----

Eb-0-----0-----0-----0-----0-0-0-0-0-0-0-  
 Bb---4-----4-----4-----4-----4-4-4-4-4-4-4-  
 Gb---4-----4-----4-----4-----  
 Db-----  
 Ab-----  
 Eb-----

Eb-----|  
 Bb-----3-----3-----|  
 Gb-----2-2---2-2-----|  
 Db--2---2-0---2-0---5=7-5-|  
 Ab--2---0---0---5=7-5-|  
 Eb-0-----|

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “ROCK YOU LIKE A HURRICANE”- THE SCORPIONS

Another classic example of how powerful distorted down-stroked power chords can be.

This anthemic rocker has become popular in athletic settings. In many stadiums the song plays out over the loudspeakers between periods, during time outs, on 4th down and what have you. However, this resulted in controversy when the Tampa Bay Buccaneer’s cheerleading squad used it during their routine in a game against the New Orleans Saints. Many felt it was in bad taste given the devastation caused in New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina.

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-9-9-9-----5---7--7--|
D-9-9-9-----5--5---7--7---5---7--7--|
A-7--7--7-----5--5---7--7---3---5--5--|
E-----3--3---5-5-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/likehurricane](http://www.riffriff.com/likehurricane)

## “SHARP DRESSED MAN”-ZZ TOP

This riff starts off with fourths played on the G and B strings followed by a bluesy, pentatonic lick on the E and the A strings.

Before guitarist Billy Gibbons formed ZZ top he played in a band called ‘The Moving Sidewalks’. Jimi Hendrix was so impressed with Gibbons’ playing that he proclaimed-on television- that Billy Gibbons was his favorite guitarist and would be the next big thing.

```
E-----|
B-6---4-----6-4-----|
G-5---3-5---5-3---5-----|
D-----5-----5-----|
A-----3-----|
E-----3--3^6-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/sharpman](http://www.riffriff.com/sharpman)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “SPOONMAN”- SOUNDGARDEN

This riff is in drop-D tuning. Drop D is great because you can make a power chord by simply barring your index finger straight across the strings. To play this riff keep your right hand loose and bend the chord that's marked in blue blues style. Also, you'll notice that this riff has an odd timed groove to it. Without getting too technical about it, whereas the vast majority of rock riffs are in 4/4 time, this song is actually in 7/4. To make it easy, we'll just say that the last 4 chords, which are marked in red seem like they're "tacked on" at the end before it repeats. It's a little strange to play at the beginning, but with repetition, and by listening to the song, you'll soon get the hang of it.

This song was written about 'Artis the spoonman', a homeless man who was living in Seattle and eeked out a living playing the spoons in the street. He played the spoons on the track and appeared in the song's video.

E-----|  
B-----|  
G-----|  
D-----|  
A-10=12--12--12--12--10--7--5--3--0--3=5--5--5--0--0--0--0--|  
D-10=12--12--12--12--10--7--5--3--0--3=5--5--5--0--0--0--0--|

[www.riffriff.com/spoonman](http://www.riffriff.com/spoonman)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “START ME UP”- THE ROLLING STONES

This song is in an alternate tuning, the ‘open G tuning’, which from low to high is D-G-D-G-B-D. To make this tuning drop the 5th string (what’s usually the A string) a whole tone (2 frets) so that it matches the 3rd string, the G string. To check the tuning play the 7th fret on the 5th string and make sure that it matches to the open D string. You also want to drop high E and low E strings, the 1st and the 6th strings, a whole tone to a D.

The song opens with this riff. The first time through you’ll notice that the opening figure has three strums (long-short-short), but when it repeats there’s an extra chord strummed, which we’ve marked in red.

The Rolling Stones had recorded various versions of this song for years before finally recording the well-known version on the “Tattoo You” Album in 1981. The song originally was a reggae style song, but the band was not satisfied and these recordings were shelved.

