

**THE
MAGIC
OF
DROP D
TUNING**



KENNY MANN

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Guitar Alliance Inc.

Publisher:
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1518 McBee St.
Malvern AR 72104

Web Site: <http://guitaralliance.com>
E-Mail: kenny@guitaralliance.com

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INTRODUCTION

“Drop D” is an alternate tuning for guitar.

A guitar can be said to be tuned to drop D (or dropped D) when the low E string is tuned one step down to a D note. This results in a tuning of DADGBE.

That might seem like a small change from the standard tuning of EADGBE, but it can make a huge difference. Songs in drop D sound, feel, and look different.

A lot of people associate drop D tuning with heavy metal. That's because it allows for quick one finger power chords needed for fast passages, plus hard rockers tend to love the deeper sound the low D string makes.

Drop D isn't just for heavy metal. It's been used in many genres of music and by many notable musicians through the years. Some of which might surprise you.



John Lennon used drop D for the song "Dear Prudence"

FROM BACH TO ROCK

Drop D tuning has been used in a variety of music. A few notable uses include:

- "Dear Prudence" by The Beatles (written primarily by Lennon) is a splendid example of drop D in all its glory. Its beautiful finger style passages seem inspired by the ringing open strings made possible in drop D.
- Guitarist Robby Krieger spent over ten minutes haunting us with his unique take on drop D tuning with the Doors song "The End". It's a song that would not have worked with any other tuning other than drop D.
- In the Queen song "Fat Bottomed Girls", Brian May created his memorable riffs for the song with drop D.
- The popular piano piece by Bach called "Musette in D" was transcribed for guitar. Using a drop D tuning for the piece made it possible to play on guitar.
- Neil Young makes excellent use of the tuning in several of his songs, especially in the song "Harvest Moon".

DROP D IN THE MARKETPLACE

Drop D tuning has become quite popular in recent years. There are even tuning mechanisms you can buy like the "EVH D-Tuna Drop D Tuning System" which was designed by Eddie Van Halen for his Floyd Rose double-locking tremolo. Not everyone goes crazy with the tremolo bar like Eddie, so you probably won't need to upgrade your guitar's hardware.



Fig. 2: The EVH D-Tuna Drop D Tuning System

WHAT DROP D CAN DO FOR YOU

Creating your own songs in drop D can open up new creative avenues as it did many other players throughout history. It gives you a different way to look at the instrument and the resulting music is usually not like anything else you'll play in standard tuning. If you're looking for something to create that special "magic", then drop D may be what you're looking for.

This book hopes to fully instruct you in the ways of drop D. You'll learn how to play your chords and scales in this alternate tuning. We'll explore some of the great drop D songs as well as how to use the tuning to create your own compositions. Hopefully somewhere along the way you'll discover the true magic of drop D.

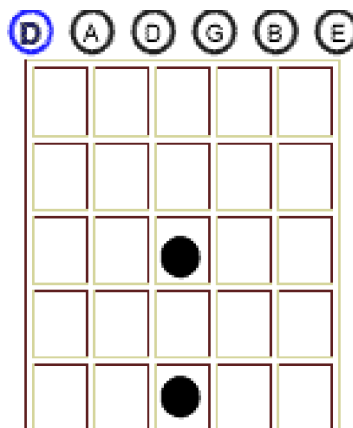
1

TUNING TO DROP D

("dropped") from the usual E of standard tuning by one whole step (2 frets) to D. Drop D tuning is also known as DAGDBE (the tuning of the guitar from lowest string to highest).

In other words, if you start in standard tuning, all you would have to do is drop the tuning of the low E string down one step to D. This new D note on the low string will sound an octave lower than the D string. We can now call the low E string the low D string instead and call the string normally tuned to D, the high D.

Fig. 3



This picture shows how the guitar's strings are tuned to in drop D.

If you don't have a good tuner on hand, you can use the online tuner at [the address below](#) to tune to drop D:

www.dropdguitar.com

DOUBLE CHECK YOUR TUNING

Once you have tuned your low E string down to D you'll want to check the tuning of your other strings. A lot of times, when we adjust one string, it will slightly alter the tuning of the other strings.

2

OPEN CHORDS

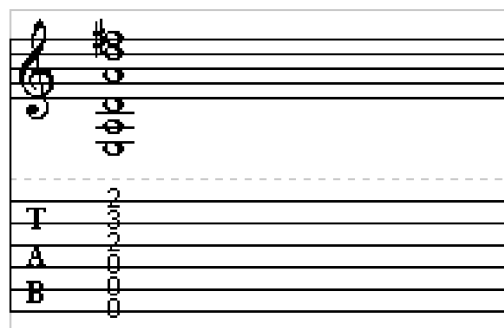
IN DROP D

Many common chords aren't affected by the different tuning. Any chord with a root on any string other than the low E (now the low D), such as the open A and open C chord, remains unchanged. Chords, such as the open E and G, that use the low E string as a root become somewhat obsolete in drop D.

