

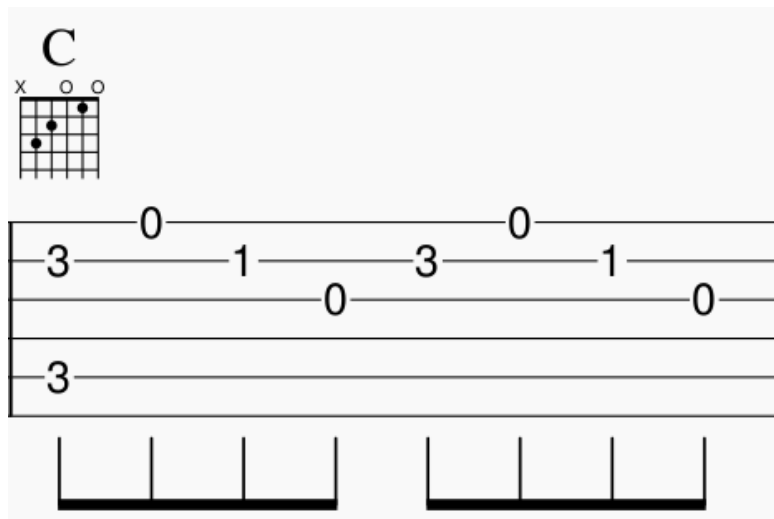
## Jawmunji's Tabs: Tips and Tricks

Hey there and welcome to tips and tricks on how to read and play my fingerstyle guitar tabs! I am JAW from <https://jawmunji.com> head on over there to find yourself some tabs. Let's get started.

This is an example of a simple bar. Where it makes sense to I will put in the chord name and a chord diagram. Like all tab notation the six lines represent the six strings, put your fingers on the fret number indicated and pluck!

In this simple example you will pluck the 5<sup>th</sup> string 3<sup>rd</sup> fret C at the same time as the 2<sup>nd</sup> string 3<sup>rd</sup> fret D, then you will play an open 1<sup>st</sup> string E, and...well you get the idea. Most of the time you will play the bottom 3 low strings with your right thumb, and the top 3 high strings with your right fingers but that's not a rule, do what works best for you.

Rhythm is actually indicated with these tabs you can see it underneath the notes, in this case all the notes here are 1/8 notes.



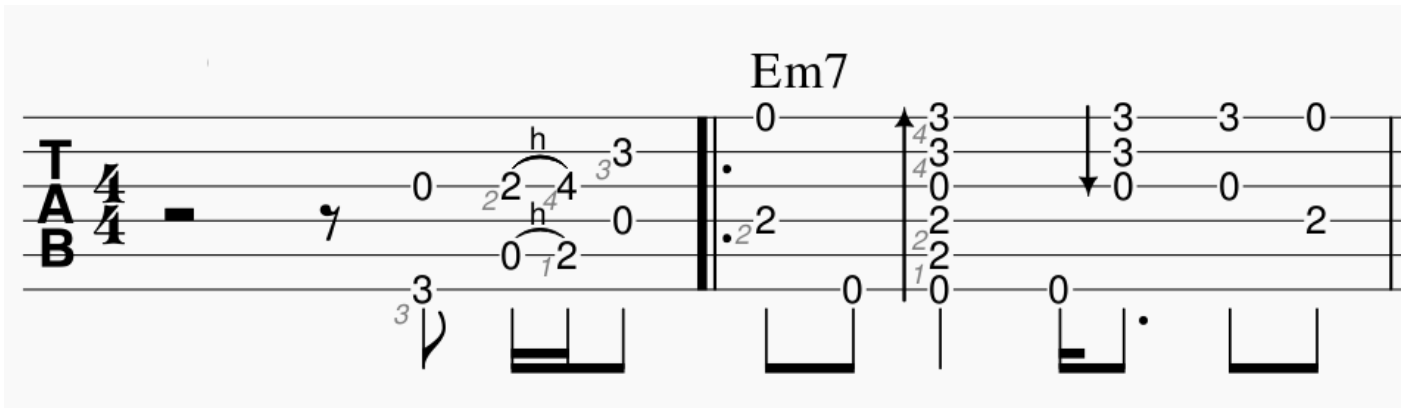
The following phrase is a bit more complicated and has a few additional features. The small grey numbers are left hand fingering suggestions. You don't have to use them, these are how I approach it and might not work best for everyone. For open positions the general rule of first finger first fret, second finger second, and so on, is a good starting point. The chord indicated, using your favourite chord fingering, is also a good starting point. Only when it starts to get a bit strange will I make fingering suggestions.

