

The Beginners Guide To Tuning A Guitar

By Paul Bright

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Introduction

Hello there, guitar students! If you are reading this, then it probably means that you want to learn to tune your guitar on your own, or at the very least, you are curious how to do it. Probably because you see your other musician friends doing it and making it look so easy, and now you want to get it down pat, too. Or probably you are getting tired of having to ask your other friends or your guitar tutor to keep tuning your guitar strings for you whenever it snaps out of tune? Whatever the reason may be, we are happy that you are now taking the initiative to learn on your own, because learning how to tune a guitar on your own is one of the most important lessons there is to be mastered in guitar playing.

What will I be learning here?

Based on the title, you have probably deduced that we will be covering learning how to tune a guitar in this lesson. We will be taking up the different ways to tune a guitar, discuss the importance of each method of tuning, and why it is important for you to learn these, too. We will also discuss here why you should learn to tune by ear.

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Here are some of the topics we will cover in this article:

We will talk about guitar tuners – what they are, how they work, where you can get them, and how much they cost. We will touch on the difference of the cheap and expensive guitar tuners, and what would be most appropriate for you to buy.

We will also be discussing the fifth fret method of tuning a guitar. We will define what it is, and we will give detailed steps on how to do it so that you can follow it on your own. Some tips will also be included for you so that you can do the fifth fret method well even if you are only just starting out.

Aside from these topics already mentioned, we will also be covering the online guitar tuners – what it is, how it works, and how you can use it.

Of course, each method of guitar tuning has its own set of advantages and disadvantages. As you read on, you will learn these for yourself, and you will be able to judge what will work best for whatever situation you find yourself playing your guitar in, and you may need to suddenly tune your guitar. It is best to learn all methods, though, because some methods work better than others in different occasions.

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Why should I read this?

Why, indeed, should you read this? First of all, if you read all the way to the end of this article, you will learn something new about guitar playing. It's not all about the chords and playing the songs when you are serious about learning the guitar. Part of being a great guitarist is knowing how to tune your own instrument. When you don't know how to tune your own instrument, it's like you are not fully realizing your own potential as a musician.

Another thing that will make you think twice before leaving this article is this particular bit of thought – exactly how long do you want to keep running to your more experienced musician friends, or to your guitar tutor, to have your guitar tuned every time it goes out of tune? Every time you hit a snag, will you keep expecting other people to fix it up for you? There's a thought, right? Of course, it won't hurt to have your tutor or friends check your progress, but to completely depend on them defeats the purpose of your learning to play the guitar in the first place.

And perhaps the best reason for you to keep reading is that it would be very beneficial for you to know how to tune your own guitar, simply because it deepens your musical foundations, and it helps you become a much better guitarist!

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Why should you listen to us? – Paul's section

Well, now that we have that sorted out, and we assume you are still reading, we can now start on the things we are supposed to be learning today. Pay close attention, and we are sure that before long, you will be tuning your guitar by yourself already!

Guitar Tuners

A guitar tuner, in very basic terms, is a device that will help you tune your guitar quickly and accurately. They come in all shapes and sizes, but they all basically perform the same function, and that is to get your guitar strings back in tune. Different brands of guitar tuners may also vary in their price – some may be more expensive than others, but there is nothing wrong with getting yourself a cheaper one first as long as you are able to use it properly and you have a gauge for telling if your guitar strings are in tune or not.

Guitar tuners are very useful in situations where you can't really tune your guitar by ear. For example, you are playing a gig at a bar, and it's very noisy, tuning your guitar by ear is not really an option now, is it? It would be difficult to get your guitar in tune if you can't even hear it properly in the first place. It's also very useful if you do not have the time to spare to tune a guitar by ear, such as impromptu performances. Because guitar tuners take much less time and effort than tuning by ear, this method is generally preferred in fast-paced situations or in noisy environments.

How does it work?

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A guitar tuner will help you get in tune by the reference needle that will point out if your string is either flat, sharp, or in tune. This needle will indicate if the string you are tuning is either too low (meaning it is flat), or it is too high (sharp). Aside from the needle, guitar tuners are equipped with LED display lights – usually in red and green, wherein the green light indicates being in tune, while the red lights will indicate a sharp or flat.

Standard tuning for guitar strings – which means that the strings are set in EADGBe tuning – uses A 440Hz as its standard measure for being in tune. For you to be able to tell if your string is in tune or not, it will have to be pointing to this frequency.

Tuners for acoustic guitars have a built-in microphone, so that it is able to pick up the sound created. The downside with this is that you will have to find a really quiet spot where you can tune your guitar, otherwise, the tuner will pick up other noises in different frequencies, which will make tuning hard for you. For electric and electro-acoustic guitars, on the other hand, there are tuners that have input and output (like the Qwick Tune QT-1), wherein you can simply plug your guitar into, and then plug the amplifier into the output socket. This is very useful when you are tuning during gigs or jam sessions, because when the guitar is plugged into the tuner, it does not pick up any other sound

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which might tend to mess up the tuning process. Exogenic guitar tuners, such as the Q12E, have the capability of “blocking out” other noise and other unwanted noise signals, which makes tuning in a noisy environment much easier.

Where do I get one?

A guitar tuner is very easy to find. You can always go to your local music shops, and inquire about guitar tuners, and for sure, they will present you with more than one kind available. Otherwise, you can always go to online stores such as www.amazon.com and browse through their available products.

What type of tuner would you recommend that I get?

There are different types of tuners available in the market out there, and it would be best to familiarize ourselves with at least some so that you can get a fair gauge of what would work best for you. Each brand, of course, will basically offer the same function of tuning your guitar, but there will be slight variations in the other features that may be available.

Some additional features on guitar tuners are the metronome (the Korg TM40 has one), which is something very useful to help you keep your rhythm especially when you are playing alone; the pitch pipes

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(Qwick Tune QT11 is the brand that offers this) which plays the note you want to tune in a long, continuous tone. When a note is out of tune, there will be conflicting “vibrations” from the pitch pipe and the guitar string, but this disappears once you get your string in tune. Another useful feature that comes with some guitar tuners is the tuning peg winder (Planet Waves has this), which helps you wrap new strings on your guitar much faster than by ding it by hand.

It would be best to get to know some of the things about guitar tuners, first, so that when you go buy one, you will know what to look for.

Analog and Digital Tuners

What’s the difference between an analog and a digital tuner? Analog tuners have needles that respond to the guitar string’s pitch. Digital tuners have the same function, too, except that some guitarists may argue that analog tuners are much more accurate than digital ones because with a digital tuner, there are only a fixed numbers of positions the needle could point to (because of the whole 10 programming thing going on with computers), unlike with analog tuners, where the needle is basically “free” to point to any range on the screen so even the slightest indication of being out of tune will be detected.

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Various designs

Guitar tuners come in the clip-on kind, and the foot-pedal variation. The clip on guitar tuners are clipped onto the guitar, usually at the head stock, and it picks up the vibrations made when you play a string. Foot pedal tuners (just like Korg), just like the name suggests, are larger – they have a larger screen, and it has a stomp button, which will allow you to tune up on stage.

Usually, Korg is the most recommended brand to get when it comes to guitar tuners. It has many different kinds of tuners available, ranging from the cheap ones (they can go for as low as \$8 on amazon.com) to the more expensive ones (\$90-100). Other reliable brands are Qwik Tune, Behringer, Boss, and Snark. The prices of these all range from the values given. You don't really need to get yourself a very expensive guitar tuner, as long as it does what it is supposed to do, then you should be all set.

How to tune your guitar using a tuner

Now that you know the basics on guitar tuners, we can now proceed to learning how to tune your guitar using this device. Before we proceed on tuning, however, you must first know the guitar strings and their names.

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Starting from the top, the thickest string on your guitar, is the sixth string. It is also known as the E string. The one below that, the fifth string, is the A string. The fourth string is D, the third is G, the second is B, and the first string is E. The E of the first string is the high E, while the one on the sixth string is the low E.

Tuning an acoustic guitar

If you are using an acoustic guitar, it is important for you to do your tuning in a quiet place so that the guitar tuner will not pick up other noises that could interfere with the tuning. When you have found your quiet spot, turn on the tuner, and then pick the string you wish to tune, and see where the tuner's needle points, if the note is sharp or flat. Observe also the lights on the tuner as you make adjustments on the string. When the needle points at 0, and when the light is steady at green, then you have your string in tune.

Tuning an electric guitar

For electric guitars, it is more convenient to use the plug-in type of tuners, especially when you are jamming with others. Plug-in tuners, as mentioned earlier, are the type that have input and output, so you can just plug your guitar into it, and plug the amplifier on the output. This way, outside sounds do not interfere with your tuning. Once you have plugged the guitar into the

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tuner, and you have connected the tuner to the amplifier, you can tune your strings pretty much the same way as with the process for the acoustic guitar.

Tips

With any piece of electronic equipment, it is essential for you to read the manual first in order to familiarize yourself with how the equipment works, how to properly care for it, and other important things to know. The same goes for your guitar tuner. If you are getting one, make sure you don't get too excited that you use it without even bothering to read the manual.

If you are using an acoustic guitar, and your tuner is the type that has a built-in microphone, it is best to go to a quiet spot and tune your guitar there, so that there won't be added noise to add to that of the sound produced by the guitar strings.

Take good care of your guitar tuner – make sure it does not get wet, or exposed to too much heat and moisture, because these things will affect your equipment. As much as possible, too, keep your guitar tuner clean and away from potentially damaging things – soda, food, and other things that might slip your mind in the excitement.

The Fifth Fret Method

The fifth fret method of tuning a guitar is one of the most basic ways to tune a guitar by ear. You might ask, why should I learn how to tune by ear, when there's already a guitar tuner to help me? A very valid question right there. Why, indeed, should you bother learning by ear, when there are devices available to help you? First of all, learning to tune a guitar by ear will make you more sensitive to the differences in sound, tone, and pitch. Sensitivity to sound is very important to a musician because this is, in essence, what helps him make music in the first place. Being able to tune a guitar by ear strengthens your musical foundations, and it helps you appreciate your craft even more.

To be able to tune using the fifth fret method, however, your sixth string needs to be in tune. There are a number of ways that you can tune your sixth string, and one way that has already been discussed is by using a guitar tuner. Simply tune your sixth string with the help of a guitar tuner. If one is not available, you can tune the sixth string using another guitar that is in tune, or by using a piano (if there is one available). To tune your sixth string by means of another instrument, ask a friend to play the sixth string of the guitar that is in tune. The sound of that string should be the basis of your tuning your own sixth string. Using a piano is also

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advisable – play the E note on the middle octave. Your guitar string should match that sound.

How to do the fifth fret method of tuning

Once you have the sixth string in tune, you are all set to do the fifth fret method of tuning your guitar. Follow these simple steps, and you will be able to tune your guitar by ear in no time.

Step 1: Press on the fifth fret of the sixth string, and then play that note.

Step 2: Now play the open A string. If the sound of the open A string does not match that of the fretted E string, adjust the A string until their sounds match.

Step 3: Press on the fifth fret of the fifth string, and then play the note.

Step 4: Play the open D string. As with Step 2, the sound of the open D string should match that of the fretted A string. Make the necessary adjustments until the sounds match.

Step 5: Press on the fifth fret of the fourth string, and play that note.

Step 6: Play the open G string, and match its tone to that of the fretted D string.

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Step 7: With tuning the B string, our step will vary just a bit. Instead of pressing down on the fifth fret of the G string, you will press down on the fourth fret.

Step 8: Play the open B string, and adjust until it sounds the same as that of the fretted third string.

Step 9: Press down on the fifth fret of the B string, and play the note.

Step 10: Play the open lower E string, and adjust it until it matches the sound of the fretted B string.

Pretty easy, right? It might be confusing at first, especially if you are new to tuning your guitar by ear, but with time and practice, you will be able to do this method of tuning easily. It just needs some getting used to.

How to know if your note is flat or sharp

Here's a little tip when you are tuning a guitar by ear. When there are guitar tuners available, it is easy to see when a note played is flat or sharp. But when there are none available, you will have to rely on your ears. Usually, when a note is flat, it creates a low, long, reverberating "waaa-waaa-waaa" sound. When it is a sharp, the "waaa-waaa-waaa" sound is more high-pitched and tends to reverberate a lot faster.

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Some tips

In using the fifth fret method of tuning, it is important to do it somewhere quiet, especially if you are still getting used to it. You cannot have other noises distracting you, as these might make you lose focus on the sound of the notes you are trying to tune.

If you find yourself having trouble, you can always check your progress by listening to guitars that are in tune, or by checking by means of a guitar tuner.

Online Guitar Tuner

An online guitar tuner, as you might have guessed, can be found on the internet. It works the same way another in-tune guitar or piano would – it acts as a guide for you to be able to tune your guitar by giving you the sound of the notes in their proper tune.

The online guitar tuner is pretty useful, especially for beginners who have yet to acquire a guitar tuner. Because some guitar tuners need to be plugged in, not all of them can be used for tuning an acoustic guitar. And if you don't have a piano available, or another friend who has a guitar that is in-tune, then your best bet for help in getting your guitar in tune is an online tuner.

Just like with the fifth fret method of tuning, you need to be sensitive to sound, pitch, and tone, because the online guitar tuner way of tuning your guitar is also done by ear.

