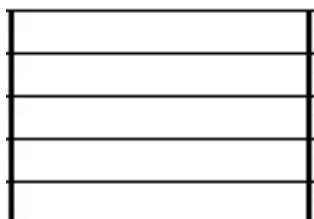
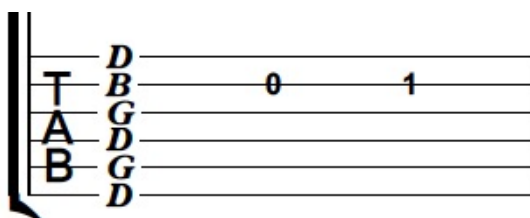


# Reading Tablature

Tablature is a popular system of reading music for stringed instruments using lines representing each string and numbers indicating which frets or open strings to play. For the guitar, six lines are used representing each of the six strings with the lowest line on the page being the lowest string on the guitar:

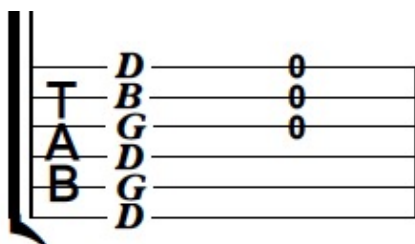


The measures are separated by vertical lines as shown above. The six horizontal lines represent each string. A zero on any line represents an open string and a number represents a fretted note:



In the example above the first note is the second string open and the second note is the first fret of the second string. The letters on each string at the beginning of each song will indicate the tuning used. This example uses the open G or Taro Patch tuning: DGDGBD from low to high.

Notes lined up vertically are played together as a chord. In the example below, the top three open strings are played together:



Rhythm is not indicated in the tablature that we will use most often. I will also include standard notation above the tablature to show rhythms, fingerings, and chord symbols. The two staff will line up showing both standard notation and tablature. In the example below, a G chord symbol is used above the standard notation staff and right hand fingerings are given using the letters *p*, *i*, *m*, and *a*.  
*p* = right hand thumb  
*i* = index finger  
*m* = middle finger  
*a* = ring finger

G

Left hand fingerings are written to the left side of notes in the standard notation staff.

0 = open string

1 = first finger

2 = second finger

3 = third finger

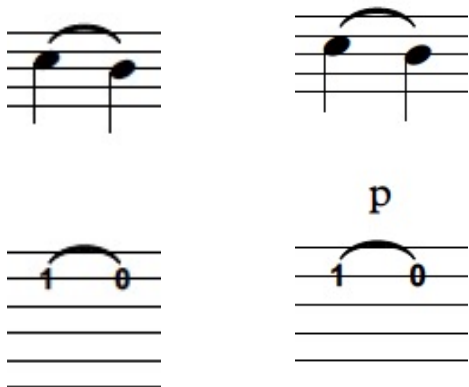
4 = fourth finger or pinky

In the example below, the left hand first finger plays the first fret of the second string followed by the open second string, second finger on the second fret of the third string, and third string open. The up-stem notes represent the melody and the down-stem notes represent the bass notes played with the right hand thumb.

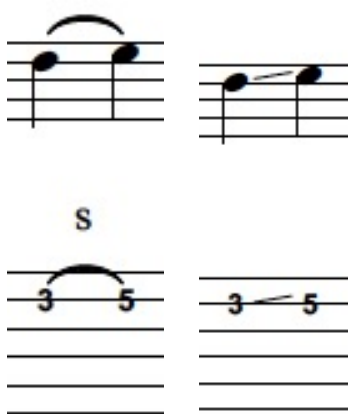
D<sup>7</sup>                      G

Here are some tablature notations for common techniques we will use:

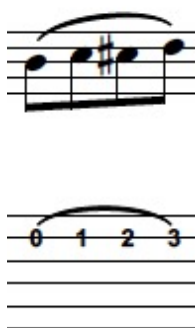
**Hammer On:** play a lower pitch then hammer or rapidly place a higher pitch on the same string with the left hand alone. Sometimes a letter “h” is used between the two pitches.



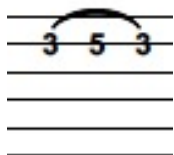
**Pull Off:** play a fretted note then release it to a lower fretted note or open string with the left hand alone. Sometimes a letter “p” is used between the two pitches.



**Slide:** play a fretted note then move the same finger up or down the string to arrive at a different note. This is most often notated with a similar arch over the notes with the letter “s” between the two notes. It can also be notated with a straight line.



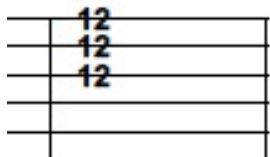
**Multiple note Hammer On:** A series of notes connected by the same arch. This can apply to ascending phrases (hammer-ons) or descending phrases (pull-offs).



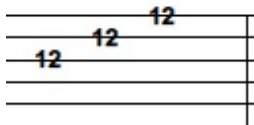
**Hammer On/Pull Off combination:** The first note is played then the next is a hammer-on that then releases with a pull-off the the original note.



Harm.



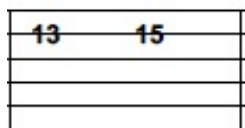
Harm.----|



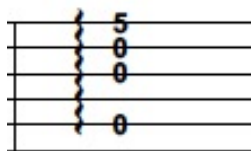
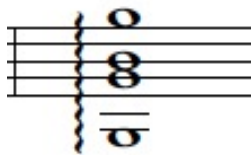
**Harmonics:** Also called “Chimes” and Natural Harmonics these notes are produced by lightly touching the strings directly over the fret wire with a left hand finger laying flat. Quickly remove the left hand finger after playing the notes with the right hand to allow the harmonics to ring.



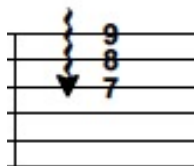
A.H.----|



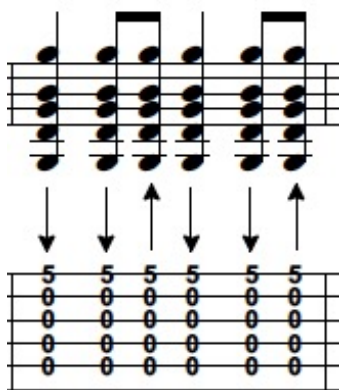
**Artificial Harmonics:** The left hand holds a pitch 12 frets below the written pitch while right hand index finger frets the pitch over the fret wire as written while the right hand thumb or ring finger plucks the note. This is a more advanced technique that we will study after the Natural Harmonics are learned. In this example, the left hand fingers would play the first fret of the second string followed by the third fret.



**Rolled Chord:** The notes of a chord are played slightly separated. Usually the notes ascend starting with the lowest pitch to highest. In this example the left hand thumb would start by playing the 5<sup>th</sup> string followed by the index on the 3<sup>rd</sup> string, middle on the 2<sup>nd</sup> string, and ring on the 1<sup>st</sup> string. (*p. i. m.* then *a*).



**Rake:** A right hand finger brushes across more than one string to create a chord. *i*, *m* or, *a* would all work well here.



**Strumming:** The arrows indicate which direction to strum. Downward pointing arrows are down strums and upward pointing arrows are up strums. Right hand fingers can also be added to indicate which finger strums. Usually the index finger is used.