TalkingBass.net

Beginner's Course

Lesson Workbook

TalkingBass.net

Beginner's Course Workbook

Lesson #1: Absolute Basics

Anatomy Of The Bass Guitar

The following diagram gives an overview of the three main parts of the bass guitar. The body, the neck and the headstock:

Strings Of The Bass Guitar

The strings of the bass guitar are named according to the standard tuning of each open string. They are (from thickest to thinnest): The E String, A String, D String and G String:

Parts Of The Bass

The following diagram displays the standard parts found on most regular bass guitar bodies:

The following diagram displays the standard parts of the bass headstock:

The following diagram displays examples of the frets and fret markers found on most common bass guitar necks:

Fret Numbers and Markers

The frets of the bass guitar neck are numbered in ascending order from the headstock to the body as follows:

The following diagram displays the fret number of each fret marker on the neck up to the 12th fret (double fret marker):

Lesson #2: Getting Started With Fingerpicking

Exercises:

1: E String Plucking – Pluck open E string with the 1st finger:

1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	etc.
Pluck	Pluck	Pluck	Pluck	Pluck	Pluck	Pluck	Pluck	etc.

2: E String Pluck and Choke – Pluck open E string then choke with the 1st finger:

1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	etc.
Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	etc.

3: A String Pluck and Choke – Pluck open A string then choke with the 1st finger:

1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	etc.
Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	etc.

4: D String Pluck and Choke – Pluck open D string then choke with the 1st finger:

1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	etc.
Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	etc.

5: G String Pluck and Choke – Pluck open G string then choke with the 1st finger:

1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	etc.
Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	etc.

6: Third Fret Pluck – As previous examples (2-5) but hold down the 3rd fret of each string. Play each string in turn in the order: E string, A string, D string, G string, D string, A string. Repeat.

7: Fretting Hand Choke – As exercise 6 but choke by each note by releasing pressure in the fretting hand:

1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	etc.
Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	etc.

8: Short Riff – Same pluck/choke pattern using the following notes: G, B, C, D

- G: 3rd fret of the E string
- B: 2nd fret of the A string
- C: 3rd fret of the A string
- D: 5th fret of the A string

1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
G		G		B		B	
Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke

1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
C		C		D		D	
Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke	Pluck	Choke

Lesson #3: Notes

The Musical Note System

To label pitches in music, we use the notes of the alphabet :

ABCDEFG

The distance between two adjacent notes of the same letter is called an *Octave*. So the distance from one A to the next A (ABCDEFGA) is *1 Octave*.

Notes On The Fretboard

When we look at these notes on the bass fretboard we find there are two frets between each note except for the notes E-F and B-C that are divided by only one fret:

B to C = 1 Fret

E to F = 1 Fret

This gives us the following set of notes:

A	-	B	-	C	-	D	-	E	-	F	-	G	-	A
	2 frets		**1 fret**		2 frets		2 frets		**1 fret**		2 frets		2 frets	

If we use this system to locate the notes on the A string we find the following:

We can apply this principle to every string to locate every natural note (no sharps or flats) on each string of the bass:

E string

A string:

D string:

G string:

Learning By Fret Marker

The fret markers can be used a navigational aid on the bass fretboard. These are useful in making the first step towards learning all the notes of the bass fretboard.

3rd, 5th and 7th fret markers of the E string:

3rd, 5th and 7th fret markers of the A string:

Combined fret markers of the E and A strings:

Notes On The Neck

Fret Markers

E String

G - 3rd fret
A - 5th Fret
B - 7th Fret

A String

C - 3rd fret
D - 5th Fret
E - 7th Fret

C	D	E	D	E	D	E	D
C	C	D	C	D	E	D	C
C	D	D	E	C	E	D	C
D	E	C	D	E	C	C	E
E	D	C	D	C	C	E	D
C	D	C	D	E	C	E	C
D	E	C	D	E	D	C	E
C	D	E	C	E	E	D	C
E	D	C	E	C	D	E	C

E & A Strings

G	B	A	B	C	B	A	C
D	E	G	A	B	C	D	D
G	C	B	A	G	B	G	A
E	D	G	A	C	G	E	E
G	C	G	D	A	B	G	G
A	C	B	A	G	D	C	E
C	B	D	E	B	C	G	A
B	G	C	A	G	C	B	E
D	E	B	C	D	G	B	A

Sharps and Flats

Sharp and Flat notes are created using the following simple guidelines:

- To sharpen a note: Raise a natural note by one fret
- To flatten a note: Lower a natural note by one fret

The sharp and flat notes are indicated using the following symbols:

- Sharp notes use a hash symbol: G sharp = G#
- Flat notes use a b symbol: G flat = Gb

As an example of a sharpened and flattened note we find the following notes surrounding the G natural at the 3rd fret of the E string:

G Natural:

G Sharp:

G Flat:

Any sharp/flat can be viewed as the sharp/flat of another note. For example, Gb and F# occupy the same 2nd fret on the E string:

We choose the spelling based on context. This is a more advanced subject. For now just be aware of the basic principles of raising and lowering a note by one fret.

Lesson #4: Introduction To Rhythm

When we listen to music we hear and feel a beating pulse. This pulse can be divided up into a repeating numbers of beats. Recurring sets of 4 beats would be counted as 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4. Each set of these beats is called a *bar*. So the count of 1 2 3 4 would be one bar, 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 would be two bars etc.

The speed of this pulse is called *tempo.* This can be written in terms of the beats per minute, eg. 120 beats per minute (bpm) or as a simple term such as *Slow* or *Fast*. Italian terms such as *Adagio* and *Allegro* are often used in Classical music.

The number of beats in a bar is referred to as the *Time Signature*. This is written as two numbers such as 4/4. The first number refers to the number of beats in the bar. The second (or lower) number refers to the type of beat (quarter note, 8th note, 16th note) but we don't need to worry about this at the moment. As a beginner it's OK to know that 4/4 refers to a basic 4 beats in the bar.

Counting Exercises:

1. Count repeating bars of 4 beats. Tap the foot and say the beats as you count.
2. As Exercise 1 but count silently while tapping the foot. Accent the count of 1.
3. Play the 3rd fret of the E string (G) on beat 1 and hold for the full bar. Count and tap along.
4. As exercise 3 but pluck on beats 1 and 3.
5. As exercise 3 but pluck on every beat: 1,2,3,4.
6. Count repeating bars of "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and" while tapping the foot. Say the beats as you count. Alternate bars with this exercise and exercise 1.
7. Play the 3rd fret of the E string (G) on beat 1 and hold for the full bar. Count "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and" aloud as you play and tap the foot.
8. As exercise 7 but pluck on beats 1 and 3.
9. As exercise 7 but pluck on every beat: 1,2,3,4.
10. Play the following rhythm: **(1)** and 2 **(and) (3)** and 4 and. Pluck on the bracketed beats.
11. Play the following rhythm: **(1) (and)** 2 and **(3) (and)** 4 and. Pluck on the bracketed beats.
12. Play the following rhythm: **(1)** and 2 **(and)(3)** and 4 **(and)**. Pluck on the bracketed beats.
13. As exercise 12 but work through the progression: G, C, D, C. (One bar for each note).
14. As exercise 13 but count silently while still tapping the foot.

More Rhythmic Exercises:

- **(1)** and 2 **(and) (3)** and **(4) (and)**
- **(1) (and)** 2 **(and) (3) (and)** 4 **(and)**
- **(1)** and **(2) (and) (3)** and **(4) (and)**
- **(1)** and 2 and **(3)** and **(4) (and)**
- **(1)** and **(2)** and **(3)** and **(4) (and)**
- **(1)** and **(2) (and) (3)** and **(4)** and
- **(1) (and) (2)** and **(3)** and **(4) (and)**

Lesson #5: The Fretting Hand

4 Finger Exercise:

The following exercise helps bring all the fretting hand fingers into play

- Play frets 5-6-7-8 with fingers 1-2-3-4. Keep each finger held down after playing.
- Play the pattern across the fretboard on each string from the E string to the G string and back.

If you have any problems with the stretch, move the pattern higher up the fretboard to start on a higher fret.

Blues Riff in A:

Blues Riff in G:

Theme From Peter Gunn:

Bassline 1 (using 4th finger):

Bassline 2 (using 3rd finger):

Lesson #6: Two Finger Picking

Alternate Picking Exercise:

1. Pluck a steady, continuous rhythm on the open E string using the picking pattern 2 1 2 1 etc. (start on 2nd finger)
2. Repeat the previous exercise using the picking pattern 1 2 1 2 etc. (start on 1st finger)

Blues Riff in A:

Bassline (Mixing the fingers up):

Lesson #7: Using A Plectrum

Downstroke Exercise:

- Pluck a downstroke on every beat of the bar: 1,2,3,4.
- Work through the notes G, C, D, C (one bar each)

Alternate Picking Exercise:

- Pluck alternating downstrokes and upstrokes on the beats 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and
- Work through the notes G, C, D, C (one bar each)

Lesson #8: The Next Step

Bass Playing Principles and Tips:

1. Bass Guitar gives a warmth to the overall sound of a band
2. The bass function is to gel the drumkit and the other instruments together by working rhythmically with the drumbeat and harmonically working to reinforce the chord progression.
3. Bass lines can consist of repeating riffs played with, or independent of, the other instruments. They can also weave separate melodic counter lines through the chords.
4. In working through a chord chart the bass player must pay particular attention to the root notes of the chords. For example, C in C major7 or D in D minor7.
5. Many bass lines use the bass drum pattern as a rhythmic foundation. Try to pick out the bass drum in any recording you hear. Pay attention to the rhythmic patterns.
6. Listen to bass lines in all the music you hear. Try to pick out bass patterns in the mix.
7. **Biggest Tip: Learn songs!** Learn as many songs as possible in all styles. This will teach you how basslines work in a song and help with creating your own lines.
8. Try learning songs by ear. Listen to bass lines and try to work them out on your bass.
9. Use **Youtube** to help you work out the songs you like.
10. Use tablature in helping to work out songs. Be careful! Many online tabs are incorrect. Always use your ear as the ultimate deciding factor.
11. Find guitar/piano chord charts for your favourite songs. These can help in working out the bassline and give you an introduction to how chord progressions work.
12. Study music theory and harmony. This will help in creating bass lines by providing you with a knowledge of chord tones. The notes of the chord are the framework we use in constructing melodic bass lines.

Reading Tablature:

Tablature consists of four lines that each represent the strings of the bass:

We simply write numbers on the lines to indicate the required frets you need to play. The following note is a G at the 3rd fret of the E string:

Copyright © 2015 Talkingbass Media