

A stylized illustration of a guitar on the left side of the cover. It features a black body with a dark red circular sound hole, a black neck, and six orange strings. The background is a solid dark red color with abstract black shapes.

Getting Started A Beginner's Guide to Guitar Playing

by Charlotte Adams

2-DISC SET INCLUDED

SECOND EDITION

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Introduction

I designed this program for the complete beginner. While there are countless books, CD's and DVD's on the market that can help you get started on the guitar, this program differs from them, in that rather than merely presenting information, I will speak to you exactly as I do in a private lesson. By doing so, I can address the questions and pitfalls that I have witnessed beginning students deal with hundreds of times in my teaching experience. You will also have the benefit of watching me demonstrate and perform techniques and exercises on the short DVD included. The DVD contains relevant excerpts from my instructional video course, *Comprehensive Guitar Instruction*, and will fill in many of the gaps that you might experience from working without personal instruction. The CD is a recording of all of the songs in the book.

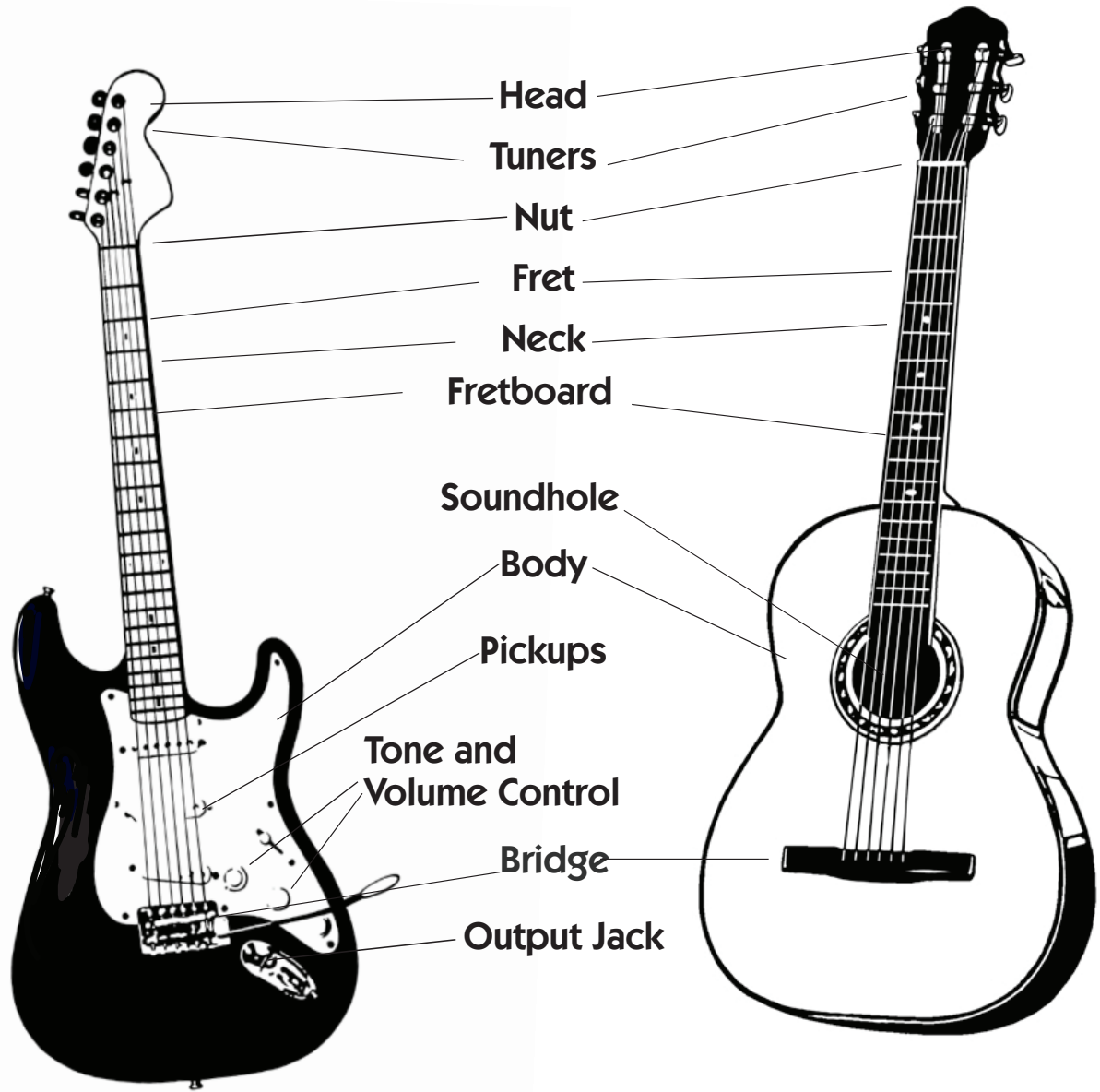
I have not included note-reading exercises in this program. I do, however, show you how to find the notes on the guitar and on the staff, as this will give you an introduction to the musical language and help you read and understand charts for songs you want to play. You will learn more about note reading in the follow-up to this book, *Moving On*.

To help you learn to play chords in an accompaniment style, I've included commonly known "easy" songs to start with. Follow the instruction in the text and use the CD to help you with the rhythm and feel of each song. After you get the idea, you can play any songs you like from books or charts.

I've also included tips on learning to sing with your own playing. Even if you're not accustomed to singing, I would suggest you work with this chapter. Singing is "lead playing", using the voice. It's important to know where the melody is at all times, no matter who is singing or playing it.

