

FRETBOARD NAVIGATION – FINDING THE NOTES

There is no substitute for knowing your way around the fretboard, but it can seem like a daunting thing to learn, what with six strings and twelve frets each. Luckily, instead of seventy-two different notes, there are only twelve, so you may begin to realise that many notes overlap. There are some simple rules to help you find your way around; the first of these is how the notes are laid out.

ALL NOTES ARE 2 FRETS APART EXCEPT E&F AND B&C; THEY ARE 1 FRET APART

The notes we use in music – A B C D E F G – are known as natural notes. Every fret represents half a note, so two frets is a whole note. Adding one fret to a note is like adding a half; for example, A plus a half becomes A# (A 'sharp'). Add another half and it becomes B.

If we apply this to the rest of our notes (excluding our exceptions of E&F, B&C), we get all of the notes we use in music:

A A# B C C# D D# E F F# G G#

We end up with twelve notes; coincidentally, this is why the 12th fret of any string has the same note as the string itself, albeit higher in sound/pitch.

Except for G&B, all strings obey the following rules:

- **THE 5th FRET OF A STRING GIVES THE NAME OF THE NEXT STRING**
- **THE 7th FRET OF A STRING GIVES THE NAME OF THE PREVIOUS STRING**

For example, the 5th fret of the 'A' string gives you 'D', which is the name of the next string; the 7th fret of the 'A' string gives you 'E', the name of the previous string.

The G&B strings are tuned four frets apart (all the others are five), hence their exception to above rules; in their case, the 4th fret of G gives you B, and the 8th fret of B gives you G.

Octaves are a very useful way of locating notes. The octave of a note refers to a higher version of said note; it is so called because notes are usually grouped into eight-note families called scales, with the first and last notes being the same in name, albeit different in pitch. Octaves obey the following rules:

- **ON THE E&A STRINGS, AN OCTAVE IS 2 STRINGS OVER AND 2 FRETS UP**

For example, the 5th fret of the low 'E' string gives us the note of 'A'; by applying the above rule, its octave is on the 7th fret of the 'D' string.

- **ON THE D&G STRINGS, AN OCTAVE IS 2 STRINGS OVER AND 3 FRETS UP**

For example, the 5th fret of the 'D' string gives us the note of 'G'; by applying the above rule, its octave is on the 8th fret of the 'B' string.

When finding your way around, compare the sounds of notes to ensure you have found what you are looking for. If you would like a complete diagram of the fretboard, check out the FRETBOARD MAP, which can be found on the GUIDES page at www.playyourguitar.co.uk