

Blues Guitar Institute's Guide to

# **KNOW YOUR FRETBOARD**

A practical 5-Step guide to learning  
the names of all the notes on the fretboard.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>About John and Blues Guitar Institute</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>KNOW YOUR FRETBOARD</b>	<b>4</b>
5 STEP METHOD FOR LEARNING THE FRETBOARD	4
STEP 1: The notes of the open strings	5
STEP 2: Learn the natural notes on the 6th string	6
STEP 3: Learn the natural notes of the 5th string	7
STEP 4: Use octave shapes to help you learn the note names on all other strings	8
STEP 5: Fill in sharps and flats	9
NEXT STEPS	10
<b>THANK YOU!</b>	<b>11</b>

## **About John and Blues Guitar Institute**

Hey, I'm John!

I began my guitar journey over two and a half decades ago, soaking up all things Clapton and Zeppelin with a thirst for electric guitar. I played in several local bands doing my best to imitate my guitar heroes.

At some point, I began researching the guitar players that influenced my favorite players. I began digging through the years and peeling back the layers of Rock and Roll and arrived at the Blues.

If you go back far enough, you'll find a core group of acoustic players from the 20s and 30s, like Robert Johnson, Blind Boy Fuller and Charley Patton that are responsible for shaping so much of the music we know and love today. I've been on a quest over the last several years to get my playing closer and closer to the heart of the Blues.

### **Blues Guitar Institute**

I created Blues Guitar Institute (BGI) back in 2011 and began teaching Blues-focused lessons online to help others learn to play great Blues, specifically acoustic Blues.

With hundreds of videos available, BGI has since grown to be a top resource for guitar players looking to connect with the very

roots of Blues. From Delta to Piedmont to Texas, there's something for just about every picker at BGI.

The BGI Community, now several thousand strong, seek the simple amid the complex in straightforward, no-frills lessons.

With any worthy pursuit, there will be struggles and there will be hard work. But BGI is here to guide you along the way and put you on the proven path to better Blues. The most important part of learning with BGI?

Enjoy the journey!

Find out more about BGI by visiting  
<http://www.bluesguitarinstitute.com>

# KNOW YOUR FRETBOARD

Can you play chords without knowing the names of all the notes on the guitar?

Sure.

But knowing the note names will help you gain a deeper understanding of how the fretboard is arranged.

If the fretboard seems like a maze of wrong notes, commit to learning the note names on the guitar; it's important.

The problem is that the grid of frets and strings yields a staggering number of notes to learn. For example, a 14-fret acoustic guitar has 84 notes! Clearly, rote memorization of 84 notes will be difficult to impossible.

Instead, let's chunk this into 5 manageable steps:

## 5 STEP METHOD FOR LEARNING THE FRETBOARD

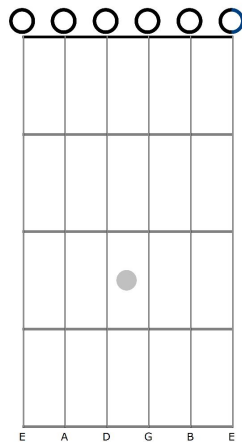
1. Learn the notes of the open strings
2. Learn the natural notes on the 6th string
3. Learn the natural notes on the 5th string
4. Use octaves to learn the notes on strings 4, 3, 2 and 1
5. Fill in sharps/flats

*STEP 1: The notes of the open strings*

A common way of referring to a string on the guitar is to refer to its string number. The lowest sounding, thickest string, is the 6th string and it is tuned to an E note in standard tuning.

The next thickest string is the 5th string which is tuned to an A note. Followed by the 4th string tuned to D, 3rd string tuned to G, 2nd string tuned to B and finally the thinnest string, the first string is tuned to E.

Tunings are spelled from the lowest note to the highest note.



