

What Is Guitar Tab?

Guitar Tablature (usually called "tab") is an alternative to traditional sheet music. Many guitarists find tab easier to master than traditional sheet music. It certainly is easier to read in the beginning, but you should know that tablature has a fundamental flaw: While tab may show you what fret to put your fingers on, most tablature does not indicate the timing of the notes to be played.

Because of this, and unlike sheet music, if you haven't heard the song and don't know the rhythm to be played, the tab won't help you much. With traditional sheet music, you can play songs correctly even if you've never heard them before.

Of course most people don't search for tab for songs they've never heard – you're usually looking for the tab for a song you love and are eager to play, right?

The Bottom Line: Sheet Music vs. Tablature

Tablature is very popular, and somewhat easier to read than sheet music – up to a point. But in the long run, you would be better off learning to read traditional sheet music.

Once you become a fairly advanced guitarist, and you're looking at the tablature for some shreddin' guitar solo – say by the likes of Joe Satriani, or Jimmy Page, or Zakk Wylde – the tablature can be every bit as complicated as the actual sheet music.

Believe me, I've had to transcribe some intense guitar licks in both sheet music and tablature in books I've written or edited for music publisher Hal Leonard – and the tab in those was really complicated and full of all kinds of special markings that only a pro tab reader would have been able to understand – yet without any indication of the rhythmic value of the notes you're supposed to play.

What I'm saying is, that to become an expert tab reader at a high level of guitar ability, you'd have to put in almost as much time practicing reading tab as reading sheet music – only you'd have been better off learning to read sheet music to get the rhythmic info necessary to play the song correctly.

Tab is OK, but sheet music is better.

"Yeah, right," I hear you saying. "Now let's get on with the tablature."

OK. Let's do it.

Guitar Tab Basics

Guitar tablature represents the six guitar strings and the fret numbers you are to play in an easy to read graphic. Each number you see on tablature tells you on which string and at which fret to place your fingers. Additional markings you'll learn about below will indicate if a note is to be treated in some special way, such as a bend, or vibrato. I'll cover all those special markings in this booklet.

Guitar tab is written with six lines, each representing a guitar string.

The top most line represents the thinnest string on your guitar, the bottom line is the thickest string on your guitar.

```
E----- Thinnest String  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E----- Thickest String
```

Numbers placed on these lines indicate which fret to play on each string. Also, you must treat the tablature as a timeline, with the numbers played in order (in time) as you read from left to right, just like you're reading this sentence.

The following tab indicates that you are to play the open first string (thinnest string) – a zero on the line means to play the string open (not fretted) – followed by the first fret, then the third fret, then the first fret, and then the open string again.

```
E-0-1-3-1-0-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----
```

How to Read Guitar Tab Chords

When you see numbers stacked up on top of each other in tablature, this indicates that you are to play them as a chord. Here is the tab for a C chord:

```
E--0-----  
B--1-----  
G--0-----  
D--2-----  
A--3-----  
E-----
```

The following example shows that you are to play the C chord four times:

```
E--0--0--0--0-----  
B--1--1--1--1-----  
G--0--0--0--0-----  
D--2--2--2--2-----  
A--3--3--3--3-----  
E-----
```

In the above example, you would strum the C chord four times. If, instead, you were supposed to pick the chord one note at a time (an arpeggio), as in a finger-picking song or maybe a slow ballad section, you would see the numbers of the chord spread out this way:

```
E-----0-----  
B-----1-----  
G-----0-----  
D-----2-----  
A----3-----  
E-----
```

Notice that the above example is the same C chord played in the previous example, but this time played as an arpeggio.

Expert Tip: I would highly suggest that whenever you are looking at tab, you keep an eye out for groupings of numbers that actually make up a chord shape. I routinely see students struggling to play a series of notes one at a time, and to finger them one at a time – and having the song not sound like it's supposed to sound.

Then I take a look at the tab they're working from and point out to them that that spread out group of numbers is really just a C chord, or a D chord – or whatever – played one note at a time, as an arpeggio. And then as soon as they actually hold the chord down and pick the notes, the song starts to sound like it is supposed to sound.

They were seeing it all as just some random notes, not the chord that I saw it to be. Once they saw it and played it as a chord, the song came together real quick.

So keep your eye out for chords played as arpeggios, and then hold the entire chord down as if you were going to strum the chord, even if it is going to be played as an arpeggio.

So Is There *Any* Rhythmic Info in Tab?

The best you're going to get with most tab, in regards to any hints at the rhythm of the notes, is the spacing of the numbers on the tab timeline. If a pause is needed between notes – or if a note is to be held longer – there will usually be some space between it and the next note. And when notes are to be played in rapid succession, they will be closer together.

