

Guitarist's Dictionary

Glossary

**What does it mean? Musical terms defined for
Guitar Teachers.**

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11th chord: Dominant eleventh chord (1,3,5,b7,(9),11). A direct substitute for the dominant seventh.

12/8: Four beats to the bar with each beat subdivided into three. Counted as: 1 and a 2 and a 3 and a 4 and a. Most commonly found in slow blues.

12/8 Slow blues shuffle: (Also see 12/8) Each main beat is considered to be three equal (triplet) beats the second and fourth main beats are emphasized by the snare drum.

13th chord: Dominant thirteenth chord (1,3,5,b7,(9),13). A direct substitute for the dominant seventh.

2nd string anomaly: Assuming standard tuning (E A D G B E), all the strings on the guitar are tuned a fourth apart except for the 2nd string (B) which is tuned a third higher than the 3rd string. This exception disturbs the shapes of chords etc. as we move across the strings.

4/4 with 8-beat feel: Counted as: 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and.

4/4 with a 16 beat feel: Counted as: 1 e and a 2 e and a 3 e and a 4 e and a.

5th chord: Chord containing only the 1st and 5th notes of the scale. Often referred to as Power Chord.

6th chord: Major sixth chord made up of 1st, 3rd,5th and 6th notes of the major scale.

7th chord: Usually refers to the dominant seventh chord (1,3,5,b7). But Jazz musicians may use the term to refer to the Major seventh chord (1,3,5,7)

9th chord: Dominant ninth chord (1,3,5,b7,9). A direct substitute for the dominant seventh.

Ad-hoc: One-off.

Aeolian mode: The sixth mode of the major scale. Formula: b3,b6,b7. Produces the relative minor (natural minor) scale.

Altered chord: Generally a chord with one or more of its diatonic notes displaced by a semitone. In jazz the term is more specifically used to describe dominant chords with # or b fifths and/or 9ths.

Alternating picking: Up/Down/Up/Down etc.

Amplitudes: A measurement of size of vibration rather than speed or frequency.

Anticipates: Occurs just before. Heralds.

Arpeggios: Chords played one note at a time.

Ataxia: Failure of muscular coordination; irregularity of muscular action.

Augmented: I III #V.

Backward diagonal octave pattern: The octave pattern fingered from the 6th string to the 3rd.

Blues: Afro American music genre at the root of most modern popular music styles like rock, jazz, soul etc.. Chiefly built around a 12-bar progression of chords and a melody using the b3, b5 and b7 notes of the major scale.

Blues scale: A minor pentatonic scale with a b5 added in. Formula: 1,b3,4,b5,5,b7.

Bottlenecks (FFLP Lesson plan 6): Parts of the song that prove difficult and slow the student down.

BPM: Beats per minute.

CAGED system: A powerful fretboard orientation system based on the octave patterns produced by the five open chord shapes C, A, G, E, and D.

Call and response: Pairing of phrases that sound as if they answer each other.

Chord substitution: The principle of replacing a chord or series of chords with different chords to add colour and movement to jazz progressions.

Chromatic scale: The scale of all 12 notes.

Chromaticism: Linking notes or phrases using segments of the chromatic scale.

Circle of fifths: A sequence of notes produced by moving five major scale steps up from each note of the circle.

Circle of fourths: A sequence of notes produced by moving four major scale steps up from each note of the circle.

Clefs: Symbols derived from ornate letter names used to pinpoint a given line of the staff as representing a certain note.

Complements: Goes well together with, or enhances the effect of.

Consensus: Commonly held agreement.

Convolutd: Strung out, long-winded, complicated.

Country music: Genre of popular music evolved chiefly in the Southern U.S. with roots in European, Celtic, African and Native American folk music as well as Gospel. Mostly characterised by simple harmonies and melodies often based on the major pentatonic or country scale.

Country scale: The country scale is a major pentatonic with a minor III added to it. Its formula is I II bIII III V VI.

Dead String: A jazz guitarist's chord shape typically using the root on the 6th string, then muting the 5th string, playing the rest of the chord on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th strings.

Depping: Deputising. Standing in for a guitarist who is off sick or on holiday.

Derivation: A word that describe where something originates or is derived from.

Diatonic harmonizing: Using only notes from within the key that result in a sound pleasing to the ear.

Diminished: Diminished chords have a flatted V.

Diminished 7th: I bIII bV bbVII.

Dominant: The fifth note in a major scale or any chord harmonized on it.

