



Bashar Haroun

MUSIC THEORY

SIMPLIFIED!

A Practical Guide to
Understanding Music
Instead of Memorizing It

A BEGINNER-FRIENDLY GUIDE
DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR
MUSICIANS WHO WANT TO
UNDERSTAND HOW MUSIC
ACTUALLY WORKS



Guitar & Bass players



MUSIC THEORY SIMPLIFIED

FOR GUITAR AND BASS PLAYERS

BY

BASHAR HAROUN

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BEFORE WE GET SERIOUS...

If you're reading this material, chances are you either want to start on the right path from the very beginning, or you've already picked up a guitar or bass and started learning your favorite songs. Maybe you've memorized a few chords, learned some riffs, or even played along with your favorite bands. That's a great start but sooner or later, almost every musician reaches the same point.

You begin to ask questions:

"Why do these chords sound good together?"

"Why is this note wrong, even though it's only one fret away?"

"How do musicians know what to play without memorizing everything?"

"How can I improvise instead of copying other people?"

The answer to all of these questions is the same: **music theory**.

Now, if you feel that the words *music theory* sound intimidating, let me tell you something important:

Music theory is not a collection of complicated rules designed to make music harder. It isn't a secret language that only professional musicians understand, and it certainly isn't about memorizing endless charts, scales, and formulas.

Music theory is simply the language we use to describe what is already happening in music.

Imagine trying to build a house without understanding how bricks, wood, or concrete work. You might succeed by copying someone else's design, but the moment something changes, you'll be lost.

Learning music by memorizing shapes and patterns without understanding them is very similar. You can copy songs if you want, but the moment you try creating something original, you might face limitations.

Understanding theory changes everything. Instead of memorizing hundreds of chord shapes, you'll understand how chords are actually built.

Instead of remembering scale patterns because someone told you to, you'll understand why those notes belong together.

Instead of relying entirely on tabs or videos, you'll begin recognizing musical ideas on your own.

Most importantly, you'll become a more confident musician.

Why Guitarists and Bassists Need Music Theory?

One of the biggest misconceptions among beginners is that music theory is only for pianists, composers, or classical musicians.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

In fact, guitarists and bass players often benefit more from understanding theory because our instruments are highly visual. Once you understand how music works, the fretboard starts making sense instead of looking like a long collection of random frets.

You'll begin noticing patterns everywhere.

The same intervals repeat across different strings.

Chord shapes become movable.

Scale patterns stop being isolated diagrams and become connected ideas.

Instead of thinking, *"I have to memorize this shape,"* you'll start thinking, *"I understand why this shape exists."*

That shift is one of the biggest milestones in becoming a musician.

What You'll Learn

Before we continue, I'd like to set one important expectation:

This material is not intended to be a complete guide to music theory. In fact, that isn't its purpose at all.

Throughout my years as a musician, educator, and producer, I've come to a simple realization. If we imagine that all of music theory represents **100%** of the available knowledge, then the amount you truly need to understand in order to make sense of music to play, analyze, improvise, and understand the vast majority of songs and styles is surprisingly small.

I'd argue that mastering even **10%** of music theory gives you access to understanding nearly **85%** of the music you'll encounter.

Music theory is an incredibly broad subject. There are countless advanced topics, alternative approaches, analytical systems, and specialized concepts that musicians can spend a lifetime exploring. While those subjects are valuable, they aren't where most guitarists and bass players should begin.

The goal of this material is not to make you a music theorist.

Instead, its goal is to help you see music differently.

Even the essential 10% covered here won't be explored in exhaustive detail. Rather, I'll introduce the core principles, explain why they matter, and show you how they connect. Think of every chapter as opening a new door rather than walking you through the entire building.

By the end of this material, you'll have a clear framework that allows you to recognize musical ideas, understand what's happening around you, and confidently continue learning on your own. Once you know the fundamentals, you'll also know what to study next and why it matters.

Everything presented here is meant to be a starting point, a collection of practical concepts that you can continue expanding throughout your musical journey.

A Different Way of Learning

One of the biggest mistakes musicians make is believing that understanding comes from memorization.

Memorization certainly has its place. We all memorize chord shapes, scales, note names, and songs. But memory fades. If information isn't applied, it eventually disappears.

Understanding is different!

When you truly understand an idea, you no longer need to remember it. You recognize it.

That's the philosophy behind this material.

As you work through these chapters, I encourage you to keep your guitar or bass within reach. Play every example. Experiment with every concept. Move notes around the fretboard. Listen carefully to how changing a single note changes the entire sound.

Don't just read about music. Experience it.

The goal isn't to finish this material as quickly as possible. The goal is to transform every concept into something you can hear, see, and physically play on your instrument.

Learning music is much like learning a new language. At first, you consciously think about every word. Eventually, you stop translating and simply speak. Music works exactly the same way. With enough practical application, these concepts will stop feeling like theory and start becoming instinct.

Feeling Overwhelmed? Don't Worry

As you work through this material, there may be moments when you feel that a chapter contains more information than you actually need, or that a particular concept has become a little confusing. That's completely normal.

Remember, the purpose of this material isn't to master every detail on your first read. Sometimes you'll encounter information that may not seem immediately useful, but it's there to help you see the bigger picture and understand how different musical ideas connect.

If you ever find yourself thinking, *"This is getting a bit too complicated,"* don't stop reading.

Simply continue to the end of the chapter.

Every chapter concludes with a section called "**Key Takeaways**".

This is where I summarize everything you've just learned in clear, straightforward language, focusing only on the essential ideas that you should remember. Think of it as the "big picture" of the chapter. The concepts that truly matter.

However, I strongly recommend reading the entire chapter before jumping to the summary. The explanations, examples, and discussions leading up to it provide the context that makes the summary meaningful. Once you've reached The Takeaway, you'll find that the ideas become much easier to understand and remember.

Learning music isn't about understanding everything immediately. It's about gradually connecting ideas until they begin to make sense naturally. Trust the process, be patient with yourself, and remember that every accomplished musician has experienced exactly the same moments of confusion along the way.

One Last Thing...

Before we begin, I'd like to ask you for one small favor.

Give yourself permission not to understand everything the first time.

If a concept feels unfamiliar, that's okay.

If you need to read a chapter twice, that's okay too.

If you've been playing for years and suddenly realize there are things you never understood, that's perfectly normal. Every experienced musician has had moments where something finally "clicked" after years of playing.

Learning music isn't a race. There are no grades, no deadlines, and no finish line.

Enjoy the process.

My hope is that, by the time you finish this material, you won't just know more about music, you'll hear music differently.

And once that happens, there's no going back.

Now, grab your instrument, turn the page, and let's begin!



CHAPTER I



NOTES AND INTERVALS



*The music is not in the notes,
but in the silence between.*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart



Natural Notes

Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Si (or **Ti**, depending on the country) are probably the first musical notes you learned at school. These are what we call the natural notes.

Although we often sing them as Do, Re, Mi..., musicians usually refer to them using letters of the alphabet:

- Do = C
- Re = D
- Mi = E
- Fa = F
- Sol = G
- La = A
- Si (Ti) = B

This gives us the following seven-note sequence:

C – D – E – F – G – A – B – C

Notice that after **G** the alphabet starts again with **A**, not **H**.

These seven notes together form what is called the **C Major Scale**, which we'll discuss later. For now, the important thing to remember is that these are called the **natural notes**, and they form the foundation of almost everything you'll learn, hear, and play in music.

Intervals and the Chromatic Scale

We'll explain what a musical scale actually is later, but first you need to know something important.

Music doesn't only contain seven notes.

Those seven are simply the natural notes, but there are additional notes between some of them.

In Western music, we divide notes using the concept of a **half step** (also called a **semitone**). The notes that fall between the natural notes are called **accidentals**. They are represented as **sharps (#)** and **flats (b)**.

Keep in mind that other musical traditions, especially many ethnic and non-Western styles, may divide notes differently and use intervals smaller than a half step. However, throughout this material, we'll focus on the Western system.

One of the most important ideas in music is the **interval**, which simply means the distance between two notes.

For example, between **C** and **D** there is another note. We can call it either:

C# (C Sharp)

or

D $\flat$ (D Flat)

A sharp simply means **one half step higher**, while a flat means **one half step lower**.

Think of it like telling the time.

If I ask you what time it is, you might say **5:30**.

Someone else could say **30 minutes to 6**.

Both descriptions represent exactly the same moment.

Music works the same way.

C# and D $\flat$ are different names for the same note.

Generally, when ascending we tend to use sharps:

C – C# – D – D# – E...

When descending we often use flats:

E – E $\flat$ – D – D $\flat$ – C

Don't worry too much about this for now. Whether you use sharps or flats isn't important at this stage. Understanding the concept is what matters.

There is one small exception that every musician should remember.

Between **E** and **F** there is **no** note in between.

Between **B** and **C** there is **no** note in between either.

These are naturally separated by only a half step.

If we write every possible note from C to C, we get what is called the **Chromatic Scale**.

There are **12 unique notes** in Western music.

C – C#/D $\flat$ – D – D#/E $\flat$ – E – F – F#/G $\flat$ – G – G#/A $\flat$ – A – A#/B $\flat$ – B – C

Now we can define intervals more clearly.

The distance between any note and the very next note in this scale is called a **half step**.

