

How to Really Learn the Notes on the Fretboard

You know you need to do it at some point or maybe you've been putting it off for a while now but there's no denying it; one way or another **you need to learn the notes on the fretboard**. There are plenty of methods out there, most of them gimmicks, but I've come up with a way to learn them which I think you might like.

Benefits of Knowing the Notes on the Fretboard:

- ✓ Understand what you're playing
- ✓ Make your theory knowledge useful
- ✓ Communicate better with other musicians who play different instruments
- ✓ Improve your improvisational skills
- ✓ Makes learning to read notation easier
- ✓ Moves things around the fretboard at will
- ✓ Become less reliant on shapes

How Not to Learn the Fretboard

The main problem I see with a lot of note-learning methods is that they have little to do with the practical application of finding notes on the fretboard.

The 'Up and Down' Method

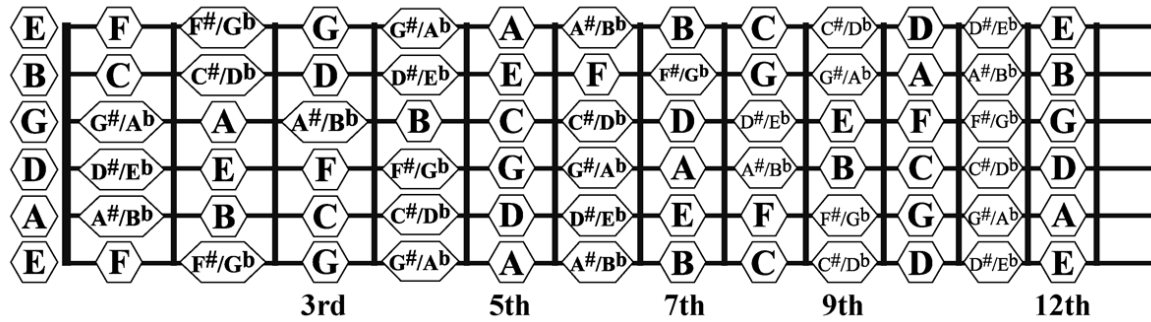
This method involves naming the notes as you go up and down one string as follows: E, F, F#, G, G# etc. Apart from being extremely tedious, it is very time-consuming and has very little practical benefit as **you know which note comes next regardless of which fret you're on** because you're just reciting the musical alphabet. The connection between the note name and its location doesn't happen.

The 'Find the Same Note on All Strings' Method

This method involves finding all the F notes on the fretboard then all the F# notes etc. and is sometimes practiced with a metronome. While you get a better idea of the location of each note, it's unlikely that you'll need to play seven F notes in a row in different locations on the fretboard, and it'll take a long time before you know the notes in proximity to each other in a limited area on the fretboard, which is a far more useful application.

My Method

The fretboard diagram on the next page shows you where all the notes are on the fretboard. Underneath it I've put the steps to follow in order to (finally) learn the information.



Step 1: Play the notes on the first four frets only using one finger for each fret i.e. 1st finger 1st fret, 2nd finger 2nd fret and so on (use this page if you need to but once you have the notes off the paper/screen and into your head, stop looking at this page). Call out the note names as you play them randomly. When you more or less know them move on to the next step.

Step 2: Move up one fret so that your 1st finger now covers the 2nd fret, your 2nd finger the 3rd fret and so on. Repeat the procedure in step 1, calling out the names of the notes as you play them. What we're doing is introducing the notes gradually while reinforcing the ones we've already learned.

Step 3: Rinse and repeat until you reach the end of the fretboard (or at least the 13th fret).

You don't have to do the whole fretboard in one day, in fact, I'd recommend doing one shift per day to really get the notes down then in a couple of weeks you should be looking at the fretboard in a whole new way!