```
D--5-5-5-5-----5---5-5-5-5-5-5-----|
B--5-5-6-6-----5---6-6-5-5-6-6-0^3-3-4---3-3-4-3---3-4---3-3-4-|
G--5-5-5-5-----5---5-5-5-5-5-5-0^3-3-3---3-3-3-3---3-3---3-3-3-|
D--5-5-7-7-----5---7-7-5-5-7-7-0^3-3-5---3-3-5-3---3-5---3-3-5-|
G--5-5-5-5-----5---5-5-5-5-5-5-0^3-3-3---3-3-3-3---3-3---3-3-3-|
D-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/startmeup](http://www.riffriff.com/startmeup)





# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “SWEAT LEAF”- BLACK SABBATH

Another power chord based Toni Iommi masterpiece.

Widely considered one of, if not the greatest “riffsmith” and the godfather of heavy metal guitar, Black Sabbath’s Tony Iommi has done it all without the tips of two of his fingers on his fretting hand which he lost as a teenager in a factory accident. To this day he still plays with homemade fake finger tips made from rubber.

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-----7-6-5----5--7-|
D--7--7----7-6-5--7-5--7-|
A--7--7----5-4-3--7-3--5-|
E--5--5-----5-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/sweetleaf](http://www.riffriff.com/sweetleaf)

## “THE OCEAN”- LED ZEPPELIN

This riff is based on the pentatonic scale or “blues scale”. See the part marked in **red** where the two notes are separated by a diagonal line? This means you play the noted starting on the 8th fret and then slide your finger (pinky finger) down rapidly to the 5th fret.

In the early 60s, years before joining Led Zeppelin, guitarist Jimmy Page was a very in demand session musician, and recorded with The Who, The Kninks, Marriane Faithful, The Rolling Stones and Van Morrison amongst others.

```
E-----|
B-----|
G-----|
D--7--7--5-----5-----7----7----7|
A-----7-----5-^7-----5-^7-----4----5--|
E-----8/5-----|
```

[www.riffriff.com/ocean](http://www.riffriff.com/ocean)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “THE OTHER SIDE”- THE RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

This riff is played during the start of the song. As you can see, the pattern basically repeats itself with a few variations. Notably, the fourth time round there is a slide up on the G string to the 9th fret. This riff comes back in again during the chorus and again, there are some slight variations that you have to listen to carefully to pick out.

What’s different about this riff from the others we’ve covered so far is that it has to be finger picked (you don’t use a pick to play this) with the thumb and index finger on your strumming/picking hand.

The video for this song was inspired by turn off the century German expressionism, specifically the expressionist horror film “The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari”

```
E-----  
B-----  
G-----2--2--4-2-0-----  
D-2--2--2-----2-----0--0--0--  
A-0--0--0-----  
E-----1--1-----
```

```
E-----  
B-----  
G-----2--2--4-2-0-----  
D-2--2--2-----2--2-2-2-0--0--0--  
A-0--0--0-----3--3-3-3-----  
E-----1--1-----
```

[www.riffriff.com/otherside](http://www.riffriff.com/otherside)



# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

E-----  
B-----  
G-----2--2--4-2-0-----  
D-2--2--2-----2--2-2-2-0--0--0-  
A-0--0--0-----3--3-3-3-----  
E-----1--1-----

E-----  
B-----  
G-----2--2--4-2-0--2/9--9--9-----  
D-2--2--2-----9--9-9-  
A-0--0--0-----  
E-----1--1-----

[www.riffriff.com/sweetleaf](http://www.riffriff.com/sweetleaf)

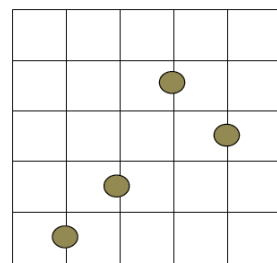
# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “UNDER THE BRIDGE”- RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

At first this riff may seem very, very intimidating. Wow that’s a lot of notes. Well, yes and no, what’s really happening here is that there are two arpeggiated chords: D major and F# major. The chord shape for D major is not the conventional chord shape for this chord. Perhaps then, it’s best to include some chord diagrams.