Take a look at the tablature below. This tab represents the intro and repeating riff in the Beatles "Day Tripper." Notice the space between the first note (the open sixth string) and the 3-4 that follows on the same string. On the Beatles' recording, that first note – the open E string – rings a bit before they continue with the rest of the riff. The spacing of the notes in this tablature example indicates that you are to sustain that note (or at least pause) before playing the notes at the 3rd and 4th frets.

```
E-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----2---0---4---0-2--  
A-----2-----2---2-----  
E-0---3-4-----
```

Watch for the spacing of notes in tablature and treat longer spaces as longer pauses or longer sustained notes (you'll have to figure that out by listening to the song). You would know for sure whether the note was to be sustained or simply followed by a rest if you were reading the same notation in real sheet music.

Special Markings and Guitar Techniques

Once you know which fret to place your fingers on, how do you know whether you're supposed to bend that note, put a little vibrato on it, hammer-on to another note, or apply any other special technique?

These techniques are explored in detail in the intermediate level of the course. Get your basic beginner level skills down first if you haven't already, then dig in to the intermediate level course path I've created.

Here is a whole list of basic tab markings as they are found in most Internet tablature:

- h - hammer on
- p - pull off
- b - bend string up
- r - release bend
- / - slide up
- \ - slide down
- v - vibrato (sometimes written as ~)
- t - right hand tap
- s - legato slide
- S - shift slide
- - natural harmonic
- [n] - artificial harmonic
- n(n) - tapped harmonic
- tr - trill
- T - tap
- TP - trem. picking
- PM - palm muting
- \n/ - tremolo bar dip; n = amount to dip
- \n - tremolo bar down
- n/ - tremolo bar up
- /n\ - tremolo bar inverted dip
- = - hold bend; also acts as connecting device for hammers/pulls
- <> - volume swell (louder/softer)
- x - on rhythm slash represents muted slash
- o - on rhythm slash represents single note slash

Expert Tip: The tablature you'll see in most professional songbooks, and in most of the online and printed lessons I create, is a little different, primarily because we use sheet music/tablature graphics programs such as Finale or Sibelius, which allow us to create arrows and other such symbols to represent various guitar techniques, rather than having to rely on whatever letters or symbols a computer keyboard allows.

Here is a chart of guitar techniques described in sheet music and tablature, as you may find in my lessons or in a regular song book you purchase at your local music store:

Guitar Notation Legend

Notes:

Strings:
T A B
E A D G B E

4th string, 2nd fret 1st & 2nd strings open, played together open D chord

THE MUSICAL STAFF shows pitches and rhythms and is divided by bar lines into measures. Pitches are named after the first seven letters of the alphabet.

TABLATURE graphically represents the guitar fingerboard. Each horizontal line represents a string, and each number represents a fret.

HALF-STEP BEND: Strike the note and bend up 1/2 step.

BEND AND RELEASE: Strike the note and bend up as indicated, then release back to the original note. Only the first note is struck.

HAMMER-ON: Strike the first (lower) note with one finger, then sound the higher note (on the same string) with another finger by fretting it without picking.

TRILL: Very rapidly alternate between the notes indicated by continuously hammering on and pulling off.

TREMOLO PICKING: The note is picked as rapidly and continuously as possible.

WHOLE-STEP BEND: Strike the note and bend up one step.

PRE-BEND: Bend the note as indicated, then strike it.

PULL-OFF: Place both fingers on the notes to be sounded. Strike the first note and without picking, pull the finger off to sound the second (lower) note.

TAPPING: Hammer ("tap") the fret indicated with the pick-hand index or middle finger and pull off to the note fretted by the first hand.

VIBRATO BAR DIVE AND RETURN: The pitch of the note or chord is dropped a specified number of steps (in rhythm) then returned to the original pitch.

GRACE NOTE BEND: Strike the note and bend up as indicated. The first note does not take up any time.

VIBRATO: The string is vibrated by rapidly bending and releasing the note with the fretting hand.

LEGATO SLIDE: Strike the first note and then slide the same fret-hand finger up or down to the second note. The second note is not struck.

NATURAL HARMONIC: Strike the note while the fret-hand lightly touches the string directly over the fret indicated.

VIBRATO BAR SCOOP: Depress the bar just before striking the note, then quickly release the bar.

SLIGHT (MICROTONE) BEND: Strike the note and bend up 1/4 step.

PALM MUTING: The note is partially muted by the pick hand lightly touching the string(s) just before the bridge.

SHIFT SLIDE: Same as legato slide, except the second note is struck.

PINCH HARMONIC: The note is fretted normally and a harmonic is produced by adding the edge of the thumb or the tip of the index finger of the pick hand to the normal pick attack.

VIBRATO BAR DIP: Strike the note and then immediately drop a specified number of steps, then release back to the original pitch.