Let's start with getting to know your guitar and its various parts.

Parts of the Guitar



Play With Your Guitar!

Take a good look at your guitar, inspecting it from every angle. Then, holding it in the conventional playing position, choose any string and use the index finger (first finger) of your left hand to press on different frets. Each time you move to a different fret, pluck the string with your right thumb and listen to the sound. As you move toward the soundhole, the pitches become higher, since you are essentially shortening the string by pressing on it. When we go in this direction, we are going up the fretboard. As you move back toward the head of the guitar, the notes, or pitches, are lower – the strings are longer – so you are going down the neck or fretboard. Just play around, pressing on random frets on different strings and listening to the sounds. Relax and have fun experimenting.

When using your left hand fingers to press on the frets, there are two things you need to know:

Press with the tips of your fingers, not the fleshy pads. This will not only give you the best sound, but will also keep you from “killing” the sound of the string underneath the one you’re fretting.

Press close to the fret on the body end of the guitar. In other words, if you’re playing the 2nd fret, you will press between the two metal frets, but closer to the one on the right (as you look down on the fretboard). (Watch the DVD)

Next, look at the DVD to learn how to hold your pick properly. Practice striking the first string (the thinnest one), using a downward motion. Do the same thing on the other strings. Go back and play some more random notes on the strings, this time using a pick. Then strum across all the strings, making a big, crazy sound!

If you have an electric guitar, take some time to play with the knobs and switches on both the guitar and the amplifier. The knobs on the guitar are tone and volume controls and the toggle switch is used to select a pickup or a combination of pickups. With experimentation, you will find the combination of settings that gives you the sound you like for the music you want to play.

How to Hold Your Guitar

*(*DVD, Chapter I)*

Holding your guitar correctly is important. Don't be tempted to postpone learning this, as you risk establishing habits that will not only limit your playing, but can also cause you discomfort.

Sit on a chair to play guitar. Beds, sofas and floors will not allow you to sit in a healthy way or to get the best sound from your guitar. Use a music stand so that you can see your music without contorting your body. If you don't have a music stand, you can fashion a temporary one by pulling your chair to a table or desk and propping your music up at an angle that allows you to read it comfortably.

As you hold your guitar in your lap, the back of the guitar should be parallel with your torso. Once you've established a proper plane for your guitar, consider the angle of the guitar on that plane. In other words, is the neck pointing toward the ceiling and the body toward the floor, or the other way around? The closer to your body you hold the neck (and, consequently, your left arm and hand), the easier it will be to play well and the lower your risk of injury.

Once you feel that you have digested this information, sit in front of a mirror with your guitar and check that your image reflects the way you feel. Adjust your body so that you are sitting tall, without leaning to one side or the other. Make sure that you are sitting toward the front edge of your chair, with your guitar at a proper angle. Practice keeping your body aligned while you change the angle and position of your guitar. Study the way I hold my guitar in the DVD. Look at yourself in the mirror again and compare your position to mine. Breathe!

Look at your left hand. Your fingers should curve over the fretboard, so that they don't stop the vibration of the string underneath the one being fretted. Unless your hands are very large, this will require you to drop your hand to the point that your left thumb contacts the back of the neck on or close to the apex of the curve. For the optimum sound, find a position where your wrist is down enough to have space between the palm of your hand and the guitar neck, but not jutting out and causing strain. A good rule is to look for a rather straight, or only slightly curved line from the elbow to the knuckles.

Is Your Guitar Set Up Properly?

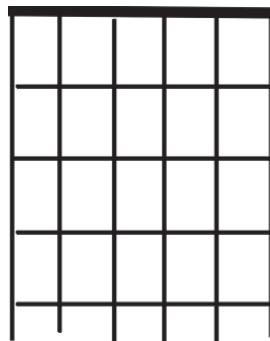
If it's difficult to press down on the strings of your guitar, the strings may be too high off of the fretboard. Most people assume that a new guitar is as playable as it will ever be. This is not always the case. When you buy a guitar, ask the salesperson if the guitar has been "set up". If not, request that it be done before you take the guitar home. If your guitar is used, a loaner or a hand-me-down, ask an experienced guitarist to play it and offer an opinion as to its playability. If they feel that it takes too much muscle to get a clear sound, take it to your local music store and ask them to adjust the action. The adjustment is inexpensive and can often be done while you wait. This is important for your progress, not to mention your comfort level, so take the time to check it out.

The Open Strings

The strings are numbered 1-6, beginning with the smallest string (the string that's highest in pitch and closest to the floor). The open strings, starting with the 6th string (the lowest in pitch), are E A D G B E. You can use this sentence to remember them: Eat A Darn Good Breakfast Early. Here's another one you might like: Elephants And Donkeys Got Big Ears!

Practice saying the name of the strings as you play them, one at a time. Mix up the order of playing and saying, so that you get good at it.

E A D G B E



6 5 4 3 2 1

Getting Started A Beginner's Guide to Guitar Playing

by Charlotte Adams

Designed for the complete beginner, *Getting Started* presents chords, accompaniment techniques, and essential information about the musical language and the instrument in a logical, easy-to-follow format.

Topics covered include:

- Parts of the guitar
- How to tune the guitar
- How to change strings
- Proper technique
- Notes on the fretboard
- The musical staff
- Chords and chord progressions
- Strumming and fingerpicking patterns
- Nine songs to sing and play
- ...and more!

*Guitar
Instruction*TM

BY CHARLOTTE ADAMS

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