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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Guitar System! My name is Nate Savage, and you’ve just cracked open the most comprehensive home study guitar course on the planet. This entire program has been designed to take someone who’s never even seen a guitar, all the way to being a proficient guitarist. It’s also incredibly valuable for those who already know how to play but want to fill in the gaps in their guitar education.

We’ll start out with some guitar playing fundamentals that absolutely every player should know. Holding the guitar, changing strings, how to tune the guitar, how to read TAB and how to work your guitar and amplifier (amp) are just a few of the many topics included in this first section.

In the core sections of this system we’ll focus on the information and concepts that’ll get you playing both rhythm and lead guitar in ways you never imagined. Each and every section is very progressive and thorough. A step-by-step approach will take you through each technique and concept you need to master, in order to become the guitar player you want to be.

Step-by-step instruction like this is great, but what if you don’t know how to apply what you’ve learned? No worries. I’ve got you covered! One of the main goals of The Guitar System is to give you high-quality, effective and fun applications at the end of each new section. This is done through incredible play-along songs that help you use and develop your new skills. Each song will leave you with something new that you can actually take away, play and make your own.

At first glance you may wonder, “Why are there no rock or pop sections in this system?” There’s a very good reason for that. The core of The Guitar System focuses on playing guitar from a rock and pop perspective. The fundamental guitar skills and concepts you need to know will be taught through rock, classic rock, hard rock, blues, and pop play-along songs.

Once you’ve used the core section of The Guitar System to lay a solid foundation for your rhythm- and lead-guitar skills, you can choose to explore new styles such as jazz, fingerstyle, classical, metal, bluegrass and country. Each style has its own unique section. If you want to work on your jazz skills, you can do that. If you want to work on your fingerpicking chops, you can do that too.

Reading music, music theory, playing by ear, and ear training are four critical topics for you to master if you want to reach your full potential as a musician. All four topics are scattered throughout the core sections of The Guitar System, but I felt it was important for each one to have its own dedicated section as well.
The final portion of this course is the performance play-along section for your entertainment and inspiration. I thought it would be fun for you to see how some of the play-alongs could be applied to a real-world band setting. Enjoy this part!

If you’ve already been playing for a while and want to know what material you need to go through, in order to reach your specific guitar playing goals, I’ve got you covered. Included with The Guitar System is the Practice Routine Generator. This is an incredible tool that uses your current skill level and overall guitar playing goals to build a customized program and practice schedule of your own.

Playing the guitar can be challenging. Practicing plays an important role in ensuring your success as a guitarist. You should really be practicing at least 20-40 minutes a day, four or five times per week. If you make an effort to practice this much, you should be able to keep your hands in shape and really see some great progress. If you only practice once or twice per week, you probably won’t see a whole lot of progress. Later on, we’ll talk more about practicing.

If you’re new to the guitar, your fingers will probably be sore for a while. Don’t let that discourage you. After a few weeks you should have some pretty good calluses built up on your fingers. I hope you’re as excited about learning the guitar as I’m about teaching it to you. We’re about to embark on an exciting musical journey. Have fun and enjoy the ride!
**GUITAR FUNDAMENTALS**

**INTRODUCTION**

There are certain things that every guitar player needs to know. Some of them don’t seem to have much to do with actually playing the guitar, but they’re still important. In this section of lessons we’ll be taking a look at some of the absolute fundamentals of playing the guitar such as holding the guitar, finger and *fret* numbers, tuning the guitar, how TAB works, and basic technique.

If you’ve been playing guitar for a while, you might be thinking about skipping this section. However, I’d recommend going through the entire thing. You might learn something new, right?! If you’re a complete beginner, you’re definitely in the right place. Going through these lessons will save you a lot of time and frustration in the future.

**HOLDING THE GUITAR**

We’ll be covering four basic ways of holding the guitar: the casual method, the classical method, standing up with a strap and sitting down with a strap. Each method has its own advantages and can be used with either the acoustic or electric guitar. It’s important for you to experiment with each one. Choose the one that works best for you and your own unique style.

**The Casual Method** – This method is probably the most common. If you saw a right-handed person sit down with a guitar, odds are they’d simply put it over their right leg and start strumming away. That’s the casual method. Try it for yourself. If you’re right-handed, take your guitar and place it over your right leg. Now, use your right arm to hold the guitar close to your body so it doesn’t slip down your leg. Bring your left hand up to the neck of the guitar. Make sure to stay relaxed and sit up straight! One of the biggest advantages to the casual method is that it’s super easy to just sit down and start playing. One of the disadvantages is that it’s very easy to let your posture deteriorate very quickly.

**The Classical Method** – To use this method of holding the guitar, you need to rest the guitar on the leg opposite to the one used in the casual method. Start by putting the guitar on your left leg if you’re right-handed, and reach your right arm around to pull the body of the guitar close to you. Bring your left hand up to the neck of the guitar. Make sure to stay relaxed.

You’ll probably notice that this method makes the neck of the guitar stick out much further to the left. This puts the neck in a better position for playing higher notes on the guitar. The classical method also kind of forces you to sit up straight too. These are the two main advantages of using this method to hold the guitar.

Often, you’ll see people that adopt the classical method using a footstool to prop up their left foot. This helps to put the guitar in a better playing position by placing it a bit higher. You can find these footstools in pretty much any local music store.
Standing Up With A Strap – Standing up with the guitar is my personal favorite way to practice. This is because I usually stand when I play in front of people. Practicing in the same way you plan to perform makes playing much easier when it’s show time.

You’ll need a guitar strap in order to hold the guitar while standing up. Guitar straps can be purchased from $10 to $200—most of them are around $20. If you don’t own a strap yet, you can always pick one up the next time you’re at your local music store.

If you do have a strap, all you have to do is put it on your guitar and adjust the height to your liking. I like to adjust my strap to where my guitar is at the exact same height as it would be if I were sitting down to practice. Many straps have a lot of room for adjustment. You’ll have to play around with your strap to find the height that’s most comfortable for you.

Most guitars come with strap buttons for you to attach your strap on, but some acoustic guitars don’t. If this is the case for you, don’t worry. Many guitar straps come with a kind of strap or shoelace that you can use to tie around the headstock of an acoustic guitar.

Sitting Down With A Strap - Some people prefer to have the guitar higher up than they can get it by setting it on their leg. If you have a strap attached to your guitar, fastening it to a higher setting will allow you to get your guitar to the height you desire while sitting down.
FINGER AND FRET NUMBERS

Knowing the numbering systems for the fingers on the *fretting hand* and the frets of the guitar may seem very simple to many players. While these numbering systems are very basic, they’re also very important. Having a firm understanding of these simple concepts will make going through all the coming lessons much easier and quicker.

The numbering system for the fingers on the fretting hand is pretty simple. The index finger is referred to as the *1st finger*, the middle finger is referred to as the *2nd finger*, the ring finger is referred to as the *3rd finger*, and the pinky is referred to as the *4th finger*. Keep this in mind as you work your way through the following lessons. There’s a diagram on this page that explains this system, and that’ll help you out if you have any more questions about it.

The metal strips in the *fretboard* of the guitar are called *frets*. Most guitars have 21, 22 or 24 frets. Take a look at the metal strip, or fret, that’s the farthest down the neck of the guitar, toward the tuning keys. That’s the 1st fret of the guitar. The next fret up is the 2nd fret; the following one is the 3rd and so on. Throughout The Guitar System you’ll hear me say things like, “Put your 1st finger on the 1st fret of the 1st string.” That simply means you should place your index finger right behind the 1st fret on the *high E* string. You might not be used to these finger and fret numbering systems, but after a few lessons you’ll begin to pick up on them pretty quickly.

NAMES OF THE OPEN STRINGS

One thing I had a bit of a hard time with, when I first started playing the guitar, was memorizing the names of the *open strings*. I guess that’s because I didn’t really know the names of the open strings for a long time. I’ll make sure you don’t have that problem.

Start on the thickest string of the guitar. That string is called *low E* or *6th string*. The second thickest string is the A or *5th string*. Next we have the D or *4th string*. The 3rd string is the G string and the 2nd string is the B string. The thinnest and final string is known as the high E or *1st string*.

All together, and starting from the thickest, or lowest string, the six strings of the guitar are, E A D G B E. Did you notice that there are two E strings? That’s right! The 6th and 1st strings are both called E strings. Make a mental note: the 6th string is called low E string and the 1st string is called high E string. Check out the diagram on this page for a good visual reference.
One way to remember the names of the strings is to come up with a little saying. I use, “Eat All Day Go to Bed Early.” That works for me, but you can come up with your own funny little phrase if it helps you. Memorizing the names of the strings is very important, especially when you start learning how to tune your guitar. Take a few minutes, and go through the names of all six strings several times.

## Tuning the Guitar

Knowing how to tune the guitar is an absolutely essential skill for every guitar player. If your guitar is in tune, you’ll sound like a pro! If it’s not in tune, you’ll run the risk of sounding bad and getting on people’s nerves. In this section we’ll take a look at how to tune a guitar using an electronic tuner and how to tune a guitar by ear.

Before moving on to each of these sections, you really should have the names of all the open guitar strings memorized. If you’re still a bit shaky on that, you might want to review the previous section. Tuning a guitar can be difficult for some players at first, but I’ll walk you through the entire process, and your guitar will sound great afterwards.

### Tuning a Guitar with a Tuner

Now that you know the names of the open guitar strings, you can learn to use an electronic tuner. Using an electronic tuner can be pretty tricky if you’re new to the guitar, but once you get the hang of it, you’ll be in tuning heaven. Most electronic tuners have a microphone for acoustic guitars and an input jack for electric guitars. If you have an electronic tuner, you should be good to go, no matter the type of guitar you have. If you don’t have a tuner, you can pick one up at your local music store or just read the next section on how to tune a guitar by ear.

When using an electronic tuner, the idea is to tune a string to its respective open-note name before making the finer adjustments that’ll get it as in tune as possible. Let’s look at an example where we’ll use the 6th string, or low E string, as our test subject. Once you’ve played that string, your tuner should display which note that string is actually tuned to. If it displays an E, that’s great! If not, you need to make a tuning adjustment. For example, if the tuner displays a D, you’ll need to raise the pitch of the string to an E. On the other hand, if the tuner displays an F, you’ll need to lower the pitch of the string to an E. In order to make tuning adjustments, simply turn the tuning key of any particular string one way or the other. Getting a particular string to the correct note is the first step in using an electronic tuner. Fine-tuning is the second and final step.

Most electronic tuners have either a needle or a series of red and green lights that let you know if a note is flat or sharp. If the needle or light is off to the left, the note is flat and needs to go up in pitch. If the needle or light is off to the right, the note is sharp and needs to go down in pitch. When the string is perfectly in tune, the needle or the light will be in the middle of the tuner—the light is usually green in this particular situation. If you have a tuner, play around with it and get to know how it works.
TUNING A GUITAR BY EAR

If you don’t have an electronic tuner, you can always learn to tune a guitar by ear. You’ll need a reference note or a place from which to start tuning. If none of those options are available to you, you can always use any string that’s close to being in tune as a reference note. Once you’ve found it, you’ll need to use it in conjunction with a tuning method. This will enable you to tune the remaining strings by ear.

There are several methods for tuning a guitar by ear, but we’ll be using what I call the 5th-fret method. Let’s assume that the low E string is in tune. Press down on the 5th fret of the low E string and play it. That note is an A note, much like the next string over: the open 5th string. The idea is to match the pitch of the open A string to the pitch of the 5th fret of the E string. Play both the 5th fret of the E string and the open A string at the same time. Now try to adjust the open A string to where its pitch matches the one from the note on the 5th fret of the E string exactly. It’ll take some time and practice to get this down, but it’ll come to you.

Once you have the A string in tune, put a finger on the 5th fret of the A string, and play that note along with the open D string. Those two notes should be the same too. If they’re not, you need to adjust the tuning key for the D string until they are.

In order to tune the G string, you need to repeat this process once again. Play the 5th fret of the D string along with the open G string. Adjust the tuning key for the open G string if the notes don’t sound the same.

The tuning by ear process changes a little when you get to the B string. You need to press down on the 4th fret instead of the 5th fret of the G string, and play that note along with the open B string. This is the only time in the process where you’ll switch to the 4th fret. If the notes don’t have the exact same pitch, adjust the B string until they match.

Only one string to go! In order to tune the high E string, press down on the 5th fret of the B string and play it along with the open high E string. Again, if the notes don’t match, simply adjust the tuning key for the high E string until they do.

Tuning the guitar by ear isn’t easy for everyone; it can take a while to learn. Don’t get discouraged if you can’t do it right away; it takes some practice. Once you’re able do it, you can be in tune and sounding great no matter where you find yourself at. If you can afford it, I’d highly recommend going out and picking up an electronic tuner. They just make life a little easier.
Fretboard Layout (Half-steps and Whole-steps)

There are many lessons in The Guitar System regarding the layout of the fretboard. In this section we’re going to cover the most basic concepts of whole-steps and half-steps. I’ll use the keyboard of a piano to help you understand this.

Imagine a piano keyboard. Lots of black and white keys, right?! In order to play a half-step on the piano, start on any note you like and play the very next key. The key can be up or down, black or white, it doesn’t matter. Easy, right?! To play a half-step on the guitar, start on any note you like and play one fret in either direction.

To play a whole-step on the piano, start on any note and skip one key in any direction. It doesn’t matter if it’s black or white. In order to play a whole-step on the guitar, choose a note and play two frets away in any direction. You can think of it as just skipping a fret. The concepts of half-steps and whole-steps are pretty simple, but they’re very important for future lessons. Just take a minute, and play a few half-steps and whole-steps on your guitar.
HOW CHORD DIAGRAMS WORK

Chord diagrams are simple pictures that let you know exactly where to put your fingers in order to make specific chord shapes. They're usually placed at the beginning of sheet music and TAB, and are great for teaching you the exact chord shapes, songs are played with. They also come in handy for learning chords you don’t know the shapes for. Therefore, it's essential for you to understand how these diagrams work. Since you'll be learning a mountain of chords throughout The Guitar System, I'll make sure you learn how to read chord diagrams properly.

The six vertical lines on a chord diagram represent the six strings of a guitar. The far left vertical line represents the low E string, and the far right vertical line represents the high E string. The horizontal lines represent the frets of a guitar.

Most chord diagrams use dots or circles to tell you where to place your fingers. Throughout this book I’ll be using circles and black dots. The black dots represent the root of a chord—don’t worry too much about this right now. Inside each circle or dot you’ll find a number that tells you which finger from your fretting hand to use, in order to play that note.

There are a few other chord diagram symbols with which you should be familiar. A circle or a black dot above a string, means you should play it open. An X above a string, means you shouldn’t play that string at all. The rectangular block at the top of a diagram represents the nut of a guitar.

Thick black arcs or lines that go across multiple strings represent bars. Bars are used to tell you that you should be pressing down on more than one string with the same finger. You’ll be seeing a lot of these once you start learning bar chords. Lastly, any number you see to the left of a chord diagram serves as a reference for letting you know what fret to play.

Here are a couple of chord diagram examples. Study them, and try to familiarize yourself with the elements covered in this section.
How TAB Works

Tablature, or TAB, is a system that graphically tells you where to place your fingers on a guitar, in order to play a certain song, musical idea, chord, lick, or scale. Take a look at the TAB legend on the following page. Underneath the sheet music you’ll see a system of six horizontal lines with numbers and symbols all over them. The six lines represent the six strings of a guitar. The bottom line represents the 6th string, or low E string, and the top line represents the 1st string, or high E string.

The numbers on the TAB represent the fret, or frets, on which you should place your fingers. Single notes are represented by numbers that follow one another from left to right, and chords are depicted as numbers stacked vertically.

Take some time to go through the TAB legend and get familiar with some of the more common symbols. You may not understand exactly what you’re looking at right now, but it’s helpful to know as much about TAB as you can before getting into the following lessons. Here are a few of the more common symbols you’ll see in TAB:

- **Muting** – an X on one or more lines;
- **Bending** – an upward pointing arrow next to a number;
- **Sliding** – an ascending or descending diagonal line between two or more neighboring numbers;
- **Vibrato** – a squiggly line at the top of the TAB;
- **Hammer-on & Pull-off** – an arc, or a slur, that goes from at least one note to another.

Find the TAB legend on the following page...

For most guitar players, learning to read TAB is a bit easier than learning to read traditional sheet music. It may be a bit cryptic at first, but most people find that after a short while they can breeze through just about any TAB they can get their hands on.

There are certainly many more elements of TAB that we could go over, but if you know the basics presented here, you should have no problems with future lessons. However, you’ll still learn new TAB symbols as you progress through The Guitar System.
HOW RHYTHM WORKS

In order to start playing the guitar, you need to know a little bit about how rhythm works. To get you up to speed on this, we’re going to look at counting to four and discuss basic note values with “The Dollar Analogy.”

Most music is in 4/4 (pronounced four four) time, which means each bar, or measure of music, gets four beats, or pulses. I’m pretty sure everyone has heard a drummer count off a song: “one ... two ... three ... four.” This is really all I’m talking about here: counting to four over and over again. The beginner lessons in The Guitar System will be in 4/4 time exclusively.