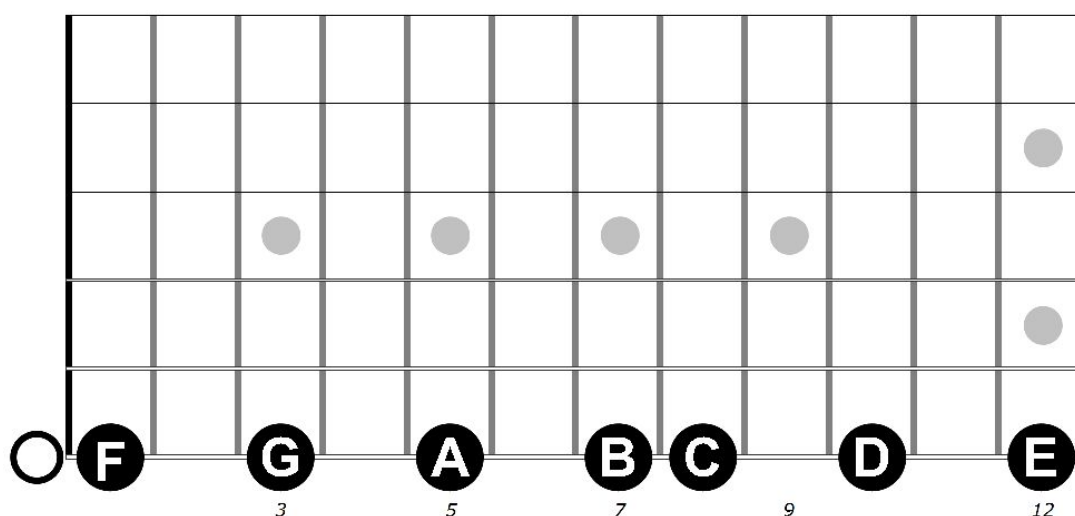
E - A - D - G - B - E

Low → High

**Action Item:** Memorize each of the notes sounded by plucking each of the individual strings and saying the note name out loud (seriously, out loud).

*STEP 2: Learn the natural notes on the 6th string*

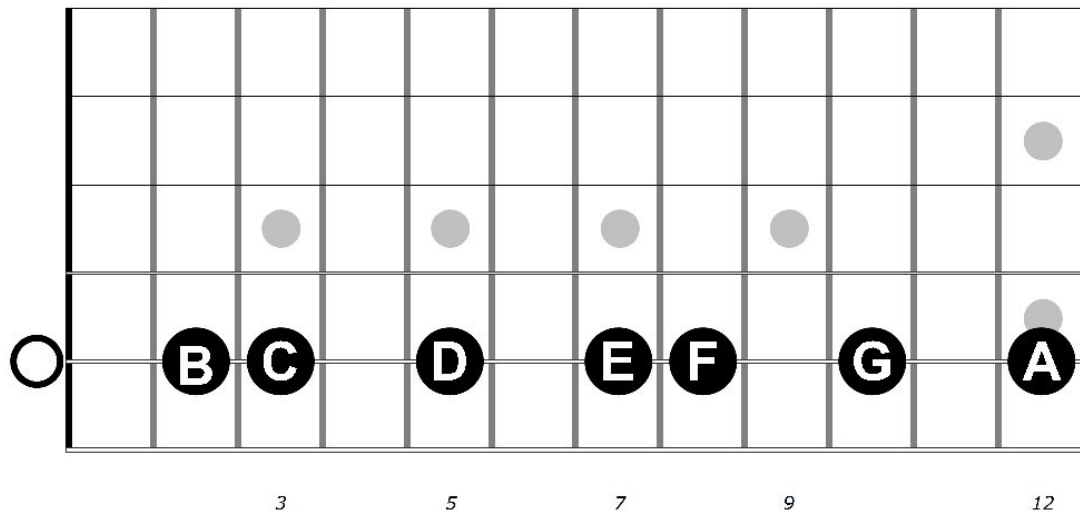
Natural notes are the note names not accompanied with a sharp or flat symbol, ie the letter names. In this step, you will memorize the location of each natural note occurring on the 6th string.



*Action Item: Memorize the natural notes on the 6th string according to the grid (say the note names out loud as you play them).*

*STEP 3: Learn the natural notes of the 5th string*

Repeat step 2 on the 5th string, learning its natural note locations.



**Action Item:** Memorize the natural note locations on the 5th string according to the grid above (say the note names as you play them).



*STEP 4: Use octave shapes to help you learn the note names on all other strings*

View Tuesday Blues #157 to see the octave shapes you can use as a reference point to figure out notes on strings 4, 3, 2 and 1.



*STEP 5: Fill in sharps and flats*

Once you have a strong recall of each of the natural notes on the fretboard, you can easily solve for a sharp note.

Sharp simply means to increase in pitch by a half-step. On the guitar a half-step is the distance of one fret. Therefore, to make a note sharp, you move up one fret on the guitar.

Conversely, to flatten a note is to decrease it in pitch by a half-step. On the guitar, you would move down a fret to flatten a note.

As an example, we know from Step 2 that a D note occurs on the 5th string, 5th fret. Therefore, a D sharp is up a fret at the 6th fret and a D flat is down a fret at the 4th fret.

## **NEXT STEPS**

For most of us, learning the neck takes time and practice. Use this 5-Step system to give you a jumpstart, but don't get discouraged if it doesn't sink it all at once.

It probably won't.

Start with Step 1 and take as much time as you need in each step until you master it. Some steps will come quickly and others take time and regular practice but it is worth the effort.

# THANK YOU!

I want the final word in this guide to be a heartfelt thank you from me to you. It's no small thing to me that you took time out of your day to connect with me through BGI.

I truly hope that this guide helps you finally learn the note names along each string at every fret. It may seem like a daunting task, but follow this guy and take your time to make steady progress.

With practice, you'll know your fretboard cold. That's the goal and this skill will help you in so many ways along your guitar journey.

Good luck and...

Play On!

JOHN HATCHER

John Hatcher

PS - learn more about what Blues Guitar Institute can do for your playing here:

<http://www.bluesguitarinstitute.com>