

Guitarrón Notation

Guitarrón music is notated in the Bass Clef. Normally, the lower note of each octave is written, but it is general practice to play *both* strings. The exception to the rule is single-fingered notes, such as G#. There are also instances when an arranger might call for a single-string effect, which would be indicated by the words *single-string* or *una cuerda*. For illustration purposes, both notes will be written out on each fingering exercise, but scales, technical exercises and flexibility exercises will be written in traditional *guitarrón* notation.

Teaching the *Guitarrón* Fingerings

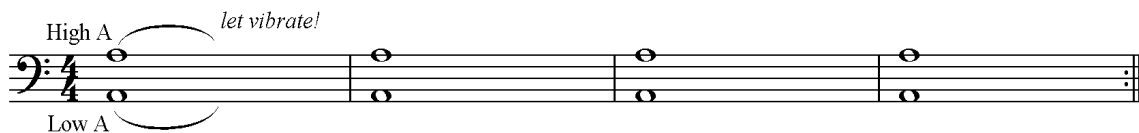
The first two notes to be learned on the *guitarrón* are the As. The high A is played with the 1st (A) string open and the low A is played with the 6th (A) string open, as well. The right hand middle finger will hook the 1st string at the tip joint and the right thumb will contact the 6th string at a 45° angle. It may be stated as a general rule, that:

- the right hand middle finger plucks *only* the 1st string
- the 2nd and 3rd strings will *always* be plucked with the right index finger
- the 4th, 5th, and 6th strings are *always* plucked with the right thumb

The thumb must be extended outward, allowing the flat part (“thumb pad”) of the tip joint to contact the string. Pull the strings toward each other in a diagonal, upward motion, bending the right wrist slightly upward and releasing the strings simultaneously (Figure 12). Make sure both strings are played with equal volume. Make sure that the left hand thumb and fingers do not touch the vibrating A strings. Play the following exercise, four full counts and relaxing the right hand on the release.



Figure 12



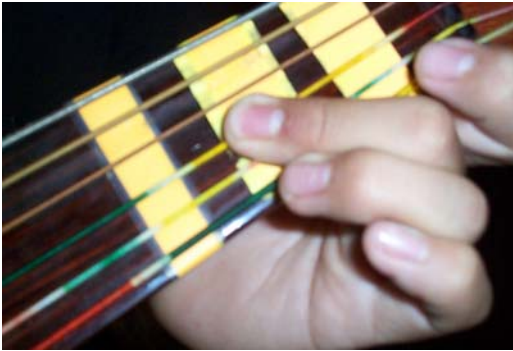


Figure 13

The next two notes to be learned are the Ds. The high D is fingered with the pad of the left hand middle or 2nd finger on the 3rd (C) string, about 2¼” from the nut and the low D is played with the 5th (D) string open (Figure 13). Simulated “fret” markers, made of colored vinyl or masking tape, can be wrapped around the fingerboard to aid in correct finger

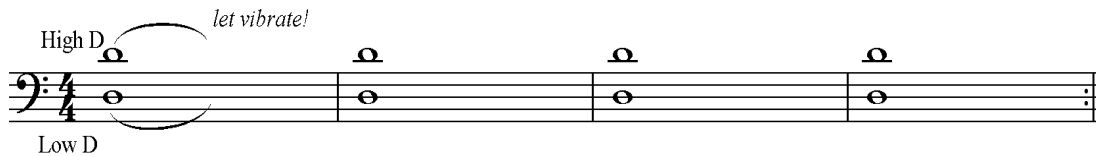
placement, just as violin teachers do for their beginning students. The right index finger will hook the 3rd string and the thumb will contact the 5th string at a 45° angle (Figure 14). The thumb must be extended outward allowing the thumb pad contact the string.



Figure 14

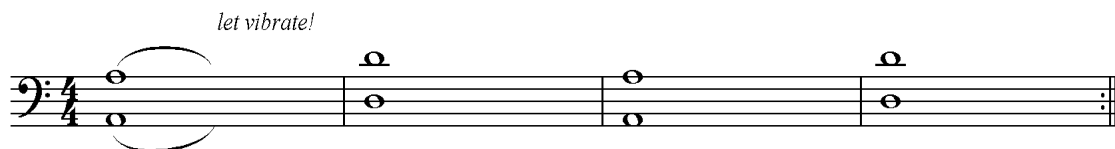
Pull the strings toward each other in a diagonal, upward motion, bending the right wrist slightly upward and releasing the strings simultaneously. Make sure both strings are played with equal volume.

