

Learn bass in a Flash - by Mike Overly

Introduction

Is your knowledge of the bass fretboard incomplete, out-of-order, fragmented and disconnected? If so, then you should get a deck of **Bass Fretboard Flashcards** from **12 Tone Music Publishing** and begin feeling complete, in-order, whole and connected. You and your bass will be happy you did!

A Complete Deck

You just got your bass, or, you have been trying to learn to play bass, but are feeling a little lost and confused. Well, now's the time to have some simple and easy letter learning fun with a complete deck of bass flashcards. What do I mean by a complete deck? Well, we all know that 52 cards is a complete deck of playing cards, but, just how many cards is in a complete deck of 4 string bass flashcards? The simple answer is: **84!** Here's the proof...

While it's true that music has **12 sounds** in one octave, those 12 sounds have **21 letter names!** I know, this sounds complex and confusing, but it's really not if you think of it in this way. There are **7 natural** letters, **7 flat** letters and **7 sharp** letters. Simply stated, $7 + 7 + 7 = 21!$

In other words, the complete music alphabet has **12 sounds** with **21 letter symbols**. Here they are:

7 natural letters: A B C D E F G,

7 flat letters: bA bB bC bD bE bF bG, and

7 sharp letters: #A #B #C #D #E #F #G.

Said one more time, **7 natural letters + 7 flat letters + 7 sharp letters = 21 letter names for 12 sounds!** And since there are **four strings** on a 4 string bass, this means that to have a complete deck of bass flashcards, you must have 84 cards. Here's the math: **4 strings x 21 letter names = 84 cards!**

Now, here's an amazing fact. Only **Bass Fretboard Flashcards** from **12 Tone Music Publishing** has 84 cards in the deck, making them the only complete 4 string bass flashcard deck in the world! To prove this, just Google bass flashcards and see for yourself, no other deck of bass flashcards in the entire world has 84 cards in the deck.

Now, let me ask you a question. Would you buy a puzzle if it was missing pieces? Of course the answer is no. So, why would you buy a deck of bass flashcards that was missing cards? Remember, you can't succeed if you're incomplete!

Be Correct The First Time

Being complete is certainly essential but being in-order is equally important. And by learning in a **Sign Before Symbol** manner, guarantees that you will be complete, in-order and faster! Think of it this way...

Let's begin by imagining that you want to go to Jill's house, but, you don't know where she lives. However, your friend Jack does, and he agrees to take you there. So, you go to Jack's house and then together you go to Jill's house. So far, so good.

Later, you want to go to Jill's house by yourself, but, the only way you know how to get there is to go to Jack's house, and then go to Jill's house. Here's the problem. While it's true you get to Jill's house, it takes you twice as long to get there than if you had learned to go directly to Jill's house in the first place. Direct is faster!

So, what does this have to do with playing bass? To understand this, let's explore **Sign Before Symbol**.

A **symbol** represents something, but, it is not what it represents. For example, in music, the letter E **represents** the sound of E, but, the letter E is not the sound.

A **sign** implies an **action**. In other words, a sign tells us to do, or not to do, something. For example, a stop sign tells us to do something: stop. However, it also tells us not to do something: don't go.

Traditional bass flashcards use a **letter symbol** to represent a sound on the fretboard, and two **accidental signs**, the **sharp #**, and the **flat b**, tell us **to do**, or **not to do** something. However, **Bass Fretboard**

Flashcards from 12 Tone Music Publishing differ from traditional bass flashcards by presenting the sign before the symbol. Let's explore this very important difference.

In traditional music notation, the letter symbol is presented first and the accidental sign follows. In other words, traditional music notation places the sign **after** the letter symbol. However, by placing the sign after the letter symbol, traditional music notation makes you go to where you don't want to be, then has you change your mind to then go to where you wanted to be to start with! This traditional approach to an accidental letter symbol makes you twice as slow as you should be. **Sign Before Symbol** presents a new and direct way of thinking that is guaranteed to make you faster. Let's continue.

