

From Bass to Uke

How to Turn Bass Tabs into Ukulele Tabs



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Video Tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLeiflO5Pgk>

The tuning of a bass guitar, low to high

E
A
D
G

The tuning of an Ukulele, low to high

G
C
E
A

*Technically this might not be low to high because your G string is a Reentrant tuning

Technique Number 1 - The E & A rule

♩ = 110

The image shows a musical score for a riff. The top staff is a bass line in 4/4 time, starting with a tempo marking of ♩ = 110. The riff is divided into two halves. The first half is for bass guitar, with fret numbers 5-3-0-0-0-0-0-0-3-0-5-5-3-0. The second half is for ukulele, with fret numbers 0-0-0-0-0-0-3-0-5-5-3-0. Chords Em and Am are indicated above the staff. The ukulele part is played on the E and A strings.

- The first half is the bass the second half is ukulele
- Any time the riff is played only on the E and the A string you can simply play it the exact same on the E and the A string of the Ukulele. This is the easiest technique for sure and the good news is a lot of bass lines are only played on these two strings they are the lowest.

SONG USED: Another One Bites the Dust

ARTIST: Queen

BMP: 110

KEY: Em

Technique Number 2 - Adding the D string

The image shows two musical staves for bass guitar. The left staff is in G major and features a sequence of chords: G (measures 6-7), C (measure 7), D (measure 7), and C (measure 8). The tempo is marked as 82 BPM. The right staff is in G major and features a sequence of chords: G (measures 8-9), C (measure 9), D (measure 9), and C (measure 10). The tempo is also marked as 82 BPM. Both staves include a bass line with notes and a fretboard diagram below it showing fingerings for the strings.

- Here we have two notes on the D string of the bass, the rest is on the E and the A, making most of it easy but those two other notes need some kind of technique.
- The D note is the 5th fret of the A string, so when you see 0 on the D string you simply play the 5th fret of the A string
- You also treat that note as the open D, so when you see 2nd fret D string you count up two more frets from the D note, in this case it would be the 7th fret of the A string.

SONG USED: The Joker

ARTIST: Steve Miller Band

BPM: 82

ORIGINAL KEY: F

KEY USED: G

Technique 3 - Finding the notes and using fretboard knowledge

The image shows two musical staves for bass guitar. The left staff is in D minor and features a sequence of notes: G (10), A (11), Bb (11), C (11), D (11), Eb (12), F (12), G (12). The tempo is marked as 82 BPM. The right staff is in D minor and features a sequence of notes: G (12), A (13), Bb (13), C (13), D (13), Eb (14), F (14), G (14). The tempo is also marked as 82 BPM. Both staves include a bass line with notes and a fretboard diagram below it showing fingerings for the strings.

- The first note is on the 5th fret of the A string, we have an A string so we can count to the 5th fret to know the note.
 - o A -> Bb -> B -> C -> Db -> D
 - o Remember you start on A, so A is zero and Bb is 1
- For the 12th you know the note because it is on the A string, it is an A note, you can also see that it is 7 frets above the D note (12-5=7)
- Knowing that our D note is the lowest note it is best to play the 2nd fret of the C string instead of the 5th. If the note is the lowest in the riff try and find the lowest possible note, in this case the 2nd fret of the C string and not the 5th fret of the A string
- If you have a low G you have 5 more notes in pitch, B to G
- The 10 is on the G string, we have a G string so you can count it out on our G string
 - o A faster way though is to say that 12 is an octave, also a G string, so the 10th fret is just two frets below G
 - o G -> Gb -> F
- We are only missing one note, the 12th fret of the D string, which is a D note, again the octave helps us.

- After finding the F note on the 8th fret of the A string, we could play the D note on the 5th fret, but to keep the shape similar to the original riff we play the 10th fret of the E string instead.
- How did we know it was the 10th fret? Using our octaves again, we know the 12th fret is an E note, making 11 Eb and 10 D

SONG USED: Come Together

ARTIST: The Beatles

BMP: 83

KEY: Dm

Technique 4 - Transposing phrases

The image shows a musical score for the bass line of 'Come Together'. It is divided into two sections: 'Intro Lick' and 'Verse'. The 'Intro Lick' starts at measure 14 and consists of a sequence of notes on the A and B strings. The 'Verse' starts at measure 15 and is marked with chords C, G, D, A, and E. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a bass clef. Below the staff are guitar tabs with fret numbers and techniques like 'H' (hammer-on) and '7-9' (bend).

The entire verse is played just on the E and the A, so we use technique 1

This image shows the same musical notation as above, but with the verse part transposed to be played on the E and A strings. The notes are now on the A and B strings, and the guitar tabs reflect this change, with fret numbers adjusted accordingly. The 'Intro Lick' is also shown in this transposed context.

- It is just the little intro lick that needs to be transposed
- We can see that it is significantly higher in pitch than the rest of the bass line, but because we are already playing on the two highest strings we won't be able to play that lick that high.
- So we are going to find the notes and transpose the lick, to actually play it lower in pitch than the verse
- We know using the G string that the 7th fret is a D note
 - With the D string you can either play it on the C string and add two to each tab, so it would 9h11
 - Or if you play it on the E string you can subtract two, making it 5h7
- We go with the E string method, finding the D note on the A string, which is 5th fret, and we get the intro lick.

This image shows the final part of the musical notation, focusing on the transposed intro lick. It shows measures 18 and 19. The notes are on the A and B strings, and the guitar tabs show the fret numbers and techniques for this section.

SONG USED: Hey Joe

ARTIST: Jimi Hendrix

BMP: 82

KEY: E



Ten Thumbs