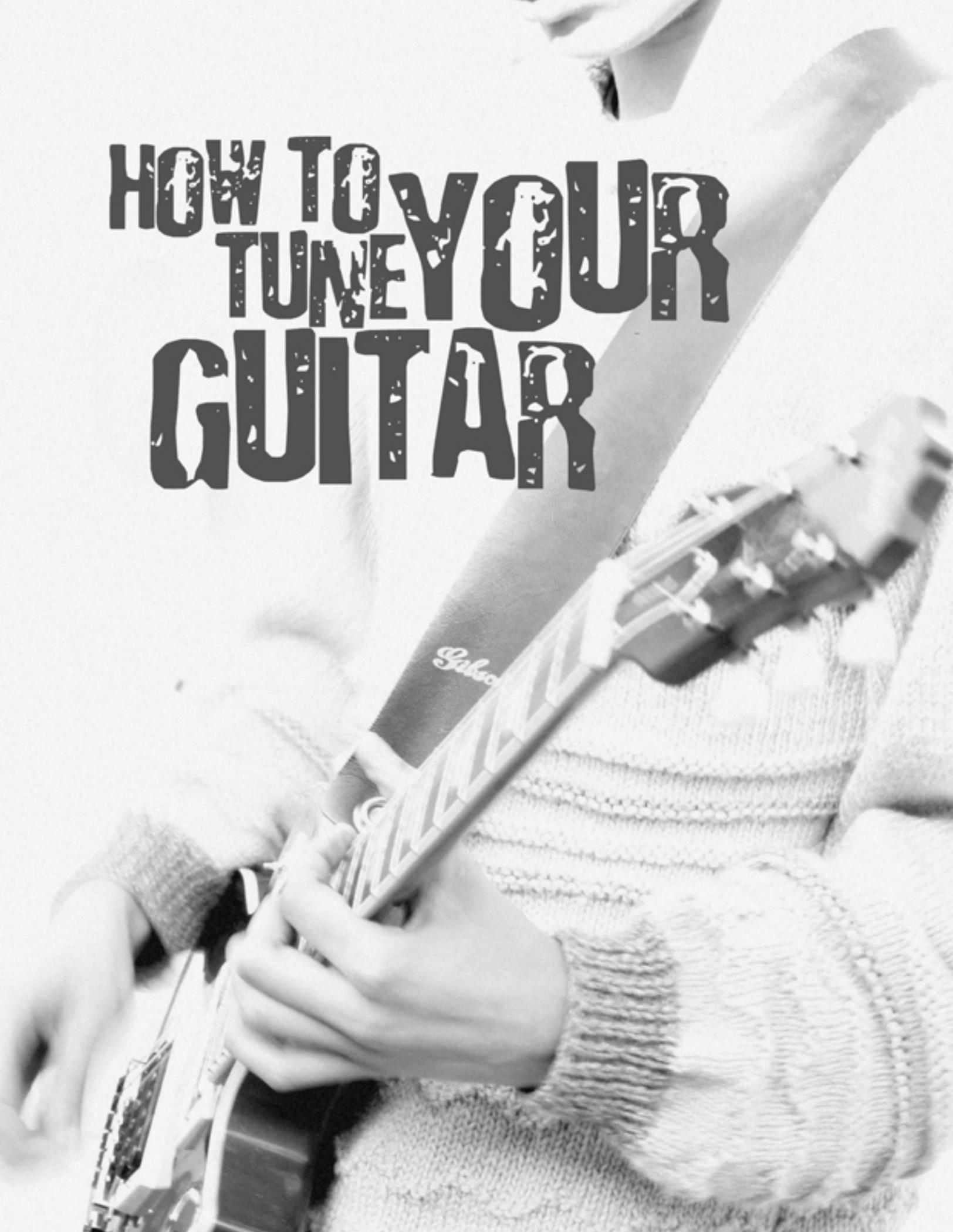


# HOW TO TUNE YOUR GUITAR



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# CHAPTER ONE

Before we start on the methods for tuning your guitar, we will go through some handy tips that could save you from making any major mistakes the first time you tune up. It is a good idea to ask an experienced guitar player to help you work through the following tips on tuning.

