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## Using Your Left Hand

The job of a left-hand finger is to shorten the vibrating string length by pressing the string into a fret. The shorter the vibrating string, the higher the *pitch* (pitch is the highness or lowness of the sound). Note that we *do not press the string into the wood of the fretboard*. It is by pressing the string securely into the fret wire that we change the vibrating length of the string, so the most efficient left-hand technique is one that accomplishes this using as little strength as necessary. Be sure to review How to Read Chord Diagrams with your child.

### Introducing the Left-Hand Fingers

Numbers are given to the left-hand fingers for easy identification. The fingers are numbered consecutively, with the index finger being 1 and the pinky, 4.

1. Have your child hold up their left hand. Point to each finger and say the corresponding finger number.
2. Repeat, but this time, ask your child to say the finger number as you point.

### Practice Suggestions

1. Have your child trace their left hand on a separate piece of paper. Then, number each finger.
2. Have your child hold up their left hand. As you call out finger numbers, have them wiggle the correct finger.

### Hand Position and Placing a Finger on a String

Fingers are naturally stronger and will provide the best leverage in a curled position, like gently holding a ball. The left thumb should be in the middle of the back of the guitar neck, between fingers 1 and 2. Keeping the elbow loosely in and the fingers curled, use the very tips of the fingers to press the strings, placing them directly next to the fret wire, but not actually ON the fret.

### Practice Suggestion—Butterfly Finger Exercise

1. Using the photos on page 17 as a guide, have your child lightly place finger 1 , without pressing down, on the 2nd string, right next to the 1st fret. You can say the finger should be “like a butterfly landing on the string.”
2. Ask him or her to pluck the 2nd string with the pick or right-hand finger. You will hear a clicking, unpitched sound. No note will be heard.
3. Have your child slowly begin to add pressure with the finger as they pluck the string. The instant the string sings out a clear note, the student should stop adding pressure. That is as hard as he or she needs to press to play.

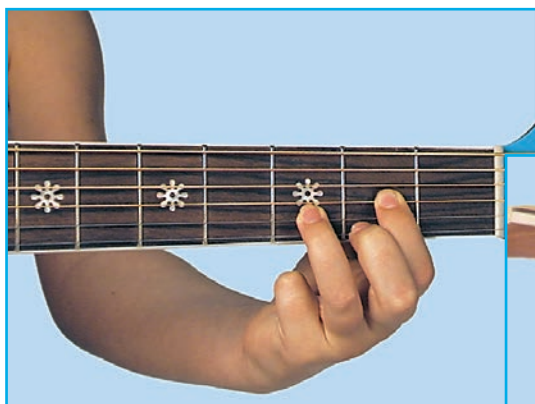
### Subsequent Lessons

Your child may experience a little discomfort at first. It takes a while to develop calluses at the tips of the left-hand fingers. Keep practice sessions short to minimize associating discomfort with playing guitar, and always remind him or her that their fingers should not press hard or squeeze the neck. Repeat the “butterfly finger” exercise described above often.

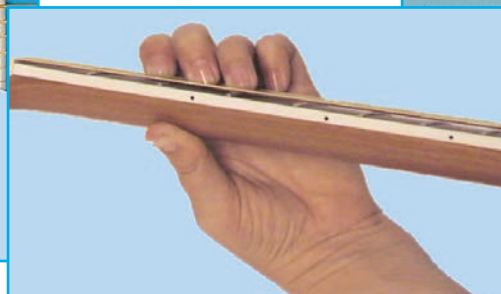
# Using Your Left Hand

## Hand Position

Learning to use your left-hand fingers easily starts with a good hand position. Place your hand so your thumb rests comfortably in the middle of the back of the neck. Position your fingers on the front of the neck as if you are gently squeezing a ball between them and your thumb. Keep your elbow in and your fingers curved.