We've already discovered that to go to Jack's house, which we will call **A**, and then to go to Jill's house, **A#**, will take twice as long as it should because we must first go to Jack's house **A** before we can change our mind and go to Jill's house **A#**. In contrast to this traditional approach, **Sign Before Symbol** has you playing twice as fast by directing you to **not go** to **A** first and then **A#**, but rather, go **directly** to **#A**!

Okay, let's think this through on the bass. Why go to string 4 fret 5 **A** so that you can get to string 4 fret 6 **A#**, when you can go directly to **#A** the very first time? Remember, **sign before symbol** teaches you that **#A** is **not** **A** or **bA**, so, don't waste time going to those letter and fret locations, instead, go directly to **#A** the first time. Yes, it's true, there is no doubt, **Sign Before Symbol** makes you faster!

Now you can understand why sign **before** the letter symbol makes you faster, it takes you directly to the fret location of the letter you want to play.

More Than One Location

With continued use of your **Bass Fretboard Flashcards**, you will quickly and easily learn the letter names on **all** the strings of your bass. And with this simple and complete knowledge, you will receive this remarkable benefit: **closer is faster**, and faster is better! It helps to think of it this way...

If the song you are playing asks you to play **G** and then **C**, and you only knew the letters on string 4 of your bass, that would be okay, because at least you could play the sound of **G** on fret 3 and **C** on fret 8. However, because these letters are five frets apart, it would take a certain amount of time to travel that amount of distance. Remember what Einstein said: time is space!

However, to play **G** and **C** faster would certainly be better. So, to play **faster**, use **less energy** and be more **efficient**, learn the letters on string 3 of your bass. Then, because you know the letters on both string 4 and string 3, you will discover an amazing **benefit** ~ you can play **G** and **C** much faster. This is true because now they are **closer**, and closer is faster! Here's the proof: **G** is on string 4 fret 3 and **C** is on string 3 fret 3. Now, since they're on the same fret, you can't get any closer, therefore faster is the result!

As you continue to progress and learn the letters on all four strings of your bass, you will discover the awesome benefit of playing your bass as **fast** as you always wanted to!

Master Memory

Bass Fretboard Flashcards make you smarter because they enable you to develop a **Master Memory**. Here's how...

Studies of the whole brain have revealed that the left-brain likes to **think**. In other words, to calculate, reason, read words, and do math. This is a good thing.

These same studies have shown that the right-brain likes to... well, not think, but rather be creative and see things like pictures and drawings and listen to music without really thinking about what it's listening to. Kind of like day dreaming. And this too is a good thing.

Of course you really don't have two brains, both sides of the brain are connected and work as one. However, it is still helpful to understand the different functions of whole-brain learning so that we can understand the elegant design of **Bass Fretboard Flashcards**. Let's explore this.

On the front side of a flashcard is a left-brain question: on this **string**, what **fret** is this **letter**? For example, on string 4 of your bass, what fret is the letter **A**? As you can tell, this front side of the card makes you calculate these three different ideas ~ string, letter, fret ~ into one answer. This is left-brain fun.

Then, when you turn the card over, the answer is presented, which, for the question just asked, is fret 5. However, not only are you presented the fret answer, but you also see a picture of the fretboard with an empty square on the correct fret so that you may **visualize** the location of the answer. But wait, there's more. The **staff-note** of that letter location is also shown! This is right-brain fun.

You can now understand how **Bass Fretboard Flashcards** train you to use both sides of your brain so as to better remember and in turn, make you smarter! No other deck of bass flashcards are designed with this degree of detail to guarantee the development of your **Master Memory** success.

A Clear and Simple Understanding

I don't know where you are today, but, I know where you'll be tomorrow, reviewing your bass flashcards for speed and clarity. And as a result, tomorrow you will be a better player than you are today.

