

Tuning.

Nothing sounds worse than a guitar out of tune with itself or with other instruments.

It is a great idea to practice tuning so that you can quickly and accurately tune your guitar, whether it is with itself or to other instruments. This way you will always be playing an in tune guitar for yourself and in a band situation.

When a string is perfectly in tune with another string or instrument it should sound as though only one note is being played. The only difference will be an increase in the volume. Aim for this perfection in your tuning.

The "secret" to tuning is to LISTEN. This seems obvious but you have got to listen hard. What you should be listening to is the PITCH of the notes. Pitch means how high or low a note sounds. To help you focus your listening to the pitch you should hum or sing the notes. Hum the note that is your guide note and then hum your string. Listen to your hum - did you go higher or lower when you hummed your string?

Be careful of not listening to the colour of the notes. For example if you are tuning to a trumpet then the colour of the trumpet is brighter and thinner than your guitar. So by only listening to the colour it appears that the trumpet sounds 'higher', but when you concentrate on the pitch you will get the correct tuning. This problem of instrument colour will also happen between acoustic and electric guitars, steel string and nylon string guitars.

It will even happen when you are tuning on your own guitar and you compare a wound string with a plain string. So you must be careful not to let yourself listen to the colour rather than pitch. Remember to hum or sing to focus your listening. Your voice

will act as a common colour and make listening easier.

Here is a drill to help you hear higher and lower pitches. The drill is done along the same string. Choose a string where the pitches are comfortable for you to hum or sing. LISTEN to the way the pitch changes.

To really focus your listening try singing "*Jingle Bells Jingle Bells*" for each note. This part of the song is all on the same note.

Play these frets on your chosen string -
Pitches going higher - 5 5 6 6 7 7 8 8 .
Pitches going lower - 5 5 4 4 3 3 2 2 .

Your string = _____

When listening, play the guide note a few times to let the pitch sink in and then play the string your checking a few times to let the pitch sink in. Remember to hum or sing the pitches - this will focus your listening.

When you have to change your string you must keep listening. Make sure to play the string so can hear it as you change it. You can only gauge the change of tuning by listening to the pitch of the string and not by how far you turn the tuning peg. Bring the string into tune with a smooth motion towards the correct pitch.

Make sure you have hold the right tuning peg before you start turning.

With some of the tuning methods you will lose one or both of your tuning notes when you move your chord hand to the tuning peg. There are two ways to get around this problem.

Firstly you can tune "overhanded". Use your picking hand to change the tuning peg while

leaving your chord hand on the guitar. Listen to the string as you change it - keep comparing it to the guide note and in one smooth move you should have the string almost in tune.

The second solution is to remember the pitch of

the guide note in your head and tune the new string to the remembered pitch. Keep humming or singing the pitch of the in-tune string and change the out of tune string. Remember to listen to the pitch of the string you're changing. Keep comparing it to the pitch you've remembered. Move the out of tune string in a smooth action towards the correct pitch.

When your string is close to being in tune with the guide note you will hear the two notes start to "beat". Beating means you will hear a "wavy" and "wooh-wooh" sound. Beating will only happen between two pitches and not just one. Beating also only happens when the two notes are very close in pitch - when there is less than a semitone or 1 fret difference. Hearing beating gives you the clue that you are close to being in tune. You still have to decide if your string is flat or sharp. The speed of the beating will give you a clue to how far flat or sharp you are. The faster the beating the further apart the two notes are. As you bring your string into tune the beating will slow down. When your string is in tune the beating will stop, and it will sound as though only one note is being played.

Another handy hint is to slightly stretch the strings to make sure they are holding their pitch and that there is no slackness in the windings on the tuning peg. Once you get the string in tune hook your finger under it and pull the string lightly. Then check the tuning again.

Think of these following steps. **ALL THE TIME LISTENING HARD!** :

(a) Play a guide note. Maybe another instrument or a string on your guitar.

(b) Comparing. Is your string in tune or out of tune? If it's out of tune is it flat or sharp?

(c) Adjusting (if necessary). When adjusting be sure to play the string so you can hear it change, and then come into tune. Adjust the tuning peg smoothly, not in jerky movements. Keep listening.