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Introduction

Rhythm Guitar is the Twelvemonth Music manual on rhythmic (chord-based) styles of play on the steel string acoustic guitar, and the manual for the rhythm guitar component of the visualinear tablature guitar series. Every rhythm guitar arrangement included in the series is presented in a comprehensive multi-component format. The most important component is the visualinear tablature score, which describes in complete detail how each arrangement is played.

Experienced guitarists who have already attained a beginning to intermediate level of skill will probably find that reading the Quick Guide To Visualinear Tablature will allow them to start making use of these tablature scores. The same is true for those who already play a musical instrument and who therefore already have a basic understanding of music theory. If the Quick Guide does not suffice, a far more extensive introduction to the tablature is provided on the Visualinear Tablature page of the Twelvemonth Music website. Beginners in the study of music or in the study of the guitar would do well to consider reading Rhythm Guitar beforehand, even if only in the abridged e-book version, since this will allow for a better understanding of the tablature scores and of the other learning materials associated with them.

Another important and unique component of the format in which each rhythm guitar arrangement is presented is given by the chord chart, which clearly and concisely shows the harmonic rhythm of the music contained in the tablature score. Harmonic rhythm is the sequence of chords (chord progression) on which music is based, and the exact rhythmic timing of the transition between each chord and the next. The chord charts can serve several useful purposes, the most obvious of which is to provide a quick review of an arrangement you have already

learned. Often you will have memorized an arrangement in the process of learning it, and you will in any case usually be able to play the arrangement by reading the chord chart rather than the complete tablature score (a quick review of the tablature may be required if you have not played the arrangement for a while).

The chord charts can also serve, in this same manner, as the basis for improvising variations of an arrangement. These variations can be devised by employing different patterns of play, or even an altogether different style of play. The importance of studying the tablature scores and mastering in note-for-note fashion the arrangements given by them is obvious enough. The common denominator in this extensive and varied collection of rhythm guitar music is the fact that all the arrangements make sense musically, and therefore exemplify the manner in which well-conceived rhythm guitar arrangements are fashioned. But it is no less important to devote at least some of your practice time to improvising variations on arrangements by working from chord charts.

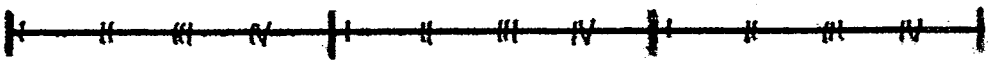
This exercise in improvisation is an enjoyable and creative activity that fosters the development not only of playing skills but also of the ability to express musical ideas in rhythm guitar music. It will move you forward toward the goal of becoming a competent and accomplished rhythm guitarist, since the ability to devise and play sensible and effective rhythm guitar arrangements by working solely from chord charts is an essential element of that goal. The chord charts can serve still another useful purpose, in that they can be used as a study tool for expanding a chord progression by substituting related chords, or for modifying a chord progression by transposing to a different key of play.

The tablature score and chord chart for each arrangement are accompanied by Study Notes. The Study Notes walk you through the

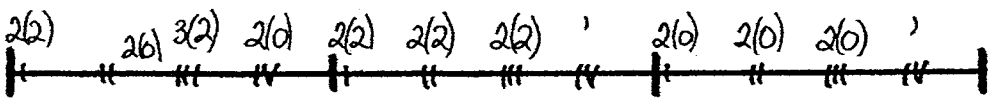
basic steps of learning an arrangement by providing a review of the required chords and a detailed account of the particulars of the style of play employed. Also included in the Study Notes are explanations of unusual or noteworthy aspects of the notation, either in the tablature score or in the chord chart, and relevant discussions about the interrelatedness of the two forms of notation. Finally, by narrowing the focus at times on individual notes in an arrangement, the Study Notes provide insights into how to play an arrangement most efficiently, and more importantly, most musically. These insights will hopefully prove useful to those who aspire to becoming better musicians as well as better guitarists.

Quick Guide To Visualinear Tablature

Visualinear tablature is a simple single-line system for notating guitar music. It is based on the beats of the music's meter. The beats are represented along the line of tablature by Roman numerals.