Now, let's look ahead and learn some things that will clarify your thoughts and simplify the ideas you will encounter in the future so that you may avoid confusion and frustration as you progress. Let's proceed...

At some point you will see this harmony symbol: **Gb5**. This looks simple enough, and most bass players would say that this is a "G flat power chord." But are they certain? Could it be something else? Could it be "G with a flat 5 added?" The point is, we're really not sure. We are confused because of a lack of **clarity** and **certainty**.

This confusion comes from traditional music notation that places the accidental sign **before** a staff-note symbol, **before** a tone number (scale degree) symbol, **before** a harmony numeral symbol, but, illogically and incorrectly, places the accidental sign **after** a letter symbol! This unexplainable exception creates great uncertainty, confusion, frustration, and serious lack of clarity. What are we to do?

The answer is very simple, be consistent and place the accidental sign **before** the letter symbol! This very simple action brings clarity and certainty, and avoids confusion and frustration. In other words, to be consistent, the accidental sign is **always** placed **before** the **symbol**, whether it's a **staff-note** symbol, a **tone number** symbol, a **harmony numeral** symbol, or, simply a **letter** symbol. Avoiding confusion and replacing it with clarity is extremely simple and easy, just put the **sign before a symbol** in all cases! Let's continue and prove our point with a more complex example.

It's easy to know what this harmony symbol is, **bG5**, because the accidental sign is placed before the letter symbol. It's "flat G with tone 5 added." The simple and clear reason why **sign before symbol** is not confusing is because its order is consistent.

Here's another example. Traditional music notation writes **Gb#5**. Wow! What in the world is that? Traditional music notation knows that this is confusing and unclear. How do we know that, because more symbols are added in an attempt to bring clarity to this obvious confusion. Here is the way traditional music notation writes it: **Gb(#5)**. As you can see, more is not always better!

In other words, extra symbols are not what is called for, what is needed is a simple and clear **sign before symbol** presentation. This logical order easily resolves the problem. It's easy to see that, **bG#5** is "flat G, sharp five." Nothing could be more simple or clear. Now, here's another example of traditional confusion, contrasted with simple and clear **sign before symbol** clarity.

In the traditional way of thinking, a letter may be flatted or sharped twice. In other words, double flat and double sharp, for example, **Gbb** and **F##**. And to add to this confusion, traditional music notation uses an **x** to symbolize **##**. In other words, **F##** is written **Fx**! This is certainly not necessary, because a symbol of another symbol only adds to the confusion. By the way, **Gbb** sounds like **F** natural, and **F##**, also shown as **Fx**, sounds like **G** natural. This "sounds like" concept is called **enharmonic**, and enharmonic presents problems all its own, but, that's another lesson.

As you progress in music, you will eventually encounter this very troubling harmony symbol: **Gbbb5**. Yikes! What the heck?! Is this "G double flat with flat 5 added," or "G flat with double flat 5 added," or "G with a triple flat 5 added?!" Talk about confusing and unclear!! Fortunately, **sign before symbol** again brings simplicity and clarity to this truly unruly harmony symbol. It could be, **bbGb5** "double flat G flat 5," **bGbb5** "flat G double flat 5," or, in some extreme bizarre case, **Gbbb5** "G triple flat 5!" We could go on and on with

harmony symbol clarification, but, you get the point, your future will always be simple, clear, and void of confusion because of **sign before symbol**.

More Applications

Learning the letters on your bass fretboard is one of the most powerful and useful skills that you can develop. So, if you're ready to have some fast and easy letter learning fun, here are some exciting ways to improve your performance skills.

Begin by learning the 7 natural letters horizontally, east and west, on string 4 of your bass. You will quickly discover that learning the 7 natural letters and their 7 fret locations on string 4 is as easy as learning a telephone number, which also has 7 numbers.

