



Homeschool Music Curriculum Guitar for All Grade Levels



MME First Lessons Guide



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MakeMusicEasy.com

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Introduction

Welcome to the **Make Music Easy (MME) First Lessons Guide!** This is your “getting started point” with our homeschool guitar curriculum. We’ve prepared a step-by-step approach to guide you, whether you’re an accomplished guitar player or have never picked up a guitar in your life.

➤ Part I: Teacher Preparation

Part I will help you understand the guitar concepts you’ll teach to your child. These basic concepts include using a guitar pick to pluck strings, playing notes with correct fingering, and reading Guitar Tablature (TAB). Guitar TAB is a popular notation system for the guitar that’s easy to learn and easy to teach.

➤ Part II: Teaching Your Child

Part II takes you through the first guitar lessons. You can use it at the same time that you’re delivering the lessons to ensure that you are teaching the guitar concepts correctly. We recommend having this PDF open on your computer or device, or printing it out for use during your first lessons.



Because the concepts are taught in sections, you don’t have to complete this entire guide with your child in one sitting. Some older children may absorb these concepts in one lesson and be ready to start learning songs right away. With younger children however, it may take several lessons (or even lesson reviews) to grasp these concepts – which is just fine.

➤ Appendix: Guitar TAB Exercises

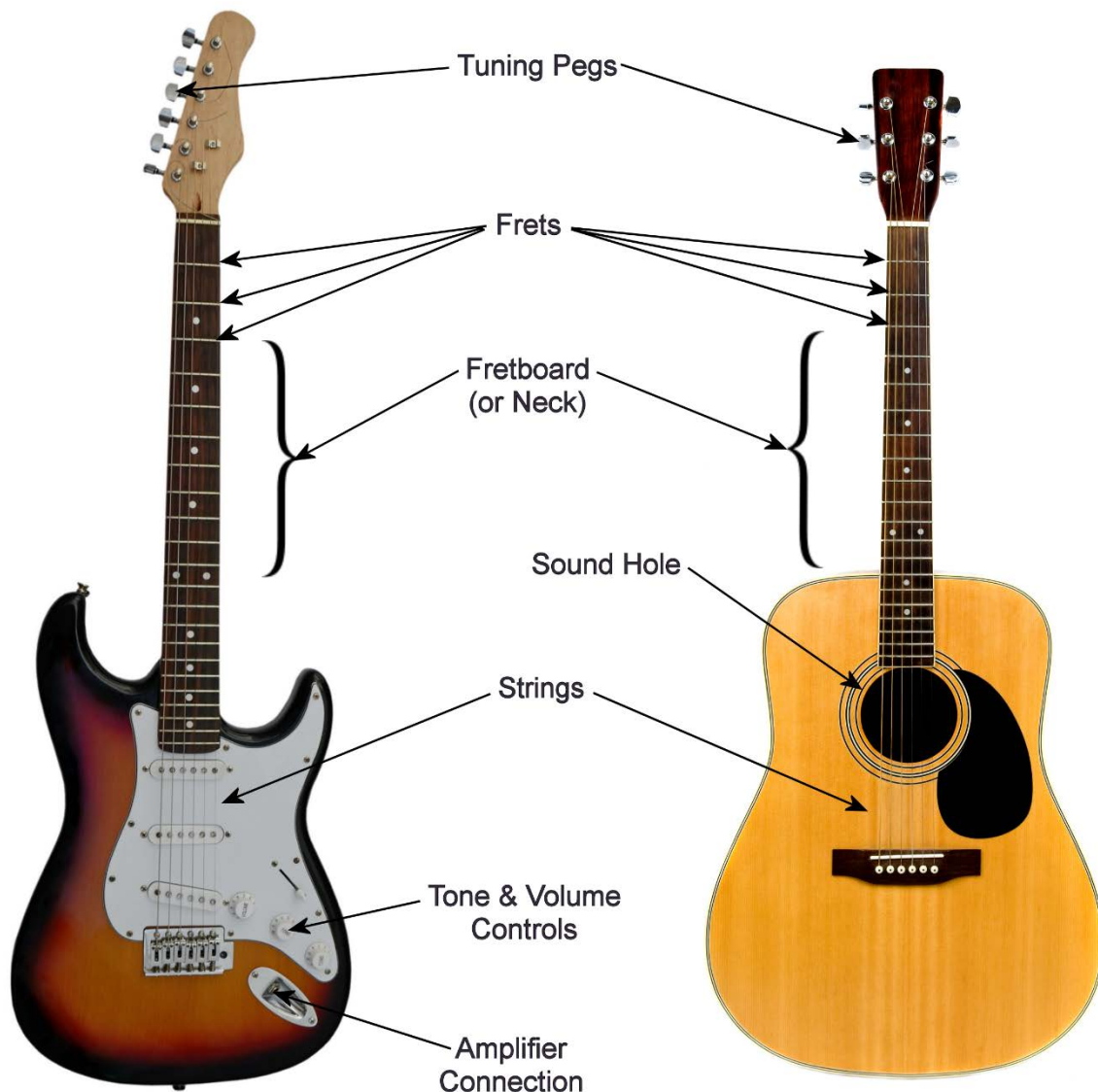
The **Appendix** contains Guitar TAB Exercises that your child will use during the first lessons to help learn guitar tablature and playing techniques. We strongly recommend printing this page out for you and your child to use during lessons.

Part I – Teacher Preparation

Section 1: Basic Information

Guitar Parts

Some important parts of an electric and acoustic guitar are identified below. The **fretboard**, **frets**, and **strings** are mentioned frequently throughout this guide.



Holding the Guitar

Holding the guitar is obviously a concern for young children, and the size of the guitar is the most important factor. Older students may be able to use full-sized guitars; however, younger children often require smaller “short-scale” guitars.

Yet even with the right size guitar, many children have difficulty maintaining good posture. In fact, holding the guitar is usually quite awkward at first, but this is nothing to worry about. It may take several weeks (or longer) until your child is actually able to hold the instrument in a stable, comfortable position.



To encourage good posture, have your student sit up straight with the guitar over the leg while holding the instrument close to the body with the strumming arm. You might even consider using a small back pillow to help your child sit up straight.

Having both feet on the floor will also help in holding the guitar properly, but often a child's legs are too short to reach the ground. In this case, you could purchase a guitar foot stool to rest one or both feet on, depending upon its size. Or for a free alternative, consider using objects found around the house, such as a sturdy cardboard box or a stack of books.

Note: In our experience, no child ever holds the guitar “perfectly” at first. Please understand that good posture and total comfort with holding the guitar takes time.