OPEN D CHORD

In drop D, the D chord is expanded from a 4 string chord to a full six string chord such as in figure 4. This creates a very rich and robust D chord. As you can see, this tuning can greatly enhance a song in the key of D, especially if more "muscle" is required.

Fig. 4:
The open D chord

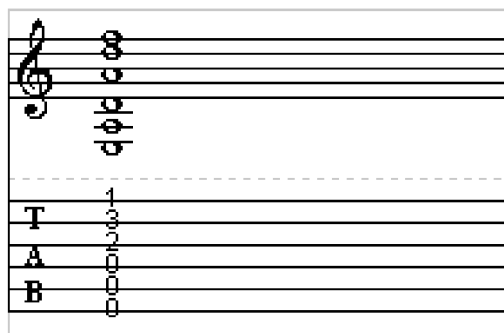


DM

The tuning doesn't get in the way of creating a D minor chord. You would play the D minor as normal, but now the A string and low D string are included to create a bigger bottom end as in figure 5.

Fig. 5:

The open D minor chord



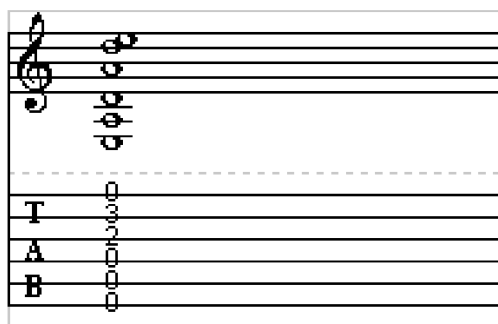
Dsus2

If we add the 2nd scale step in the D major scale (an E note) we end up with a Dsus2 chord, or D suspended 2nd. To create this chord in the open position we simply drop the F# on the high E string and instead play the string open to produce our added E note as in figure 6.

Suspended chords sound dissonant and are screaming for resolution back to a D chord. Practice playing a Dsus2 chord and then switch to a D chord. See how it resolves, or eliminates the dissonance of the suspended 2nd? Dissonance occurs when two notes are harmonically very close together. This is a combination of notes that

sound harsh or unpleasant to most people and that's why it wants to "resolve" back to the plain old D chord to relieve the tension.

Fig. 6: Dsus2

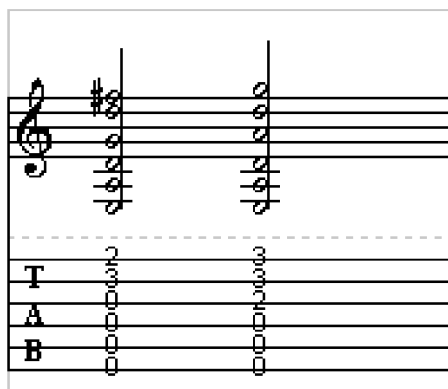


OPEN DSUS4

If we take the 4th scale step (a G) and add it to the D chord we create a D suspended 4th chord, often times denoted as Dsus4. It can be played a couple of different ways (figure 7) and tends, like the suspended 2nd chord, to want to resolve back to a D chord.

The suspended 2nd and 4th chords are "busy" chords. Let's say you're playing a song that has the D chord in it a lot. You're just playing along, but things are getting boring, so you spice things up a bit by adding a suspended 2nd or 4th chord in there to add some tension.

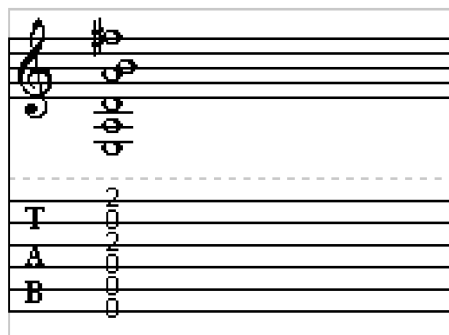
Fig. 7: Dsus4



OPEN D6

A jazzy chord you can create is the sixth chord. Just add the 6th scale step from the D major scale (a B note) to the D chord and you have a D6 (figure 8). You can use a D6 to substitute a D chord if you want to pep things up.

Fig. 8: D6



OPEN DMAJ7

The major 7th is a very common chord in all types of music. You can play a D major 7th, or Dmaj7 by adding the 7th scale step in the D major scale (C#) to the D chord. To play a Dmaj7 chord in the open position, just barre your first finger across the second frets of the G, B, and high E strings and then play the low D, A, D strings open as in figure 7.