For example:

- C → C# = Half Step

- $C\# \rightarrow D$ = Half Step

Therefore:

- $C \rightarrow D$ = One Whole Step

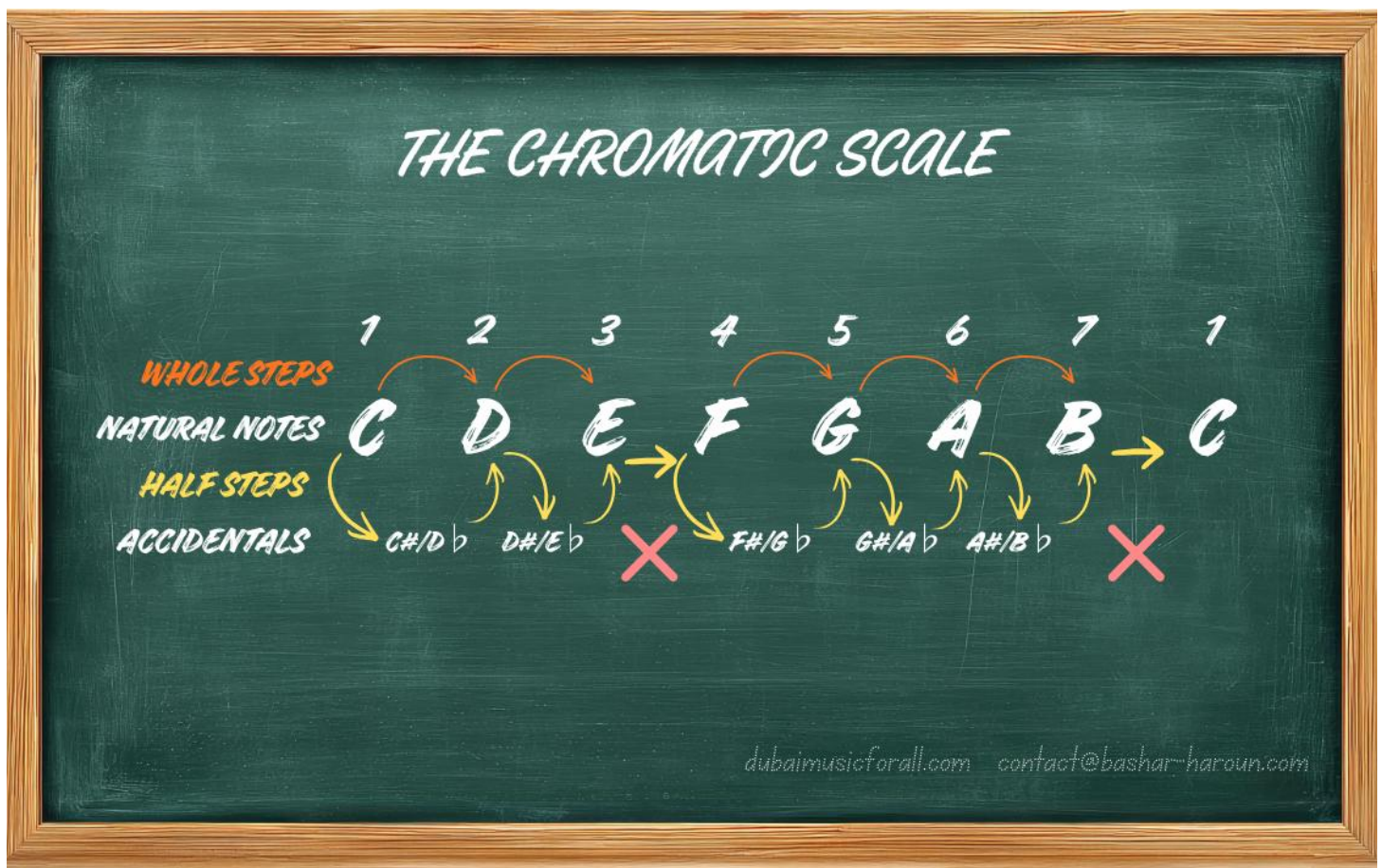
Likewise,

- $D \rightarrow E$ = Whole Step
- $F \rightarrow G$ = Whole Step

But remember:

- $E \rightarrow F$ = Half Step
- $B \rightarrow C$ = Half Step

Even though these are natural notes, there isn't an accidental between them.



Applying This to Your Guitar or Bass

Now let's connect this to your instrument.

There are only two things you need to know to identify any note on the fretboard.

1. Every fret equals one half step.

The distance between every pair of consecutive frets is one half step.

This also includes the distance between an open string and the first fret.

2. Memorize your open strings.

Guitar (thin string to thick string)

1. E
2. B
3. G
4. D
5. A
6. E

Bass (thin string to thick string)

1. G
2. D
3. A
4. E

Let's calculate a note together.

Suppose I ask you:

What note is on the 5th fret of the 6th string on the guitar?

The 6th string played open is **E**.

Move one fret at a time:

Open = E

1st fret = F

2nd fret = F#

3rd fret = G

4th fret = G#

5th fret = A

Easy, right?

Now let's try the bass.

What is the 3rd fret on the 1st string?

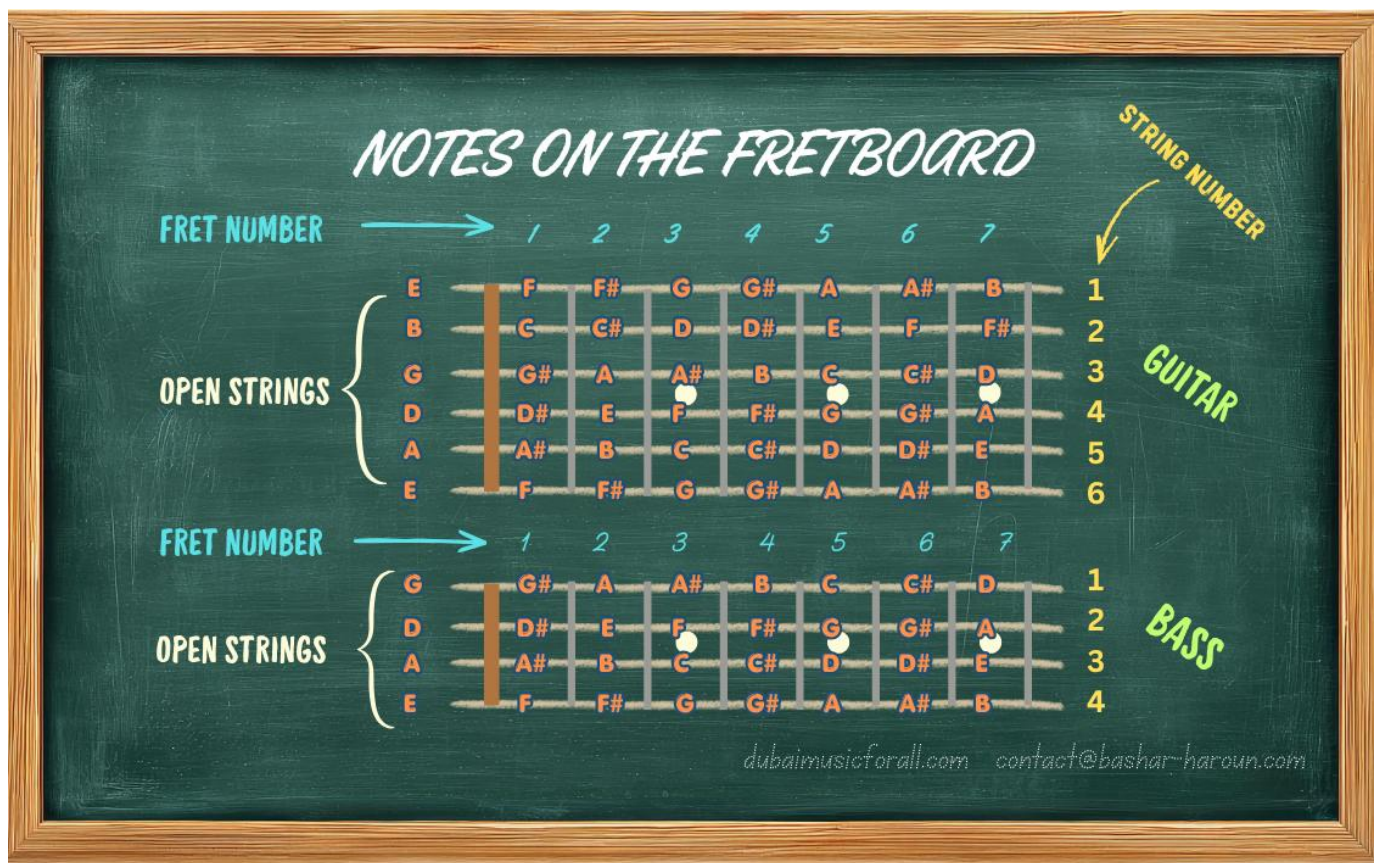
Open string = G

1st fret = G#

2nd fret = A

3rd fret = A#

Using this simple process, you can identify any note on your guitar or bass.



Key Takeaways:

- **The 12-Note System:** Western music consists of **12 unique notes** in the Chromatic Scale before the pattern repeats.
- **Natural Notes:** The 7 main letter names are **A, B, C, D, E, F, G**.
- **Accidentals:** Sharps ($\sharp$) raise a note by a half step; flats ($\flat$) lower it by a half step. Same note has two names (like $C\sharp$ and $D\flat$).
- **The No-Sharp Exceptions:** Every natural note is separated by a **Whole Step** (2 frets), EXCEPT:
 - **E to F** = Half Step (1 fret)
 - **B to C** = Half Step (1 fret)
- **Fretboard Rule: 1 Fret = 1 Half Step.** Counting up from any open string through the chromatic scale reveals every note on the neck.

Action Step

Pick your thickest string (E), play it open, and name every note out loud as you move up fret by fret to the 12th fret. Repeat this process until you can find any *A* or *G* on the neck without counting!

CHAPTER 2:

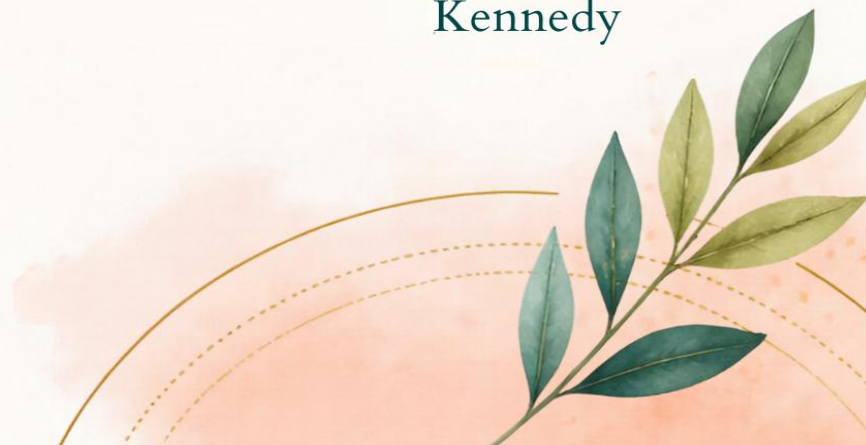
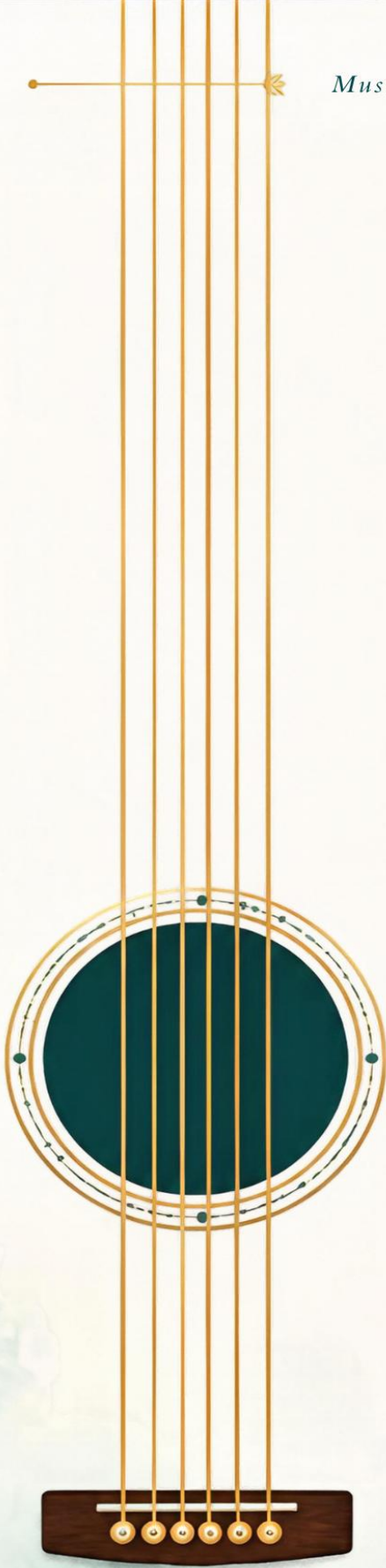
MUSICAL SCALES

“

I've learnt new scales through playing different types of music, like Indian raga scales, gypsy scales and harmonically-based jazz scales.

”

— Nigel
Kennedy



What Is a Scale?

To keep things simple, think of a **scale** as a group of notes that naturally sound good together.

Whenever you play notes that belong to the same scale, they'll sound like they belong together.

That doesn't automatically make your playing beautiful, that's where your creativity, musical taste, rhythm, and expression come in, but at least the notes themselves will sound correct.

Now try adding a note that doesn't belong to that scale.

You'll immediately hear the difference.

It suddenly feels tense, unstable, or simply wrong.

That's the power of scales.

Major Scales

Remember the natural notes?

When we play them from **C** up to the next **C**, they form the **C Major Scale**.

It's called **C** because it starts on the note C (called the **root note**), and **Major** because it belongs to the major family of scales.

There are many different families of scales, but don't worry about those yet.

For now, I recommend that you understand, and eventually memorize, the Major Scale, because almost everything else you'd study later, including minor scales, modes, and many chords, can be understood by making small changes to the major scale.

Let's analyze the intervals in the C Major Scale.

C → D = Whole Step

D → E = Whole Step

E → F = Half Step

F → G = Whole Step

G → A = Whole Step

A → B = Whole Step

B → C = Half Step

This gives us the following pattern:

Whole – Whole – Half – Whole – Whole – Whole – Half

or simply:

W – W – H – W – W – W – H

This is called the **Major Scale Formula**.

If you forget everything else in this chapter, remember this formula.

It is one of the most important concepts in music theory and forms the foundation for many of the scales, chords, and harmonic ideas we'll explore throughout the rest of this material.

Applying the Major Scale Formula to All Starting Notes

Now that we understand the formula that creates the sound of the major scale, let's apply it to all possible starting notes.

Remember, the C Major Scale was:

C D E F G A B C

When we analyze the intervals between these notes, we get:

Whole – Whole – Half – Whole – Whole – Whole – Half

or:

W – W – H – W – W – W – H

This formula is what makes a major scale sound like a major scale.

Let's try building a major scale starting from G.

First, we write the notes from G to G:

G A B C D E F G

Now let's apply the major scale formula:

G → A = Whole Step ✓

A → B = Whole Step ✓

B → C = Half Step ✓

C → D = Whole Step ✓

D → E = Whole Step ✓

E → F should be a Whole Step, but it is only a Half Step.

Therefore, we need to raise F by one half step:

F becomes F#

Now we have:

G A B C D E F# G

Congratulations! You have just created the **G Major Scale**.

Try doing this yourself with a piece of paper. Start from different notes and apply the formula. You will quickly understand how major scales are constructed.

Let's try another example.

Starting from D:

D E F G A B C D

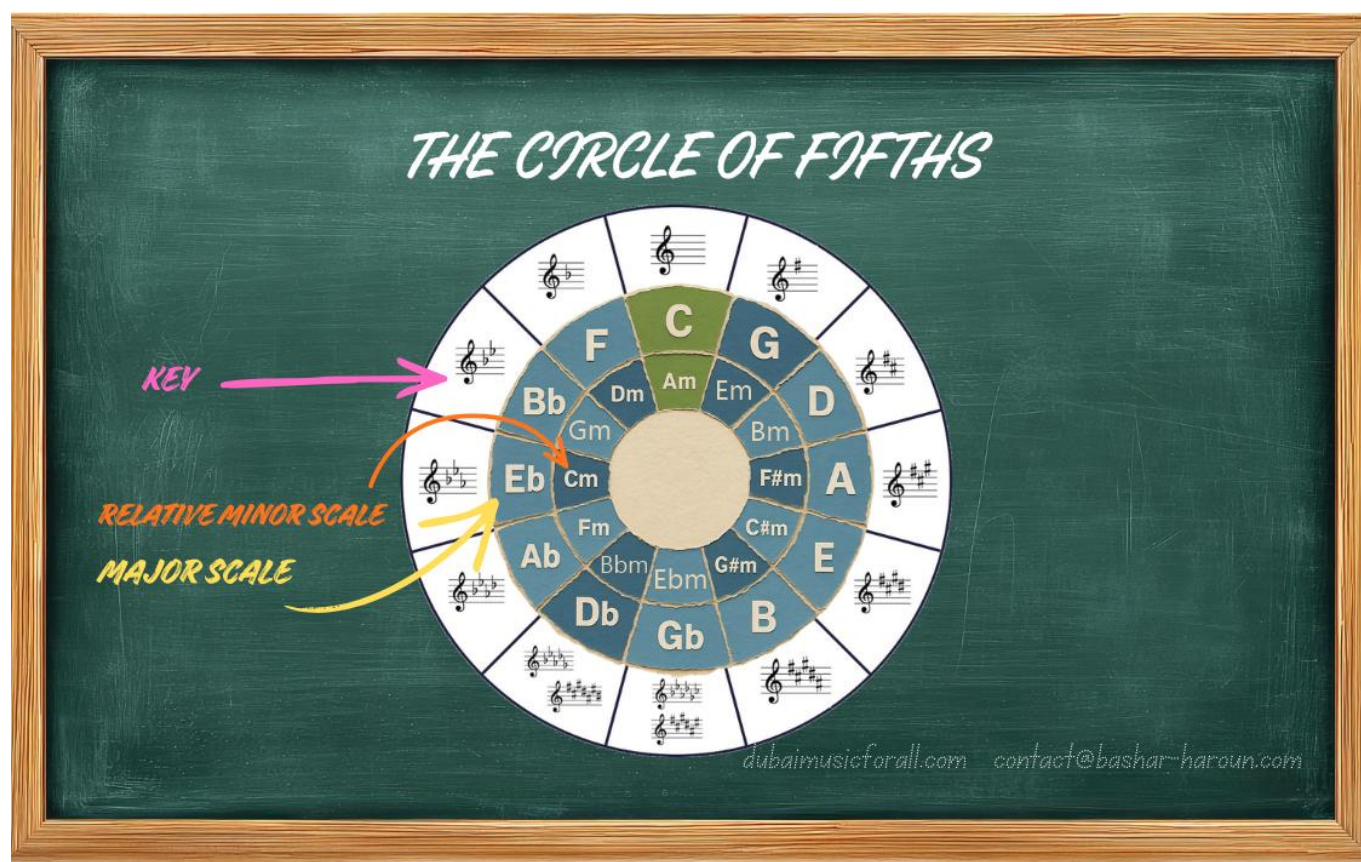
Applying the formula, we discover that:

- F needs to become F#
- C needs to become C#

So the result is:

D E F# G A B C# D

This is the **D Major Scale**.



The Circle of Fifths

While exploring major scales, you may come across something called the **Circle of Fifths**.

It is a very useful tool that organizes keys and shows the relationships between major and minor scales. It also makes remembering key signatures much easier.

However, I won't explain it in detail here.

Why?

Because the purpose of this material is to give you the essential understanding, not to cover every possible tool in music theory.

Once you understand how scales are built, learning the Circle of Fifths later will become much easier. If you become interested in deeper theory, this is definitely a concept worth exploring.

For now, the important thing to understand is this:

When we organize major scales, we notice a pattern.

Starting from:

C → G → D → A → E → B

each new scale introduces one additional sharp.

For example:

C Major:

C D E F G A B C

G Major:

G A B C D E F# G

D Major:

D E F# G A B C# D

And so on.

Then, moving in the opposite direction, we start introducing flats.

The first example is:

F Major

F G A B $\flat$ C D E F

Then:

B $\flat$ Major

E $\flat$ Major

and so on.

Remember, the goal is not to memorize everything immediately. The important skill is knowing how to generate a major scale using the formula.

So, How Do We Build Any Major Scale

To create any major scale:

1. Choose your starting note (the root).
2. Write the natural notes starting from that note.
3. Apply the major scale formula:

W – W – H – W – W – W – H

4. Whenever the distance does not match the formula, change the note using a sharp or flat until it does.

Because the chromatic scale contains 12 different notes, we can create 12 possible major scales.

MAJOR SCALES

THE MAJOR SCALE FORMULA: W W H W W W H

Scale	Notes
C MAJOR SCALE	C D E F G A B C
F MAJOR SCALE	F G A B♭ C D E F
G MAJOR SCALE	G A B C D E F♯ G
B♭ MAJOR SCALE	B♭ C D E♭ F G A B♭
D MAJOR SCALE	D E F♯ G A B C♯ D
E♭ MAJOR SCALE	E♭ F G A♭ B♭ C D E♭
A MAJOR SCALE	A B C♯ D E F♯ G♯ A
A♭ MAJOR SCALE	A♭ B♭ C D♭ E♭ F G A♭
E MAJOR SCALE	E F♯ G♯ A B C♯ D♯ E
D♭ MAJOR SCALE	D♭ E♭ F G♭ A♭ B♭ C D♭
B MAJOR SCALE	B C♯ D♯ E F♯ G♯ A♯ B
G♭ MAJOR SCALE	G♭ A♭ B♭ C♭ D♭ E♭ F G♭

Note: In the original image, the B♭ in the G♭ scale is written as B with a flat, and there is an arrow pointing to it from the text 'B' below.