Play the following exercise, allowing the strings to vibrate for four full counts and relax the right hand on the release. Make sure to press the left hand middle finger firmly.



Press the left hand middle finger firmly through the duration of the note.

The following exercise will alternate between A and D. The left middle or 2nd finger should hover over the D note on the 3rd string while playing the A notes. Make sure that the left thumb and fingers do not touch the vibrating strings when playing the A notes.



Work for a smooth transition between notes.



Figure 15

The third pair of notes will be the Gs. The high G is fingered with the pad of the left little or 4th finger on the 2nd (E) string, about 4” from the nut, while the low G is played with the 4th (G) string open. The left ring or 3rd finger can be placed beside or on top of the little finger to help depress the string (Figure 15). The right index finger will hook the 2nd string and the

thumb will contact the 4th string at a 45° angle (Figure 16).

The thumb must be extended outward allowing the thumb pad to contact the string. Pull the strings toward each other in a diagonal, upward motion, bending the right wrist slightly upward and releasing the strings simultaneously. Make sure that both strings are played with equal volume. Again, repeat following exercise in whole notes, allowing the strings to vibrate for four full counts and relaxing the right hand on the release. The left press the 2nd string firmly.



Figure 16



The next exercise alternates between A, D, and G. Repeat this exercise several times. The left middle finger should hover over the D note on the 3rd string, while the left little finger hovers over the G note on 2nd string when playing the A. Make sure that the left thumb and fingers do not touch the vibrating strings when playing the A notes.

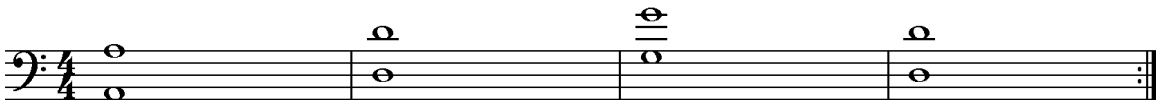
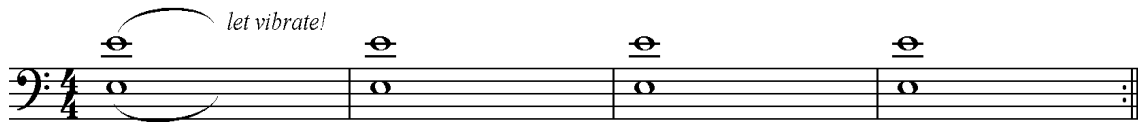




Figure 17

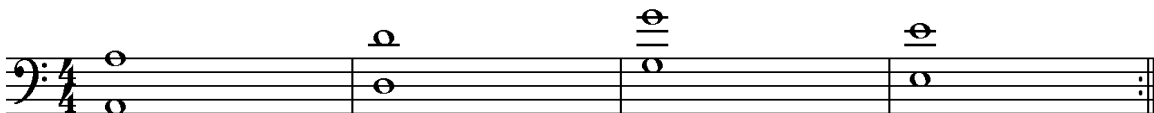
The fourth pair of notes will be the Es. The high E is played with the 2nd (E) string open and the low E is fingered on the 5th (D) string with the left hand middle and ring fingers. The middle finger will depress the string about 2" from the nut. The ring finger should be placed beside it to add strength and support, the two fingertips depressing the 5th string

together (Figure 17). The right index finger will hook the 2nd string and the thumb will contact the 5th string at a 45° angle. The thumb must be extended outward allowing the thumb pad to contact the string. Pull the strings toward each other in a diagonal, upward motion, bending the right wrist slightly upward and releasing the strings simultaneously. Make sure that both strings are played with equal volume. Again, play the following exercise in whole notes, allowing the strings to vibrate for four full counts and relaxing the right hand on the release.



