

# HOW TO READ GUITAR TAB

- *Biswarup Majumder*

This lesson will teach you how to read guitar TAB as well as how to write it so that others can read it

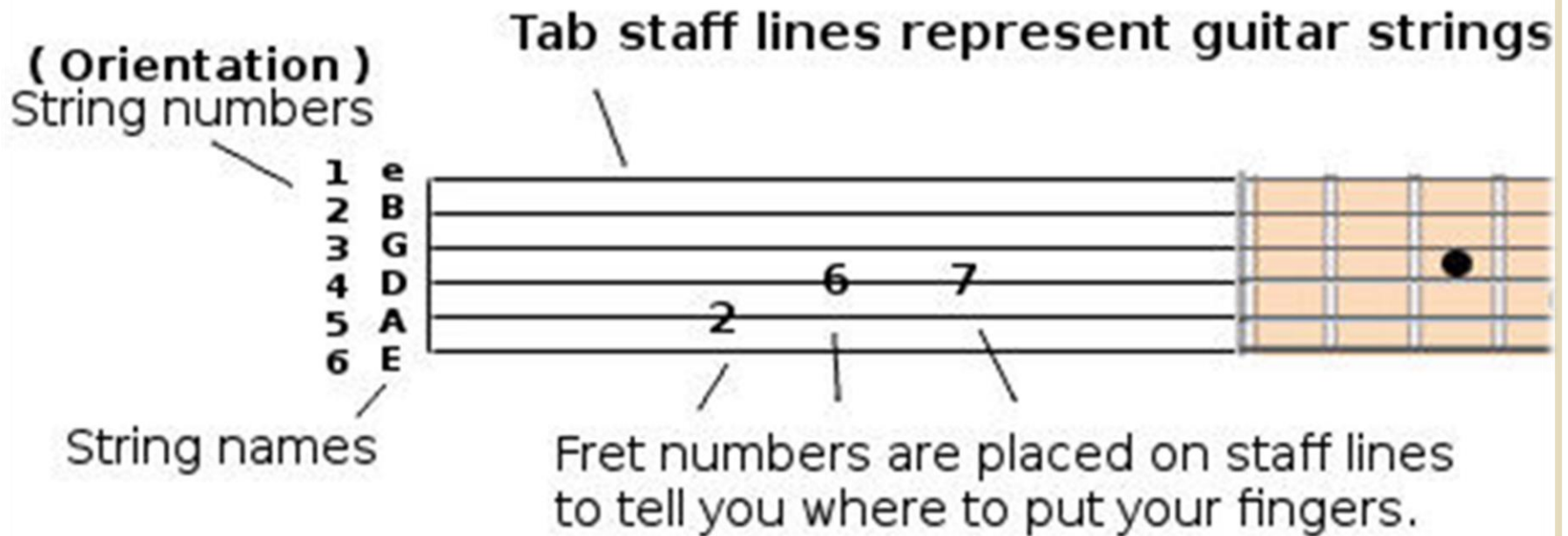


# What is Guitar TAB?

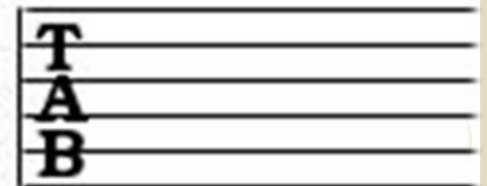


- Guitar TAB is a clever invention that lets people easily communicate music written for guitar.
- TAB is actually an abbreviation for the word tablature. Tablature is a shorthand for musical notation that indicates an instrument's fingering and other mechanics used to play a piece of music.

- TAB consists of a staff (lines and spaces) that mimic the strings of a guitar as well as various other symbols.



The beginning of a piece of music written in TAB is prefaced with the word "**TAB**" in bold so it's not confused with regular music notation.



# Benefits of Guitar TAB



- *It's easy to learn.*
- *TAB is easier to read and write compared to standard music notation.*
- *If done right, TAB can show the timing and the technique used to play guitar music.*
- *It's a great learning tool.*
- *It's a fast way to communicate or archive musical ideas.*

# TAB Symbols For Guitar Technique

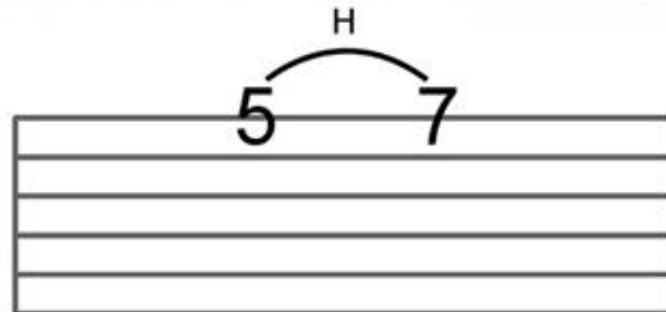


- There is no set standard for writing TAB but there are TAB symbols that are fairly common. I'll go over most of them here.



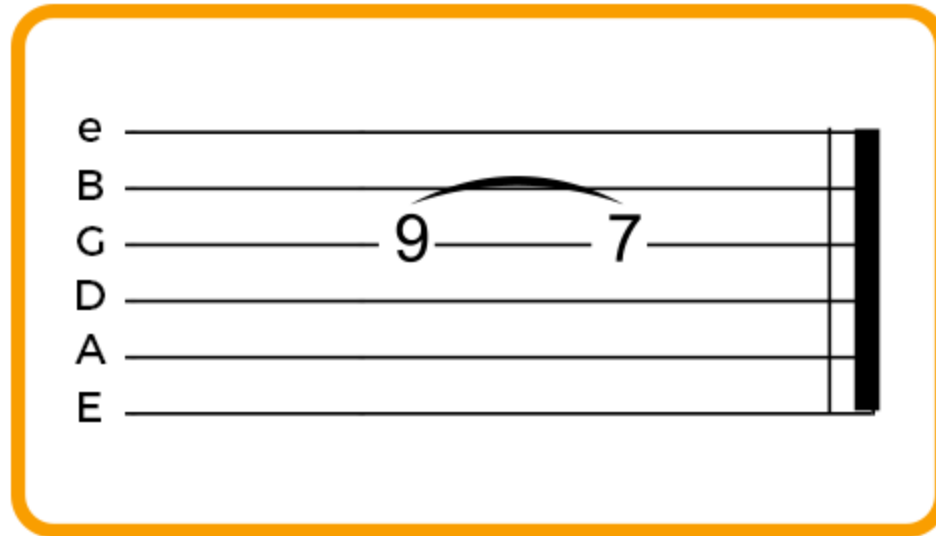
# Hammer On

- While holding the 5th fret with the first finger, slam down another finger on to fret 7 without picking.