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Minor Scales

Minor scales are another family of scales.

There are several types of minor scales, including:

- Natural Minor
- Harmonic Minor
- Melodic Minor

For now, we will focus only on the **Natural Minor Scale**.

The natural minor formula is:

W – H – W – W – H – W – W

You could use this formula to build all minor scales, but fortunately, there is a much easier shortcut.

Relative Minor Scales

Every major scale has a **relative minor scale**.

This means:

A major scale and its relative minor contain exactly the same notes, but they start from different root notes.

To find the relative minor, simply start from the **6th degree** of the major scale.

Let's look at C Major:

C = 1st degree

D = 2nd degree

E = 3rd degree

F = 4th degree

G = 5th degree

A = 6th degree

B = 7th degree

C = octave

If we take the same notes but start from A:

A B C D E F G A

we get:

A Natural Minor Scale

Notice that it follows the minor formula:

Whole – Half – Whole – Whole – Half – Whole – Whole

By learning the major scales, you automatically gain access to their relative minor scales.

Another example:

G Major:

G A B C D E F# G

The 6th degree is E.

Therefore:

E F# G A B C D E

is the relative minor:

E Natural Minor

Major vs Minor Sound

Generally speaking:

Major scales often create a brighter or happier feeling.

Minor scales often create a darker or more emotional feeling.

However, remember that music is an art form.

A great composer can create many different emotions from the same scale. Beethoven is a great example of that.

The scale is only the material. The musician creates the meaning.

Pentatonic Scales

Before we finish talking about scales, there is one more extremely important family of scales for guitar and bass players.

The **Pentatonic Scale**.

Many of the melodies, solos, and bass lines you hear in:

- Blues
- Rock
- Metal

- Funk
- Pop
- Jazz

are heavily based on pentatonic ideas.

The word **pentatonic** simply means:

Five-note scale

Not every scale contains seven notes. Some scales contain fewer notes, and the pentatonic scale is one of the most important examples.

There are two main types:

- Major Pentatonic
- Minor Pentatonic

Major Pentatonic Scale

To create a major pentatonic scale, take these degrees from the major scale:

1 – 2 – 3 – 5 – 6

Example:

C Major:

C D E F G A B C

Degrees:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Remove the 4th and 7th degrees:

C D E G A

This gives us:

C Major Pentatonic

Minor Pentatonic Scale

To create a minor pentatonic scale, take these degrees from the natural minor scale:

1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 7th

Example:

A Natural Minor:

A B C D E F G A

Remove the 2nd and 6th degrees:

A C D E G

This gives us:

A Minor Pentatonic

Final Tip About Scales

Before we finish this chapter, there is one important thing you should know as a guitar or bass player.

Although understanding and eventually memorizing the 12 major scales is extremely valuable, you don't always need to calculate every note manually.

The guitar and bass fretboard has something very useful:

Movable shapes.

Once you learn a scale shape, you can move that shape anywhere on the neck.

Start the shape from a different root note, and you automatically play the same scale in a different key.

This is why guitarists and bassists often learn patterns and positions.

However, remember the philosophy of this material:

Shapes are useful.

But understanding **why those shapes work** is what makes you a musician.

Learn the shapes, but don't become trapped by them.

Understand the concept behind them, and the fretboard will start to make sense.

Key Takeaways

- **The Universal Formula:** Every Major scale is built using the exact same step pattern:
W – W – H – W – W – W – H (Whole, Whole, Half, Whole, Whole, Whole, Half).
- **Relative Minors:** Every major scale shares its exact same notes with a relative minor scale, just start on the **6th note (degree)** of the major scale.
- **Pentatonic Power:** Pentatonic scales use only **5 notes**, removing the half-step tensions (degrees 4 and 7 from Major; degrees 2 and 6 from Minor). This makes them the ultimate foundation for solos, riffs, and basslines in rock, pop, and blues.
- **Sharps & Flats Order:** Key signatures add accidentals in a predictable sequence ($C \rightarrow G \rightarrow D \rightarrow A \dots$), adding one accidental at a time.
- **Shapes vs. Theory:** Visual shapes on the fretboard let you transpose scales anywhere instantly, but knowing the *formula* behind the shape is what turns a button-pusher into a real musician.

Action Step

Pick your open **G string** (or 3rd fret on your low E) and build a **G Major scale** on a single string using the **W – W – H – W – W – W – H** formula ($3 \rightarrow 5 \rightarrow 7 \rightarrow 8 \rightarrow 10 \rightarrow 12 \rightarrow 14 \rightarrow 15$). Say the formula out loud as you play each fret!



CHAPTER 3:

HARMONY AND CHORDS

“You can’t always write a chord ugly enough to say what you want to say.”

Frank Zappa

Melody vs. Harmony

Although you probably already have an intuitive idea of the difference between melody and harmony, I've noticed over the years that whenever I ask my students to explain the difference, most of them struggle.

So let's make it as simple as possible.

A **melody** is a sequence of notes played one after another. When these notes are organized in a certain rhythm and timing, they create what we recognize as the melody of a song.

Examples of melodies include:

- The singer's vocal line.
- A guitar solo.
- A bass fill played between sections of the song.

Harmony, on the other hand, is created when **two or more notes are played at the same time**.

It is the combination of these notes that creates richness, tension, emotion, and color in music.

A simple example is a backing vocalist singing together with the lead singer. On the guitar, however, the best representation of harmony is the **chord**.

The chord supports the melody by giving it context, depth, and emotion.

What Is a Chord?

To keep things extremely simple, think of a chord as:

Two or more notes played together.

These notes are not chosen randomly. They follow musical rules that determine which notes sound good together.

Throughout this chapter, we'll learn the most important of these rules.

Why Should Bass Players Learn Chords?

I've been asked this question many times by bass students.

"Why do I need to know chords if I usually play only one note at a time?"

The answer is simple.

First, bass players do play chords from time to time. Although it isn't very common, it certainly exists.

More importantly, understanding chords completely changes the way you see the instrument.

Many bass players spend their entire lives simply following the root note, occasionally jumping up an octave. There's absolutely nothing wrong with that, in fact, some musical styles require exactly that.

But what if you want more?

What if you want to improvise?

What if you want to write interesting bass lines?

What if you want to create your own musical ideas instead of simply following the guitarist?

Knowing the key of the song already limits your note choices to a relatively small group of notes, usually seven in a major or minor scale, or even five in a pentatonic scale.

Knowing the chord being played at any given moment narrows your choices even further and tells you which notes will sound the strongest.

Instead of being limited to playing only the root note, you suddenly have at least three strong note choices, each creating a slightly different feeling.

Perhaps even more importantly, chords help you understand which notes you should avoid at certain moments.

Isn't that worth learning?

Especially when you discover next that building chords is actually very simple.

Triads: The Foundation of Chords

Most basic chords are built from three notes, and these three-note chords are called triads.

A chord is usually named after two things:

- Its root note, which is the note the chord is built upon.
- Its quality, such as Major or Minor.

For example:

- C Major
- E Minor
- A Major
- D Minor

If someone played a chord and then asked you to sing it, your voice could only sing one note at a time. In most cases, the note you would naturally sing is the root note.

This is why the root is considered the foundation of the chord.

How Are Triads Built?

Building a triad couldn't be much easier.

Take the:

1st - 3rd - 5th

degrees of the corresponding scale and play them together.

That's it.

Example 1: C Major

The C Major scale is:

C D E F G A B C

Take the:

- 1st = C
- 3rd = E
- 5th = G

Play them together:

C - E - G

Congratulations!

You have just built a **C Major chord**.

Example 2: E Minor

The E Natural Minor scale is:

E F# G A B C D E

Take the:

- 1st = E
- 3rd = G
- 5th = B

Play them together:

E - G - B

This gives you an **E Minor chord**.

The same process works for every major and minor chord.

Why Does the Guitarist Seem to Play Six Notes?

You might have noticed that when a guitarist plays a chord, they often strum five or six strings.

Does that mean the chord contains six different notes?

Not at all.

In most cases, the guitarist is simply repeating the same three notes in different octaves.

For example, a C Major chord may contain only:

C

E

G

repeated across different strings.

The guitar's tuning makes this repetition natural and gives chords a fuller, richer sound.

TRIADS & BASIC CHORDS

C MAJOR SCALE
C D E F G A B C
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1

C MAJOR TRIAD / CHORD
C E G

A MINOR SCALE
A B C D E F G A
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1

A MINOR TRIAD / CHORD
A C E

C

Am

dubaimusicforall.com contact@bashar-haroun.com

Triads Aren't Only for Rhythm Guitar

Most people think of triads as something you strum as chords.

That's certainly one way to use them.

But another powerful approach is to play them as **arpeggios**, where the notes are played one at a time instead of simultaneously.

Instead of hearing a block chord, you hear a melodic line built from the notes of that chord.

This is especially useful for bass players.

While the guitarist is playing the chord, the bassist can outline the harmony by playing an arpeggio based on the same triad, creating interesting bass lines while remaining perfectly connected to the harmony.

Beyond Triads

Triads are only the beginning.

Many chords contain four notes instead of three.

These are called **Seventh Chords**.

There are also chords containing even more notes, each adding a different color and emotion to the harmony.

But, for this material, we will stick only to triads and leave the rest for further future explorations.

Harmonizing a Scale

One topic I highly recommend exploring in the future is **harmonizing a scale**.

This is the process of building all the chords that naturally belong to a particular scale.

One of the beautiful things you'll discover is that every major scale follows exactly the same pattern of chord qualities.

Once you learn the pattern, you can apply it to every key.

I won't cover it also in this material because it goes beyond the essential concepts I want you to master.

However, if this topic interests you later, it's definitely worth studying.

What Should You Memorize?

At the beginning of this material, I promised that I wouldn't ask you to memorize endless amounts of information.

That promise still stands.

At this stage, I only recommend memorizing the **12 Major scales** and becoming completely comfortable with the **major and minor triads** built from them.

Why?

Because triads are one of the fastest paths toward improvisation, songwriting, understanding harmony, and musical freedom.

The more familiar they become, the less you'll feel like you're guessing and the more you'll feel like you're making musical decisions.

One Last Piece of Good News

Music contains thousands of possible chords, inversions, voicings, and chord extensions.

That may sound overwhelming.

Fortunately, most songs don't use anywhere near that many.

In fact, you'll be surprised to discover that countless songs are built using only a handful of basic chords.

Master those well, understand how they relate to each other, and you'll already be able to play, analyze, and enjoy an enormous amount of music.

As always, don't aim to memorize everything.