Press firmly with the left hand middle and ring fingers

The next exercise will be to alternate between A, D, G, and E. Play a whole note A, followed by whole notes D, G, and E. Repeat this exercise several times. The left hand middle finger should hover over the D note on the 3rd string while the little finger hovers over the G note on the 2nd string when playing an A. Again, make sure that the left thumb and fingers do not interfere with the vibrating A strings. The left hand should not shift and will remain in this “home” position throughout the exercise.



The fifth pair of notes will be the Cs. The high C is played with the 3rd (C) string open and the low C is fingered with the left thumb pad on the 6th (A) string about 3½” from the nut (Figure 18). The palm of the left hand must press firmly against the neck in a diagonal to provide leverage for the thumb (Figure 19). The right index finger will hook

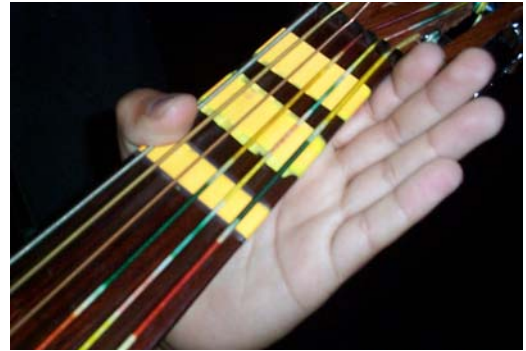


Figure 18



Figure 19

the 3rd string and the thumb will contact the 6th string at a 45° angle. The thumb must be extended outward allowing the thumb pad to contact the string. Pull the strings toward each other in a diagonal, upward motion, bending the right wrist slightly upward and releasing the strings simultaneously. Make sure that both strings are played with equal volume. Again, play the following exercises in whole notes, pressing the

left thumb down firmly thus allowing the strings to vibrate for four full counts and relaxing the right hand on the release.

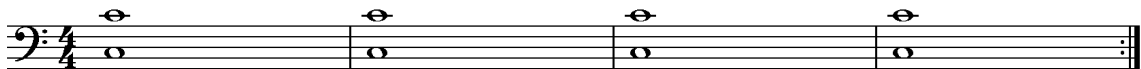
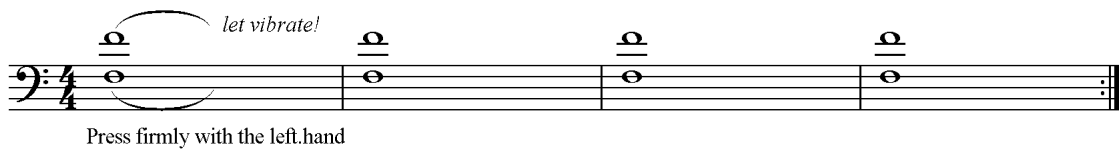




Figure 20

The sixth pair of notes will be the Fs. The high F is fingered on the 2nd (E) string with the tip of the left index finger about 1¼” from the nut and the low F is fingered with the tips of the left middle and ring fingers on the 5th (D) string. The middle finger will depress the 5th string about 3” from the nut with the ring finger beside it to aid with proper intonation and

support (Figure 20). This is the first instance the player does not have the advantage of an open string and, thus, needs to finger both notes. The right index finger will hook the 2nd string and the thumb will contact the 5th string at a 45° angle. The thumb must be extended outward, allowing the thumb pad to contact the string. Pull the strings toward each other in a diagonal, upward motion, bending the right wrist slightly upward and releasing the strings simultaneously. Make sure that both strings are played with equal volume. Play the following exercises paying close attention to tone quality and intonation.



Press firmly with the left hand

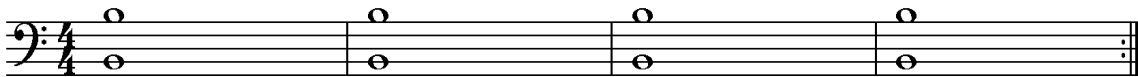


The seventh pair of notes will be the Bs. The high B is fingered on the 1st (A) string with the left hand middle finger pad about 2½” from the nut. The low B is fingered with the left thumb pad, also 2½” from the nut, on the 6th (A) string (Figure 21). The right middle finger will hook the 1st string at the tip joint and the right thumb will contact the 6th string at a 45° angle.