# Pull Off

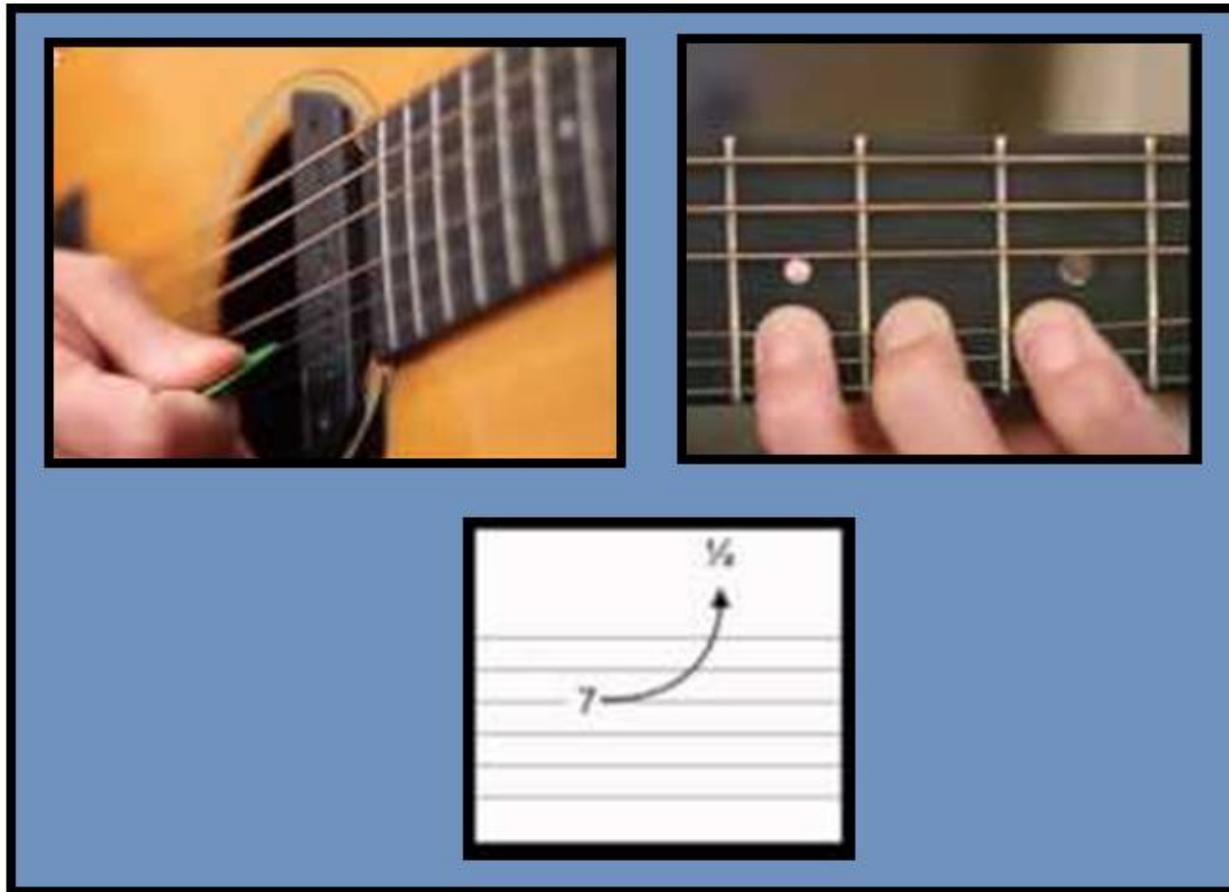
- Opposite of a hammer on, a pull off lifts one finger to a held fretted note behind it causing it to ring.





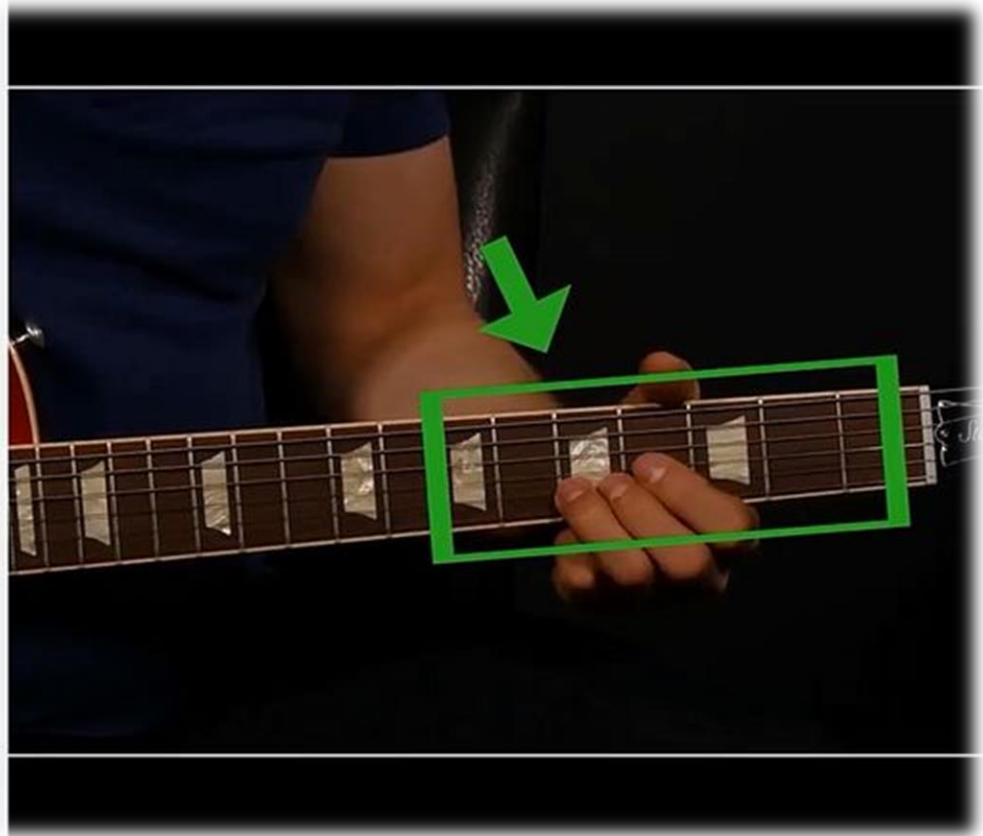
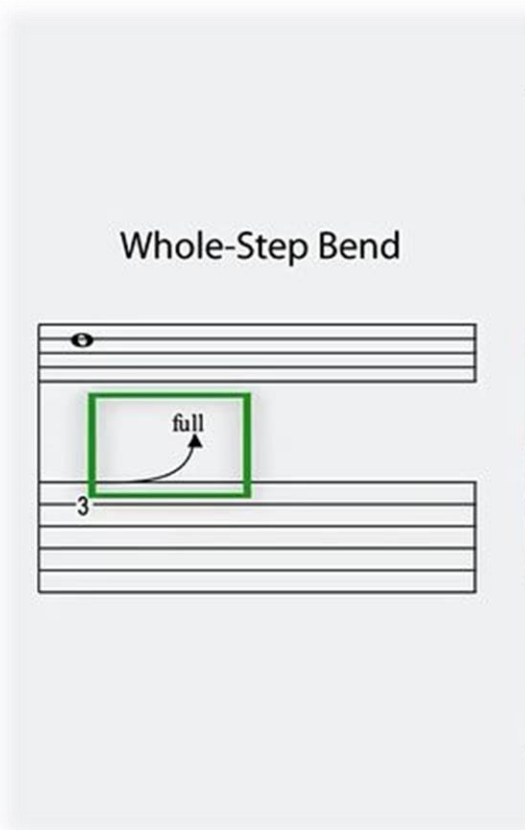
# Bend (1/2)

- Note is picked then bent upward to a pitch a 1/2 step higher.



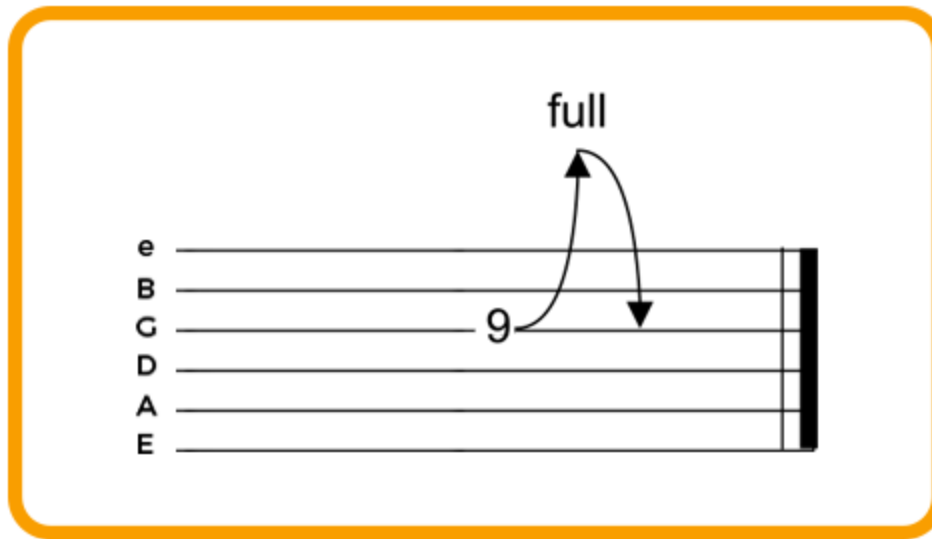
# Bend (Full)

- Note is picked then bent upward to a pitch a whole step higher.



