GUITAR WEEKLY

FRETBOARD ESSENTIALS

Know Your Fretboard Notes

Every Note, Every String · Learned In Layers

The whole neck from the open strings to the 15th fret, broken down one string and one shape at a time.

12	6	4
NOTES	STRINGS	WEEKS

Steve Anthes

guitarweekly.com

How to use this booklet

Learn It In Layers

Nobody learns the fretboard by staring at a chart of ninety notes. You learn it in layers — a few notes at a time, each one helping you find the next.

This booklet starts with the big picture so you know where you are heading. Then it strips the neck back to just the natural notes, then just the sharps and flats. After that you take it one string at a time, and finally the **octave shapes** link everything together, so the notes you know on one string show you the notes on all the others.

1 **The alphabet**
Seven letters and the two gaps

2 **The big picture**
All notes, then naturals, then accidentals

3 **String by string**
Low and high E, then A, D, G and B

4 **Octave shapes**
One note, found everywhere

5 **Drills & worksheets**
Practise until it is automatic

Every letter has its own colour



Every C in this booklet is red, every G is teal, and so on. Your eye starts spotting the patterns before you even read the letters — which is exactly how you will eventually see the neck. Sharps and flats are always grey.

> Five minutes a day beats an hour a week
>
> Learning notes is memory work, and memory loves repetition. A short daily session, every day, will get you further than a long one now and then. The 4-week plan at the back is built exactly that way.

Layer 1

The Musical Alphabet

Music uses just seven letters: A B C D E F G. After G it starts again at A.



Most letters are two frets apart, with a note in between. But two pairs are only **one fret apart**, with nothing in between: **B to C** and **E to F**. Remember those two pairs and you can work out any note on the guitar.

> **The one rule to remember**
> There is no note between B and C, and no note between E and F. Everywhere else, the note in between is a sharp or a flat.

Sharps and flats

The notes in the gaps take their name from the notes either side. Go up a fret from C and you get C♯ (C sharp). Go down a fret from D and you get D♭ (D flat). They are the same note — one fret, two names.

C♯	=	D♭
D♯	=	E♭
F♯	=	G♭
G♯	=	A♭
A♯	=	B♭

Sharp (♯) means one fret higher.

Flat (♭) means one fret lower.

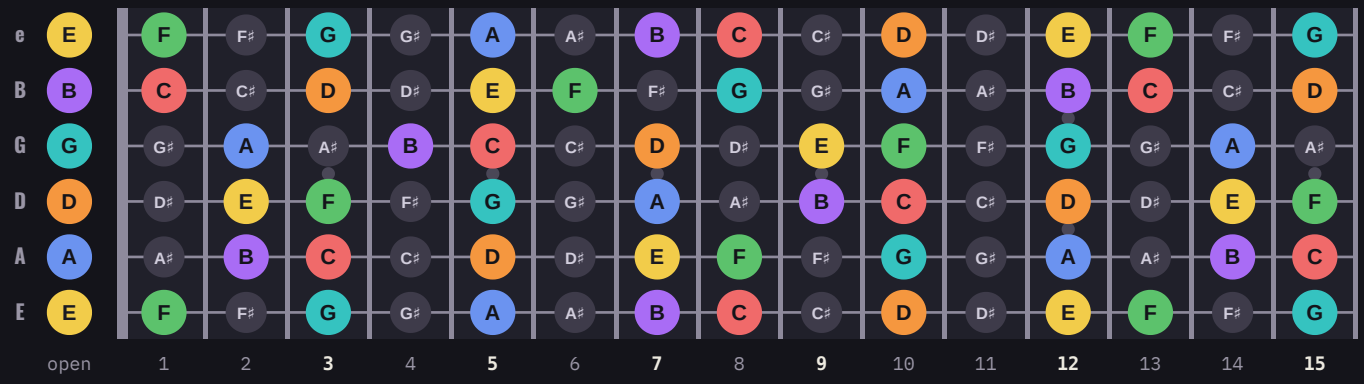
Which name you use depends on the key you are in. For finding notes on the neck, either name is fine.

Twelve notes in total: the seven naturals plus five sharps or flats. After the twelfth fret, the whole set repeats.

Layer 2 · every note

The Whole Neck

Here is everything: every note from the open strings to the 15th fret. Do not try to memorise this page — it is the destination, not the first step.



Natural notes are in colour; sharps are grey (each one also has a flat name). The high E string is on top, just as you see the neck when you look down at your guitar.

Three things to notice already

The 12th fret starts it all again. The notes at the 12th fret are the same as the open strings. Everything from 12 up repeats everything from the nut.

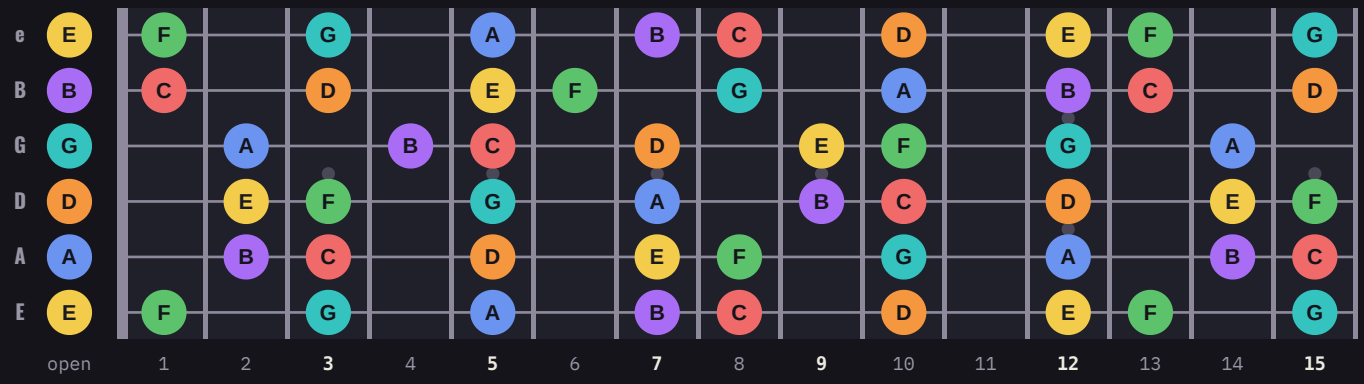
The two E strings are identical. Top and bottom string carry exactly the same notes, two octaves apart. Learn one and you know both.

The colours repeat in patterns. Look at the reds: every C is the same distance from the next one. Those patterns are the octave shapes, and they come later.

Layer 2 · the seven letters

Just The Naturals

Take away every sharp and flat and the neck gets much simpler: just the seven letters, in their colours.



This is the map to learn. Notice the pairs that sit side by side with no gap — B–C and E–F — on every string. Spotting those pairs is often the quickest way to get your bearings.

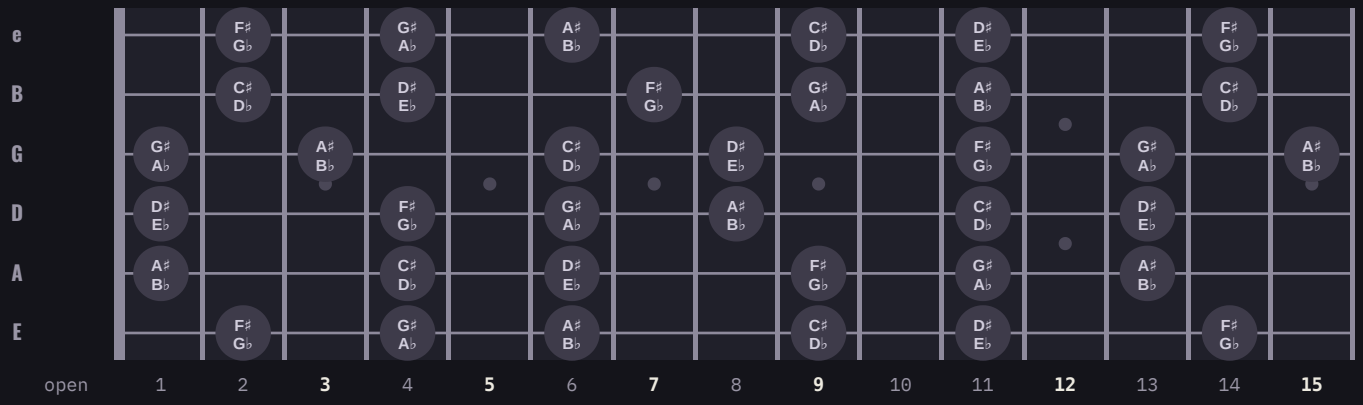
Why naturals first

Once the naturals are solid, you never need to memorise a sharp or flat. Every sharp is one fret above a natural, every flat one fret below. Learn seven letters and you have all twelve notes.

Layer 2 · sharps and flats

Just The Accidentals

The sharps and flats on their own. Each one has two names: the sharp of the note below, or the flat of the note above.



Look where they live: in the gaps between natural notes. Wherever two naturals are two frets apart, an accidental sits between them. Wherever they are one fret apart — B–C, E–F — there is nothing.

Find them by rule, not memory

Need an F♯? Find F, go up one fret. Need a B♭? Find B, go down one fret. That is the whole method — which is why the rest of this booklet concentrates on the naturals.

Before you start

Landmarks

A few fixed points make every other note easy to find. Learn these first.

The open strings

E A D G B e

Low to high: **E A D G B E**. A memory line if you need one — *Eddie Ate Dynamite, Good Bye Eddie*.

The dots

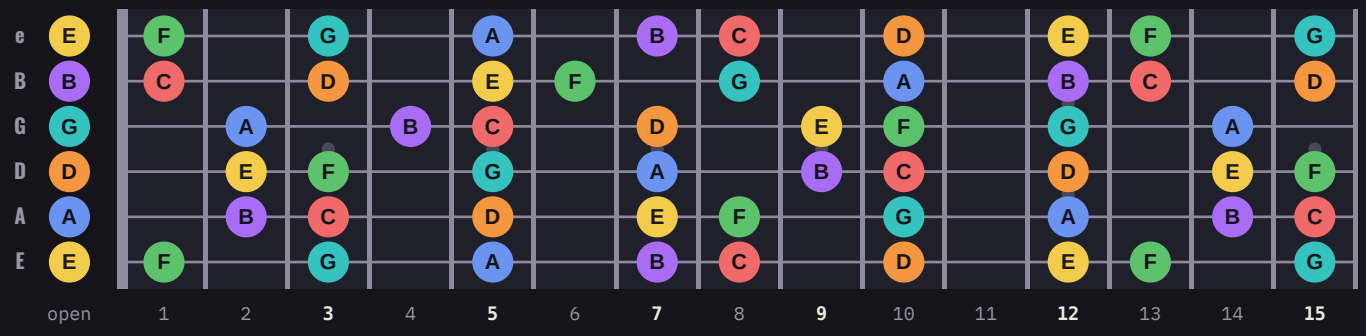
The inlay dots sit at frets 3, 5, 7, 9, 12 and 15 — with a double dot at 12. They are your signposts. Learn the notes that fall on the dots first, and every other note is at most a fret or two from a note you know.

The 12th fret

The 12th fret is the open strings again, one octave higher: E A D G B E. Anything you know near the nut, you know again from the 12th fret up.

The 5th-fret rule

The 5th fret of any string is the same note as the next string open — the same trick you use to tune. The low E at fret 5 is A; the A string at fret 5 is D. The one exception is the G string, where it is the **4th** fret that gives you B.



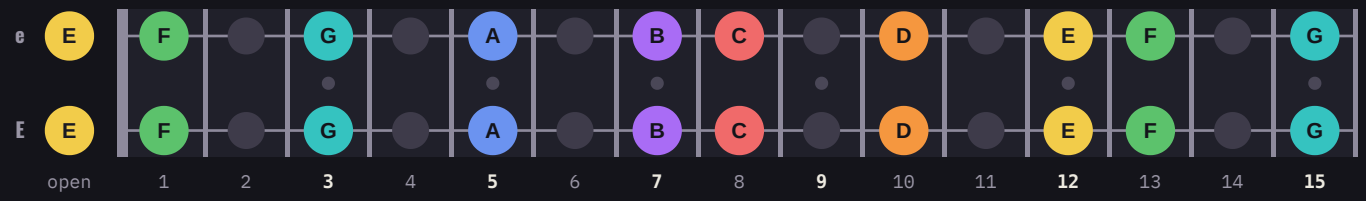
Look down the 5th fret column: A, D, G, C, E, A — each the open note of the string above it, except the C on the G string. The B is at the 4th fret.

String by string · 1

The Two E Strings

Start with the two E strings — because they are the same string. Learn the low E and you already know the high E, two octaves up.

The low E string is where the root of every E-shape bar chord lives, so it is the most useful string to learn first. Say each note as you play it.



The natural notes on this string

E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
open	1	3	5	7	8	10	12	13	15

Use the dots

On both E strings the first three dots spell **G, A, B** (frets 3, 5, 7). One fret past the B is **C** at the 8th fret — no gap, because B to C is a half step. Then **D** at 10 and **E** again at 12.

