



Learning the Notes of the Fretboard

The Workbook

Introduction

As I said in the article on my website (<http://chainsawguitartuition.net/notes-on-guitar/>), memorizing the notes on the guitar fretboard is really just learning the C major scale. That's because this scale contains all the *natural* notes, and no *sharps* or *flats*.

We're going to start with this scale, and then I'm going to show you some exercises that you can use to memorize it. You can work through this book in any order, although I suggest you spend enough time on each exercise to get it memorized (which means you can play it without the tab- don't cheat!).

It might be a good idea to take a week for each exercise, and use them as **warm-ups** before your full practise routine.

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The First Steps

After getting your head around the sequence of notes, with the semitones (half steps) between B and C, and E and F, the next step is to memorise this sequence along single strings. This is just as I talked about in the article on my website.

You should start with the notes on the E and A strings, because these are most useful when playing E and A shaped barre chords. You can then use other shapes and relationships between notes to find the notes on other strings.

So here are the notes on the E and A strings. Play these up and down until they are memorized. Just remember that all the notes are 2 frets apart, except B and C, and E and F!



It might also help to say the names of the notes out loud as you're playing them.

Natural Notes

E and A string

Standard tuning

E String

Gtr

mf

T
A
B

0 1 3 5 7 8 10 12 12 10 8 7 5 3 1 0

E F B C

A String

T
A
B

0 2 3 5 7 8 10 12 12 10 8 7 5 3 2 0

Octave Shapes

Playing notes like this, from A to the next A, or from E to E, covers the distance of **one octave**- which is a useful interval to learn, because it means you can use octaves to go between one 'A' note, and the next (for example).

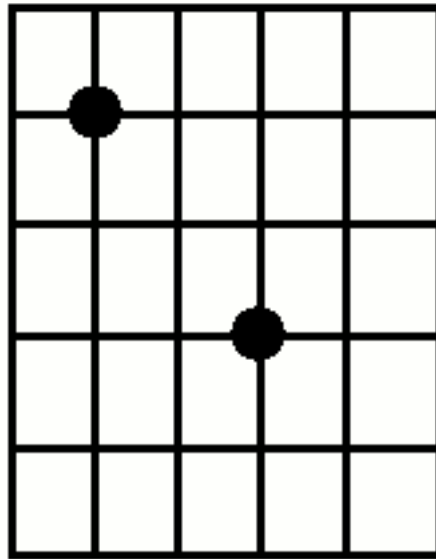
Of course, we don't have to just up 12 frets every time we want to play the next octave. There are other strings available. So, we can use **octave shapes** to get from one 'A' to the next (for example).

So, from the E and A strings, you can go two strings thinner, and then two frets towards the body. This fret will be an octave above your original note.

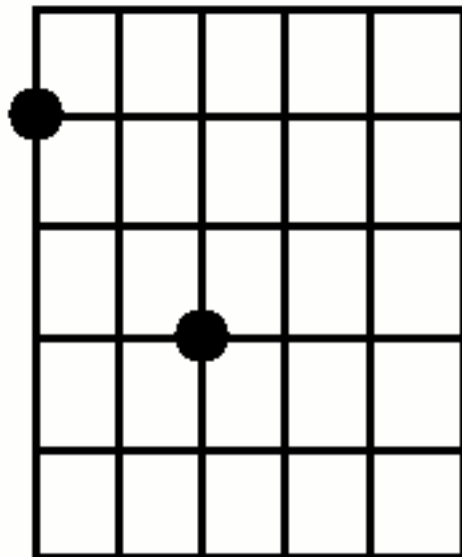
Here are those shapes in diagram form. If you play this in any position, both notes will have the same letter name, but be in different octaves. Just remember that these are *not chords*, and each note should be played *separately*!



A String Octave



E String Octave



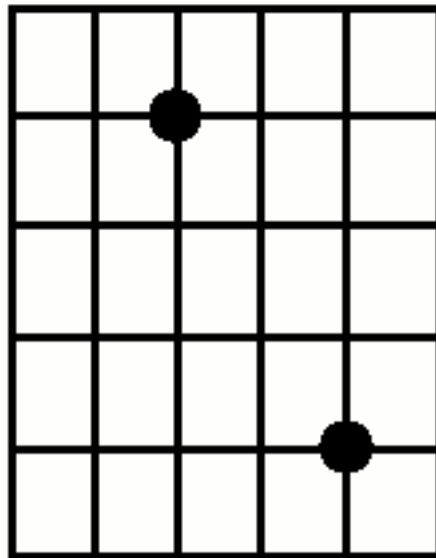
So, with this shape, you can take any note on the E or A string, and find the note with the same letter name on the D or G string. This is really useful when, for example, you're trying to find a C



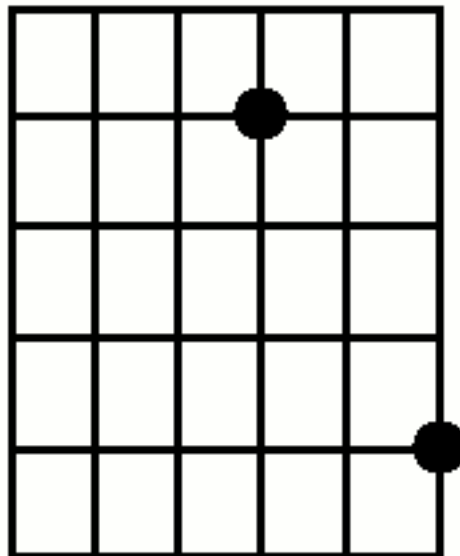
(or any other note) on the G or D string, because you just need to find that note on the E or A string, and use the above shape to find the note.

