

HOW TO READ TABLATURE – GUITAR

Reading Music vs. Tablature: Learning to “Read” music will be a very important decision for beginning Guitar players, but Tablature is a standard now and should also be learned (Tablature is an easier way to read “Notes” and can be learned quickly).

Let’s take a look at the differences between Reading Music (Standard Music Notation), and Tablature (a Basic Grid representing Notes on the Guitar)...

Standard Notation Used for “Reading Music”

Treble Clef, Time Signature, Names of the Notes on the Staff, *Notes can be on a line or in a space, or on lines above or below the staff (called ledger lines), Ledger lines extend notes above and below the staff, These lines (Called “Staff” lines) represent notes on the Guitar.

Grid Used for “Tablature”

The 6th string (Top string and fattest string) on the Guitar. These circled numbers are shown only to illustrate the string numbers. When a number is placed on a line (String) on the Grid it will represent a fret (Note). Ex: The “3” means to place your finger on the “3rd Fret” of the “6th String.” (It’s that simple). When a number is placed below the “Grid” it will represent which finger to use to “fret” a note. Ex: The “3” means to use your 3rd finger (of your left hand) to play the note on the “3rd Fret” of the “6th String.”

The “Grid” lines represent the Strings on a Guitar. The “0” means to play the string “open.” (no “fretting” needed).

Now let’s take a look at the difference between “Reading a Note” on a music “Staff” and how these same notes will look on the Tablature Grid...

Bar Lines divide the measures, Treble Clef, Time Signature, Quarter Notes, “C” Chord, “F” Chord, Chords are two or more notes played at the same time. The “double bar” at the end of a line of music (on a staff or tablature grid) indicates the end of the measure or piece???, Same Notes in Tablature, Chords in Tablature, Strike all notes indicated at the same time.

Music Staff

Tablature Grid

String Numbers: Numbers on the tablature grid lines (strings) will indicate which frets are to be played. Any number under the grid area will indicate which finger to use (left hand).

As you can see – it is much more difficult (and time consuming) to learn to read music than to read tablature. Tablature can be learned quickly. Even if you decide to take lessons to learn to read music (which is highly recommended for guitar players that want to learn “Classical” music or become a “Studio” guitarist) it would be very beneficial to learn tablature (since Tablature has become a world wide standard, and you will run into it a lot during your guitar studies).