Now, with all that technical mumbo-jumbo out of the way, let me say it's a very easy chord to play and has a very pleasing sound. It can be used at any point you would use a regular D chord, or you can use it to alternate between a D chord. Take a few minutes to play between the Dmaj7 and the D chord to hear the difference between the two. Can you see how many people love to add the maj7 chord for effect?

Fig. 9 Dmaj7

The figure shows the Dmaj7 chord. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are D4 (open), F#4 (2nd fret), A4 (open), and C#5 (4th fret). Below the staff is a guitar fretboard diagram with six strings. The strings are labeled T, A, B, and D from top to bottom. The fretting is: T (open), A (2nd fret), B (open), D (open).

DOMINANT 7TH

If you take the Dmaj7 and flat the 7th and you end up with the D7 chord. Of all the seventh chords, perhaps the most important is the dominant seventh. It was the first seventh chord to appear regularly in classical music.

Fig. 10: D7

The figure shows the D7 chord. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are D4 (open), F#4 (2nd fret), A4 (open), and G#4 (3rd fret). Below the staff is a guitar fretboard diagram with six strings. The strings are labeled T, A, B, and D from top to bottom. The fretting is: T (open), A (2nd fret), B (open), D (open).

MORE OPEN CHORDS

You can create a neat Em chord, G chord, and G6 chord in open D as in the figure 11. The cool thing about the tuning is that it's fun to experiment with. With so many open strings to play around with you can easily make up your own chord voicings by moving patterns around (but more on this later). Most chords in drop D are either open D, or the power chord variety, or those that use the open strings in new and mysterious ways.

Fig. 11: Em, G, G6

The figure shows musical notation for three chords in Drop D tuning (D A B C D G). The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The first three measures show the chords: Em (D4, E4, F#4, G4), G (D4, G4, B4, D5), and G6 (D4, G4, B4, D5, G5). The fourth measure is a whole rest. Below the staff is a guitar diagram with strings labeled T, A, B, and two unlabeled strings. The fretting is: Em (open, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2), G (open, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2), and G6 (open, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2).

3

MOVABLE

CHORD SHAPES

BARRE CHORD SHAPE

We can take the open D chord and slide everything up to play different chords. This is called a barre chord.

There is one slight problem and that's the note on the high E string. It becomes a pain to play in the configuration, so we omit it as shown in figure 12. This chord shape would be a D#.

Fig. 12: Drop D Barre Chord

The image displays the musical notation for a Drop D Barre Chord. The top part shows a treble clef with notes on the strings: 4 on the high E string, 3 on the D string, 2 on the G string, 1 on the B string, and 1 on the low E string. The bottom part shows a tablature with fret numbers: 4 for the high E string, 3 for the D string, 2 for the G string, 1 for the B string, and 1 for the low E string.

POWER CHORDS

To take things one step further is to drop all notes except the notes on the bottom three strings. These chords are called power chords (figure 13).

Power chords are not really chords. Chords are 3 notes or more, whereas power chords only have 2 different notes. A more correct name would be "power intervals" because they only contain two different notes. Usually power chords are composed of the root, a perfect 5th, and the octave. Basically they are just like playing perfect 5th intervals and doubling up a note or two.

Power chords are easy to play just about anywhere on the neck, but lend very little harmonic texture to a song. They do not have a major or minor third interval. A chord needs this interval in order to make it a major or minor chord.

THE 1 FINGER CHORD

The power chord shape in drop D can be performed with a single finger. Just barre your 1st finger on the bottom 3 strings and you've got an easy to move power chord pattern. It's one of the easiest chords to play on guitar.

We don't have to create a barre with just our first finger. We can use our 2nd, 3rd, or 4th fingers to create a barre as well. In effect you can use all four fingers to play four subsequent rather quickly.

12 DIFFERENT CHORDS

If figure 13 you'll see all twelve possible power chords in tab. The open string power chord is D, as is the 12th fret power chord.

| T | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|
| A | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| B | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |

Fig. 13: Power Chords

THE POWER CHORD TRAP

Power chords can come in handy if you're playing a song with a lot of distortion, strumming a full chord might create too much dissonance. Also, if you have a fast chord change, it's often easier to use power chords for the really fast part. Beginners will overuse them due to their convenience, but if used in moderation they can come in handy.

Power chords can be a crutch, especially in drop D tuning. The tendency of many players to play extravagant one finger riffs up and down the fretboard tends to get old quick. A lot of the sub par stuff is going to sound like a dozen other songs in drop D, so take care to not fall into this trap.

