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2nd Edition

Guitar

ALL-IN-ONE

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dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Jon Chappell, et al.



Guitar

ALL-IN-ONE

2nd Edition

by **Jon Chappell, Mark Phillips,
and Desi Serna**

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand

Guitar All-In-One For Dummies®, 2nd Edition

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Introduction

So, you want to play guitar, eh? No one can blame you. The guitar isn't just a beautiful, soulful, and versatile instrument. For about 80 years now, it has also set the standard for coolness in the music world. Not a bad combination.

Though the guitar as we know it is only about a century and a half old, its roots as a plucked stringed instrument go back deep into history. Many ancient folk instruments have followed the basic strings-stretched-over-fretboard-and-played-with-fingers design for thousands of years, and the guitar is in some ways the culmination of that legacy. It seems humans have always had something like the guitar in mind.

After the guitar was electrified in the 1930s — that is, when it went from soft backup instrument to a forceful and expressive vehicle for soloing — its popularity skyrocketed, and its intrinsic qualities and sound changed popular music forever. But its softer side didn't go away. When Bob Dylan famously “plugged in” at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival and was booed by outraged folk fans, it became clear that the electric guitar had entered its own universe.

Guitar All-in-One For Dummies, 2nd Edition covers both the acoustic and the electric universes — as well as the older classical guitar one, which has its own language, techniques, and musical pedigree.

About This Book

First, here's what this book is not: It's not a textbook, nor a long-winded history, nor a rote learning tool. Lots of those kinds of books are on the market, if that's what you're looking for — but beware, they're often dry and assume underlying knowledge.

Guitar All-in-One For Dummies, 2nd Edition is a generous conglomeration of material from several *For Dummies* guitar and music books. It aims to cover the guitar gamut, from what those thingies are called that wind the strings (tuning machines) to how Stevie Ray Vaughan got his incredible sound (by tuning lower, among other tricks) to how to employ the insights of guitar theory in your playing.

Much of the material is relevant to any style of guitar playing. But three popular guitar genres each get their own sections, called *books*: rock guitar, blues guitar, and classical guitar. You'll also find chapters on learning to read music, on building your chord repertoire, on practicing, scales, riffs, and how to play the fancy stuff . . . let's just say there's a lot here. And don't forget, the book is accompanied by 30 video clips and more than 120 audio tracks that can help you on your way to sounding just like the pros.

In this book, important words are defined in italics. Key words in lists that bring important ideas to your attention are in bold. And Web addresses are in monofont to set them apart.

Here are a few other conventions to help you navigate this book:

- » **Right hand and left hand:** Instead of using "strumming hand" and "fretting hand," this book uses "right hand" for the hand that picks or strums the strings and "left hand" for the hand that frets the strings (it's easier and shorter that way). Sincere apologies to those left-handed readers who are using this book; you folks should read "right hand" to mean "left hand" and vice versa. You're probably used to stuff like that.
- » **Up and down, higher and lower, and so on:** If you're asked to move a note or chord up the guitar neck or to play it higher on the neck, it means higher in pitch, or toward the body of the guitar. If you're asked to go down or lower on the neck, it means toward the headstock, or lower in pitch. (Those who hold a guitar with the headstock tilted upward may need to do a bit of mental adjustment whenever you see these terms. Just remember that these terms are about pitch, not position, and you'll do just fine.)
- » **Dual music notation:** Some songs and exercises are arranged with the standard music staff and guitar tablature. You can use either of these methods, but you don't need to look at both at the same time. In many cases, the music under scrutiny also is on the free audio files for the book, so look for the Play This! icon that points you to specific tracks.

Foolish Assumptions

This book doesn't assume you know anything about playing guitar or reading music. It starts from zero and builds from the ground up — and then keeps going and going. It contains straightforward, informal explanations of how guitars work, what the different kinds are, how to get started playing, and how to form chords and strum and fingerpick. It then proceeds to help deepen your knowledge in several directions.

