

6

Developing our understanding of the fingerboard – 6th and 5th String Geography

Fingerboard Knowledge

To play rock guitar well, it helps the guitarist to know the notes on the fingerboard. The process of learning all the notes on the guitar is called Fingerboard Knowledge.

It is however essential that you have a thorough understanding of the notes on the 5th and 6th strings firstly before taking on the whole neck.

Understanding the notes on the bottom two strings is not only essential for rhythm guitar and chord playing but also for lead guitar solo playing which we will study in depth in Part Three of the course.

In this lesson we are going to focus on the remaining notes on the bottom two guitar strings.

6th and 5th String Notes

The key to learning all of the notes on the 5th and 6th strings is that we will then be able to play every Power Chord in two different positions. One on the 6th string and one on the 5th string.

We need to know two positions of each chord as this enables the guitarist to find the next chord that they require in as close a position to the existing chord as possible.

Learning the Natural Notes

In the diagram that follows we can see a picture of the fingerboard with all the **natural notes** on the 6th and 5th strings being marked.

A note which is not a **Sharp** (#) or a **Flat** (b) is called a Natural.

Look at the diagram, you will notice that there is a jump of two frets between each of the notes marked in the diagram.

Lesson Objectives

- Develop familiarity with all **natural notes** on the guitar's neck.
- Be able to interchange between all natural power chords.
- Introduce and understand the concept of **flat** and **sharp notes**, then;
- Recognise the position of sharp and flat power chords on the guitar's neck.
- Be able to change between any two power chords.



Starting on the 6th string at the first fret with F, there is a two fret jump to G then a two fret jump to A and so on.

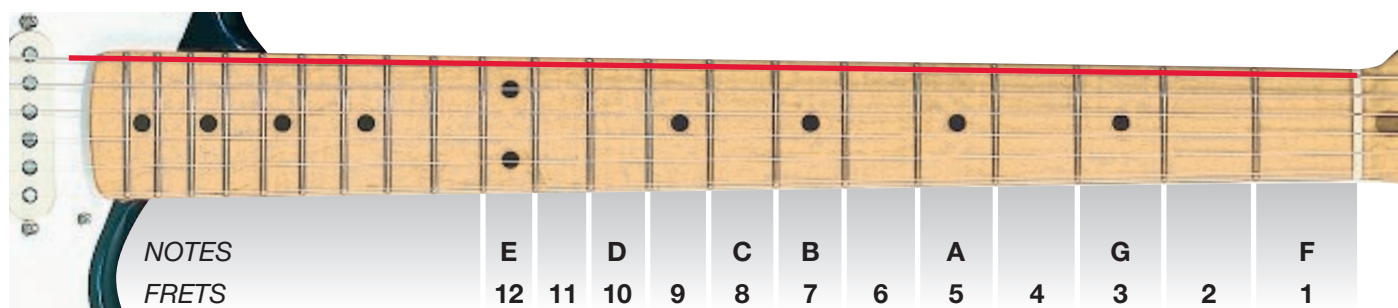
There are however two exceptions to this rule.

1. E and F are always next to each other with no note in between.
2. B and C are always next to each other with no note in between.

These notes must be learned thoroughly.

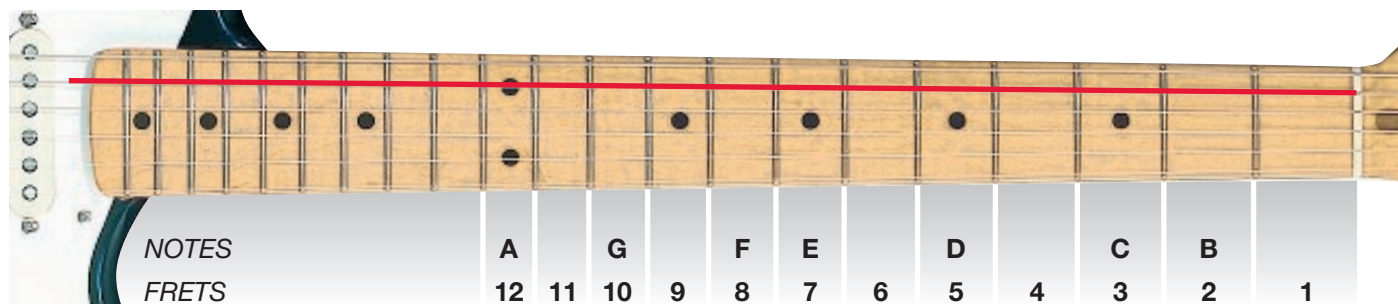
Natural Notes on the 6th String (E-String)

Here are all the notes on the 6th String up to the 12th Fret.



Natural Notes on the 5th String (A-String)

Here are all the notes on the 5th String up to the 12th Fret.



How to memorize the notes on the neck

As you can see, the notes go from the open string to the twelfth fret in alphabetical order, so that the 6th strings notes are from the Open E:

Open E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E.

The 5th string notes are from the Open A:

Open A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A.

This is convenient for working out unknown notes and chords but can be a hindrance in terms of memorising the notes as the student often falls back on working the notes out alphabetically rather than learning where the notes are. In a real life musical situation a guitarist is expected to know where all the chords are immediately not after working it out!

As this has more to do with memory and the brain rather than guitar playing, it is helpful to practise naming the notes without the guitar. For example, be able to state that on the 6th string, G is on the 3rd fret, B is on the 7th, D is on the 10th etc.

The majority of this learning can be done without the guitar.

- Learn the neck in relatively small chunks at a time.
- Learn the notes up to and including the 7th fret only on the 6th string.
- Once these have been learnt move onto the first 7 frets on the 5th string.

Once learned, move on to the higher frets.

Naming Notes Across the Strings

To consolidate this knowledge, name both notes on each fret. For example, the 3rd fret contains the notes G and C. The fifth fret contains the notes A and D. The 7th fret contains the notes B and E.

This is a very useful skill as the guitarist has to think across the strings as well as up and down them.

Practising chord changes between all Natural Power Chords

Play the following exercises using the media files to accompany you as usual. Notice how in all cases there is a choice of two positions for each chord.

Play the shape which is nearest to the current chord.

Exercise 1: lesson006.igsduf.01

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Musical notation for Exercise 1, showing two staves of music in C major. The first staff contains two measures: the first measure is labeled F⁵ and the second is labeled G⁵. The second staff contains two measures: the first is labeled A⁵ and the second is labeled G⁵. A triplet of eighth notes is indicated by a '3' above the first measure of the second staff.

Exercise 2: lesson006.igsduf.02

Exercise 2: lesson006.igsduf.02

Musical notation for Exercise 2, showing two staves of music in C major. The first staff contains two measures: the first measure is labeled D⁵ and the second is labeled B⁵. The second staff contains two measures: the first is labeled G⁵ and the second is labeled A⁵. A triplet of eighth notes is indicated by a '3' above the first measure of the second staff.

Exercise 3: lesson006.igsduf.03

Exercise 3: lesson006.igsduf.03

Musical notation for Exercise 3, showing two staves of music in C major. The first staff contains two measures: the first measure is labeled E⁵ and the second is labeled D⁵. The second staff contains two measures: the first is labeled C⁵ and the second is labeled B⁵. A triplet of eighth notes is indicated by a '3' above the first measure of the second staff.

Introducing Sharp (#) and Flat (b) notes

To complete the notes on the 5th and 6th strings we need to learn Sharp and Flat notes.

Sharp means Higher and is denoted with the following symbol '#'.

Flat means Lower and is denoted with the following symbol 'b'.

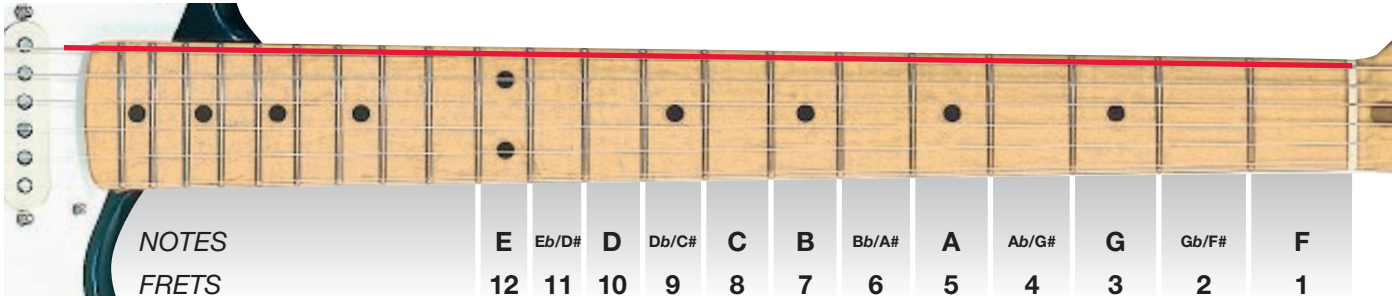
Consequently seeing a chord named F#5 means a Power Chord of F sharp. Bb5 would mean a power chord of Bb.