Tuning the Guitar

Putting the guitar in tune is critical, and it's the first thing you should do before each lesson. We recommend using an electronic guitar tuner. If you don't know how to use one, you can read our **Tuning Guide** PDF available for download in your Member's Area at MakeMusicEasy.com



You (the parent) should tune your child's guitar for the first lesson. In fact, tuning the guitar should remain your responsibility for a while. For many children, learning to tune can be confusing and in some cases physically difficult.

Eventually, you can teach your child how to tune, but it's not something you should worry about teaching just yet.



If you have never tuned a guitar before, also consider watching our website video tutorial on **Tuning the Guitar** (available at MakeMusicEasy.com). It provides helpful visual examples and demonstrations.

Section 2: Understanding Fundamentals

This section will show you the three basic guitar fundamentals that you'll be teaching during the first lessons. In order to prepare for teaching, be sure to read this section carefully.



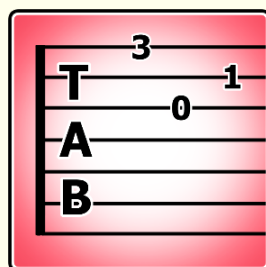
Fundamental 1: Using a Guitar Pick

The first fundamental is learning to use a guitar pick, which is used to pluck the guitar strings.



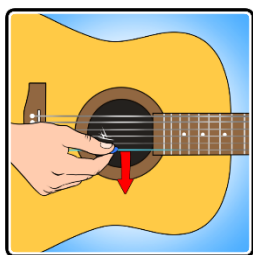
Fundamental 2: Using Correct Fingering

The second fundamental is playing notes using correct fingering technique. This fingering approach is simple and effective and can be applied to all the songs in MME songbooks.



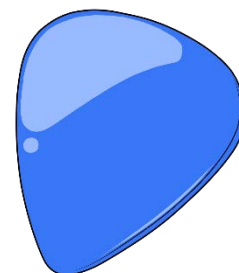
Fundamental 3: Reading Guitar TAB

The third fundamental involves learning Guitar TAB – a popular notation system for reading guitar music. It's relatively easy for kids to learn and can be used to play every song in MME songbooks.



Fundamental 1: Using a Pick

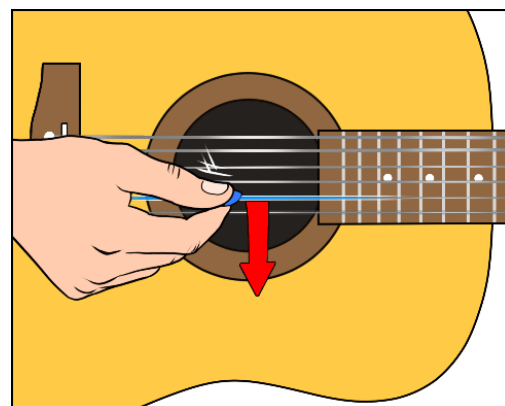
A guitar pick is a small plastic object used to “pluck” (or play) the guitar strings. Playing guitar with a pick produces a bright sound with more volume, as compared to plucking with the fingertip. Picks are inexpensive and you can find them at any guitar store.



When teaching this first fundamental, your child will use the guitar pick to begin plucking strings. You’ll also begin teaching your child the string names and identifying them with numbers. There are six strings on the guitar which are identified by number, from thinnest to thickest: **1st String (thinnest)**, **2nd string**, **3rd string**, **4th string**, **5th string**, **6th string (thickest)**.



Your child should hold the pick between the thumb and index finger of the dominant hand and use a downward stroke to play a note. Early on, he or she will accidentally pluck wrong strings – and this can happen often. However, with practice, accuracy will improve. It's also normal to drop the pick frequently, but over time, this will also occur less often.



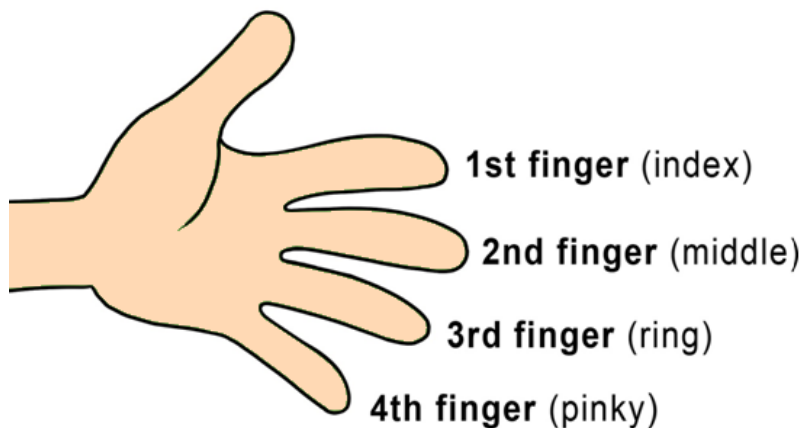
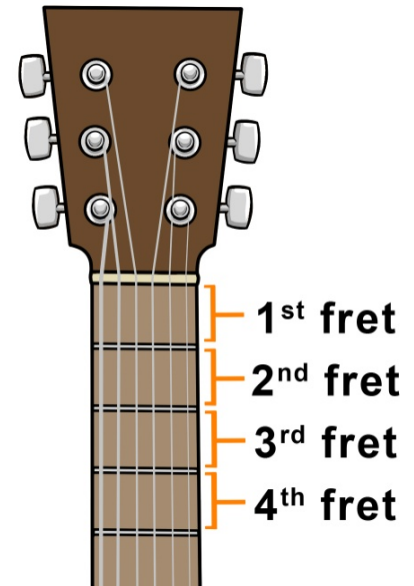


Fundamental 2: Using Correct Fingering

Most guitars have around 20 **frets** that divide the guitar neck into discrete segments. Each fret is assigned a number, beginning right below the guitar head and ending at the guitar body.

All songs in the MME method have been placed within the first four frets of the guitar; therefore, you'll teach your student how to identify these first four frets (*pictured right*). This is closely related to our next concept: **Correct Fingering**.

The image below shows the fingers used to play notes on the guitar.