CHORD FINDER

So, it's easy to play those one finger power chords, and it's easy to know the name of the chord you're playing. That is if you know the notes on your low D string. You can use the friendly chord finder in figure 14 to help you identify what chords you're playing. The lowest note is the root note which gives the chord its name.

Note that there are sharps and flats between each chord except between E and F, and between B and C. To play a D# chord you would play your power chord on the first fret (it's up one step from D). To play an A flat chord you would play the power chord pattern on the sixth fret, or one step down from A on the 7th fret.

Fig. 14: Chord Finder

You can use this handy chart to find your power chords.

| Chord | Fret |
|----------------|------|
| D ₅ | 0 |
| E ₅ | 2 |
| F ₅ | 3 |
| G ₅ | 5 |
| A ₅ | 7 |
| B ₅ | 9 |
| C ₅ | 10 |
| D ₅ | 12 |

4

POWER CHORD RIFFS

In this chapter we'll take a look at several drop D riffs I created in drop D that use power chords. We'll also take a look at a couple of real world examples. Finally I will encourage you to play around with the tuning and come up with your own riffs. You may find that it will help you come up with fresh ideas that you normally wouldn't come up with. It's like having a fresh perspective on all things guitar.

In my first example of a riff that I created (figure 15) we can play the notes on the 2nd fret with our 1st finger and the notes on the 3rd fret with our 2nd finger. We can use the 3rd finger when the chords are a whole step apart.

Fig. 15: Heavy Riff

| | | |
|----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| T | | |
| A | 0 0 2 3 0 0 3 5 | 0 0 2 3 0 0 7 5 |
| B | 0 0 2 3 0 0 3 5 | 0 0 2 3 0 0 7 5 |
| | 0 0 2 3 0 0 3 5 | 0 0 2 3 0 0 7 5 |

THE OPEN STRINGS ARE YOUR FRIEND

You can create all kinds of cool patterns when alternating between fretted power chords and the open D as in figure 16.

Fig. 16: More Power

| | | | | |
|----------|------------|------------|------------|---------|
| T | | | | |
| A | 0 2 0 10 | 0 2 0 8 | 0 2 0 7 | 2 0 2 7 |
| B | 0 2 0 10 | 0 2 0 8 | 0 2 0 7 | 2 0 2 7 |
| | 0 2 0 10 | 0 2 0 8 | 0 2 0 7 | 2 0 2 7 |
| | <i>sl.</i> | <i>sl.</i> | <i>sl.</i> | |

DROP D DEPENDANT

Sometimes drop D power chords are an integral part of a song. The song "Slither" by Velvet Revolver is such a case. You would be hard pressed to play this riff at full speed using traditional power chords (so even would Slash, himself). The possibility of a one finger power chord found in drop D is what allows the riff to be played fast. Remember, for this fast stuff, you have to use more than just your 1st finger.

Fig. 17: "Slither" by Velvet Revolver

The figure shows a musical score for a guitar riff. The top staff is a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The riff consists of a sequence of power chords: D5 (open), D5 (3), D5 (4), D5 (open), D5 (6), D5 (7), D5 (open), D5 (10), D5 (open), D5 (6), D5 (7), D5 (open), D5 (5), D5 (open), D5 (3), D5 (4). The bottom staff shows the fret numbers for the bass string (B) and the treble string (T). The fret numbers are: B: 0 3 4 0 6 7 0 10 0 6 7 0 5 0 3 4; T: 0 3 4 0 6 7 0 10 0 6 7 0 5 0 3 4.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| A | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| B | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 4 |

MIXING POWER CHORDS AND OPEN CHORDS

A riff can alternate between power chords and regular chords such as this riff from "Show Me How To Live" in figure 18.

The musical score for the riff from "Show Me How To Live" by Audioslave is presented in 4/4 time. The riff alternates between power chords (Ds and Es) and regular chords. The guitar part is marked "Gtr I. ff" and "p". The fretboard diagram shows the string positions for the riff.


| Measure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Chord | D5 | Es | D5 | Es | D5 | Es | D5 | Es |
| T | • 3 | | | | • 3 | | | |
| A | • 0 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 2 2 | • 0 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 2 2 |
| B | • 0 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 2 2 | • 0 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 2 2 |

Fig. 18: "Show Me How To Live" by Audioslave

PICK UP DISTORTION-DROP A NOTE

Some bands, high on distortion, will only play the bottom two notes, such as in "The Beautiful People" by Marilyn Manson (as in figure 19)

Fig. 19: "The Beautiful People"



| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| A | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| B | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |

5

SCALES IN

DROP D



In this chapter we'll take a look at several drop D riffs I created in drop D that use power chords. We'll also take a look at a couple of real world examples. Finally I will encourage you to play around with the tuning and come up with your own riffs. You may find that it will help you come up with fresh ideas that you normally wouldn't come up with. It's like having a fresh perspective on all things guitar.