Figure 21

The thumb must be extended outward allowing the thumb pad to contact the string. Pull the strings toward each other in a diagonal, upward motion, bending the right wrist slightly upward and releasing the strings simultaneously. Make sure that both strings are played with equal volume. Again, play the following exercise allowing the strings to vibrate for four full counts and relaxing the right hand on the release.



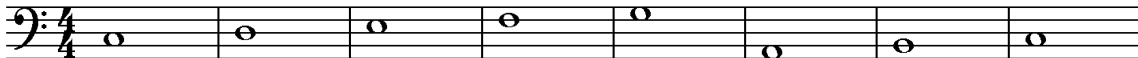
Make sure both notes are played with equal volume.

Now we can play the C Major scale with all seven notes that we have learned.

The scale is written in standard *guitarrón* notation.

C Major Scale

Written in standard *guitarrón* notation



Reminder: Play a pair of strings for each note.

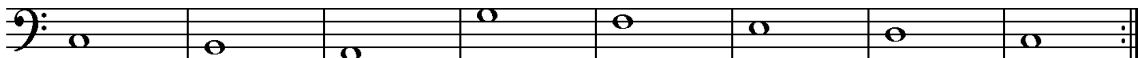




Figure 22

The eighth pair of notes will be the F#s (enharmonically G Flat). The high F# is fingered on the 2nd (E) string with the tip of the left index finger, about 2½” from the nut. The low F# is fingered with the tips of the left middle and ring fingers on the 5th (D) string, about 4” from the nut (Figure 22). The left hand will shift up to this position from the shape

formerly learned as “F.” The right index finger will hook the 2nd string and the thumb will contact the 5th string at a 45° angle. Play the following exercise and be sure to press the fingers of the left hand down firmly through the duration of each note.

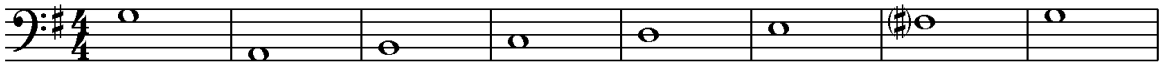


Press firmly with the left hand fingertips.

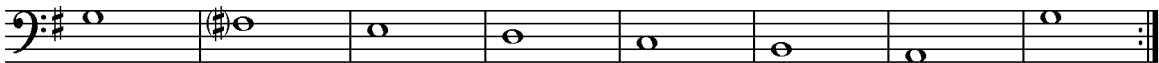
The next scale we will play is the G Major Scale, which has one sharp (F#):

G Major Scale

Written in standard guitarrón notation



Reminder: Play a pair of strings for each note.



The ninth pair of notes will be the C#s (enharmonically D Flat). The high C# is fingered on the 3rd (C) string with the tip of the left index finger about 1¼” from the nut. The low C# is fingered on the 6th (A) string, with the tips of the left middle and ring fingers being forced to stretch about 4” from the nut (Figure 23). Due to the inherent physical



Figure 23

difficulty involved in fingering the low C# correctly, C# is frequently performed on a single string, fingering only the high C#. The right index finger will hook the 3rd string and, should the student become capable of producing the double-note C#, the right thumb will contact the 6th string at a 45° angle. Play the following exercise. If you difficulty playing both strings, then play single-string.

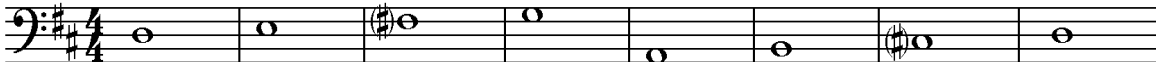


If fingering both strings, stretch the left hand middle and ring fingers to improve intonation.

The next scale we will play is the D Major Scale, which has two sharps (F# and C#).

D Major Scale

Written in standard guitarrón notation



Reminder: Play a pair of strings for each note.