# Release Bend

- Starting from a pre-bent position the note is then picked and brought down to normal position.



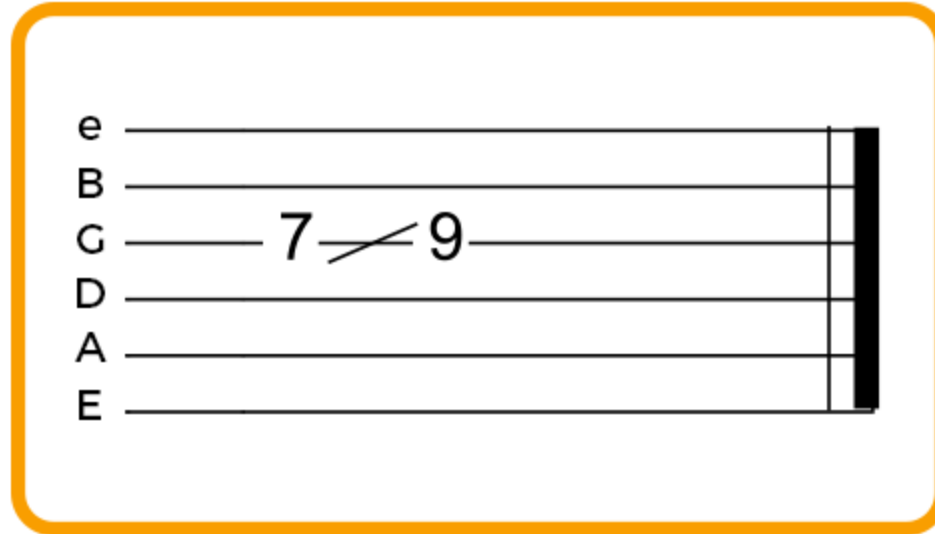
# Let Us Summarize

The image displays a musical staff with a treble clef and four measures, each containing a whole note. Below the staff are four labels: "Full Step Bend", "Half Step Bend", "Full Step Bend & Release", and "Half Step Bend & Release". Below these labels is a guitar tablature with four measures. The first measure shows a triplet of three notes on the first string, with an upward arrow labeled "full" indicating a full step bend. The second measure shows a triplet of three notes on the first string, with an upward arrow labeled "1/2" indicating a half step bend. The third measure shows a triplet of three notes on the first string, with an upward arrow labeled "full" and a downward arrow indicating a full step bend followed by release. The fourth measure shows a triplet of three notes on the first string, with an upward arrow labeled "1/2" and a downward arrow indicating a half step bend followed by release. The letters "T", "A", and "B" are stacked vertically on the left side of the tablature.

	Full Step Bend	Half Step Bend	Full Step Bend & Release	Half Step Bend & Release
	full	1/2	full	1/2
T	3	3	3	3
A				
B				

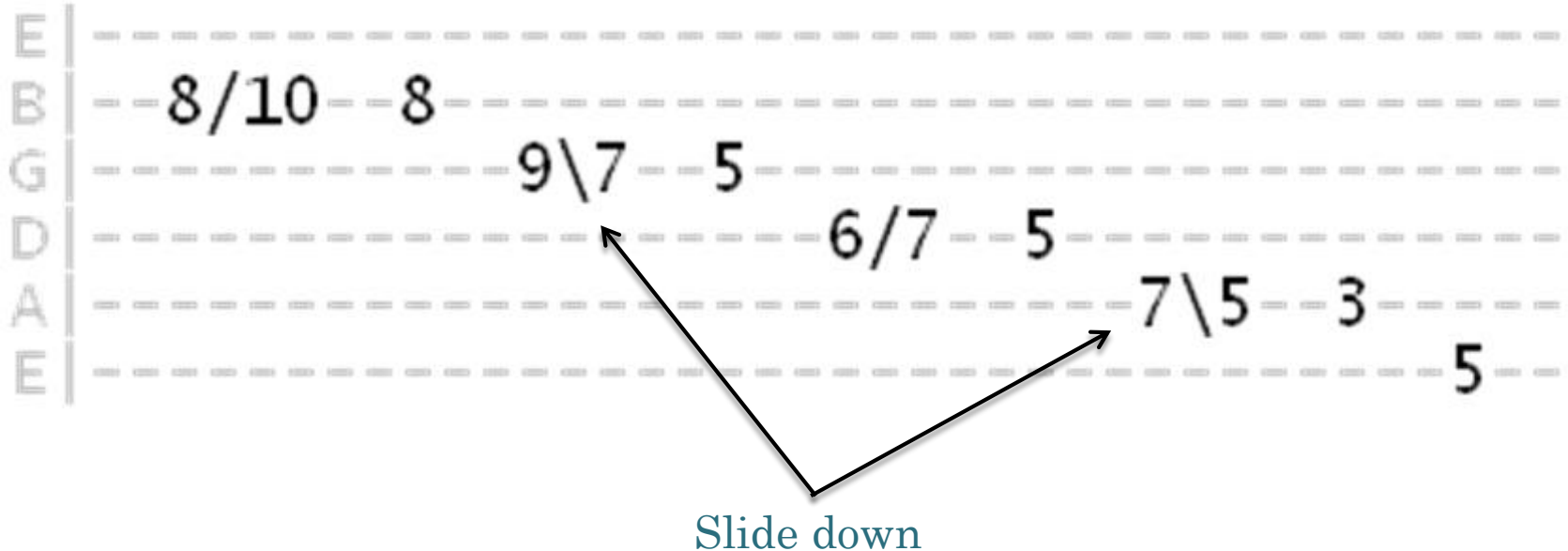
# Slide Up

- Pick the first note then slide your finger to the next note in the direction towards the guitar body.



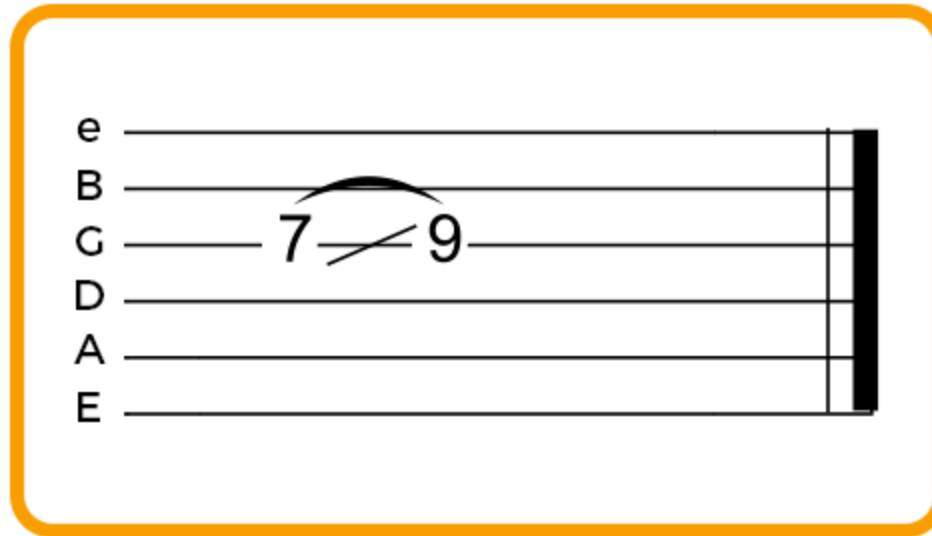
# Slide Down

- Pick the first note then slide your finger to the next note in the direction towards your head stock.



