

The 12 different notes of Western music...

Demystifying the fretboard...

Work slowly through these pages and make sure you understand each section before moving on.

Pick up your guitar....

When you look at your guitar you will see 6 strings (4 if it's a bass) spanning over many frets (might be up to 24 frets on some electric guitars).

How many frets do you have on yours?

This number of frets and strings can seem a bit mind boggling to new guitarists. Knowing which strings and what frets to play is confusing and it might leave you feeling like this →



So let us try and explain it...

Well there are 6 strings each with let's say 24 frets (electric guitar), so if we use some maths:

$$6 \text{ strings} \times 24 \text{ frets} = 144 \text{ notes to play}$$

Does this mean there are 144 different notes you have to learn???

NO!! It's much easier than that! Look up at the title of this page again...

There are 12 different notes

Let's give the notes some names...

Each box in the diagram below is a single note.

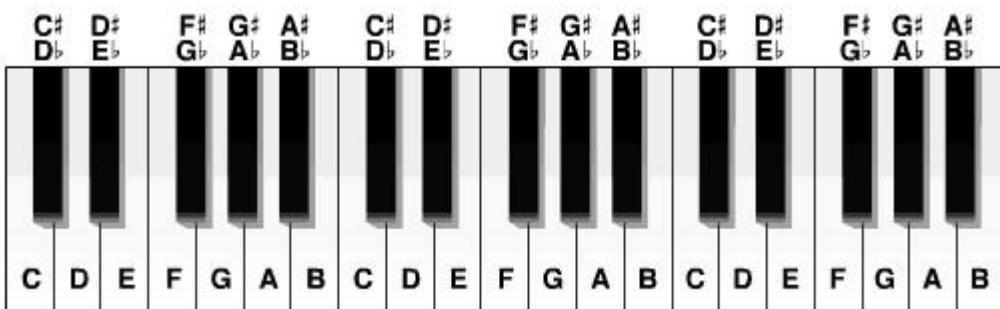
A	A#/Bb	B	C	C#/Db	D	D#/Eb	E	F	F#/Gb	G	G#/Ab
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In western music we use the letters 'A' up to 'G' to name the notes.

'#' (sharp) means higher than and 'b' (flat) means lower than

Do you understand '#' sharp and 'b' flat?

The second box along is the note 'A#'. It is also called 'Bb' sometimes. It's not important to worry about why for now. The note is sharper than 'A' and flatter than 'B' so you could call it either 'A#' or 'Bb'. If you are used to piano or keyboard the #'s (sharps) and b's (flats) are the black keys.



You might have noticed that there are sharps/flats in between all the notes except 'B' and 'C', also 'E' and 'F'. This is not a mistake! Because...

E is F's friend. B is C's buddy, they sit together.

If there are only 12 notes, how can that take up so much space on the guitar (up to 144 frets remember)?

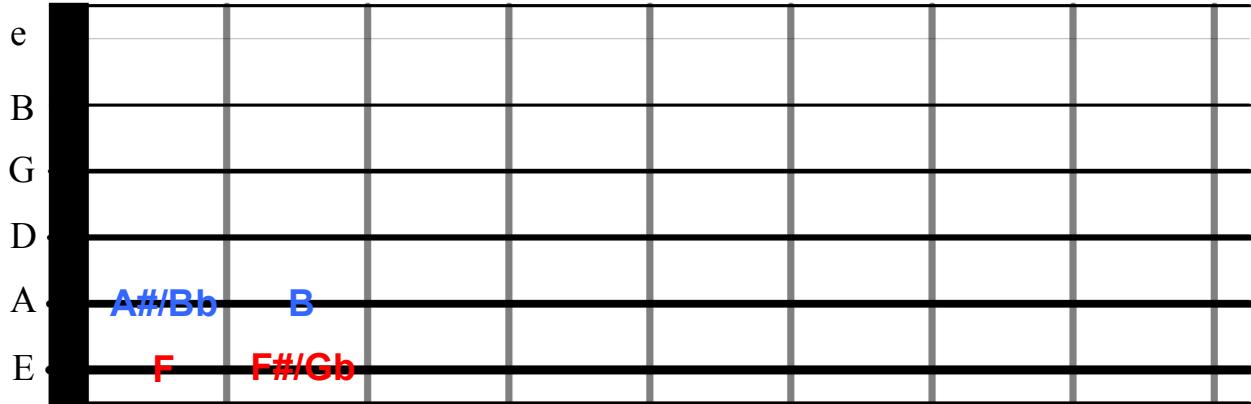
It's very simple. The notes are used more than once (repeated) to fill up the guitar. Again, if you have ever used a piano or keyboard you might be familiar with this idea of repeated notes.

The diagram above tells us where the notes are on a keyboard. Can you find them on a guitar yet? If not keep reading and have your guitar ready to play...

You should know the string names by now ([Naming the Strings resource](#)).

E A D G B e.

The E string is so called because when played without frets (open) it sounds the note 'E'. The A string open sounds the note 'A' and so on...



When we press a fret we change the note sounded by the string:

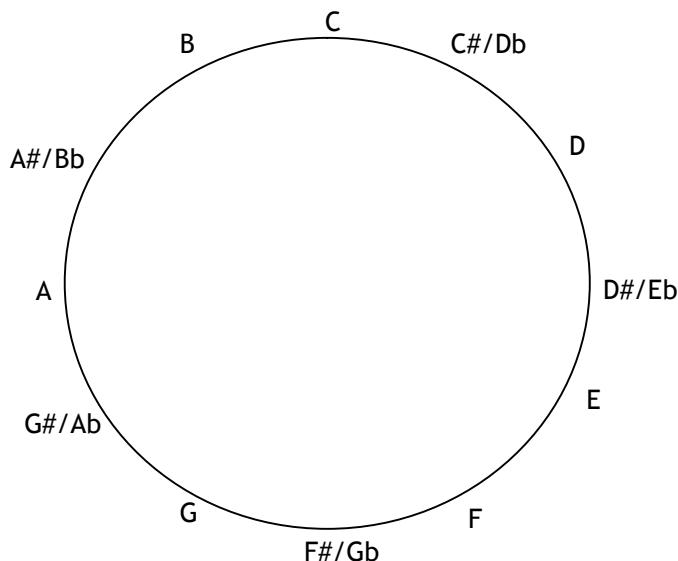
Press the 1st fret on the E string and pick the string. This plays the note '**F**'.

Press the 2nd fret on the E string and pick it. This plays the note '**F#/Gb**'

What about the other strings?

Press the 1st fret on the A string and you play '**A#/Bb**'. Press the 2nd of the A string fret and you play '**B**'

You can move 1 fret at a time and follow the note change on the diagram below as long as you know where you started. As you move UP the frets (towards the guitar body) you move clockwise round the diagram. As you move DOWN the frets (towards the HEAD) you move anti-clockwise on the diagram.



**Can you fill in the rest of the notes on the guitar diagram above?
You can also check your knowledge by picking a string and fret at random, then
find out the note name by counting from the open string.**

NOW TAKE THE ONLINE QUIZ:

[Demystifying the fret board](#)

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