There are various websites out there that offer free online guitar tuners. Just go to Google and type online guitar tuner in the search bar, and you will get plenty of results. Of course, as with anything you find on the web, you have to exercise some caution because not all websites can be trusted. But if you want to narrow your searching, you will find one, too, in this website:

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<http://www.beginnerguitaristacademy.com/articles/guitar-tuning/online-guitar-tuner/>

How to tune your guitar using an online tuner

Now that you have your online guitar tuner, take out your guitar and follow these simple steps in tuning your guitar.

Step 1: Go to the website given above for the online guitar tuner.

Step 2: Click on the note you want to tune. For example, you wish to tune your D string. Click on the D note on the online guitar tuner, listen to it, and then adjust your string accordingly. If you don't get it the first time, you can always press repeat or click on the note again.

There you have it! It's a piece of cake, right?

Some tips

When using this method of tuning your guitar, it's best to do it in a quiet environment, especially if you are new to tuning by ear. It takes quite a bit of practice to be able to tune your instrument by ear, so give your ears a break from other distracting sounds. Being in a quiet environment will let you focus on the sound given by the tuner and the sound of your guitar.

Conclusion

There you have it, these are some of the simplest and easiest ways to tune a guitar. So far, we have talked about guitar tuners, the fifth fret method of tuning, and using an online guitar tuner.

Guitar tuners are, of course, the easiest and fastest way to tune a guitar, but it could make you lazy if you rely on it too much. These guitar tuners come in all shapes and sizes, they have different features included in them, depending on the manufacturer, and some of these features include pitch pipes, metronome, and tuning peg winders. There are clip-on and foot pedal types of tuners. One advantage of using a tuner, especially the plug in types, is that you will be able to tune your guitar even in a noisy environment, such as when you are jamming with friends or during a gig.

The fifth fret method is one of the methods of tuning a guitar that is done by ear. The sixth string (E) has to be in tune for you to be able to do this. You can tune your sixth string by using a tuner, or by matching its sound to the E note in the middle octave of a piano, or with another guitar that is in tune. Once you have the E string in tune, just follow the steps given in the fifth fret method section, and you are all set.

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Another method of tuning by ear is the use of an online guitar tuner. It acts similarly to a piano, or another guitar, such that it provides you with the sound you can use as basis for tuning your guitar. Simply click on this link:

<http://www.beginnerguitaristacademy.com/articles/guitar-tuning/online-guitar-tuner/> and you will have access to an online guitar tuner. Then all you have to do is click on the particular note that you want to listen to, and then tune your guitar string accordingly.

Some general tips for tuning your guitar by ear

Using a guitar tuner for tuning your guitar is very easy. But when you have to rely on your own ears to get your instrument in tune, that is where the fun part comes in. Of course, some people are able to do it right away, but for most of us, it takes a lot of practice.

One tip for tuning your guitar by ear is to keep listening to guitar scales and other guitar exercises to get yourself familiar with the sound of a guitar that is in tune. This way, by training your ears to the sound of an instrument that is playing in tune, you will be able to tell more accurately if something is off.

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Another useful tip in tuning your guitar by ear is to do it someplace quiet, especially the first few times that you are doing it. If you are not very sensitive yet to sound, and you find that you have difficulty in telling apart the sound of one note from another, it is more advisable for you to go to a quiet spot so that you won't be distracted by other noises in your immediate vicinity and you will be able to focus just on the sound of your guitar.

A useful tip to remember in adjusting your guitar strings is that is better to end with a tightening action than with a loosening one. Ending in a loosening action will slacken you strings, and make it go out of tune much faster. So for example, you are adjusting your strings, and you hit the right note when you loosened the string, go further in loosening, and then tighten your string again until you hit the right note.

And of course, make sure that you clean your guitar regularly. The sweat from our hands, the dirt, the oils, and other substances we transfer onto our guitars unknowingly, all of these contribute to the wear and tear of your guitar strings and your instrument. Wipe your guitar down regularly to remove the dirt that accumulates, especially on the strings. And always have a fresh set of strings ready, you don't want to be caught unprepared, do you?

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Now it's your turn!

There you go, just some of the things for you to remember when tuning your guitar by ear, and for tuning your guitar in general. It might be confusing at first, and it may be a lot more challenging, but learning how to tune your own guitar, especially tuning it by ear, is really a worthy accomplishment. Don't be frustrated if you don't get it at first, especially if you are tuning by ear. Just keep at it, follow the tips we gave you, and before you know it, you will be able to do it well.

Now that we have given you some of the ways to tune your guitar, why don't you get your guitar, and start practicing? That way, you can get started on being an even better guitarist!

Resources