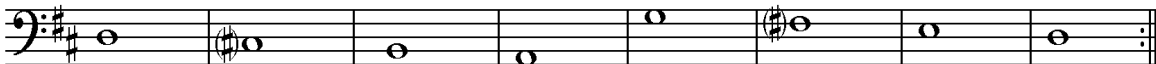
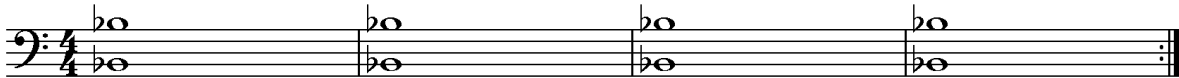




Figure 24

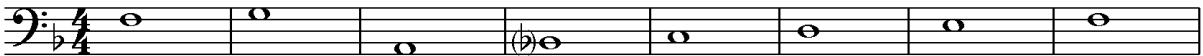
The tenth pair of notes will be the B Flats (enharmonically A#). The high B Flat is fingered on the 1st (A) string with the left hand index finger pad, about 1¼” from the nut. The low B Flat is fingered with the left thumb pad on the 6th (A) string, also about 1¼” from the nut (Figure 24). The right middle finger will hook the 1st string at the joint and the right thumb will contact the 6th string at a 45° angle. Play the following exercise and remember to use the left hand index finger on the high B-flat.



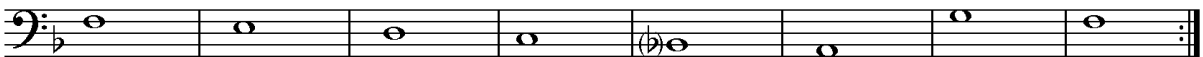
Reminder: Make sure that both strings are played with equal volume.

F Major Scale

Written in standard guitarrón notation



Reminder: Play a pair of strings for each note.



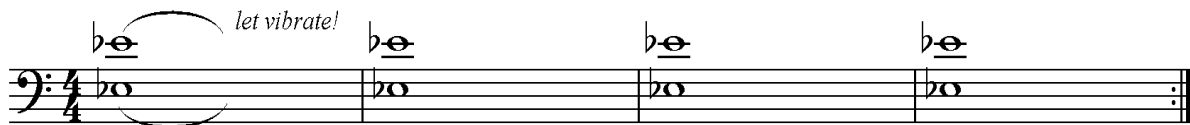
The eleventh pair of notes will be the E Flats (enharmonically D#).

The high E Flat is fingered on the 3rd (C) string with the left hand little finger pad about 4" from the nut. The low E Flat is fingered with the tip of the left index finger on the 5th (D) string, about 1¼" from the nut (Figure 25). The left thumb will support the fingers on the back of the neck. The right index finger will hook the 3rd string and the thumb will contact the 5th string

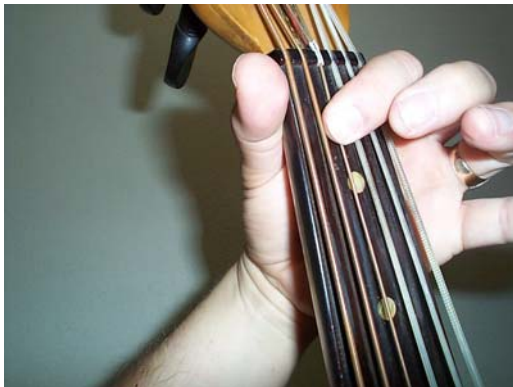


Figure 25

at a 45° angle. The thumb must be extended outward, allowing the thumb pad to contact the string. Pull the strings toward each other in a diagonal, upward motion, bending the right wrist slightly upward and releasing the strings simultaneously. Make sure both strings are played with equal volume. Play the following exercise and press the left hand index and little fingers firmly.



Press the left hand index and little fingers firmly.



The final note to be learned is G# (enharmonically A Flat), which is usually performed using just one string. It is fingered on the 4th (G) string with the tip of the left index finger, about 1¼" from the nut (Figure 26). The right thumb will pluck this low G#, contacting the 4th string at a 45° angle. Play the following exercise and press the left hand index finger firmly.

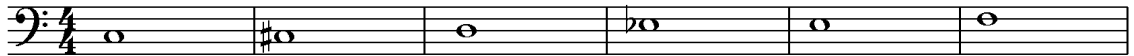


Press the left hand index finger firmly.

The following chromatic scale is a review of all twelve *guitarrón* fingerings. Practice it slowly, focusing on both the production of correct intonation and a solid, resonant tone.

Chromatic Scale

Written in standard *guitarrón* notation



Reminder-Play both strings for each note, except G#, which is played single-string.