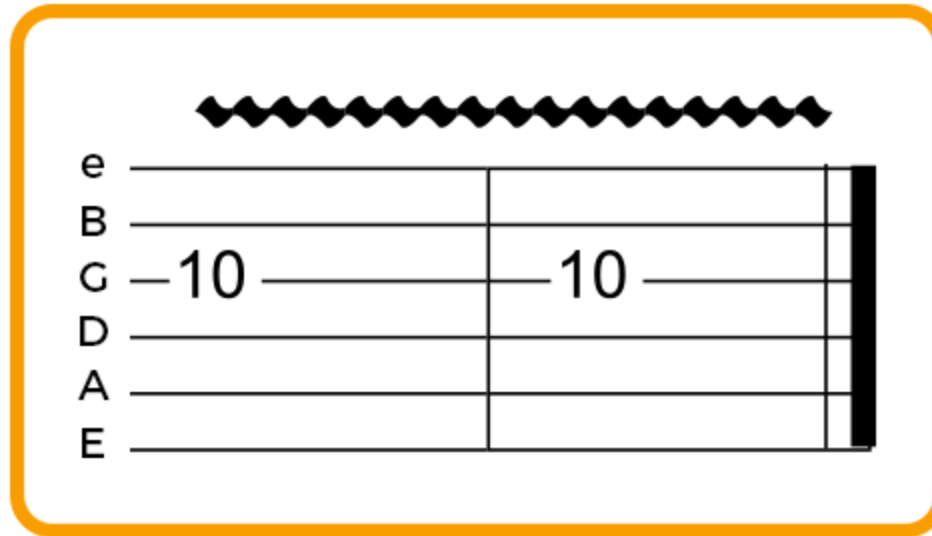
# Legato Slide

- Slide from one note to the other without picking.



# Vibrato

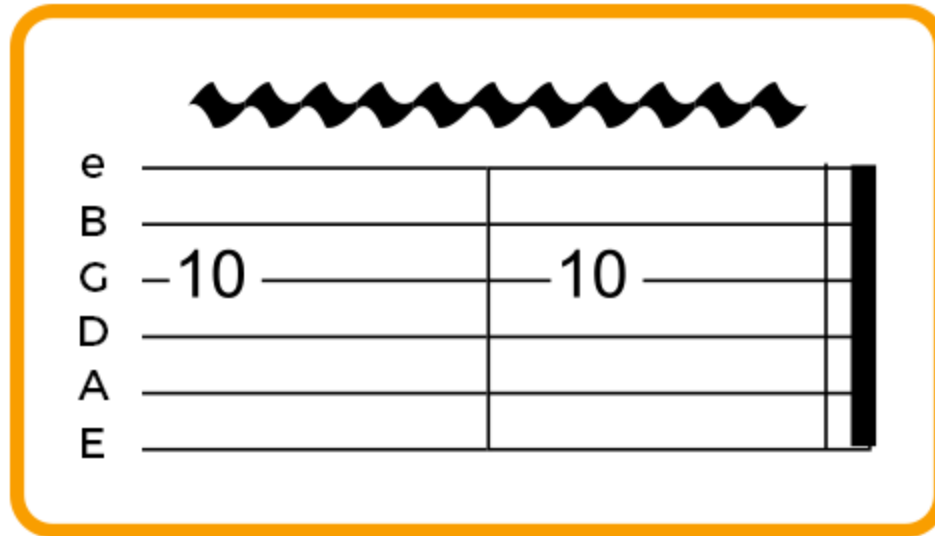
- Rapid bend and release of a string that causes the pitch of the note to fluctuate.





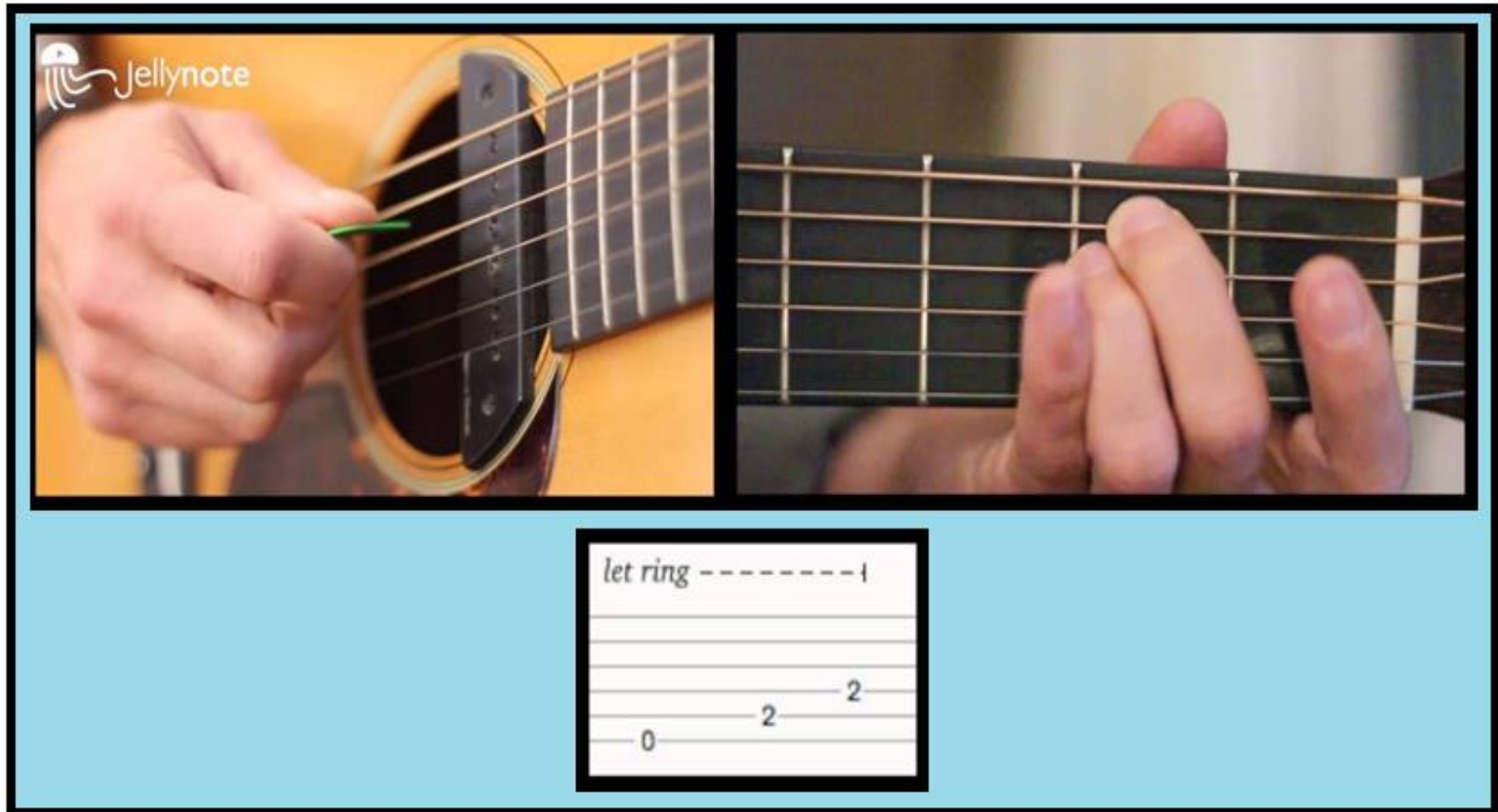
# Wide Vibrato

- Rapid bend and release of a string that causes the pitch of the note to fluctuate but with wider bends than normal vibrato.