Now you need to learn a little bit about basic note values. Imagine each measure, or group of four beats, as one dollar. A whole note looks like a hollow circle and represents four beats or the entire dollar.

A half note looks like a hollow circle with a stem. You can think of it as a fifty-cent piece. Instead of taking up all four beats like a whole note does, a half note takes up only two beats. It’s kind of like cutting the dollar or whole note in half. So two half notes take up one full measure in 4/4 time.

A quarter note looks like a solid circle with a stem and symbolizes one quarter or beat out of one dollar or measure, respectively. There are four quarters in a dollar, so each measure of 4/4 time can have four quarter notes in it.

All of this rhythm and dollar stuff may seem a bit strange right now, but you’ll catch on as soon as you get through your first few “real” lessons. Keep an open mind and have fun!

TIME SIGNATURES

In this section we’re going to take a look at the basics of what a time signature is and how to interpret one. Every song has a natural pulse, or meter, to it. A time signature simply tells us how many beats are in a measure or the natural pulse of a particular song. We’ve already touched base on 4/4 time, but I’ll take this opportunity to teach you more about it as we take a look at what time signatures are all about.

Time signatures have two critical elements: the top number and the bottom number. The top number tells us how many pulses are in one measure. In 4/4 time this means there are four beats, or pulses, in each measure.

The bottom number of a time signature tells us what kind of note gets the beat. The way to tell which note gets the beat is to replace the top number of the time signature with 1. In our example of 4/4 time, you’d end up with 1/4. This means that the constant pulse, or beat, you hear in a song in 4/4 time is a quarter note. Back to grade school and fractions!

Again, don’t make too big of a deal about this right now. It’ll all become very clear once you start playing.
Basic Technique

Technique is a quite subjective topic, but there are a few universal tips that'll help you as you develop your own technical style. I’ll refine your overall guitar technique throughout The Guitar System, but in this section we’ll focus on supplying you with some general guidelines to help you start out with some great left and right hand guitar technique. We’ll start out by taking a look at different ways of holding a pick before moving on to good habits for the fretting hand.

Holding a Pick

I’ve seen many different ways and styles of holding a guitar pick in my day. Some work great, and some don’t work that well. Every person on Earth has a little bit different physical anatomy, so not everyone’s picking technique will be the same. Picking technique is a highly subjective topic, but there are a few general guidelines that’ll apply to everyone.

Let’s start by looking at a generic grip for the pick. Curl the index finger on the picking hand. Place the pick on the fleshy part of the index finger, between the fingertip and first joint. Now bring the thumb down, and lightly pinch the pick between the thumb and index finger to hold it in place. You should have a firm grip on the pick, but your thumb, index finger, wrist and arm should still be relaxed.

This brings us to the first general guideline: you should always relax when holding the pick. Try to remember this when you practice in the future. Any excess tension in your fingers, hands, arms or shoulders can hinder your progress or even lead to injuries.

The second general guideline for the picking hand is economy of motion. Generally, when picking single notes, you’ll want to keep your motions small. Move the pick only as much as you need to in order to make the string ring out appropriately. We’ll go over this concept much more in-depth in future lessons on picking technique.
Fretting Hand Posture

Just like picking technique, fretting technique is very subjective. Many world-class guitar players have wildly different fretting hand techniques but all work great. Nevertheless, there are a couple of valuable general guidelines I’d like to share in this section that can be applied by everyone.

Start off by holding out your fretting hand with the palm facing up. Relax and pretend like you have an apple in your hand. Your wrist should be pretty straight. If you have your guitar with you, move the fretting hand up to the neck and grab it. The thumb should rest on the back of the neck. Try keeping the relaxed posture of “holding the apple” in mind. This is a great way to think about good fretting hand technique.

Above all, make sure to relax. Everyone’s fretting hand technique is different, but just about any guitar player on the planet will agree that relaxing as much as possible is a huge factor in learning to play the guitar. You don’t want to strain your fingers or wrist.

Now let’s take a look at the proper way to fret a note on a guitar. Bring the 1st finger of the fretting hand down on the 3rd fret of the high E string of your guitar. Your finger should be curved over enough to come down on its very tip. You should also have it curved enough so it’s not touching or muting the neighboring 2nd string.

While still keeping the 1st finger on the 3rd fret of the high E string, look at where you’re placing it. Is it in the middle of the space between the frets? Is it toward the lower fret? If so, you need to move your finger up to where it’s right next to the 3rd fret, almost touching it. Placing your finger behind a fret is crucial for preventing any kind of buzz and getting a good overall tone.
PLAYING YOUR FIRST SONG

Now that we’ve been through some of the basics, it’s time to really start playing guitar. In this section you’ll learn two chords that take only two fingers to make, and some simple strumming to go along with them. Once you have that down, you’ll learn two simple melodies to play over those chords.

I don’t want you to worry too much about the technical aspects of playing guitar for now. We’ll add all of that, bit by bit in the following lessons. Just try to copy me and do what I do. Don’t worry if your chords and melodies don’t sound perfect at first. It takes some time for your fingers to get used to all of these new actions. Your fingers will probably be a bit sore at first, but that’ll go away with time and practice.

FIRST CHORDS: A2 AND D2

It’s time to learn your first two chords. They’re the A2 and D2 chords, and you need only two fingers to make each one! I thought learning these two simple chords would get you playing guitar sooner rather than later, which is why I chose them.

Check out the A2 chord diagram. The X above the low E string means you shouldn’t play it. The circles above the diagram tell you that the strings they’re lined up with are to be played open. The black circles represent the root notes of the chord. In this case, both black notes are A notes because you’re playing an A2 chord. To make this chord you need to place the 1st finger on the 2nd fret of the 4th string, and the 2nd finger on the 2nd fret of the 3rd string.

Now take your pick, and strum the strings—except for the low E—using a downward sweeping motion. Are the notes clear? If so, great! If not, check if your fingers are right behind the frets and if you’re curving them over enough. Practice the A2 chord until you have its shape memorized and you can go to it right away.

Like the A2 chord, the D2 chord shape is simple to make because it uses only two fingers. You just have to place the 1st finger on the 2nd fret of the 3rd string, and the 3rd finger on the 3rd fret of the 2nd string. Now strum through the 4th, 3rd, 2nd and 1st strings. Notice the X above the 6th and 5th strings. You shouldn’t strum those two strings for this chord.

How does the chord sound? If it’s a bit “buzzy” and muted-sounding, you should double-check your finger placement and posture. Make sure your fingers are right behind the frets, curved over and coming down right on their tips.

Practice this chord until it’s clean-sounding and you can play the shape right away. In the next lesson we’ll take a look at switching between the A2 and D2 chords, in order to play your first chord progression.
A2-D2 Progression (Changing Chords Smoothly)

Now that you have two chord shapes down, it’s time to put them together to make your first chord progression. A chord progression is a series of chords that go together. If you don’t quite have the A2 and D2 chord shapes down, you might want to go back and review the previous lesson.

Changing between chords can be one of the most challenging things for new players to do. It can take some time to develop this skill. Don’t get frustrated if your chord transitions aren’t great right away. The following exercises will help you work on this skill.

A measure of music is defined by a vertical line in the sheet music or TAB. Take a look at the first measure of this exercise and you’ll see two groups of half notes. Above those notes you’ll see A2. This indicates that you have to play an A2 chord for two beats and then another A2 chord for two more beats. If you’re counting “one two three four,” strum the first A2 chord on beat one and let it ring out through beat two. Strum the second A2 chord on beat three and let it ring out through beat four. Do you see how each group of half notes gets two beats?

In the second measure you’ll see a solid black rectangle hanging from one of the lines of the sheet music. This symbol is a whole rest and is telling you that you shouldn’t play for an entire measure, or four beats. I added this measure of rest in here to give you time to switch from the A2 chord to the D2 chord.

In the third measure of this exercise, you’ll switch to the D2 chord and strum two more half notes. Rest for one measure, and switch to the A2 chord for two more half notes. Rest one more time, and switch back to the D2 chord for two more half notes.
A2-D2 PROGRESSION - QUARTER NOTES

This exercise is very similar to the previous one, but instead of using two half notes per measure, you’ll be using four quarter notes per measure. Remember, there are four quarter notes in each measure of 4/4 time. You’ll be strumming each chord four times using all downstrokes. Each measure of strumming is followed by a measure of rest. Use the rests to change to the next chord.

Once you’ve played through the progression twice, you’ll see a pair of dots at the end of the exercise. The two dots are a repeat sign. They’re simply telling you to go back to the beginning of the exercise and repeat the whole thing again.

When practicing this exercise on your own, make sure to count out loud to help keep yourself on track. It’s very important that you count out loud and practice with a metronome when it comes to developing good timing.
A2-D2 Progression - Quarter Notes (No Rests)

You’ve had a lot of practice changing from the A2 to the D2 chord. So, it’s time to put your skills to the test. In this exercise you have to strum every quarter note. Rests were replaced with more quarter notes, leaving you with less time to change chords.

Play the A2 chord for two measures using all quarter notes—that’s eight full beats of A2. Switch to the D2 chord for the next two measures. Repeat the exercise as much as you like or until you get the chord change down smoothly. Changing chords can be quite challenging at first, but it does get easier with time. Try not to get frustrated if you have to stop for a bit between chords. That’s normal for most new guitarists. Just turn off the video and practice on your own for a while.

A2-D2 Groove

Now that you have some basic chord changes and strumming down, let’s take it one step further by taking a look at a full strumming groove with the A2 and D2 chords. We’re going to combine some half notes and quarter notes with a new rhythm indicator called quarter rest. Look at the third beat of the first and third measures on the sheet music below. The little squiggly symbol is a quarter rest and is telling us that we shouldn’t play on those beats.

Play the A2 chord for the first two beats of the first measure using two downstrokes. Once you get to the third beat of the measure, you’ll need to rest. To do so, mute the strings by placing the strumming hand on them. To complete the first measure, strum the A2 chord on the fourth beat. The second measure is simply two half note strums with the A2 chord. Now you just need to switch to the D2 chord for measures three and four, and repeat the exact same strumming pattern.

Once you get to the end of the groove, make sure to go back to the beginning of the exercise so you can repeat it as much as you like or need to. Your fingers might be getting pretty sore right about now. Don’t get discouraged, though. The pain you feel right now will go away with time and practice.
Practical Application - A2-D2 Groove #1 Play-Along

In this Practical Application section I supply you with a play-along track that you can use to practice the A2-D2 groove that you learned in the last lesson. This will be just like being in a band with a drummer and a bass player. Have fun with this one.

A2-D2 MELODY #1

Now that you have some chords and strumming working for you, it's time to add a little bit of lead guitar to them. To do so, you're going to learn two simple melodies to play over the A2-D2 groove you learned in the previous lesson.

This first version uses only whole notes and half notes. Remember, a whole note looks like a hollow circle and a half note looks like a hollow circle with a stem. Start by playing a whole note on the open 1st string for the first measure of this melody. Let it ring out and count "one two three four." Take a look at the TAB below. Do you see the 0 on the top line? That's what tells you to play the high E string open.

The second measure is made up of two half notes. The first one is played on the open 1st string again, and the second one is played on the 2nd fret of the 2nd string. You can use the 1st finger to play this note if you like. For the third measure, play a whole note on the 3rd fret of the 2nd string with the 2nd finger. The final measure of this melody is simply another whole note on the 3rd fret of the 2nd string. Watch out for the repeat sign!
A2-D2 MELODY #2

This second melody is a bit trickier to play than the first one. We’ll be adding some quarter notes into the mix to make it more interesting. Start off with a whole note on the open 1st string again. The next note is a half note on the open 1st string. Now play a quarter note on the 3rd fret of the 2nd string with the 2nd finger, and a quarter note on the 2nd fret of the 2nd string with the 1st finger.

The third measure is simply a whole note on the 3rd fret of the 2nd string that’s played with the 2nd finger. For the duration of beats one and two on the fourth measure, play a half note on the 3rd fret of the 2nd string with the 2nd finger. Next, play a quarter note on the 2nd fret of the 2nd string on beat three with the 1st finger, and a quarter note on the 3rd fret of the 2nd string on beat four with the 2nd finger.

The fifth and sixth measures are the exact same as the first two measures. The seventh measure has you playing a half note on the 3rd fret of the 2nd string and a half note on the 5th fret of the 1st string. I like to use my 4th finger to reach up and grab this note.

For the last measure, play a half note on the 3rd fret of the 2nd string. Beats three and four of the last measure are two quarter notes on the 2nd and 3rd frets of the 2nd string. Make sure to take the repeat sign back to the beginning of the melody.

Practical Application - A2-D2 Groove #2 Play-Along

Congratulations! Now you know a couple of melodies to go with the A2-D2 groove. To help you work on getting the melodies down even better, I made a version of the A2-D2 Play-Along with the rhythm guitar tracks added into the mix. This will let you be the lead-guitar player in the band.

Try playing both melodies over this play-along track. Don’t be afraid to experiment and come up with your own melodies too. I’ll give you an example of how you can develop a simple idea like this A2-D2 Groove into a great-sounding song. You’ll be able to do this and much more by the time you finish The Guitar System. Work hard my friend!
PRACTICING

Practicing is one of the most important topics covered in The Guitar System. You can go through all this material over and over again, but it’ll do you absolutely no good if you don’t practice it on a regular basis. In this section we’ll take a look at some general guidelines for several different aspects of practicing, like how long to practice, relaxing when practicing, stretching, and using a metronome.

**Practicing Time**

The amount of time you spend practicing really depends on your overall goals as a guitarist. If you just want to learn to play some songs for your own enjoyment, you won’t be practicing nearly as much as the guy who wants to be the next Stevie Ray Vaughan. I’d say that everyone who’s going through The Guitar System should be practicing a minimum of 20-40 minutes, four or five times per week. Of course, the future rock stars out there will probably be practicing for several hours each day. The Practice Routine Generator that we’re including with The Guitar System will help you define your guitar playing goals and determine how much you should be practicing. Make sure to go through the Practice Routine Generator; it’s an invaluable resource.

It’s great to have a set time and place for your practice sessions. If you don’t, it’s very easy to skip practice or get distracted from your current session. The more you can do to make a routine out of your practice time, the better it’ll be.

**Practicing Goals**

Practicing with a goal in mind is a great way to make sure you’re using your practice time efficiently. If you know you’ve set a certain playing goal for the end of the week, you’ll be much more likely to focus on that goal during your practice sessions. If you don’t have any goals for a particular practice session, you’re much more likely to noodle away your valuable practice time.

Practice-session goals should be small and relatively easy to attain. Learning four new chords by the end of the week is a really good example of that. If your goals are too big, you run the risk of getting frustrated and end up not practicing at all.

We’ll cover practicing goals more thoroughly in the Practice Routine Generator and throughout the entire Guitar System. For now, remember to practice with a purpose or goal in mind.
**RELAXING**

One thing you’ll probably get sick of hearing me say is, “Remember to relax.” That’s because it’s very important to relax when practicing. It’s not only critical for the quality of your practicing and playing, but also for the health of your body.

I’ve met many guitar players who have had some kind of injury due to excess tension in their fingers, hands, arms, shoulders and even in their necks. A few of them had to give up playing guitar all together. Don’t let that be you. Identifying what parts of your body tense up is crucial. You should stop playing any time you feel excess tension in your fingers, hands, arms, shoulders, back or neck. Take a minute, relax and then start up again.

**POSTURE**

When you sit down or stand up to play the guitar it’s very important to have good posture. Poor posture, especially throughout long practice sessions, can cause unnecessary back pain and injuries in extreme cases. An ounce of prevention is worth 10,000 tons of treatment when it comes to this. Just try to be aware of how you’re sitting or standing when you enter a practice session. Your body will thank you later.

**STRETCHING AND WARMING UP**

Stretching and warming up are two very simple things you can do to multiply the effectiveness of your practice sessions. Stretching the fingers, hands and arms out just takes a few minutes and helps to limber you up and keep you injury-free. I’ll cover some basic stretches with you in the video for this section. Warming up can be as simple as playing through a scale several times to get your hands acclimated to the guitar.

Many people underestimate and overlook these simple aspects of practicing. That’s a shame because they’re very good for the body and very effective for boosting practice sessions. Make sure to stretch and warm up before any practice session.

**USING A METRONOME**

A metronome is a little device that beeps or clicks to any number of beats per minute set by the user. Practicing with a metronome is a very important aspect of the development of your internal rhythm and is essential for you to become a good musician. Unfortunately, many guitarists don’t like practicing with one because they feel it’s boring, inconvenient or that they just don’t need it. Let me tell you right now: every guitarist on Earth needs to practice to some kind of steady beat.

