

# **MR. DICKSON'S METHOD FOR GUITAR CLASS**

## **LEARNING CHORDS AND READING LEAD SHEETS**

[www.JustinDickson.com/Guitar](http://www.JustinDickson.com/Guitar)

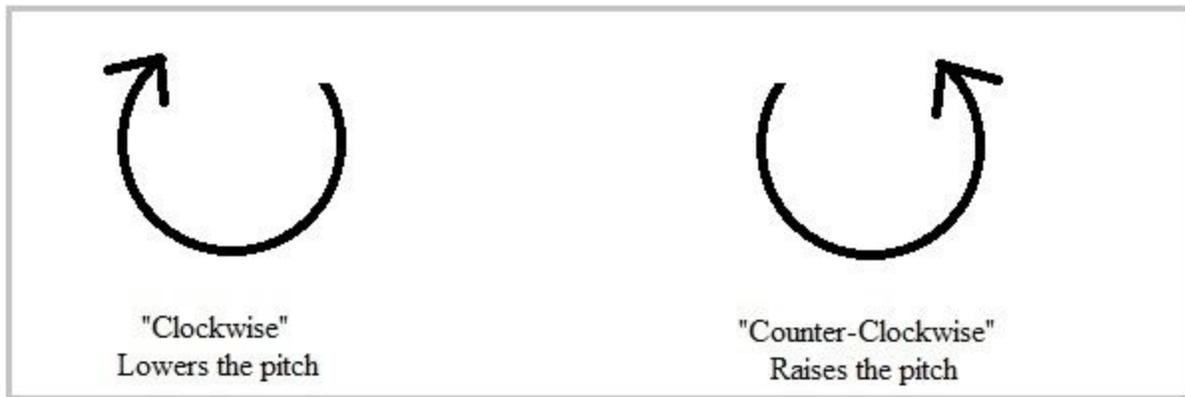
Revised October 5, 2017

# Chapter 1: How To Tune Your Guitar

## How to tighten and loosen the strings

1. Find the low E string on the guitar. It is the biggest, thickest string.
2. On the end of your guitar, you see 6 knobs, and each one is attached to one of your strings. These are called "Tuners". Find the Tuner that your low E string is attached to.
3. Pluck your low E string, and gently turn the Tuner about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a turn clockwise. You should have heard the pitch go down.
4. Now pluck the low E string, and gently turn the Tuner about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a turn counter-clockwise. You should have heard the pitch go up.

*Warning: be gentle. If you tighten a string too much, it will break and you can ruin your guitar. It is a delicate musical instrument, not a toy. Respect it.*



## How to hold a Pick

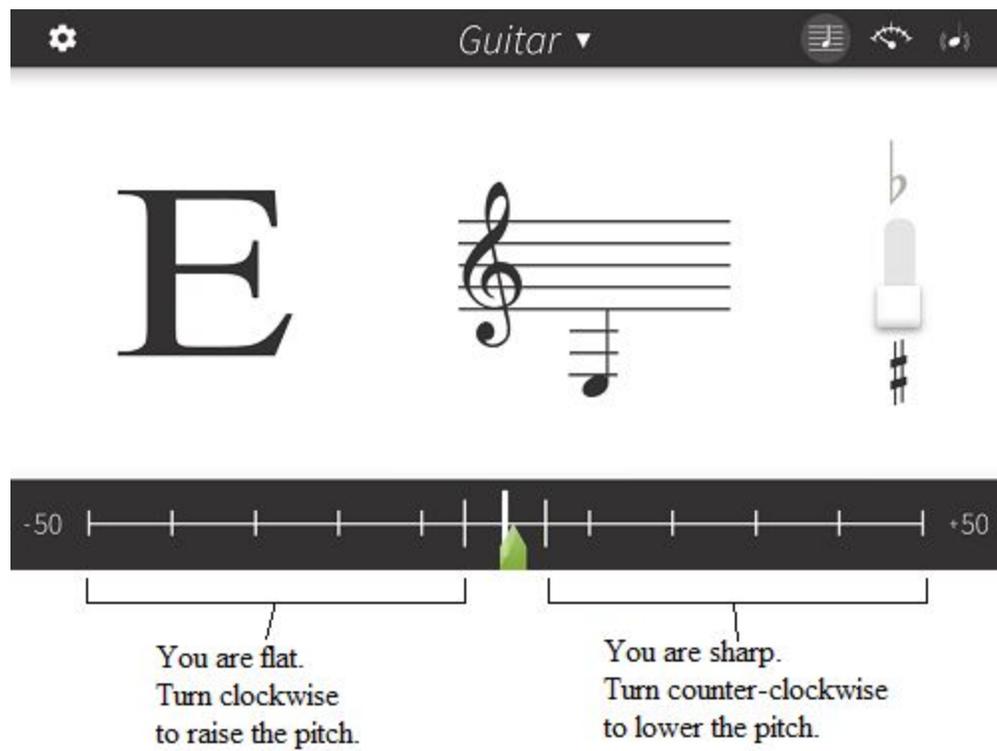
Pinch the Pick between your thumb and pointer finger. The Pick should "point" about the same direction as your pointer finger.