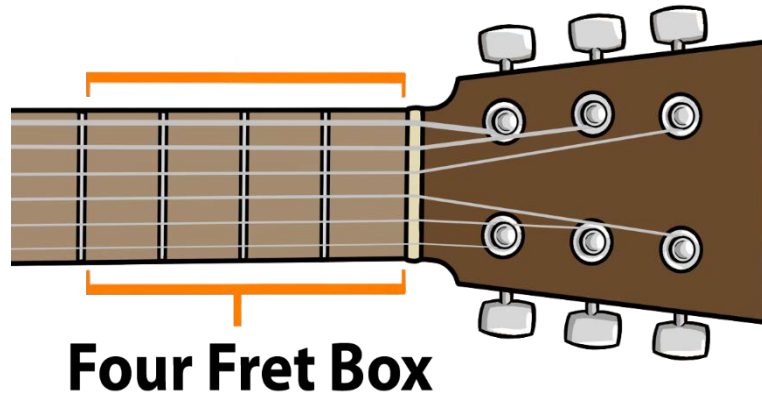


Since there are four fingers and there are four frets to play, we can simply assign one finger to each fret. This is easy if you think about it this way:

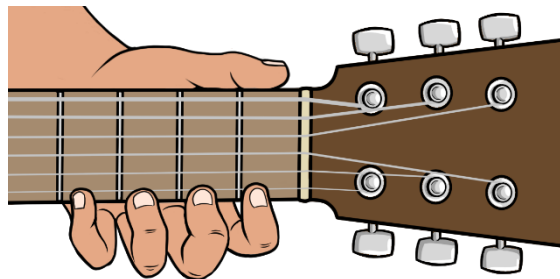
- 1st finger gets 1st fret
- 2nd finger gets 2nd fret
- 3rd finger gets 3rd fret
- 4th finger gets 4th frets

“Four Fret Box” Visualization

It can be helpful to have your child picture a “four fret box” on the guitar.



This “four fret box” shows the exact hand position your child will use for learning melodies. You can easily form this “four fret box” with your own hand to help visualize the assigned fingering.



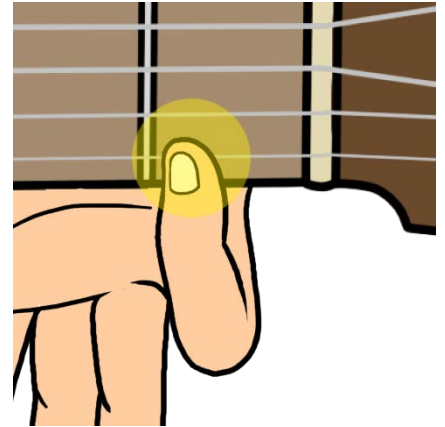
- 1st finger gets 1st fret
- 2nd finger gets 2nd fret
- 3rd finger gets 3rd fret
- 4th finger gets 4th fret

Note: Your child does not actually have to physically make this “four fret box” shape with his or her hand as depicted above. It is okay to try, but many children’s hands are just too small for this. The “four fret box” is mainly for visualization purposes to help assign fingers to frets.

Playing Notes on the Fretboard

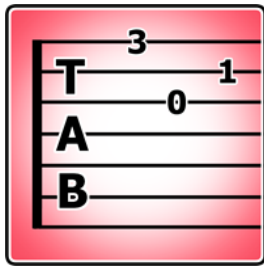
There are three steps to playing notes on the fretboard:

1. The finger should be placed on the fret just behind the metal bracket, not on top of it.
2. The finger should be arched and pressing with fingertip.
3. The finger should press hard enough to make the note "sound out."



Ouch! -- A Word About Fingertip Pain

For new guitarists, slight fingertip pain can be common. This is something every guitar learner experiences; unfortunately, it can be a bigger issue with young children who tend to be more sensitive to pain. This is nothing to worry about and, over time, fingers do toughen up – so fingertip pain is only a temporary issue. Still, if your child does experience some finger pain, feel free to take frequent breaks.



Fundamental 3: Reading Guitar Tablature

Guitar Tablature (or TAB) allows you to learn songs on the guitar without the difficulty of learning traditional musical notation. Guitar TAB is the most common guitar notation system in the world and is used throughout the MME method.

The example below is a visual comparison of guitar TAB and traditional musical notation.

Standard Music Notation

Guitar Tablature notation

You'll most likely recognize the “standard music notation” shown at the top part of the staff. If we compare these two forms of notation, we can see a striking similarity: lower-pitched notes are found on lower lines and higher-pitched notes are found on higher lines.

However, guitar TAB is much easier to learn because it shows a direct correlation between the numbers shown on the TAB lines and the notes played on guitar strings.

Note: *Standard Music Notation can also be learned with the MME Standard Music Notation Course; however, we strongly recommend that your child learn and become comfortable with GUITAR TAB first.*

Guitar TAB takes advantage of the guitar's visual layout by using 6 lines that correspond to the 6 guitar strings. With Guitar TAB, the top line represents the thinnest guitar string and the bottom line represents the thickest string.

When a number other than “0” appears on a line of Guitar TAB, it identifies two things: the **fret** to press and the **string** to pluck:

Twink-le, twink-le lit-tle star,

TAB: 0 0 3 3 0 0 3

1st fret
2nd fret
3rd fret
4th fret

6 5 4 3 2 1

When a “0” appears on the line, the string is played as an “**open string**,” which means that no fret is pressed – but the string is still plucked.

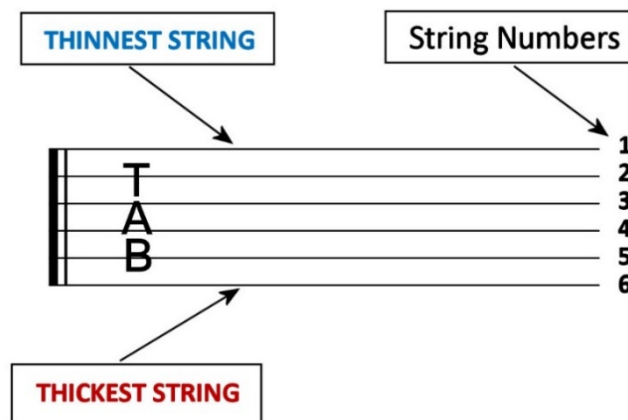
Twink-le, twink-le lit-tle star,

TAB: 0 0 3 3 0 0 3

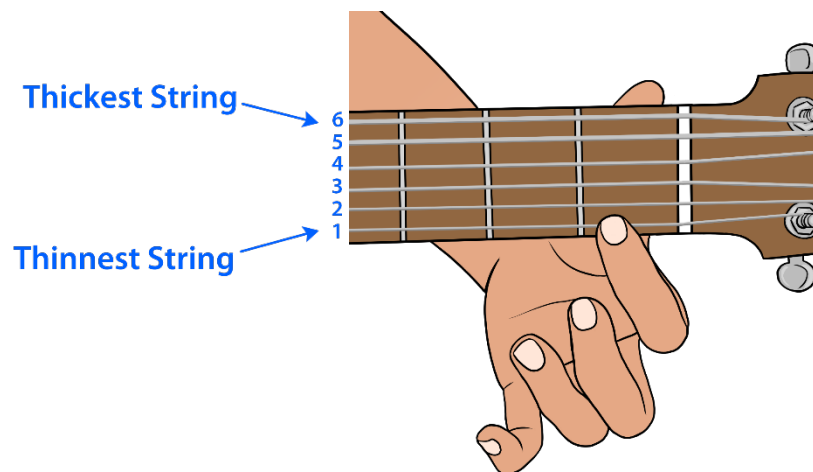
1st fret
2nd fret
3rd fret
4th fret

6 5 4 3 2 1

With Guitar TAB, the **thinnest string** is represented by the **TOP line** of the TAB staff, and the **thickest string** is represented by the **BOTTOM line** of the TAB staff.