Dominant 7th: The seventh chord is built by harmonizing the V (dominant) note of the major scale. It's formula is I III V bVII.

Dominant 9th: I III V bVII IX.

Dominant type: Chords that are built on the fifth (or dominant) note of a key. They are generally extensions of I III V bVII.

Dorian mode: The second mode of the major scale. Formula: b3,b7.

Dyspraxia: Impaired or painful function of any organ of the body.

Enharmonic: Notes that sound identical but are named differently. For example: An augmented fourth (a perfect 4th raised or 'augmented' by a semi-tone) sounds the same as a diminished fifth (a perfect 5th flattened or 'diminished' by a half-step) but each have different names.

Esoteric: Hidden.

Expectation management: Student has unrealistic expectations about the nature of the task. You have to help them adjust their reality accordingly.

Family: The three principle chord families are: Major (I III V VII or VI and extensions), Minor (I bIII V bVII or VI and extensions), and Dominant (I III V bVII and extensions).

Fill: A phrase or phrases that link one line of melody to the next.

Finger angle: Fingers on their tips, not on their flats.

Finger position: One finger per fret. Fingers just behind the frets.

Fingerable octave patterns: Movable patterns where both notes are fingered, as opposed to octave patterns that use open strings.

Fingerstyle: Styles of guitar playing that involve using the fingers to pick or pluck the strings directly, making contact either with fingertips, nails or individual fingerpicks. As opposed to using a plectrum (Flatpicking).

Five-line stave: The five horizontal lines on which, and between which, are positioned the notes in standard notation.

Flat (b) Keys: Key signatures expressed as a certain number of flats (bs) as opposed to those expressed in sharps (#s).

Flatpicking: Styles of guitar playing that involve using a plectrum (flat pick) to pick the strings, as opposed to using fingers (Fingerstyle).

Folk: A genre of music with its roots in traditional music of many cultures. Also refers to the original music composed by chiefly North American artists during the sixties Folk Revival.

Formula: A way of describing chords generically using Roman numerals to describe which steps of the root note major scale are used to make up that chord. For example, a major chord uses the Roman numerals I, III, V. In the G major scale (G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G) the I is the first note G, the III is the third note B, and the V is the fifth note D.

This means that you would need the notes of G, B, and D in any order to make up the chord of G major.

Forward diagonal octave pattern: The octave pattern that is fingered on the 6th and 4th strings or the 5th and 3rd strings.

Four-note equivalent: In fingerstyle jazz, a chord played with the thumb and first three fingers.

Generic 12-bar blues: (Also see Generic terms and Roman numerals) Generic means written out using the Roman Numeral system. This means that the piece can be adapted to any key.

Generic terms: By using the Roman numeral system we describe note and chord relationships in a way that can be applied equally to any key.

Genre: Type of music. Examples of genre are: Pop, Blues, Jazz, Funk, Hip hop, etc.

Grace-Note: A note that has no significant time value of its own. Used to embellish the note following or preceding it.

Half-step (Semi-tone): Distance between any two adjacent notes on a chromatic scale. Also known as a semi-tone.

Harmonic minor scale: A minor scale widely agreed upon as being best utilized for harmonizing music written in minor keys. It has a flatted III and a flatted VI but retains the natural VII.

Harmonizing: Building chords on a given scale.

Harmony: The 'vertical' component of music – the subject of how two or more musical sounds blend together when heard simultaneously.

Hierarchy of rhythmic responsibility: For example: the drummer lays down the basic tempo and feel, the bass player locks into that and the rhythm guitarist provides colour to fill in some of the gaps. The lead vocals or other instruments then have freedom to play over that rhythmic base without being too concerned about creating rhythmic structure.

Home keys: For example, using the E blues scale for a song in the key of E. (As opposed to say, using the E blues scales for songs in G major--which is a related key).

II, V, I (2,5,1) sequence: For example: In the key of G major: Am7 D7 GM7.

Improvise: To spontaneously compose music. To play by ear as opposed to reading. To make up a melody or counter-melody that fits a given underlying chord sequence or

to spontaneously alter the chords of a sequence by substitution in order to enrich the harmonies of a piece of music.

Inverted: An inverted chord is one in which the root note is not the lowest note heard in the chord.

Ionian mode: The first mode of the major scale. The Ionian mode is the major scale.