## How to tune using the Bandmate Chromatic Tuner mobile app

Bandmate Chromatic Tuner is a free app for iOS and Android phones and tablets. The advantage of using this tuner app is that it shows your note on a music staff. So for example, if your string is so out of tune that it is not even on the right note, you can easily see that and you can see how far you are from the right note.

1. Once you have Bandmate installed on your phone, tap the top of the screen and select Guitar as your instrument. Then go ahead and touch the switch on the right side of the screen so that it displays “sharp” notes instead of “flat” notes (the sharp sign looks like #).
2. Position the microphone of your phone as close to the guitar as possible. You can even put the guitar flat on your lap and put your phone on top of the guitar.
3. Use your Pick to pluck your low E string. A note on the music staff will appear. Now try to make that note go down by turning your Tuner clockwise. Now make the note go back up again. See how this works?
4. Now we want to tune your low E string to the note E. Tighten or loosen your string until the note E (not Eb) is displayed.
5. Now we want to “fine tune” the note. Your E is in tune when the needle at the bottom of the screen is in the middle and turns green. If the needle is on the left side, then you are flat and you need to raise the pitch by turning the Tuner counter-clockwise. If the needle is on the right side, then you are sharp and you need to lower the pitch by turning the Tuner counter-clockwise.



6. Now go through these steps for each string. Each string is tuned to a different note (see the graphic on the next page). You want to tune the strings in this order: Low E, high E, low A, high B, low D, high G.



D



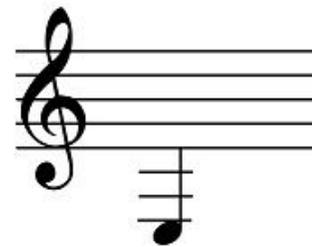
G



A



B



E



E



## How to tune using a Snark Tuner

Snark Tuners, or a similar clip-on tuner, can be bought at any guitar shop. The advantage of Snark Tuners is that they can be used in a noisy room, because they pick up the vibration of the instrument instead of using a microphone.

1. Make sure the switch on the side is set to “VIB”

2. Use your Pick to pluck your low E string.  
When the string is in tune, the lights will point to the middle.

If your string is flat, the lights will point to the left.

If your string is sharp, the lights will point to the right.



You are flat.  
Turn the Tuner clockwise  
to raise the pitch.



You are in tune.



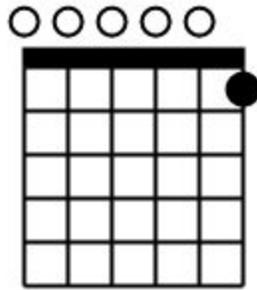
You are sharp.  
Turn the Tuner counter-clockwise  
to lower the pitch.

3. Now go through these steps for each string. Each string is tuned to a different note (see the graphic on the previous page). You want to tune the strings in this order: Low E, high E, low A, high B, low D, high G.

# Chapter 2: How To Read A Fingerboard Chart

A fingerboard chart is a drawing that shows you where to put your fingers on the guitar, in order to play a given chord. The vertical lines represent your six strings, and the horizontal lines represent the Frets.

A black dot shows you where you are supposed to press down one of your fingers. To get the best sound, press your finger near the Fret, but not directly on it.

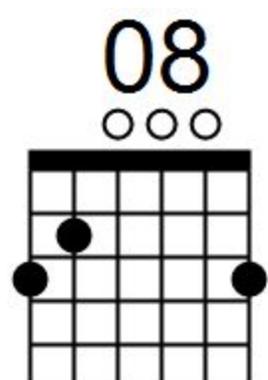
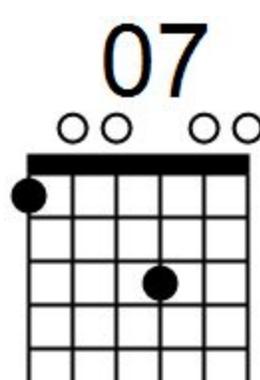
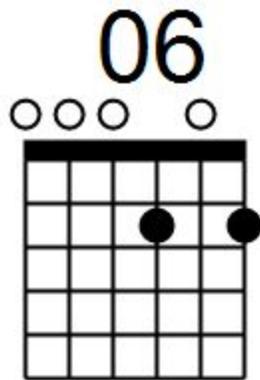
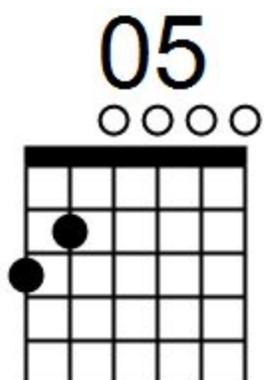
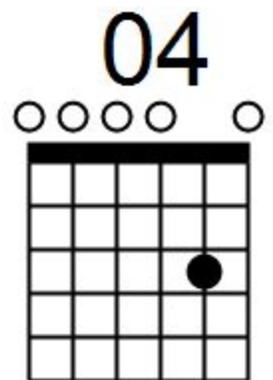
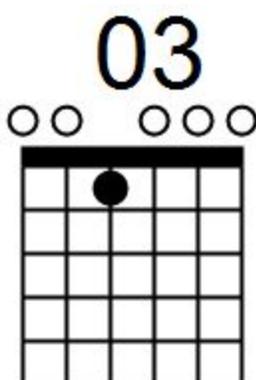
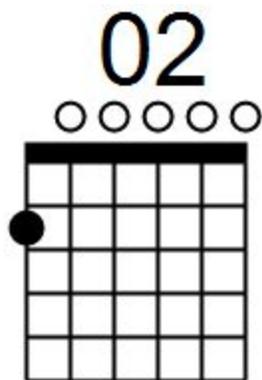
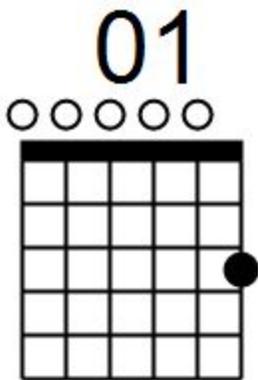