Some technique are also indicated here, small "h" for hammer on, small "p" for pull off.

Arrows here indicate a strummed arpeggio. When notes are vertical with no arrow, they are plucked together at the same time. But an arrow up means strum from the low note to the high note and an arrow down means strum from high note to the low note. The length of the strummed arpeggio is the duration of the note.

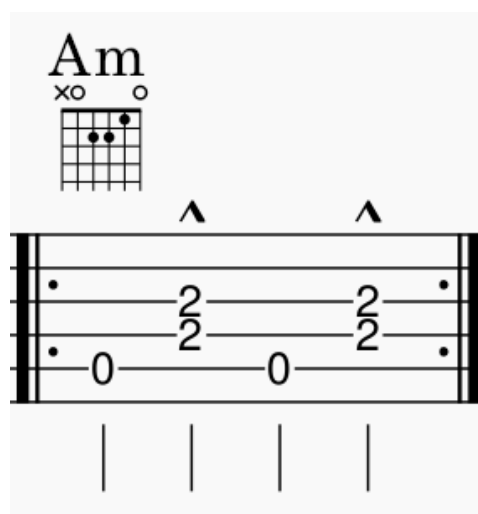
Some of the timings can get pretty complicated so unless you are a proficient sight reader listening to the music played is a great way to go. If you have a copy of the Musescore file you can open it in Musescore and have the software play it for you.

But don't feel silly if you need to clap out the timing. Starting with "1 2 3 4" for the quarter note beats then switch to "1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &" for 1/8<sup>th</sup> notes and finally for 1/16<sup>th</sup> notes "1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a". Applying counting that to this phrase it counts out to "1 2 3 & 4 e & 1 & 2 3 e 4 &"



One of the features I often use in my songs is incorporating bass and rhythm in a boom-chick style. To make it feel more rock than country I strum or flick partial chord fragments. I notate this with the marcato accent while not technically correct it captures the abrupt and short sound, and conveniently the up arrow symbol is the direction of the flicked chord fragment.

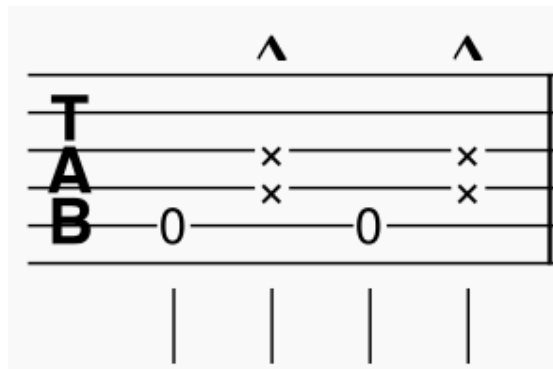
You can play the following piece is a style similar to the previous examples, however by lowering your wrist and having the bottom part of your thumb where it meets the hand hit the strings at the same time, this can give it a more rockier sound.