Additional Musical Definitions



(*accent*)

• Accentuate note (play it louder)



(*staccato*)

• Play the note short

D.S. al Coda

• Go back to the sign (8), then play until the measure marked "To Coda"; then skip to the section labelled "Coda."

D.C. al Fine

• Go back to the beginning of the song and play until the measure marked "Fine" and.

FBI

• Label used to identify a brief melodic figure which is to be inserted into the arrangement.

N.C.

• No Chord



• Repeat measures between signs.



• When a repeated section has different endings, play the first ending only the first time and the second ending only the second time.

Expert Tip: The list of techniques shown on the diagram above, and explained in further detail below, should not just be considered important in regards to "How To Read Tab." It's way more than that. This is truly a list of **THE MOST IMPORTANT GUITAR TECHNIQUES YOU SHOULD KNOW**.

Use this list as a check list and make sure you are competent at all or most of these techniques, and your playing will soar!

The Most Useful Techniques Shown As Tab

There are a handful of guitar techniques you'll come across more often than others – both in your reading of tablature or sheet music, and in your actual playing.

Here are some of the Must-Know tab markings:

A Hammer-On

To play a hammer-on, you'll pick a note, then slam a finger down a fret or more higher on that same string. This is a technique you should practice over and over until you can do it routinely.

Here it is shown in basic internet tab:

```
E-----  
B-----  
G-----9h11-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----
```

The above example indicates that you are to play the note at the 5th fret on the third string, then (without picking again), slam your finger down on the 7th fret of the third string. The "h" between the numbers tells you that this is a hammer-on.

Here is the same technique shown as you might find it in a songbook, or one of my courses:

HAMMER-ON: Strike the first (lower) note with one finger, then sound the higher note (on the same string) with another finger by fretting it without picking.



A Pull-Off

A Pull-off is basically the opposite of a hammer-on. To play a pull-off, you'll pick a note, then pull that finger off the string to make a lower note on the same string sound. This technique is a little more difficult to master than a hammer-on.

You'll place both fingers on the string at the same time. Then pick the first note. To achieve a good pull-off, you'll then need to pull the finger off the string in a sort of plucking motion. If you just simply lift the finger off the string (lifting straight up), the second note won't be very loud. To increase the volume of the second note, apply a slight downward pressure on the string with the finger you are pulling off. You'll literally need to slightly pluck the string with that finger as it comes off the fretboard.

This is another technique you should practice over and over until you can do it routinely.

Here it is shown in basic internet tab:

```
E-----  
B-----  
G-----11p9-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----
```

The above example indicates that you are to play the note at the 7th fret on the third string, then (without picking again), pull that finger off and allow the note on the 5th fret of the third string sound. The "p" between the numbers tells you that this is a pull-off.

Here is the same technique shown as you might find it in a songbook, or one of my courses:

PULL-OFF: Place both fingers on the notes to be sounded. Strike the first note and without picking, pull the finger off to sound the second (lower) note.

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains two notes: a quarter note on the 7th fret (G) and a quarter note on the 5th fret (E), connected by a slur. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature with strings labeled T, A, and B. It shows the same two notes: a quarter note on the 11th fret and a quarter note on the 9th fret, connected by a slur.

A Trill

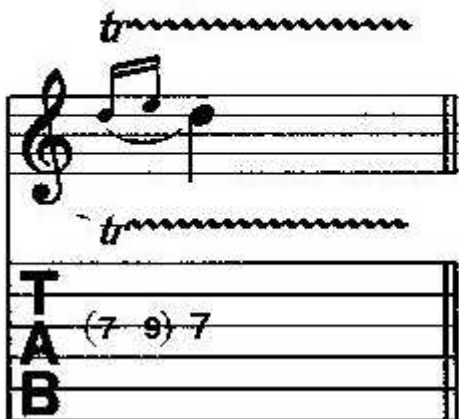
A trill is a very rapid hammer-on and pull-off combination between two notes. You'll play a note, then hammer-on a note above it on the fretboard, then pull-off that note back to the original note. You'll then repeat this move quickly over and over for as long as indicated.

Here is a trill shown in typical internet tab:

```
E-----  
B-----  
G-----9tr11-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----
```

Here is the same technique shown as you might find it in a songbook, or one of my courses:

TRILL: Very rapidly alternate between the notes indicated by continuously hammering on and pulling off.



The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef. Above the staff is a trill symbol, a wavy line with a 'tr' above it. Below the staff is a guitar tablature with five lines. The first line is labeled 'T', the second 'A', and the third 'B'. The tablature shows the sequence of frets: (7 9) 7.

A Few Types of Bend

A Bend may be the most essential skill of all. And you may have to work on it a bunch before you get it right. And bends come in various "sizes," so to speak.

Anyway, a bend means that you play a note, then push (or pull) on the string to bend the string, raising the pitch of the note.

Half-Step Bend

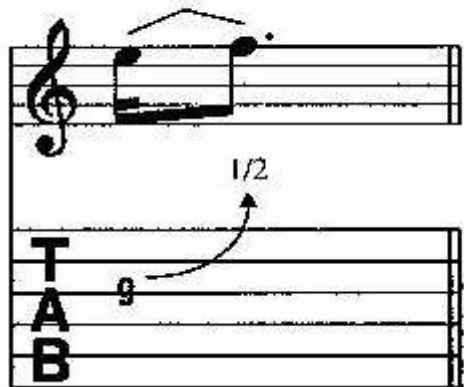
Here is a bend shown in basic internet tab:

```
E-----  
B-----  
G--9b-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----
```

The above example indicates that you are to play the note at the 7th fret on the third string, then bend that note (it doesn't tell us how much to bend, unfortunately). The "b" after the fret number tells you that this is a bend.

Here is the same technique shown as you might find it in a songbook, or one of my courses:

HALF-STEP BEND: Strike the note and bend up 1/2 step.

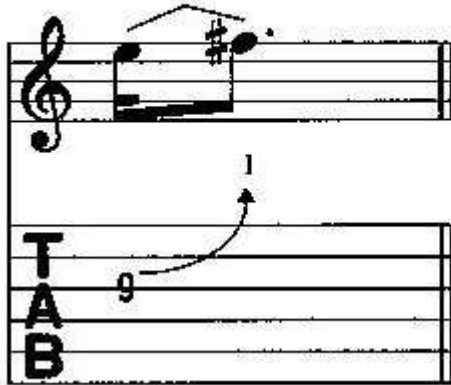


In the above example, you are to bend the note $\frac{1}{2}$ step, which means bend the note until it sounds exactly the same pitch as the note one fret higher, in this case, the 10th fret. A half step is equal to one fret on the guitar, so a half-step bend indicates bending a note to raise the pitch one fret.

Whole Step Bend

Here is a whole step (two fret bend), which is the most common bend you'll come across:

WHOLE-STEP BEND: Strike the note and bend up one step.



The image shows a musical staff in treble clef and a guitar tablature staff. The musical staff contains a quarter note on the second line (F4) with a sharp sign (#) above it, indicating a whole step bend. A bracket above the note indicates the duration of the bend. The tablature staff shows the string and fret numbers: the 9th fret on the second string. An arrow points from the '9' to the first fret line, with the number '1' above it, indicating a two-fret bend.

Grace Note Bend

Sometimes you actually bend a note before we hear the original (unbent) note. This is called a grace note bend. Here is how that looks in tablature. Notice in the sheet music the "grace" note has no stem.

GRACE NOTE BEND: Strike the note and bend up as indicated. The first note does not take up any time.



The image shows a musical staff in treble clef and a guitar tablature staff. The musical staff contains a grace note (a quarter note on the second line, F4, with no stem) followed by a quarter note on the second space (G4). A sharp sign (#) is above the grace note. The tablature staff shows the string and fret numbers: the 9th fret on the second string. An arrow points from the '9' to the first fret line, with the number '1/2' above it, indicating a half-step bend.

Slight or Microtone Bend

And occasionally we see instructions for a very slight bend, not even a 1/2 step. This is usually called a 1/4 step bend, "slight" or "micro-tone" bend. You'll actually see this a lot on the G note at the 3rd fret of the sixth string, particularly in songs in the key of A or E.

Here is what a "slight" bend looks like:

SLIGHT (MICROTONE) BEND:

Strike the note and bend up 1/4 step.

The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a single eighth note on the G line (3rd fret, 6th string). A curved arrow above the note points upwards and is labeled "1/4". Below the staff is a guitar tablature with the number "9" on the sixth string, and a curved arrow pointing upwards from the "9" is also labeled "1/4".

Pre-Bend

And one more type of bend: A pre-bend means that you will actually bend the note all the way before you even pick it.

Here is what a pre-bend looks like:

PRE-BEND: Bend the note as indicated, then strike it.

The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a single eighth note on the G line (3rd fret, 6th string). A curved arrow above the note points upwards and is labeled "1". Below the staff is a guitar tablature with the number "9" on the sixth string, and a curved arrow pointing upwards from the "9" is also labeled "1".

A Bend and Release

If you're going to bend a note, you're going to have to release it too, right? Sometimes we don't care whether or not we hear the bend released, but in some instances, the release of the note is essential.

In this case you pick and bend the note, let it ring for a bit as a bent note, then slowly release it back to its unbent position, letting it ring the whole time. So you'll hear the unbent note first, then the bend, then you'll hear the bend being released, and finally you'll hear the original unbent note – and you'll only have picked the guitar string one time throughout all of that. You've got to grip the strings and fretboard firmly to keep the note sounding that whole time.