Aim to understand the ideas behind what you're playing, and let your ears guide the rest.

Key Takeaways:

- **Melody vs. Harmony:** Melody is notes played one after another, like a vocal line or guitar solo. Harmony is notes played at the same time, providing depth, emotion, and context.
- **Triad Construction:** The vast majority of standard chords are built using three notes from a scale: the **1st, 3rd, and 5th degrees** (1 – 3 – 5).
 - *C Major:* C – E – G (from the C Major Scale)
 - *E Minor:* E – G – B (from the E Minor Scale)
- **Arpeggio Advantage for Bass:** Playing chord notes sequentially rather than all at once creates an arpeggio. This allows bassists to outline the guitarist's chord progression melodically while staying perfectly in tune with the harmony.
- **6-String Strumming:** When a guitarist strums 5 or 6 strings, they aren't playing 6 different notes, they are simply repeating the same 3 triad notes across different octaves for a fuller sound.
- **The 12-Scale Mastery Strategy:** You don't need to memorize thousands of chords. Master the 12 Major scales and their core triads to unlock the vast majority of popular songs.

Action Step

Pick any major chord on your bass or guitar (like **C Major**). Instead of playing just the root note (*C*), play through its triad as an arpeggio: **Root (*C*) → 3rd (*E*) → 5th (*G*)**. Feel how each note adds a slightly different emotional weight over the harmony!

CHAPTER 4: RHYTHM AND TIME

*“You can’t have a melody
without rhythm, but you can
have rhythm without a melody.”*

— Unknown



So far, we've spent most of our time talking about notes: what they are, how they relate to each other, how scales are built, and how chords are formed.

But music has another essential dimension.

Time.

Music isn't only about *which* notes we play. It's also about **when** we play them, how long we hold them, and how quickly or slowly they move.

In this chapter, we'll cover some of the fundamental ideas you need to understand rhythm and timing.

Tempo: How Fast or Slow Is the Music?

When we want to describe how fast or slow a piece of music is, we talk about its tempo.

We don't usually say:

"This song is kind of fast."

Instead, we can give the tempo a precise measurement.

Tempo is measured in **BPM**, which stands for **Beats Per Minute**.

For example:

60 BPM means that there are 60 beats every minute.

120 BPM means that there are 120 beats every minute.

This gives musicians a common reference point. Whether you're playing with someone in Dubai, London, or Tokyo, 120 BPM means the same thing.

The Metronome:

The device we use to establish and practice tempo is called a metronome.

Metronomes used to be physical mechanical devices that you placed next to your instrument while practicing.

Today, you don't even need to buy one. There are countless free metronome apps available on your phone. Just search for "metronome" in your app store and you'll find plenty of options.

When you open one, you'll usually see a number representing the BPM.

Set the BPM, press play, and you'll hear a steady click.

That's it.

I know that a metronome can feel intimidating sometimes.

I like to call it **every musician's ugly friend**.

You may love it or hate it, but there is simply no way around it if you want to develop solid timing.

Get used to having it in your pocket.

Note Subdivisions

Now that we understand tempo, let's talk about how we divide time.

Whatever notes we play, whether in a song, a piece of music, or a simple exercise, have to occur within a specific rhythmic structure.

We don't normally say:

"Play two quick notes and then one longer note."

Instead, we use specific rhythmic values.

For example:

"Play two eighth notes followed by a quarter note."

This is what note subdivisions are about.

Notice that subdivisions have nothing to do with *which musical pitch* we're playing.

Whether you're playing C, F#, A, or any other note, the subdivision describes when you play it and how long it lasts.

For this material, we'll focus on three subdivisions that you'll encounter constantly in modern music:

- Quarter notes
- Eighth notes
- Sixteenth notes

There are many more, but mastering these three will give you a very strong rhythmic foundation.

Quarter Notes

The quarter note represents one beat when we're working with a standard 4/4 pulse (ignore the technical terminology).

It is written as a note head with a stem and no flag or beam.

The easiest way to understand it is to use a metronome.

Set your metronome to a comfortable tempo.

Now play one note every time you hear a click:

Click — Play

Click — Play

Click — Play

Click — Play

You are playing quarter notes.

Each quarter note occupies **one beat**.

It is very common to count quarter notes like this:

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4...

Try saying the numbers while playing.

Eighth Notes

The next subdivision is the eighth note.

An eighth note divides one quarter-note beat into **two** equal parts.

So if one quarter note gives you:

1

an eighth-note subdivision gives you:

1 &

That means you play twice as many notes within the same amount of time.

For example:

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

The **&** happens halfway between each beat.

Visually, an eighth note looks similar to a quarter note, but it has a flag when it appears by itself or a beam when connected to another eighth note.

Try this with your metronome:

Metronome:

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

You play:

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

Two eighth notes occupy the same amount of time as one quarter note.

Sixteenth Notes

Now we take the same idea one step further.

A sixteenth note divides one quarter-note beat into **four equal parts**.

If quarter notes give us:

1

and eighth notes give us:

1 &

sixteenth notes give us:

1 e & a

So we count:

1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

Four sixteenth notes occupy the same amount of time as one quarter note.

Notice that each level doubles the number of notes we can fit into the same amount of time when moving from quarter, to eighth, to sixteenth notes.

Visually, sixteenth notes look similar to eighth notes, but they have **two flags or two beams**.

The Three Subdivisions Together

Let's put everything together.

At the same tempo:

Quarter notes:

1 — 2 — 3 — 4

Eighth notes:

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

Sixteenth notes:

1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

This is one of the most important rhythmic concepts you can learn.

Once you understand how these subdivisions relate to each other, rhythm becomes much easier to read, count, and play.

Counting while practicing:

Here's one of my favorite rules when teaching rhythm:

Say it to play it.

Don't immediately pick up your instrument and try to guess the rhythm.

First, say it.

For example:

1 – 2 & – 3 e & a – 4

Once you can say the rhythm comfortably and consistently, try playing it.

This simple habit can dramatically improve your sense of rhythm.

Start slowly.

Put the metronome on.

Count out loud.

Then play.

Don't worry about speed. Accuracy comes before speed.

Mixing Subdivisions

Once you're comfortable with each subdivision individually, start mixing them.

For example:

1 – 2 & – 3 e & a – 4

This means:

- Beat 1 = one quarter note
- Beat 2 = two eighth notes
- Beat 3 = four sixteenth notes
- Beat 4 = one quarter note

Try creating your own combinations.

You don't even need your instrument at first.

Turn on the metronome, clap the rhythm, and count out loud.

This is how you begin to develop a real internal sense of time.

Rests: When Not Playing Is Part of the Music

There is one final concept I want you to understand before we move on.

Every rhythmic note value has a corresponding rest.

A rest is simply the rhythmic equivalent of **not playing**.

When you encounter a rest, you still count the time, but you don't play anything.

For example, if the rhythm is:

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

and there is a rest on beat 2, you count:

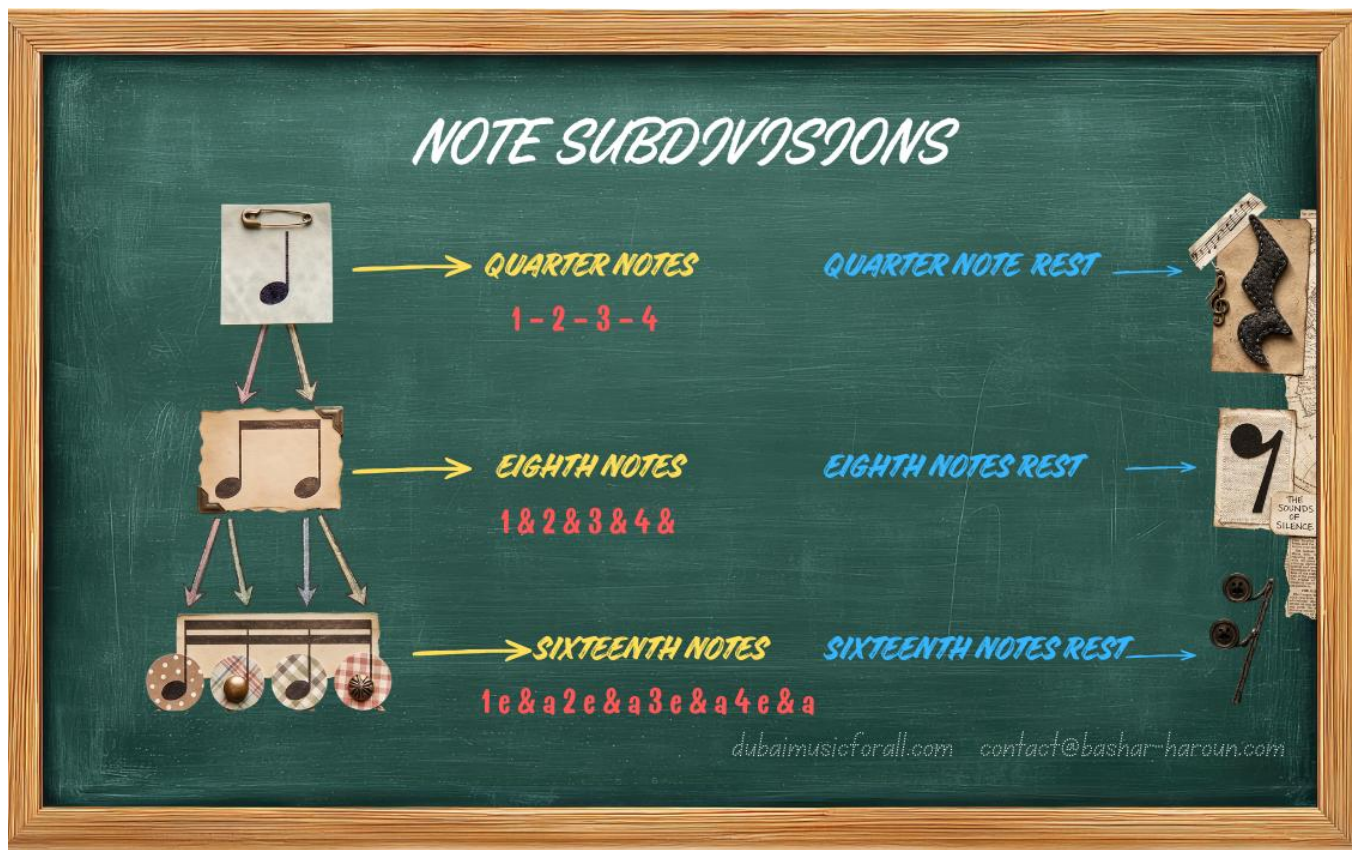
1 – 2 – 3 – 4

but you don't play anything on **2**.