This orientation can be the single most confusing aspect of learning Guitar TAB, so be sure you understand that the top line of Guitar TAB always represents the string closest to the floor when holding the guitar.



If you are brand new to guitar tablature, consider watching our website video tutorial on **Learning to Read Guitar Tab** (available at MakeMusicEasy.com). It provides helpful visual examples and demonstrations.

Section 3: Teacher Strategies

Let's look at some key teaching concepts that you should use during your first lessons and beyond.

Be Patient

Sometimes teaching a musical instrument requires a bit more patience than certain other subjects. Don't get upset when your child makes mistakes or has trouble grasping a new concept. Make sure you and your student realize that mistakes are a not a bad thing — in fact, they are a necessary part of the learning process.

We all know that children learn behavior from adults. The more patient you are, the more patient your child will be. The more relaxed you are, the more relaxed your child will be. The more willing you are to work through challenges, the more willing your child will be.

Correct Your Child's Mistakes

Be sure to correct your child whenever a mistake is made. This is especially important when working with a beginner. The most common mistakes, early on, involve playing the wrong note, or using the wrong finger to play a note. And we guarantee that this is going to happen — a lot!

As you correct your child, please keep in mind that mistakes are NOT a bad thing. Instead, they'll provide an *opportunity* for your child to see what he or she is doing wrong. The fact is that everybody makes mistakes; they are a normal — and necessary — part of the learning process.

Handle mistakes this way: Immediately explain what went wrong, ask your child to correct it, and then move on. Often, a child will make the same mistakes again and again, so be patient. With gentle and consistent corrections — and more practice — these mistakes will gradually fade away.



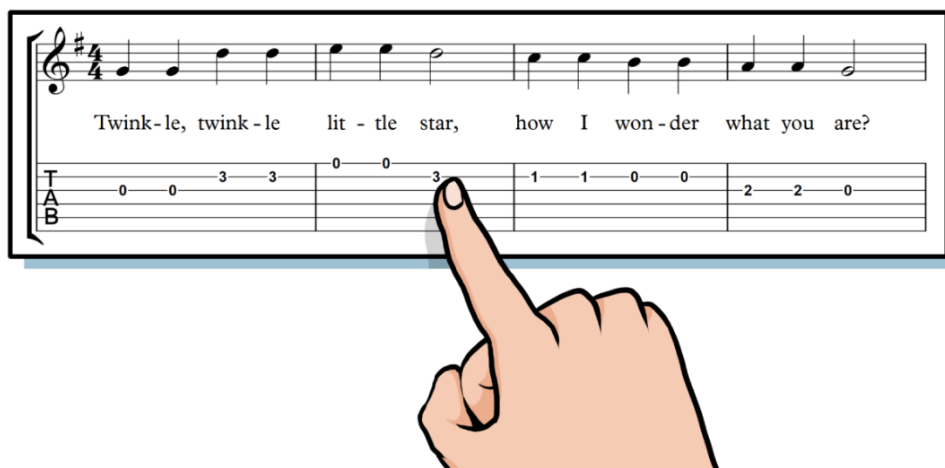
Use Finger Guiding

It can often be confusing for a beginner to know exactly which finger to use or where on the guitar to place it. When this confusion occurs, it may be necessary to guide your child's finger to the correct location on the guitar. We call this **Finger Guiding**, and it simply involves pointing to the correct string and fret location to show proper finger placement. It may sometimes be necessary to use your hands to physically guide your child's fingers into place.



Use Note Guiding

Note Guiding refers to physically pointing to notes on the music sheet, with your finger (or pen or pencil), right along as your child is practicing. It's one of the most helpful strategies you can use early on.



Note Guiding will provide that extra little bit of help to keep track of the notes. By physically pointing to the notes, you can make it easier for your child to know where he or she is at all times. Note Guiding will have the added benefit of directing your child's focused attention on the music.

Part II – Teaching Your Child

Section 1: Before You Begin



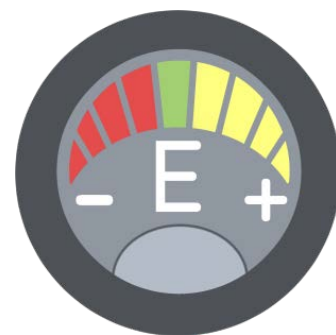
Print Learning/Teaching Materials

Before you begin teaching, print the **Appendix: Guitar TAB Exercises** found at the end of this guide. Your child will need to look at and play exercises on this page and it can be helpful to use a printed copy. If you are unable to print, be sure that your child is able to easily look at this page on your screen whenever necessary.

In addition, you may consider printing out Part II of this guide in it's entirety for use during the first lessons. The remainder of this guide has been designed with a parent-friendly format that you can follow right along as you are teaching your child. Again, if you are unable to print, simply follow Part II on your computer or device.

Tune Your Child's Guitar

Be sure to tune your student's guitar before you begin each lesson. Tuning is a skill your child will eventually learn, but it can be difficult to learn for a child just starting out. A new guitarist has plenty enough to focus on, so tune your child's guitar for now!



Section 2: Begin Teaching

Now it's time to begin teaching! You'll teach the following fundamentals using the following steps:

1 Student Information

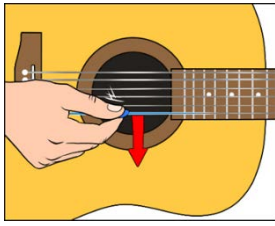
Briefly explain each guitar concept in preparation for an upcoming Student Exercise. Don't worry if your child doesn't understand everything right way. Continuous review of information is encouraged so that your child can become confident with guitar.

2 Student Exercise

You'll guide your child through an exercise that will help him or her understand the guitar concept. Take your time and repeat these steps as often as necessary until the skills can be performed.