## **New strings:**

When you are dealing with new strings, it can be a little nerve racking at first. They can make some pretty frightening sounds. When your strings are new, they are at their most vulnerable. They will break if you pull them too tight, too quickly. The key is to tune them slowly. You really have to take your time. You will find that they will reach a certain pitch and then drop back down very quickly. This is because they are stretching and it is quite normal. You just need to keep tuning them up slowly until they hold their pitch.

## **Work the string in:**

After a string is put on the guitar, it needs to be worked in. This is done by pulling the string away from the fret board with the thumb and first finger of your right hand. You only need to pull the string a little or else it could break. You are really just stretching the string so that it will hold its pitch.

## **A quiet room:**

It is important that you can hear each string clearly as you tune it. Find a room somewhere that is very quiet with good acoustics. A room with good acoustics is one where the string sound can be heard crisply and clearly. The bathroom is often a good place as it doesn't absorb sound like a room with furniture does.

## **Temperature:**

The temperature of a room affects the way your strings behave. Moving between a warm room and a cold room can change the pitch of your strings. Try to stay in one room at the same temperature while you tune.

## **Pay attention:**

You really have to be patient and pay attention when you are learning to tune your guitar. Make sure that you are always tuning the correct tuning key on the guitar head or you may end up quite confused as to which strings need tuning.

# CHAPTER TWO

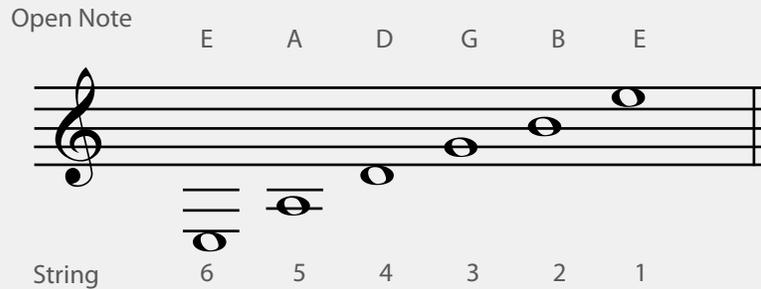
## Notes on the open strings

Before you begin tuning, you need to know the pitch of each open string. There are many different guitar tunings, but we will start with standard guitar tuning (sometimes referred to as open E tuning) for both the six and twelve string guitar. Here are the string pitches for standard tuning:

### Open E tuning for a six string guitar



### Six string tuning on staff



### Open E tuning for a 12 string guitar



## 12 string tuning on staff

Open Note	E	E	A	A	D	D	G	G	B	B	E	E
-----------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

String 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

### Guitar tuning methods

There are quite a few methods for tuning your guitar, some that you will use more than others. Still, it is good to know how to use all the methods that are available.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Method one – Electronic tuner

The electronic tuner is probably the easiest and most effective way of tuning your guitar to correct pitch. With an electronic tuner you can get a very accurate tuning because it actually measures the sound wave frequency of your strings. With an electronic tuner you can tune each string individually, the tuner indicating whether the string pitch is above or below the desired pitch.

There are quite a few different models to choose from. Most use a needle or a set of lights to indicate string pitch.

### Electronic tuner for electric guitar.

When you are using an electronic tuner with your electric guitar, you plug a lead directly from your guitar to the line in on the tuner. You then pluck each string and tune them until you reach the desired pitch on the tuner. Most electronic tuners will have a line out also, so you can plug from the tuner and into an amplifier. When tuning, remember to plug your guitar lead into the line in. If you plug it into the line out, it won't work. Your volume control will need to be turned up a little so that the tuner can get a signal. It is best to tune your electric using the front pickup of the guitar; that is the pickup that is closest to the guitar neck. One other thing to keep in mind is the other strings that you are not tuning. You need to keep them quite or else the tuner can not tell which string you are trying to tune. Mute the rest of the strings using your left hand.