This book is designed for just about anyone who loves guitar. It's as useful for people who have barely touched a guitar as it is for those who have fiddled around with one for years but would like to get more serious. Even advanced players — those who would like to try a different genre than they're used to, or who specifically need to work on, say, their outside chord inversion patterns — will find plenty of valuable information in these pages.

No matter your situation, experience, or motives, this book's goal is to give you enough information so that ultimately you can explore the guitar on your own. Many of the best guitar players describe themselves as “self-taught.” You can use this book to teach yourself. Discovering what the instrument can do, finding ways to make new sounds, suddenly grasping a better way to fret notes or chords that just minutes ago seemed impossible — these are tremendously exciting and satisfying experiences. Such magic awaits you if you're willing to put in some time and effort. That's a big *if*, though. It really is up to you.

Icons Used in This Book

As you go through the chapters of this book, you'll find friendly icons scattered here and there. They're designed to draw your attention to different kinds of information, from helpful guidance to pleasant diversions.



REMEMBER

Be sure to pay attention to anything that has this icon attached. As you may guess, it's something important that you shouldn't forget. Tuck this info in the back of your mind.



TIP

When you see this icon, you know that some handy-dandy information follows that can save you time, trouble, money, energy, and more.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

There's an occasional step into the swamp of technical jargon or complex discussion, and this icon gives you fair warning. It's not essential stuff. Feel free to flip past it if you just don't care.



WARNING

Pay attention to text featuring this icon. It can help you avoid mistakes and problems.



PLAY THIS

This means there's an audio track or video clip that relates to what you're reading. The video and audio examples that appear throughout the text bring a lot of the music in this book to life. You can find these tracks and clips at www.dummies.com/go/guitarai0.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the book content, you can find a free online Cheat Sheet that includes handy info on fingerboard diagrams and tablature, 24 common guitar chords, and all the notes on the first nine frets. Go to www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/guitarai0 to access this handy reference material, and then print it out and keep it handy.

This book comes with additional free articles that cover information that simply couldn't fit into the book. Check them out at www.dummies.com/extras/guitarai0.

Finally, remember that www.dummies.com/go/guitarai0 is home to the video clips and audio tracks that accompany this book. Head there for demonstrations of notes, riffs, scales, chords, songs, exercises, the sounds of instruments, and various guitar features — and much more.

Where to Go from Here

The book is organized into parts (called books) with chapters grouped according to broad, related topics. But you sure don't have to read it from front to back — or in any particular order. The idea is that you can skim through the table of contents and pick and choose whatever's interesting to you, based on where you are currently in your musical journey. Then go directly to that section and get cracking.

Still, if you really want some tips about where to begin, here are a few:

- » If you've never touched a guitar before, definitely start with Book 1 (and if looking at printed music gives you heart palpitations, you really should think about heading to Chapter 4 in Book 1).
- » If you're okay on the very basics, try Book 2, which covers chord and note fundamentals and basic techniques.
- » If you're okay strumming along by a campfire, but get wobbly in the knees whenever you think of playing anything higher than the 5th fret, check out the chapters in Book 3.
- » If you're already not bad at playing but would like to dig deeper into some particular styles, such as rock, blues, or classical guitar, head to Books 4–6.
- » And if you're actually pretty good but could use some terrific warmups to get your fingers even more limber (limberer?), head for Book 7 for lots (and lots) of practice material.

Bottom line: Every person's musical journey is unique. Don't feel like you have to learn this or that. Let yourself be attracted to the kind of guitar music and styles that truly speak to you. Have fun! That's really the whole point.

1

Guitar 101

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IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Identifying the different parts of the guitar
- » Understanding how the guitar works
- » Counting strings and frets
- » Tuning the guitar relatively (to itself)
- » Tuning to a fixed source
- » Access the audio track and video clip at www.dummies.com/go/guitaraiio/

Chapter **1**

Guitar Anatomy and Tuning

All guitars — whether painted purple with airbrushed skulls and lightning bolts or finished in a natural-wood pattern with a fine French lacquer — share certain physical characteristics that make them behave like guitars and not violins or tubas. If you're confused about the difference between a headstock and a pickup or you're wondering which end of the guitar to hold under your chin, this chapter is for you.