3 Student Test

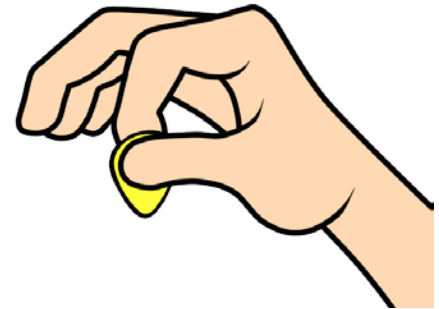
Each exercise is then followed by a short test to see if the fundamentals have been learned. If your child has great difficulty, repeat the previous Student Exercise and try again.



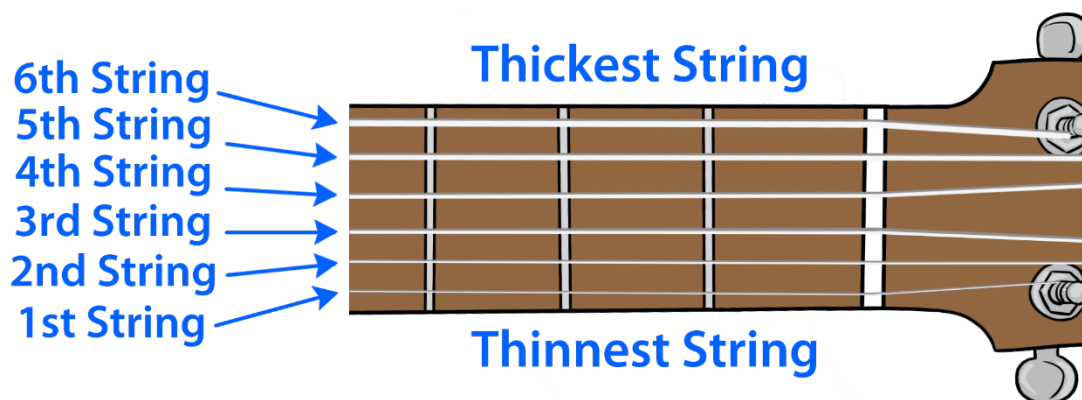
Fundamental 1: Using a Guitar Pick

1 Student Information

1. Give your child a guitar pick, explaining that it's used to pluck the strings.
 - o Encourage your child to hold the pick between the thumb and index finger.

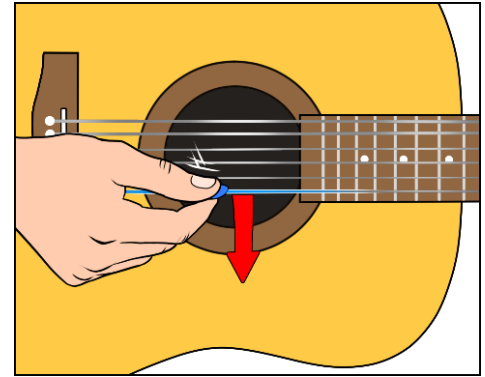


2. Tell your child there are six strings on the guitar. Take your time to explain that the thinnest string is called the “**1st string**”; the second thinnest string is called the “**2nd string**”; the third is called the “**3rd string**”; the fourth is called the “**4th string**”; the fifth is called the “**5th string**”; and the sixth (thickest string) is called the “**6th string**.” There's no need to rush through this.

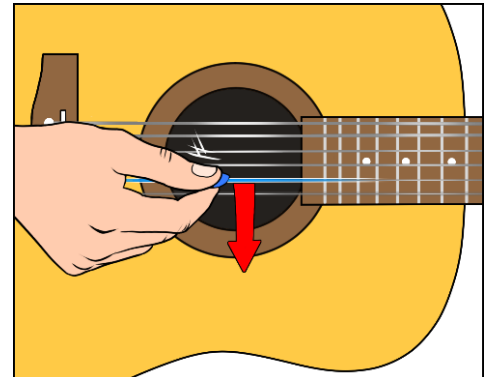


2 Student Exercise

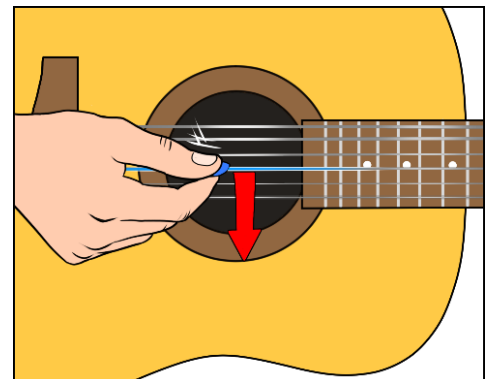
1. Have your child pluck the first string with the guitar pick using a downward motion.
 - Then have your child say “1st string” out loud.



2. Have your child pluck the second string with the guitar pick.
 - Then have your child say “2nd string” out loud.



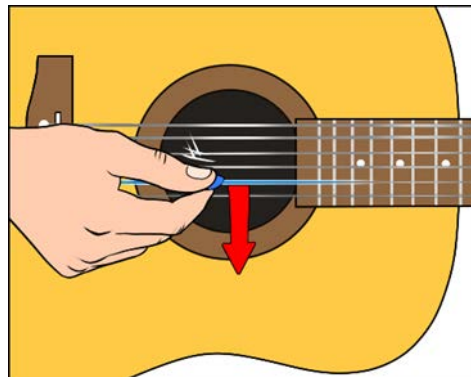
3. Have your child pluck the third string with the guitar pick.
 - Then have your child say “3rd string” out loud.



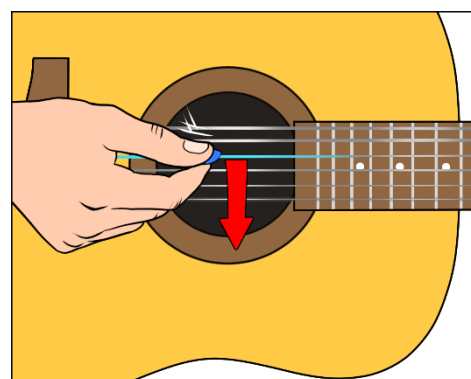
4. Continue this approach with the next three strings:
 - a. Have your child pluck the 4th string again and then say “4th string.”
 - b. Have your child pluck the 5th string and then say “5th string.”
 - c. Have your child pluck the 6th string and then say “6th string.”

3 Student Test

1. Randomly select one of the strings and ask your child to play it for you.
 - For example, say “Play the 2nd string” and your child will then play it.



2. Randomly select another of the first three strings and ask your child to play it for you.
 - For example, say “Play the 4th string” and your child will then play it.