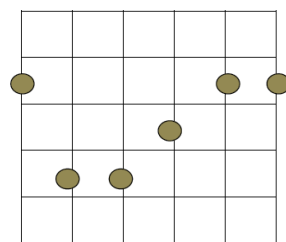
### D Major

5th fret on the A string with your pinky finger  
4th fret on the D string with your ring finger  
2nd fret on the G string with your index finger  
3rd fret on the B string with index pinky



### F# Major

Index finger on the 2nd fret across all 6 strings  
4th fret the A string with your ring finger  
3rd fret the G string with your middle finger



So those are the two chord shapes this riff is based on. The right hand is not overly complicated, but it’s not best to explain it in writing here. It’s best to check out the video carefully for the right hand.

So to repeat, for the most part this riff is two chords with a couple descending licks to transition between the two. Practice the two chord shapes above. For the part of the riff that you need to have your hand in D major, the notes are

marked in **red**. For the part where your hand has to be in F#major, the notes are marked in **Blue**. There’s a couple other details to be aware of in this riff: there are a few hammer-ons that are marked in **green**, and there are a couple slides (where your pluck the notes and slide your hand up) that are marked in **orange**. Watch the video.

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

Here's the tablature:

```
E-----  
B- 3-----3-----2-----  
G-----2-----2-----3-----  
D- 4-----4-----4-----4-----4-----2-----0-----  
A- 5-----4-----2-----0-----4-----4-----4-----  
E-----4-----2-----
```

```
E-----  
B- 3-----3^5-----2-----  
G-----2-----2-----3-----  
D- 4-----4 4=6 6-----4-----4-----4-----2-----0-----  
A- 4^5 5-----5-5=7-7-----4-----4-----4-----  
E-----2-----
```

```
E-----  
B- 3-----3-----2-----  
G-----2-----2-----3-----  
D- 4-----4-----4-----4-----4-----2-----0-----  
A- 5-----4-----2-----0-----4-----4-----4-----  
E-----4-----2-----
```

```
E-----  
B- 3-----3^5-----2-----  
G-----2-----2-----3-----3-----  
D- 4-----4 4=6 6-----4-----4-----4-----  
A- 4^5 5-----5-5=7-7-----4-----4-----4-----  
E-----2-----
```

[www.riffriff.com/underbridge](http://www.riffriff.com/underbridge)

# 50 Guitar Riffs Every Guitarists Should Know

## “WIPEOUT”- THE SURFARIS

This is a 12 bar blues. Play Figure One four times, Figure Two twice, then back to Figure One twice, then Figure Three, and then finally Figure 4.

The maniacal voice that bellows “ha ha ha ha ha wipeout!” at the beginning of the song was actually recorded by the band’s manager.

E-----| Figure One  
B-----|  
G-----|  
D-----|  
A---1-2-3-3-3-1---|  
E-3-----3-|

[www.riffriff.com/wipeout](http://www.riffriff.com/wipeout)

E-----| Figure Two  
B-----|  
G-----|  
D---1-2-3-3-3-1---|  
A-3-----3-|  
E-----|

E-----| Figure Three  
B-----|  
G-----|  
D---3-4-5-5-5-3-----5-4-3-3-1---|  
A-5-----5-5-----3-|  
E-----|

E-----3-3-3-3-3-3-3-| Figure Four  
B-----3-3-3-3-3-3-3-|  
G-----4-4-4-4-4-4-4-|  
D-----5-5-5-5-5-5-5-|  
A---1-2-3-3-3-1-----1-2---5-5-5-5-5-5-5-|  
E-3-----3-3-----3-3-3-3-3-3-3-|