

5 NOTES ON THE FRET BOARD

Introduction

By now, you must be keen to get to use your left hand, or fretting hand, and if you have practiced sufficiently with your right, then you will produce a good sound. Playing the open strings with the rest stroke should be automatic by now, so we can concentrate on the left-hand, and learn the notes on the fret board.

Even though you know it, you should still revise the previous sections, every day, as well as progress with this section.

The left hand

The diagram below shows you how to finger the notes. See how the finger tip comes down just behind the fret, not on it, or too far away. If you experiment you will arrive at just the right place, with just the right amount of pressure to get a clean, clear tone.

The fingers are given numbers: 1 [index], 2 [middle] 3 [ring], and 4 [little finger], as per the illustration.

Note how the tips of the fingers are placed just behind the frets, as far as possible. Try to bridge out the way so when you play inner strings like B or G, the fingers won't interfere with the E string.



Good left-hand technique involves using all of the left hand fingers, but not the thumb! That is held behind the neck, about halfway up, as per the diagram.

Don't squeeze too tightly between your thumb and fingers, as this will give you cramp, and also do not press too tightly down on the fingerboard with your fingers, as they will get sore more quickly!



Over time, your fingers will build up strength and flexibility, and you will develop a pad of tougher skin on your fingertips.

Tip: Remember to keep the nails of your left hand as short as possible - and also remember that if you are left-handed to reverse all of the instructions concerning hands.

Notes on the first string

The first fingered note we will play first are on the E [1] string - that is the thinnest treble is F, with the first finger.

If you were to look at another guitarist play it, it would look like this.



But we will show notes as if you were looking down at your own left hand, as below.



Here is the F, fingered behind the first fret with 1 (the first finger).



And G, fingered behind the third fret, with the 3rd finger

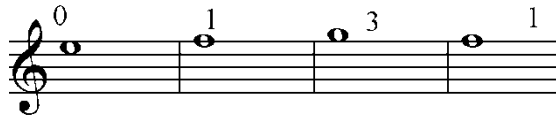


You'll see that there's a fret between them. This is a sharp (F#) which we shall not play just now.

The 'finger per fret' rule

Just now, we will use what is called the 'finger per fret' rule. This means that if a note on the third fret is to be played, we will use the third finger. If it's a note on the first fret, then use the first finger, and so on.

Here are the notes E, F and G on the staff.



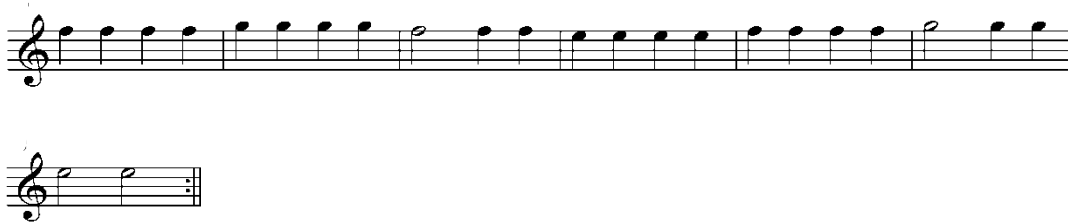
Exercise 25

Try and play them, with the apoyando stroke, alternating fingers, and remember to press just *behind* the fret, just enough to produce a firm, clean tone, with no 'buzzing'. (If it does buzz or sound muffled then you are either too far away from the fret, or right on it.) Try to keep your first finger on the F, when you play the G with the third finger.

Now compare your playing with the track.

Exercise 26

Here's a simple tune in 4/4 time on the E [1] string. Play along with the track.



Second string notes

The notes on the B[2] string, are C, (first fret) and D, (third fret) played similarly to the first string.

C behind the first fret



And D behind the third



Between them is C#,
which we won't play just
now.



You will see that it is harder to play notes on the 'inside strings', like the B, than the outside string E. To get a clean sound, try and bring your finger down at a 90 degree angle to the string, so it bridges over the first string, and does not stop it from sounding if you want to play it.

Exercise 27

Here are the notes B, C and D on the stave.



