



How to Read Guitar Tab

By Jon Broderick

The notation we use here on the Guitar Tricks site is called "tablature" or "tab" for short.

Tab is very easy to read.

Each of the six lines represents a string on the guitar.

The bottom line represents the thickest string, the top line represents the thinnest string.

The numbers indicate the frets of the guitar that you should play, reading from left to right.

The vertical bars represent measures of the song.

The thickest string is called the 6th string. The thinnest string is called the 1st string. The rest are numbered 1-6.

Tab does not show timing, except in a loose way. So, it is inferior to standard musical notation as a complete explanation of how to play music, but it is much easier to learn. By the end of this page, you will be able to read tab!

How to Read Guitar Tab

By Jon Broderick

The image displays a musical score for guitar in 4/4 time. The top staff is a standard musical notation with a treble clef, showing a melody of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by three measures of chords. The bottom staff is guitar tablature, with the letters 'T', 'A', and 'B' stacked vertically on the left. The first measure contains the numbers 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 8, 5, 8. The second measure contains four vertical 'CHUNKS' symbols. The third measure contains a slur over the numbers 5, 7, 7, 5, 7, 5, 5, with an arrow labeled 'fall' pointing to the second '7'. The piece concludes with a double bar line.



How to Read Guitar Tab

By Jon Broderick

For this example you should place your index finger on the 4th string (4th largest from the little one) at the 5th fret. Then place your ring finger on the 4th string on the 7th fret, then place your index finger on the 3rd string on the 5th fret, and so on.

See the little curve tying the 5 to the last 7 at the beginning of the third measure? This means "hammer on." Instead of picking that note on fret 7, you should let the one before it keep ringing and then hammer your ring finger down on the 7th fret.

In a similar way, the curve tying the 7 to the 5 indicates a pull-off and the arrow pointing up at the end of the third measure indicates a bend. There are other special symbols as well. You will learn those symbols later as you learn those techniques.

To learn more about the different tab symbols we use to indicate different techniques, click the help button on the toolbar above.