Here is what a Bend and Release looks like in basic internet tab:

```
E-----  
B-----  
G--10r9-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----
```

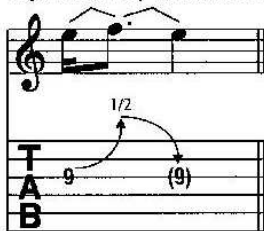
Or sometimes you'll see it written this way:

```
E-----  
B-----  
G--9br9-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----
```

The "r" between the fret numbers in the first example indicates a release of a bend (though they didn't tell us to bend the note in the first place – you need to know that...) In the second example the "br" between the numbers does indicate that we are to bend the 9th fret, then release back to the 9th fret, though it doesn't indicate how far to bend. The wrong bend (bending a whole step when you should have bent only a 1/2 step, or vice versa), is the same thing as playing the wrong note. But that's a limitation of internet tab not found in songbook tab (which is far more accurate and informational.)

Here is what a Bend and Release looks like in a songbook:

BEND AND RELEASE: Strike the note and bend up as indicated, then release back to the original note. Only the first note is struck.



Notice the songbook tab indicates only a half-step bend. The internet tab above didn't tell us much about how far to bend.

A Slide

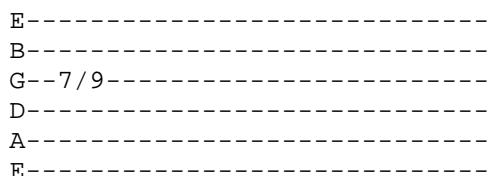
Sometimes we slide from one fret to another. The slide might go up the fretboard or down the fretboard. Keep in mind, this type of "slide" has nothing to do with playing "slide guitar," which is accomplished by wearing a glass, ceramic, or metal "slide" on your fretting hand.

This may be the easiest common technique of all. To accomplish a slide you simply place your finger on a note, pick the string, then slide that finger to a higher or lower fret on that same string. Done.

A slide is indicated by a slash.

The slash symbol "/" indicates a slide going up the fretboard (toward the body of your guitar).

The slash symbol "\" indicates that you are to slide down the fretboard (away from the body of your guitar).



Here is the same technique shown as you might find it in a songbook, or one of my courses:

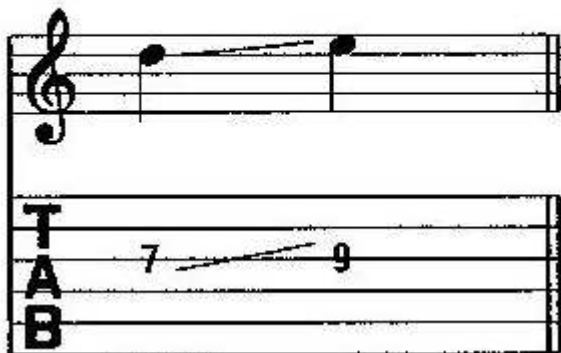
LEGATO SLIDE: Strike the first note and then slide the same fret-hand finger up or down to the second note. The second note is not struck.



Again internet tab proves to be not quite as informational as pro tab. There are actually two types of slide, the "Legato Slide" and the "Shift Slide." In the Legato slide you only pick the string once, at the beginning of the slide. In the Shift slide you pick the string both at the beginning and end of the slide.

Here is how the Shift Slide looks:

SHIFT SLIDE: Same as legato slide, except the second note is struck.



Notice the shift slide is missing the curved line above the numbers. The curved line indicates something called a "slur," where two or more notes are played without any rhythmic or accent separation between them. This type of playing is called Legato, and hence the Legato Slide.

The opposite of Legato – in general music terms – is staccato. When we have a distinct separation between notes, as opposed to a smoothly flowing legato melody line, we call that staccato. The Shift Slide, because we do pick both the first and second notes, is slightly more staccato – hence the missing "slur" line.

Of course, if you're learning a song you already have heard a zillion times, you'll probably know by ear whether or not the second note is to be picked.

Vibrato

Vibrato will probably end up being your favorite technique. Most lead guitarists add a touch of vibrato to the note at the end of every melodic phrase. Some players add more, some less, but it's almost always in there – unless you listen to really early rock, when, it seems, players just didn't use much vibrato. I've had students who played lead guitar without ever adding vibrato and it sounded like they had just come in from the early '60s via Time Machine.

Vibrato is simply the slight bending of the guitar sting – almost a wiggle, if you will. This is not nearly as much bending as discussed above in the section on Bends. We're talking very slight bending here, usually less than a "micro-tone" bend.

Perfecting vibrato takes time, as do all these guitar techniques (well, perhaps with the exception of the slide). Start out slow and steady and gradually build up speed. Use a metronome to practice vibrato and try to match your bends to the click of your metronome, gradually increasing the tempo.