There's not a huge change when playing scale in drop D, but it's a good idea to get familiar with these slight changes.

MAJOR SCALE

In figure 20 we have the extended D major scale. The major scale consists of 7 different notes: D, E, F#, G, A, B, and C#.

Fig. 20: D Major Scale

Fig. 20: D Major Scale

| | | |
|-------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Gtr I | | |
| T | | 0 2 3 0 2 3 |
| A | | 2 4 0 2 0 2 3 0 |
| B | 0 2 4 5 0 2 4 0 | 2 4 0 2 3 0 2 3 |

PENTATONIC SCALE

The pentatonic, as in figure 21, is the same thing minus the 4th and 7th scale steps.

Fig. 21: D Pentatonic Scale

Fig. 21: D Pentatonic Scale

| | | |
|-------|-----------------|-----------|
| Gtr I | | |
| T | | 0 3 0 2 |
| A | | 2 0 3 0 2 |
| B | 0 2 4 0 2 0 2 4 | 2 0 3 0 2 |

6

OPEN STRING

RIFFS

One of the really cool things about drop D is the bottom three strings can be played open for a solid D chord. You can use these strings as a basis for a riff and add melodic notes like in figure 22. Try playing the riff with a clean tone. It can be finger picked or you can use a pick. Either way.

The drone of the open strings is what drives the riff.

Fig. 22: Drop D Arpeggios

The figure shows musical notation for Drop D Arpeggios. The top staff is a treble clef with a series of arpeggiated chords. The bottom staff shows a guitar fretboard with strings T, A, and B. The A string has frets 0, 2, 4, 5. The B string has frets 0, 0, 0, 0, 0. The bottom staff also shows frets 0, 0, 0, 0, 2.

In figure 23 you'll find a variation. Use a clean tone for this one as well and let all of the notes ring out. When creating riffs like this you don't really worry about "the rules". Just go by what sounds good to you.

Fig. 23: Variation

let ring

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T | | 10 | | 8 | | 7 | | 7 | | 5 |
| A | | 11 | | 9 | | 7 | | 7 | | 6 |
| B | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

GET CREATIVE

Riffs using the droning open strings just keep coming! You should spend some time to create your own riffs in similar fashion. Part of being a complete guitarist is not just playing other people's music, but creating your own as well. Drop D is perfect for creating your own works, so you're only hurting yourself if you don't try.

In figure 24 is another example of open string fun with fairly involved chord voice changes.

Fig. 24: Yet Another Example

The figure shows a musical score for guitar. The top staff is a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music. The first two measures feature a power chord (G2, B2, D3) with a sharp sign above the notes, and the last two measures feature a power chord (G2, B2, D3) with a sharp sign above the notes. The notes are: G2 (open), B2 (open), D3 (open), G2 (open), B2 (open), D3 (open), G2 (open), B2 (open), D3 (open), G2 (open), B2 (open), D3 (open), G2 (open), B2 (open), D3 (open), G2 (open), B2 (open), D3 (open).

Below the staff is a guitar tablature section. It is labeled "Gtr I" and "let ring". The tablature is divided into two systems. The first system has two measures: the first measure has fret numbers 9 and 11 on the A string, and 11 and 12 on the B string; the second measure has fret numbers 9 and 7 on the A string, and 7 and 4 on the B string. The second system has two measures: the first measure has fret numbers 9 and 7 on the A string, and 7 and 4 on the B string; the second measure has fret numbers 2 and 0 on the A string, and 0 and 0 on the B string. The strings are labeled T, A, and B from top to bottom.

FAT CLEAN SOUND

More use of the open strings can be found in figure 25. The open D chord at the bottom is constant. We only change the "melody" chords at the top to create fresh new voicing only available in drop D. This one sounds best on an acoustic. We're using all six strings for a nice fat sound.

Fig. 25: Fat Acoustic Sound

let ring

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| T | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| A | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| B | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

CAN YOU TAKE ME HIGHER?

A real world example of the "fat clean sound" is the song "Higher" by Creed (figure 26). The open D chord is constant throughout much of the riff with a melody on top. That open D chord makes it easy to just slide a finger around for the melody (and at the same time creating intricate chord voicing). When the song switches to power chords mobility is sacrificed, but not as much in drop D than if it was in standard tuning.

Fig. 26: Higher

The figure displays three systems of musical notation for the riff "Higher" by Creed. Each system consists of a standard notation staff (treble clef, key signature of one sharp) and a corresponding guitar tablature staff (T, A, B strings).

