

Getting to know your guitar

Your guitar is a valuable musical instrument and therefore needs to be handled, stored and transported with great care.

- Each time you finish playing, it is a good idea to wipe the strings and body with a soft cloth (not a duster).
- When not played, we advise you sit your guitar on a guitar stand. These come in many shapes and forms but they will all ensure that your guitar will not fall over and become damaged. If you haven't got a stand, you can lean it up against a wall but make sure that it is stable and will not fall.
- If you need to transport your guitar, the best way to do so is in a guitar gig bag or case. The protection these offer varies depending on the type of bag/case you choose.

TIP: Do not lean your guitar near a radiator. This causes the wood to warp which can affect the sound and will void your warranty.



Playing Positions

People play guitars in all sorts of positions from standing up with a strap, to sitting cross legged. The best way to begin, is to sit on a chair (without arms, otherwise they will get in the way) and cross your legs. This lets the contours of the guitar body naturally fit around your body resulting in a comfortable playing position.



Tuning your guitar

A guitar has six strings which all need to be tuned properly using the machine heads. The best way to do this is by using an electronic tuner, but you can also use a piano, pitch pipes or tuning fork.

Become familiar with the name of each string: **E-A-D-G-B-E**
The thickest string being 'E', the next thickest being 'A' and so on.



Once you are familiar with the strings it's time to tune. Machine heads on the left side of the headstock will tighten (tune up) by turning the machine heads anti-clockwise. Machine heads on the right side will tighten by turning them clockwise.

Turning the machine heads slightly and then plucking the string to see if it is higher or lower than the relevant note before adjusting it again, is a good way to make sure you do not over-tighten causing the strings to break.

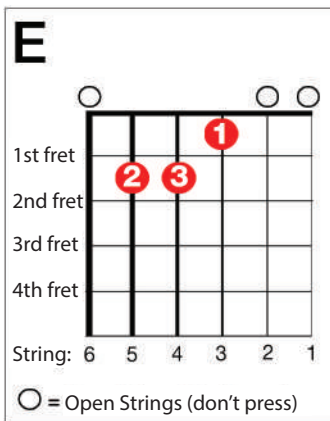
TIP: Always tune up to the correct note. If you have tightened too much and the note is high, loosen the strings by turning the machine head in the opposite direction until the note is lower than desired then tighten slightly until it is in tune.

Your first chords

You might think that playing a song on your guitar will take years of practice, when in fact once you have learnt to tune the strings and are comfortable holding your guitar, you aren't far from playing your first song. On the next pages are instructions for 3 chords used regularly by song writers to get you started. Once you're confident playing these chords you'll be playing popular songs in no time.

Chord Diagrams

Guitarists use chord diagrams to show where to place your fingers for each chord. Let's look at the E chord diagram and learn how to read it.



- The lines running vertically on the diagram represent the strings starting with string six (the thickest) on the left through to string one (the thinnest) on the right.

- The lines running horizontally represent the frets on your guitar as if the guitar was standing upright against a wall.

- The red dots show you which strings to play and on what fret. The number inside the dots tell you which finger to use to press that string down. (finger 1 being your index finger)

- The ○ symbol above the chart indicates that the string does not need to be pressed down. These are classed as open strings

Using the chord diagram above, lets learn to play the E chord.

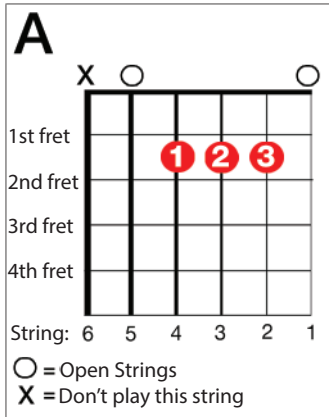
- Press your first (index) finger down on the 3rd string in the 1st fret. Press the string down close to the fret wire but not directly on top of it as this can cause a buzzing sound.
- Press your second (middle) finger down on the 5th string in the 2nd fret.
- Press your third (ring) finger down on the 4th string, also in the 2nd fret.
- Your hand and finger positions should now look like the image (right).



Now that your fingers are in the correct position, strum all six strings with your right hand. There are many different ways to strum or pluck strings, but to start with we recommend using the end of your thumb, in a downward motion starting from the 6th (thickest) string to the 1st (thinnest string). This is called a down strum. You have now played your first chord.

TIP: The chord may not ring freely or there may be a buzzing sound. Don't worry, this is usually because you are not pressing down hard enough on the strings with your left hand. This will come with practice and if you persevere, you'll soon master playing the chord.

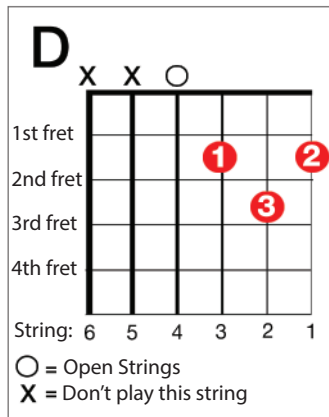
More Chords



This is the chord diagram for the **A** chord. Notice at the top of the diagram there is an **X** symbol. This symbol indicates that this string should not be played when strumming. Instead of starting your strum on the 6th string, your thumb needs to start the down strum on the 5th string, which as shown in the diagram is an open string.

- Press your first (index) finger down on the 4th string in the 2nd fret.
- Press your second (middle) finger down on the 3rd string in the 2nd fret.
- Press your third (ring) finger down on the 2nd string, also in the 2nd fret.

This chord may seem a little tricky to master at first as your fingers will have to be close together on the same fret. Remember not to press down on the fret wire, but instead practice fitting all 3 fingers on their relevant string inside the two fret wires.



This is the chord diagram for the **D** chord. Notice at the top of the diagram there are 2 **X** symbols. This means that you now start strumming from the 4th string downwards.

- Press your first (index) finger down on the 3rd string in the 2nd fret.
- Press your second (middle) finger down on the 1st string also in the 2nd fret.
- Press your third (ring) finger down on the 2nd string, in the 3rd fret.

Now you have learnt 3 chords you can start to practice swapping between the chords until you are confident with a smooth transition. With practice this will become comfortable, and you will then be able to play your first song.