Quick check

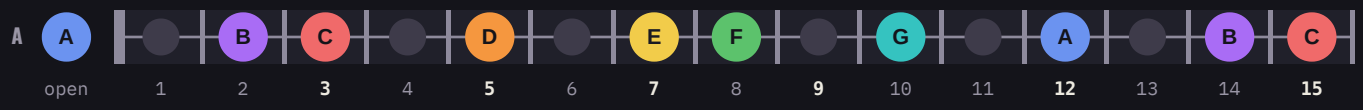
Cover the diagrams above. Name the note at each fret on the low E string and write it in the box — then uncover and check.

fret 1	fret 3	fret 5	fret 7	fret 8	fret 10	fret 12	fret 13	fret 15

String by string · 2

The A String

The A string carries the root of every A-shape bar chord. Learn it together with the low E and you can name almost any bar chord on sight.



The natural notes on this string

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
open	2	3	5	7	8	10	12	14	15

Use the dots

On the A string the dots spell **C**, **D**, **E** at frets 3, 5 and 7. One fret past the E is **F** at the 8th fret (E to F, no gap). Then **G** at 10 and **A** again at 12.

Quick check

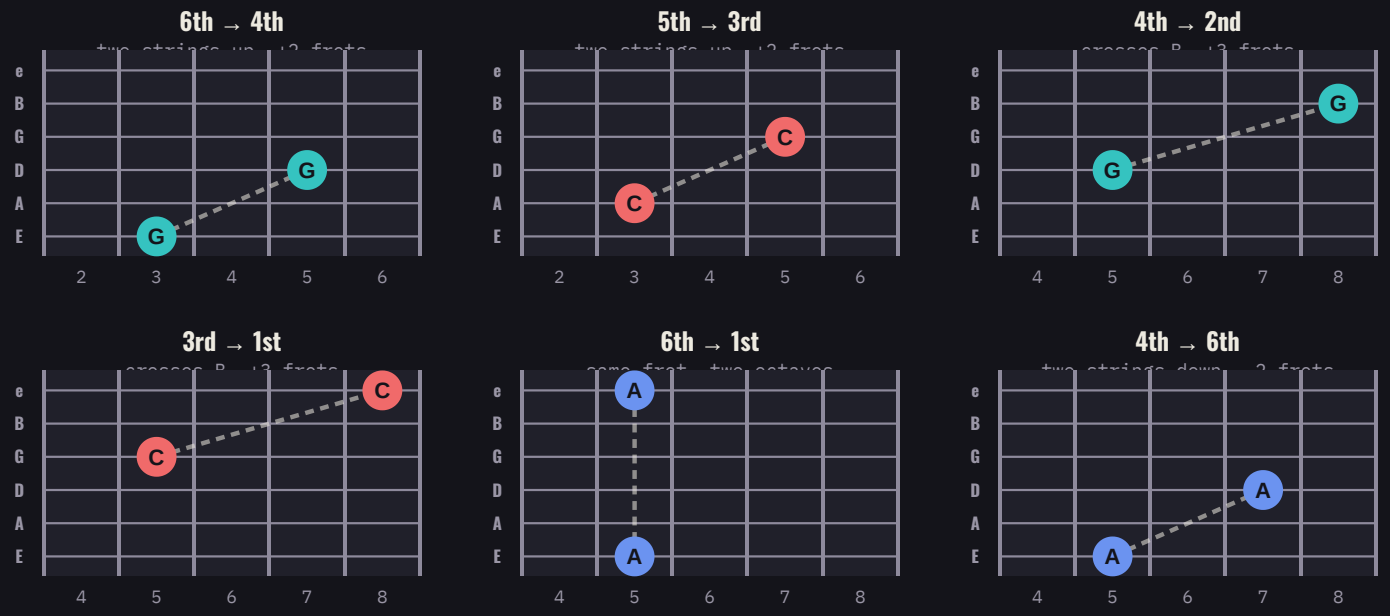
Cover the diagrams above. Name the note at each fret on the A string and write it in the box — then uncover and check.

fret 2	fret 3	fret 5	fret 7	fret 8	fret 10	fret 12	fret 14	fret 15

The key that unlocks the rest

The Octave Shapes

An octave is the same note, higher or lower. On the guitar, octaves always sit in the same few shapes — and those shapes carry every note you know onto every other string.



Skip a string, up two frets. From the low E to the D string, or from the A string to the G string.

Skip a string, up three frets — whenever the shape crosses from the G string to the B string. That pair is tuned closer together, so you need one extra fret.

Same fret, outer strings. The low E and high E are always the same note.

Why this matters so much

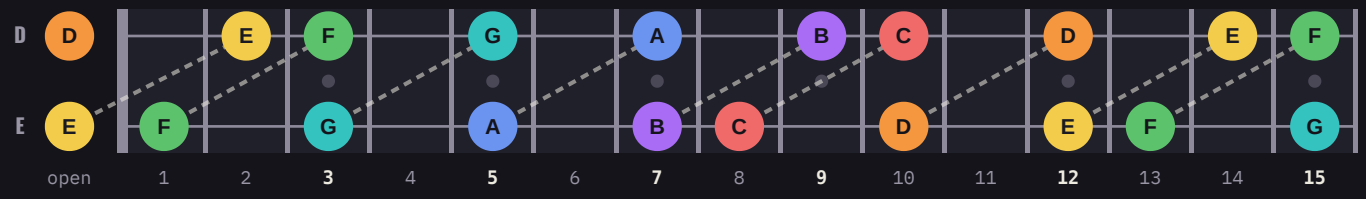
You have already learned the low E and A strings. Using these shapes, every note on those two strings shows you a note on the D, G, B and high E strings. The next three pages do exactly that.

String by string · 3

The D String

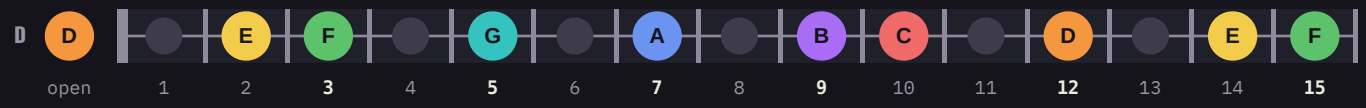
You already know the D string. Every note on it is an octave above the low E, two frets higher.

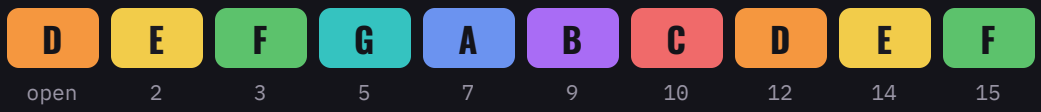
From the low E string



Every dashed line is one octave shape: the same note, 2 frets up and two strings higher. Learn the shape once and the whole string follows.

The D string on its own





Quick check

Cover the diagrams above. Name the note at each fret on the D string and write it in the box — then uncover and check.

fret 2	fret 3	fret 5	fret 7	fret 9	fret 10	fret 12	fret 14	fret 15

String by string · 4

The G String

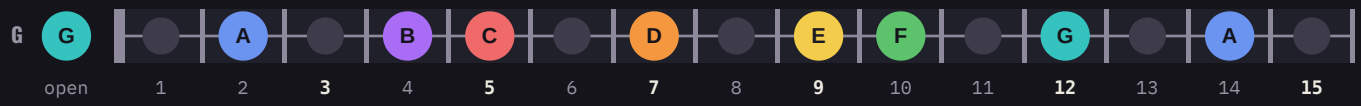
The G string comes from the A string the same way: skip a string, up two frets.

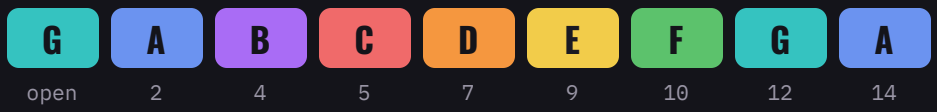
From the A string



Every dashed line is one octave shape: the same note, 2 frets up and two strings higher. Learn the shape once and the whole string follows.

The G string on its own





Quick check

Cover the diagrams above. Name the note at each fret on the G string and write it in the box — then uncover and check.

fret 2	fret 4	fret 5	fret 7	fret 9	fret 10	fret 12	fret 14

String by string · 5

The B String

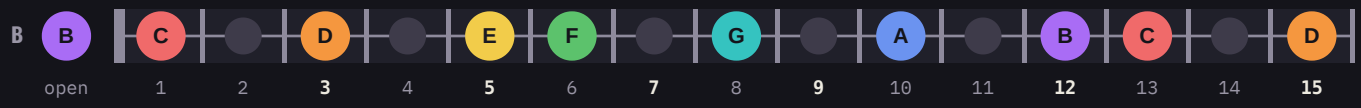
The B string comes from the D string — but this shape crosses from G to B, so it is three frets up, not two.

From the D string



Every dashed line is one octave shape: the same note, 3 frets up and two strings higher. Learn the shape once and the whole string follows.

The B string on its own



B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D
open	1	3	5	6	8	10	12	13	15

Quick check

Cover the diagrams above. Name the note at each fret on the B string and write it in the box — then uncover and check.

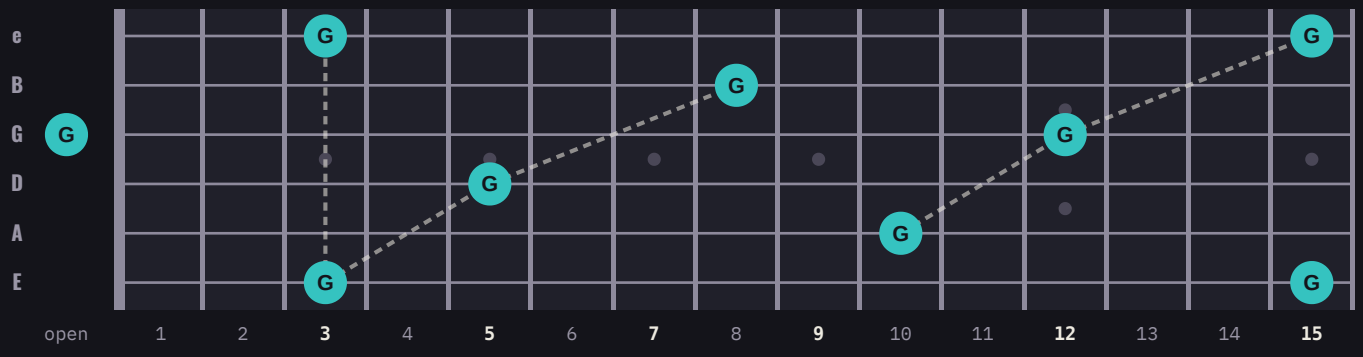
fret 1	fret 3	fret 5	fret 6	fret 8	fret 10	fret 12	fret 13	fret 15

One note, found everywhere

The Octave System In Action

Pick any note on the low E or A string. The octave shapes will show you every other place it lives on the neck.

Every G, from one starting point



Low E 3 → D 5 → B 8. A 10 → G 12 → high E 15. And low E 3 is the same note as high E 3. Two starting notes, five shapes, every G on the neck.

The octave chart

From	To	Move	Why	Example
Low E	D	+2 frets	skip one string, up	G: low E 3 → D 5
A	G	+2 frets	skip one string, up	G: A 10 → G 12
D	B	+3 frets	crosses G–B, so one extra	G: D 5 → B 8
G	High E	+3 frets	crosses G–B, so one extra	G: G 12 → high E 15
Low E	High E	same fret	two octaves apart	G: low E 3 = high E 3
D	Low E	−2 frets	skip one string, down	G: D 5 → low E 3
G	A	−2 frets	skip one string, down	G: G 12 → A 10
B	D	−3 frets	crosses G–B, down	G: B 8 → D 5
High E	G	−3 frets	crosses G–B, down	G: high E 15 → G 12
Any string	Same string	+12 frets	the 12th fret repeats	G: low E 3 → low E 15
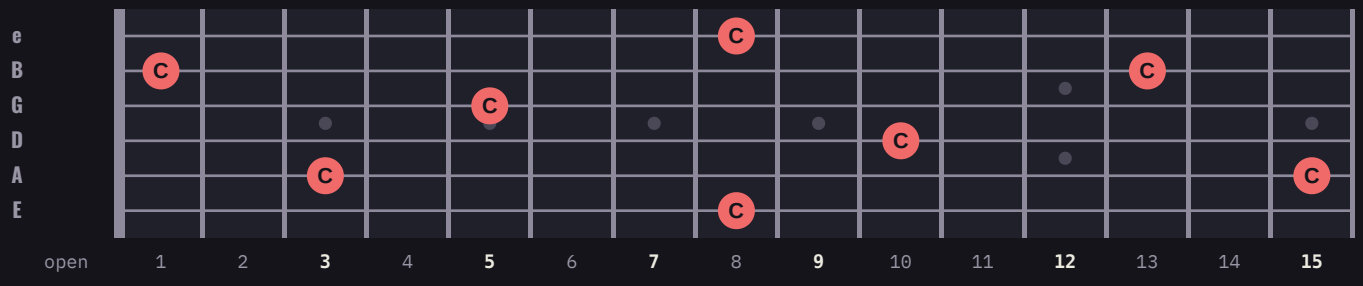
The only rule to remember: skipping a string is two frets — unless you cross between the G and B strings, when it is three.