System 1: The first system shows a riff starting with an open D chord (D4, E4, F#4, A4). The melody is played on the A string, with notes sliding up and down. The tablature for the A string is: 7 7 9 9 9 11 11 9 11 11 12 9 9 9 9 11 11. The B string has fret numbers 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 7 7 7 7. The D string has fret numbers 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 7 7 7 7. There are two slurs labeled "sl." under the 11th and 12th frets of the A string.

System 2: The second system continues the riff. The melody on the A string includes a triplet of eighth notes (11, 9, 7) followed by 9 9 11 9 7 7 7 9 9 7 7 7 7 0 0. The B string has fret numbers 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 0 0. The D string has fret numbers 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 0 0. A slur labeled "p" is under the first two notes of the D string, and a slur labeled "sl." is under the first two notes of the B string.

System 3: The third system shows the final part of the riff. The melody on the A string has fret numbers 12 11 11 11 9 11 11 9 11 7 7. The B string has fret numbers 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0. The D string has fret numbers 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0.

7

MORE GREAT RIFFS

A CLOSE LOOK AT "ALL APOLOGIES"

Nirvana had several songs in drop D. One of their best uses of the tuning is the song "All Apologies" (figure 27). In the first two measures, you will find yourself very busy on the guitar. It is full of thick, rich tones. Though what you will be playing isn't too difficult, there are some parts that you may see as difficult. This song's catchy riff is very profound, and as for the most part Kurt Cobain played most of the band's songs as himself being the only guitarist. To play the song, start off by placing your 1st finger on fret 9 on the "A" string and keep your finger there until otherwise notes. Now, strum one time. Next, you will need to just play the note that your 1st finger is on. It will be on the "A" string again. After you have done that, you will need to use your 2nd finger and put it on the "A" string on the tenth fret. After you have done that strum that once. If you notice, you are basically doing a "hammer", but not with as much emphasis on the "hammer". Then play and slide the "A" string from the tenth fret to the twelfth fret and play that twice. (Still use your 2nd finger to slide to fret twelve, and lift off of your 1st finger.) After you have let off of your 1st finger, you will use that to play the tenth fret on the "A" string, then slide to the ninth fret. The next measure is a little easier.

You will do this by playing the “low D ” twice open. After you have done that, place your 1st finger on the “A” string and play the tenth fret. Then play the open “low D” once. Notice that at the end of this measure you are playing exactly what you played from the end of the first measure, just one string higher. (There is an open “A” string note in there but that is pretty insignificant.) Remember to play that note, you will need to slide on the “D” string this time instead of the “A” string from the tenth fret to the twelfth fret and play that note twice. Then, you will need to play the tenth fret (and play the open “A” string) on the “D” string, then slide to the ninth fret on that same string.

This part is almost identical to the first measure in the beginning, except you don’t play quite as much, and your focus is on the picking. The picking order to play this is: With your 1st finger, place it on fret 9 on the “A” string. Play the “low D” open and then play the “A” string at fret 9. Then play just like you did at the beginning and use your 2nd finger to hit the tenth fret on the “A” string. Play the open “low D” and proceed to the little riff just like you played on the first measure. The last measure is pretty easy, but the positioning of your fingers is of great importance. Start by picking twice the “low D” open string. Use your 2nd finger and play the tenth fret on the “A” string. Then play the open “low D” again. Here is where you have to watch your finger arrangement. The most effective way to make this song work at the end is by using your 2nd finger on the eleventh fret on the “G” string and play it twice. Notice the open “D” string (not the low E string tuned down to D, but the actual open D string which is the 4th string) and play it accordingly. Now, after you have used your 2nd finger to play the eleventh fret on the “G” string, simply play it twice, and then use your 1st finger to play the ninth fret on the same string. (Note the open “D” string again.) Finally, use your 2nd finger on the twelfth fret on the “D” string to finish off the song.

Fig. 27: "All Apologies"

let ring

| | | | | |
|----------|------------------------|----------------|------------------------|----------|
| T | | | | |
| A | | | | 11 11 9 |
| B | 9 9 10 9 10 12 12 10 9 | 0 0 0 0 10 (0) | 0 9 10 0 10 12 12 10 9 | 0 0 10 0 |
| | <i>sl</i> | <i>sl</i> | <i>sl</i> | |

"EVERLONG"

The Foo Fighters song "Everlong" doesn't really use drop D to its full advantage, but the tuning allows for fast downstrokes of the creative chord voicings. Use your 1st finger for all the notes on the 9th frets and your 3rd fingers for all the notes on the 11th frets. The fingerings are fairly simple, now try to play it up to speed!