# Let Ring

- Keep the note ringing until the end of the dashed line.



The image is a composite graphic with a light blue background. At the top left, there is a logo for 'Jellynote' featuring a jellyfish icon. The main part of the image is divided into two side-by-side photographs. The left photograph shows a close-up of a hand plucking a string on an acoustic guitar with a green pick. The right photograph shows a close-up of a hand fretting a note on the guitar neck. Below these photographs is a diagram of a guitar staff. The staff has five lines. The text 'let ring' is written above the staff, followed by a dashed line that extends across the staff. Below the staff, there are three notes: a whole note on the first line (labeled '0'), a quarter note on the second line (labeled '2'), and another quarter note on the second line (labeled '2').

# Palm Mute

- The string is muted using the meat of the picking hand near the bridge, pickups or sound hole.

P.M.-----|

e \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_

G \_\_\_\_\_

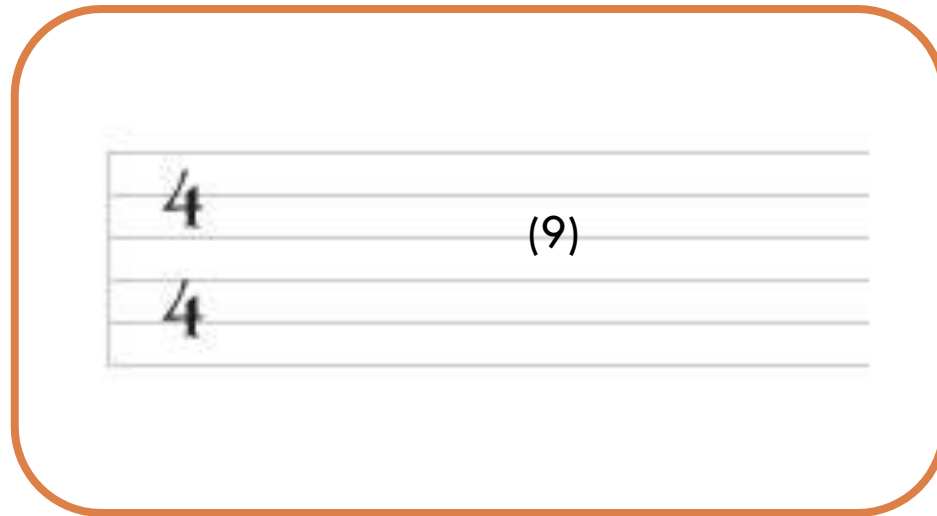
D \_\_\_\_\_

A \_\_\_\_\_

E — 0—0—0—0—0—0—0—0—0—

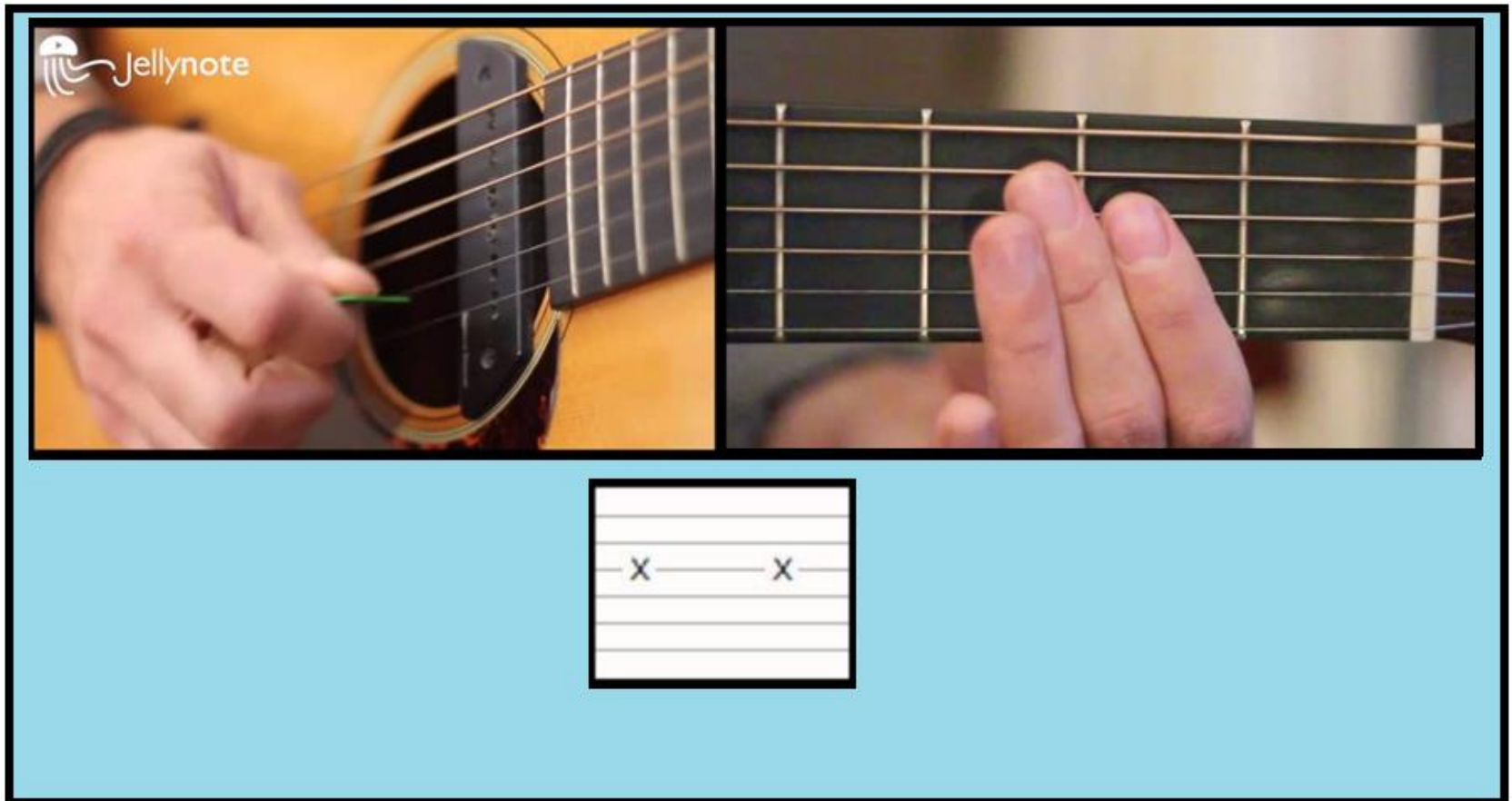
# Ghost Note

- An audible note that is not picked and whose sound may be caused by the vibration of other notes.



# Dead Note

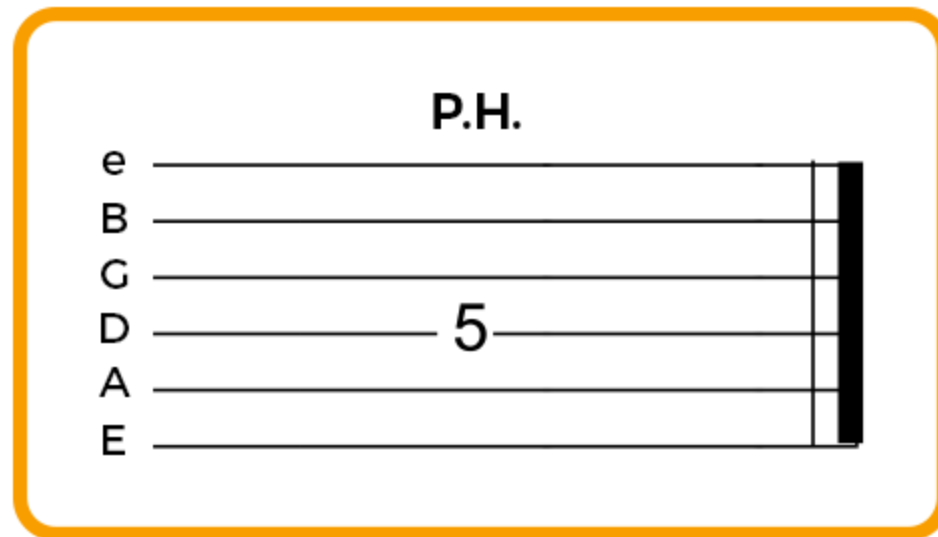
- A note that is muted using the fretting hand.



