

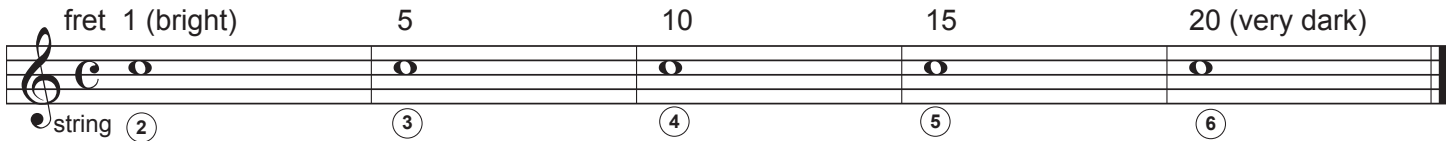
(Book 4) Lesson 32.

Choosing a Position

(mostly for sight reading)

The following remarks are intended as a generalization of the process of choosing a playing position.

The range of the tune (low note to high note) has much more to do with it than the key it happens to be written in. The weight and length of the strings also plays an important part. Playing the following note as indicated may help in understanding the difference between string length and string weight. Notice that while the pitch of the notes remains the same, the quality (timbre) changes as the string length is shortened by fretting a note and the string weight is heavier as we approach the sixth string:



In solo (unaccompanied) playing, this may or may not have some credibility, according to taste. But in orchestral playing, if one day some discerning conductor enquires as to why your notes keep changing timbre, you will know that your position playing is at fault and this conductor would like you to keep your musical sounds more even.

Performing in one position was never intended. Playing in one position was only intended as an easy way to locate notes, but not necessarily for playing the guitar. So, my friendly, if you play in one position, there is a good chance that you do not know your fingerboard. If your notes keep changing timbre, it probably means that your musicianship could stand a little polishing. ----- How?----- Listen!!!! This in no way discredits the idea of using any one position as "home base" and moving in and out of that position to produce the best possible musical sounds. In general, players with a good technique may be inclined to sacrifice musical sound quality to display their speed. On the other hand, players with a good sound may have to sacrifice sound to manage a difficult technical problem. Those of you who have both good technique and a good sound have indeed been smiled upon by the guitar gods. You are most fortunate.

My first "home base" choices are: (a) Scale starting from the root of a chord. (b) Scale starting from the 3rd of a chord. (c) Scale starting from the 5th of a chord. (d) If necessary, my next thought would be, a major scale starting on another note of the alphabet of the original major scale. This rarely happens but it could be a life saver. In general, avoid open strings in anything slower than a medium tempo, and even then, use with some care. (Open strings tend to be over-resonant and somewhat uncontrolled because you do not have a finger on them.)

We return again to that fountain of musical ideas, the alphabets. Remember that they always remain the same and are altered only to accomodate some key signature or harmony of some chord or scale.

Simply put, a composition in "C" major with the following ranges:

A musical staff in treble clef with a common time signature (C). Four scale ranges are shown, each starting with a whole note on the second line (G4) and ending with a whole note on the second space (A4). The ranges are: 1) from G4 to A4 (labeled 'may be played using a First Inversion Scale'); 2) from G4 to A4 (labeled 'may be played using a Second Inversion scale'); 3) from G4 to A4 (labeled 'may be played using a Root Position Scale'); 4) from G4 to A4 (labeled 'may use the octave higher of the First Inv.').

Where possible, notes may be added below or above these scales by merely using the appropriate fingering. As a disciplined practice, I suggest that in the possible situations, you use the "In Hand, Fore Hand or Back Hand" fingerings. In time, you will learn to spot the correct fingering that is suitable to your hand. This will eventually be immediate and not require any perceptible conscious thought or effort. (It very seldom happens over-night. Be ready to spend lots of time in developing your sight reading ability.)