All seven naturals · C to F

One Note Everywhere

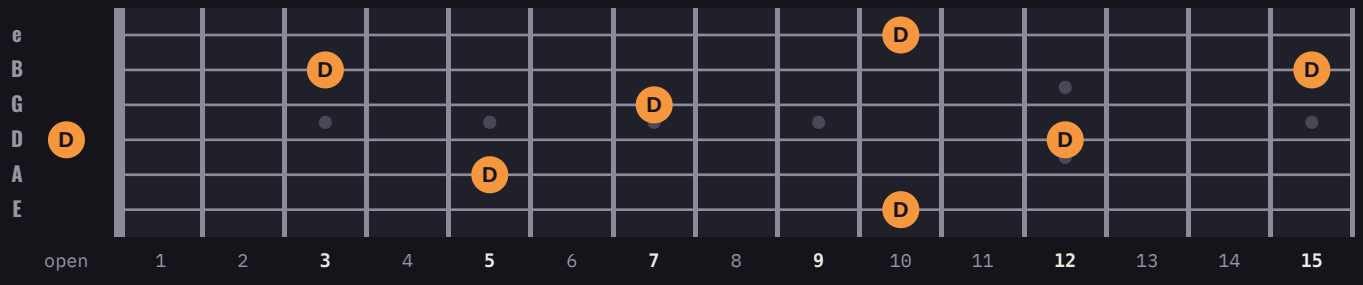
Each natural note on its own, across the whole neck. Learn one a day: find every place it lives, play them all, and say the name each time.

Every C
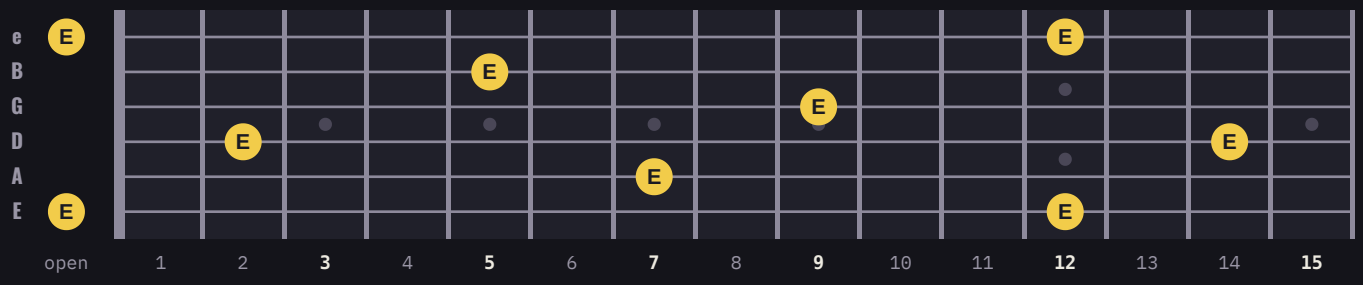


Low E 8 A 3, 15 D 10 G 5 B 1, 13 High E 8

Every D



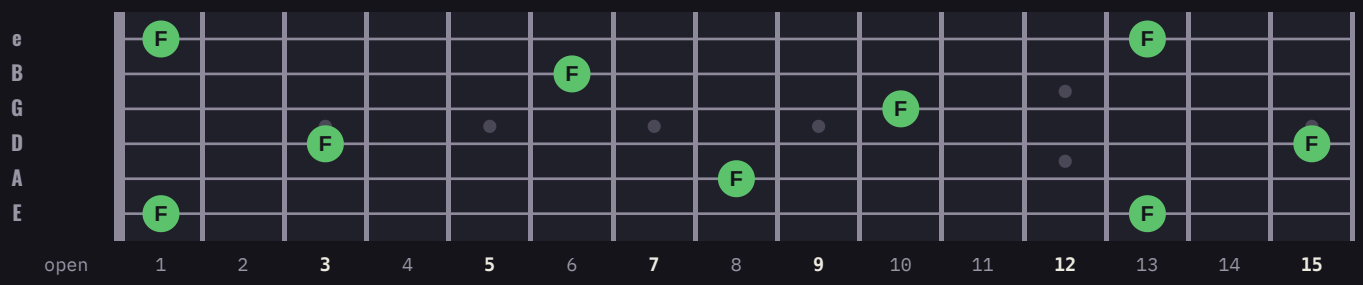
Low E 10 A 5 D open, 12 G 7 B 3, 15 High E 10

Every E



Low E open, 12 A 7 D 2, 14 G 9 B 5 High E open, 12

Every F
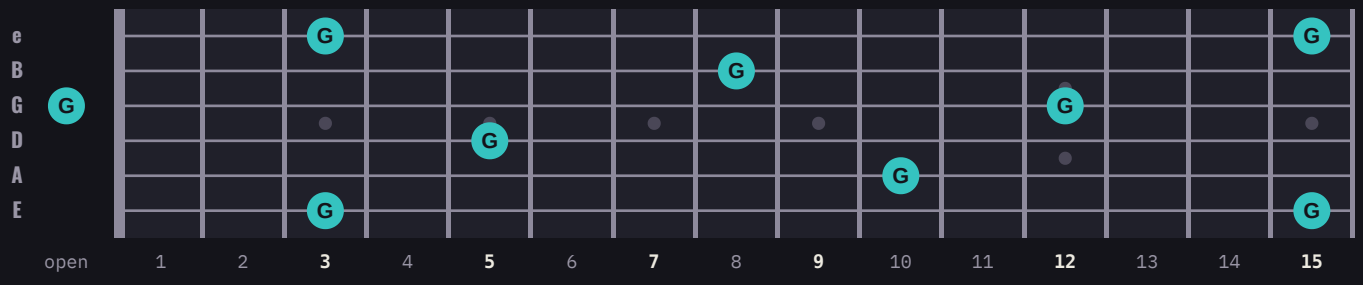


Low E 1, 13 A 8 D 3, 15 G 10 B 6 High E 1, 13

All seven naturals · G to B
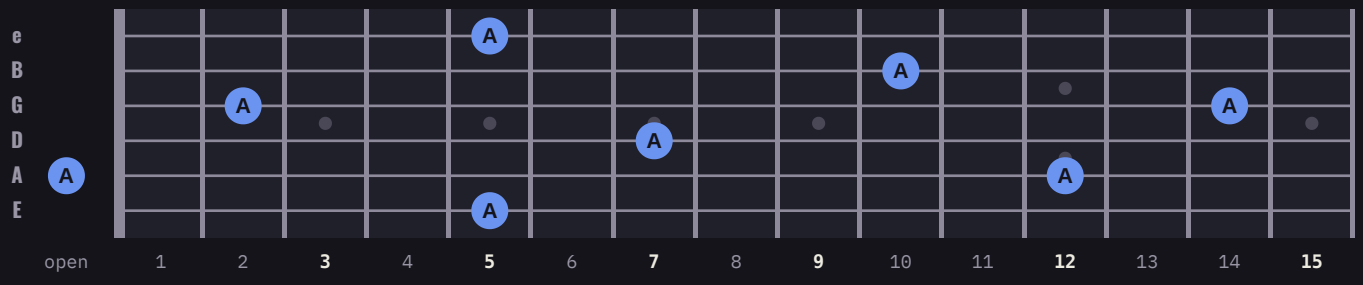
One Note Everywhere