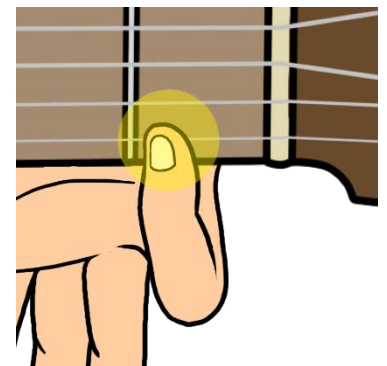
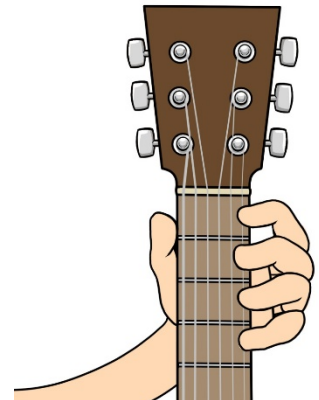
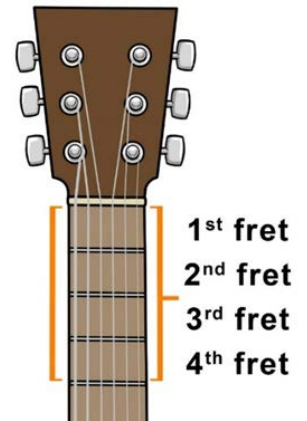
3. Continue randomly selecting from any of the six guitar strings until your child has an understanding of the string numbers and has some practice using a guitar pick.



Fundamental 2: Correct Fingering

1 Student Information

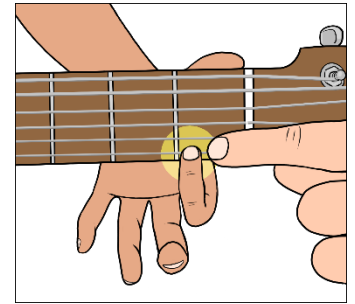
1. Show your child that “frets” are the segments of the guitar neck that lie between the short metal brackets.
 - Identify the first four frets by location and name: “1st fret,” “2nd fret,” “3rd fret,” and “4th fret.”
2. Explain it like this: “Since we have four fingers and there are four frets to play, each finger gets a fret.”
 - a. 1st finger gets 1st fret
 - b. 2nd finger gets 2nd fret
 - c. 3rd finger gets 3rd fret
 - d. 4th finger gets 4th fret
3. Demonstrate to your child how to play the first four frets with correct fingering.
 - a. Show how each finger should be placed just behind the metal bracket, not on top of it.
 - b. Explain that you need to press down hard enough to hear a note “sound out.”
 - c. Show how to use the pick to play the string.



2 Student Exercise

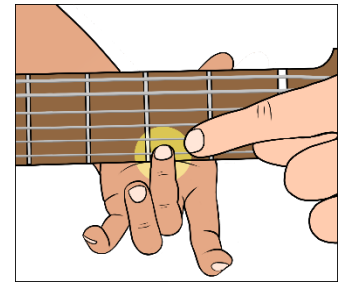
1. Have your child press down on the 1st fret using the tip of the 1st finger and then pluck the 1st string. (You can use **Finger Guiding** to show exactly where your student should place the finger).

- Then have your child say out loud “1st fret, 1st finger.”



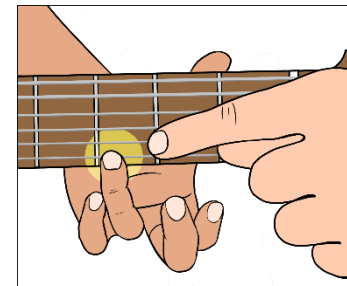
2. Have your child press down on the 2nd fret using the tip of the 2nd finger and then pluck the 1st string.

- Then have your child say out loud “2nd fret, 2nd finger.”



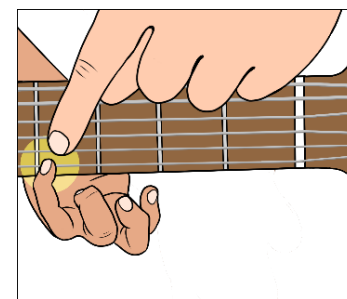
3. Have your child press down on the 3rd fret using the tip of the 3rd finger and then pluck the 1st string.

- Then have your child say “3rd fret, 3rd finger.”



4. Have your child press down on the 4th fret using the tip of the 4th finger and then pluck the 1st string.

- Then have your child say “4th fret, 4th finger.”
- Don’t worry if your child is unable to play notes with the pinky finger – it will not be used in the song about to be taught.

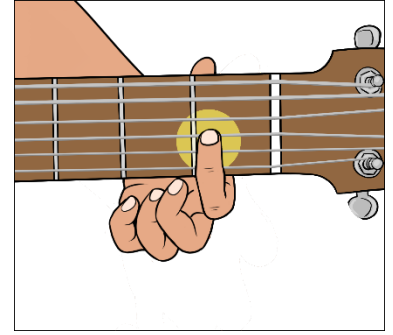


5. Continue this exercise with each of the other five guitar strings.
 - Don’t worry if your child has problems reaching or playing the notes on the thicker strings; this is something that will get easier for young children over time.

3 Student Test

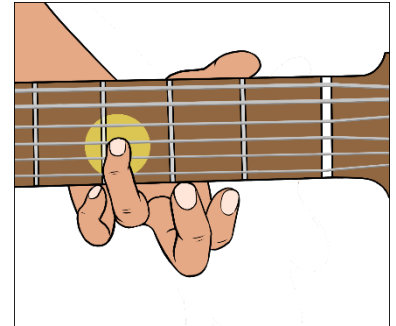
1. Name a random string and fret (1 through 4) for your student to identify and play.

- For example, say “Play 1st fret 3rd string.”
- Provide assistance if your child needs help to identify or play the note correctly.



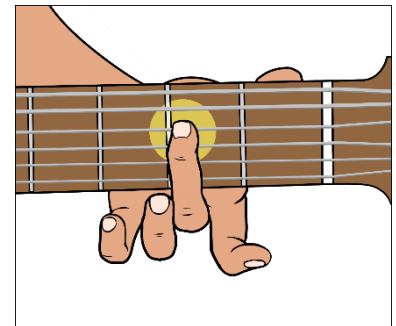
2. Name another random string and fret (1 through 4) for your child to play.

- For example, say “Play the 3rd fret, 3rd string.”



3. Name another random string and fret (1 through 4) for your child to play.

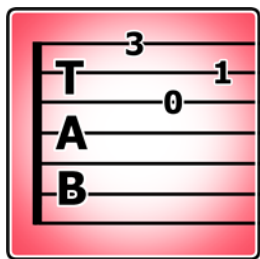
- For example, say “Play the 2nd fret, 4th string.”