You might also want to practice a narrow vibrato and a wide vibrato (where you do bend the notes a little more). If you listen closely to your favorite guitarists, you'll notice that some use a wider vibrato than others.

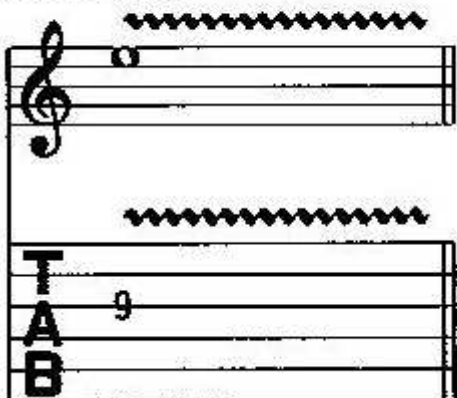
Here is what vibrato looks like in basic internet tab:

```
E-----  
B-----  
G--9v-----  
D-----9~~~~  
A-----  
E-----
```

Notice the "v" after the 9 above, and also, in the second example, the "~~~~~" symbols, indicating vibrato.

Here is the same technique shown as you might find it in a songbook, or one of my courses:

VIBRATO: The string is vibrated by rapidly bending and releasing the note with the fretting hand.



Pick Hand Tapping

Tapping, made very popular by Eddie Van Halen when his 90-second guitar solo "Eruption" first pinned back our ears in 1978, is a lot of fun, and not too difficult to accomplish.

Basically, tapping, or finger-tapping, involves using your pick hand to fret notes, just like you usually do with your fret hand. Most players use the finger tip of their pointer or index finger to tap on the guitar fretboard, sounding the note tapped as if it were being played normally by the fret hand.

Usually, a tapped note is then pulled off to a lower note on the same string, and often this is done in a rapid, repetitive pattern, typically involving three separate notes (two played by the fret hand, and the other, highest note, tapped by the pick hand).

Here is a tap shown in typical internet tab:

```
E-----  
B-----  
G--7t---7t---7t-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----
```

The "t" indicates you are to tap the 7th fret on the third string with one of your pick hand fingertips.

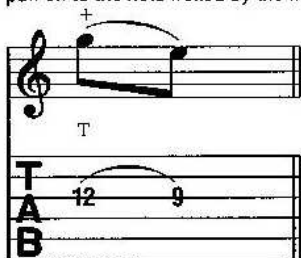
A more typical "tapping" riff, shown in typical internet tab:

```
E-----  
B-12t-8--5-----12t--8--5-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----
```

The above riff indicates that you would tap the 12th fret on the second string, then pull off to the 8th fret (played by the fret hand), then pull off that note to the 5th fret (also played by the fret hand). The phrase is then repeated. In tapping, your tapping finger has to be adept not only at tapping the note, but at completing the "pull off," with a slight pluck of the string, much the same as a traditional pull off (see above).

Here is the same technique shown as you might find it in a songbook, or one of my courses:

TAPPING: Hammer ("tap") the fret indicated with the pick-hand index or middle finger and pull off to the note fretted by the fret hand.



Harmonics

Harmonics are those beautiful, chime-like sounds we sometimes play on guitar.

They take a bit of practice on their own, of course. Don't apply too much pressure (certainly don't press down on the string when trying to create a natural harmonic) or your harmonic won't chime.

Natural Harmonics

Notice I said "Natural Harmonic." There are other types, I'll describe below. Natural harmonics chime naturally at the 5th, 7th, and 12th frets (those are the most widely used, anyway.)

Here is a natural harmonic shown in typical internet tab:

```
E-----  
B-----  
G-----<12>-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----
```

The "<>" indicates you are to play a 12th fret harmonic on the third string.

Here is the same technique shown as you might find it in a songbook, or one of my courses:

NATURAL HARMONIC: Strike the note while the fret-hand lightly touches the string directly over the fret indicated.

The image shows two staves. The top staff is a standard musical staff with a treble clef. It contains a single note with a diamond-shaped head, positioned on the second line (G4). Below the staff is the word "Harm.". The bottom staff is a guitar tablature staff with five lines. The word "TAB" is written vertically on the left side. The number "12" is written on the third line, indicating the fret.

Notice the sheet music note head for a harmonic is actually diamond-shaped, as opposed to the usual round notehead for a regular note.

Pinch Harmonics

There is also a type of harmonic called a Pinch Harmonic that is really fun. A pinch harmonic kind of squeals, and they've been used by everyone from Billy Gibbons on early ZZ Top songs such as "La Grange," to modern metal guys such as Zakk Wylde (Ozzy Osbourne).

Pinch harmonics are tough to get at first, but eventually you'll be able to play them all over the place. And then that's what you'll do: overuse them. Have fun with 'em for awhile, then back off a bit!

