From Zero to Guitar Fingerpicking in 30 Days



A Udemy Course by Patrick O'Malley

www.learnfingerpicking.com

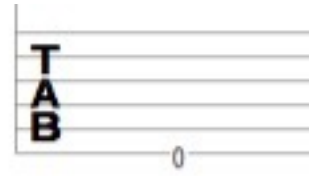
Section 1 – Lesson Eight

Reading Guitar Tablature

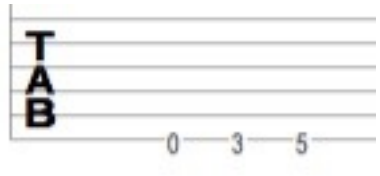
Guitar Tablature (or guitar tab) is a way of notating music for guitar. It is not quite reading "sheet music" like our piano playing friends, it is a little bit easier but still takes a little getting used to.

We'll start by playing a melody on one string. Then we will add other strings. Then we will look at how chords are written in tab.

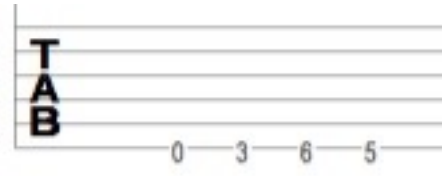
So we'll start by looking at playing one note - the 6th string (low E). This is just playing an open string so don't fret anything with your left hand - just play the thickest string on your guitar and let it ring. Note if you are not fretting a string, then we call that an open string and it is denoted in tab as a '0'.



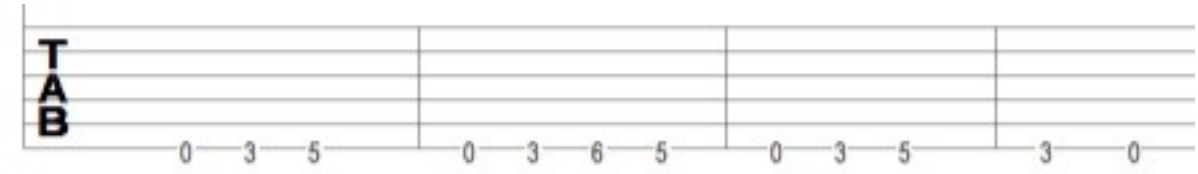
Now if we play that same string (the low E string) three times: first as an open string, then at the 3rd and 5th fret, it would have guitar tab that looks like this



Now if we play the same string low E four times - first open, then 3rd fret, then 6th fret then 5th fret, it would look like this.



Finally if we play both patterns above then follow by play the low E string open, 3 fret, 5 fret, 3 fret, open string, you are playing a line similar to Smoke on the Water by Deep Purple. You do know this riff! Google it if you are not familiar with it and then hum it and then play this tab until it matches. Now you will have followed tab to play a song on one string and from here adding other strings is relatively easy.

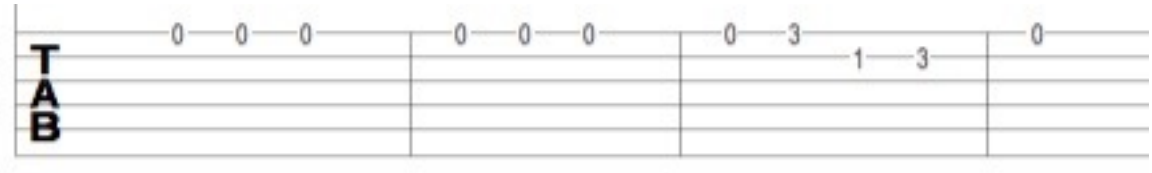


Notes on Several Strings

So now let's play the 1 string (high E / thinnest string) three times open. Repeat.

And now play the high E string open, then at the third fret.
And now the 2 string (B string) at the first fret then third fret.

And finish by playing the 1 string (high E) open.



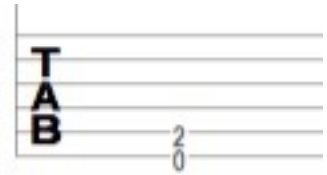
Congratulations. You have just played Jingle Bells - but really this is kinda cool because this is reading tab on two strings!

Playing Notes at the Same Time

Up until now, we have played notes sequentially, meaning one then the next one after that.

But what if we want to play two notes at the same time?

Well if we play the 6th string (low E) open and the 5th string (A) at the second fret - at the same time - then it looks like this



And if we wanted to show a G chord using tab, it would look like this.



Remember from the last section how to play a G chord. We fret the 6 string (or low E or thickest string) at the third fret. Then we play the 5th string (A string) at the second fret. The 4th and 3rd strings (D and A) are open. Then we play the 6th string (the high E or thinnest string) at the third fret.