



## Memorizing The Notes On The Bass Guitar

by John Falstrom

If I was to give only one single bit of advice to anyone looking to play the bass guitar, it would be to memorize the notes on the entire bass guitar fretboard. I can't even imagine playing the bass without knowing what notes I'm playing, yet people try to do it. Here's how I learned the fretboard in my

first 6 months of playing the bass:

1. I had a picture of the notes on the fretboard of the bass wherever I was at. I studied it until I couldn't anymore, then I studied it some more. I'd put notes into groups of 2, 3, 4 etc., and then memorized that certain group of notes everywhere they appeared on the fretboard. I would start with only the natural notes (no sharps or flats) until I had a section of the fretboard memorized, then I'd take a natural note and add the flat (b) and the sharp (#) on either side of the natural note, giving you 3 consecutive notes. A great way to grab 2 notes at once is to memorize a note's octave. You will find the octave two strings higher and up two frets from whatever note you are starting on (as long as you can go up two strings).
2. After I learned a song, and had played it until I had memorized it, I would go back and memorize every note in the song. If you do this with the songs you can play, I believe this will help you get the job of memorizing the fretboard done.
3. When you play a scale, go back and slowly play it over & over again until the notes are memorized. Saying the note names as you play them can also help with this process. Later then, go back and see if the notes appear in your head. If they don't, you'll have to keep playing the scale until the notes "stick".
4. When you play chord's arpeggio, go back and? memorize the notes to the chord. Knowing your chord tones is also very important. Trust me on this!
5. When you make up a song or an exercise, etc. Always make sure that you know exactly what notes you are playing. How can you possibly communicate a song, a lick, or an exercise to other musicians if you don't know what you're playing?

**Summary:** How will you know that you have all the notes on the bass guitar fretboard memorized? If right before you play a note, the note letter appears in your head, you've got it. If it doesn't, you still have more work to do. Memorizing the notes on the entire bass guitar fretboard is a tremendous accomplishment. It will greatly increase the odds that you will become the bassist/musician you want to be. Do yourself a great big favor, and start today.

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