This may sound simple, but rests are extremely important.

In fact, knowing when not to play is just as important as knowing when to play.

Silence is part of music.



A Little Practice Goes a Long Way

There is obviously much more to learn about rhythm.

We haven't even talked about whole notes, half notes, dotted notes, thirty-second notes, triplets, and many other rhythmic concepts.

And that's okay.

Remember the purpose of this material.

I'm not trying to teach you everything about rhythm.

I'm trying to give you the foundation you need to understand what you're hearing and playing.

If you can comfortably:

- Keep a steady beat with a metronome
- Play quarter notes
- Play eighth notes
- Play sixteenth notes
- Count them correctly
- Mix different subdivisions
- Understand and play rests

you already have a very strong rhythmic foundation.

And don't let the terminology intimidate you.

With a little practice, these concepts will stop being mathematical words on a page and start becoming something you can feel.

That's when rhythm really starts to make sense.

Key Takeaways

- **Tempo & BPM:** Tempo measures how fast or slow music moves and is measured in BPM (Beats Per Minute).
- **The Metronome:** It is an indispensable tool for building solid timing. Accuracy must always come before speed.
- **Note Subdivisions:** Subdivisions dictate when and how long a note is played, completely independent of pitch:
 - **Quarter Notes:** One note per metronome beat (1 – 2 – 3 – 4).
 - **Eighth Notes:** Two equal notes per beat (1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &).
 - **Sixteenth Notes:** Four equal notes per beat (1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a).
- **"Say It to Play It":** Vocalizing the rhythmic count out loud when playing or practicing prevents guessing and embeds the rhythm mentally.
- **Rests:** Rests represent measured silence. Knowing when *not* to play carries equal weight to playing the notes, silence creates groove, space, and structure in music.

Action Step

Set a metronome app to **60 BPM**. Clap out loud across 4 beats while transitioning through each subdivision:

1. One bar of **Quarter Notes** (1 – 2 – 3 – 4)
2. One bar of **Eighth Notes** (1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &)
3. One bar of **Sixteenth Notes** (1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a)

Count out loud as you clap!



CHAPTER 5:

READING MUSIC STANDARD NOTATION & TABLATURE

*“Reading music is like reading a book.
The more you do it, the easier it gets, and
the more you appreciate the story”*

— Itzhak Perlman



If you've ever opened a page of sheet music and thought:

"What on earth am I looking at?"

Don't worry.

Standard music notation can look intimidating at first. There are lines, dots, stems, strange symbols, numbers, and sometimes what seems like an entire foreign language written on a page.

But once you understand what each part is telling you, it becomes much simpler.

And here's something important before we begin:

I don't want you to become a professional sight-reader.

You don't need to be able to pick up a piece of music you've never seen before and immediately perform it perfectly.

What I want is much more practical.

I want you to understand the language of music well enough to read, communicate, practice, and understand what you're playing.

For guitarists and bassists, there is another important part of this language:

tablature, or TAB.

The two systems complement each other extremely well.

Standard notation tells you primarily **what** to play and **when** to play it.

TAB tells you **where** to play it on your instrument.

Let's look at both.

Part 1: Reading Standard Music Notation

The Staff

The foundation of standard music notation is the staff.

A staff consists of five horizontal lines with four spaces between them.

Like this:

5th line _____

4th line _____

3rd line _____

2nd line _____

1st line _____

Notes are placed either on the lines or in the spaces.

The position of a note on the staff tells us its **pitch**, in other words, which musical note it represents.

The higher the note appears on the staff, the higher its pitch.

The lower it appears, the lower its pitch.

But something else is needed here:

A staff by itself doesn't tell us which notes those lines and spaces represent.

That's where the clef comes in.

The Clef

A clef is a symbol placed at the beginning of the staff that tells us how the notes on the staff are named.

For guitar and bass players, the two clefs you need to know are:

- **Treble Clef**
- **Bass Clef**

Treble Clef

The Treble Clef is commonly used for higher-pitched instruments and voices.

Guitar music is normally written in treble clef.

It looks like this:



The treble clef tells us where the note **G** is located on the staff. That's why it is also called the **G Clef**.

Once the clef establishes the position of G, we can determine all the other notes on the staff.

For the lines of the treble clef, starting from the bottom:

E – G – B – D – F

For the spaces:

F – A – C – E

A common way to remember the spaces is simply:

FACE

You don't necessarily need to memorize these immediately. With enough practice, you'll start recognizing the notes visually.

Bass Clef

Bass players will spend a lot of time with the Bass Clef.

It looks like this:



The bass clef is also called the **F Clef** because it tells us where the note F is located.

For the lines, from bottom to top:

G – B – D – F – A

For the spaces:

A – C – E – G

Again, you can memorize these if you find it useful, but the ultimate goal is to stop thinking about the individual lines and spaces and start recognizing notes naturally.

The position of the note on the staff tells you WHAT note to play.

For example, if you see a note positioned on the second line of the treble staff, the clef tells you that the note is **G**.

If you see a note on the first line of the bass staff, the note is **G**.

The clef changes the names of the notes because it changes the reference point.

So when reading standard notation, you are constantly answering:

What note is this?

The position on the staff gives you the answer.

But that's only half of the information.

The Shape of the Note Tells You WHEN to Play It

Remember what we learned in the previous chapter about note subdivisions?

Quarter notes, eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and so on?

Standard notation combines that information with the pitch.

The shape of the note tells you something about its rhythmic value, how long it lasts and how it fits into the beat.

For example:

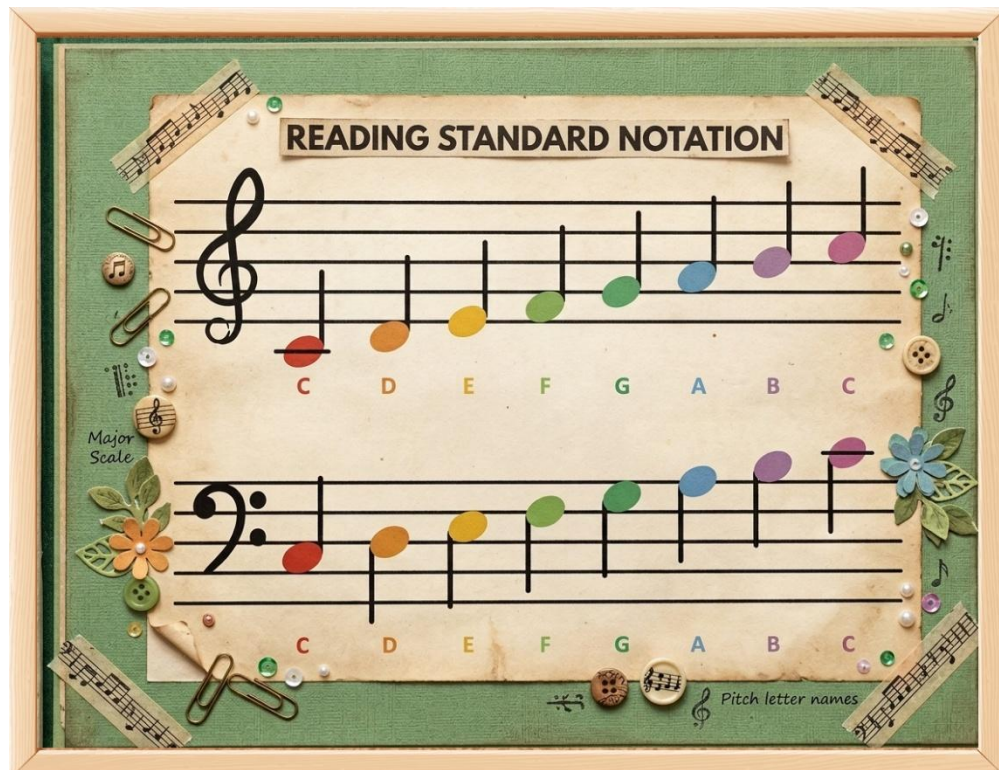
- A whole note lasts longer.
- A half note lasts half as long as a whole note.
- A quarter note represents one beat in common 4/4 situations.
- Eighth notes divide a beat into two.
- Sixteenth notes divide a beat into four.

So when you look at a piece of standard notation, you are reading two things simultaneously:

The position of the note = WHAT to play

The shape of the note = WHEN and for how long to play it

This is the fundamental idea behind reading music.



The Time Signature

You will often see two numbers near the beginning of a piece of music. This is the time signature.

For example: 4/4

The top number tells us how many beats are contained in each measure.

The bottom number tells us which type of note represents one beat.

In **4/4**, we have four quarter-note beats in each measure.

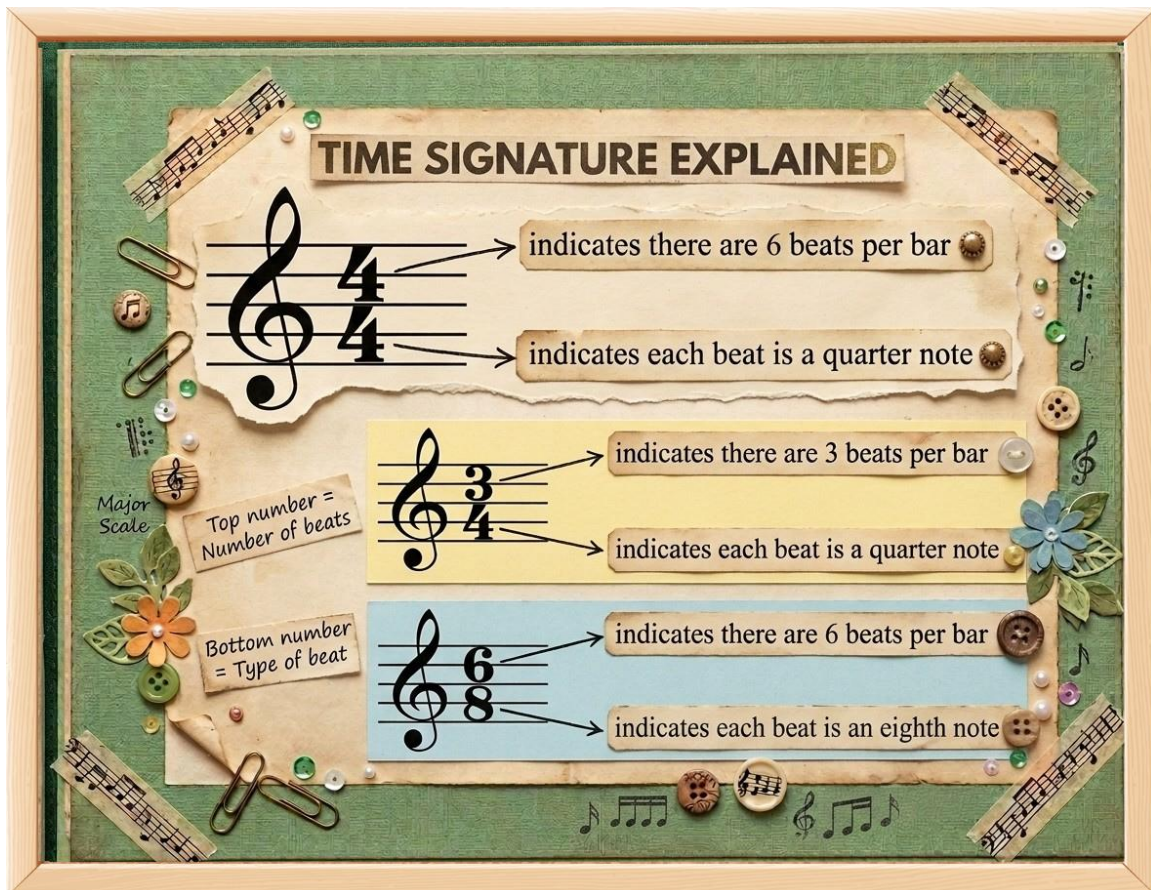
You will encounter many other time signatures, such as:

3/4, 6/8, 5/4, and many others.