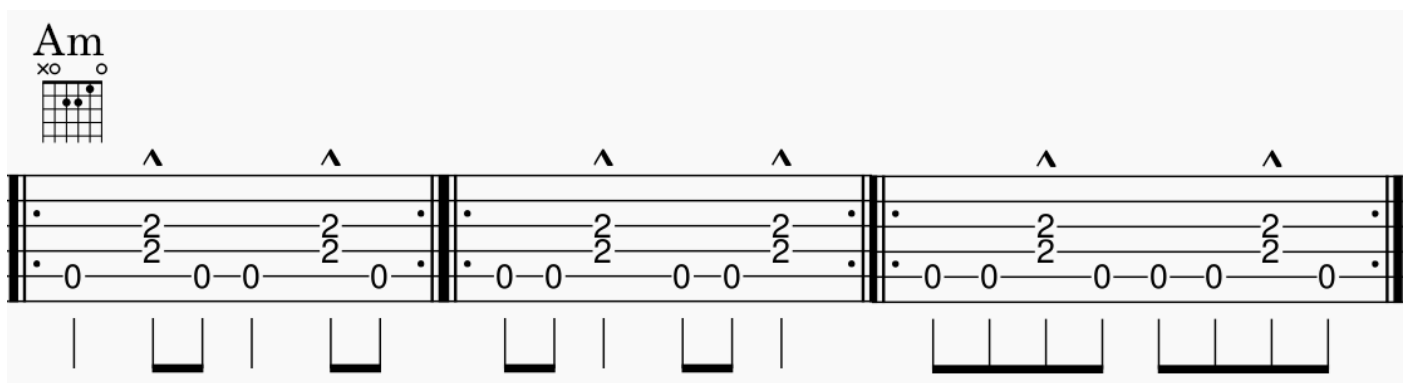
Note that although the chord fragment is only two notes is it always best to hold the full chord shape as nearby strings will vibrate even if not fully plucked (or if you miss a note!) and you won't want them to sound out of chord.

Sometimes the marcato will be on a single note, particularly when the melody is introduced and this can be quite challenging!

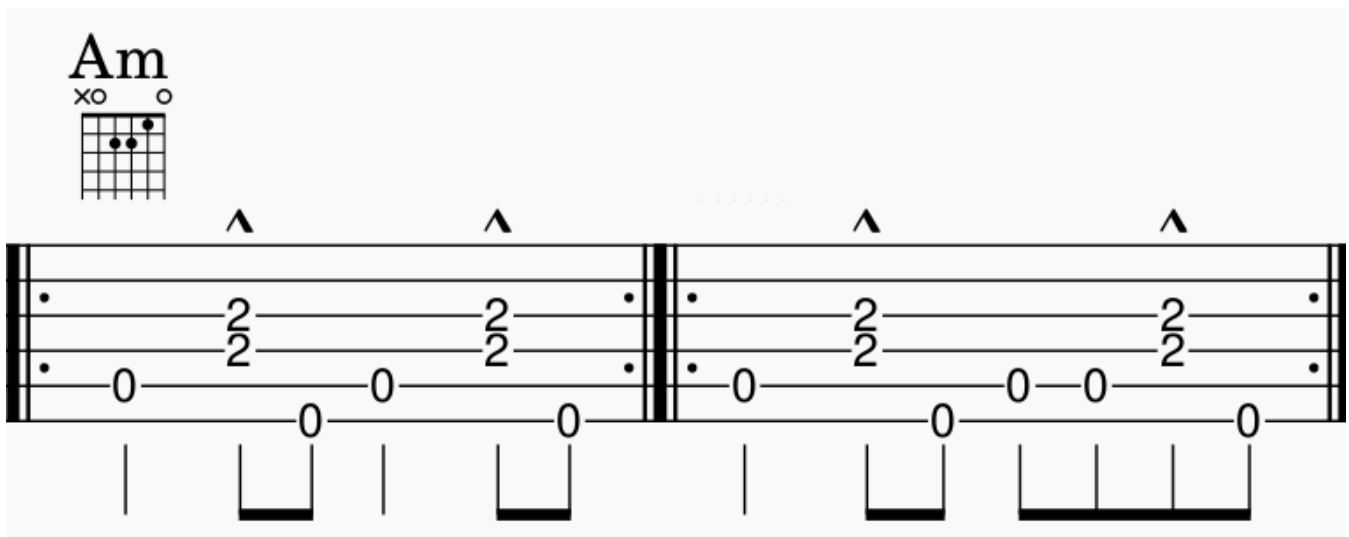
When the marcato notes are crossed out then the two strings involved should be muted with your left hand, by relaxing the fingers from the strings no longer applying enough force to fret the note – this is for a percussive feel. Keep your fingers in the chord unless this is a percussive strum used to fill out a beat during a long position change.