Fortunately for you, we’ve taken the boring part of practicing with a metronome, out of the equation. Instead of giving you only metronome loops to practice with, we provide you with actual play-along songs in many different styles of music. Make sure to use them whenever you feel like it but especially during your daily practice. These tracks can actually be used instead of a metronome, but I’d probably have a metronome handy just in case.
CONCLUSION

Congratulations! You’ve learned the most essential fundamentals you’ll need to become a true guitar player. Feel free to go back and review this section as many times as you need to, in order to fully absorb all the information found herein. In the next section you’ll learn about all kinds of guitar gear and how to work the gear you own.
INTRODUCTION

The world of guitar gear and tone can be quite overwhelming, especially if you’re a newbie. There are so many different options out there. You may have no idea where to start when going out to buy accessories, guitars, amps or pedals. In this section I’ll give you a crash course on the basics of all the different types of guitar gear available to you.

Many guitarists have a lot of questions about how guitar gear works and how to get the best tone out of the gear they own. I want you to enjoy your guitar playing experience as much as possible. That’s why I’ve included sections on how to work your gear and how to get a good guitar tone for virtually any given style of music.

There’s a staggering amount of variations on all this gear, but we’ll hit the high points and prepare you for anything you might see at your local music store. Remember, a big part of developing your own unique guitar tone is experimenting with the gear you own. Don’t be afraid to try new things!

PARTS OF AN ELECTRIC GUITAR

There are many different types of electric guitars out there, but most of the basic parts are the same on all of them. In the video for this lesson we’ll go through each part of the electric guitar in detail. This will help you when communicating about guitars with other players, guitar repairmen or salesmen at music stores. Make sure to go through the video for a description of each part of an electric guitar. You can also check the picture below for a handy diagram with labels for the different electric-guitar parts.
**Types Of Electric Guitars**

Despite the diversity of electric guitars, most of them fall into one of five categories: Stratocaster, Les Paul, hollow body, semi-hollow body, and Jackson (shredder guitar). These are general categories that cover most types of electric guitars you’ll encounter. In this section we’re going to take a closer look at each one of these five categories. This will give you a good idea of what you can expect to see on your next trip to your local music store.

**The Les Paul**
The Les Paul style of electric guitar is quite different from the Stratocaster. It’s a solid body guitar just like the Strat, but it’s quite a bit darker- and thicker-sounding. It’s great for rock, metal, jazz, blues and many other styles of music. You’ll generally find humbucking pickups (twin-coil pickups) on a Les Paul. These pickups partially contribute to the overall thicker tone.

**The Stratocaster**
If you take a look at pretty much any picture of Eric Clapton or Stevie Ray Vaughan, odds are they’re playing a Fender Stratocaster. The Stratocaster, or Strat, is generally characterized by its three single-coil pickups and solid wood body. It’s one of the most popular electric guitars of all time. It’s been so successful over the years that many brands have tried to copy it. The Stratocaster has a brighter, or “glassy,” tone that’s great for rock, blues, country, pop and funk.

**The Semi-Hollow Body**
Semi-hollow body guitars are kind of a mix between solid body guitars like the Strat and hollow body guitars. Generally, semi-hollow body guitars are quite a bit thinner than hollow body guitars. They usually have a solid plank or board running through the middle of them. This makes the tone not quite as mellow or dark as an hollow body guitar. The most popular semi-hollow body guitar on the planet is probably the Gibson ES-335.

**The Hollow Body**
Hollow body guitars come in many different variations, but they all have one thing in common: they’re hollow! The hollow design of these guitars makes for a rich, warm tone. If you’re really into jazz, rockabilly or blues, you might want to check out a hollow body guitar. Popular brands of hollow body guitars include Gibson, Gretsch, Ibanez, and Godin, to name a few.

**The Jackson (The Shredder)**
The Jackson Soloist launched the era of a guitar called Super-Strat. Guitars like this are known for their edgy tone and super-easy playability. This makes them great for more aggressive styles of music like metal and shred. ESP, Ibanez, Jackson, B.C. Rich, and Schecter are a few of the many brands that manufacture this type of guitar.
USING YOUR ELECTRIC GUITAR

Now that you’ve learned about the basic parts and types of electric guitars, it’s time for you to learn how to work your own electric guitar. There are really only a few controls on most electric guitars. As soon as you learn to work these basic controls, you’ll be on your way to create your own unique guitar tones. In this lesson we’ll go over how to change your guitar tone by adjusting the pickup selector switch and the volume and tone knobs.

THE PICKUP SELECTOR SWITCH

Most electric guitars come with one, two or three pickups, and a three- or five-way pickup selector switch. The switch usually comes in one of two distinct variations: a toggle switch or a blade switch. Toggle switches are very common in Gibson-style guitars, whereas blade-type switches are prevalent in Fender-style guitars.

The purpose of the pickup selector switch is to let you choose a pickup that’ll help you create the desired guitar tone. If you choose a pickup closer to the bridge, you’ll generally get a brighter tone. If you select a pickup closer to the neck, you’ll generally get a warmer tone.

VOLUME AND TONE KNOBS

Most electric guitars come with one to four control knobs that let you tweak the volume and tone of the pickups. The knob configuration will be slightly different from guitar to guitar, but the basic ideas behind them will still be the same.

The volume knob lets you control the overall volume of the guitar. When you turn down a volume knob, the tone tends to get a bit softer and the guitar pickups tend to get a bit less sensitive. Just keep that in mind when experimenting with your guitar. Tone knobs on electric guitars act as a kind of high-end roll-off control. By that I simply mean that when you turn a tone knob down, you’re taking some treble out of the overall guitar tone. Experiment with the knobs on your guitar, and see what kind of unique tones you can create!
### Parts of an Acoustic Guitar

Most parts of an acoustic guitar are very similar to the ones on an electric guitar. However, there are some variations and different parts you should know about. Make sure to watch the video and check out the diagram below that labels all the parts of an acoustic guitar.
Types Of Guitar Amps

Guitar amps come in a staggering amount of styles, sizes and shapes. On top of that, each amp comes with a ton of its own unique features. In this section of lessons we’ll look at five basic types of amps. This will help you get the most out of your own amp or make an educated decision when going out to buy one.

Tube Amps

*Tube amplifiers* are generally the most expensive types of amps out there. They’re called *tube amps* because they use tubes as a means of powering the amp and creating the overall tone. These tubes look a lot like little light bulbs and come in many different variations.

There are advantages and disadvantages to tube amps. The biggest advantage is the warm, dynamic tone you can get out of them. The two biggest disadvantages are their price tags, which are usually high, and the fact that you have to change the tubes out every once in a while. Despite these two disadvantages, tube amps really do get the best tone for electric guitars in my opinion.

Solid-State Amps

*Solid-state amps* use transistors instead of tubes to create power. The biggest advantages solid-state amps have over tube amps are their smaller price tags, lighter weights and the money you’ll save on tubes since there aren’t any to change. The biggest disadvantage to solid-state amps is that the tone isn’t quite as warm or dynamic as the tone you can get out of a tube amp. That said, solid-state amps are great for practicing at home or carrying around town to jam with friends.

Modeling Amps

*Modeling amps* use software to create or simulate the sounds of certain amplifiers, tones and effects. They can use either tubes or transistors to generate power for the amp, but most of them use transistors. The great thing about these amps is that they generally come with a ton of different settings that allow you to get a good tone for just about any style of music you can imagine. Modeling amps may be a great choice if you enjoy a lot of different styles of music or if you just don’t know what kind of tone you’re into. Line 6, Fender, VOX, and Roland are the go-to companies when it comes to great modeling amps.

Combo Amps

The term *combo amp* refers to any kind of amp where the controls and speaker, or speakers, of the amp are all contained in one unit. There are advantages and disadvantages to combo amps. The main advantage is that they’re quite easy to carry around. The only real disadvantage I can think of is that they don’t look as cool as a *stack*. We’ll cover what a stack is in the next section.

Stacks

Unlike combo amps, stacks have the controls and speakers in separate units. The controls and power section are in one unit referred to as *head*, which is usually stacked on a unit called *speaker cabinet*, or *cab*, that holds all the speakers—hence *stacks*. Take a look at pretty much any picture of Jimi Hendrix playing live. He’ll probably be standing in front of an entire wall of Marshall stacks. Very cool! Nothing screams rock ‘n’ roll more than a giant wall of speakers.

The biggest disadvantage of stacks is that they’re pretty difficult to carry around. However, that’s not a problem if you end up leaving them in the same place all the time. Stacks can be very loud! This may be an advantage or disadvantage, depending on your particular situation.
USING YOUR AMP

I always get emails from people all over the world asking me how to use their amp or get a good tone out of it. There are a lot of different amps out there with a lot of different features. Covering every possible amp or tone would be impossible. In this section we’re going to take a look at some general guidelines for getting a good tone out of whatever amp you may have.

The three basic elements we’ll cover in this section are volume, gain and equalization (EQ). The volume knob on your amp, controls the overall loudness. This knob may be labeled master or level on your amp but is still simply the volume.

The gain knob, controls the amount of overdrive or distortion on an amp, which is what gives you that rock ‘n’ roll tone. This knob may be labeled distortion or pre gain but it still has the same function. Often, amps will have separate clean and lead channels, making it look like there are a ton of different knobs on it. Don’t let that confuse you. A lot of those knobs are repeated because of the multiple channels.

The equalization section of your amp is where you can dial in your own customized tone. EQ knobs on a guitar amp generally include bass, middle (Mid), and treble. Each amp’s EQ reacts differently, so the best way to familiarize yourself with the one on yours is to experiment with it. Here’s an example of what the knobs on a typical amplifier might look like.

Control Knobs of a Typical Two-Channel Guitar Amp
PEDALS

If you think there are a lot of different types of guitars and amps out there, just wait until you see the many different types of guitar pedals that exist. Most guitar pedals fall into one of two main categories: individual pedals or multi-effects pedals. There seems to be a bit of confusion about each category and which one would be best for a particular person. For this reason, I’ve included a brief description of both pedal categories, as well as a description of the most common types of guitar effects available to you.

MULTI-EFFECTS PEDALS

Multi-effects pedals combine a ton of different guitar effects into one compact package. Often, these units will have many different types of distortions, overdrives, delays, choruses and other effects from which to choose. Being compact and less expensive than a lot of individual pedals are the biggest strengths of multi-effects pedals.

Multi-effects pedals are great for covering a lot of ground and getting familiar with what guitar effects sound like and how they work. The main disadvantage of multi-effects pedals is usually the cumbersome interface you have to work through, in order to dial in the exact effects you desire.

INDIVIDUAL PEDALS

Individual guitar effects pedals come in an overwhelming amount of variations, shapes and sizes. The main advantage of choosing single pedals over multi-effects pedals is that they’re very easy to adjust and dial in your favorite guitar sounds. I also think they generally sound better than multi-effects pedals, when plugged into tube amps—that’s a subjective statement, though.

The biggest disadvantage to individual pedals is the price. You can rack up quite a bill from buying the individual pedals you’d need, to cover all the effects contained in one multi-effects unit. Lugging all those pedals around can be quite a chore too.

I actually own and use both single pedals and multi-effects units. Which one I use really depends on the situation and application. If I’m just at home practicing, I’m a lot more likely to plug into a multi-effects pedal. If I’m playing live or in the studio, I tend to use my individual effects pedals more. In the following section we’ll take a look at the main types of effects pedals there are.
Wah Pedals
A wah pedal is a classic guitar effects pedal that’s been around for a long time. A great example of what it sounds like can be found on the classic Jimi Hendrix song “Voodoo Child.” Wah pedals get their name from the actual “wah” sound they make when they’re used.

Tuner Pedals
Tuner pedals are great for electric and acoustic/electric guitars because you always have access to a tuner. Many of these pedals can act as a power supply for your other individual pedals as well. Some of the more popular tuner pedals out there are made by Planet Waves, Boss, Korg, and TC Electronic. Most multi-effects pedals come with a tuner built right into them.

Overdrive
Overdrive pedals are great for giving you the sound of an amp with the gain cranked. Most of these pedals have knobs for volume, gain and tone so you can dial in the exact sound you’re hearing in your head. Generally, overdrive pedals are a bit smoother and less aggressive than distortion pedals.

Distortion
Distortion pedals act like a gain knob for an amplifier. If you want more distortion than what your amplifier can deliver or just a different sounding distortion, you can go out and buy a distortion pedal. They’re generally sharper and more aggressive-sounding than overdrive pedals.

Chorus, Phasers And Flangers
These types of pedals create a spacious or “whooshy” sound for your guitar. They’re great for creating a nice ambient sound or thickening up your overall tone. Pedals like these, often come with knobs to adjust the amount, rate and depth of the effect.

Reverb
Reverb pedals give you a kind of echo effect that makes your guitar sound like it’s in a large room. It’s a nice effect for when you want to give your guitar some depth or make it sound less dry. Many amps have spring reverb units built right into them. Other amps and reverb pedals offer many different types of reverb from which to choose.

Delay
Delay pedals take the notes you play on the guitar and repeat them back to you. This is great if you want to give your guitar a very spacious or wet sound. Usually, delay pedals have knobs to adjust the amount of delay, delay speed and number of repeats.

Volume Pedals
Volume pedals do the exact same thing as the volume knob on your guitar; you just get to use your foot instead of your hand. This can come in handy when you’re performing live and your hands are busy playing. Ernie Ball makes the best known volume pedal on the market.
ACCESSORIES

There’s a ridiculous amount of guitar accessories and add-ons that you could potentially buy—walk into your local music store and you’ll see what I mean. So how do you know which accessories you need and which ones you can live without? Seeing there’s such an overwhelming amount of options out there, I decided to include a section that would give you tips on some of the more common guitar accessories.

Picks
Guitar picks come in an enormous variety of shapes, sizes, thicknesses and colors. If you’re brand new to the guitar, I suggest you start out with a nice medium thickness pick. Thicker picks are a better option for super-fast playing, while thinner picks are killer for strumming. Pick preference is a pretty personal thing. Experiment with a lot of different types of picks and see what works best for your own personal style and taste.

Strings
There are many different brands and gauges of guitar strings out there for you to choose from. I like to use D’Addario guitar strings because I’ve found them to be of great quality and consistency. The best thing for you to do is experiment for yourself and find out which strings work best for you.

When you hear someone talking about string gauges, they’re just alluding to how thick they are. Strings are measured by the thickness of the thinnest string on a guitar. Thicker gauge strings are more difficult to play and have a fuller tone, while thinner gauge strings are easier to play but don’t sound quite as full.

Electric guitar strings come anywhere between .008 and .013 inches. Most people use .009 or .010 gauge strings on their electric guitars. Acoustic guitar strings come anywhere between .010 and .013 inches. Most acoustic guitars come with .012 gauge strings on them.

Straps
Guitar straps can be fun to pick out because they come in a lot of different variations to reflect your own personal style. Straps vary greatly in price, but most of them are around $20-$40. If you have an acoustic guitar, make sure it has strap buttons. If it doesn’t, check if the strap you’re considering buying has a way to attach to a guitar without strap buttons.

Tuners
A guitar tuner is a tool that every guitarist should have and use often. Guitar tuners can be expensive, but there are decent ones out there that won’t break the bank. Tuners come in many different variations such as pedal tuners, hand-held tuners and clip-on tuners. The appropriate one for you really depends on your situation and budget. I have one of each kind.

Cables
There are many brands of instrument cables from which to choose from. The best advice I can give you when buying a cable is to get one that has lifetime warranty. Cables tend to break or short out over time. If you spend a little extra money on a cable that has a warranty, it’ll definitely pay for itself in the future.
Capos
A capo is a device that clamps on to the neck of a guitar in order to let you play open chords in any position on its neck. Most capos cost about $20, but there are some that can get quite expensive. If you’re into bluegrass or folk music, you’ll probably want to pickup a capo at some point. Planet Waves, Kyser, and Dunlop all make great capos.

Metronomes
A metronome is an important tool that every guitarist should own. They really help develop your overall sense of time—a critical aspect of musicianship. Metronomes come in many different brands and prices. Some of them can get very expensive, but you can buy a decent one without breaking the bank. You might want to get a metronome with a headphone jack so you don’t drive other people crazy when you practice.

Polish And Polish Cloths
Guitar polish comes in many different brands, and most of them work pretty well. There are regular pump-style guitar polishes that are great for removing dirt and fingerprints, but there are also some that are more like waxes. Make sure to ask at your local music store which kind of polish will work best for your particular guitar. Polish cloths are pretty essential if you want to take care of your guitar properly. I suggest you buy one of the more expensive polish cloths because they work better and last a lot longer. Of course, a clean t-shirt always works great in a pinch.

Guitar Stands
Every guitar should have a guitar stand. A great way to potentially break your guitar is to just lean it up against a wall—no one wants that. Guitar stands start out pretty cheap, but they can get expensive depending on the kind you choose. I suggest that you at least buy one of the mid-priced stands. They’re a lot more durable and reliable than the cheaper ones.

Footrests
Footrests are typically used by people who play classical guitar, but I think any guitar player can benefit from using one. They’re not too expensive and can come in handy during long practice sessions. I personally have a metal one and a wooden one.