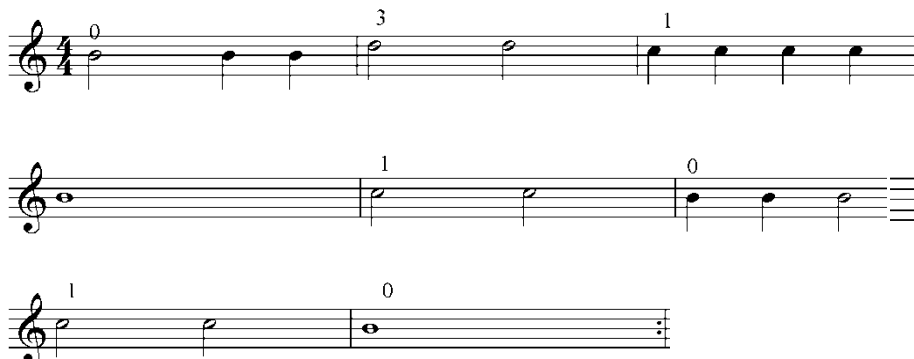
Exercise 28

Now play this tune on the B string and compare your playing to the track.



Exercise 29

Here's a simple tune on the second string - try playing this along to the track.



Now you know the notes B, C, D, (on the second string) and E, F, and G (on the first) you can try this tune, which combines the two strings. You will probably recognise it as

'Merrily we roll along'! (There are no finger markings to help you in this one.) It is in 4/4 time.

Exercise 30



Tip: It is a good idea to not get too reliant on fingering as it can stop you learning the actual music on the stove.

'Echoes' exercise on the E and B strings

Exercise 31

Now we will try the echoes exercise again, on the fingered notes. Just try and copy back what you hear, in time. This is done away from the music, and will develop your ear as you have to work out which note you are playing, on which string.

Fretting finger exercise

Exercise 32

To help you develop that all important balance of pressure and accuracy in fretting try this exercise. First, try and press your finger as accurately as possible just behind the fret. Now, try pressing too softly, so as to produce a buzz, and then increase the pressure till you get a firm tone. Now take your finger off, just enough to let the open string ring out, and play that, now repeat the process, playing notes on and off etc.

Tip: Remember, if you keep left hand nails short as possible they will not interfere with the fingerboard.

Notes on the G [3] string.

Remember the musical alphabet only has seven letters: A, B, C, D, E, F, and G.

After G, we start again at A as there is no H, J etc.

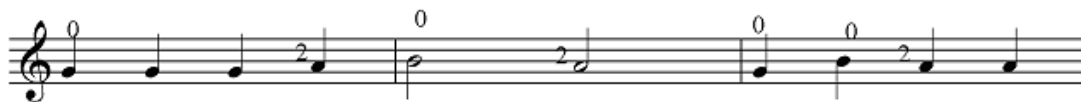
A is played with finger 2, behind the second fret on the G [3] string.



It is different from the other two strings you have played, as there is G# between the G open, and the A, on the 1st fret, which we won't play just now.

Try this part of a tune, which combines notes on the G and B strings, and then play along with the track. It will give you the correct notes then provide a backing – keep repeating it. It's a fragment of a well known tune – can you recognise it?

Exercise 33



Now, try the tune all the way through. The second section, the 'variation', has a tricky bit in the second last bar. You should practice this first with your fingers, rest stroke, till you can play at the correct speed.



Recommended Listening

Listen to F.Sor's 'Variations on a Theme by Mozart' for guitar, to get an idea as to how a simple idea can be developed in different styles.

Variations on a Theme

Exercise 34



About 'Variations'

Varying or improvising on a popular tune was a popular pastime in the 18th and 19th centuries. Composers and musicians would take well-known tunes (sometimes exceedingly simple ones like the above) and create ornate elaborate developments on the tunes, using their knowledge and skills of the forms and structures of music. There were often competitions between virtuoso players and composers to out do each other, and the resultant music or composition might in the end have little in common with the starting point. Bach and Handel were great exponents of this art, and could create fugues (a very structured composition/improvisation) and variations at will, and did in fact have a competition to see who the best was. (It was reported to be a draw). Sometimes the variations were played on different instruments, or in a different style and speed, but at the end the basic tune was usually played to remind listeners where they had started from.

London's Burning

Now we are going to play another traditional tune, 'London's Burning'. Don't be put off by the fact that it's a children's tune as it provides very good practice on what you have learnt, and besides, everyone knows it so you can check whether you are reading and playing it correctly!