Jazz: A diverse style of music that grew out of blues music in the Southern US around the beginning of the 20th century. Jazz music is, by its own definition quite hard to pin down, but for me Jazz tunes are usually simple melodies over complex harmonies with (usually syncopated) rhythms. The performance of Jazz normally includes improvised solos or choruses.

Key: A piece of music is generally assigned a key. This defines how notes and chords used in that piece of music relate to each other to create moments of tension and resolution in the music.

Key centre: Point of resolution in the piece of music.

Key note: If you are playing in the key of E major, the key note is E. If in the key of F# minor, the key note is F# and so on.

Key signature: The number and name of sharps (#) or flats (b) that naturally occur in a given key is called its key signature.

Lead Guitar: Refers to the use of a guitar to perform melody lines, fills, and solos in a song.

Legato: In a smooth, even style without any noticeable break between the notes.

Lick: A short musical phrase played by the lead guitarist. Most licks include the use of one or more techniques.

Locrian mode: The seventh mode of the major scale. Formula: b2,b3,b5,b6,b7.

Lydian mode: The fourth mode of the major scale. Formula: #4

Major arpeggio and chord Set: Arpeggios and chord shapes for Major, Major seventh, Dominant seventh, and Major sixth chords.

Major scale: Produced from the chromatic scale by applying the formula: Tone, Tone, Semi-tone, Tone, Tone, Tone, Semi-tone also known as Whole, Whole, Half, Whole, Whole, Whole, Half or W W H W W W H.

Major seventh: I III V VII

Manuscript paper: Prepared sheets of paper with blank five-line staves ruled on them.

Melodic: Of or to do with melody.

Melodic minor scale: Has a bIII on the way up then a bVII bVI and bIII on the way down.

Melody: The horizontal component of music. How we hear sounds relating to each other against time. A melody is also another word for tune or air.

MinMaj7 chord: Minor Major seventh: I bIII V VII. Also called a minor natural seventh.

Minor arpeggio and chord set: Arpeggios for Minor, Minor Major seventh, Minor seventh, and Minor sixth chords.

Minor scale: Scales using the minor III instead of the major III.

Minor thirds: Notes that are a tone and a half apart.

Mixolydian mode: The fifth mode of the major scale. Formula: b7

Mnemonic: A way of remembering something, for example, the names of the open string note names on the guitar E A D G B E. A way of remembering this might be Elephants And Donkeys Grow Big Ears.

Modes: Scales derived from the major scale by starting at each degree of the scale.

Muso: Someone who is more interested in the mechanics of music than in actually playing it.

Names of modes: Modes are named after Greek Islands!

Natural: Naturally occurring in the major scale.

Natural minor scale: The minor scale built directly from the VI note of the relative major. It has a bIII, bVI and bVII.

Non-diatonic: Including notes that don't belong in the key.

Numbers of modes: The number of each mode indicates which degree of the major scale the mode is started on.

Octave fret: The 12th fret is positioned exactly halfway between the nut and the bridge. When strings are stopped at this fret, they vibrate at exactly twice the frequency of the open string thereby producing a note one octave higher.

One finger per fret: Positional playing. For example: If the 1st finger is playing notes at the 3rd fret, the 2nd finger looks after notes at the 4th fret, the 3rd finger at the 5th fret, the 4th finger at the 6th fret.

Passing notes: Notes played briefly and not carrying any rhythmic weight.

Phrygian mode: The third mode of the major scale. Formula: b2,b3,b6,b7.

Picking: Generally refers to striking the string with a plectrum (or flatpick). As opposed to fingerpicking or fingerstyle guitar.

Pivot: An area of a scale from which to start and to which to return. An orientation point.

Point of departure: A basic idea from which to develop improvised phrases.

Positions: Guitar on right thigh or left thigh; neck angled up or horizontal; guitar pointing across student's body or away from it.

Pressurizing body language: Leaning forward in your seat, fidgeting or showing any other signs of impatience towards the student.

Quick-change 12-bar: Typically I, IV, I, I in the first measure; IV, IV, I, I in the second measure; and V, IV, I, V in the third measure.

Reciprocating bends: Backwards and forwards or up and down.

Reciprocating slides: Backwards and forwards or up and down.

Resolved: Phrased in a way that sounds completed.

Response time: How long the student takes to respond to, and successfully carry out, an instruction.

Rhythm chart: Chart showing time signature and chord changes in each bar together with information about the sequencing of a piece of music.