Gig Bags And Hard Cases
Gig bags and hard cases for guitars can be expensive, but they’re sure worth it. Breaking a guitar or getting a huge ding on it can make it seem pretty inexpensive in hindsight. Obviously, hard cases offer the most protection for your guitar, but gig bags are less expensive and a bit easier to carry around.

Strap Locks
Strap locks are little devices you put on a strap to keep it from slipping off of the strap buttons on a guitar. If you stand up and play a lot, you should really consider buying a set of strap locks. I’ve seen more than one headstock broken off from a strap slipping off of a strap button. Scary! They’re not too expensive and really protect your investment.

Music Stands
Picking up a music stand is always a good idea. Your practice sessions will go smoother, and you’ll avoid the pain and frustration of always having to look down at any music you might be working on. Entry-level music stands are reasonably priced, but some of the nicer stands can get pretty expensive. Check out some music stands the next time you’re at your local music store.
CHANGING ELECTRIC GUITAR STRINGS

Changing guitar strings is something every guitar player should learn to do but most new players avoid. Knowing how to change strings is kind of like knowing how to change a flat tire. You can pay someone to do it for you, but doing it yourself is a lot cheaper and more convenient. The Guitar System will arm you with the knowledge you need in order to know when and how to change guitar strings.

Knowing when to change strings is something a lot of new players don’t always understand. What your strings look like and sound like are the two basic indicators you should go by when deciding when to change them. Having rusty or discolored guitar strings is a good sign that they should be changed. More importantly, you should go ahead and change them if they sound muddy or dull. Some guitarists change guitar strings every few days, while others go months between changes. How often you change strings can depend on how humid your climate is, how much you play and how clean you keep your strings. There are two things you can do to make your strings last longer: wash your hands before you play and wipe down the guitar strings after you play.

It’s a good idea to have a string winder and a string clipper handy, whenever there are strings to change. I like using the Planet Waves Pro-Winder because it’s an inexpensive all-in-one tool that features a string winder and a clipper. Next I’ll explain how to go about changing guitar strings, by using the high E string as a guinea pig.

The first step in changing strings is to take off one of the older ones. If you have a string winder, place it on the tuning peg of the high E string and start turning it until the string is loose. If you don’t have a string winder, use your fingers instead. Once the string is loose you should be able to grab it, unwind it off of the post and take it off. Be careful not to poke yourself with the sharp loose end of the string. Next, you have to get the string loose from the bridge of the guitar.

There are a lot of guitars out there with many different types of bridges. You’ll have to experiment with your guitar in order to find out how your bridge holds the strings. Odds are you have a Fender- or Gibson-style guitar, so the strings won’t be that hard to get off. If you have a guitar with a Floyd Rose, you’ll need some allen wrenches in order to get the strings off of the bridge. Changing strings on this style of guitar is a bit more difficult, so you may want to get some professional help the first time around.

Once you’ve taken the old string off, it’s time to put the new one on the guitar. Feed the string through the bridge in the same way you took it off. Bring the loose end of the string down to the tuning peg for the high E string. Put the loose end through the hole in the peg. Try leaving enough slack on the string to have about three or four wraps around the tuning peg. Put the string winder on the tuning peg and start winding. Make sure the string is going on the same side of the tuning peg as it was before you took it off. The first wrap should go over the top of the loose end of the string. All the following wraps should go under the loose end of the string. It’s a good idea to stretch out a new string a bit once you get it on. Repeat this whole process for the remaining strings.

If you have a string tree for a few of the higher strings, make sure you’re using it. A string tree is a small device on the headstock of a guitar that’s used to hold the higher strings down toward the headstock.
Many guitars have all the tuning pegs on one side of the headstock, but yours may have three on each side. Don’t let that confuse you. Just be sure to pay attention to which peg goes with which string.

Don’t be afraid to change your strings. You can never learn how to do so unless you try it for yourself. The worst thing that can generally happen is a broken string or two.

**Changing Acoustic Guitar Strings**

Changing strings on an acoustic guitar is very similar to changing strings on an electric guitar. The main difference is how the strings are held on to the bridge of the guitar. Most acoustic guitars have bridge pins that have to be taken out, in order to get the old strings off. If you have a string winder, look at the end of the winder that goes over the tuning pegs. If there’s a notch there, use it to pop out the bridge pins.

Start by taking an old string off after popping a pin out. Next, place a new string down into the hole and stick the bridge pin back into it. Make sure to line up the slot in the bridge pin with the string. Push down on the pin and pull the string up until it catches. There you go! That’s the only thing you might have to do differently when changing acoustic guitar strings. Some acoustic guitars have pinless bridges that load from the back. Either way, after watching this section on string changing, you should be ready to give this a try for yourself. Good luck!
GETTING GOOD TONE OUT OF YOUR GEAR

I always get a ton of questions about how to get a good guitar tone for certain styles of music. In this section I decided to give you some general guitar tone guidelines for some of the more popular styles of music. Remember, these guidelines are really just a starting point. Make sure to develop your own unique guitar tone by experimenting with your gear.

Rock

The genre of rock music is so large that dialing in a “good” tone really depends on your own personal preferences and the kind of song you’re playing. There are a few general guidelines you can follow to make sure you’re headed toward the tone you’re hearing in your head.

The first thing is to make sure you have the right kind of guitar for the style of rock you want to play. If you want a thicker tone, you should probably go with some kind of Les-Paul-style guitar. If you think you’ll need a brighter tone, you might want to use a Stratocaster-style guitar instead.

It’s a good idea to set your amp in a kind of neutral position before dialing in your tone. Try setting the amp to where all the EQ knobs are right in the middle. This will ensure a nice even starting place for customizing your tone.

Rock guitarists usually use a wide variety of overdrives and distortions to achieve a desired tone. Use overdrive if you want a smoother tone, or distortion if you want a more aggressive and sharp tone. This entire area of rock tone is very subjective, so try out as much gear as you can get your hands on. Experiment and have fun.

Blues

Blues is another genre where the tone is dictated by personal preference and the song being played. There seems to be two schools of thought for blues tone in general: the Fender school and the Gibson school. The Fender school seems to prefer a bit thinner and nastier tone, while the Gibson school leans toward a thicker, rounder tone. This is a bit of a generalization but it does seem to be true most of the time. Think about Stevie Ray Vaughan and then about B.B. King. These two players really do a great job of representing the differences between the two schools of blues tone.

Country

Country guitar tone is generally characterized by the tone you’d get from a Fender Telecaster. Telecasters are known for their pretty bright and “twangy” sound. You don’t need to have a Telecaster to play country, though. There are plenty country players out there who use Les-Paul- or Stratocaster-style guitars.

Generally, you’ll want to set the pickup selector switch to the bridge position in order to play country rhythm parts. It’s that pickup that gives you the “twangy” sound country music is known for. Depending on what song you’re playing, you can have your guitar set to a clean or dirty sound. Dirty-sounding country guitar tones are usually obtained through overdrive pedals instead of distortion pedals. This is a generalization that’s true most of the time.
Jazz
The key word to remember when dialing in a good jazz tone is *mellow*. Hollow body guitars are almost always used when playing jazz. This is because the large hollow body of the guitar has a naturally mellow tone. Generally, you’ll be using the neck pickup of your guitar to play jazz. There are some jazz-style guitars that don’t even have bridge pickups. Many jazz guitarists roll back their tone knob and use special strings called *flatwounds* to make their tone even mellower.

Metal
Metal generally uses a very aggressive tone that’s achieved with a generous amount of gain or distortion. There are many great distortion pedals and amps that can provide you with many different unique metal tones. Generally, metal rhythm guitar uses the bridge pickup, which makes for a sharper, more articulate tone. Metal lead guitar can use the bridge, neck or both pickups, depending on the desired tone. Ibanez, Jackson, ESP, Schecter, PRS, and Gibson are a couple of my favorite guitar brands for metal.

Steel String Acoustic Guitars
The type of wood your acoustic guitar is made of, the body style and the type of strings used are just a few of the general factors that can impact your overall acoustic guitar tone. There are many types of woods to choose from when buying an acoustic guitar, and each one has its own unique tonal qualities. Rosewood, mahogany, maple and spruce are just a few of the more popular woods used to build acoustic guitars. The best way to find out which wood you like best for acoustic guitars is to go play as many different types as you can.

Body style can have a profound effect on the overall tone of an acoustic guitar. The three basic body styles for acoustic guitars, from smallest to largest are, concert, dreadnought and jumbo. Generally, larger bodied guitars have fuller tones. Shorter people usually prefer concert-style guitars because they’re smaller and easier to sit down with and play.

Bronze and phosphor bronze strings are the two basic types of strings you can use on a steel string acoustic guitar. Bronze strings are golden in color and quite bright-sounding. Phosphor bronze strings are a bit more reddish or copper in color and have a bit warmer tone. Fingerstyle guitar players often prefer phosphor bronze strings because they seem to be a bit more articulate.
CONCLUSION

Great! You made it through the “Guitar Gear And Tone” section of The Guitar System. Remember that the most valuable resource you have for getting a good tone out of your gear is experimentation. If you don’t have any guitar gear yet, you might want to go through this section again. Once you do that, you can take a trip to your local music store to see all the things we’ve been talking about.

In the next section we’ll enter the world of *power chords*. This will be very exciting because you’ll learn to play all kinds of great music and songs with just a few simple chord shapes. Get ready to rock!
Power Chords

Introduction

Power chords are the bread and butter of guitar players, especially rock guitar players. Once you get them down, you’ll be surprised at how many songs you’ll be able to play. Power chords are pretty easy to learn. You need only two fingers to play them. In this section you’ll learn a few of the finer points of holding the pick, two basic power-chord shapes and how to switch back and forth between different power chords.

Holding The Pick And Strumming

You’ll strum only two or three strings at a time when playing power chords. There are a few things to remember when strumming power chords. The first thing is to stay relaxed when playing them. If you’re tense you’ll have trouble keeping up with the exercises taught throughout this section. The second thing to remember is to use the wrist for most of the strumming motion. Strumming these chords properly isn’t the only crucial element in mastering them. Knowing how to hold a pick will improve your power chord learning experience and help you master the material from this section way faster.

Grab a pick between the 1st finger and the thumb on your picking hand. Prepare the pick by placing it on the low E string. Strum the 6th and 5th strings by pushing the pick through them using a downward motion. Although most of the motion should come from your wrist, some of it can come from your arm as well.

In these first few lessons, we’ll keep it simple by using only downstroke strumming. We’ll add upstrokes into the mix later on. Don’t worry if this seems a bit difficult at first. We’ll gradually refine your strumming and picking technique in coming lessons.

Two Power-Chord Shapes

There are two basic but very similar power-chord shapes. Take a look at the first diagram for the A power chord (A5). Notice that there are only two notes in the chord. That’s because power chords are made of two notes: the root and the 5th. Don’t worry too much about what that means right now. Just be aware of that fact.

The chord diagram is telling you to place the 1st finger on the 5th fret of the 6th string and the 3rd finger on the 7th fret of the 5th string. The note you’re playing with the 1st finger is an A, or the root of the A power chord. Make sure you’re relaxed and your fingers are curved over enough so that you’re coming down on the very tips of them. Now take your pick and strum both the 6th and 5th strings using one downward motion. Congratulations! You just played your first power chord.
Now let's learn another power-chord shape. This one can be constructed with three fingers. Make the A power chord you just learned, and add the 4th finger to the 7th fret of the 4th string. The new note you added is an A. It's just like the note on the 5th fret of the 6th string, only one octave higher. Play the 6th, 5th and 4th strings using one downward strum. This second power-chord shape is a great option if you want a fuller sound. Try making this new shape several times until your fingers start to get used to it.

There's one variation on this second power-chord shape that every guitar player should know. It still uses the same notes, but the fingering is a little different. Instead of playing the notes on the 7th fret of the 5th and 4th strings with the 3rd and 4th fingers, use the 3rd finger to play them both. Check out the chord diagram below. Do you see the solid black bar across the 7th fret of the 5th and 4th strings? It's telling you to play those strings using just one finger. In this case it will be the 3rd finger. Don’t forget that when you play multiple notes of a chord with one finger like this, it's called a *bar*.

It may be a bit difficult for you to use a bar to play multiple notes with one finger at first, but it'll get easier with time. Try making the A power chord using this shape a few times until your fingers start to get used to it.

![A Power Chord](image1)

**Changing Between Power Chords**

Now that you have the two basic power-chord shapes down, it’s time to discover how to move them around to play power chords all over the guitar. In this section we’ll go through several exercises that’ll get you used to playing a ton of different power chords. At the end of this section there will be a super-fun play-along you’ll be able to use to practice power chords.

**Exercise #1**

Here's a little exercise to help you get used to making power chords in the three different ways we've covered so far. The chord shapes are played as whole notes, so make sure to hold them down for four beats. The first measure is an A power chord made with just the 1st and 3rd fingers. You can tell this by looking at the 1 and 3 beside each whole note. I placed a whole rest on measure number two in order to give you time to change chords. Measure number three is still an A power chord, but you’re adding the 4th finger to the 7th fret of the 4th string to make the fuller-sounding version. Take another measure of rest to prepare for the next chord shape.
The A power chord on measure five is the exact same as the one on measure three, but instead of using the 3rd and 4th fingers to play the notes on the 5th and 4th strings, you’ll be using the 3rd finger. Notice the two number 3s by the top two whole notes on measure five. They’re telling you to play both notes using a bar with the 3rd finger. Take another measure of rest, and get ready to repeat the entire exercise.

Exercise #2
Exercise #2 uses the same power-chord shape we’ve been using to play the A power chord, to play a B power chord (B5). The first measure is simply an A power chord played as a whole note. In the second measure the power-chord shape is moved up to a B power chord. To play it, place the 1st finger on the 7th fret of the 6th string and the 3rd finger on the 9th fret of the 5th and 4th strings. There’s a B power chord diagram here to help you understand exactly where to put your fingers.

If you look at measure two of this exercise, you’ll see that the whole notes of the B power chord have some arcs or ties that lead to the exact same notes on the following measure, or measure three. Ties are simple notation marks that tell you to join whatever note values that are “tied” together. Therefore, the tie in this exercise is simply telling you to hold down the B power chord for two full measures—you can think of it as eight beats or two whole notes. Go through this chord progression twice. Make sure to follow the repeat sign in order to play the entire exercise one more time.
Exercise #3
It’s time to add another power chord into the mix. In this exercise you’ll be playing an E power chord (E5) along with the A and B power chords you already know. This particular power chord looks a little different because it’s played with the open 6th string. To play this shape you’ll only need to position the 1st finger on the 2nd fret of the 5th and 4th strings, and strum the 6th, 5th and 4th strings.

Now play through the E5-B5-A5 progression twice, before repeating the entire exercise again. You’re using whole notes for each chord here, and there are no rests in between chord changes to give you time to switch. Stay on your toes for this one.

Exercise #4
Great job so far! You’re playing three power chords already. With this exercise I’ll make things even more interesting by introducing you to your fourth power chord: the C# power chord (C#5). You’re going to add this chord into the mix by placing the 1st finger on the 9th fret of the 6th string and the 3rd finger on the 11th fret of the 5th and 4th strings. Strum the 6th, 5th and 4th strings, and make sure you’re not playing the remaining strings. Here’s a C# power chord diagram to help you out a bit.

In exercise #4 you’ll be playing through the C#5-A5-E5-B5 progression twice, before repeating the entire exercise from the beginning. You’ll probably notice that there are no whole notes here. The notes you see in this exercise are all half notes. Remember that half notes only get two beats, so you’ll be playing each power chord for two beats. Get ready! There are a lot of quick chord changes in this one.
Woodshed

Congratulations! You’ve learned to move the all-important power-chord shape around the fretboard. You’re almost ready to move on to the Beginner Power Chord Play-Along, but before you do that you need to make sure you have a few things down cold.

Make sure you can play all the power-chord shapes we’ve gone over, cleanly. If there’s any buzzing or if you’re not quite certain of the actual shapes, you might want to go back and work through the previous four exercises again. Next, make sure you can change between the A5, B5, C#5 and E5 chords quickly and smoothly. Once you have these two things down, you’ll be ready to rock out with the following play-along.

Practical Application - Beginner Power Chord Play-Along

If you’ve completed all the exercises up to this point, this play-along will be a breeze for you. This tune uses the power chords you’ve learned so far and most of the progressions from the previous exercises.

If you take a look at the sheet music on the following page, you’ll see that the first two measures are a C#5-A5-E5-B5 progression in which each power chord gets one half note. Notice the repeat sign at the end of measure two. Do you see how there’s a 4x above it? That’s just telling you to repeat those two measures four times. After the fourth time you’ll play an A power chord that consists of two whole notes tied together. Remember, two whole notes tied together get eight beats.

Measures 5-7 consist of a simple E5-B5-A5-B5 chord progression. Each power chord in the progression gets four beats. You’re going to play through this progression four times. Take a look at what’s written below the line that’s above measure eight. That 1-3 is telling you to play measure eight for the first three repeats. Next, check what’s underneath the line positioned just above measure nine. That 4 is telling you to play measure nine instead of measure eight on the fourth repeat.