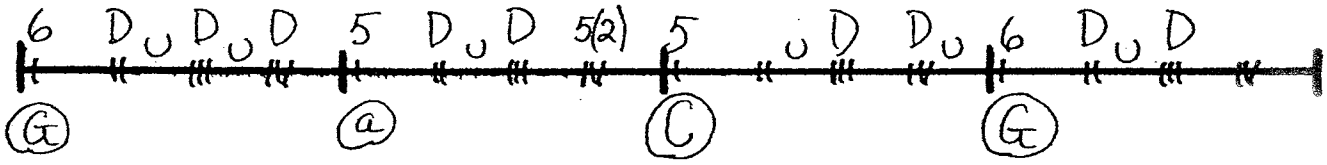


The notation for melodies is simpler than for rhythmic (chord-based) guitar music. Notes are represented solely by means of numbers. The six strings of the guitar are numbered from highest to lowest in pitch (from thinnest to thickest). Fretted notes are represented by a string number followed by a parenthesized fret number. Open (unfretted) notes are represented by a string number followed by a parenthesized 0. The rhythmic timing of a note is given by the exact placement of the string and fret notation along the line of tablature. Most melodic notes, and especially for simple melodies, are timed either on beats or halfway between beats. Damp signs (apostrophes) are used to indicate the exact point in time at which notes must be damped (silenced).

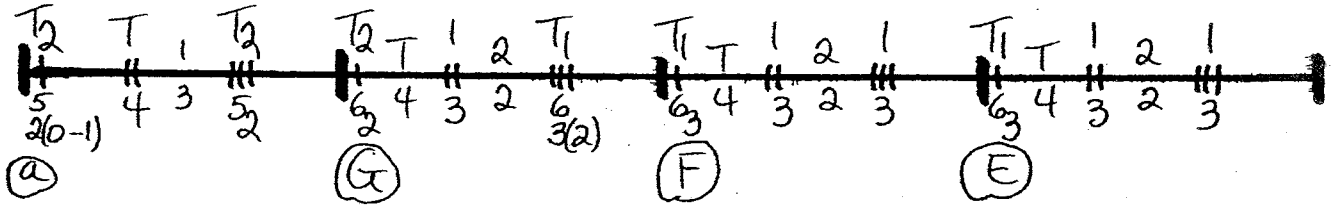


Unlike melodic tablature, rhythmic tablature is governed by a specific chord fingering. Chord symbols representing specific chord fingerings are placed beneath the line of tablature at the exact points in time at which changes of chord must be made. The most common chord fingerings and the simplest barre chords are identified solely by means of chord symbols. All other specific chord fingerings are diagrammed at the bottom of the page of tablature score.

The notation for flatpicked guitar music is simpler than for fingerstyle music, since there is no need to show playing hand fingerings. Basic downstrums and basic upstrums are represented by Ds and Us. The exact placement of these strumming symbols along the line of tablature shows the correct rhythmic timing of the strums. Basic strums, and the symbols by which they are represented, can be modified in a number of ways (including damped strums, arppeggiated strums, muted strums, and strums over specific strings). Individually flatpicked notes that are notes of the specific chord governing the tablature are represented solely by means of string numbers. Individually flatpicked notes that are not notes of the specific chord are represented with string and fret notation.



For fingerstyle guitar music, the tablature shows the playing hand fingerings above the line, and the corresponding string numbers below the line. As with flatpick tablature, non-chord notes are represented with string and fret notation to show the exception to the specific chord fingering. In either flatpick tablature or fingerstyle tablature, two-note techniques (hammer-on, pull-off, and slide) are represented with string and fret notation. The two fret numbers between which the technique must be executed are separated by a hyphen. For slides, an S is placed above the hyphen to show that the second note is sounded by means of a slide rather than a hammer-on or pull-off.



18 Common Chords

These common chords are identified in visualinear tablature scores solely by means of their chord symbols. Upper case letters are used for Major and Major-related chords, and lower case letters are used for minor and minor-related chords. All other chords are identified in visualinear tablature scores by means of an asterisked chord symbol, with the asterisk indicating that the chord fingering is diagrammed beneath the tablature.

The chord diagrams for the 18 common chords have not been included in this demonstration version of the Quick Guide. They have been omitted for the benefit of those who elect to pursue the course of study developed in Rhythm Guitar. One important element of this course of study is the fact that it includes detailed explanations of the basic principles of music theory and chord theory that allow readers of Rhythm Guitar to figure out these and other chord diagrams for themselves. Learning how to devise chord diagrams is more advantageous than simply memorizing chord diagrams, since it requires a basic understanding of chords and how they are constructed.

The 18 common chord diagrams are included, however, in the complete version of the Quick Guide. The complete version is included with all orders for rhythm guitar arrangements in either PDF or printed and bound format. The common chord diagrams are included in the complete version for the benefit of those whose learning needs and interests would be better served by bypassing Rhythm Guitar altogether and proceeding directly to the arrangements themselves. If you elect to proceed in this fashion, and this will probably prove to be the most sensible course of action if you are already an experienced guitarist, remember that you can re-evaluate this decision at any time by undertaking the study of Rhythm Guitar (either in the abridged e-book version or in the complete version), if you believe that doing so will allow you to make better use of any tablature scores and associated learning materials you have purchased.