The image is a composite graphic with a light blue background and a black border. At the top left, there is a logo for 'Jellynote' featuring a jellyfish icon. The main part of the image is split into two photographs: the left one shows a hand strumming the strings of an acoustic guitar with a green pick, and the right one shows a hand muting the strings with the palm of the fretting hand. Below these photos is a guitar staff with five lines. The first and fifth lines have an 'x' mark on them, indicating muted notes.

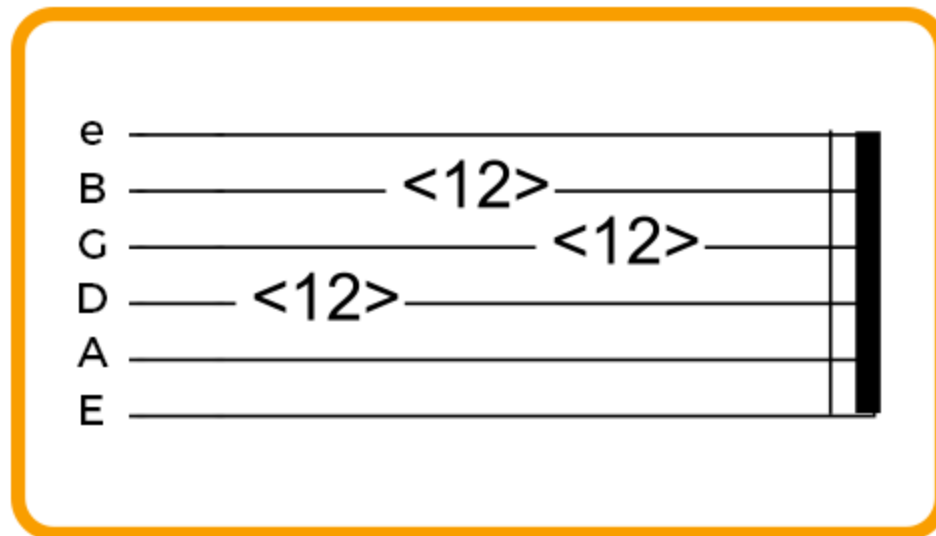
# Pinched Harmonics

- A pinched harmonic is caused by the pick or picking hand coming into contact with a ringing string. This usually generates a high pitched squealing harmonic.



# Natural Harmonic

- The harmonic produced by lightly touching the string above the indicated fret number.



# Down Stroke

- Pick the indicated note or chord downward towards the floor.

this symbol  
means downstroke

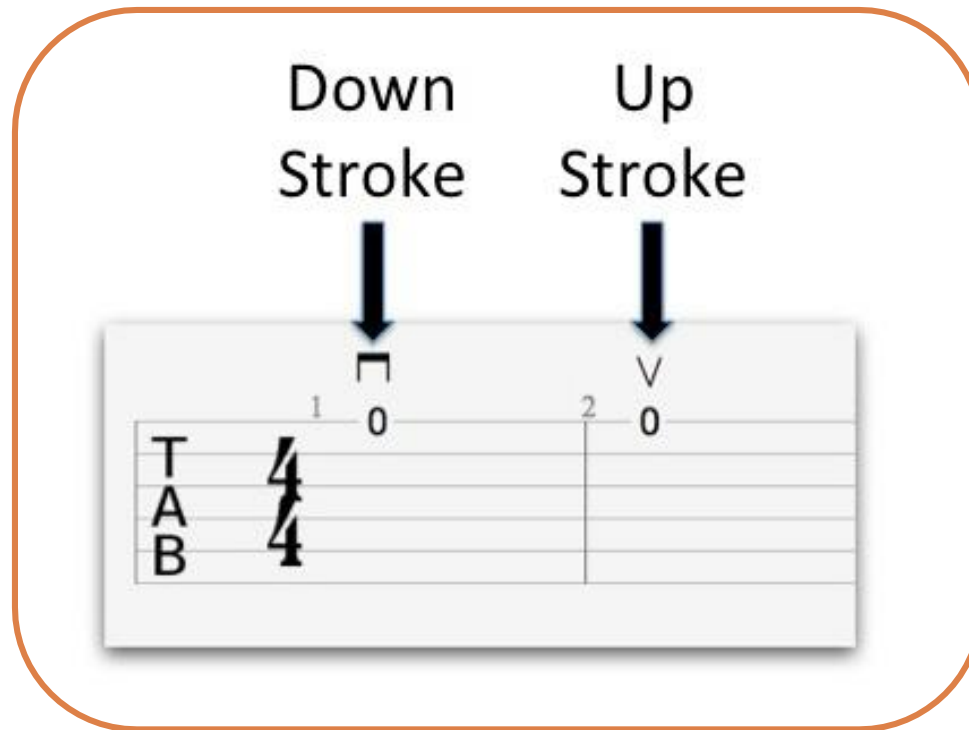
T  
A  
B

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○



# Up Stroke

- Pick the indicated note or chord upward towards the sky.



