

A Better Tuning Method When You Don't Have a Tuner

I've found, sometimes when I don't have my electronic guitar tuner handy, that I can't quite get a guitar to tune well to itself; some chords I get to sound OK, then other chords sound crappy. I came across a MUCH better way to tune. I thought I'd pass it along, just in case you haven't used it. It REALLY makes a difference.

The key is to NOT use the 7th-fret harmonic whatsoever!!! Only octaves (5th and 12th harmonics) are used, with some fretted notes. This definitely beats the 5-5-5-4-5 method (5th fret on 6th string matches open 5th string, etc.), and even beats the 7-5-7-5-7-7 method (where you match the 7th-fret harmonic to the 5th-fret harmonic of the next string, and so on).

I learned this from a Luthiers website, then I made the diagrams below. For those who don't know the term, luthiers are the folks who build and repair guitars and other stringed instruments.

There are three pages to this document. The luthier's explanation was VERY verbose, with no pictures. I'm a picture kind of guy!

Pass it along, and enjoy!! Save this document to share, or cut and paste this into its own text document for future reference or to print out, but make sure you use a MONO-spaced font (like Courier) so the diagrams line up properly.

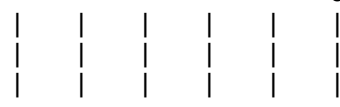
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Tuning Your Guitar

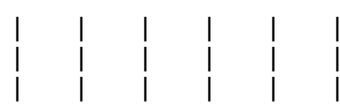
Step 1: Adjusting 1 and 6 strings (hi and lo E, respectively)

6 5 4 3 2 1 <-- string number
E A D G B E <-- string name

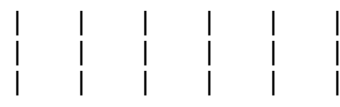
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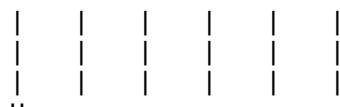
Tune either the open hi-string E, or the open lo-string E, to a tuning-fork (best), pitch-pipe, piano, or similar standard. In the absence of a standard, tune either E-string to your best "guess-timate" of a normal pitch.



Harmonic of lo-string E at 5th fret should match open hi-string E. Tune whichever is not to pitch.



Strings 1 and 6 are now tuned.

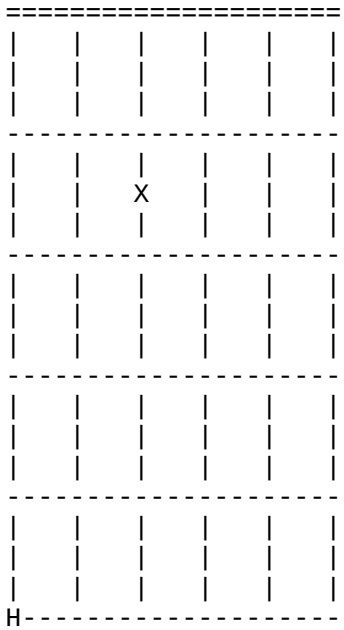


H = harmonic, 0 = open

H----- 5th fret

Step 2: Adjusting 4 (D)

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



X = fretted

2nd fret

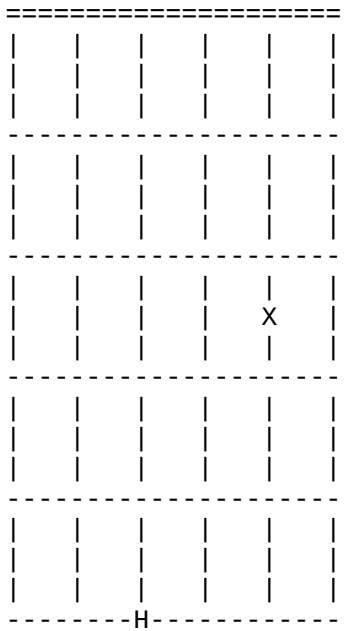
Make 2nd fret of the 4th/D-string match the harmonic of lo-E (6th string) at the 12th fret. Do NOT readjust the lo-E, since the 6th is already in tune with the 1st string, hi-E!

Strings 1, 4, and 6 are now tuned.

12th fret

Step 3: Adjusting 2 (B)

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



Make 3rd fret of the 2nd/B-string match the harmonic of 12th fret D string. Do NOT readjust the 4th/D-string!

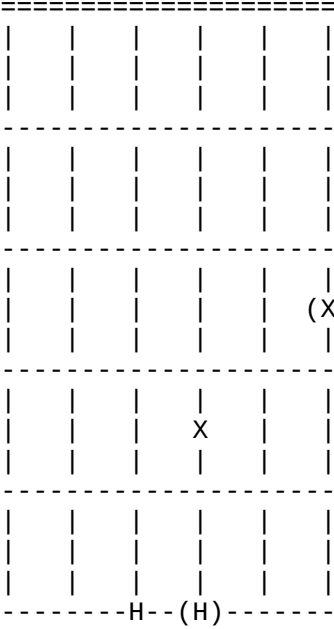
3rd fret

Strings 1, 2, 4, and 6 are now tuned.

12th fret

Step 4: Adjusting 3 (G)

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



Make 7th fret of the 3rd/G-string match the harmonic of 12th fret D string. Do NOT readjust the 4th/D-string!

(Then, compare 12th harmonic of 3rd/G-string against 3rd fret of 1st/E-string. Adjust G-string ONLY if absolutely necessary!)

3rd fret

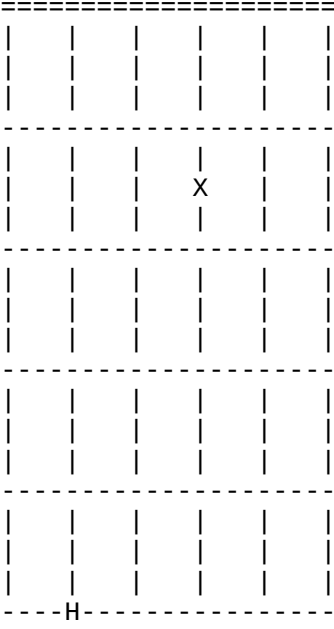
Strings 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 are done.

7th fret

12th fret

Step 5: Adjusting 5 (A)

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



Make 12th fret harmonic of the 5th/A-string match the fretted A (2nd fret) of the G string. Do NOT readjust the 3rd/G-string!

3rd fret

7th fret

12th fret

Now you're ALL done! Enjoy!