Measure nine will have you playing a B power chord on beats one, two and three. The dot underneath the notes on beat three is telling you to play that last power chord staccato. Staccato is just a fancy way of saying you should cut that chord short or mute it right after you play it. On beat four of measure nine you’ll see a quarter rest. Make sure you don’t play there! The words Da Capo at the end of measure nine mean that you should go back to the top of the music and play everything again.

Once you play through measures 1-9 for the second time, move on to measure ten instead of going back to the top of the music. Measures ten and eleven have the C#5-A5-E5-B5 progression repeated four more times. Measures twelve and thirteen (page 45) have the C#5-A5-E5-B5 progression repeated four times as well but with a slight rhythmic twist: you’ll be playing two quarter note strums per chord instead of one half-note strum. Finally, measure fourteen ends on an A power chord. The little symbol that looks like an arc with a dot underneath is called fermata. A fermata tells you that you can hold out that A power chord until you think it’s time to release it. Have fun with this one!
Beginner Power Chord Play-Along

Chorus
C\# 5  A5  E5  B5  A5

Verse
E5  B5

Da Capo
A5  B5  B5  B5

Chorus
C\# 5  A5  E5  B5...
Strumming Power Chords

You’re now armed with the power chords you need to make tons of great music. In this section we’re going to concentrate on taking your power chord strumming to the next level. Every exercise you’ve gone through so far relied exclusively on downstrokes. Now it’s time to start learning to incorporate upstrokes into your strumming. This will make it easier to play some faster eighth note rhythms. We’ll also take a look at how to move the power-chord shapes you already know to where the root, or lowest note of the power chord, is on the 5th string of the guitar. Once you’ve worked on these two aspects of your playing, you’ll put them into practice by learning a fun Punk Play-Along.

More About Rhythms

Up until now, we’ve used whole notes, half notes and quarter notes to play all the exercises and songs in The Guitar System. Remember that one measure of 4/4 time contains four beats and is like a dollar. A whole note takes up the entire measure, or all four beats—it’s also like a dollar. A half note is like a fifty-cent piece and takes up half of the dollar or two beats. Quarter notes are like quarters: there can be four in each dollar, or in this case a measure of 4/4 time, and they take up one beat.

The following exercises (starting on page 49) introduce you to the eighth note. This is where the dollar analogy kind of falls apart.

If you take a quarter note and cut it in half, you’ll get two eighth notes. Seeing there can be four quarter notes in a measure of 4/4 time, there can be up to eight eighth notes in a measure of 4/4 time. Eighth notes are counted “one and two and three and four and” instead of just “one two three four.” Try that right now: count out loud “one and two and three and four and” over and over again. This is how you’ll need to count for the following lessons. Check out this diagram; it gives you a visual overview of how many whole, half, quarter and eighth notes can fit in one measure of 4/4 time.

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One Measure Of 4/4 Time Can Have

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**Fifth String Root Note Power Chords**

This next group of exercises is going to introduce you to power chords that have their root, or lowest note, on the 5th string of the guitar. It’s really nice to know this shape because it helps you avoid moving up and down the fretboard when switching between different power chords. Let’s look at an example to understand exactly why this is.

The root note for the C# power chord that you’ve been using is all the way up on the 9th fret of the 6th string, which is a long way to travel if you’re moving from the open E power chord. Playing the root note of the C# power chord on the 5th string instead, enables you to transition comfortably from the open E power chord to the C# power chord. To build this new variation of the C# power chord, place the 1st finger on the 4th fret of the 5th string and the 3rd finger on the 6th fret of the 4th and 3rd strings. Check out the diagram included here for this new C# power-chord shape. Do you see how it has the same shape as the C# power chord with the root note on the 9th fret of the 6th string?

**Exercise #1**

This first exercise featuring the 5th string root note power-chord shape is pretty simple. You’ll be playing an open E power chord followed by a C# power chord with the root note on the 4th fret of the 5th string. The rhythmic pattern is comprised of simple half and whole notes. Don’t forget to take the repeat and stay relaxed!
Exercise #2
Just like the E power chord that uses the open E string as the root, there’s an A power chord that uses the open A string as a root. Check out the following A power-chord diagram. Position the 1st finger on the 2nd fret of the 4th and 3rd strings and then strum the open 5th string along with the two notes your 1st finger is holding down.

This exercise combines this new A power-chord shape with the C# power chord you learned in the last exercise. The rhythms are pretty simple in this one, so just concentrate on making the chord changes smoothly.

Exercise #3
The chords and rhythms in this exercise are the exact same as the ones from the previous exercise, but you’ll be using upstrokes to strum each chord. Upstrokes can feel quite a bit different than downstrokes. Many new guitar players tend to have a hard time starting to use them in their playing. In fact, some players kind of avoid upstrokes all together. Don’t let that be you! Tackle these upstrokes now and your playing will get much better. Let’s start practicing them.

Make an E power chord using the open E power-chord shape—you’ll just be playing the 5th and 6th strings for now. In order to perform an upstroke on this power chord, place your pick on the side of the 5th string that’s farthest away from the 6th string. Using the wrist, strum through the 5th and 6th strings with one smooth upward motion. Do this over and over again until you get used to it. Remember to relax as you play. Upstrokes may seem awkward to you at first, but that’s only because you’ve been using all downstrokes so far.

Check out the little arrow-like symbols at the bottom of the TAB for this exercise. Those are upstroke indicators. Any time you see one of those, you should pick or strum with an upstroke. Make sure to be patient with yourself, and give your upstrokes as much hard work as you’ve been giving your downstrokes. It’ll pay off big time in the future.
Exercise #4
It’s time to raise the stakes a bit! The chord progression in this exercise is the exact same as the one from the previous two but with a little more intense rhythm. Instead of half notes and whole notes you’ll be playing all quarter notes—that’s a lot more strumming. In order to strum this much, you’ll be alternating downstrokes and upstrokes with the strumming hand. Remember that the upstroke indicator looks like a little arrow at the bottom of the TAB. There are also some downstroke indicators in this exercise. The downstroke indicators are the little symbols that kind of look like an upside down U.

Take a look at the first measure of this exercise. Start out by playing two quarter notes on a C# power chord. The first C#5 is strummed with a downstroke and the second is strummed with an upstroke. Next, move to an A power chord and play a downstroke followed by an upstroke. The final chord in the progression is an E power chord that’s strummed four times with alternating downstrokes and upstrokes. Make sure most of the strumming motion is coming from the wrist and that your arm stays relaxed throughout the exercise.

Exercise #5
In this exercise you’ll be using all quarter notes and keep the downstroke and upstroke strumming going. You’ll also be introduced to the 5th string root note shape for the B power chord.

Take a look at the chord diagram provided. To play the B power chord you have to place the 1st finger on the 2nd fret of the 5th string and the 3rd finger on the 4th fret of the 4th and 3rd strings, and then strum the 5th, 4th and 3rd strings.

Each chord in this exercise gets two quarter notes. The first one is strummed with a downstroke and the second one with an upstroke. This means you have to switch between chords quite often, so take your time and practice as slowly as you need to in order to get all the changes clean. Keep this in mind as you work on getting the exercise on the following page under your fingers.
Strumming Power Chords With Eighth Notes

It’s time to take your power chord strumming one step further by learning to strum eighth notes. Remember that because there are four quarter notes in a measure of 4/4 time, we can cut them in half to make eight eighth notes. Also, the way you count, changes a little bit when playing eighth notes. Instead of “one two three four” you have to count “one and two and three and four and.” Learning how to strum eighth notes with power chords will bring a whole new dimension to your power chord playing. This is definitely a crucial step in learning to play styles such as punk, rock, metal, pop and country.

Exercise #1
The chord progression in this exercise is exactly the same as the one we finished the last set of exercises with, but played with eighth notes instead of quarter notes—that’s twice as much strumming! This time around, each power chord gets four strums that are performed with alternating downstrokes and upstrokes. This is going to require quite a bit more strumming speed, so get ready for a workout.

If you’re having trouble keeping up with the video, stop, get your metronome out and practice at a speed that’s suitable for you. Make sure to practice slowly enough to where your upstrokes and downstrokes are even-sounding and your chord changes are clear. Don’t get discouraged if you have to slow it way down. Practicing at a speed that allows you to play accurately will help you achieve the best results in the least amount of time.
Exercise #2
Exercise #2 starts off with an E power chord that’s played four times with quarter note downstrokes. The second measure switches to an A power chord that’s followed by a B power chord. Both chords get four eighth notes and are played with alternating downstrokes and upstrokes. Take a look at the repeat sign at the end of measure two. Notice anything different about it? There’s a 4x above it. Remember that it means to repeat the entire exercise four times.

Exercise #3
Each measure from this exercise has the exact same rhythm: one quarter note and six eighth notes. Notice that the quarter notes are played with downstrokes, much like the first chord from each group of six eighth notes. There are two full measures of an E power chord and then two full measures of an A power chord. Remember to repeat. Keep up the good work! You’re getting very close to being able to use all your power chords and strumming technique in the Punk Play-Along.

Exercise #4
Exercise #4 is exactly like Exercise #3 except that every single strum uses a downstroke. This is quite common in punk rock music. Using all downstrokes makes your playing sound a bit more aggressive and sharp. It may take you a while to build up the endurance required to play this exercise all the way through, but it’ll be worth it when you get to the play-along.
Exercise #5
This exercise is a two-measure C#5-B5-E5 chord progression that’s repeated four times. Don’t forget to pay close attention to the downstroke and upstroke indicators. Get this one down cold because you’re just about to put everything you’ve learned about power chords and strumming to practice with the Punk Play-Along.

WOODSHED
Before moving on to the Punk Play-Along, you need to make sure you can do a couple of things. First, you need to be able to play the E, A, B and C# power chords using both the 6th and 5th string root note shapes, and move between them at the drop of a hat. Second, you need to be able to play these chords using both downstrokes and upstrokes. If you feel a little bit shaky in either of these two areas, you should probably go back and repeat the exercises in this section.
Practical Application - Punk Play-Along

Punk rock usually features a lot of power chords and fast strumming. Although the strumming patterns mix downstrokes and upstrokes, they can be built around downstrokes only. If you’ve worked your way through the exercises in this section, you already know pretty much all the main parts to this song. Now it’s just a matter of putting them together. Crank up the gain on your amp, make sure you’re using the bridge-position pickup and get ready to rock.

If you take a look at the sheet music on the following page, you’ll see that the very first portion of the Punk Play-Along is pretty much like what you played in Exercise #2 of the previous section. The only difference is that here you’ll be repeating the two measures from Exercise #2 three times instead of four. Afterwards, play the E power chord on the first beat of the third measure before resting for beats two, three and four. The little symbol just to the right of the E5 in the third measure is called dotted half rest and is what’s telling you to rest for those three beats. Keep an eye out for the whole rest on measure four. When you come back in on measure five, you’ll be repeating the same thing you played on the first two measures, three more times.

Measures seven and eight are the exact same thing you played in the first half of Exercise #3. Play Exercise #2 three more times before rocking out the first half of Exercise #3 once more.

Now we move on to measure thirteen, which is the chorus of this song. Measures thirteen and fourteen have you playing an A power chord using the same rhythmic pattern as the previous two measures. The next four measures are an exact copy of Exercise #3. On measures 19-22 (page 54) you’re simply playing Exercise #5 twice. The words Da Segno at the end of measure twenty-two are telling you to go back up to the funny little symbol above measure five and repeat the entire song until you get to the end of the chorus again.

Once you reach the words Da Segno for the second time, you can ignore them. Just go on to measure twenty-three and play the song all the way to the end. Measures twenty-three and twenty-four are Exercise #5 again. Measures twenty-five and twenty-six are Exercise #5 one more time but ending on a single E power chord. Keep an eye out for the fermata that’s over the E power chord on the final measure.
Punk Play-Along

Intro

E5

A5

B5

E5

Verse

E5

A5

B5

E5

Chorus

A5

E5
CONCLUSION

Congratulations! You've come a very long way since learning your first power chord at the beginning of this section. In the next series of lessons you'll learn about palm muting and how to use it to spice up your power chord playing. Get ready to take the Punk Play-Along up to the next level and learn a completely new play-along too.
Palm Muting and Theory

Palm Muting

Palm muting is an important guitar technique that every guitar player should know, no matter the style of music they may play. Unfortunately, many new guitar players seem to have some trouble getting their palm muting to sound exactly as it should. You won’t have this problem because we’re about to dissect palm muting and get yours sounding perfect. In this section we’ll go through the finer points of palm muting before applying them to the Punk Palm Muting Play-Along, a variation of the Punk Play-Along, and a completely new play-along.

What is Palm Muting

Palm muting is the simple action of muting one or more guitar strings with the fleshy part on the palm of the picking hand while playing. The muting takes place when you rest the fleshy part that goes from the base of the pinky to where the palm meets the wrist, right where the strings take off from the bridge of the guitar. Palm muting is often associated with single notes and power chords. Seeing you’ve been working on power chords, I felt this was an appropriate time to get your palm muting technique up and running.

Palm Muting, What to Do and What Not to Do

There are a few general tips I’d like to give you before you dive into the world of palm muting. You can probably guess what the first one is … that’s right, relax! If you’re relaxed, you’ll have a much easier time playing through all the exercises, and you won’t tense up or injure yourself.

The next general tip on palm muting is to avoid using only the elbow while strumming. Most of the strumming motion should come from the wrist. I’ve seen many new guitar players try to strum palm muted power chords using only the elbow without much success. They just lock their wrist and go for it with their elbow. That can really slow you down and stress out your arm. You don’t have to leave the elbow out of the process; just get most of the motion from the wrist.

Getting A Great Rock Palm Muting Tone

Now it’s time to find the sweet spot on your guitar where your palm muting sounds best. When you try palm muting for the first time, it’ll probably be very apparent that you’re either muting too much of the string or not enough. You don’t want the strings to ring out too much but at the same time, you want to be able to decipher the notes you’re playing.

Make an E power chord with the open E string by positioning the 1st finger on the 2nd fret of the 5th string. Now take the picking hand and place the fleshy part we talked about earlier, on the E and A strings, right where they take off of the bridge of the guitar. Strum the E and A strings with a downstroke. What kind of sound did they make? Was it a completely muted sound or did it ring out? If it was completely muted and the notes were pretty much non-existent, move the picking hand toward the bridge. If the strings rang out quite a bit and were barely muted, you should mute more of the strings with the palm of the picking hand.
Finding the exact spot on your guitar where palm muting sounds the best is a process of trial and error. Spend some time with your guitar, and see how moving your palm closer to and farther away from the bridge affects the sound of your palm muting. You should get a nice percussive sound, where the notes aren’t ringing out too much but are still identifiable. Don’t get frustrated if you don’t get a great sound right away; we’ll work on it together in the following exercises.

**Palm Muting Exercises**

These first few exercises are designed to get you used to the physical action of palm muting power chords on the guitar. The remaining exercises will introduce you to palm muted parts you’ll be playing in the Punk Palm Muting Play-Along later in this section. Practice hard because that play-along is basically the Punk Play-Along sped up a little bit to give it even more of a punk feel.

**Exercise #1**

To go through this exercise you only have to play E power chords as half notes. I figured that keeping it simple would give you a good chance to find the sweet spot for palm muting on your own guitar. Take a look at the P.M.--- markings underneath the half notes in this exercise. That element of the TAB is telling you to palm mute the first power chord and every one after that for the entire exercise. Be sure to play every power chord in the exercise with a downstroke.

**Exercise #2**

It’s time to kick things up a notch. You’ll still be using a palm muted E power chord for the entire exercise, but you’ll be playing quarter notes instead of half notes. Notice that every power chord is strummed using a downstroke. Try to keep the sound of your palm muting even and steady. Keep working on finding that perfect-sounding place for palm muting on your guitar.
Exercise #3
Exercise #3 is something you could easily hear in a punk, rock, metal or pop song. I’ve simply replaced the quarter notes with eighth notes—you’ll be strumming a lot more here. This kind of fast palm muted strumming generates a really great sound, especially when distortion is added to the guitar. Your picking hand might get a little tired because you’ll still be using all downstrokes throughout the entire exercise.

Exercise #4
This exercise is exactly like the previous one. However, this time you’ll be alternating strictly between downstrokes and upstrokes. Palm muting with upstrokes can feel quite different from palm muting with downstrokes. Sometimes it can feel like the pick is getting caught in the strings. Just remember to relax and you should be fine.
Exercise #5
Now that you have some basic palm muting skills down, it’s time to start learning a few variations on parts of the punk song you learned in the previous section. This exercise is very similar to measures seven and eight of the Punk Play-Along, except for the fact that all the eighth notes are palm muted. Make sure not to palm mute the quarter notes and to play each power chord with a downstroke.