Don't worry about mastering all of them right now.

For the purposes of this material, simply understand that the time signature establishes the basic rhythmic framework of the music.

Note that 4/4 time signature sometimes referred to as common time signature because it's the most used time signature in music. If you encounter a music sheet with no time signature at the beginning, that most probably means, it's 4/4 time signature.



Measures and Bar Lines

Music is divided into small rhythmic sections called **measures** or **bars**.

Vertical lines called **bar lines** separate them.

For example, in 4/4:

| 1 2 3 4 | 1 2 3 4 |

Each section between the vertical lines is one measure.

This makes music easier to organize and read.

Instead of seeing one enormous stream of notes, you can think of the music as a series of small rhythmic units.

The Key Signature

You may also notice some sharps or flats immediately after the clef and before the notes begin.

These make up the key signature.

The key signature tells you which notes are generally sharp or flat throughout the piece.

For example, if the key signature contains one sharp, that sharp is normally applied to every occurrence of that particular note unless something tells us otherwise.

The key signature therefore gives us an important clue about the key of the music (the scale).

Remember the major scales we learned earlier?

This is where that knowledge starts becoming useful in real notation.

You don't need to memorize every key signature right now. The important thing is to recognize what the key signature is doing:

It establishes the default sharps and flats for the piece.

Accidentals

Sometimes a composer wants to temporarily change a note from what the key signature tells us.

That's where accidentals come in.

The most common ones are:

Sharp — raises a note by one half step.

b Flat — lowers a note by one half step.

♮ Natural — cancels a previous sharp or flat.

For example, if the music is in a key where F is normally sharp, a natural sign can tell us:

"Play F natural this time."

Accidentals are written directly before the note they affect.

This is another place where the concepts we learned earlier about the chromatic scale, sharps, flats, and half steps become practical.

A Few Other Symbols You'll Encounter

There are many symbols in standard notation, but you don't need to learn all of them at once.

Here are some of the most useful ones to recognize:

Rests

A rest means don't play.

Remember what we learned in the rhythm chapter: silence is part of music.

Rests have their own rhythmic values, just like notes.

Dots

A dot placed after a note increases its duration by half of its original value.

For example:

A dotted quarter note lasts for one and a half beats in a standard 4/4 context.

Ties

A tie connects two notes of the same pitch and combines their durations.

Instead of playing the second note again, you hold the first one for the combined duration.

Slurs

A slur connects notes that are different pitches and generally indicates that they should be played smoothly as one musical phrase.

For guitarists, you'll also encounter slurs in the form of hammer-ons and pull-offs.

Dynamics

Dynamics tell you **how loudly or softly** to play.

You'll encounter markings such as:

p = piano = soft

f = forte = loud

and many levels in between.

You may also encounter symbols showing gradual changes in volume, such as crescendos and diminuendos.

These aren't about which note to play or when to play it.

They're about how to express it.

The Limitation of Standard Notation for Guitar and Bass

Now we reach an important problem.

Standard notation tells you what note to play.

But it doesn't necessarily tell you where to play it on the guitar or bass.

And this is a particularly important issue for us.

Remember how we learned earlier that the same note can appear in multiple places on the fretboard?

For example, you can find the same pitch in different positions and on different strings.

So if standard notation tells you: Play A

there may be several different A notes available on your guitar or bass.

Which one should you play?

Standard notation doesn't always give you the answer.

And that's where TAB becomes extremely useful.

Part 2: Reading Tablature

TAB, short for tablature, is a system specifically designed to show you where to play notes on a fretted instrument.

Instead of answering:

"Which note is this?"

TAB answers:

"Where do I put my finger?"

This makes TAB extremely intuitive for guitarists and bassists.

But TAB has its own major limitation.

Traditional TAB by itself doesn't clearly communicate rhythm and timing as effectively as standard notation.

You might know exactly where to put your finger...

but not necessarily when to play the note or how long to hold it.

This is why the two systems work so well together.

Reading Bass TAB

Bass TAB normally contains four horizontal lines, representing the four strings of a standard four-string bass.

From top to bottom:

G

D

A

E

Each number tells you which fret to play.

For example:

G|-----

D|-----

A|---3---

E|-----

The number **3** on the A string means:

Play the 3rd fret of the A string.

That's it.

Unlike standard notation, you don't need to calculate which note that position represents.

TAB has already told you where to put your finger.

Reading Guitar TAB

Standard six-string guitar TAB has six horizontal lines.

From top to bottom:

E

B

G

D

A

E

The top line represents the thinnest/highest-pitched string, and the bottom line represents the thickest/lowest-pitched string.

Again, the numbers represent fret positions.

For example:

E|-----

B|-----

G|-----

D|---2---

A|-----

E|-----

This tells you to play the 2nd fret of the D string.

If you see:

e|-----

B|-----

G|-----

D|---2---

A|---2---

E|-----

you play both notes at the same time.

And if several numbers appear vertically aligned, that usually means they are played together, often forming a chord.

So Which One Should You Read?

Both.

And this is where everything comes together.

Standard notation tells you:

WHAT + WHEN

TAB tells you:

WHERE

Think of it this way:

Standard notation:

"Play an A for one beat."

TAB:

"Play that A here."

Together:

Play this note, at this time, in this position.

That's incredibly useful for guitar and bass players.

Don't Be Intimidated

When you first look at a page containing both standard notation and TAB, it may seem like you're expected to read two languages at the same time.

You're not.

You're simply getting different pieces of information from each system.

Look at the TAB for the position.

Look at the notation for the timing.

Put the two together.

Done.

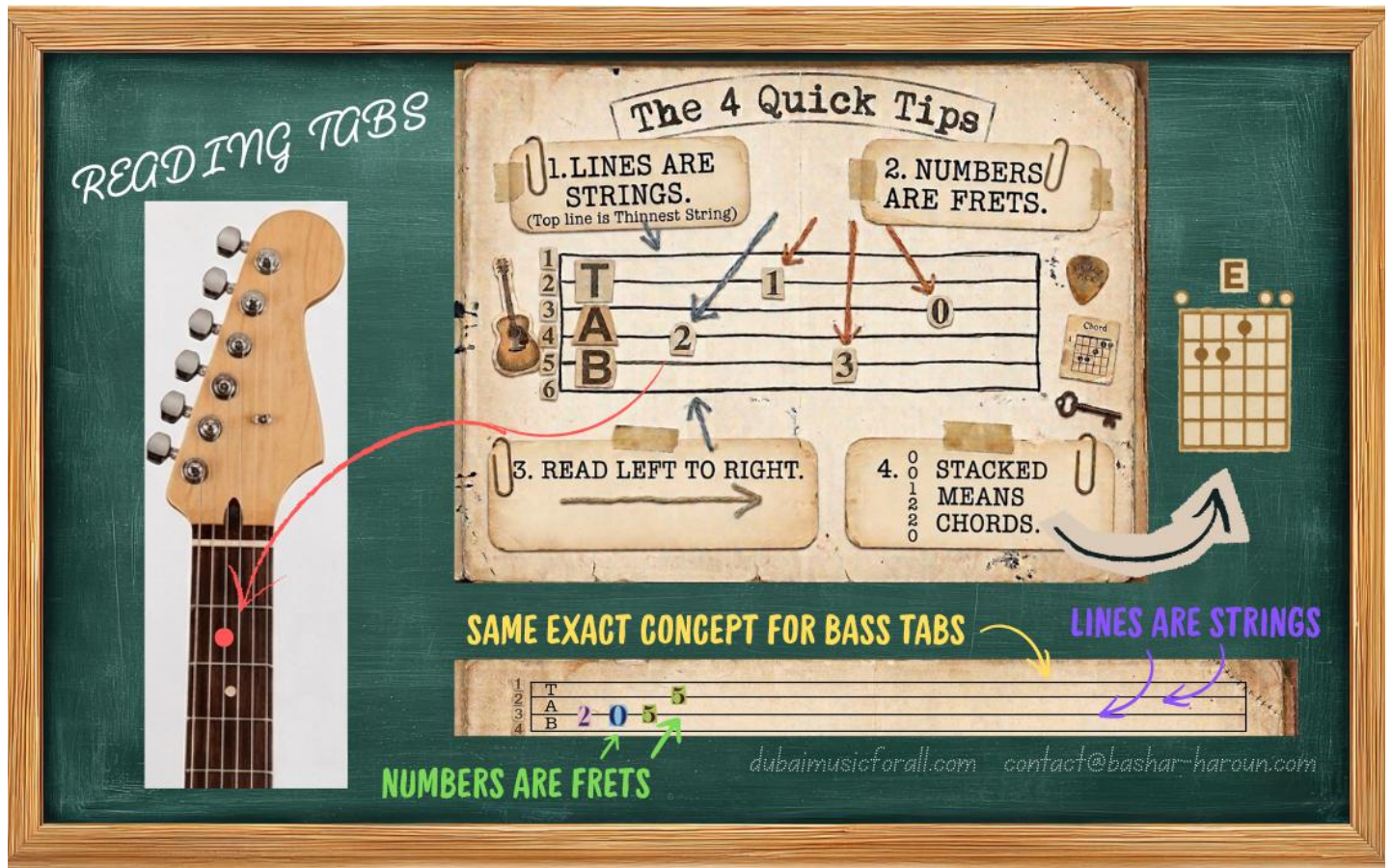
With a little practice, your brain will start processing both at the same time without conscious effort.