Every G



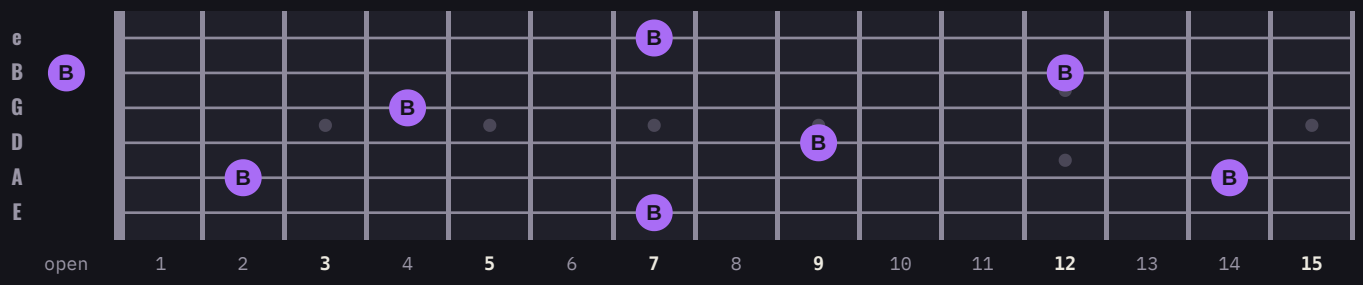
Low E 3, 15 A 10 D 5 G open, 12 B 8 High E 3, 15

Every A



Low E 5 A open, 12 D 7 G 2, 14 B 10 High E 5

Every B



Low E 7 A 2, 14 D 9 G 4 B open, 12 High E 7

One note a day

Seven days, seven notes. By the end of the week you have found every natural note on the neck at least once — and the octave shapes will have started to feel automatic. Look at how each note's positions are linked by the same shapes every time.

Make it automatic

Drills

Knowing where a note is and finding it instantly are two different things. These drills close the gap.

1

Note of the day. Pick one letter. Find every one on the neck, low to high, saying the name and the string as you go.

2

String walk. Play every natural note on one string from open to the 12th fret, out loud. Then come back down.

3

Say it, then play it. Name a note and a string first, then put your finger on it. Naming before playing is what builds real recall.

4

Octave hop. Find a note on the low E, then hop it through every octave shape until you run out of strings.

5

Random note, one minute. Shuffle the seven letters, call one out, find it on the low E and A strings. How many in sixty seconds?

6

Fourths across the neck. At one fret, read the notes straight across the strings. Each string is a fourth higher — except the G-to-B jump.

> Track your speed
>
> Time the random-note drill once a week and write the score in the tracker. Watching the number fall is the best motivation there is.

Use it in your playing

Every time you play a bar chord, name its root. Every time you play a scale, name the first note. Within a few weeks you will notice you are reading the neck without trying.

Five minutes a day

The 4-Week Plan

Week 1	The alphabet, the landmarks, and both E strings. One note of the day.
Week 2	The A string. Low E and A together until any bar-chord root is instant.
Week 3	The octave shapes. D, G, B and high E found from the strings you know.
Week 4	Whole neck. One note everywhere, random-note drill, and the worksheets.

Progress tracker

Tick a box each week you can do the item quickly and without guessing.

Skill	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4
Musical alphabet & the two half steps				
Open strings & dot notes				
Low & high E strings				
A string				
Octave shapes				
D string				
G string				
B string				
Every natural note				
Sharps & flats by rule				

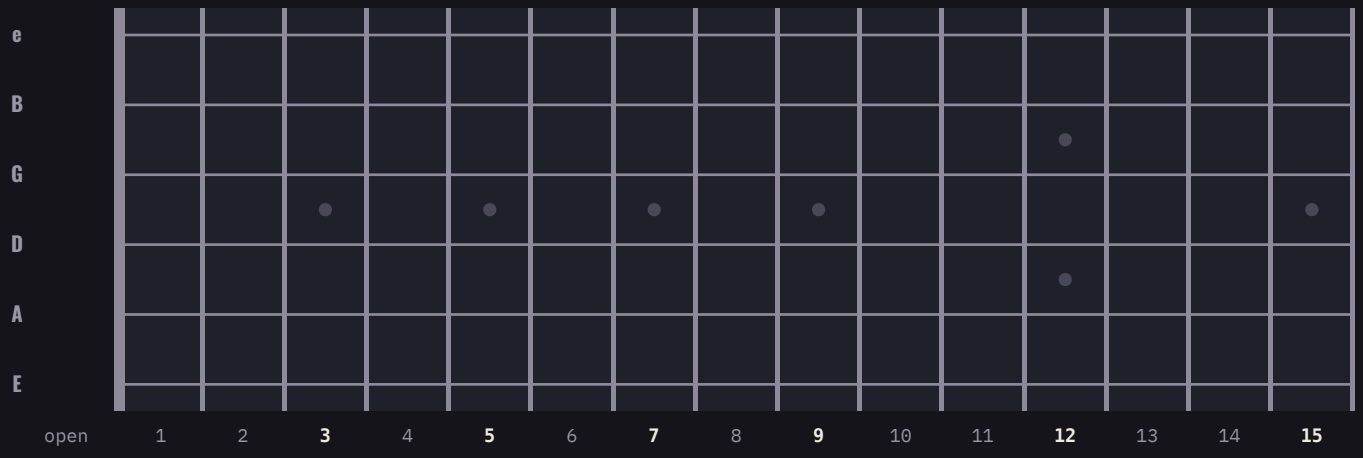
Random-note drill scores

	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4
Notes found in 60 seconds				

Worksheet 1

Worksheet · The Whole Neck

Write every natural note on the neck, from the open strings to the 15th fret. Start with the landmarks, then fill in the rest.