Exercise #6
This exercise is very similar to the first few measures of the Punk Play-Along, but there are some very big differences too. The first one is that every power chord is strummed with a downstroke. The second one is that the four quarter notes in the first measure are replaced by one quarter note and six palm muted eighth notes. Try getting this one down cold because we’re about to shift the Punk Play-Along into high gear.
Woodshed

Before moving on to the Punk Palm Muting Play-Along, you need to make sure you can do two things. First, that you’ve found the sweet spot for palm muting on your guitar and you can go right to it when you need to. This will make the palm muting in the next play-along much easier to perform. If you’re having a bit of trouble getting the palm muting to sound good, don’t worry. Just go back through the exercises in this section, and take some time to practice.

The second thing you need to be able to do is play all the power chords you’ve learned so far, with palm muting. Once you can do these two things, you’ll be ready to tackle the Punk Palm Muting Play-Along. Get ready for some serious fun!

Practical Application - Punk Palm Muting Play-Along

As mentioned earlier, this play-along is very similar to the Punk Play-Along, but there are some big differences as well. First of all, it uses all downstrokes and is quite a bit faster; your picking hand might not be used to strumming this much, so get ready for a good work out. Fast tempos and lots of downstrokes are quite common in punk music. The strumming in this tune is a little different too. Don’t worry, though. We’ll go over each part that has changed.

If you take a look at the sheet music on the following page, you’ll see that the first two measures of this play-along are just like Exercise #6. In the first measure you have one quarter note followed by six eighth notes. The eighth notes are palm muted, and every chord is played with a downstroke. The second measure is played exactly like the second measure from the Punk Play-Along, except you’re using all downstrokes. This is also the rhythm you play any time you see the E5-A5-B5 progression in this song.

Measures seven and eight are the next where you come across more palm muting. Each one features the rhythmic pattern you came across while playing measure one. You’ll eventually start to recognize this pattern just by glancing at it.

When you get to measure thirteen (page 61), you’ll see that the A5-E5 progression found within is similar to the one from the corresponding measure on the Punk Play-Along. The only thing that changes a bit is the rhythm with which it’s played. Instead of one quarter note and six eighth notes, you’ll be playing eight eighth notes for each chord change. Remember to use all downstrokes to get that aggressive punk sound.

The C#5-B5-E5 progression that starts on measure nineteen is also played similarly to the corresponding measure on the Punk Play-Along. Much like with measure thirteen, the only thing that’s different here is the rhythmic pattern. You’ll play four eighth notes for the C#5, instead of one quarter note and two eighth notes. When you get to the E5, you’ll play eight eighth notes instead of one quarter note and six eighth notes. Use all downstrokes again.

The form stays exactly the same for this song, so don’t forget to take the Da Segno indicator all the way back to the little squiggly symbol on measure five. There are a ton of downstrokes in this tune, so don’t get frustrated if you can’t quite keep up with its tempo or get tired. Practice hard, and the muscles you use to strum, palm mute and play power chords will get stronger. Your fingers might be getting sore by now but push on through. It’ll totally be worth it once you can play the entire song all the way through without stopping.
Punk Palm Muting Play-Along
STRUMMING AND PALM MUTING WITH POWER CHORDS

All right! If you made it through the Punk Palm Muting Play-Along, there’s no doubt you have some skills with strumming and palm muting power chords. Now it’s time to take your power chord rhythm playing one step further. We’ll do this by working on switching back and forth between regular strumming and palm muting. This is a pretty vital skill for any guitar player regardless of their preferred style of music. Once you get this down, your rhythm guitar playing abilities with power chords will be pretty sharp.

Switching back and forth between strumming and palm muting power chords can be a bit tricky at first. Don’t worry, though. Once you work on this kind of transitions for a while, it’ll start to come more naturally to you. With that in mind, the exercises in this section will start out very simple and get progressively more difficult. All your hard work culminates at the end of this section, where you can apply your rhythm guitar skills to a new play-along called Ultimate Beginner’s Power Chord Play-Along.

STRUMMING AND PALM MUTING EXERCISES

These exercises are designed to slowly break you in to the idea of switching back and forth between strumming and palm muting power chords. Playing like this is often used in punk, rock, pop, metal, country and many other styles of music. The last few exercises are taken directly from the play-along you’ll be playing at the end of this section. You’ll be using ideas like the ones presented here a lot throughout your guitar playing career. Enjoy the simple goodness of making great music with power chords!

Exercise #1

This first exercise is simply strumming an A power chord with quarter notes for four measures. With each new measure you alternate between strumming open and palm muted power chords. Each strum, whether palm muted or not, is played with a downstroke. Make sure to repeat the exercise as many times as you need to.

What we’re working on here is the transition between regular strumming and palm muting. That’s why there’s only one chord in the exercise. I really want you to be able to focus on getting clean transitions between each measure.
Exercise #2
Exercise #2 is pretty similar to the last one, but it uses all eighth notes instead of quarter notes. In the first measure you’ll use downstrokes to strum eighth-note-based A power chords. The first half of the measure is performed with unmuted chords, and the second half is performed with palm muted chords. Continue with the exact same pattern for the next three measures, and don’t forget to take the repeat afterwards. Although this exercise is similar to the previous one, the transitions from regular strumming to palm muting are twice as fast.

Exercise #3
Hopefully you’re getting used to transitioning back and forth between strumming and palm muting power chords by now. In this exercise you’ll be alternating between two unmuted A power chords and two palm muted A power chords. The entire exercise uses eighth notes and downstrokes, so you’ll be working on transitioning between open and palm muted power chords a lot.
Exercise #4
Now that you’re pretty comfortable at switching between regular strumming and palm muting, it’s time to throw some chord changes into the mix. This exercise uses eighth notes and downstrokes exclusively. Start off with two palm muted E power chords followed by two unmuted E power chords. Then, repeat the same sequence to finish measure one. Afterwards, switch to an A power chord and repeat the exact same rhythmic and palm muting patterns. Go through this progression one more time before repeating the entire exercise again.

Exercise #5
This exercise is pretty much like the last one, except for the fact that you’re changing to a B power chord halfway through the second and fourth measures. Make sure you can play this exercise before moving on to the next one. Don’t forget to slow it down as much as you need to in order to get every strum and chord sounding clean.
Exercise #6
Exercise #6 features the main palm muting rhythm from the upcoming play-along, as well as a few, new power chords: the D# power chord (D#5) and the D power chord (D5). Below you’ll find diagrams for these two chords; they should be pretty easy for you by now. The D#5 has its root note on the 6th fret of the 5th string, and the D5 has its root note on the 5th fret of the 5th string. Take a few minutes to play these chords and memorize where their root notes are located.

Once you get the new power chord locations down, all you have to do is memorize one simple eighth-note-based palm muting rhythmic pattern: one unmuted eighth note, two palm muted, one unmuted, two palm muted, one unmuted and one palm muted. Check the sheet music below if you’re still not clear about this rhythmic pattern.

After getting it down, all you have to do is repeat it for every chord change in the C#5-A5-E-D#5-D5 chord progression. The D5 is repeated for the final measure. Make sure you have this one down, because you’ll be using it a lot in the Ultimate Beginner’s Power Chord Play-Along.

D# Power Chord
X X X
6

D Power Chord
X X X
5
Before moving on to the Ultimate Beginner’s Power Chord Play-Along, you need to make sure you can switch with ease between all the power chords covered so far, as well as between strummed and palm muted power chords. Once that’s taken care of, you’ll be ready to start working on the play-along.

Practical Application - Ultimate Beginner’s Power Chord Play-Along

Welcome to the Ultimate Beginner’s Power Chord Play-Along. You’ve come a long way since learning your first power chord. I’m pleased to say that once you can play this entire song, you’ll be a great power chord player.

If you take a look at the sheet music on the following pages (page 67-69), you should notice that every single strum in this tune is played with a downstroke. The first six measures of this play-along are Exercise #6 of the last section. Play through it twice before moving on. Next there’s a simple E5-B5-A5 progression that uses whole notes and is played twice, as well. The second time through this progression ends a bit differently from the first. Take a look at measure fourteen (page 67). Instead of repeating the A5 power chord for one whole note like on measure ten, you have to play it for one half note before switching to a C power chord (C5) for four eighth notes. Although this is the first time you’ll be playing a C power chord, you should have no problems. Just make sure the 1st finger is on the 3rd fret of the 5th string and the 3rd finger is on the 5th fret of the 4th string.

From there, move on to the next section of the play-along, and play Exercise #6 two more times. Take the first ending the first time through and the second ending the second time through. The second ending is the five eighth notes on “one and two and three.” When you get to the fifth eighth note, make sure to mute the strings and rest for the remainder of that measure.

The next section, starting on measure twenty-two (page 68), goes back to the whole-note-based E5-B5-A5 progression, but this time you repeat it four times. Take the first ending for the first three repetitions and the fourth ending for the last one. The fourth ending, which is on measure twenty-six, is comprised of an A5 chord that’s played eight times as eighth notes.

The next part of the tune alternates back and forth between a C# power chord and a B power chord. The C# power chord on measure twenty-seven is a half note with a dot next to it, or a dotted half note. That note is tied to an eighth note. The dot is telling you to play the half note plus half of its value. In this case that would be a half note plus a quarter note, which is equivalent to three quarter notes, or “one and two and three and.” The tie is telling you to add an extra eighth note to the duration of the dotted half note, totaling three and a half beats. Therefore, play the C# power chord and hold it out for three and a half beats. You can count “one and two and three and four” as you hold it down. The B power chord comes in on the “and” of beat four and is tied to a whole note on the following measure. This means you play the B5 on the “and” of beat four on measure twenty-seven and hold it out all the way through measure twenty-eight. Repeat this progression and rhythm two more times.

Measures thirty-three and thirty-four (page 69) are simply quarter notes played as an A power chord. These two measures lead you back to the E5-B5-A5 whole note progression. Play it four times. On the fourth time through, make sure to take the second ending. Then, play an A5 for one half note, a B5 for one half note and end the song on a C#5. Have fun with this one!
Ultimate Beginner’s Power Chord Play-Along

C#5

A5

E5

D#5

D5

P.M. - I  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.

P.M. - I  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.

P.M. - I  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.

P.M. - I  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.  P.M. - I  P.M.

E5  B5  A5

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BEGINNER INTERVALS AND EAR TRAINING

In this section we'll start going over two topics that'll really make you a better guitar player and musician: *intervals* and ear training. These subject matters may scare a lot of new guitar players but are super important if you want to learn to figure out songs and even write your own.

There will be lessons on intervals and ear training throughout The Guitar System, but here, we'll start off with some very simple concepts and build on each one progressively. This will help you avoid feeling overwhelmed by some of these new topics.

**WHY TRAIN YOUR EARS**

You may be asking yourself, “Why do I need to train my ears?” Well, the answer is simple. If you train your ears to recognize certain chords and sounds, you'll be able to figure out your favorite songs for yourself and even write your very own. Imagine hearing one of your favorite songs on the radio and being able to identify exactly what chords to use in order to play it. That would be great, right?! That's the power of training your ears. The whole topic of ear training can be a bit overwhelming and intimidating at first, but we'll take it one step at a time.

**LISTENING FOR ROOT NOTES IN POWER CHORDS**

The first thing we're going to do is look at how to recognize the root note of any power chord you might hear. For example, if someone plays an A power chord, you'll need to be able to identify the root of that chord, or the A note, just by listening and using your ears.

Let me walk you through a great exercise for learning how to do this. Start by playing an A power chord with the root on the open 5th string. Now play the A note on the open 5th string. Try singing that note. You may feel silly doing this, but it's important to be able to sing back any note you hear. Play the A power chord again. Can you still sing the A note, even when both notes of the power chord are ringing? Learning how to focus in on the root of a chord is really the first step to training your ears.

Continue this exercise by playing random power chords all over the guitar. Play a power chord, and see if you can sing its root note. Do this on a regular basis until you can immediately identify the root note of any power chord you hear. If you have a friend that plays an instrument, you can quiz one another.

**INTERVALS**

Before you can go any further with your ear training, you need to know what an interval is. An interval is the distance between any two notes. You’ve already been playing with intervals, because you know the difference between half-steps and whole-steps. A half-step is an interval called *minor second*, sometimes written m2. A whole-step is an interval called *major second*, sometimes written M2. Don’t worry too much about this right now. Just make a mental note and realize that an interval is nothing more than the distance between two notes.
Fifths

Remember that a power chord is made up of a root and a note that's five notes away from that root. That's why power chords are called 5 chords. Let's look at an E power chord as an example. The notes in an E power chord are E and B. These notes are taken from the E major scale, which is spelled 1E 2F# 3G# 4A 5B 6C# 7D#. Don't worry too much about this right now. Just realize that the E is the first note, or root, of the E major scale and the B is the fifth note of the E major scale. The interval from an E to a B is called perfect fifth, sometimes written P5.

\[
\begin{align*}
&1E & 2F# & 3G# & 4A & 5B & 6C# & 7D#
\end{align*}
\]

Perfect Fifth

There are two basic ways in which you can hear any interval: as two notes played at the same time, like a power chord, or as two notes played one right after the other, like a melody. One of the purposes of training your ears is being able to recognize the notes of any interval, either played together or separately.

Play any power chord you want. That's the sound of a perfect fifth, or P5 interval. Learning to recognize that sound is very important if you want to be able to tell when someone is playing a power chord. Now play an E power chord, and listen to the sound of the notes ringing together. Next, play the E note on the open 6th string before playing the B note on the 2nd fret of the 5th string. That's the sound of a perfect fifth played melodically.

Practice memorizing the sound of a perfect fifth by playing random power chords on the guitar. Perform the power chords by strumming them and playing each note individually like a melody. Try singing the perfect fifths as you play them too.
The next interval you’ll be learning is the octave. Do you remember the power-chord shape that uses three notes? Let’s take a look at it one more time by using the E power chord as an example. Start by placing the 1st finger on the 2nd fret of the 5th and 4th strings. Next, play the 6th, 5th and 4th strings. The note on the open 6th string is an E, which is the same note as the one on the 2nd fret of the 4th string. The E on the 2nd fret of the 4th string is one octave higher than the E on the open 6th string.

The E major scale is spelled 1E 2F# 3G# 4A 5B 6C# 7D# 8E. Notice the extra E note at the end of the scale. Just like an octopus has eight legs, an octave is eight notes away from the note on which the scale starts. In our example, the E on the 2nd fret of the 4th string is eight notes away from the E on the open 6th string. Keep in mind that we’re going by the major scale for the numbering process here. Don’t worry too much about this right now. In this section we’re just going to concern ourselves with memorizing the sound of an octave.

Octave

Play the E on the open 6th string followed by the E on the 2nd fret of the 4th string. Listen to that sound; it’s the sound of an octave. It’s now time to learn a shape for playing octaves. Place the 1st finger on the A note that’s on the 5th fret of the 6th string, and the 3rd finger on the A note that’s on the 7th fret of the 4th string. The shape is kind of like a big L. Think of it as starting on any note of the 6th string, going up two frets and over two strings.

You already know this shape from learning power chords; you’re just leaving out the note on the 7th fret of the 5th string. When strumming the root note and the octave, be careful not to let the note on the 5th string ring out. You can mute it by letting the 1st finger kind of brush up against it.

Try moving this shape, up and down the fretboard. You can strum the two notes or play them individually. Each time you move the shape around, try singing the two notes in the octave you’re playing. The important thing here is to become very familiar with the sound of an octave so you can recognize it when you hear it in a song.
WOODSHEd

Your objectives in this Woodshed section are to work on identifying the root note of any given power chord, memorize the sound of a perfect fifth and of an octave. These aural (auditory) skills aren’t to be perfected overnight. You don’t have to have them down before moving on to new things. Work on your aural skills occasionally throughout the course of your musical education. You can go back and repeat the exercises in each section as often as you like. This may not seem like the most exciting stuff in the world, but all your hard work will really payoff when you start to identify the chords and melodies of your favorite songs all by yourself.

BEGINNER FRETBOARD LAYOUT

The “Fretboard Layout” sections of The Guitar System will focus on helping you memorize the names of the notes on the guitar and understand the overall layout of the entire fretboard. Memorizing the names of the notes on the entire fretboard may seem a bit overwhelming, but we’ll take it in small bite-size pieces. In this first “Fretboard Layout” section, we’ll concentrate on getting familiar with the names of the notes on the 6th, 5th and 1st strings and learning how to find any note on the fretboard.

REVIEW OF THE OPEN STRINGS

Let’s start off with a quick review of the names of the open strings on the guitar. Starting with the thickest string and working your way toward the thinnest, the names of the open strings are, E A D G B E. Remember, “Eat All Day Go to Bed Early.” It’s very important to have the names of the open strings down cold because they’ll be your reference points for finding any note on a guitar.

REVIEW OF WHOLE-STEPS AND HALF-STEPS

In order to find any note on the fretboard, you need to fully understand the difference between a whole-step and a half-step. Let’s review this quickly. Start on any note of the guitar. Move one fret up or down from that note. For our purposes that’s a half-step. Now start on that same note but move two frets up or down. For our purposes that’s a whole-step. Keep this in mind as we work through the next few lessons.

