

How to Read Tablature

All of the music is written in standard notation and Tablature for guitar. Tunings are given twice, once as the common name for the tuning, for example **Taro Patch**, and again as pitches immediately to the left of the first line.

Tablature, or TAB, is an ancient system of musical notation in which lines represent the instrument's strings, starting with the highest string on top. Fingering positions are indicated by numbers. TAB doesn't give any indication of how long to hold each note; for that refer to the staff above the TAB. (If you are unfamiliar with standard musical notation, see page 14.) For example:

In this example you would play the open fifth string with your thumb at the same time as plucking the third string at the fourth fret. Then you'd play a double stop with the open fourth string and the first string at the fifth fret. Pay attention to the direction of the note stems. Downward pointing stems are played with your thumb, upward pointing stems are sounded with your fingers.

Fingerings have not been indicated to allow each player to develop a personal style: experiment with different fingerings to see what works best for you. Although some old-time slack key players use only one or two fingers to sound the strings, Keola suggests learning to play with your index, middle and ring fingers for better tone and flexibility.

Here are some additional symbols you will encounter:

Slide: Play the first note, and slide up or down to the next. Try to sound each note clearly.

Hammer-on: Play the first note, then rapidly press your finger down to the fretboard to sound the second note.

Pull-off: Play the first note, then quickly pull off your finger to sound the lower note.

Hammer/pull combination: A common feature of slack key, this is a rapid combination of a hammer-on and pull-off executed as a quick flick of the finger. Slack key artists may combine hammers, pulls and slides (all technically called **slurs** in the music world) in bewildering variety. Mastery of these techniques is something so personal that an individual player can often be identified just from listening to the slurs.



Harmonic: Also called *chimes* in Hawaiian music. Lightly touch the string directly over the fret to produce a ringing tone. Keola recommends moving your plucking hand back towards the bridge slightly to better define the harmonic.



Brush: Brush upwards across the strings indicated with your index finger. An upward pointing arrow indicates a downward strum with your thumb.

Reading Musical Notation

Although it is not necessary to know how to read musical notation to play the songs in this book, knowledge of a few musical symbols will greatly enhance your enjoyment.

Since the TAB will give you the correct pitches on a properly tuned guitar, you really only have to worry about the rhythm of a particular piece.

Music is divided into **measures**, each of which contains the number of beats delineated by the **time signature**:








4/4 means four beats per measure, each quarter note counts as one beat.



3/4 is three beats per measure, each quarter note counts as one beat.

Occasionally alternate symbols are used for the time signature. **Cut Time** (C) is another way of writing 2/2; and **Common Time** (C) is the same as 4/4.

Each beat can be further divided into smaller and smaller units:

-  The longest note is the whole note; it is the equivalent of four quarter notes, or four counts.
-  The half note is equal to two quarter notes.
-  The quarter note gets one count.
-  Two eighth notes equals a quarter note.
-  The sixteenth note is half as long as the eighth note; so two sixteenths equal one eighth, four sixteenths equal a quarter, and sixteen equal a whole note.

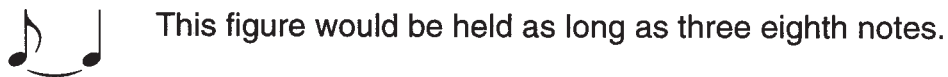
Rests correspond to each of the different note values.



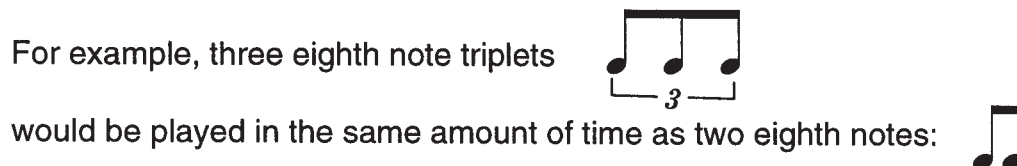
A dot placed next to a note (or rest) lengthens it by one half of its value. For example:



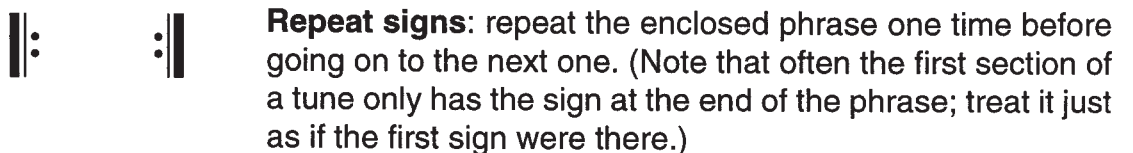
Ties are used for notes that are held for their combined values:



Triplets are groups of three notes that are played in the space of two.



A few more signs to help you find your way:



This sign means play the measures under the sign on the first time through and then go back to the beginning of the section. On the repeat you skip over the first ending and play the second ending.

BV — — A barre symbol means to cover all of the strings with your index finger at the fret indicated by the Roman numeral, and hold the barre as long as indicated by the dotted line. A partial barre is indicated by the sign **1/2B**.





A **fermata** is the symbol to hold a note just a little longer than its value. It is used to add expression to your playing.


D.C.

From the Italian, **Da Capo**, meaning "Head." This sign directs you to go back to the beginning of the music. **D.C. al Fine** directs you to play from the beginning to the designated end of the song. We use the Hawaiian word **pau** in place of the Italian **fine**.

D.S.

Dal Segno, or "to the sign," tells you to look for the symbol () and play that section next rather than returning to the beginning. **D.S. al**  means play from the sign to the coda sign, then jump to the coda.



A **Coda** sign is often used to mark the ending of the piece. When you see this sign, skip down to the section marked  **Coda** to finish the song. Coda is Italian for "Tail," by the way.

Rit.

Also **Ritard**. Gradually slow the pace to bring the music to a graceful conclusion.

Pau

Hawaiian for "done." When you see the word **pau**, you've finished.