Quick Guide To Chord Charts

The term harmonic rhythm refers to the sequence of chords (harmonies) that governs a song or other musical work, and to the timing (rhythm) of the changes from each chord to the next. It is relatively easy to devise a rhythm guitar accompaniment once the harmonic rhythm of the music to be accompanied is known. In the standard form of notation for songs, called a lead sheet, the melody is given in staff notation. The harmonic rhythm is usually indicated by the placement of chord symbols, above the notation for the melody, at the points in time at which changes of chord must be made. Lead sheet notation would seem to suggest that harmonic rhythm is dependent on melody, but it is in fact dependent not on melody, but rather on the music's meter.

Harmonic rhythm can therefore be notated with the use of a chord chart that does not include the notation for the melody. Because the melody is omitted, chord chart notation is completely different from lead sheet notation. The omission of the melody allows for a greatly simplified notation of the harmonic rhythm, and is a sensible departure from the standard notational model for two important reasons. First, the easiest (and often also the best) way to learn a melody is to listen to it, and that learning process does not require any form of notation. Second, the specific notes of a song's melody are seldom of great importance in the matter of fashioning a rhythm guitar accompaniment to that song. In fashioning rhythm guitar accompaniments, the only consideration of overriding importance is conformance to the music's harmonic rhythm.

Chord charts are based on groupings of evenly spaced slash marks. The correct timing of chord changes is given by the exact placement of chord symbols in relation to these slash marks. Notice that this visual representation of rhythm is similar to the notation of rhythmic timing in

visualinear tablature. However, unlike the beats along a line of visualinear tablature, the slash marks in a chord chart seldom represent individual beats of the music's meter. Since changes of chord are normally made far less frequently than on every beat, the notation can usually be simplified by having the slash marks represent either full measures or half measures. The coordination of the chord chart with the music's meter, and with the beating of a metronome, is explained in the chord chart heading, an example of which is shown below.

MM = 120
in 4
/ = two beats (one half measure)

The top line of the heading gives the numerical metronome setting that establishes the tempo of the music. The middle line of the heading is the music's meter (in 3, in 4, etc.). The bottom line of the heading is more complicated, since it refers not only to beats of the metronome, but also to the music's meter, which consists of beats. To avoid confusion of the two different types of beats, the reference to the music's meter is made in terms of the portion of a measure represented by each slash mark. For example, the bottom line of the chord chart heading given above indicates that each slash mark in the chord chart represents two beats of the metronome, which is equivalent to one half measure of meter. In other words, the metronome beats out every beat of meter, and each slash mark represents two beats (one half measure).

In some cases, the beats of the metronome represent two or three beats of meter. For instance, fast-paced music in 4 is often counted out in 2 (this is called cut-time), which would result in the following bottom line of a chord chart heading : **/ = two beats (one full measure)** Music in 6 is often counted out in 2, which would result in the same bottom line of a chord

chart heading. Music in 9 is normally counted out in 3, which would result in the following bottom line of a chord chart heading :

/ = three beats (one full measure) Music in 12 is normally counted out in 4, which would result in the following bottom line of a chord chart heading :

/ = four beats (one full measure)

In constructing a chord chart, once the metric and rhythmic framework for the harmonic rhythm has been established with the use of slash marks, all that remains is the placement of chord symbols at the required locations. Major chords, and chords based on the Major chord type, are expressed in chord symbol by upper case (capital) letters. Minor chords, and chords based on the minor chord type, are expressed in chord symbol by lower case (small) letters. The completed chord chart gives a concise and complete account of the harmonic rhythm of the music, and is in effect an abbreviated version of a visualinear tablature score for a rhythm guitar arrangement. The sole exception to this interconnection is the fact that barre chords are identified by their actual pitch in a chord chart. For example, if the A7II barre chord is called for in a rhythm guitar arrangement, the chord symbol B7 is used to represent that chord in the chord chart.

Chord charts can serve a number of useful purposes. They can provide a quick review of rhythm guitar music you have already learned. They are more useful than a visualinear tablature score in the matter of improvising variations of a known arrangement, or improvising an arrangement altogether, since they give a simpler and more condensed account of the required chord changes. They can be used as the basis for devising complementary rhythm guitar arrangements, either by transposing all the chords to another key of play and using a capo, or by translating all the chords to an alternate tuning. But perhaps most importantly, chord charts can facilitate people playing music together by

ensuring that everyone is literally on the same page in very short order. By removing the tedious and often time-consuming obstacle presented by the need for everyone to learn and memorize the required chord changes, chord charts can allow people to come together musically more productively and more enjoyably.