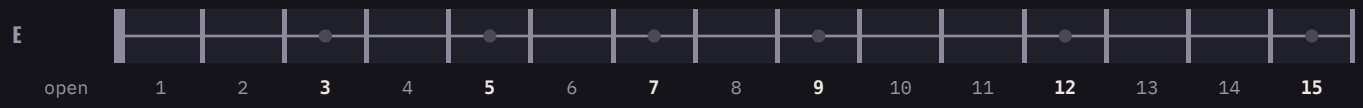


Name _____ Date _____ Time taken _____

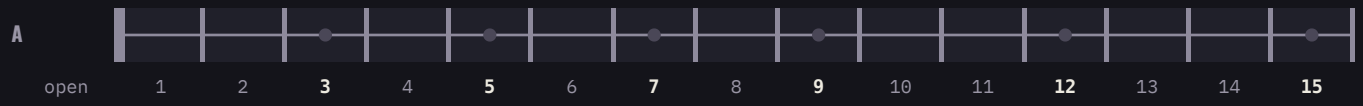
Worksheet · One String At A Time

Write the natural notes along each string, from open to the 15th fret. The high E string is the same as the low E, so it is not repeated here.

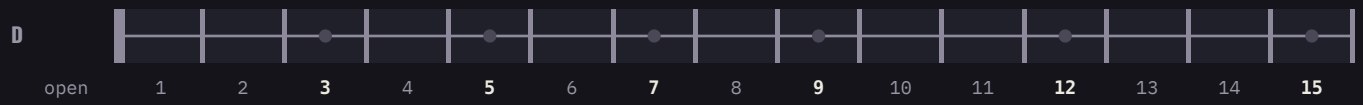
low E string



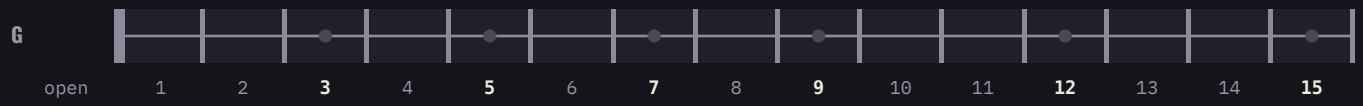
A string



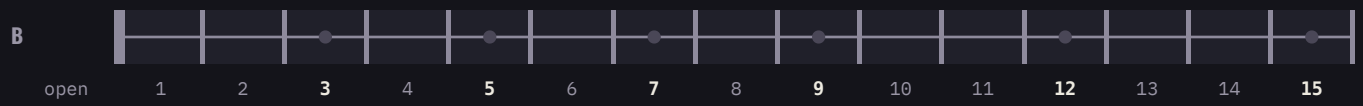
D string



G string
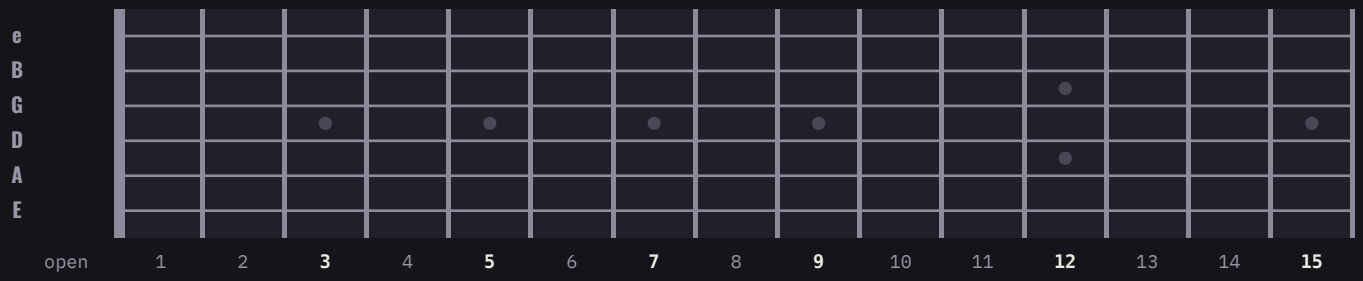


B string
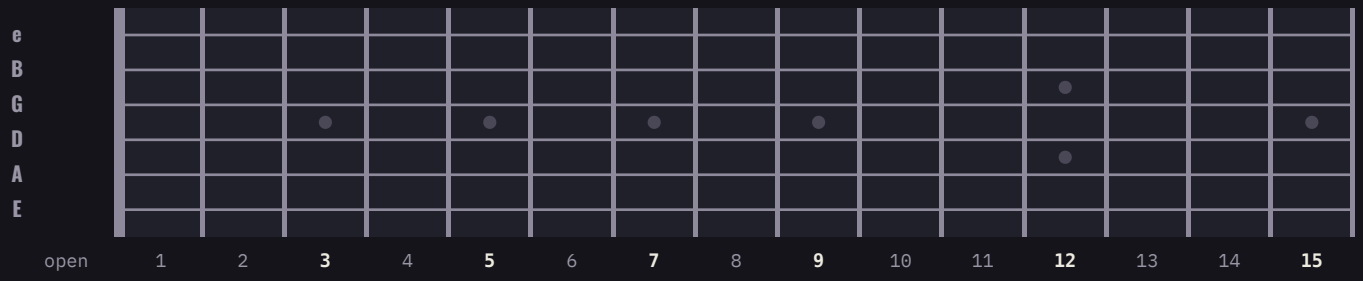


Worksheet · One Note Everywhere

Choose a letter, write it in the title, then mark every place it appears. Use the octave shapes to check yourself. Photocopy this page for the other letters.
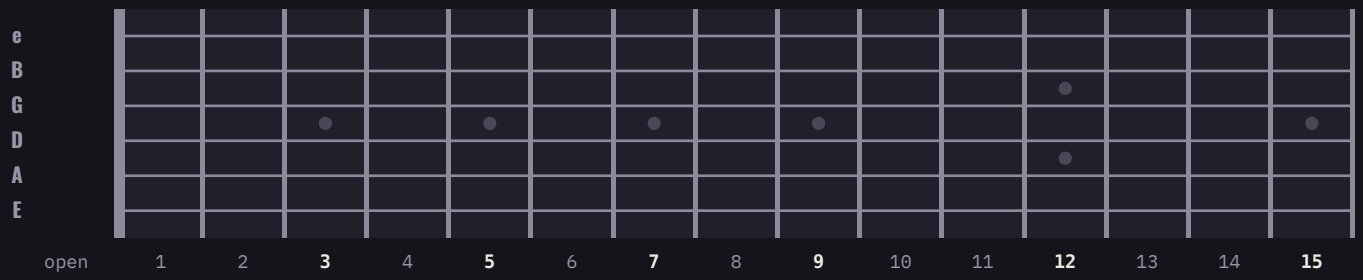
Find every ____
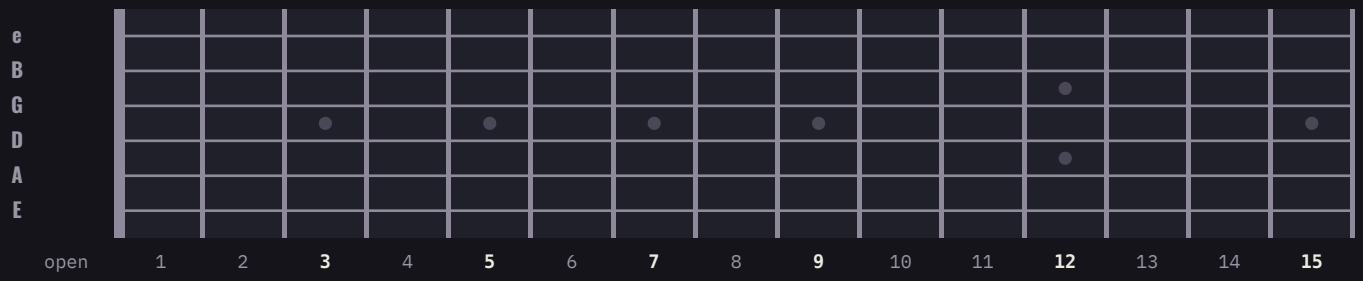