First practice these bars, and repeat till you feel you can play all the way through the tune. It is on open D [2] and open G [3] and you can play it with the fingers, rest stroke.

Exercise 35



The time signature is 3/2 which means that there are three beats in each bar, but the unit of each beat is a minim this time. (In other words a minim gets one count). Now play the tune all the way through. Remember that the backing track will start to play along but be two bars behind you, so you have to concentrate!

Exercise 36

First Voice *Second*

Now repeat the exercise, but this time, you are playing the second voice - come in when the track is playing the A at the end of the third bar.

About London's Burning

This is an example of a 'round', a form of 'cannon', which means that the tune is repeated over itself, by different voices coming in at different times, to form its own harmony. This is a device often used in traditional folk tunes, which could be sung unaccompanied, or with very simple harmonic instruments, eg bells. It's actually meant to refer to the great fire of London, which was in 1666, so it harks back to an earlier age when songs were a means of recording important events and then became part of folklore, and in time, simple children's songs.



Recommended Listening

Listen out for Pachelbel's (1653-1706) Cannon in D if you are interested in learning more about cannons or rounds. It is often played at weddings.

Tempo and Dynamics

Music is a fluid and changing medium – it sometimes does not fit easily into rigid bars, of regular beats, all played at the same speed in the same way. It is all about how you interpret the music that creates the individual magic that defines your art. The composers of the tune will usually give their indication as to speed and styles by adding indications of tempo eg Allegro, Andante. Within the music, there are phrase marks and accents which help you identify the 'feel of the music that the composer intended. Also sections will have indicators like Piano (usually a *p* – note not the small p which is your thumb) for soft, and Forte for loud, shown as *f*, or *ff* and *fff* for very, very loud.

Tempo/Speed

Usually Italian terms are used: they range from Grave and Largo (very slow and slow) to Allegro (fast) and Prestissimo (very quick). Sometimes metronome speeds are given: 1 crotchet = 120, or 120 BPM, which means 120 Beats per minute.

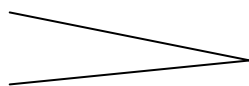
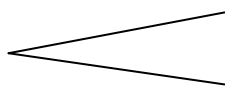
Here are several to remember just now.

- *Andante* - a walking speed – not fast or slow
- *Legato* – play smoothly – not jerky
- *Staccato* – jerky

Dynamics and Phrasing

The use of lounds and softs in music is called 'dynamics' and gives the music interest. Dynamic markings tell you when to play louder, quieter etc. These are signified by either:

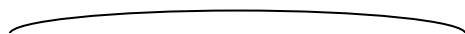
- Letters like *p* (piano) and *f* (forte)
- Signs such as meaning getting louder and getting softer.



- Accents such as a *>* over a note which means play it louder, or accent that note alone.

- 'Crescendo' – meaning getting louder, and 'Diminuendo' – meaning getting quieter

- Phrase marks



Phrase marks signify that all the notes within the phrase mark are part of the same expressive sentence, which may extend across bar lines and the normal rhythm of the bars.

Example



Three tunes on the treble strings

We will now play three short tunes, on the 3 treble strings, which have some dynamic markings. They are recorded for you to check your interpretation. Of course, you can interpret these in your own fashion.

- 1) Ode to Joy – L. Van Beethoven. Try and work out for yourself where the music should be louder, or softer, or where you should 'force' the rhythm, to create your own interpretation.
- 2) Cannon – T. Tallis. This piece is quite tricky unless you pay attention to the phrase marks, as the tune is quite hard to pick out.
- 3) Evening Song - F. Schultz. This tune is in 4/4 time, remember to accent the first beat in the bar, which can assist you in getting the feel for a tune, whatever the tempo or time signature.



Recommended Listening

You will no doubt be aware of Beethoven's famous Fifth symphony, but also listen out for the Moonlit Sonata and Fur Elise, for piano.