### **Electronic tuner for acoustic guitar.**

If you want to tune your acoustic guitar with an electronic tuner, you will need a tuner that has an in built microphone. To tune your acoustic guitar, place the tuner near to the body or sound hole of the guitar. Pick each string as you tune them and do so in a clean and non-aggressive manner. If you pluck the strings too hard, the tuner will have trouble reading them. You may need to play around a bit with the positioning of the tuner in relation to the guitar. If you keep experimenting, you will find the best distance between the tuner and the guitar body. Make sure that the room you are in is a quiet one. Electronic tuners may pick up room sound that will interfere with tuning. Make sure that your electronic tuner has good batteries. If the tuners batteries are getting low you won't get an accurate tuning. The last thing to list here is to make sure that you are tuning each string to the right pitch. Sometimes a string can be so out of tune that the tuner will mistake it for another string.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Method two – Tuning to another guitar**

For this method you need to have a second guitar that is in tune and somebody with you to pluck the strings on the second guitar. Take your guitars into a quiet room where they can both be heard clearly. Have someone pluck the sixth string on the second guitar. Listen to the pitch of the note being played on the second guitar and pluck your sixth string in comparison. Try to ascertain whether your sixth string is higher or lower in pitch to that of the second guitar. If you think lower, tune your sixth string up (anti-clockwise movement of the tuning key) to match the pitch of the second guitar. It is easier to tune up to a pitch than it is to tune down to one. If you think that your sixth string pitch is higher than that of the second guitar, you should tune the string down (clockwise movement of the tuning key) so that its pitch is below the pitch that you desire. From there, tune the string up to the desired pitch. There is another reason for tuning up rather than down and that is that, the string will hold its pitch better due to the strain that you have put on it. Once you have tuned the sixth string, repeat the process for all of the other strings.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Method three – tuning the guitar to itself

This is probably the most important piece of knowledge you can have about tuning your guitar. The process of tuning your guitar to itself is one where you tune each string to another string on the guitar. Before you start to tune using this method, you need to have your sixth string already in tune. You can use an electronic tuner or another instrument to get the sixth string in tune. Once the sixth string is in tune you can apply the following steps to put the rest of the guitar in tune.

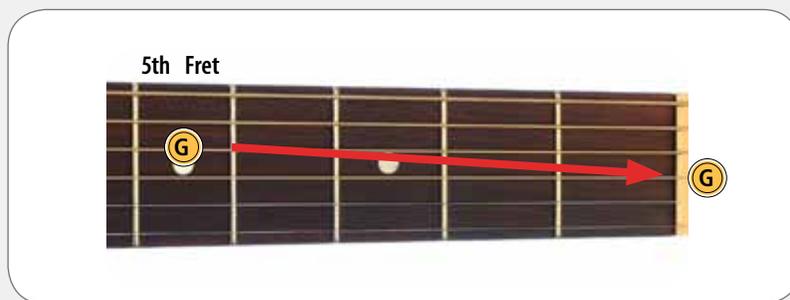
- The first step is to get your fifth string in tune with your sixth string. Place a finger on your left hand on the fifth fret of the sixth string. The note that you are holding down is an A and that is the pitch that string five should be tuned to. Keep your finger in position and pluck the sixth string and let that note ring. As you let the sixth string ring, pluck the fifth string. If the fifth string sounds exactly like the A note you are holding on the sixth string, it is in tune. If it is higher, you need to tune down below the A note on the sixth string and then bring it back up to match with the fifth fret note on the sixth string. If the fifth string note is lower, you need to tighten the string and bring its pitch up to the fifth fret note on the sixth string. It may take you a while to match pitches exactly but the more practice you get at this, the faster you will get.