Find every ____



Find every ____



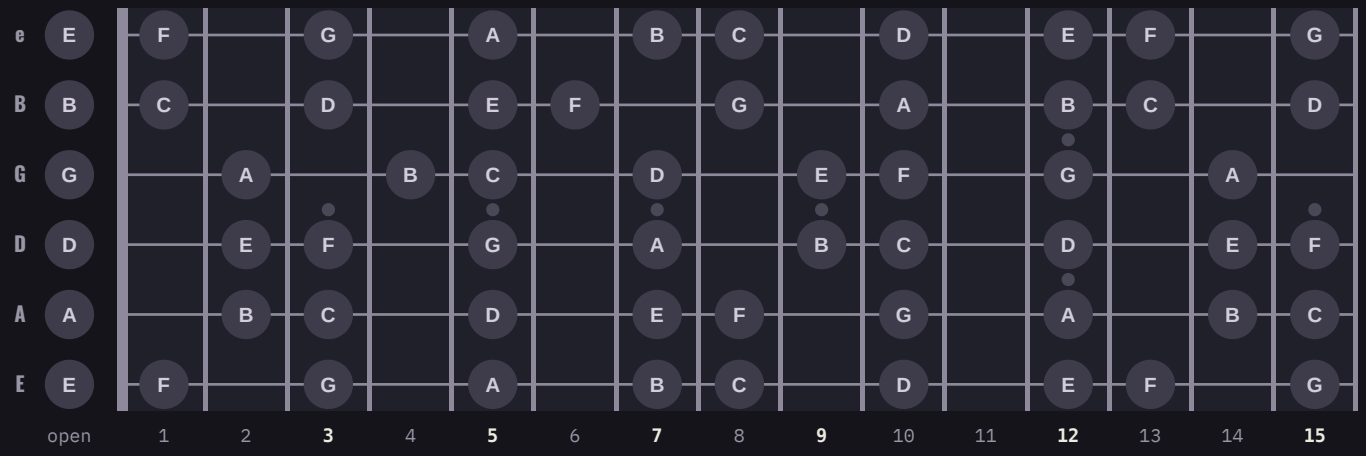
Find every ____



Worksheet 4

Worksheet · Sharps And Flats

The natural notes are filled in for you. Write a sharp or flat name in every gap.

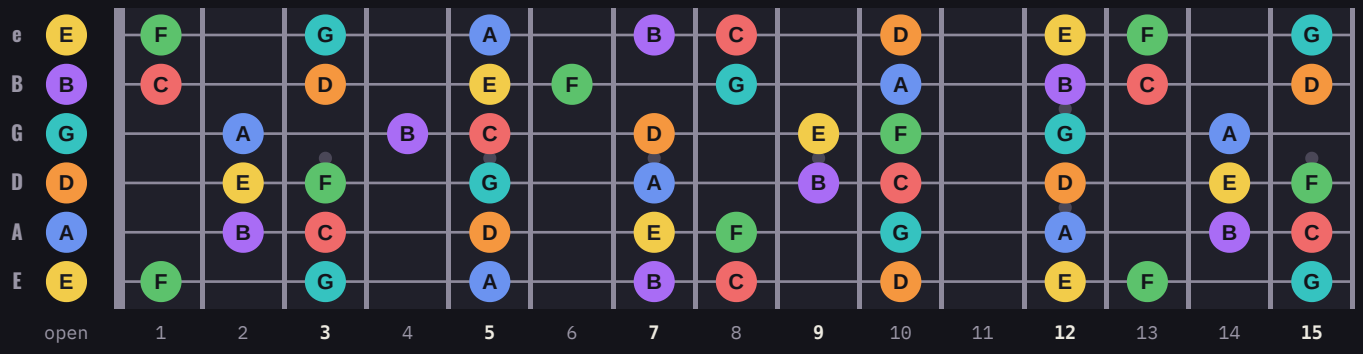


Name _____ Date _____ Time taken _____
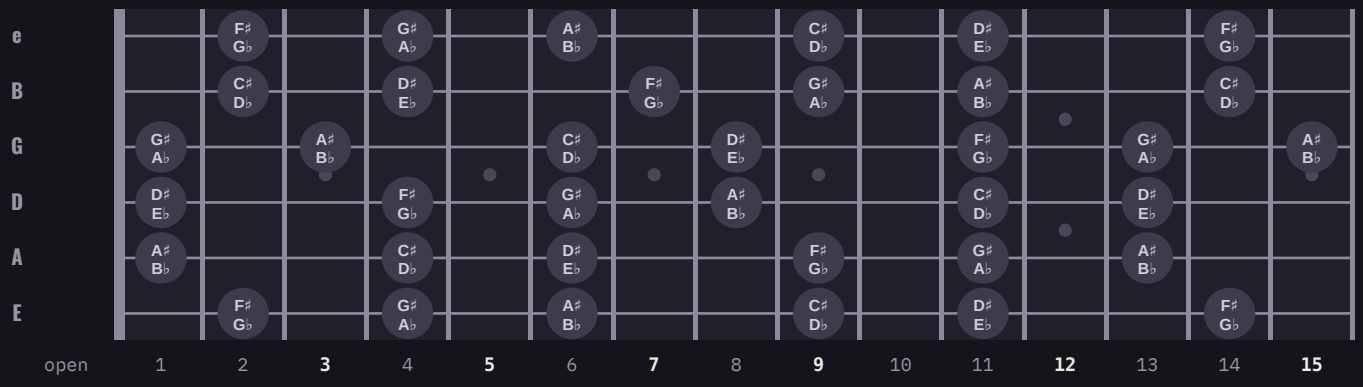
Check your worksheets

Answer Key

Natural notes — worksheets 1, 2 and 3



Sharps and flats — worksheet 4



KEEP GOING

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