THE MUSICAL ALPHABET

Before you start learning the notes on the fretboard, you need to be familiar with the basic musical alphabet. The musical alphabet is, A B C D E F G. That’s it! These notes are called natural notes because there are no sharps or flats associated with them. If you’re counting through the musical alphabet and get all the way to G, you just start over again on A. You can raise or lower any natural note by putting a sharp (#) or a flat (b) next to it, but A B C D E F G make up the basic natural musical alphabet. Don’t worry too much about sharps and flats right now. We’ll get to those later.
E & F/ B & C Rule

There’s an important rule you need to know about and understand, in order to find any note on the guitar. It’s called E & F/ B & C and states that in the musical alphabet there’s a whole-step, or two frets, between every letter except for E & F and B & C. Both E & F and B & C have only a half-step, or one fret, between them.

Completely understanding this rule is crucial for finding notes on a fretboard. Take some time to read through this rule a few times and soak it in. This rule may seem a bit abstract right now, but it’ll become clear in the next few lessons. Just memorize it for now and take it at face value.

Note Names On The Low And High E Strings

You’re going to start learning the names of the notes on the fretboard by killing two birds with one stone. Since the open 6th and 1st strings are both E notes, you’ll memorize the notes on both strings as soon as you memorize the notes on one. Let’s go with the names of the notes on the 6th string because you’ve been playing a lot of power chords with the root notes on this string.

![Guitar Fretboard Diagram](image)

Obviously, the name of the note on the open 6th string is E, but how do you know what the name of the note on the 1st fret of the 6th string is? The answer to this question goes back to the E & F/ B & C rule you learned a little while ago. Remember, the rule states that all natural notes except for E & F and B & C have a whole-step between them. That means that both E & F and B & C have only a half-step between them. With this in mind, it makes sense for the 1st fret of the 6th string to be an F note because the open 6th string is an E note.

Now, if you move up another half-step from the F on the 1st fret of the 6th string, you’ll be on the 2nd fret of the 6th string, which is an F sharp (F#) note. You may be thinking, “Why isn’t this note a G?” Well, remember what the E & F/ B & C rule says: every natural note has a whole-step between it except for E & F and B & C. If you wanted to get to a regular G note, you’d have to go up one whole-step from the F on the 1st fret of the 6th string. Putting a sharp next to a natural note simply raises it by one half-step. In this case the F note is raised to an F# note.

An F# note can also be called G flat (Gb). Any time you place a flat next to a natural note you lower it by one half-step. When you have one note that can be called by two different names it’s referred to as an enharmonic note. In this case, the note on the 2nd fret of the 6th string is a perfect example of an enharmonic note because it can be called F# or Gb.
Let’s move on to the note on the 3rd fret of the 6th string. The note in question is a G because it’s one whole-step away from the F note on the 1st fret of the 6th string. Now move that note up one half-step to the 4th fret. That note is a G# or an Ab, because the E & F/ B & C rule says there’s a whole-step between G and A, and not a half-step. Move that G# note up one half-step to the 5th fret. That’s an A note. Starting to catch on?

The note that’s one half-step up from the A note on the 5th fret can be called A# or Bb. Move up one more half-step to the 7th fret: to a B note. If you move another half-step, you’ll land on the 8th fret of the 6th string. The note on that fret is a C. Remember, there’s only a half-step between B and C. The 9th fret of the 6th string is a C# or Db note. Move to the 10th fret to land on a D note. The 11th fret is another enharmonic note, which is either a D# or an Eb. Finally, you reach another E note on the 12th fret. That note is an octave higher than the open E note on which you started.

This whole process may seem very foreign and strange to you right now but you’ll catch on with some practice. For now, just concentrate on memorizing the names of the notes on the low E string and understanding the E & F/ B & C rule.

Go through the notes on the low E string again, and try to name them all. If you need help, refer back to the graphic of the guitar neck with the note names on every fret (page 74). It may take you a while to memorize the names of all the notes on the low E string, but that’s okay. Just try to go through the notes on a regular basis until you get them down. Don’t forget that once you’ve memorized them you’ll automatically know the names of the notes on the high E string too, seeing they’re the exact same. Bonus!

**Twelfth Fret Octave**

Did you notice that once we got to the 12th fret in the last lesson, we stopped and didn’t continue to name the notes farther up the fretboard? That’s because all the notes repeat once the 12th fret is reached. This is something that’s actually marked on most guitars with two dots on the 12th fret. It’s a kind of road map to help us keep our place when playing up and down the fretboard.
You know the basics of how to find notes on a fretboard, and you’ve also been exposed to the names of the notes on the E strings. Let’s reinforce your knowledge by going over the names of the notes on the A string. We’ll do so by going through the exact same process used to find the names of the notes on the low E string.

Start on the open A string. Can you guess what the name of the 1st fret of the A string is? Since there’s a whole-step between the A note and the B note, the 1st fret of the A string is an A# or a Bb. The 2nd fret is a half-step away from the 1st fret, so a B note is what you’ll hear if you play the 2nd fret of the 5th string. The 3rd fret is a C note because, as you may recall, there’s only a half-step between B and C. The 4th fret is a C# or a Db, the 5th fret is a D and the 6th fret is a D# or an Eb. Continuing on to the 7th fret of the 5th string, you have an E note.

The 8th fret of the 5th string is an F because, if you remember the E & F/ B & C rule, there’s only one half-step between E and F. Move up one half-step to the F#/ or Gb note on the 9th fret of the 5th string. The 10th fret is a G note and the 11th fret is a G# or an Ab note. Finally, you’re back to the A note on the 12th fret.

Hopefully, going through the note names on another string helped you understand the E & F/ B & C rule a little better. Try scheduling a bit of practice time each week to go over the names of the notes on the E and A strings.
Octave Centers

We’ve already talked a little bit about octaves in the “Beginner Intervals And Ear Training” section. In this section we’re going to review how to find the octave of any note on the 6th or 5th string.

Let’s go through a couple of specific examples to help solidify this concept for you. Start on the G note on the 3rd fret of the 6th string. Now move up two frets to the 5th fret of the 6th string and go over two strings to the 5th fret of the 4th string. That note is a G and is just like the G on the 3rd fret of the 6th string, only one octave higher.

Next, play the B note on the 2nd fret of the 5th string. Go up two frets and over two strings to the note on the 4th fret of the 3rd string. That’s a B note too. Pick any note on the 6th or 5th string, and try to visualize where the octave would be. Not too difficult but very important for future lessons.

Woodshed

Your goal in this Woodshed section is to go over the names of the notes on the high and low E strings as well as the notes on the A string. You don’t have to have every note completely memorized before moving on, but you should be very familiar with how to find any note on these strings. If you don’t understand the E & F/ B & C rule, go back and review it until it starts to make sense.
INTRODUCTION TO CHORD PROGRESSIONS

It’s time to talk a little bit about chord progressions. We’re not going to go very deep into this topic right now, but I think it’s important to introduce it to you. Simply put, a chord progression is any series of chords you play. All the chord progressions you’ve played with power chords so far have been in the key of E major. You can tell that by looking at the key signature at the beginning of each example, exercise and play-along.

A key signature is a series of sharps or flats at the beginning of a piece of music that tells you its key. For example, just by looking at the sheet music below, I can gather that it’s in the key of E major, because of its key signature of four sharps. Yes, I’m talking about the four sharps I’ve drawn a circle around.

Sometimes there are no sharps or flats in the key signature. That means the song is in the key of C major or A minor. Don’t worry too much about this right now. You’ll learn a lot more about key signatures later on.

![Key Signature Example](image)

NOTES IN ANY MAJOR KEY

Up until this point we’ve been using mostly chords based on the notes in the E major scale: E5, A5, B5 and C#5 power chords. The root notes for those chords occur naturally in the E major scale because, like I told you in previous lessons, the E major scale is spelled 1E 2F# 3G# 4A 5B 6C# 7D#. Don’t make a big deal out of this right now. Just realize that every major scale has seven notes in it, and every one of those notes has a chord that goes along with it.

OPTIONS IN THE KEY OF E MAJOR

When it comes to basic options regarding the power chords you can use in a given major key, its major scale is a great place to start. For example, because the E major scale is spelled 1E 2F# 3G# 4A 5B 6C# 7D#, you can play a power chord based on each note in it. This works for any major scale.

Check out the example on the following page; it goes through power chords based on each note of the E major scale. The power chord for the D# note is a little bit different because the 5th of the chord is lowered one half-step. Don’t worry about that right now. Just be aware of it when you get there.

You’ll learn a lot more about the major scale in coming lessons. Until then be aware that you can use any power chord from the example on the following page to make up your own songs in the key of E major.
Woodshed

Take the exercise we went over in the last section, and memorize the locations of all the power chords in the key of E major. Don’t worry too much if you’re not quite sure of where the chords come from or why you’re using those specific power chords. Play around with them, and come up with your own song in the key of E major—there’s no right or wrong. Experiment with those seven power chords, and try to be creative!

Conclusion

Congratulations! You made it through the lessons on power chords, palm muting, music theory and ear training. Try listening to some of your favorite songs, and see if you can play along with them using the power-chord shapes you’ve learned.

In the next section you’ll focus on learning and strumming more open chords. There will be a great-sounding acoustic play-along to help you memorize all the new chords from the upcoming series of lessons. See you there!
Open chords are chords that use the first three frets of the guitar exclusively and contain at least one open string. The most popular and essential ones are A, C, D, E and G major, which are also the open chords we’ll be focusing our attention on throughout this section of lessons. Along the way I’ll give you a lot of tips for changing between each chord smoothly. Once you know these basic open chords, you’ll be able to play a ton of different popular songs on the guitar.

As you learn these new open, major chords, we’ll be working on developing your strumming skills as well. You’ve already been working on strumming power chords, but that can feel quite different from strumming open chords. At the end of this section of lessons you’ll tackle the Ultimate Beginner’s Acoustic Strumming Play-Along, an acoustic track that’ll have you using all the skills you’ve been developing. You don’t have to own an acoustic guitar to play it, though; an electric guitar will work just fine too.

**Good Chord Ing Technique**

Let’s review some of the guidelines for good open chord technique. Do you remember the A2 chord you learned a while back? Let’s use that chord shape to make sure your chording technique is as good as it can be. Start off by holding out the fretting hand with the palm facing up. Relax and pretend you have an apple in your hand. The wrist should be pretty straight. Move your hand up to the neck of the guitar, and rest the thumb on its back. Place the 1st finger on the 2nd fret of the 4th string and the 2nd finger on the 2nd fret of the 3rd string. Push down on the strings as hard as you need to for the notes to ring out clearly.

Any time you’re making a chord, try visualizing the relaxed posture of “holding the apple.” Doing so will keep you from tensing up or stressing out your hand. Also, make sure your fingers are right behind the frets, in order to avoid any unnecessary buzzing. Keep these simple guidelines in mind as you learn these new chords, and above all, relax!

If you feel that your strings are unusually difficult to press down on, you might need to take your guitar in for a set-up. A guitar set-up involves adjusting the guitar to where the strings are as close as they can be to the fretboard without buzzing. This makes the guitar easier to play. A set-up is recommended for just about every guitar, even if it’s brand new. Usually, your local music store will offer this service or at least have the phone number of a guitar repairman.
**Basic Strumming Technique**

Before getting into the new open-chord shapes you’ll be learning, we should review some basic strumming technique. Place a pick in between the index finger and the thumb. Pretend that you have some honey on your pinky and that a feather is stuck to the honey. While holding the pick, make a motion with the strumming hand as if you were trying to flick the feather off of the pinky. Most of the motion should be coming from the wrist. This is a great motion to think about when learning to strum the guitar.

Go ahead and make the A2 chord. Position the pick on the 5th string, and strum through all strings except for the low E string. When strumming through the strings, try to remember the flicking motion you learned in the last paragraph. It’s okay to use the elbow a bit, but most of the strumming motion should come from the wrist. Above all, stay relaxed when you strum.

**A, D And E Major Chords**

In this section you’re going to learn the open A, D and E major chords. The A and D major chords are easier to get under your belt because of the A2 and D2 chords. All you have to do is add one note to the A2 and D2 shapes to make the open A and D major-chord shapes, respectively.

Start by pressing down on the guitar strings with the A2 shape. Then, add the 3rd finger to the 2nd fret of the 2nd string, and strum all the strings except for the low E string. This is the open A major chord. The shape for this chord requires you to squish the 1st, 2nd and 3rd fingers quite closely together. It may feel awkward at first but you’ll eventually get used to it. Put this new A major-chord shape on and take it off several times until your hands get used to how it feels.
Let’s take a look at how to make the open D major chord. Press down on the guitar strings with the D2 shape. Instead of playing the 1st string open, add the 2nd finger to the 2nd fret of the 1st string and strum the top four strings. That’s the open D major-chord shape. Put this shape on and take it off several times until you get used to it.

Now it’s time to learn a completely new open chord: the E major chord. Place the 2nd finger on the 2nd fret of the 5th string, the 3rd finger on the 2nd fret of the 4th string and the 1st finger on the 1st fret of the 3rd string. Make sure you’re curving the fingers enough to come down on their very tips and that you have them positioned right behind the frets. Strum all six strings with a downstroke. Notice that this chord shape has three black E root notes in it: one on the open 6th string, one on the 2nd fret of the 4th string and one on the open 1st string.

Practice these three new chord shapes until you can make them without any issues. The exercises on the following pages (page 83-85) focus on improving your ability to transition between these new chords smoothly.
SWITCHING FROM CHORD TO CHORD

Switching from chord to chord smoothly can be one of the biggest challenges a guitar player faces when first starting out. The first step in making sure your chord changes are smooth and natural is having each new chord shape fully memorized. With that in mind, I’ll introduce you to a couple methods you can use to help your hands “memorize” chord shapes a lot faster.

Place the new chord on the guitar and hold it there for about 30 seconds. Now take it completely off and shake out your hand. Repeat this process over and over again. Try to remember what that chord feels like. Following this process for learning new chords will help your muscle memory.

Visualizing a new chord right before you make it can actually help you learn its shape much faster. This is especially true when used in combination with the exercise I just gave you for the development of muscle memory. This is a very effective way of learning new chords.

Go through the process of visualizing and building up your muscle memory for the open A, D and E major chords you just learned. In the following lessons we’ll focus on changing between these chords.

Exercise #1
This first exercise uses half notes to switch between the open A and D major chords, which are strummed with downstrokes. When moving between the A and D chords, try to visualize the chord that’s coming up next. This will ensure you’re ready for the chord transition and that you move right to the next chord.

If you take a look at the key signature for this exercise, you’ll notice it features three sharps. This means the key signature you’re looking at is the one for the key of A major. This is just a fun and useful fact for you.

![Chord Diagram](image-url)
Exercise #2
Now that you have the open A and D major chords down, it’s time to throw the open E major chord into the mix. In the first measure, play an A chord for one half note and a D chord for another half note. Measure two is where the E chord comes into play. Strum the E chord and let it ring out for one whole note. Practice this exercise as much as you need to in order to get the chord changes down smoothly.

Exercise #3
Exercise #3 is an A-E-D-E chord progression that uses quarter notes. Don’t forget that to play these chords accurately you should only strum the top five strings for the A chord and the top four strings for the D chord. The E chord is the only one you can strum all six strings for. Each chord gets strummed twice before changing to the next one. The chords in this exercise are changing more quickly than the ones in the previous two exercises. Slow this exercise down as much as you need to in order to get the changes clean and clear.
Exercise #4
Now it’s time to put your chord changing skills to the test. You’ll be playing through an A-E-D chord progression that despite being simple, ramps up the speed of the chord changes by using all eighth notes. Study the chord progression and try to memorize it. Knowing what chord is coming next will make it easier to think ahead and switch to that chord faster.

Woodshed
Your first goal for this Woodshed section is to get the open A, D and E major-chord shapes down so well that you can make them right away. If you don’t have the shapes quite memorized or if you’re just a bit shaky on actually making them, you might want to go back and work on them a bit more. Your second goal is to get to where you can change between each of these chords smoothly. It may seem difficult to make the chord changes without any gaps or bumps, but with some faithful practice you can get them sounding great.

Practical Application - Loop 1
For this Practical Application section I wanted to give you a loop to help you practice the open A, E and D chords. The chord progression for this loop is very simple. It consists of one measure of A, one measure of E and two measures of D. I’m leaving the rhythm up to you; this is your opportunity to get creative with your playing. Strum any rhythm you like, for each measure; just make sure to use an A for the first measure, an E for the second measure and a D for the third and fourth measures. These four measures will repeat over and over again for you. Have fun!
STRUMMING AND MORE OPEN CHORDS

In this section you'll take your chord strumming to the next level by learning to use upstrokes, the constant strumming technique, and muting. These three techniques are critical in making your strumming sound professional. Once you’ve mastered them, you'll be able to strum along literally thousands of the world’s most popular songs.

You'll also be learning some more open chords that are vital for any guitar player to have in their chord library. Once you’ve gone through this section on strumming and open chords, you'll put all your new skills to use by learning the Ultimate Beginner’s Acoustic Strumming Play-Along. If you're into older folk or classic rock bands, you'll love this play-along.