This chapter describes the differences among the various parts of the guitar and tell you what those parts do. It also tells you how to hold the instrument and why the guitar sounds the way it does. You *don't* hold the guitar under your chin — unless, of course, you're Jimi Hendrix.

One of the great injustices of life is that before you can even play music on the guitar, you must endure the painstaking process of getting your instrument in tune. Fortunately for guitarists, you have only six strings to tune, as opposed to the couple hundred strings in a piano. Also encouraging is the fact that you can use several different methods to get your guitar in tune, as this chapter describes.

The Parts and Workings of a Guitar



REMEMBER

Guitars come in two basic flavors: *acoustic* and *electric*. From a hardware standpoint, electric guitars have more components and doohickeys than acoustic guitars. Guitar makers generally agree, however, that making an acoustic guitar is harder than making an electric guitar. That's why, pound for pound, acoustic guitars cost just as much or more than their electric counterparts. (When you're ready to go guitar or guitar accessory shopping, check out Book 1 Chapter 3.) But both types follow the same basic approach to such principles as neck construction and string tension. That's why both acoustic and electric guitars have similar shapes and features, despite a sometimes radical difference in tone production. Figures 1-1 and 1-2 show the various parts of acoustic and electric guitars.

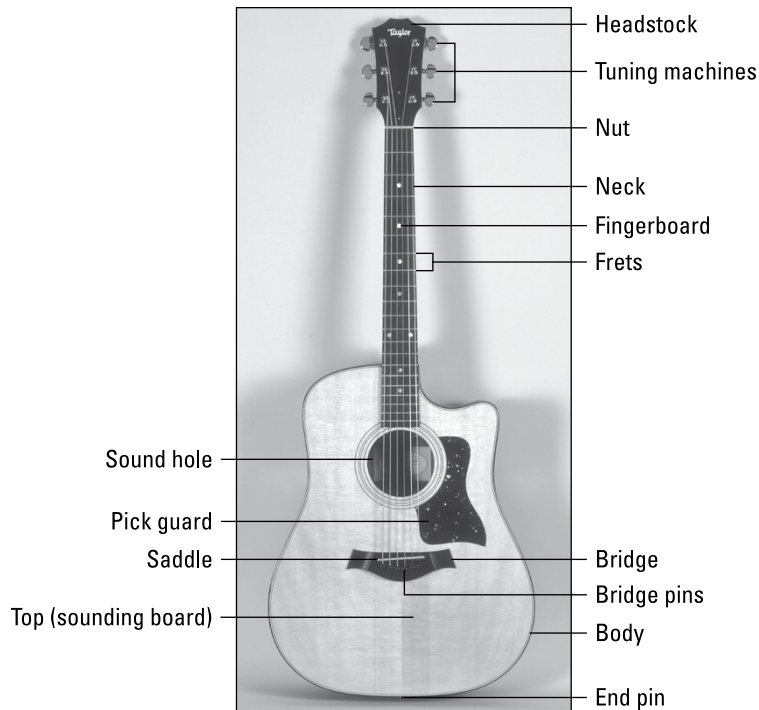


FIGURE 1-1: Typical acoustic guitar with its major parts labeled.