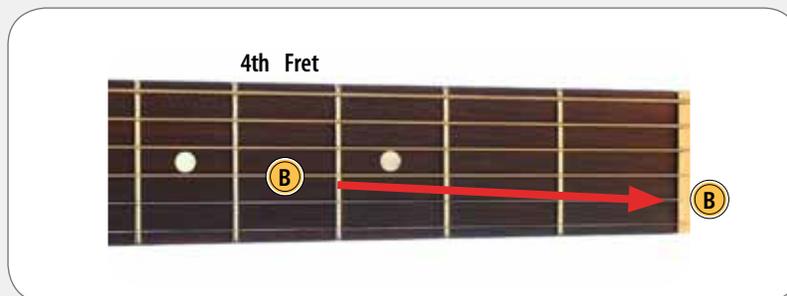
- The second step is to get your fourth string in tune with your fifth string. Place a finger on your left hand on the fifth fret of the fifth string. The note that you are holding down is a D and that is the pitch that string four should be tuned to. Keep your finger in position and pluck the fifth string and let that note ring. As you let the fifth string ring, pluck the fourth string. If the fourth string sounds exactly like the D note you are holding on the fifth string, it is in tune. If it is higher, you need to tune down below the D note on the fifth string and then bring it back up to match with the fifth fret note on the fifth string. If the fourth string note is lower, you need to tighten the string and bring its pitch up to the fifth fret note on the fifth string. Keep tuning the string until you get an exact match for pitch.



- The third step is to get your third string in tune with your fourth string. Place a finger on your left hand on the fifth fret of the fourth string. The note that you are holding down is a G and that is the pitch that string three should be tuned to. Keep your finger in position and pluck the fourth string and let that note ring. As you let the fourth string ring, pluck the third string. If the third string sounds exactly like the G note you are holding on the fourth string, it is in tune. If it is higher, you need to tune down below the G note on the fourth string and then bring it back up to match with the fifth fret note on the fourth string. If the third string note is lower, you need to tighten the string and bring its pitch up to the fifth fret note on the fourth string. Keep tuning the string until you get an exact match for pitch.



- The fourth step is to get your second string in tune with your third string. Place a finger on your left hand on the fourth fret of the third string. The note that you are holding down is a B and that is the pitch that string two should be tuned to. Keep your finger in position and pluck the third string and let that note ring. As you let the third string ring, pluck the second string. If the second string sounds exactly like the B note you are holding on the third string, it is in tune. If it is higher, you need to tune down below the B note on the third string and then bring it back up to match with the fourth fret note on the third string. If the second string note is lower, you need to tighten the string and bring its pitch up to the fourth fret note on the third string. Keep tuning the string until you get an exact match for pitch.



- The last step is to get your first string in tune with your second string. Place a finger on your left hand on the fifth fret of the second string. The note that you are holding down is an E and that is the pitch that string one should be tuned to. Keep your finger in position and pluck the second string and let that note ring. As you let the second string ring, pluck the first string. If the first string sounds exactly like the E note you are holding on the second string, it is in tune. If it is higher, you need to tune down below the E note on the second string and then bring it back up to match with the fifth fret note on the second string. If the first string note is lower, you need to tighten the string and bring its pitch up to the fifth fret note on the second string. Keep tuning the string until you get an exact match for pitch and you will have tuned the guitar to its own strings.



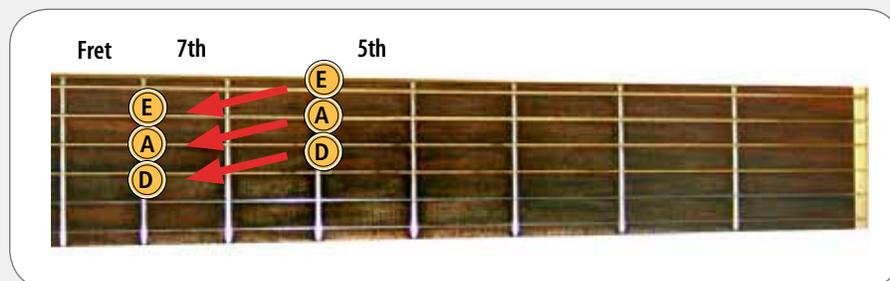
# CHAPTER SIX

## Method four – using harmonics

The method of using string harmonics to tune your guitar is harder than any of the other methods already mentioned, but it is far more accurate than tuning by string pitch (as set out in the last method – tuning the guitar to itself). A harmonic is made by lightly touching a string at the point directly above the 5th, 7th or 12th fret and plucking that string. The sound that is produced is called a harmonic, and it has a very clear sound like that of a chime or bell. This bell sound is much clearer than the sound that is produced when you hold a string down and is therefore easier to tune from. The process of tuning the guitar from harmonics is very similar to tuning the guitar to itself, but it is more accurate. Like the guitar to itself tuning, you must have the sixth string already in tune to use this method.