UPSTROKE STRUMMING TECHNIQUE

Strumming open chords with upstrokes can feel quite different from strumming open chords with downstrokes. That's because the technique used for upstroke strumming is slightly different. Let’s look at an example. Make an open A chord, and strum every string with a downstroke. Remember to leave the low E string out of the strumming and to use the wrist for most of the strumming motion. That should feel pretty normal. Now, position the pick on the side of the high E string that's closest to the floor, and use an upward motion with the wrist and arm to strum through the strings in the open A chord with an upstroke. That feels quite different, right?! Do this several times. Alternate between strumming with a downstroke and an upstroke until you get used to the feeling.

Generally, when you strum an open chord with a downstroke, you play all the notes that are available to you in whatever open chord you're making. For example, if you strum an open A major chord with a downstroke, you'll generally play every string except for the low E string. That's not always the case when you're strumming with an upstroke. Sometimes you hit only a few of the top strings. Let's look at an example. Strum an open A major chord using an upstroke. Did the pick hit every string except for the low E string? Odds are it didn't. Generally, when you strum an open chord with an upstroke, you hit only the top three to five strings. This isn’t a rule, it's just what seems to naturally happen when we use upstrokes. Of course, there are times when you’ll hit every string.

Often, you’ll see TAB indicate that you should strum the entire chord with an upstroke. This isn’t always to be taken literally. Putting the entire chord shape on the TAB just makes it easier to recognize the chord you’re about to play. In the following exercises you’ll start developing your upstroke strumming technique. Take it slowly, and enjoy learning this new tool for making great music.

Exercise #1

In this first exercise you'll be using upstrokes to strum the open A and D chords. We'll be sticking to half notes throughout the entire exercise so you can really concentrate on your upstroke strumming technique. When using upstrokes the number of strings you hit is really up to you. You'll probably hit four or five strings for the A chord and three or four strings for the D chord. Don’t make too big of a deal about this. Focus on relaxing and using the wrist for most of the strumming motion. Your arm can help out as well. Remember that the little arrows at the bottom of the TAB are telling you to use upstrokes.
Exercise #2
Let’s throw an open E chord into the mix for Exercise #2. You’ll still be using all half notes and upstrokes. Try to concentrate on getting a nice, even sound from each upstroke. These exercises might feel pretty simple to you right now, but you’ll thank yourself for going through them once you get to the play-along.

Exercise #3
In this exercise I’m raising the bar a little. Instead of half notes to work on your upstroke strumming, I decided to go with quarter notes. Keep a sharp eye out because there’s an A2 chord in the first measure instead of a regular open A chord. Make sure you’re comfortable with upstroke strumming by the end of this exercise, because in the next section you’ll start to combine upstrokes and downstrokes.
**Strumming Using Upstrokes And Downstrokes**

In this section we’ll start to combine downstrokes and upstrokes into full-blown strumming. This is really one of the main keys to developing great strumming. Before moving on to the exercises, try alternating upstrokes with downstrokes to strum an A chord. Play this strumming pattern as many times as you need to in order to start feeling comfortable with its motion. Keep in mind the action of trying to shake off a feather that’s stuck to your pinky! Stay relaxed, and remember to use the wrist for the majority of the strumming motion.

**Exercise #1**

Exercise #1 is a simple A-E-D chord progression that alternates between upstroke and downstroke strumming. It can be difficult to concentrate on changing chords and keeping the strumming going at the same time. Don’t worry if this is your case. You just have to slow down the exercise as much as you need to in order to play it accurately. Hard work and faithful practice will pay off in the future!

**Exercise #2**

It’s time to speed up your upstroke and downstroke strumming a bit. This exercise uses eighth note strumming to play a simple A2-D2 progression. The strumming alternates strictly between upstrokes and downstrokes. Try making the sound of the strumming as even as possible.
Exercise #3
This exercise is very similar to the chorus from the play-along you’ll find at the end of this series of lessons. You’ll be playing an E-D-A chord progression using all eighth notes. Make sure to relax and keep the strumming as even and in time as possible. In the next section you’ll learn two very important open chords: C and G major.

Open C and G major chords
The open C and G major chords are two of the most popular guitar chords in history. You’ll be using them a lot regardless of the kind of music you enjoy playing. These two chords are generally a bit harder to make than all the ones you’ve learned so far. However, being able to use them any time you like is totally worth the hard work.

Let’s start by learning the open C major chord. Place the 3rd finger on the 3rd fret of the 5th string, the 2nd finger on the 2nd fret of the 4th string and the 1st finger on the 1st fret of the 2nd string. Strum every string except for the low E string. That’s an open C major chord. Notice that the notes you’re playing with the 3rd and 1st fingers are both Cs, or root notes of the open C chord shape.

Play the C chord again. Was it clean-sounding or were there some muted strings and buzzing notes? It can be hard to make the open C major chord sound clean, because your fingers might tend to bump up against the neighboring strings and mute them. To avoid this, make sure you’re curving the fingers over and playing the notes with the fingertips.

Put the open C chord on and hold it in place for a while. Now take it off and shake your hand out. Repeat this process as many times as you need to in order to start feeling comfortable with this new shape.
Now that you know the open C major chord, it’s time to learn an open G major chord to go along with it. You’ll be learning two different ways to make an open G chord. The first one makes it much quicker and easier to switch to an open C chord but it’s a bit more challenging to put together. The second one is easier to put together than the first one but makes it harder to switch to the open C chord. Choose whichever way works best for you.

To make the first open G shape, place the 3rd finger on the 3rd fret of the 6th string, the 2nd finger on the 2nd fret of the 5th string and the 4th finger on the 3rd fret of the 1st string. Make sure to curve the fingers over enough so you’re not muting any neighboring strings. This shape can be pretty tough on the pinky finger. Give it some time and your pinky will get stronger.

Put the open G chord on and hold it in place for a while. Try to feel the shape of the chord. Now look at the chord and try to remember what its shape looks like. Take the chord off, shake your hand out and repeat this entire process until you start to remember the chord shape.

If the first shape for the open G chord was too difficult for your pinky finger, you might want to try an alternate fingering. Place the 2nd finger on the 3rd fret of the 6th string, the 1st finger on the 2nd fret of the 5th string and the 3rd finger on the 3rd fret of the 1st string. For some people it’s easier to make the open G chord with these fingers. However, I encourage you to use the first open G chord shape because it makes switching between the open G and C chords much faster.

**Exercise #1**

Exercise #1 was developed for getting you used to switching between the open G and C major chords. The rhythm was kept simple in order to let you focus on changing from chord to chord. Notice that the key signature has changed: it features one sharp. This is the key signature for the key of G major—just another fun fact!
Exercise #2
The chord changes in this exercise come a bit quicker, so you'll have less time to move between the open G and C chords. Try to visualize the next chord before actually changing to it. This will give you a much better chance of switching to a chord accurately.

Exercise #3
In this exercise the G and C chords are combined with eighth-note-based upstroke and downstroke strumming. There are two measures of G followed by two measures of C. Concentrating on strumming and changing chords smoothly at the same time is a challenging but necessary skill to have.
Exercise #4
This exercise is pretty similar to the previous one. The only difference between the two is the number of measures the G and C chords are played for: one instead of two. As soon as you get this exercise down, you’ll be ready to get creative with the G and C chords using the loop in the following Practical Application section.

Practical Application - Loop 2
For this Practical Application section I’ve made you a simple loop that alternates back and forth between four measures of G major and four measures of C major. Take everything you’ve learned about strumming and try coming up with your own unique parts to play over the loop—there’s no right or wrong here. Just do your best to change chords as smoothly as possible.

The Constant Strumming Technique
Congratulations! By now you should have some pretty great-sounding strumming working for you. Now it’s time to learn about one of the most important elements of strumming: the constant strumming technique. Once you learn this technique, you’ll begin to see exactly how to make up your own great strumming patterns. You’ll also be one step closer to being able to figure out the strumming patterns from your favorite songs.

The whole idea of a constant strumming pattern may sound strange to you but you’ve actually been doing it for a while now. Let’s look at an example. Make a D chord, and strum it slowly four times using all downstrokes.

Did you notice that every time you played a downstroke you had to perform an upward strumming motion to come back and play the next downstroke? That’s the heart of the constant strumming technique. No matter the strumming pattern you’re using, you have to keep the strumming hand going with a constant steady down and up motion. Even if you don’t actually strum the strings with any given upstroke or downstroke, you still need to keep the motion going. The purpose and reasoning behind this technique will become pretty clear in the upcoming exercises.
Exercise #1
This first exercise uses an A major chord exclusively so you can concentrate on the strumming. The first two strums are done with quarter note downstrokes. Play them right now. Do you see how you still made upstrokes between each downstroke? You just didn’t hit the strings with the pick when you were coming up. That’s a basic application of the constant strumming technique. The next four strums are all eighth notes played using alternating downstroke and upstroke strumming. Take it as slowly as you need to, in order to get a good feel for the constant strumming technique. This strumming pattern is repeated for each subsequent measure and used later on with the Ultimate Beginner’s Acoustic Strumming Play-Along. So get it down as good as possible.

Exercise #2
Exercise #2 uses the exact same strumming pattern as Exercise #1, but this time you’ll be alternating between an A chord and a D chord. Pay attention to the upstroke and downstroke indicators at the bottom of the TAB so you can make sure you’re playing the strumming pattern properly. Remember to keep your strumming hand in constant motion!
Exercise #3
In this exercise you'll be learning a new strumming pattern that uses the constant strumming technique. The first strum is a quarter note downstroke. The next four strums are all eighth notes. Play the first eighth note with a downstroke and the remaining ones with alternating upstrokes and downstrokes. Finish off the strumming pattern with a quarter note downstroke. This strumming pattern will feel quite different from the one in the previous two exercises. Take it slowly, and concentrate on getting the strumming pattern down smoothly.

Exercise #4
This exercise uses the strumming pattern from Exercise #3, but you'll be switching back and forth between the open G and C major chords. This is the last exercise that focuses specifically on the constant strumming technique, but there will be many more throughout The Guitar System that use this idea.
MUTING

The next aspect of strumming that you need to work on is muting the guitar strings. Muting, or muted strumming, gives your playing an awesome percussive sound that kind of makes it feel like you’re playing with a drummer. Learning to do this will add an entirely new dimension to your guitar playing.

Muting chords is often referred to as choking. There are two ways with which you can achieve this effect: muting the strings with the fretting hand or the picking hand. Although you can use each technique separately, it’s actually more effective to choke chords using both. That’s why they are used in conjunction with one another most of the time. Let’s look at an example to help you understand how to do this.

Start by making an open A chord. Next, release the pressure from the strings but keep them muted with the fingers from the fretting hand. Now instead of strumming through the strings and letting them ring out like you’d normally do, mute them with the strumming hand right as you strum through them. This is achieved by laying the same part of the hand on the strings, as you did in the “Palm Muting” section earlier on. Unlike palm muting, you’ll want to keep your hand in a natural strumming position when muting the strings you’re playing. By that I mean you don’t have to have your hand back up toward the bridge at the sweet spot for palm muting.

Try this a few times: give an A chord several muted strums using downstrokes. You should be going for a nice percussive sound, kind of like a snare drum. The following exercises will help clarify this technique and take your strumming to the next level by helping you incorporate muting into strumming patterns.

Exercise #1
This first exercise alternates back and forth between a normal A chord and a choked, or muted, A chord. I kept this exercise simple so you can concentrate on getting a good muted sound out of your guitar. Look at the TAB. The Xs you’re seeing there are called dead notes; they’re telling you to mute those notes. Make sure to use all downstrokes for now.
Exercise #2
Much like in the previous exercise, here you’re strumming an A chord with quarter note downstrokes. However, instead of being played on beats two and four, the muted A chord is strummed on beat three instead. Try getting a nice percussive sound from each muted chord. Give this one a try, and get ready to kick it up a notch in the next exercise.

Exercise #3
In this exercise you’re strumming a G chord while alternating downstrokes with upstrokes. The first two eighth notes are a downstroke followed by an upstroke. The third eighth note is a muted downstroke. Keep alternating downstrokes and upstrokes for three more unmuted eighth notes. The next eighth note is another muted downstroke. Finish off the measure by playing an upstroke on an unmuted G chord. This strumming pattern is used all over the place in popular music. Take this one as slowly as you need to in order to make the strumming pattern as even-sounding as possible.
Exercise #4
This exercise uses the strumming pattern from Exercise #3 to switch between the G and C major chords. You’ll strum a G chord for the first two measures before moving to a C chord for the second two measures. Don’t forget to take the repeat at the end of measure four.
Practical Application - Loop 3

In this Practical Application section you’ll be using the strumming pattern from Exercises #3 and #4 to play over a twelve-measure loop in the key of G. The track consists of four measures of G, two measures of C, two measures of D, one measure of C and two measures of G. For each measure, play the strumming pattern notated on the sheet music below, using the appropriate chord shape. Once you can do this, feel free to make up your own strumming patterns using this chord progression.
WOODSHED

If you’ve done all the exercises in The Guitar System up to this point, you’ve come a very long way with your strumming. Before moving on to the Ultimate Beginner’s Acoustic Strumming Play-Along, make sure you have a few things down cold: the ability to easily combine downstroke with upstroke strumming and a solid understanding of the constant strumming technique. If you don’t think you have these two aspects of your strumming down, you should go back and review the last few sections.
Practical Application - Ultimate Beginner’s Acoustic Strumming Play-Along

In this play-along you’re going to use pretty much everything you’ve learned about strumming to make some great-sounding music. If you like folk- or classic-rock-style acoustic music, you’ll love this one. I’ll walk you through each of the main sections in this song and then cut you loose to jam on your own.

The first section of this song, labeled Intro, is an eighth-note-based F#5-E-A chord progression that’s played with alternating downstroke and upstroke strumming. The very first chord in this tune is an F# power chord (F#5). You might not have played a power chord in this particular location yet, so don’t let that throw you off. You can always use the TAB on the following page to learn exactly where to place your fingers. Play the F#5 for the first two beats of the first measure and an open E for the second two beats. The second measure is an A chord strummed eight times. Repeat this entire pattern for measures three and four. When you get to measure five, stay on the A chord for four more beats.

On measure six you have to use some of your constant strumming technique skills. The basic strumming pattern for the A chord on measure six is made of two quarter note downstrokes and four alternating eighth note downstrokes and upstrokes. This strumming pattern should feel familiar to you because it was used in Exercise #1 of “The Constant Strumming Technique” section. Repeat this exact same pattern for measure seven. Measure eight encompasses an A chord and an E chord that are played for four eighth notes each. When you get to measure nine you’re simply strumming a D chord eight times. Measures 10-13 are the exact same as measures 6-9.

When you get to measures 14-18 (page 102), play the exact same thing you performed for the intro of the song. Take the repeat at the end of measure eighteen all the way back to measure six, and play through measures 6-17 again. When you get to measure seventeen for the second time, make sure to take the second ending by going directly to measure nineteen, which is a single strum on a D chord on beat one. Make sure to rest on beats two, three and four.

When you get to measure twenty you’ll see that it’s labeled Chorus. The chorus of this play-along is a simple eighth note strumming pattern that’s played throughout an E-D-A chord progression. The E chord is played for two measures, and the D and A chords are played for one measure. You have to go through this progression twice because of the repeat sign. Take note of the Da Capo at the end of measure twenty-three. It’s telling you to go back to measure one and play everything again until you reach the Da Capo for the second time.

Once you get to the Da Capo for the second time, continue on to measure twenty-four. Measures 24-27 feature the exact same E-D-A progression that you went through on measures 20-23. Make sure to take the repeat sign at the end of measure twenty-seven (page 103). You’ll be playing the F#5-E-A chord progression from the intro on measures twenty-eight and twenty-nine. The repeat sign at the end of this last measure makes you go through the progression four times. Play measures twenty-eight and twenty-nine for the first three times through, and skip to measure thirty once you get to measure twenty-eight for the fourth time. Measure thirty is an A chord that you can hold out for as long as you like.

Have fun with this one, and take some time to pat yourself on the back when you’re done. You’ll have put in a lot of hard work!
CONCLUSION

That’s it for the “Fundamentals” portion of The Guitar System. You’ve put in a lot of hard work to learn power chords, palm muting, music theory, ear training, strumming and open chords. The upcoming “Beginner” section will move on to many new topics that are very important for every guitarist to know. See you there!
CD TRACK LISTING

CD 01

Track #1 - P1 - A2-D2 Groove #1
Track #2 - P1 - A2-D2 Groove #2 (With Rhythm Guitar)
Track #3 - P2 - Beginner Power Chord Play-Along
Track #4 - P3 - Punk Play-Along
Track #5 - P4 - Punk Palm Muting Play-Along
Track #6 - P5 - Ultimate Beginner’s Power Chord Play-Along
Track #7 - L1 - Loop 1 - A-E-D Progression
Track #8 - L2 - Loop 2 - G-C Progression
Track #9 - L3 - Loop 3 - G-C-G-D-C-G Progression, 12-Measure Loop
Track #10 - P6 - Ultimate Beginner’s Acoustic Strumming Play-Along
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