Start by selecting the seven **natural** letters of string 4. Shuffle these 7 natural letter flashcards so that they are out-of-order. Work with one card at a time. Memorize the fret location for that one letter. Don't use your bass, but rather, visualize the positions on the bass fretboard as you memorize the locations. When you can recall the fret location for a letter without hesitation, then move on to the next card. Proceed with the remaining six cards until you have memorized all 7 letter and fret combinations.

There are lots of opportunities throughout the day for review, for example while you're walking to school, riding in the car, or, waiting for the school bus, or if you're older, during lunch at work. Be sure to drill the 7 natural letter flashcards several times a day to get faster and faster. After the 7 natural letters are memorized, it's time to learn the **flat** and **sharp** letter names.

You will notice that some frets have more than one letter name. As was said earlier, this is called enharmonic. **Enharmonic** means "one sound with more than one symbolic letter name." For example, **bA**, flat A, **sounds the same** as **#G**, sharp G, but as you can see, the same sound has a different letter name. The "correct" letter name for a sound depends on the **key** you are in. Here's an example. The **bE** major scale is spelled **bE F G bA bB C D**. Therefore, in this key of **bE** major, the fourth sound of this scale is **bA**. However, in the **A** major scale, which is spelled **A B #C D E #F #G**, the seventh sound is **#G**. So again, as you can see, the letter name given to the same sound depends on what key you are in. For more of this type of thinking, be sure to get your copy of **Bass EncycloMedia**.

To summarize, begin with the 7 natural cards. Then move on to the 7 flat cards. Be sure to take your time. Then, after you have memorized the 7 flat letter and their 7 fret locations, start working with the 7 sharp cards. Again, be patient and take your time. By using this simple method, you will quickly and easily memorize all **21 letter names** on one string. Then, after you have memorized the letter locations on one string, you may then move on to the next string and begin the process again. Do this until you can say the letter locations on each string of your bass without hesitation. Remember, learning all the letters on all the strings is a challenge, however, with practice, patience and time, learning the 21 letters on each string of the bass fretboard will be easy, fast and fun!

There are many ways to use your bass flashcards, for example, here's a method for learning the same letter on different strings and frets. Begin by selecting only the cards from each string that have the same letter. You will notice that some of these cards sound in **unison**, in other words, they have the **same** letter, **same** staff-note and **same** sound. Yet, some of these same letter cards sound in **octaves**, with the **same** letter, but with a **different** staff-note and a **different** sound.

Here's another suggested use of your bass flashcards. Learn the natural letters vertically, north and south, one fret at a time. Here's the method. Start with the frets with all natural letters: fret zero, fret 5 and fret 10. Drill one fret vertically until you have it memorized. Be sure to say the string and letter name and then flip the card over and say the fret number. As you work through the cards one fret at a time, visualize the fretboard in your mind with your eyes closed. After learning a new fret, go back and review all the frets you have learned up to that point. Remember, you are building your knowledge and will need to reinforce what you've previously learned.

After learning all the frets which only have natural letters, you may begin to add the frets with flat letters. Then add the frets with sharp letters. It is best to spend a few minutes every day reviewing your flashcards so as to reinforce what you've learned. Remember, there are lots of opportunities throughout the day to practice and drill, it's easy, fast and fun... and you don't even need your bass!

By following the simple suggestions above, you will memorize all 21 letters on all strings in less time than you might have imagined. And when you're really good, you should be able to say the letter names for any string without hesitation. Don't forget, **practice makes you faster!**

Bonus Benefits

Simply stated, a **benefit** is something you can do because of something you have or know. The following summary lists but a few of the many remarkable benefits to be gained from using your bass flashcards.

Complete Knowledge - This means that from the very beginning, you will know the complete alphabet of music on your fretboard. This is because the first thing you learn is 21 letters, and more importantly, that is all that you will ever learn. In other words, with your very first thought ~ you're finished. You will never have to learn another letter on the fretboard... ever! Now, you can get on with playing all the incredible songs that you have always wanted to play. Don't forget, drilling your bass fretboard flashcards will make learning the letters and staff-notes easy, fast and fun without effort or strain. Your bass playing success is guaranteed!