4. Continue this exercise with different fret and string combinations until you feel your child has a basic understanding of how to identify and play the first four frets on different strings.

Time for reflection: How is your child doing? Is he or she ready for a break, or ready to end the lesson? Or does your child want to keep going?

You can always come back later and review these concepts, picking up where you left off.



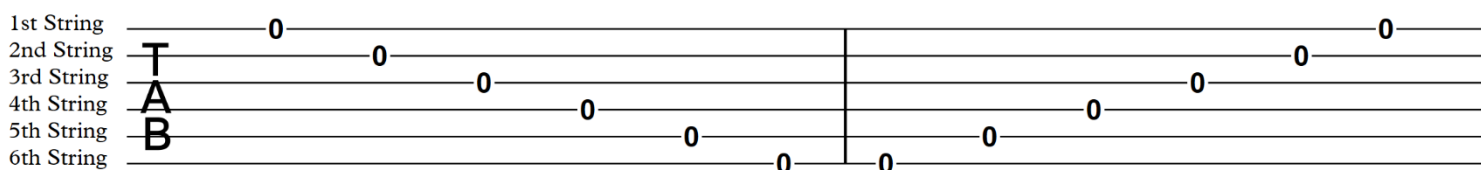
Fundamental 3: Reading Guitar TAB

***Note to Parent – Appendix: Guitar TAB Exercises is Now Required**

1 Student Information

1. Have your child look at **Tab Example 1** on the Appendix: Guitar TAB Exercises page (also shown below).

TAB Exercise 1

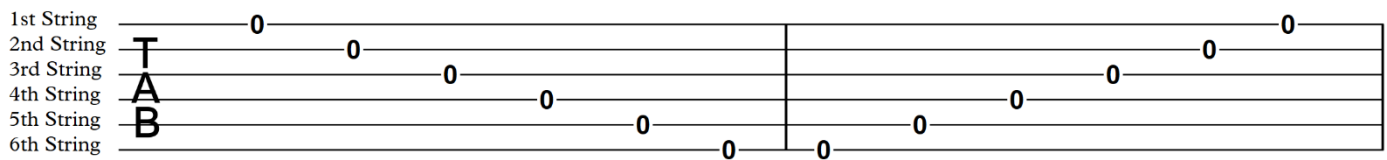


2. Explain that with Guitar TAB, each line represents a string of the guitar and that:
 - a. The top line is the 1st string (thinnest).
 - b. The second line (from the top) is the 2nd string.
 - c. The third line (from the top) is the 3rd string.
 - d. The fourth line (from the top) is the 4th string.
 - e. The fifth line (from the top) is the 5th string
 - f. The sixth line (from the top) is the 6th string (thickest).
3. Explain that the zeros on the lines in the example tell you which string to pluck with the guitar pick. Zeros also mean that no fret should be pressed down.

2 Student Exercise

1. Have your child play the notes in TAB Example 1 (also shown below):

TAB Exercise 1



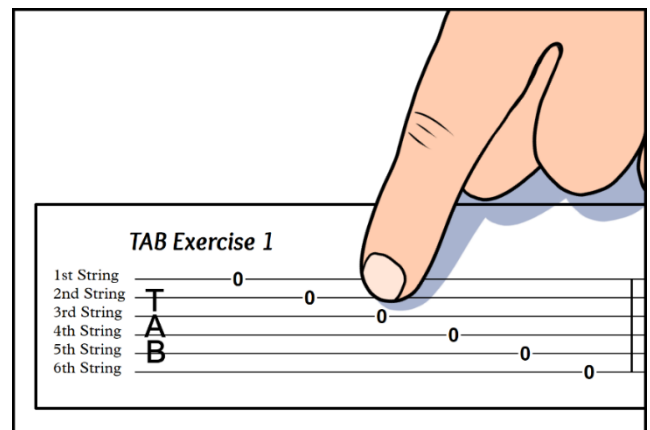
2. During this exercise, you may reinforce the following:

- Each line represents a guitar string.
- The top line represents the 1st (thinnest) string.
- With a "0," you do not press down on any fret on the guitar neck – you only pluck the string.

3 Student Test

1. Again, show your child **TAB Example 1**.

2. Point to any one of the zeros on the TAB and say, "Play the string this represents."
3. Then randomly point to a zero on a different line and say, "Play the string this represents."



1. Continue randomly selecting strings for your child to play until he or she has an understanding of how to read open strings.

Time for reflection: How is your child doing? Is he or she ready for a break, or ready to end the lesson? Or does your child want to keep going?

You can always come back later and review the concepts, picking up where you left off.

Reading Guitar TAB (continued)

1

Student Information

1. Have your student look at Tab Example 2 (also shown below).

TAB Exercise 2

0	1	2	3	4	4	3	2	1	0
T									
A									
B									
	I	M	R	P	P	R	M	I	

2. Explain that the notes are played on the 1st (or thinnest) string because they are all on the top line.
3. Remind your student that the first note “0” represents an “open string” to be played.
4. Explain that the numbers “1 2 3 4” represent frets that will be played on the thinnest string using this fingering:
 - a. Use 1st finger to play 1st fret – index finger or “I”
 - b. Use 2nd finger to play 2nd fret – middle finger or “M”
 - c. Use 3rd finger to play 3rd fret – ring finger or “R”
 - d. Use 4th finger to play 4th fret – pinky finger or “P”

Note: Don't worry if your child has difficulty using the pinky finger; it's the weakest finger, and this difficulty is common for children. Just have your child give it his or her best effort and move on.

2 Student Exercise

1. Have your child play TAB Exercise 2 (also shown below) following the guitar TAB and using the correct fingering. Remind him or her that the top line is the thinnest string.

TAB Exercise 2

0	1	2	3	4	4	3	2	1	0
T									
A									
B									
	I	M	R	P	P	R	M	I	

- Use Note Guiding and Fingering Guiding to help when necessary.
- Repeat as often as necessary until your child gains a basic understanding.
- Make sure your child understands that the letters I, M, R, & P represent the four fingers of the fretting hand.

