

Open string exercises

Luke Aylward

The image shows a musical score for guitar, consisting of a standard staff and a tablature staff. The time signature is 4/4. The first three measures of the standard staff contain quarter notes on the open strings: E4, A4, D5, G5 in the first measure; E4, A4, D5, G5 in the second measure; and E4, A4, D5, G5 in the third measure. The fourth measure contains two chords: a D5 chord (G5, F#5, E5) and an E5 chord (G5, F#5, E5). The tablature staff shows the corresponding fretting: four zeros (0) for each of the first three measures, and two zeros (0) for the fourth measure, indicating open strings.

How to read the TAB

TAB is not the same as sheet music, although it works in conjunction with it and shares some of the key principles.

The 6 lines represent the 6 strings, however the thickest string is shown nearest the floor and the thinnest nearest the ceiling, why?

Because the thinnest is highest in pitch/sound, with the thickest creating the lowest sound.

Thinnest

E— — — — —
B— — — — —
G— — — — —
D— — — — —
A— — — — —
E— — — — —

Thickest

If you see:

E—0— — — — —
B— — — — —
G— — — — —
D— — — — —
A— — — — —
E— — — — —

this means you pluck an open string once, therefore you play the string exactly as it is, without touching it with your left hand. In this example you are playing the thinnest string

If you were to see:

E-----
B-1-1-1-1-----
G-----
D-----
A-----
E-----

This means you'd place a left hand finger (ideally index) behind fret 1 on the 2nd string, and pluck the string 4 times as evenly as possible.

The index finger is also known as finger 1, however if you're reading this document you're not ready to fret notes yet, so relax and go back to the original exercise.