Dual Understanding - By using both sides of your brain to learn and memorize, you will become smarter. You will find that remembering is easy because of whole brain learning. In other words, since the frontside of a flashcard uses the left side of your brain to connect a letter or staff-note to a fret, and the backside of the flashcard uses the right side of your brain to connect a fret to a letter or staff-note, developing a **Master Memory** is guaranteed. These two different aspects of your **Bass Fretboard Flashcards** in conjunction with the two sides of your brain, like two sides of one coin, will make you equally skilled in both directions: letter, staff-note/fret and fret/staff-note, letter.

No Hesitation - You can now focus your attention on playing and enjoying music on your bass because you don't have to waste time and energy trying to locate a letter on the fretboard. Said another way, minimizing hesitation, eliminating mistakes and avoiding frustration will result in you become faster at reaching your goal of complete fretboard knowledge.

Simple and Clear - As your understanding of the fretboard becomes clearer, learning becomes simpler, and your playing improves quickly. Your technique and skill becomes much faster, cleaner and clearer. You become much more effective and efficient at playing bass because you have simple, clear and immediate knowledge of the entire fretboard.

New View - With this new view of $7 + 7 + 7 = 21$, you can never be any more complete, effective or efficient. In other words, now that you have the total fretboard knowledge of 7 natural letters, 7 flat letters and 7 sharp letters on every string, you can now think with a new and direct **sign before symbol** view. You don't waste precious time going to the wrong location to eventually get to where you wanted to go in the first place! Said a different way, with this new view, you can't get there any faster.

Many Applications - You will also discover that by knowing 21 letters on the fretboard immediately you are able to understand with clarity and certainty the more complex aspects of music. For example, **key signatures, scale spellings, chord inversions, harmony voicings** and the **parabola of 4ths and 5ths**. In other words, musical thoughts and ideas that once seem complicated and confusing will now be as easy as pie! Yummy.

More Benefits - As you progress, you will learn how easy it is to start as a beginner and quickly become an advanced player in much less time than you ever thought possible. You will break through barriers that have kept you from being the awesome bass player that you know you are by accelerating all aspects of your musical knowledge and fretboard skills. You will discover that you are able to play riffs and licks with incredible speed and accuracy and that you can create original and memorable melodies and harmonies effortlessly. You will advance your ability to "play by ear" and develop the skill necessary to express your remarkable and original talent. You will discover that you can write hit songs that the world will sing with ease. You will access the incredible versatility that allows you to play all genres and styles of music from rock to jazz to blues to country to classical to whatever. You will feel confident playing with others, whether live or virtually with YouTube, or your favorite iPod superstar!

As you can see, the benefits of using **Bass Fretboard Flashcards** from 12 Tone Music Publishing are virtually infinite... be sure to let me know what you like to do with them. I'm listening, and I'm here for you!

Globally-renowned bass and guitar instructor, **Mike Overly** easily combines the worlds of deeply-rooted academic study with a well-textured performance resume. His pathbreaking **12 Tone Music Publishing** products, including the soon to be released "**Tone Note® Music Method for Bass**," provide valuable illuminating insights while simplifying the learning process.

Join Mike at www.12tonemusic.com to explore and expand your knowledge of these two iconic instruments through a variety of reviews and interviews, tips and tricks and free lessons of remarkable originality, all presented in a family-friendly forum. Plus, as an added bonus, you get to follow Mr. Pick as he introduces you to fun fretboard games, jokes, riddles, quotes and more. Be sure to read the [12 Tone Music Blog](#) where Mike offers a behind-the-scenes look at the development of his unique approach to solving the problems of modern musical notation and traditional bass and bass methods.

Mike Overly's unmatched perspective on fretboard education has something for everyone ~ from the amateur hobbyist to the serious professional player ~ as well as any music enthusiast who wants to come along for the ride.