Photograph courtesy of Taylor Guitars

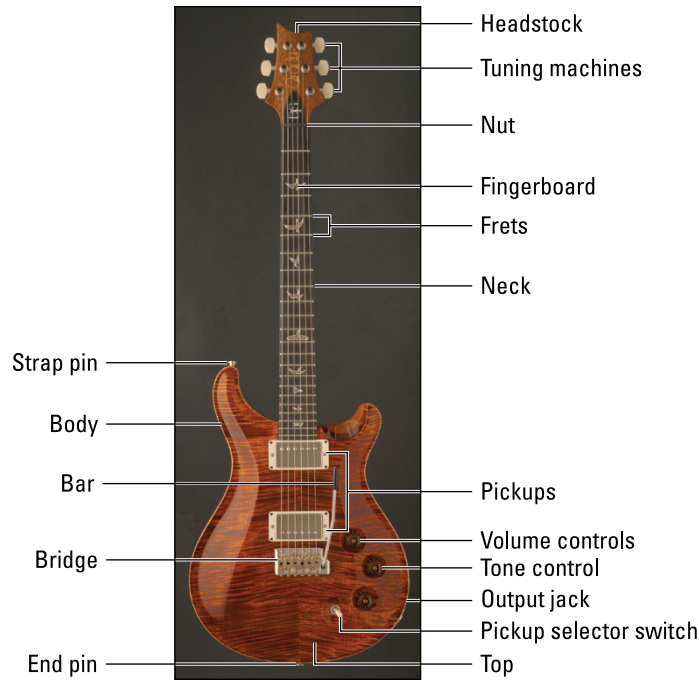


FIGURE 1-2: Typical electric guitar with its major parts labeled.

Photograph courtesy of PRS Guitars



REMEMBER

Here are the names and functions of the various parts of a guitar:

- » **Back (acoustic only):** The part of the body that holds the sides in place; made of two or three pieces of wood.
- » **Bar (electric only):** A metal rod attached to the bridge that varies the string tension by tilting the bridge back and forth. Also called the tremolo bar, whammy bar, vibrato bar, and wang bar.
- » **Body:** The box that provides an anchor for the neck and bridge and creates the playing surface for the right hand. On an acoustic, the body includes the amplifying sound chamber that produces the guitar's tone. On an electric, it consists of the housing for the bridge assembly and electronics (pickups as well as volume and tone controls).
- » **Bridge:** The metal (electric) or wooden (acoustic) plate that anchors the strings to the body.
- » **Bridge pins (acoustic only):** Plastic or wooden dowels that insert through bridge holes and hold the strings securely to the bridge.
- » **End pin:** A post where the rear end of the strap connects. On *acoustic-electrics* (acoustic guitars with built-in pickups and electronics), the pin often doubles as the *output jack* where you plug in.

- » **Fingerboard:** A flat, plank-like piece of wood that sits atop the neck, where you place your left-hand (or right-hand, if you're playing a left-handed guitar) fingers to produce notes and chords. The fingerboard is also known as the *fretboard*, because the frets are embedded in it.
- » **Frets:** Thin metal wires or bars running perpendicular to the strings that shorten the effective vibrating length of a string when you press down on it, enabling it to produce different pitches.
- » **Headstock:** The section that holds the tuning machines (hardware assembly) and provides a place for the manufacturer to display its logo.
- » **Neck:** The long, clublike wooden piece that connects the headstock to the body and holds the fretboard.
- » **Nut:** A grooved sliver of stiff nylon or other synthetic substance that stops the strings from vibrating beyond the neck. The strings pass through the grooves on their way to the tuning machines in the headstock. The nut is one of the two points at which the vibrating area of the string ends. (The other is the bridge.)
- » **Output jack:** The insertion point for the cord that connects the electric guitar (or acoustic guitar that has been fitted with a pickup) to an amplifier or other electronic device.
- » **Pickup selector (electric only):** A switch that determines which pickups are currently active.
- » **Pickups:** Barlike magnets that create the electrical current, which the amplifier converts into musical sound.
- » **Saddle:** For acoustic, a thin plastic strip that sits inside a slot in the bridge; for electric, separate metal pieces that provide the contact point for the strings and the bridge.
- » **Sides (acoustic only):** Separate curved wooden pieces on the body that join the top to the back.
- » **Strap pin:** Metal post where the front, or top, end of the strap connects. (**Note:** Not all acoustics have a strap pin. If the guitar is missing one, tie the top of the strap around the headstock, above the nut.)
- » **Strings:** The six metal (for electric and steel-string acoustic guitars) or nylon (for classical guitars) wires that, drawn taut, produce the notes of the guitar. Although not strictly part of the actual guitar (you attach and remove them at will on top of the guitar), strings are an integral part of the whole system, and a guitar's entire design and structure revolves around making the strings ring out with a joyful noise. (See Book 1 Chapter 3 for info on changing strings.)