

HOW TO READ TABLATURE

Tablature, also referred to as *Tab*, is a form of musical notation (written music) which is common for guitar. The picture below shows a comparison between standard notation and tablature.

Standard notation (top) shows a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a C chord symbol above the staff. The tablature (bottom) shows six horizontal lines representing strings, labeled T (top), A, and B (bottom) on the left. The first measure has a '3' on the fifth line, with an arrow pointing to it and the text "note (3rd fret, 3rd finger, on 5th string)". The second measure has '1 0 2 3' on the strings from top to bottom, with an arrow pointing to it and the text "chord". A chord diagram for a C chord is shown above the second measure, with an arrow pointing to it and the text "chord diagram". On the right side, arrows point to the top and bottom lines of the tablature with the labels "little string (1st)" and "big string (6th)" respectively.

Notice that in standard notation there are five horizontal lines on the staff. However, in tablature there are six horizontal lines, which correspond to a totally different thing than those in standard notation. Each horizontal line in tablature represents a string of the guitar. The top line is the little (1st) string, and the bottom line is the big (6th) string. The numbers represent the frets. They also represent the finger when playing in the 1st position. If the number is zero, it represents an open string (no fingering).

In the tablature shown, there are two measures. When we start reading the first measure, we find the word TAB written vertically and then the four-four time signature. The first note we find is a number 3 on the fifth line. This means you place your third finger on the third fret on the fifth string and play that string. The notes are played one at a time in the sequence shown.

In the second measure, the notes are played all at the same time as a chord (simultaneously). The chord diagram on top has been added to help you visualize the fingering. Chords will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

It is very important that you use the finger that corresponds to the fret. The first finger goes on the first fret, the second finger on the second fret, the third finger on the third fret, and the fourth finger on the fourth fret. This is called playing in the *first position*.