- The first step is to tune your fifth string from your sixth. Place your finger gently on the sixth string just over the fifth fret marking. Make sure that the string itself is in contact with your finger only and not the fret board. Now, pluck the sixth string and you will hear an E harmonic. Follow the same method to play the harmonic on the seventh fret of the fifth string. You want this harmonic to match the pitch of the one that you just played on the sixth string. Adjust the fifth string tuning key to match the fifth string (seventh fret) harmonic to the sixth string (fifth fret) harmonic. Once the two harmonics match, you can move on to tune the fourth string.

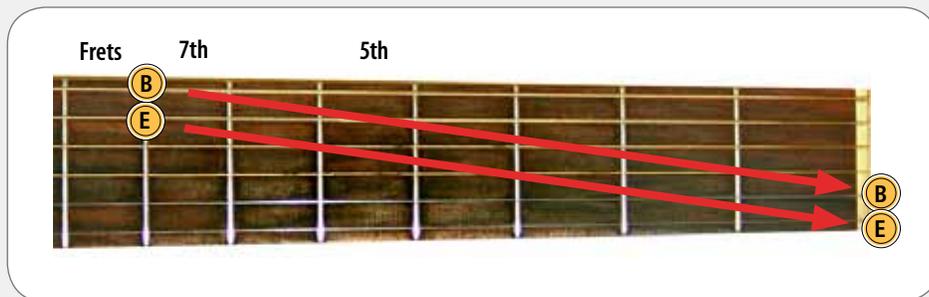
- Similarly to the last step, play the harmonic on the fifth fret of the fifth string. This is A harmonic. Play the harmonic on the seventh fret of the fourth string. You want the fourth string (seventh fret) harmonic to match the pitch of the fifth string (fifth fret) harmonic. Adjust the fourth string tuning key until the two pitches match exactly.



- Similar again, play the harmonic on the fifth fret of the fourth string. This is D harmonic. Play the harmonic on the seventh fret of the third string. You want the third string (seventh fret) harmonic to match the pitch of the fourth string (fifth fret) harmonic. Adjust the third string tuning key until the two pitches match exactly.

- This is where the method changes a little. Play the seventh fret, sixth string harmonic. This is B harmonic. Pluck the second string. You want the second string to match pitches with the sixth string, seventh fret harmonic. Adjust the second string tuning key until it is in tune.

- The last step. Play the seventh fret, fifth string harmonic. This is E harmonic. Pluck the first string. You want the first string to match pitches with the fifth string, seventh fret harmonic. Adjust the first string tuning key until it is in tune.



This method will require some practice for you to get used to it, but you will get a far more accurate tuning than you would get from tuning from string notes.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

Regardless of whether you set out to learn a few simple chords, or if you just want to be the next biggest thing to grace the music world. When you pick up an instrument you are going to have to practice if you are to have any hope of getting better.

A lot of budding musicians go wrong in the area of establishing good habits in terms of playing, practicing and developing strong technique. One of the most common reasons people get discouraged when learning to play an instrument is that they get stuck, “Why continue playing if I’m not getting any better?” This is unfortunate and is usually the result of impatience in regards to progress. Perfectionists, amongst others, are notorious for judging themselves too severely. Like most things, when learning an instrument, some skills will come quickly while others will take time to acquire. This will vary with different people, so comparing oneself with others can prove fruitless.

The people who really succeed at getting under way with their development are people who stick at it no matter what. These people have a real passion and attitude. If you watch these people progress you will see that they immerse themselves in music. They begin to walk, talk and breathe music. They capitalize on their strengths and thoroughly work their weaknesses. Above all these people love the music that they play and are never phased by what other people say. With this attitude, they continue to improve every day.

For some people, learning a musical instrument isn’t for them. However, those who set out to learn and really give it a decent go, are knocking at the door of what is potentially one of the most enjoyable and fulfilling worlds that they may ever experience.