Rhythm guitar: Refers to the use of the guitar to supplement the drums and bass with strummed or arpeggiated chords or riffs to provide a rhythmic base for the singer or soloist to work over.

Rhythmic responsibility: Playing in a way which dictates the tempo.

Riff: Usually a repeated phrase using chiefly chord tones that helps provide the rhythm track of a piece of music.

Rock: Musical genre that grew out of a synthesis chiefly of blues and country music from the 1950s. Rock is generally characterised by a strong backbeat (accent on even beats) and many would argue is also defined as best played loud!

Roman numerals: e.g. I, II, III, IV, V etc.. generally refer to steps or on the major scale. They can also be used to describe the chords built on those steps.

Root note: The name of the note on which the chord is built. The root note of E minor is E. The root note of Eb minor is Eb, the root note of F#min7b9#13sus is F#.

Root note pattern: One of the seven octave patterns derived from the CAGED system.

Rudiments: Basic elements.

Scale: A series of notes differing in pitch according to a specific scheme.

Semibreve: Whole note. One semibreve lasts for four beats.

Semitone (Half-step): Distance between any two adjacent notes on a chromatic scale. Sequence: Never mind what fingers, picking or rhythm their using - just make sure they are playing the right notes in the right order.

Seven diagonals: The basic octave patterns that make up the CAGED system.

Sharp (#) Keys: Key signatures expressed as a certain number of sharps (#s) as opposed to those expressed in flats (bs).

Sharp (#) Signs: The sharp signs are written precisely accross the space or line on which the relevant note would normally be written.

Sharped: Raised by a semi-tone (half-step).

Shredding: Refers to a collection of techniques used on electric guitar to achieve the fastest possible playing. Characteristic mainly of heavy metal and hard rock styles.

Shrunk: The effect of the anomaly on any shape based on a backward diagonal octave pattern is to make it cover less frets.

Snare beat: 2nd and 4th beats of the bar. This is when the drummer is usually hitting the snare drum. Hence the name. Also called the 'backbeat'.

Sound effect: Very short phrases of one or two notes coupled with a bit of technique to produce an effect appropriate to the lyrics being sung.

Staccato: Cut short crisply, detached, separated from the next note.

Standard notation: Music written in the conventional manner, using five-line staves, clefs, key signatures, proper rhythmic notation, words in Italian, etc.

Standard pitch: A = 440Hz.

Standard tuning: E A D G B E.

Staff: Five horizontal lines on which, and between which, notes can be written.

Straight eight feel: (Also known as 4/4 with 8-beat feel) Counted as 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and.

Straight ending: Typically a blues that ends on two bars of the key chord.

Stretched forward diagonal: A forward diagonal pattern that is adjusted to allow for the 2nd string anomaly.

Stretched shape: The effect of the anomaly on patterns based on the forward diagonal octave patterns is to make them cover more frets.

Strumming: Playing chords by striking several strings in a sweeping motion of the hand or pick. Strumming is often the first skill a new guitar player develops.

Technique: A word covering the subject of physical development in guitar playing. Also refers to any of several specific actions of the left and right hands which are used to produce various sounds (eg: hammer-ons, bends, slides, pull-offs, tapping etc..)

Tempo: Speed.

Texas-style blues: A rhythmic style of blues playing that integrates chord and lead work.

Tone (Whole step): Distance between any two alternate notes on a chromatic scale.

Treble-clef: The treble clef was originally an ornate letter G. It fixes the first line up as the line on which the G note is written.

Triad: Three note chord.

Turnaround: The last bar or two of a 12-bar blues designed to lead back into the next verse.

Turnaround ending: Typically ending on a V or V7 chord which leads back to the key chord at the start of the next verse.

Type (a.k.a. Chord type): For example: major, minor, seventh, minor 9th.

Unbends or released bends: The string is bent before it is played. The bend is then released after the note is struck.

Unresolved: Phrased in a way that sounds unfinished or inconclusive.

Unviable: Guitar can't be tuned or has impossibly high action. Also a guitar that is simply the wrong size for the student.

Validating: Praising, commending.

Vanilla sequence: The sequence of simple chords underlying the more complex chords used to jazz up a piece of music. The main structural chords.

Viable: Workable; practical.

Violin vibrato: A subtle vibrato produced by rapidly shaking the hand in the same plane as the string. The string itself is not moved. This is how a violin player sweetens the tone - hence the name.

Whole step (Tone): Distance between any two alternate notes on a chromatic scale.

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