To play a pinch harmonic, you'll fret a note normally, and you'll pick that note. But you'll have to tighten up your grip on your pick so that only the slightest bit of the tip is sticking out between your thumb and finger. Then, when you pick the note, you'll actually let your thumb brush against the string a bit. If you are holding your pick in the right position, you'll hear the note squeal, like a cross between a normal fretted note and a natural harmonic.

It is sometimes easier to get a pinch harmonic to ring if you're using a bit of gain or distortion. Also, try moving your pick hand back and forth between the bridge and the end of the fretboard and you'll find different harmonics – even though you're fretting only one note.

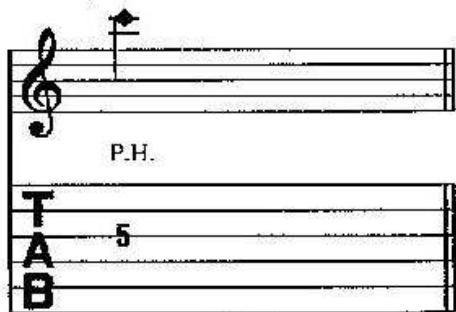
Here is a typical internet tab showing pinch harmonics:

```
E-----  
B-----  
G-----5ph-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----
```

The "ph" indicates you are to play a pinch harmonic on a note at the 5th fret of the third string.

Here is the same technique shown as you might find it in a songbook, or one of my courses:

PINCH HARMONIC: The note is fretted normally and a harmonic is produced by adding the edge of the thumb or the tip of the index finger of the pick hand to the normal pick attack.



Again, notice the sheet music note head for a harmonic is diamond-shaped, and notice the P.H. placed above the tab, indicating "Pinch Harmonic."

Palm Muting

Palm Muting is an important technique you'll need to learn, whether it ever shows up on any tab you read or not. Palm Muting is what pro players use to keep their guitar under control – to keep unwanted noise down and unplayed strings from ringing at the wrong time.

It is also a technique that heavily affects your overall guitar tone. If you're trying to cover Metallica, for example, and you're not using heavy palm muting on the rhythm guitar parts, you're not going to sound like Metallica. Palm muting is an important part of James Hetfield's guitar technique and his overall guitar tone.

With palm muting, you'll be resting the palm of your pick hand right on the guitar strings while you're playing. If you're playing an acoustic guitar *au natural*, this will simply deaden your strings. But if you're plugged in (either acoustic or electric), the muting of your pick hand will affect your tone, but still allow the sound of the notes to ring through. It's a very effective tool, and you can decide how much muting to use at any given time.

Here is palm muting shown in typical internet tab:

```
E-----  
B-----  
G-----  
D-----  
A---0pm-0pm-0pm---  
E-----
```

The "pm" indicates you are to palm mute as you play the open A string.

Here is the same technique shown as you might find it in a songbook, or one of my courses:

PALM MUTING: The note is partially muted by the pick hand lightly touching the string(s) just before the bridge.

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a guitar tablature below it. The staff contains four quarter notes on the A string, all marked with a flat symbol. Below the staff, a dashed line with a vertical bar at the end is labeled "P.M.". The tablature below is labeled "TAB" and shows four open strings (0) on the A string.

Tremolo Picking

Tremolo Picking is the very fast type of single note picking you've heard Eddie Van Halen do in numerous guitar solos. In tremolo picking, you'll play a note, and pick it repeatedly, usually as fast as possible. Van Halen would often play a series of notes with tremolo picking, as he climbed up a scale on the first string as the climax of a solo.

To build up your tremolo picking speed and consistency, you'll want to practice with a metronome. Start by playing in groups of four (16th notes), at a slower tempo, then gradually increase the tempo into hyperdrive!

Here is tremolo picking shown in typical internet tab:

```
E-----  
B-----  
G-----5TP-----7TP-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----
```

You might also see Tremolo Picking indicated this way:

```
          TP          TP  
E-----  
B-----  
G-----5-----7-----  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----
```

The "TP" indicates you are to tremolo pick as you play the open 5th fret, then the 7th fret on the third string.

Here is the same technique shown as you might find it in a songbook, or one of my courses:

TREMOLO PICKING: The note is picked as rapidly and continuously as possible.

The image shows two musical notations for tremolo picking. The top notation is a standard musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains two notes: a quarter note on the G line (5th fret) and a quarter note on the A line (7th fret), both marked with a sharp sign (#). The bottom notation is a guitar tablature with six strings. The third string has two fretted notes: a 5 and a 7, each with a double slash (//) underneath it to indicate tremolo picking. The letters 'T', 'A', and 'B' are stacked vertically on the left side of the tablature.