# Let Us Summarize

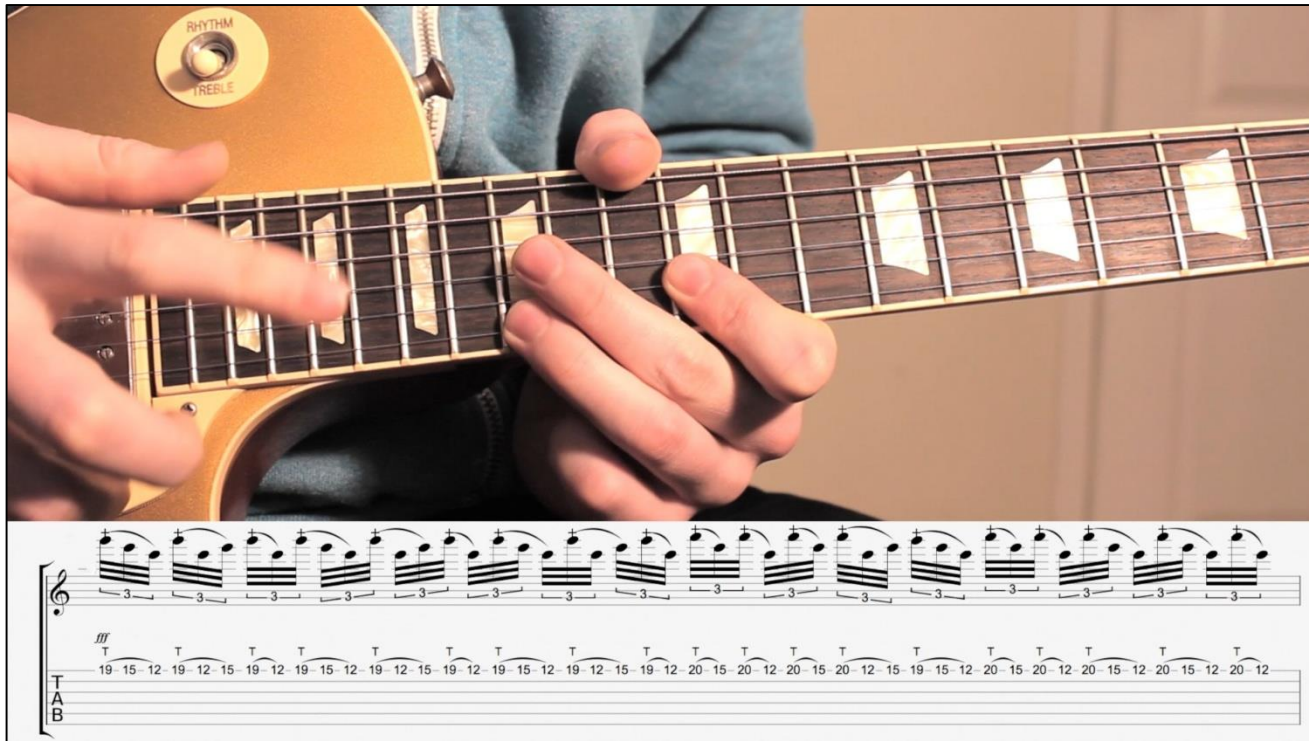
▮ = Downstroke

∨ = Upstroke

Musical notation showing a sequence of four notes on a treble clef staff. Below the staff, there are three lines of tablature. The first line is empty. The second line contains fret numbers 3, 5, 2, and 3. The third line contains fret numbers 3, 5, 2, and 3. Above the staff, there are four symbols: a downstroke symbol (▮) under the first note, an upstroke symbol (∨) under the second note, a downstroke symbol (▮) under the third note, and an upstroke symbol (∨) under the fourth note.

# Tapping

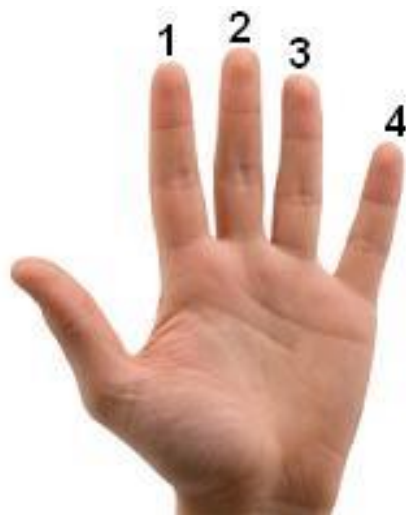
- Indicates a note or series of notes where a finger of the picking hand "taps" on the fretboard to produce the sound at the desired fret number.



The image shows a close-up of a person's hands playing an electric guitar. The right hand is tapping the strings on the fretboard, while the left hand is fretting. Below the photograph is a musical score for guitar, consisting of a standard musical staff and a tablature (TAB) staff. The musical staff shows a sequence of tapping notes, each marked with a 'T' and a fret number. The tablature staff shows the corresponding fret numbers for each note, with a 'T' above each note to indicate tapping. The fret numbers are: 19-15-12, 19-12-15, 19-12-19, 12-19-15, 12-19-12, 12-15-19, 12-15-12, 19-12-20, 15-20-12, 20-15-12, 20-12-15, 19-15-12, 20-15-12, 20-12-15, 12-20-12, 15-12-20, 12-20-12.

# Fingering

- Shows the finger number of the fretting hand used to play the note.

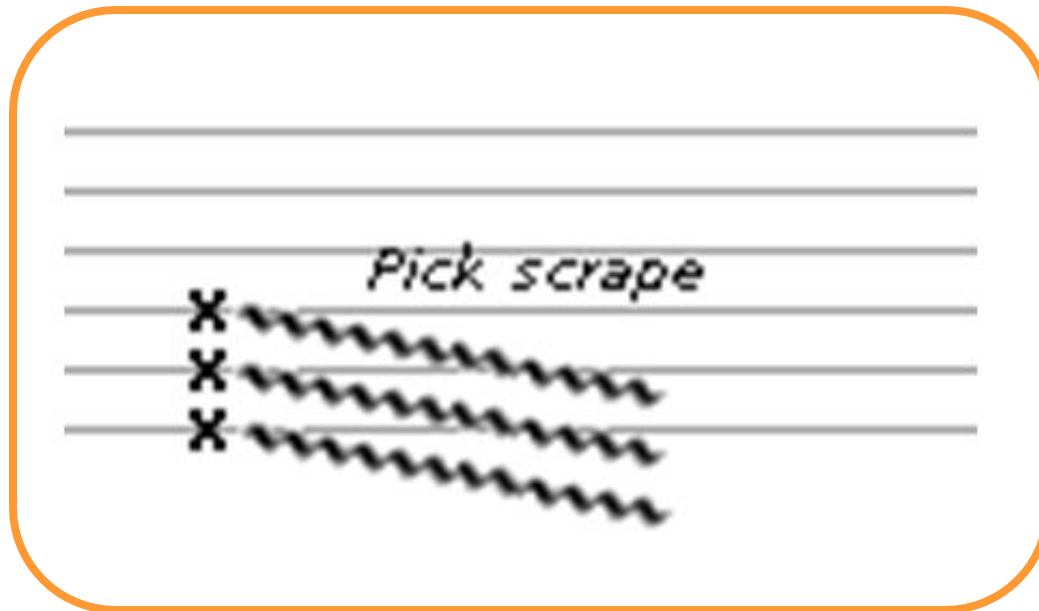


		2 ③ 5	③ 2	
		3 5	5 3	
	2 4 5		5 4 2	
	2 4 ⑤		⑤	4 2
③ 5	2 3 5			5 3 2
				5 ③ 2 ③
2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4	1 3 4 2 4	1 2 4	2 1 4 2 4 3 1 4	3 1 4 2 1 4 2 1 2

Key of G Major II Position Use the suggested fingering above. The Root notes or G notes have been circled.

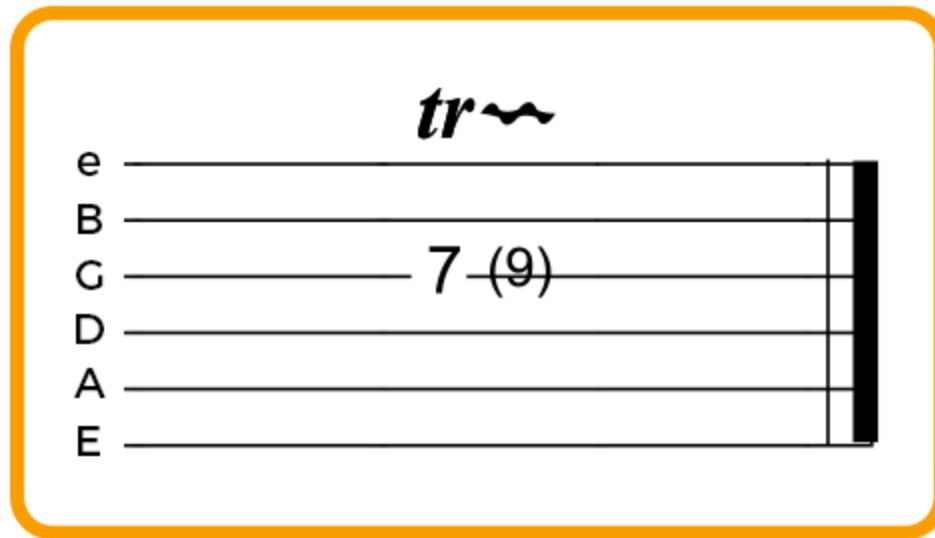
# Pick Scrape

- The guitar pick is dragged down the length of the string.



