

GETTING IN TUNE

Tuning your instrument is an important aspect of a person's musicianship. Very few people are born with perfect pitch so tuning should be a part of your regular practise routine. Of course playing in tune makes practise and performing more enjoyable for players and listeners.

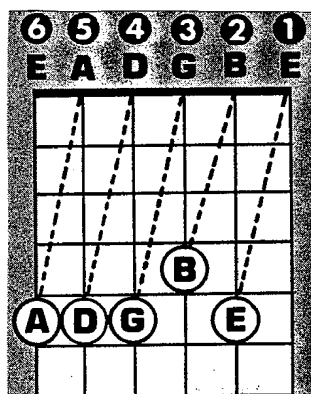
An instrument can be tuned to absolute or relative pitch. Absolute pitch refers to the exact pitch of a note in terms of vibrations or cycles per second. The "A" note vibrates at 440 cycles per second. To tune to absolute pitch one must use some type of device such as a pitch pipe, tuning fork, electronic tuner, or another instrument that is tuned properly. Relative pitch is obtained by guessing at a note on the instrument and tuning the rest of the strings to that note. Even though the instrument may not be tuned to perfect pitch it will be in tune with itself which will at least enable one to practise.

Pitch pipes are convenient and inexpensive but are not very accurate. It is recommended to tune a string to one note on the pitch pipe and tune the rest of the strings to that string.

A tuning fork is another convenient and inexpensive device and is much more reliable than a pitch pipe.

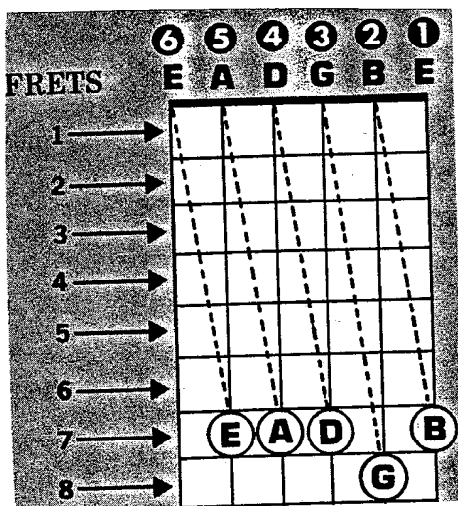
An electronic tuner is very handy and is usually accurate in relation to other instruments tuned with one but they are generally more expensive than a pitch pipe or a tuning fork.

There are several ways to tune each string on a guitar to a note that has been established as the standard. The illustration below is the most popular method used. One would tune the high E string (1) to a tuning device or other instrument and then tune the other strings as follows:

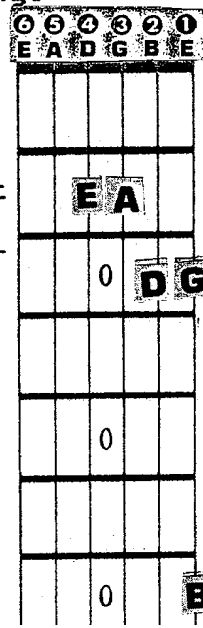


- The B string (2) pressed at the 5th fret produces the same note as the open E string (1)
- The G string (3) pressed at the 4th fret produces the same note as the open B string (2)
- The D string (4) pressed at the 5th fret produces the same note as the open G string (3)
- The A string (5) pressed at the 5th fret produces the same note as the open D string (4)
- The low E string (6) pressed at the 5th fret produces the same note as the open A (5)

Another tuning method is to use octave notes (which are easier for some people to hear) to tune each string to the standard string.



The chart on the left is a common octave tuning method. The chart on the right stays mostly within the first position (the first four frets) which is more useful if your guitar goes out of tune further up the neck. Again one would tune the high E string (1) then tune the rest to it. Match the note on the chart to its corresponding lower open string.



The guitar has been accused of being impossible to get in tune. These are methods used by Don Teeter and Sharon Isbin.

Don showed us his way of tuning during the guitar workshop in July. He tunes the 'A' string to a tuning fork then tunes the rest of the strings to the 'A'. If a string will not match between a cross check of two others Don suggested that you split the difference between them.

Sharon Isbin is a classical guitarist and her method was discussed in a Question & Answer column she writes for Acoustic Guitar magazine. She tunes the high 'E' to a tuning fork then uses a system of several cross checks to achieve a relative tuning,

Perhaps by experimenting with these methods you can arrive at a procedure that will enable you to get your guitar close to being in tune.

<<< E-1 = High 'E' string, E-6 = Low 'E' string >>>

DON TEETER

QUICK TUNE (TUNE THE 'A' STRING first)

A	HARMONIC	7 TO E-6	HARMONIC	5
A	HARMONIC	5 TO D	HARMONIC	7
E-	HARMONIC	7 TO B	OPEN	
A	HARMONIC	7 TO E-1	OPEN	
A	HARMONIC	12 TO G	FRET	2

FINE TUNE (TUNE THE 'A' STRING THEN TUNE OTHERS TO IT)

A	HARMONIC	7 TO B	FRET	5
A	HARMONIC	5 TO E-1	FRET	5
A	HARMONIC	12 TO G	FRET	2
A	HARMONIC	7 TO G	FRET	9
A	HARMONIC	7 TO D	FRET	14
A	HARMONIC	12 TO D	FRET	7
A	FRET	7 TO E-6	HARMONIC	12
A	FRET	14 TO E-6	HARMONIC	7

SHARON ISBIN (TUNE THE HIGH 'E' STRING FIRST)

E-1	HARMONIC	7 TO B	HARMONIC	5
E-1	OPEN	TO B	FRET	5
E-1	FRET	7 TO B	HARMONIC	12
B	OPEN	TO G	FRET	4
E-1	FRET	3 TO G	HARMONIC	12
E-1	OPEN	TO A	HARMONIC	7
G	FRET	2 TO A	HARMONIC	12
A	HARMONIC	5 TO D	HARMONIC	7
G	HARMONIC	7 TO D	HARMONIC	5
E-1	FRET	5 TO D	HARMONIC	7
B	FRET	3 TO D	HARMONIC	12
E-1	OPEN	TO E-6	HARMONIC	5
E-6	HARMONIC	7 TO B	OPEN	
A	HARMONIC	7 TO E-6	HARMONIC	5