At first, you might need to stop and think:

"Okay... second fret... quarter note..."

Eventually, you'll simply see it and play it.

That's the goal.



What I Want You to Learn

I don't want you to become a professional sight-reader.

I don't expect you to memorize every symbol in standard notation or be able to instantly read the most complicated score.

What I want is much more practical.

I want you to understand the language of music.

I want you to be able to look at standard notation and understand what the notes, rhythm, key, and symbols are telling you.

I want you to look at TAB and know exactly where to play.

And most importantly, I want you to be comfortable using both systems together.

Because as a guitarist or bassist, you have the advantage of being able to combine them.

Notation tells you WHAT and WHEN.

TAB tells you WHERE.

Once you understand that, reading music stops being a mysterious code.

It simply becomes another way of communicating musical ideas.

Key Takeaways

- **The Practical Goal:** You do not need to be a professional sight-reader; you only need to understand notation and TAB well enough to read, practice, and communicate musical ideas effectively.
- **Standard Notation (WHAT + WHEN):**
 - **Staff & Clef:** The five-line staff paired with a Clef tells you the pitch (WHAT note to play). Treble Clef (G Clef) is for higher-pitched instruments like guitar; Bass Clef (F Clef) is for bass.
 - **Note Shapes:** The shape of a note determines its duration and rhythm (WHEN and how long to play).
 - **Structure:** Time signatures set the rhythmic framework (e.g., 4/4 common time = 4 quarter-note beats per measure), while bar lines break music into readable measures. Key signatures and accidentals ($\sharp$, $\flat$, $\natural$) define the default pitches and temporary alterations.
- **Tablature / TAB (WHERE):**
 - TAB uses horizontal lines representing your instrument's strings (6 for guitar, 4 for bass) and numbers representing fret positions (WHERE to place your fingers).
- **The Complementary System:** Standard notation solves TAB's lack of precise timing, while TAB solves notation's ambiguity about fretboard positioning. Together, they give a complete picture.

Action Step

Pick a simple 1-measure musical line in 4/4 time that includes both standard notation and TAB:

1. **Scan the Standard Notation:** Identify the time signature, locate the clef, and look at the note shapes to determine the rhythm (WHEN to play). Count the rhythm out loud (e.g., "1, 2, 3-and, 4").
2. **Scan the TAB:** Look at the string lines and fret numbers to locate your finger placements on the fretboard (WHERE to play).
3. **Combine & Execute:** Set your metronome to a slow, steady tempo (60 BPM). Read the TAB for finger placement while keeping time using the standard notation rhythm. Play through the measure without stopping.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

You Don't Have to Know Everything

Throughout more than 20 years of teaching music, working with different instruments, producing music, and meeting musicians from all kinds of backgrounds, I've noticed something that keeps coming back again and again.

Many people look at music theory as a deep, endless well.

They stand at the edge, look down, and think:

"If I jump in, I'm going to drown."

I know that feeling.

Because I used to be one of those people.

I used to be intimidated by music theory. I imagined it was an enormous world of complicated formulas, endless scales, strange terminology, and information that would take years and years to understand.

And I've met many musicians who feel exactly the same way.

I've known performers who are really professional. Musicians with incredible ears, amazing technique, and an almost instinctive understanding of music, but who would still tell me:

"I don't know anything about theory."

I've seen the same thing particularly often with DJs and producers.

There are people who can create incredible music, perform it, mix it, manipulate sounds, and make something genuinely artistic out of almost nothing.

Yet some of them are afraid to go one step deeper.

They trust their ears, and their ears are often very good, but they feel that learning music theory might somehow open a door to a complicated world they aren't ready for.

And every time I meet someone like that, I have the same thought:

"If only you knew how simple the foundations actually are."

The Moment I Decided to Find Out

Eventually, I decided to break that barrier for myself.

I went online and started looking for answers.

I found a website.

I studied it for a few weeks, maybe a month.

Then I found another source.

I was shocked.

It was the same thing.

Then another source.

Again, the same fundamental concepts.

I remember thinking:

"Is that really it?"

Of course, no.

There is an enormous amount more to music theory.

There are advanced harmonic concepts, different analytical approaches, orchestration, counterpoint, modal interchange, altered harmony, advanced rhythmic concepts, composition techniques, and entire areas of theory that you can spend a lifetime studying.

I've done exactly that.

Over the years, I continued expanding my knowledge, connecting theory with teaching, performing, composing, arranging, producing, and working with other musicians.

But I had discovered something very important:

The foundation isn't nearly as complicated as I had imagined.

There is a relatively small collection of fundamental ideas that gives you a way into an enormous amount of music.

And once you understand those ideas, everything else becomes easier to explore.

That realization stayed with me.

So whenever I meet someone who is intimidated by music theory, I tell them:

"It's not what you think it is."

And that is one of the main reasons I made this material.

Now What?

If you've made it this far, congratulations.

Maybe everything in these pages made perfect sense to you.

Maybe some parts were confusing.

Maybe you skipped a few sections.

Maybe you are reading this and thinking:

"Okay... I understand some of it, but I definitely don't understand everything."

That's completely fine.

Actually, I expect it.

This material was never designed to make you a master of music theory.

It was designed to **give you a map**.

Now it's your turn to explore.

Here is what I recommend you do next:

1. Memorize the 12 Major Scales and Their Triads

Yes, I know.

Throughout this material I've told you not to obsess over memorization.

And I still mean it.

But there are a few things that are worth committing to memory because they become tools you'll use constantly.

The 12 Major scales are one of them.

And I strongly recommend learning the basic triads associated with them as well.

You don't need to wait until you understand every detail perfectly.

Take a piece of paper.

Write:

1 — C

2 — G

3 — D

...

all the way to 12.

Start learning them.

How long will it take?

Two days?

Maybe.

A week?

Possibly.

I'll give you two weeks.

That's it.

Don't turn it into a huge project.

Spend a few minutes every day.

Write them.

Say them.

Play them.

Test yourself.

Eventually, they will simply be there when you need them.

2. Find the Practical Application

This is probably the most important thing you can do.

Whenever you learn something, ask:

"How do I use this?"

You learned about scales?

Find out how to use them to create a bass line.

You learned about triads?

Use them to build a guitar riff or a bass arpeggio.

You learned about intervals?

Find them on your instrument.

You learned about the major scale?

Take a song you already know and figure out what key it's in.

You don't have to figure everything out alone.

Search online.

Read books.

Ask your teacher.

Ask a musician friend.

Find exercises.

Take something you learned in this material and search for:

"How can I apply this to guitar?"

or:

"How can I apply this to bass?"

or simply:

"How is this used in real music?"

Theory becomes useful when you connect it to sound.

3. Pick One Topic and Dig Deeper

This material is a starting point, not a destination.

Pick one topic that caught your attention.

Maybe it was:

- Intervals
- Major scales
- Minor scales
- Pentatonic scales
- Triads
- Chords
- Harmony
- Rhythm
- Reading music

Now make it your next little project.

Go deeper.

Watch videos.

Read books.

Find articles.

Take a course.

Ask questions.

Experiment.

There are countless free resources available, and there are also excellent paid courses and books.

You don't need to learn everything.

Choose one thing and explore it.

Then move on to the next.

That's how knowledge grows.

4. Teach Someone

This one might surprise you.

Find someone who knows less about the topic than you do and try to explain something you've learned.

It could be a friend, another musician, a student, or even someone who has never played an instrument.

Try explaining:

What is a major scale?

Or:

What is a triad?

Or:

What's the difference between melody and harmony?

The moment you try to teach something, you'll discover what you actually understand, and what you don't.

You'll find the gaps in your knowledge.

That's a good thing.

Go back, fill those gaps, and try explaining it again.

You'll help someone else learn, and you'll probably remember the concept for much longer yourself.

5. Enjoy It

And finally:

Take it easy.

Music is not supposed to be a punishment.

It's not a university exam.

It's not a competition to see who can memorize the most scales.

Music is passion.

Music is creativity.

Music is communication.

Music is fun.

There will always be another scale to learn, another chord to understand, another technique to practice, another theory book to read, and another rabbit hole to fall into.

That's part of the beauty of being a musician.

You never really finish learning.

So don't rush.

Don't compare yourself to someone who has been playing for 30 years.

Don't feel bad because you forgot something you learned last month.

Go back.

Play it again.

Listen.

Experiment.

Make mistakes.

Ask questions.

And enjoy the process!

Music Theory Simplified For Guitar and Bass Players

Stop memorizing random shapes. Stop guessing which note comes next.

Whether you're picking up a guitar or bass for the first time or you've been playing for years by copying tabs, there comes a moment every musician hits a wall. You start asking: Why do these chords work together? How do I improvise without copying someone else? Why does one fret make all the difference?

The answer isn't endless chart memorization, it's understanding the core language of music.

In *Music Theory Simplified for Guitar and Bass Players*, educator and producer Bashar Haroun strips away the academic jargon to deliver a streamlined, practical framework built specifically for fretted instruments. By mastering just 10% of the core concepts, you'll unlock 85% of the music you play, hear, and create.

Inside, you'll discover:



The 12-Note System Demystified: How to navigate the fretboard naturally using half steps, whole steps, and chromatic patterns.



The Universal Major Scale Formula: The simple logic behind scales, relative minors, and pentatonic melodies.



Triads & Harmony: How chords and arpeggios are built, and how bassists and guitarists can use them to craft powerful riffs and lines.



Rhythmic Mastery: Demystify tempo, BPM, and note subdivisions with the "Say It to Play It" method.



Notation & TAB Synergy: How to combine Standard Notation (WHAT and WHEN) with TAB (WHERE) to read music effortlessly.

Written with a practical, step-by-step approach, complete with chapter Key Takeaways and Action Steps, this material turns music theory from a confusing wall of formulas into a intuitive tool you can feel, hear, and play. At just 65 pages, it skips the fluff and delivers only the essential concepts you need to transform your playing.



ABOUT BASHAR

Bashar Haroun has been active in the music scene since 2003. As a seasoned musician, educator, and producer, he has spent over two decades helping players bridge the gap between performance and true musical understanding.



A fast-track guide written and released in August 2026.