2. Have your student look at and play TAB Exercise 3 (also shown below).

TAB Exercise 3

0	1	2	3	4	4	3	2	1	0
T									
A									
B									
	I	M	R	P	P	R	M	I	

3. Have your student look at and play Tab Exercise 4 (also shown below).

TAB Exercise 4

0	1	2	3	4	4	3	2	1	0
T									
A									
B									
	I	M	R	P	P	R	M	I	

4. Have your student look at and play TAB Example 5 (also shown below).

TAB Exercise 5

T										
A	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
B										
	I	M	R	P	P	R	M	I		

- *Thicker strings can be more difficult to play, especially for small children. Just have your child try his or her best, but don't worry if some notes can't be reached yet.*

5. Have your student look at and play TAB Example 6 (also shown below).

TAB Exercise 6

T										
A										
B	0	1	2	3	4	4	3	2	1	0
		I	M	R	P	P	R	M	I	

- *Thicker strings can be more difficult to play, especially for small children. Just have your child try his or her best, but don't worry if some notes can't be reached yet.*

6. Have your student look at and play TAB Example 7 (also shown below).

TAB Exercise 7

TAB

0 1 2 3 4 4 3 2 1 0

I M R P P R M I

- *Thicker strings can be more difficult to play, especially for small children. Just have your child try his or her best, but don't worry if some notes can't be reached yet.*

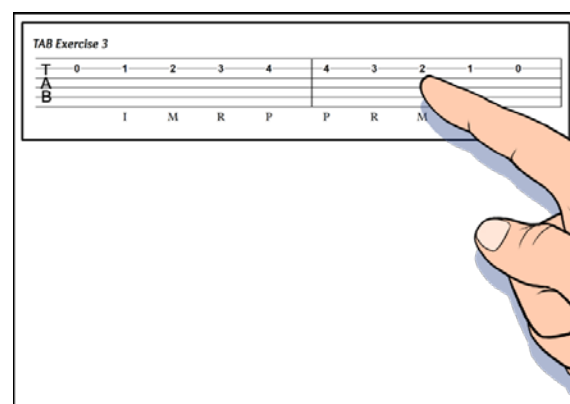
Student Test

1. Show your student any of the TAB exercises on the Guitar TAB Exercises sheet – for example TAB Exercise 3 (also shown below):

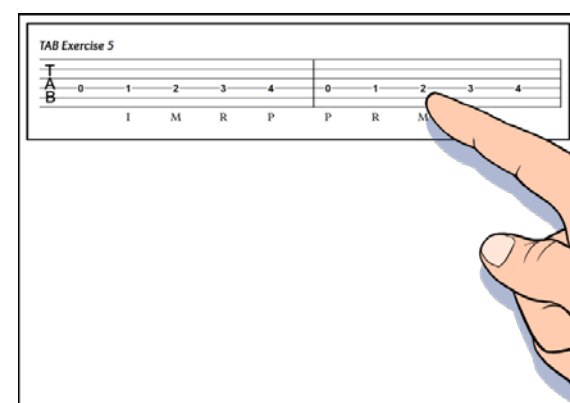
TAB Exercise 3

T	0	1	2	3	4	4	3	2	1	0
A										
B										
		I	M	R	P	P	R	M	I	

2. Choose one of the TAB exercises and randomly pick a note for your child to play.
 - For example, point to the 2 on the 2nd string and see if your student can play it.
 - Then point to the “0” on the 2nd string.
 - Then point to the “4” on the 2nd string.



3. Next choose another TAB Exercise and point to notes for your child to play.
 - For example, point to the 1 on the 4th string and see if your child can play it.
 - Then point to the 3 on the 4th string.

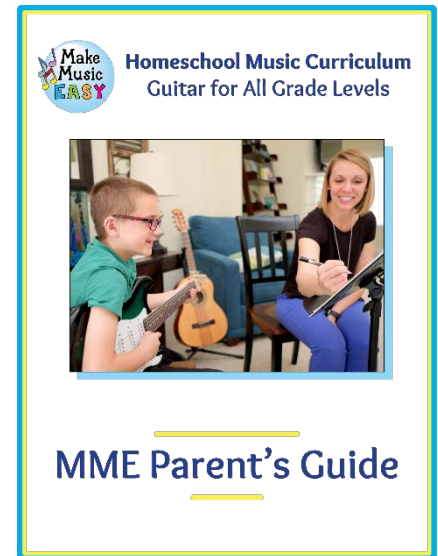


4. Continue this test using the different TAB exercises on the Guitar TAB Exercises Sheet. Take your time with this test. Once your child can identify and play these notes (especially on the thinner strings), he or she will be more than ready to begin learning songs with our songbooks!

Part III: What's Next?

MME Parent's Guide

After completing this First Lessons Guide, you and your child are ready to dive into our learning activities with our MME songbooks. These activities are explained in our main instructional document: the **MME Parent's Guide**. It categorizes MME learning activities according to your child's skill level, making it easy to focus solely on the information that's relevant to your child, no matter where he or she is in the learning process. This also makes it easy to use because your own knowledge and skills will gradually increase as you learn right along with your child.

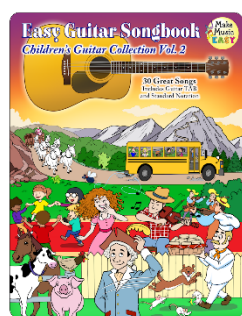


MME Guitar Songbooks

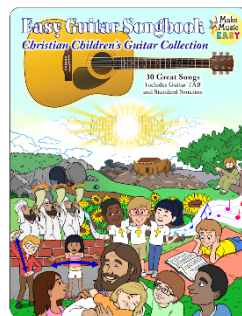
Once your child has a basic understanding of the concepts learned in this First Lesson Guide, the fun can begin with our **MME Guitar Songbooks**! Each Songbook contains 30 songs for learning melodies, chords and singing, providing a large repertoire of learning resources. Your Parent's Guide will show you exactly which songs to start with and how to use these books with our learning activities.



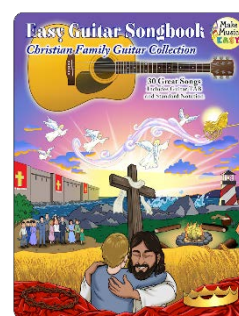
Children's Guitar
Collection Vol. 1



Children's Guitar
Collection Vol. 2



Christian Children's
Guitar Collection



Christian Family
Guitar Collection



Christmas Classics
Guitar Collection

Appendix: Guitar TAB Exercises

~Print for use during first lessons~

TAB Exercise 1

1st String 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

2nd String T A B

3rd String

4th String

5th String

6th String

TAB Exercise 2

0 1 2 3 4 4 3 2 1 0

T A B

I M R P P R M I

TAB Exercise 3

0 1 2 3 4 4 3 2 1 0

T A B

I M R P P R M I

TAB Exercise 4

0 1 2 3 4 4 3 2 1 0

T A B

I M R P P R M I

TAB Exercise 5

0 1 2 3 4 0 1 2 3 4

T A B

I M R P P R M I

TAB Exercise 6

0 1 2 3 4 4 3 2 1 0

T A B

I M R P P R M I

TAB Exercise 7

0 1 2 3 4 4 3 2 1 0

T A B

I M R P P R M I