

action

The distance from the string to the fretboard. The higher the action, the harder it is to press the down the note.

altered and open tunings

If you change the tuning of the guitar from its standard EADGBE, the result is an altered or open tuning. These are used a lot in blues & Celtic music, but can be used in any style.

alternate picking

Picking in a down up, down up motion.

arpeggio

The notes of a chord played one at a time.

arrangement

The form of a song. For instance, start with the intro then go to the verse and then the chorus etc...

barre chord

When you place the 1st finger of the left hand over 2 or more strings, you are using a barre. (Think of your finger as a capo while doing this)

bending

pushing or pulling the string across the fretboard to raise and or lower the pitch of the note.

capo

A device that clamps across the fretboard to simulate the barre. This is very useful to play in different keys but still to use the same chord shapes.

chord

A chord is 3 or more notes played together at the same time.

chorus

This refers to the "hook" of the song. Usually the part that sticks in your head that you sing over and over.

cutaway

The cutaway is the part of a guitar that is "cut out" on the lower part of the body where the neck meets the body. This is for easy access to the upper register of the fretboard.

dropped-D tuning

If you lower the low "E" string a whole step (2 half steps) you will be in dropped D tuning.

finger picks

If you cannot grow your nails and sustain them to pick the strings properly, you may have to use fingerpicks.

fingerstyle

Plucking the strings of the guitar with your fingers or fingernails instead of using a guitar pick.

Footstool

A small stool used mainly in classical guitar playing to raise the height of your leg (and therefore the guitar) for easy of playing.

hammer-on

When you strike a note, and then "hammer on" another finger to another adjacent note (without re - striking it)

harmonics

striking the string the 5th, 7th or 12th fret, to achieve a bell like, chime sound. To do this, you gently place the finger on the string above the fret itself, (but don't press down)

interval

The distance between two notes.

inversion

re-arranging the notes in a chord, inverting them. Same notes, different order.

pentatonic scale

A scale that has only 5 notes.

p i m a

letters from the Spanish names for the fingers of the right hand: *pulgar* (thumb), *indice* (index), *medio* (middle), and *anular* (ring). Indicates right hand fingering.

positions

The placement of the left hand on the fretboard. So, if the first finger is playing the notes at the 5th fret, you are in 5th position.

power chord

A chord that has only the root and the 5th notes. Sometimes this is seen as (A5, or C5)

pull-off

Striking a note and then pulling the finger off the string to hear a different note (lower in pitch) without re-striking the lower or second note.

slide

A plastic or glass tube placed over the third or fourth finger of the left hand and used to slide across the fretboard.

standard tuning

EADGBE low to high.

string winder

A device that is used to wind the tuning machines, this is a really helpful when changing your string.

tablature or tab

A way to represent the finger placement on the fretboard without having to read music. There are 6 lines representing the strings, numbers are placed on the lines to represent the frets you are to hold down.

transpose

To change the key of a song.

triad

A three-note chord.

vibrato

Wiggling the string back and forth.

Bridge

(acoustic guitar) the piece of wood glued to the guitar that holds the saddle/bridge pins.

Bridge pins

the wood or plastic pins that are pressed into the guitar with the string to hold it into the bridge.

Saddle

The white piece of bone or other material that sits in the bridge that the strings are "bent" over. Sometimes there is a "compensated" part at the 2nd string, to help with the intonation or tuning of the guitar.

Frets

The metal "bars" that are in the neck of the guitar. You place your finger directly behind the fret and then strike the string to hear the note.

CAGED System

A way to organize the chords & and scales into 5 moveable positions on the neck. Each letter of the C.A.G.E.D. word represents an open position chord which can be shifted up the neck to change the notes of the chord to a new chord while using the same shape.

Metronome

A device used to keep time. It ticks at different tempos/speeds.

Blues Scale

A 5 note scale, sometimes called the pentatonic scale.

12 Bar Blues

A bar is a measure of music. So a 12 bar blues would have 12 measures of a chord pattern, then they would repeat.

BPM - Beats per Minute

How many ticks of the metronome there are per minute.

Root Note

A chord consists of 3 notes. The root note is the lowest note in the chord and the name of the chord. (this is called first inversion, there are other inversions but we will discuss later)

8th note Triplets

There are 4 quarter notes in a measure of music. (4/4/time) There are (2) 8th notes to a quarter note. If you evenly divide the (2) 8th notes into (3) 8th notes you get 8th note triplets.

Machine Heads

At the end of the guitar neck (the headstock) there are metal gears to turn, this changes the pitch of the string.

Neck

The part of the guitar where you place your fingers on the frets to change the pitches of the notes.

Pickups

On an electric guitar, these are on the body under where you would strum or pick. They "pick up" the sound vibration of the string when you play, and magically make it come out of your amp! Assuming that you are plugged into an amp with a guitar cord, and the amp is on (and plugged in) and the volume is turned up on both the guitar and the amp.

Truss Rod

There is usually a metal rod that is inside the neck of the guitar. This is turned left or right to change the curvature of the neck. I don't advise doing this too much, maybe take it to a repair shop a couple of times and ask questions and watch...

Cross Picking

When you pick down, up, down, up, but you are playing across 2 or more strings.

Classical Guitar

A classical guitar has nylon strings, a wider neck, for ease of play with the fingers of the right hand, and usually a slotted headstock.

DADGAD Tuning

A popular altered tuning used in Celtic, fingerstyle and blues music

Fill

A fill is a part of a guitar arrangement that is not a chord strumming part, rather, a cool part that is played (usually when the vocalists is between phrases)

Hybrid Picking

While holding the pick, use your "m" and "a" fingers if the right hand to fingerpick So you get pick, m, a (now you can strum and then fingerpick and then strum again without having to put down and pick up your guitar pick again.

Riff

Think of the song of the opening guitar part of "day tripper" by the Beatles. That's a riff.

Trill

Moving from note to note (usually 2 notes back and forth) very quickly.

Lick

A musical phrase that you can play in different situations. The more licks you know the more you can string together to make a great sound solo, so start memorizing!

Nut

The nut of the guitar is between the neck and the head stock where the strings pass thru little grooves and then into the tuning peg holes.