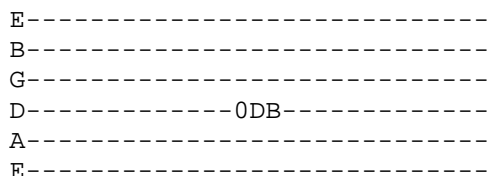
Whammy Bar Fun!

Some people call it the vibrato bar. Some people call it the tremolo bar. Some people call it the Whammy bar.... What do you call it?

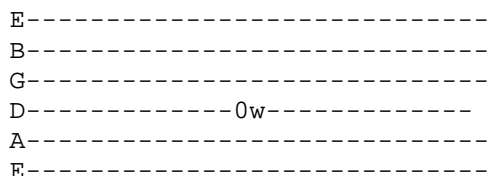
Anyway, there are several different tab markings for things you can do with one of those things, including dive bombs, dips, inverted or reverse dips, and so on.

Dive Bomb

Here is a Whammy Bar dive bomb as shown in typical internet tab:



You might also see this on the internet:



In above example, the "w" symbol tells you to use the whammy bar, but doesn't really indicate how much. Here is the same technique shown as you might find it in a songbook, or one of my courses:

VIBRATO BAR DIVE AND RETURN:

The pitch of the note or chord is dropped a specified number of steps (in rhythm) then returned to the original pitch.

A musical notation example for a vibrato bar dive and return. The top staff is a treble clef with three notes: D4, C4, and B3. A bracket under the last two notes is labeled 'w/ bar'. The bottom staff is a guitar tab with strings labeled T, A, B. The D string has a note marked '0', followed by a downward-sloping line to a note marked '-1', and then an upward-sloping line to a note marked '(0)'. A '-1' is written below the D string line.

Notice the notation says "-1." This indicates you are to play the open D string, then drop that note one whole step with the vibrato bar, before returning it to it's original pitch.

Vibrato Bar Scoop

There is also a Whammy Bar technique called a "scoop." With this technique, you quickly depress the bar before picking your note, then release the bar after you pick, so the pitch comes up to your fretted note.

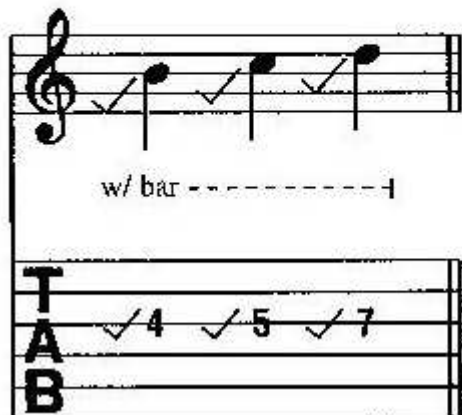
Here is a Whammy Bar scoop as you might see it in typical internet tab:

```
E-----  
B-----  
G-----\ /w4-----\ /w5-----\ /w7---  
D-----  
A-----  
E-----
```

In this case, the "w" symbol tells you to use the whammy bar and the "V" indicates to depress and release the bar.

Here is the same technique shown as you might find it in a songbook, or one of my courses:

VIBRATO BAR SCOOP: Depress the bar just before striking the note, then quickly release the bar.



The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains three eighth notes with upward-pointing stems, indicating a rising pitch. Below the staff, the text "w/ bar" is followed by a dashed line and a vertical bar, representing the whammy bar technique. Below the staff is a guitar tablature with three lines labeled T, A, and B from top to bottom. The first line (T) has a checkmark above the number 4. The second line (A) has a checkmark above the number 5. The third line (B) has a checkmark above the number 7.

Vibrato Bar Dip

This is probably the most common Whammy Bar technique. With this technique, you depress the bar after picking your note, then release the bar so the pitch comes back up to your fretted note.

Here is a Whammy Bar dip as you might see it in typical internet tab:

```

E-----
B-----
G-----\w7/-----\w7/-----\w7/--
D-----
A-----
E-----
  
```

In this case, the "w" symbol tells you to use the whammy bar and the "V" indicates to depress and release the bar. Notice the fret number is inside the "V" symbol.

Here is the same technique shown as you might find it in a songbook, or one of my courses:

VIBRATO BAR DIP: Strike the note and then immediately drop a specified number of steps, then release back to the original pitch.

The image shows musical notation for a vibrato bar dip. It consists of three parts:

- Staff 1 (Treble Clef):** Three quarter notes on the G line (G4). Above each note is a downward-pointing 'V' symbol with '-1/2' written above it, indicating a half-step dip.
- Staff 2 (Whammy Bar):** A dashed line labeled 'w/ bar' spans the duration of the three notes. Below this line are three downward-pointing 'V' symbols, each with '-1/2' written below it, indicating the bar is depressed half a step.
- Staff 3 (Guitar Tab):** A three-line guitar tab with the letters 'T', 'A', and 'B' on the left. The middle line (A string) has the number '7' written on it for each of the three notes.