

# Guitar Tablature Explained

Guitar music can be notated three different ways: on a musical staff, in tablature, and in rhythm slashes

D A D E G  
 ⑥ ⑥  
 open 3fr

**RHYTHM SLASHES** are written above the staff. Strum chords in the rhythm indicated. Round noteheads indicate single notes.

**THE MUSICAL STAFF** shows pitches and rhythms and is divided by lines into bars. Pitches are named after the first seven letters of the alphabet.

**TABLATURE** graphically represents the guitar fingerboard. Each horizontal line represents a string, and each number represents a fret.

Notes:

Strings:

4th string, 2nd fret      1st & 2nd strings open, played together      open D chord

## definitions for special guitar notation

**SEMI-TONE BEND:** Strike the note and bend up a semi-tone (1/2 step).

**WHOLE TONE BEND:** Strike the note and bend up a whole-tone (whole step).

**GRACE NOTE BEND:** Strike the note and bend as indicated. Play the first note as quickly as possible.

**QUARTER TONE BEND:** Strike the note and bend up a 1/4 step.

**BEND & RELEASE:** Strike the note and bend up as indicated, then release back to the original note.

**COMPOUND BEND & RELEASE:** Strike the note and bend up and down in the rhythm indicated.

**PRE-BEND:** Bend the note as indicated, then strike it.

**PRE-BEND & RELEASE:** Bend the note as indicated. Strike it and release the note back to the original pitch.

**UNISON BEND:** Strike the two notes simultaneously and bend the lower note up to the pitch of the higher.

**BEND & RESTRIKE:** Strike the note and bend as indicated then restrike the string where the symbol occurs.

**BEND, HOLD AND RELEASE:** Same as bend and release but hold the bend for the duration of the tie.

**BEND AND TAP:** Bend the note as indicated and tap the higher fret while still holding the bend.

**MBRATO:** The string is vibrated by rapidly bending and releasing the note with the fretting hand.

**HAMMER ON:** Strike the first (lower) note with one finger, then sound the higher note (on the same string) with another finger by fretting it without picking.

**PULL OFF:** Place both fingers on the note to be sounded. Strike the first note and without picking, pull the finger off to sound the second (lower) note.

**LEGATO SLIDE (GLISS):** Strike the first note and then slide the same fret-hand finger up or down to the second note. The second note is not struck.

**SHIFT SLIDE (GLISS & RESTRIKE):** Same as legato slide, except the second note is struck.

**TRILL:** Very rapidly alternate between the notes indicated by continuously hammering on and pulling off.

**TAPPING:** Hammer ("tap") the fret indicated with the pick-hand index or middle finger and pull off to the note fretted by the fret hand.

**PICK SCRAPER:** The edge of the pick is rubbed down (or up) the string, producing a scratchy sound.

**MUFFLED STRINGS:** A percussive sound is produced by laying the fret hand across the string(s) without depressing, and striking them without the pick hand.

**NATURAL HARMONIC:** Strike the note while the fret-hand lightly touches the string directly over the fret indicated.

**PINCH HARMONIC:** The note is fretted normally and a harmonic is produced by adding the edge of the thumb or the tip of the index finger of the pick hand to the normal pick attack.

**HARP HARMONIC:** The note is fretted normally and a harmonic is produced by gently resting the pick hand's index finger directly above the indicated fret (in parentheses) while the pick hand's thumb or pick assists by plucking the appropriate string.

**PALM MUTING:** The note is partially muted by the pick hand lightly touching the string(s) just before the bridge.

**RAKE:** Drag the pick across the strings indicated with a single motion.

**TREMOLO PICKING:** The note is picked as rapidly and continuously as possible.

**ARPEGGIATE:** Play the notes of the chord indicated by quickly rolling them from bottom to top.

**SWEEP PICKING:** Rhythmic downstroke and/or upstroke motion across the strings.

**VIBRATO DIVE BAR AND RETURN:** The pitch of the note or chord is dropped a specific number of steps (in rhythm) then returned to the original pitch.

**VIBRATO BAR SCOOP:** Depress the bar just before striking the note, then quickly release the bar.

**VIBRATO BAR DIP:** Strike the note and then immediately drop a specific number of steps, then release back to the original pitch.

## additional musical definitions

*D.Œ. al Coda*

Go back to the sign (§), then play until the bar marked To Coda 0 then skip to the section marked 0 Coda.

*D.C. al Fine*

Go back to the beginning of the song and play until the bar marked Fine (end).

tacet

Instrument is silent (drops out).

Repeat bars between signs.

□ Downstroke

∇ Upstroke

When a repeated section has different endings, play the first ending only the first time and the second ending only the second time.