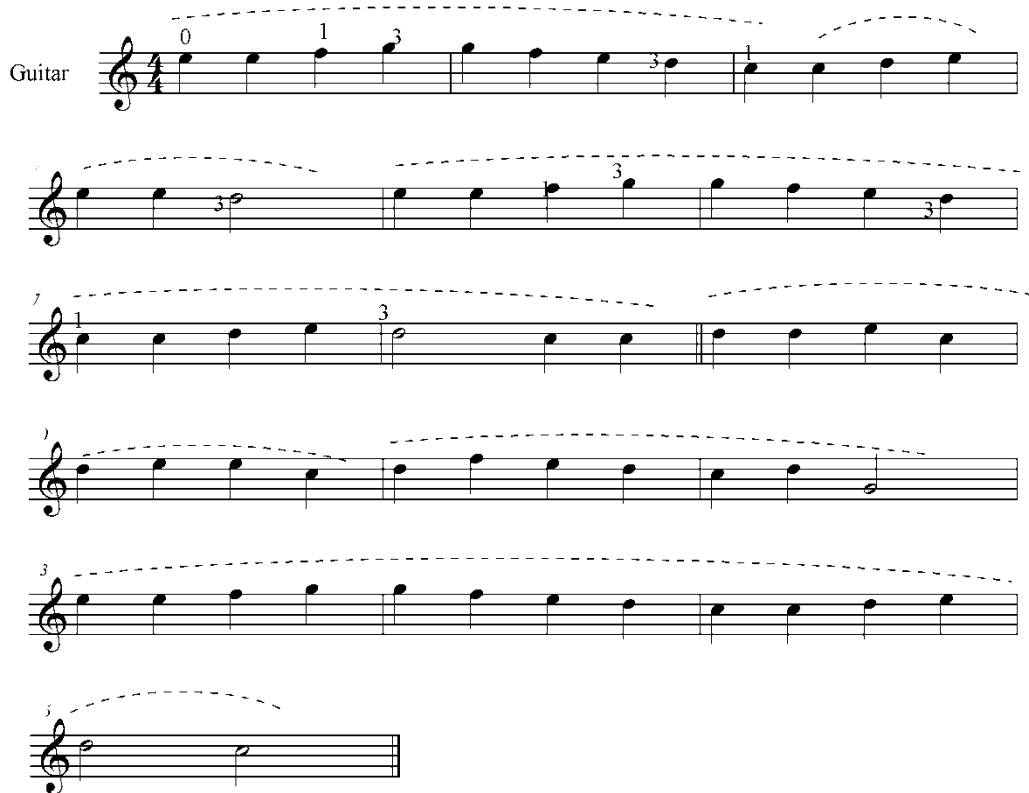
If you like the music of the medieval times and the early renaissance era then check out Vaughan William's Fantasia on a Theme by Tallis, which was written in the 20th Century, as well as music by William Byrd (1542? - 1623) who was a pupil of Tallis, and whose music has been transcribed for lute and guitar.

Not much is known about Shultz, though the style indicates a piano composition, in the romantic style of the 19th Century. Listen out for romantic compositions and arrangement particularly by F. Tarrega and M. Llobet who contributed greatly to the guitar's popularity, expanded the repertoire by transcriptions as well by composing music that captured the culture and life of Spain

Ode to Joy

Exercise 37

L. V. Beethoven



About 'Ode to Joy'

L. Van Beethoven (1770-1827) is one of the world's most famous classical composers, and was also a piano virtuoso before he eventually succumbed to deafness. He did not write for the guitar but for just about every other instrument. This is a well known tune, perhaps the world's most favourite classical piece, from the 4th movement of Beethoven's 9th symphony. In 1972 it became the anthem of the EU! It provides a good example of using phrase marks, as the sections of the tune are formed from two and three bar 'sentences'.

Play it quite slowly at first, till you feel comfortable playing at the speed of the track.

Cannon

Exercise 38

T. Tallis

Guitar

1 2 3 4

About 'Cannon'

This cannon is by Thomas Tallis (1505 - 1585). Tallis was an English church musician who led a very long life, for those days. He was very influential, and is still regarded as one of the leading Renaissance composers today, influencing later English composers like Vaughan Williams. We have met the cannon form earlier in this unit, and this one is a good example of the music of around the 16th Century. It is quite tricky to play as the tune is subtle, and does not leap out, and of course, is less well known as some of the others in this unit. If you pay attention to the phrase marks and accents you should get it right.

Evening song

Exercise 39

Andante

F. Schultz

0 2 1 0

3 3 1

16

19

2