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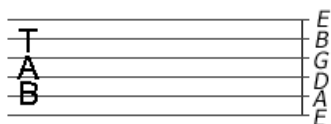Free Sheet Music, Riffs, Lessons and Tools for musicians who play.

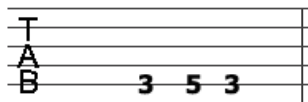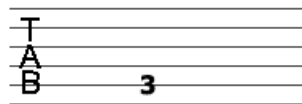Guitar » Introduction to guitar tabs

Introduction to guitar tabs

Guitar tabs are one of the easiest forms of musical notation to learn. That's because the basic concept is very simple.

A tab is simply the representation of the neck of the guitar. It show the six strings laid out with the highest-sounding string at the top :
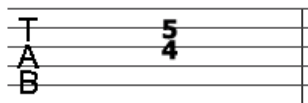

On the tab there are a series of numbers. These represent the frets of the instrument. So, for example, in the picture on the right you play the A string on the third fret.
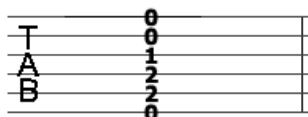

You read the numbers from left to right, so in this example, you simply play the third fret on the A string, followed by the fifth fret, and back to the third again.

If you see two notes, one on top of the other, that means play the two notes together as a chord :

And to show an entire E major chord, you write this :

Rhythm

Rhythm is not notated precisely in tab. To get the correct rhythm you need to listen to the original, or to somebody else playing the song and try to pick it up.

This said, tab is spaced *more or less* in proportion to the amount of time a note lasts. So if you see two or three notes very close together, you'll know to play them quickly.

That's it!

That really is all there is to the basics of tabs.

What's next ?

Check out our **Tab Guide** which explains some of the more advanced tab symbols for bends, hammer-ons, pull-offs and more!

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