

Reading Bass Guitar Tablature (Tab)

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Horizontal lines represent the 4 strings of the bass guitar.

These black boxes are rests, which means you don't play.

Read tabs left to right >>

Numbers represent which fret to play; they are on the line representing which string to fret the note on.

Seeing one note in a measure means this note is sustained for the full measure.

8

<< These are the counts for this measure: 1 beat of playing a chord, then 3 beats of rests.

Stacked numbers mean to play these notes at the same time, as a chord.

Try to read these four measures!

Reading tab is a great way for bassists to dive in to learning songs they love. Often, tabs will not include the exact rhythms to play. In this case, you will need to know the song well enough to play the notes correctly. Other times, tabs will contain stems that show us the rhythm.

Check out my Reading Sheet Music reference PDF to learn more about reading rhythms.