Fig. 28: "Everlong"

A Intro

Fast Rock ♩ = 154

Dmaj9 Esus2add4

Gtr I

T

A

B

"HARVEST MOON"

A beautiful example of a song in drop D is the acoustic flavored song "Harvest Moon" by Neil Young. He's used the tuning in several of his songs, but this has to be one of the best. In figure 29 you'll find the main riff from the song. It's very playful!

Fig. 29: "Harvest Moon"

Dadd9 D6add9 Dmaj7 Dadd9 D6add9 Dmaj7

T

A

B

THE BEST IN DROP D

Two of the absolute best examples of songs using drop D to it's full advantage are "The End" by The Doors and "Dear Prudence" by The Beatles (figures 30 & 31).

"THE END"

The song's guitar solo was ranked #93 on Guitar World's '100 Greatest Guitar Solos of All Time'.

Fig. 30: "The End"

(D5/A)

let ring

T 3 3 2 3 3 2 3 2 3 2 2 3 2 3 3 0

A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

H H H

(Dm)

let ring

T 0 1 0 3 3 2 3 2 3 2 0 3 2 3 2 0 0 0 2 3 0 0 0 1 0 3 3 2 2

A 0

B 0

H H

(D5/A)

let ring

T 3 2 3 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 3 5

A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

P H

"DEAR PRUDENCE"

"Dear Prudence" is a song written by John Lennon, and credited to Lennon–McCartney. The basic track was finger picking guitar performed by John Lennon as well as George Harrison on the lead guitar. Figure 31 is the main fingerpicked part played by John Lennon.

Fig. 31: "Dear Prudence"

A Intro

$\text{♩} = 76$

A7sus4 D/A Cadd9/A G/A Aadd11 Cadd9/A

ctr I
let ring

T 12 10 10 8 7 8 5 3

A 12 11 0 9 7 6 5 5

B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

B

D/A D/C D/B D/B♭

let ring

T 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 3

A 5 0 2 0 2 0 2 0

B 0 0 0 3 0 2 1 0

8

PLAYING IN OTHER KEYS




Most songs in drop D tuning just so happen to be in the key of D. That's not an absolute rule, because a song can use drop D tuning and still play in another key, but it's not that common. The reason is that a guitar tuned to drop D is usually in the key of D is because the guitar will have a big thick sound when playing D chords or shapes around the D (see riff #4). The D chord is "home base" when a song is in the key of D major.

The song "Grace" by Jeff Buckley is a perfect example of a song that uses drop D tuning, but is not in the key of D. It's in E minor!