Keep elbow in and fingers curved



Like gently squeezing a ball between your fingertips and thumb



## Placing a Finger on a String

When you press a string with a left-hand finger, make sure you press firmly with the tip of your finger and as close to the fret wire as you can without actually being right on it. Short fingernails are important! This will create a clean, bright tone.



**RIGHT**  
Finger presses the string down near the fret without actually being on it.



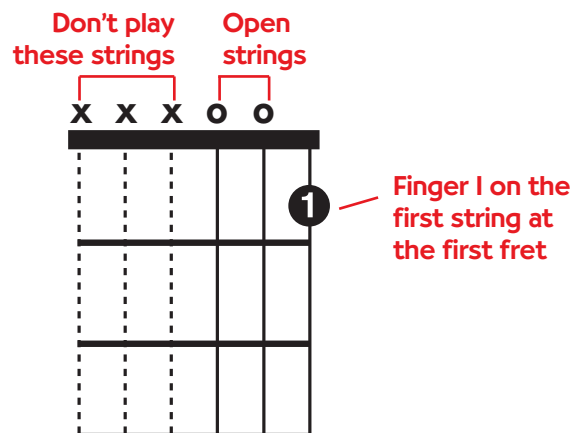
**WRONG**  
Finger is too far from fret wire; tone is "buzzy" and indefinite.



**WRONG**  
Finger is on top of fret wire; tone is muffled and unclear.

## How to Read Chord Diagrams

Chord diagrams show where to place your fingers. The example to the right shows finger 1 on the first string at the first fret. The Xs above the sixth, fifth and fourth strings tell you not to play them and only strum the third, second and first strings. Strings that are not played in a chord also look like dashed lines. The Os above the second and third strings tell you these strings are to be played *open*, meaning without pressing down on them with a left-hand finger.



## Love Somebody

Learning to play “Love Somebody” is another opportunity for your child to use all three chords—C, G<sup>7</sup>, and G—the rest position, and the repeat sign.

### Introducing the Page

1. Point out that in this song there are actually two different *verses*! The verse is the main part of a song, and often tells a story. When two or more sections of a song have essentially the same music but different lyrics, each of these sections is considered one verse. The first time through the song, we sing the top line of lyrics shown under the music. When we repeat and play it a second time, we sing the second line of lyrics.
2. Look the song over with your child, and have them say everything they observe about the music. Do they mention the repeat sign? The three different chords? The rest in measure 8? Make sure they have observed everything before continuing.

### Practice Suggestions

1. Slowly and evenly point at each quarter-note slash and say the name of the chord, saying “rest” at the quarter rests.
2. Repeat this activity with your child.
3. As you slowly and evenly point at the quarter-note slashes and rests, say the lyrics to the song, demonstrating how the words fall against the beats, and keep a steady beat as you return to the beginning for the repeat.
4. Repeat this activity with your child.
5. As you tap the beats on your lap, speak the lyrics to the song in rhythm, saying the top line the first time through and the bottom line on the repeat.
6. Repeat this activity with your child.
7. Now, you sing the lyrics as your child strums the chords.

### Subsequent Lessons

1. It’s important for your child to develop the habit of looking over a piece of music before beginning to practice. What is the time signature? What chords are used? Are there rests? Is there a repeat sign? The more we know about a piece before we play, the easier and more fun it is to learn!
2. Together, play along with Track 18.





# Love Somebody

C



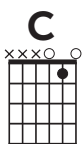
G



G7



1. Love some - bod - y, yes I do! — Love some - bod - y, won't say who. —  
 2. Love some - bod - y, want to hear? — Let me whis - per in your ear. —



Love some - bod - y, can you guess? — Who's the one that I love best?  
 Love some - bod - y, now you've guessed — You're the one that I love best!

## Alouette

The first thing you'll notice about "Alouette" is that it's 24 measures long! It's easy to learn, though, because there is a lot of repetition. This French folk song is about a bird called a skylark, and plucking the feathers before cooking it for dinner. The words are translated as: "Little skylark, lovely little skylark, little lark, I'll pluck your feathers off."