After that, you can take two slightly different shapes to go from the D and G strings, to the B and thin E strings. The shapes have to be slightly different because of the way the guitar is tuned, having a different distance between the G and B strings than all the others. Here are the diagrams for those shapes:

D String Octave



G String Octave





So, using **octave shapes** you can work out the positions of *all the notes* of a certain letter on the neck. The note names on the thin E string will be the same as on the thick E string. So, if you know that there is a G on the third fret of the E string, it goes for both E strings- they're just in *different octaves*.

So, if we follow this pattern all over the neck, we get this in tab:

Octave Shapes

B notes

Standard tuning

Gtr

mf

C String Shape

E String Shape

A String Octave Shape

Both E Strings

D String Shape

All of the notes here are B notes, but they are in different octaves. You can essentially follow this pattern with any note on the A string, and with a note on the E string, it's the same pattern just starting in a different place (we'll use 'F' this time)...

Octave Shapes

F notes

Standard tuning

Gtr

mf

Up 2 frets from B to A strings



...just remember that to go from the note on the B string, to a lower octave on the A string, you go up two frets. Play the same thing in reverse to get back down the neck.

We've only gone up to around the 12th fret in these examples, but the pattern repeats after this (12 frets higher). So the next note in the sequence above would be the 13th fret on the thick E string (1 + 12), and then the 15th fret on the D (3 + 12) etc.

Again, spend enough time on this exercise to memorise this pattern. It will *definitely* be useful!

Moving Out of the Shapes

Once you've got the octave shape memorised, you should also practise finding different notes across all the strings. So, for example, finding a G on each string going from E to E. This exercise will help you to break out of the shapes above and learn the positions of each note on their own.

Using the Major Scale

As I said originally, the *natural* notes (those that are not **sharp** or **flat**) are all contained within the C major scale. So learning this scale is the same as learning all the natural notes....right?

Well, mostly. You can learn the shapes without learning the names of the notes that you're playing. So, to really get the most out of these next exercises, you should be **saying the names** of each of the notes as you play them.

This is easier than it sounds, as the notes follow the repeating pattern: **A B C D E F G**. So, wherever you start in this pattern, you can just continue from that point (remembering to go back to 'A' after each 'G').

On the next page are five shapes for this scale that cover the whole neck. The shapes are taken from the 'CAGED' system of scales, that fit with each of the CAGED chords. That's why the shapes are named like 'C shape', 'A shape' Etc- each shape fits with a CAGED barre chord shapes.

Practise these shapes by saying the names of the notes out loud as you play them, this way you'll start to memorize which note is which. You should know the notes on the E string by now, so I'll leave it to you to figure out which letter each shape starts on.



C major Scale

CAGED Shapes

Standard tuning

C Shape

Gtr

mf

T
A
B

0—1—3 0—2—3 0—2 3—0—2 0—1—3 0—1 3

A Shape

T
A
B

3—5 2—3—5 2—3—5 2—4—5 3—5—6 3—5

G Shape

T
A
B

5—7—8 5—7—8 5—7—8 4—5—7 5—6—8 5—7

E Intro

T
A
B

7—8—10 7—8—10 7—9 10—7—9—10 8—10—7—8 10

D Shape

T
A
B

8—10 7—8—10 7—9—10 7—9—10 8—10—7—8—10



Going Further and Memorizing

When trying to memorise these shapes, it's not always the best idea to simply play up and down. The best way- in my opinion- to get these notes memorised is to work on patterns *within* these shapes.

Sequences

For example, one of the methods that I use, is to sequence the scale in various groups. For example, sequences of 4, where you play the first note and go up four, then go back to the second note and play up four etc.

Here is that in tab for the first shape, sequenced in groups of four:

C major Scale
Sequenced in Fours

Standard tuning

Gtr

mf

T
A
B

0-1-3 0-1-3 0-2-3 0-2-3 0-2-3 0-2-3 0-2-3 0-2-3

You can also try doing this with different sized groups, and different shapes of the scale. It really helps you to think outside of the simple pattern of playing the scale up and down. Remember to say the name of each note as you play it.

Intervals

Another great way to get this scale memorized, is to play double-stops for each interval. For example, going up the scale in thirds. This means that you play the first note, and third note at the same time.



Our scale starts on a C, and the third note is an E. So, this exercise starts by playing these two notes together. Don't forget to say both of these note names as you play them! The next step is to move both notes up the scale, so that you're playing a D and an F.

Thirds are quite interesting to use for this, because the shape changes as you go up the scale. You can try this with different intervals, but *thirds*, *sixths* and *sevenths* (that is: 3, 6 and 7 note distances) will tend to change shape as you go up the neck, whereas fourths and fifths will almost always stay the same.

Anyway, here is the tab for the C major scale in thirds going up one string. I'll leave you to work out more intervals (not because I'm mean, but because the process of working them out will help you to memorize the scale!).

Remember to say the note names as you play them!

C major Scale

Thirds

Standard tuning

Gtr

mf

T																	
A	2	3	5	7	9	10	12	14	14	12	10	9	7	5	3	2	
B	3	5	7	8	10	12	14	15	15	14	12	10	8	7	5	3	

These are 'double-stops' because you're playing two notes at once, and the interval is a *third* because the distance is *three* notes.

And Finally...

Hopefully, the exercises and ideas in this book will get you started at learning the notes on the guitar fretboard. Eventually, you'll start to remember the positions of certain 'landmark' notes that you can use to find your way around when playing songs or soloing.

Then you'll know that you're on your way to full fretboard memorization!

For more, visit my website at <http://chainsawguitartuition.net>