Fig. 32 : "Grace" Verse

B Verse

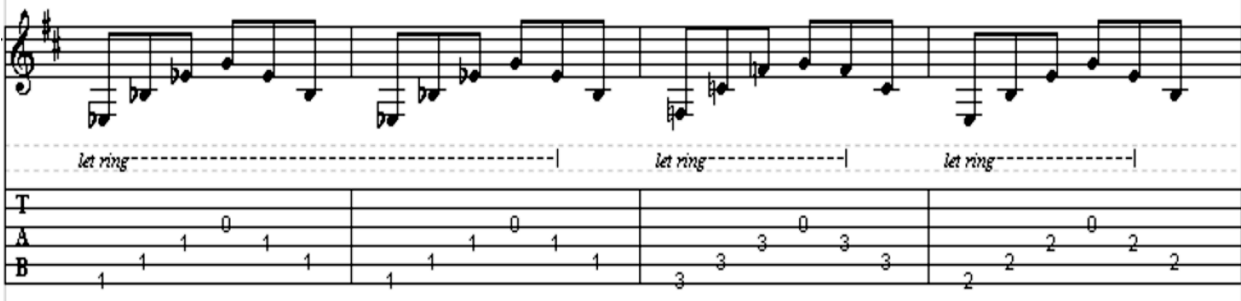
Em Fmaj7+11 Em



let ring-----| let ring-----| let ring-----|

T
A
B

Em/E^b Fmaj9+11 Em

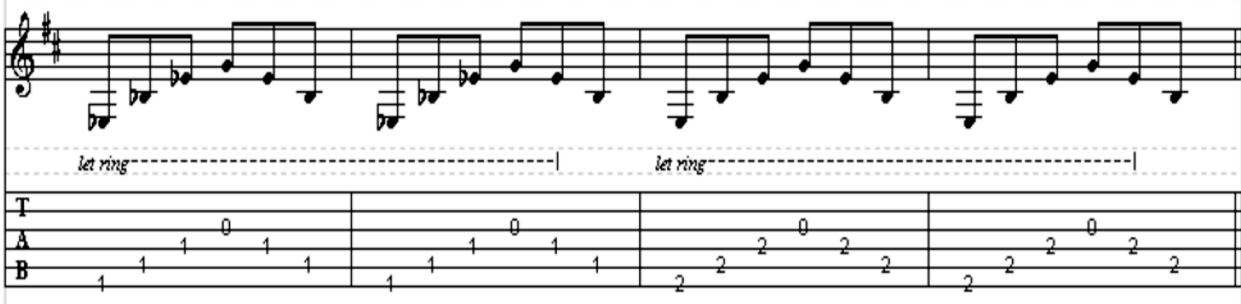


let ring-----| let ring-----| let ring-----|

T
A
B

To Dbl. Coda

Em/E^b Em



let ring-----| let ring-----|

T
A
B

9

A CLASSICAL APPROACH

"Musette in D" (figure 33) was written by Bach for the piano, but then transcribed for the guitar. A drop D tuning fits it very well since it's the key of D. The piece would not be possible to play in standard tuning.

Fig. 33: "Musette in D"

The first system of the musical score consists of a treble clef staff with a melody and a guitar tablature below. The melody is in D major and features a characteristic 'Musette' style with grace notes and slurs. The tablature is arranged in three rows: T (Treble), A (Acoustic), and B (Bass). The first two measures of the tablature show fret numbers 10, 8, 7, 9, 7 for the T string and 0, 0 for the A and B strings. The next two measures show fret numbers 10, 8, 7, 9, 7 for the T string and 0, 0 for the A and B strings. The final two measures show fret numbers 4, 5, 7, 5, 4 for the T string and 2, 7, 4, 0 for the A and B strings. Dynamic markings 'p' are placed under the first two measures of the A and B strings.

The second system of the musical score is identical to the first system. It shows a treble clef staff with a melody and a guitar tablature below. The tablature is arranged in three rows: T (Treble), A (Acoustic), and B (Bass). The first two measures of the tablature show fret numbers 10, 8, 7, 9, 7 for the T string and 0, 0 for the A and B strings. The next two measures show fret numbers 10, 8, 7, 9, 7 for the T string and 0, 0 for the A and B strings. The final two measures show fret numbers 4, 5, 7, 5, 4 for the T string and 2, 7, 0 for the A and B strings. Dynamic markings 'p' are placed under the first two measures of the A and B strings.

10 SONGS IN DROP D

Some people insist that drop d tuning is something new used only by modern rock artists. That's totally untrue. It's been around quite awhile. Not only do you have modern bands like Creed and Crossfade using drop D, but you'll also find classic rock acts like Zed Zeppelin, The Beatles, and Pink Floyd utilizing it. This is by no means a complete list. There are many more songs in drop D out there!

"Fat Bottomed Girls" by Queen

Creed's "Higher"

Nickelback's "Someday"

Pink Floyd's "Run Like Hell"

Bach's "Musette"

Fleetwood Mac's "Gold Dust Woman"

Smile Empty Soul's "Bottom Of A Bottle"

Marilyn Manson's "Beautiful People"

Papa Roach's "Last Resort"

Crossfade's "Cold"

James Taylor's "Country Road"

Nirvana's "Heart-Shaped Box"

Nirvana's "All Apologies"

Audioslave's "Show Me How To Live"

Velvet Revolver's "Slither"

"Killing In The Name Of" by Rage Against The Machine

Foo Fighter's "Everlong"

"Your Body Is A Wonderland" by John Mayer

Jimmy Buffet's "Margaritaville"

"Unchained" by Van Halen

Dear Prudence - The Beatles

The Chain - Fleetwood Mac

"Ohio" Neil Young

Pantera "Walk"

Tool "Sober"

"Them Bones" by Alice In Chains

Ozzy Osbourne " No More Tears"

Pearl Jam "Even Flow"

Metallica "The Thing That Should Not Be"

Harvest Moon - Neil Young

Something in the Way - Nirvana

Moby Dick - Led Zeppelin

I Miss You - Incubus

Cold - Crossfade

Grand Theft Autumn - Fallout Boy

Meant to Live - Switchfoot

So Cold - Breaking Benjamin

Sludge Factory - Alice in Chains

Vermilion Part 2 - Slipknot

Grace - Jeff Buckley

Black Hole Sun - Soundgarden

The End - The Doors

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ON-LINE

RESOURCES

ON THE WEB

You'll find more information about drop D at our official website:

<http://www.dropdguitar.com>

TABLATURE

Download our grown collection of tabs in drop D.

VIDEO

Watch videos that demonstrate songs, chords, riffs, and scales in drop D.



THANKS!

Thanks for reading. Be sure to visit the website to download new revisions of this book, or to ask questions.