### Introducing the Page

1. The last eight measures are exactly the same as the first eight measures. Within those eight measures, measures 5, 6, and 7 are the same as measures 1, 2, and 3. Likewise, measures 21, 22, and 23 are the same as measures 17, 18, and 19.
2. Think of "Alouette" as having three sections: The "A" section is measures 1–8; the "B" section measures 9–16; and then the "A" section returns in measures 17–24. This is an A-B-A form. The words of the song (the *lyrics*) make this form easy to detect.
3. This song combines a single-note melody with strummed three-note chords. Notice, however, that every time you strum a chord, the single note just before it is part of the chord. Just leave the finger down and strum. Easy!
4. Count aloud as you clap the rhythms in "Alouette." Be sure to spread your hands apart during the rests.
5. Do this together with your child.
6. Make measures 15 and 16 an exercise to repeat many times; they include lots of string skipping with the pick. See if your child can learn to play these measures without looking at the right hand. It's okay, though, if they need to sneak a peek every now and then. Switching attention from one hand to another and from the hands to the written music is a good skill for your child to develop.

### Practice Suggestions

Do these activities together with your child:

1. Point at the notes and say their names.
2. Point at the notes and say which string they're on.
3. Point at the notes and say the finger numbers, saying "O" for open strings. Say "O-1-O" for the C chord and "O-O-3" for the G chord.
4. Use additive practice, mastering two measures at a time before adding them to measures previously mastered.

### Subsequent Lessons

Practice "Alouette" for as many days as necessary, until it is smooth, secure, and confident. Sing the song together as your child plays. When your child can play along with Track 63 without error, it is mastered.

# Alouette



Chord diagram: C (xxx0o)

1 3 3 1 3 1

A - lou - et - te, gen - tille A - lou - et - te,

Chord diagram: C (xxx0o)

1 3 3 1 3 1

A - lou - et - te, je te plu - mer - ai.

Chord diagram: G (xxx0o)

Chord diagram: C (xxx0o)

1 3 1 3 3 1 3 1

Je te plu - mer - ai la tête, Je te plu - mer - ai la tête.

3 3 1 3

Et la tête, et la tête, Ah! \_\_\_\_\_

Chord diagram: C (xxx0o)

1 3 3 1 3 1

A - lou - et - te, gen - tille A - lou - et - te,

Chord diagram: C (xxx0o)

Chord diagram: C (xxx0o)

1 3 3 1 3 1

A - lou - et - te, je te plu - mer - ai.

## She'll Be Comin' 'Round the Mountain

This song combines all the single notes you know on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd strings, strumming the G<sup>7</sup> and C chords, and rests.

### Introducing the Page

1. Look over the music together with your child and locate all of the rests. Remember to use the rest position to silence the strings for these rests.
2. Now look through the music again, and point out all of the chord strums.
3. Count aloud as you clap the rhythms in “She'll Be Comin' 'Round the Mountain.” Be sure to spread your hands apart during the rests.
4. Do this together with your child.

### Practice Suggestions

Do these activities together with your child:

1. Point at the notes and say their names.
2. Point at the notes and say which string they're on.
3. Point at the notes and say the finger numbers: “O” for open strings, “O-1-O” for the C chord, and “O-O-1” for the G<sup>7</sup> chord.
4. Use additive practice, mastering two measures at a time before adding them to measures previously mastered.

### Subsequent Lessons

Practice “She'll Be Comin' 'Round the Mountain” for as many days as necessary, until it is smooth, secure, and confident. Sing the song together as your child plays. When your child can play along with Track 70 without error, it is mastered.

Notes:



# She'll Be Comin' 'Round the Mountain



Hold down 1st finger

She'll be com - in' 'round the moun - tain when she comes. She'll be



com - in' 'round the moun - tain when she comes. She'll be

com - in' 'round the moun - tain, she'll be com - in' 'round the moun - tain, she'll be



Hold down 1st finger

com - in' 'round the moun - tain when she comes!