

GUITARS AND STRINGS

As I said in the introduction, I am not going to deal with the rudiments of musical theory in detail. This is a **Short Cut** method and will go straight on to playing chords but before that, here are a few notes about guitars generally.

It does not matter what kind of guitar you have to learn on. All guitars are tuned the same, and they all have six strings (except the twelve-string guitar which is a separate instrument). There are two main types of guitar: One has steel strings, and the other has nylon strings — both types are tuned and fingered in the same way by the left hand.

Guitars with steel strings have a louder tone, and are mainly used for pop and country and western music, although they can of course be used to play any kind of music. Only guitars with steel strings can be played as electric guitars — steel strings can be used with an electric magnetic pick up, whereas, of course, nylon strings are not suitable for this purpose.

It does not matter whether your guitar has a round sound-hole in the middle of the body, or whether it has f-holes cut into the body like a violin or cello — their purpose is merely to vary the tone of the guitar. A guitar with a round sound-hole has a richer and fuller sound while a guitar with f-holes has a more penetrating and incisive sound — both types are good, and it is a matter of taste which you choose. As I have already said they are both fingered exactly the same with the left hand. It is with the right hand that the way of playing can be varied.

It is usual to play a steel-stringed guitar with a plectrum. A plectrum is a piece of tortoiseshell or plastic (see illustration 1) used to strike across the strings. It is held by the thumb and first finger of the right hand, with the tip of the plectrum protruding about a quarter of an inch (see illustration 2). It is, of course, quite possible to play a steel-stringed guitar with the fingers but a plectrum on the whole is preferable, and it improves the tone quality. Also strumming this type of guitar with the fingers will tend to make them sore.

Guitars with nylon strings are usually played with the fingers of the right hand rather than with a plectrum, as the nylon strings are much softer to the touch and this of course accounts for the difference in tone between the two types of guitars. The nylon-stringed instrument is soft and sweet in tone, and the guitar with steel strings is louder and more incisive.

How the Guitar is Tuned

The strings of the guitar are tuned to the notes E A D G B E starting with the thickest string. This string (E — on the far left in all the diagrams shown in this book) is known as the 6th string; and the next string, the 5th string is tuned to A; the 4th string to D; the 3rd string to G; and the 2nd string to B; finally the thinnest and 1st string is tuned to E. Of course the E to which the 6th string is tuned is two octaves deeper than the E to which the 1st string is tuned, but, to avoid going into musical theory and to get on quickly with playing, I suggest that in order to tune the guitar the reader buys some pitch pipes from any music shop. These are six little pipes joined together, tuned to the six strings of the guitar. Each pipe is blown separately and you tune the relative string to the note given by the pipe by raising or lowering the pitch of the string until it sounds the same as the note given by the pipe. To change the pitch of a string you turn the tuning key one way to lower the note, and the opposite way to raise the note. Pitch Pipes are not expensive and can be carried around with your guitar so as always to be available.

For those who prefer tuning to a piano I have indicated the method over .

FIRST STEPS IN BASS NOTE PICKING

So far in all the tunes played you have strummed across the strings (with the exception of any strings marked with an 'X' above them). Another playing technique can now be learnt. This uses the right hand to pick a bass note (i.e. one of the lower strings of the chord) on the first beat, and then strum the top strings of the chord for the second and third beats.

This gives a nice waltz rhythm with the 1st beat on a bass note, and the 2nd and 3rd beats of the top strings. Use any of the lower strings of any chords that you are playing, but remember do not use a string with an 'X' above it — this will not sound in tune. You can use either the 6th, 5th or 4th string of any chord, providing it does not have an 'X' over it.

Let your ear be your guide as to which bass string you prefer, but as long as it is in the chord then it will sound pleasant. If you are playing with a plectrum, then pick the bass note separately, and then strum the rest of the chord with the next two strokes. If you are playing with your fingers, then pick the bass note downwards with your thumb and then either strike the remaining strings with the nail of the first finger, or pluck the top three strings with your first, second and third fingers. If you choose this method remember that your first finger plays the 3rd string, your second finger the 2nd string, and your third finger the 1st string, and with these three fingers pluck the strings upwards towards you; you pick the bass note downwards with your thumb tip. Here is the lovely old carol 'Silent Night'. To find the first note of the tune, play the chord of A and pluck the 4th string, this is the note you start on.

Silent Night

Si - lent night , Ho - ly night |
 | A / / | A / / | A / / | A / / |

All is calm , All is bright |
 | E7 / / | E7 / / | A / / | A / / |

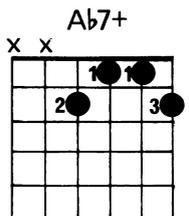
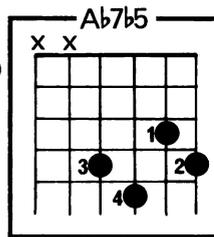
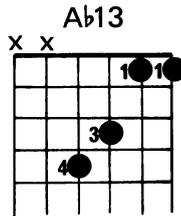
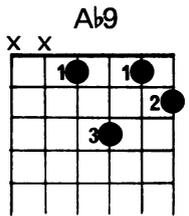
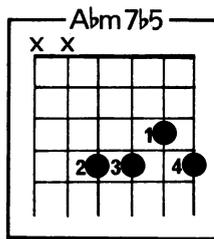
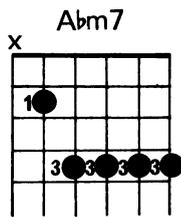
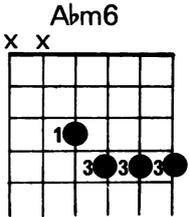
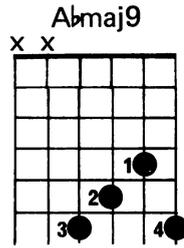
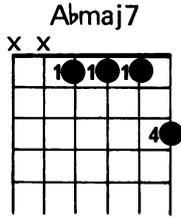
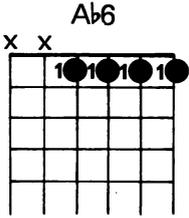
Round yon vir - gin Moth - er and child |
 | D / / | D / / | A / / | A / / |

Ho - ly in - fant so ten - der and mild |
 | D / / | D / / | A / / | A / / |

Sleep in heav - en - ly peace |
 | E7 / / | E7 / / | A / / | A / / |

Sleep in heav - en - ly peace } ||
 | A / / | E7 / / | A / / | A / / |

EXTENDED CHORDS



Basic Chord Alternatives

