

One String At A Time

A keyboard has only one 'row' of notes. But a guitar has six strings that can each be fretted at different places along the fretboard. This lesson involves playing the guitar in a way that is similar to playing a piano. It does this by approaching the guitar horizontally, one string at a time. This is the first step toward *seeing* a scale as a series of notes rather than just a 'box' pattern on the fretboard.

Go ahead and try playing up and down the 1st and/or 6th strings. Keep a steady tempo throughout.

Playing up the E string: Play **E**, **F** and **G** in the open position. Without any break in the tempo, shift to the 5th position and play **A**, **B** and **C**. This shift has to be done *smoothly*. Then shift up to the 10th position and play **D**, **E** and **F**. Say the name of each note as it is played, and let it ring out for about a second. Remember, each shift should sound smooth and seamless.

Playing down the E string: While in the 10th position play **F**, **E** and **D**. Shift to the 5th position and play **C**, **B** and **A**. Then shift to the open position and play **G**, **F** and **E**.

After working through this basic exercise, read through the first tip written below and try it again. Read each tip one at a time, and then play up and down one of the E strings again. Each new tip should help to iron-out this fret-skipping technique a little at a time.

Tip #1: *Be aware of just the right distance to move.* What are the starting and ending positions? How many frets does this cover? How wide are the frets? Learn to get a feel for any distance up & down the fretboard. What does a distance of 4 frets feel like? And 5 frets? What about in the higher positions on the neck?

Tip #2: *Focus on the skips.* First shift between the open and 5th positions to play **G** and **A**. Practice in *slow motion* and build speed slowly. Keep every movement smooth and clean. Then play the notes from **F** up to **B** and back. Finally, play *all the notes* up & down the open and 5th positions. Do the same between the 5th and 10th positions. Start with the **C** to **D** skip. Then practice playing from **B** to **E**. Then play all the way from **A** up to **F** and back.

Tip #3: When shifting, be aware of which fingers will be needed and *be ready* to fret the next note *before* reaching the next position. The next fretting finger should be ready to drop as soon as it is over the fret.

Tip #4: Many fine music teachers say to *never* look at the fretting hand; looking is a crutch. The important thing here is to get the right feel as soon as possible (like in tip#1). Looking can help to nail down the right distance faster, but it can also hinder learning how to play more intuitively. Try practicing in the dark or with your eyes closed.

Extra: After having had a really good practice, try this. Put down the guitar for a couple of hours. Then pick it up again and try to do the same thing without warming-up. Surprise! This is a great way to learn an important lesson.

*A good practice session always starts
by taking the time to warm-up.*

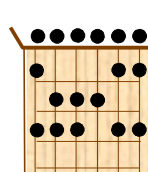
Use the memory tips and finger patterns shown below to play up & down all six strings. This should make it easier to learn all the natural notes across the fretboard in a relatively short period of time.

Memory Tip #1: Memorize the open notes (**E A D G B E**, low to high).

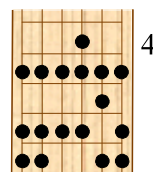
Memory Tip #2: Say each note name as it is played, and pay attention to the half-steps. With this, the whole fretboard can be practiced completely from memory without straining to recall every note individually.

Memory Tip #3: Practice the 1st and 6th strings on Monday, the 2nd string on Tuesday, and so on up to the 5th string on Friday (about 20 min. per day). Then practice all six strings again over the weekend. Following this routine will thoroughly cover all the natural notes twice each week. Before long it should be easy to find *any* tonic or root note *anywhere* on the fretboard.

Open Position



4th Position



9th Position