This fingerboard chart means to put a finger on the highest string, on the 1st Fret.

Like this:



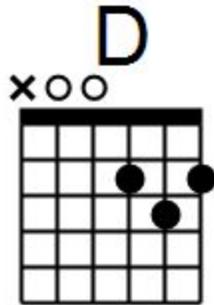
For each of these examples, show your teacher where you should place your fingers.



# Chapter 3: The D Major Chord, Strumming

## D Major on the fingerboard

The first chord we will learn is the D Major chord. After you place your fingers, use the Pick to gently strum all 6 strings except the thickest one.



*Warning: Do not scrape your guitar with the Pick.*

## How to strum

Do not use your shoulder, use your elbow and wrist. Strum the strings with the tip of your pick. Imagine your pick is a paint brush and you are painting the strings.

Advanced technique: As you are strumming down, the pick should be pointed slightly up. As you are strumming up, the pick should be pointed slightly down.

## Strum 4 beats

Most popular music is set in groups of 4 beats. This is called the Meter of the music.

1-2-3-4 1-2-3-4 1-2-3-4

Try strumming down 4 times in a row, keeping a steady beat.

/ / / /  
1 2 3 4

Set a Metronome to 80. You can either Google the word “metronome,” or download one of the many free metronome apps available for smartphones. I recommend “Tempo Lite” made by Frozen Ape.”

With the Metronome set to 80, try to strum D Major 4 times. Try to strum along with the Metronome.

If you can do that, then try to strum for 4 beats, rest for 4 beats, and strum for 4 beats.

/ / / /                      / / / /  
1 2 3 4 rest rest rest rest 1 2 3 4



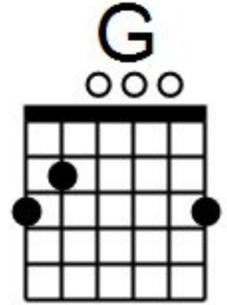
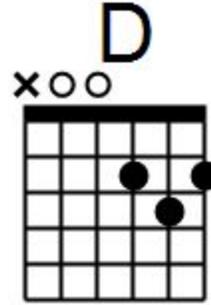
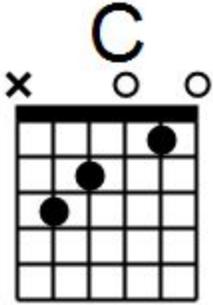




# Chapter 8: Songs with G, C, and D

## The Same Songs, In A Different Key

Up until now, we have been learning songs in the key of D. Now we will change the chords of those songs so that they are transposed to the key of G. You might play a song in a different key so that it is easier for you to sing. First we need to learn the chord C Major:



Practice going between G and C and D

### “Jingle Bells”

G

Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way

C G D

Oh what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh

G

Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way

C G D G

Oh what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh

### “Hound Dog”

G

You ain't nothin' but a hound dog, cryin' all the time

C G

You ain't nothin' but a hound dog, cryin' all the time

D C G

You ain't never caught a rabbit, you ain't no friend of mine

# Chapter 9: You Choose A Song

Now that you can read a lead sheet, think of a song you want to learn. Google the name of that song, and put the word “chords” after the name of the song. Like search for “Jingle Bells chords.” One of the top search results will probably be from Ultimate-Guitar.com. I recommend you use this site.

You may need to Transpose the song to a different key so that you can use the chords you know. In the top-left corner of the Ultimate-Guitar site, you will see “transpose” with up and down arrows. Click the arrows until the chords turn into chords that you know.

If you don’t know one of the chords in the song, you hover your mouse over the chord, and a fingering chart will appear. If that does not work, you can always Google it (e.g. search for “B minor chord on guitar”). Here are the basic chords in the keys of D Major and E Minor, which are very common keys for guitar:

