

LESSON 9.

FIRST (OPEN) POSITION

Frets are the little metal bars placed on the fingerboard of the guitar. Their function is to allow for a choice of playing notes. They are placed on the fingerboard in a calibration of semitones, each fret representing a half tone higher or lower than the last fret. Two frets, then, would represent a whole tone higher or lower.

At this point, all the notes necessary to play the guitar are at your disposal. Problem? You bet! You neither know the location of these notes nor the fingers used to play them. Fear not: there is nothing to memorize. Everything can be worked out scientifically. The frets will take care of the note locations and the placing of the left hand into what is called "position" will solve the fingering problem.

Left hand fingers are identified by the numbers:

- 1 = index (first) finger
- 2 = middle (second) finger
- 3 = ring (third) finger
- 4 = little (fourth) finger

Holding your guitar in a proper playing position, place your first finger on the first string at the first fret. Press the string down until it touches the fret. How much pressure? Well, too much pressure will produce sore finger tips and not enough pressure will produce rattles and buzzes. Some people like to think that the string is tapped rather than pressed down to the fret. There is, however, no escaping some finger tip discomfort. Short finger nails is a must. Long nails will definitely not help.

Next, press the string down on the second fret with the second finger, the third fret with the third finger and the fourth fret with the fourth finger. To help develop the playing stretches between the fingers, keep all fingers down. Try to get the feeling of balancing your hand on four fingers and then remove them one at a time. Four, three, two and one.

Without playing, use this as an exercise on all six strings.

LESSON 10.

The first finger is the finger that determines the "POSITION". First finger on the first fret makes this the first position. Because of the use of the open strings, this is also referred to as the Open Position.

The first string will give us the alphabet E-F G A B-C D E. (half tones indicated by the hyphen) Playing in first position with four fingers we can make use of the first three notes; E, F and G. Their locations are as follows. E = open string. F = half tone higher, therefore at the first fret. G = whole tone higher, therefore it will be on the third fret. At the present time, the second and the fourth frets will be used for note inflections only. The musical notation of all this translates to the following.

An open string will be identified by the number "0". Numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 will identify the precise fingerings to be used. If a "combination fingering" is intended, a line is used, indicating that the finger already pressed down should be maintained. A "fraction-like" figure may also indicate a combination fingering. Certain notes, depending on the situation, will always use "combination fingering."

The diagram shows three staves of musical notation for the first string in first position. The first staff shows the notes E, F, and G on a treble clef staff. The second staff shows the notes E, F, and G with annotations: "0 (open string)" for E, "1" for F, and "3" for G. A line connects the "1" and "3" with the text "hold first finger down add third finger". The third staff shows the notes E, F, and G with annotations: "0 (open string)" for E, "1 (first finger)" for F, and "1 (combination fingering)" for G. A "3" is written above the "1" for G, indicating a combination of the first and third fingers.

The intent is to create better hand balance and to develop stretches, thus producing a smoother and faster technique. The thought that, eventually, students will add fingering ideas that may help them perform their own particular style is freely admitted.