In the diagrams, all notes are marked up to and including the twelfth fret on the 5th and 6th strings.

All of the Natural notes should have been thoroughly memorized before moving on to the sharps and flats.

Sharp and Flat Notes on the 6th String

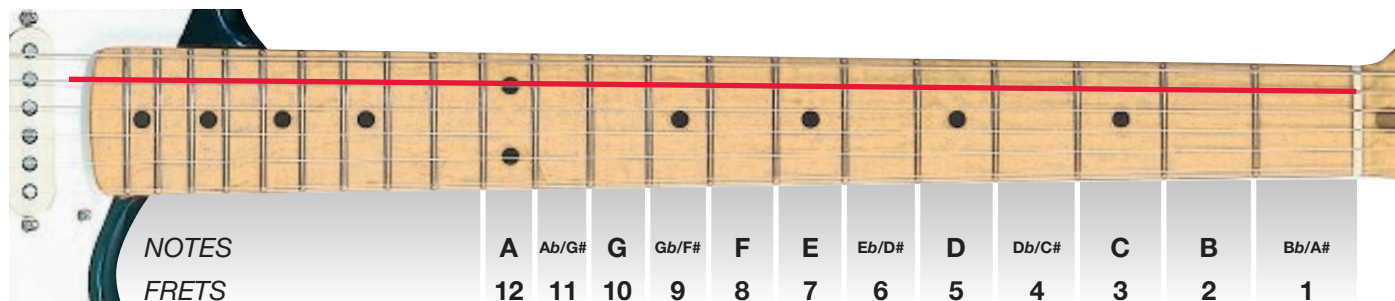
Here are all the notes on the 6th String up to the 12th Fret.



NOTES	E	Eb/D#	D	Db/C#	C	B	Bb/A#	A	Ab/G#	G	Gb/F#	F
FRETS	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Sharp and Flat Notes on the 5th String

Here are all the notes on the 5th String up to the 12th Fret.



If the Naturals have been memorized you will find that memorizing the sharps and flats are relatively easy as for instance *Bb* will be one fret lower than *B*.

G# will be one fret higher than *G* and so on.

Notice how the frets containing sharps and flats have two note names per fret.

F# is the same note as *Gb*.

C# is the same note as *Db*.

A# is the same note as *Bb* and so on.

In a piece of music the note which falls on the 2nd fret of the 6th string is called either *F#* or *Gb* depending on which Key the piece of music is in. Key Signatures require detailed explanation so we will discuss this later, as we don't need to know the full picture at this point. All you need to know is that the Chords of *F#* and *Gb* are played in exactly the same way.

We now have twelve different power chords each of which is playable in two positions on the neck. This leads to a huge number of possible combinations of chords.

You should definitely explore the neck learning how to move between these new chords, but to get you started we have laid out a few suggestions for you in the next section.

Fingerboard development studies

Here are a series of exercises to help you learn the movements between all of the notes that you need to be instantly familiar with if you are going to play the guitar musically and fluently.

Each of the exercises is accompanied with play-along media files, so that you can start changing between Power Chords slowly and steadily at first. Once you start to gain familiarity and confidence you can increase the tempo to develop the flow and smoothness of the chord changes.

Exercise 4: lesson006.igsdutf.04

Exercise 5: lesson006.igsdutf.05

Exercise 6: lesson006.igsdutf.06

Exercise 7: lesson006.igsdudf.07

Exercise 7: lesson006.igsdudf.07

Staff 1: E⁵ B⁵

Staff 2: ³ C^{#5} A⁵