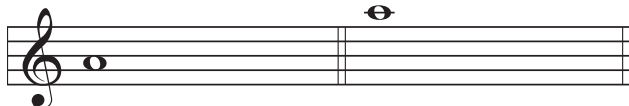


(Book 2) Lesson 10a.

What can I play on one string?

The guitar, unbeknown to many players is a transposing instrument. The guitar is tuned one octave lower than it is written. If you play a melody in unison with a piano player, you will sound like you are shadowing the piano melody but in a different pitch range. Because of this, your melodic endeavours may very well get buried when a piano player is your partner. The piano is a concert pitch instrument. (Loads of volume may get your message through but that is only a part of the solution.)

"A" 440hz is written here in concert pitch.



Guitar player must play this "A" to produce "A" 440hz.

Because the guitar is tuned an octave lower than written, you must transfer the notes 8va when you are reading from a "piano lead sheet." Most of the standard music that you will find is aimed at the piano or keyboard player. If the music is specifically written for guitar, play the notes where they are.

Melody as written for the piano.



Melodies written for piano (and singers) mostly cover a range that will fit into the staff and not very far below or above. (general rule)

The above melody written 8va.



The guitarists job is to play the notes 8va which will take the notes into the ledger line range more often than not. One could re-write all music in this manner but that is a tedious and labourious job.

You may wonder about the fingering of the tune when it is played 8va. There is no big secret to the fingering. You must invent it.

You have been learning how to play along one string using a variety of fingering devices. It is now time for you to put them to a bit of a test. You can use any method you wish. One could play a simple slow moving melody with only one finger. (any finger would do!) Generally, that probably is not the best method. You could try to analyze the melody line in some manner regarding the pitch changes.

Rather than doing either of the above, I would simply suggest that you start on the first note with any finger and go with what you know. Some of the permutations in fingering will be awkward and you will soon abandon them for something better. Unfortunately, composers and arrangers do not keep the guitarist in mind when they write a melody. It is up to you to invent the fingering.

In the beginning, it may come across as trial and error before you find a suitable fingering for any tune. Just keep the errors in the back of your mind and try to avoid them on the subsequent pass on whatever melody you are trying to play.

Any fake book is a good source of melodies. At first, look for tunes that are not too rhythmically hectic. Ballads and such make better initial experiments. Simple children's melodies are also good. Old folk songs are similarly easier at first.

This 8va concept will be revisited from time to time in this series of books.