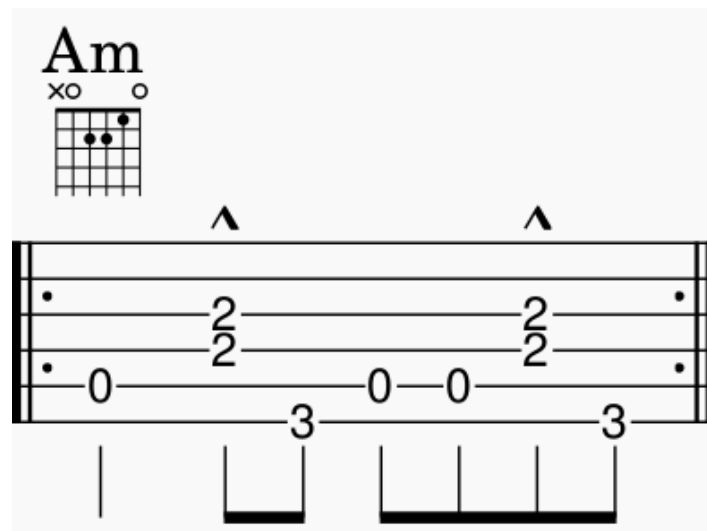
To make bass rhythms interesting, there are other off beat  $1/8^{\text{th}}$  durations that can be worked in with great effect. For instance playing the  $1/8^{\text{th}}$  note before the bass note beats has the feel of keeping the song moving forward. Playing the  $1/8^{\text{th}}$  note after the bass note gives a more forceful effect. Playing all the  $1/8^{\text{th}}$  notes has a different feel again. Add in bass notes, take them out – it is a compromise between what you feel and, unfortunately what is technically possible when the melody is introduced.



It's not often we can introduce a full walking bassline into a complex arrangement but there is lots of room to fit in classic bass sounds – a particular favourite is coming up from the 5<sup>th</sup> of the root note.



The 5<sup>th</sup> might not always be the tonal sound the song is looking for, for example coming up from the 7<sup>th</sup> could be a better fit.



Putting all this together we now introduce a melody. Conceptually most songs are lyrics over chords in a verse-chorus format, and the lyrics vary from verse to verse and may include more or less syllables. I don't want to scare you with heaps of pages of almost exactly the same thing to account for all the different syllables, so generally I am only going to tab out the first verse...and it is up to you to do the variations for the proceeding verses. Don't let that freak you out! How I do it is by knowing all the lyrics, and I sing the song in my head as I'm playing. My fingers will then add in or take out the notes – it's rare that the additional notes are different pitches, when they are I will add the notes in brackets to the tab. Most of the time you only need to drop a note, or add in an extra 1/8<sup>th</sup> of the same pitch.

And really, if you love a song enough that you want to learn a fingerstyle arrangement of it, you probably know all the lyrics already.

Lyrics are written under the melody notes. Let's run through an example, from the R.E.M. song "Losing My Religion" which is a good entry song to this style.

24 **G** **Am** **Em**

Oh - oh life, is big - ger,

27 **Am**

big - ger than you and you are not me The

30 **Em**

lengths that I will go to the dis-tance in your eyes

33 **Am**

Notice the big slow arpeggio notated in bar 2 that actually came in 1/8<sup>th</sup> note earlier and tied into the next bar. This is a sound I love and I work it into songs a lot particularly if there is nothing going on in the melody.

I hope you are now getting the idea of how to use these tabs! My arrangements mostly follow a standard pattern, melody is the king on the top, supported by a bass line and some rhythm chord fragment to fill out the middle. Depending on how demanding the melody is, the bass and the rhythm can be more or less complex.

So focus first on the melody and the lyrics. Then everything else. Start by playing just the notes – don't even think about the tempo to begin with. Play the first note/notes on beat one then move your hand to the next notes, play them, then the next, and so on. Keep going until the end of the bar. Now do the bar again. Once you know where all the notes

are, and how you are going to move to get to them, now you can start working on the tempo. When you have that bar close enough, move on to the next bar, and do it all again.

Standard practising techniques I'm sure you have heard before apply – it's better to practise 10 minutes every day than it is to practice 70 minutes just once a week. Once you've been through every bar in a song, play through it, from start to finish, every day. And play through your mistakes - this is very important! For me knowing how to play through your mistakes is just as important as know how to play through the song

Try to memorise the song – it's not as hard as you would think!

I hope this video has given you an idea of how to start tackling my tabs, and I hope it has inspired you. Keep an eye out on my YouTube channel, and check <https://jawmunji.com> for updates and new tabs and I will see you next time.