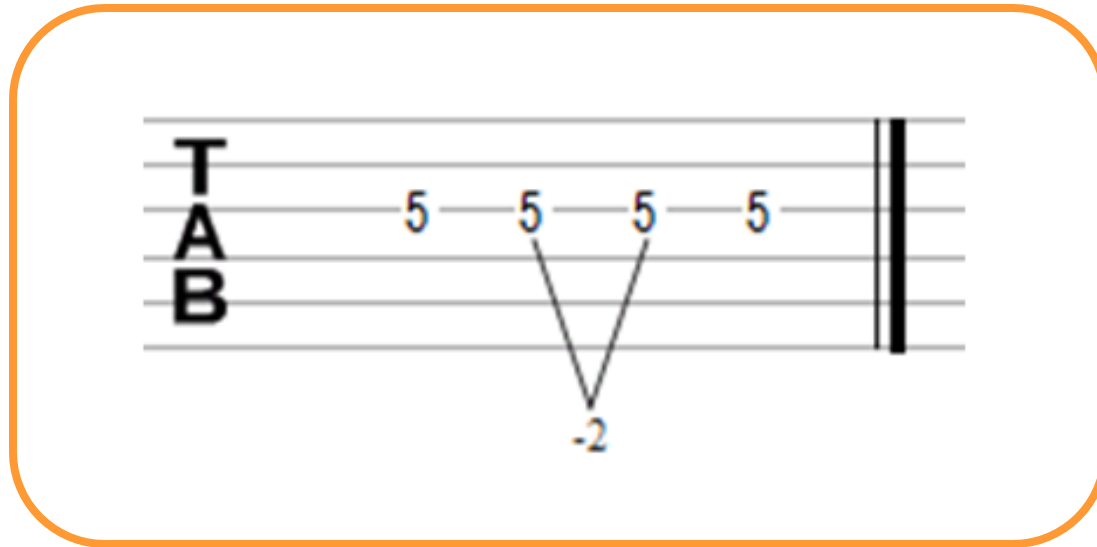
# Trill

- Rapid hammer on and pull offs between two notes.



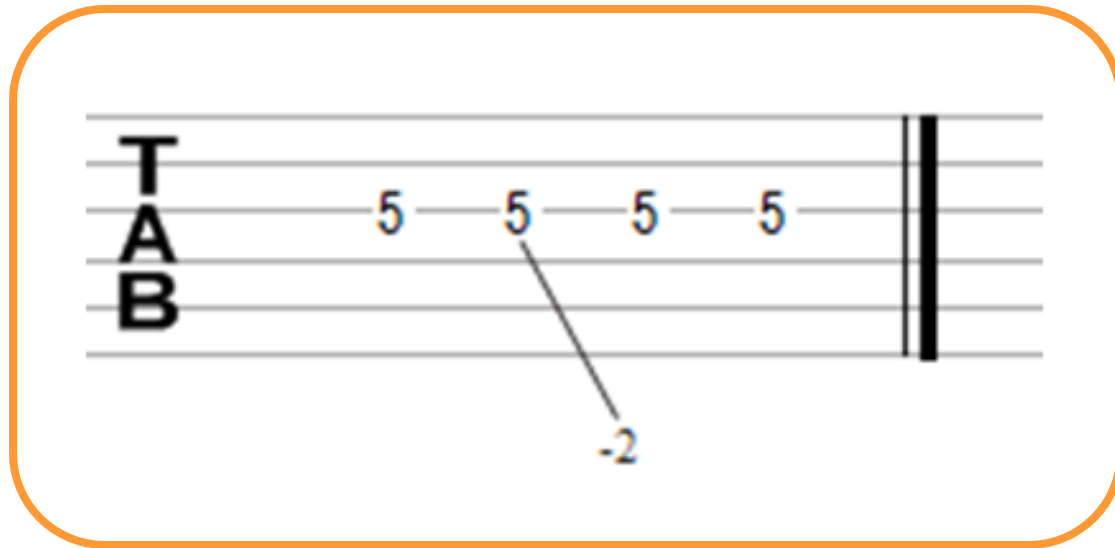
# Tremolo Bar Dip

- Tremolo bar is quickly depressed then returned back to note pitch.



# Tremolo Bar Dive

- Tremolo bar is depressed completely.

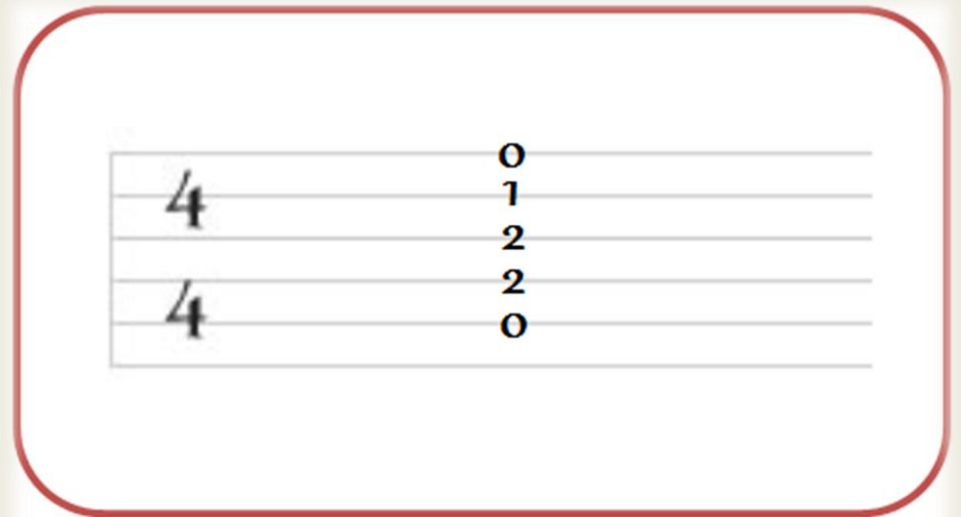
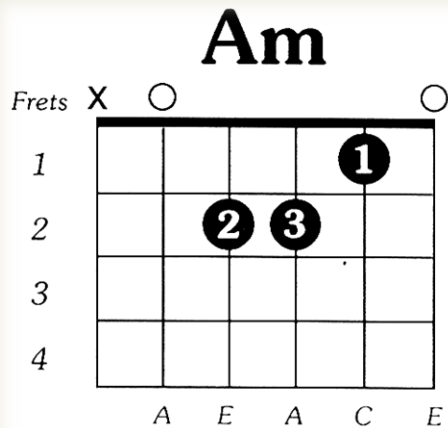




# Guitar Chord TABs



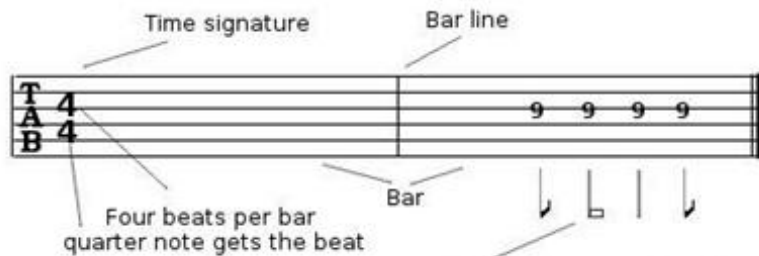
- Chords are written in TAB with the fret numbers stacked on top of each other. Stacked numbers mean the fretted notes are played simultaneously. It's also helpful to write the chord symbol above it but you don't have to.



# TAB Symbols For Guitar Rhythm / Timing



- Just about any symbol used in regular music notation can be adapted for use in TAB.
- Again there really is no standard in use for TAB but the symbols below are a good idea of what can be accomplished. I only show whole, half, quarter, eighth and sixteenth note values with TAB to notation comparison below so you can get the idea.



### Note values in TAB

□ = A whole note

▭ = A half note

┆ = A quarter note

┆ = Eighth note

┆ = two beamed eighth notes

┆ = sixteenth note

┆ = two beamed sixteenth notes

etc.

### Note values in standard notation

○ = Whole note lasts for 4 beats counted as 1234

◐ = Half note lasts for 2 beats counted as 1 2

◑ = Quarter note lasts for 1 beat counted as 1

◒ = Eighth note lasts for 1/2 a beat

◒

◓ = Sixteenth note lasts for 1/4 a beat

◓

### Rest values

— = whole or half note rest when placed above or below a line

⏏ = quarter note rest

⏏ = sixteenth note rest - can be stacked to make 32nd and 64th note rests



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Thank  
you!

