

# Reading and Playing Guitar Out of Open Position

By Christopher Perez

Regardless of style, one challenge young guitarists face is making the jump from playing in open position (also called 1<sup>st</sup> position using open strings through the first four frets) to playing in alternate positions. Once a student has proficiency in reading/performing in open position points below, they are ready to tackle reading in different positions on the guitar.

- first position scales in C, F (two octaves), B $\flat$ , G (two octaves), D, A (two octaves), and in E (two octaves)
- performing simple melodies using the natural and enharmonic notes in 1<sup>st</sup> (Open Position)

Below are several exercises and resources to aide in developing reading and technical proficiency in playing out of open position.

**C Major Scale** – This scale is one that can be practiced in a variety of positions (fixed and moveable) on the guitar. Through practice, the student will develop better reading ability in different guitar positions.

For the one octave C major scale, **Example 1** below shows the open/1<sup>st</sup> position form, beginning on the A string, third fret along with proper L.H. finger use.

## C Major Scale (Open Position)

Musical notation for the C Major Scale in Open Position. The notation is in 4/4 time and begins on the A string, third fret. The left hand fingering is indicated by numbers 1-3 below the notes. The strings are labeled T (Top), A (A), and B (Bottom).

L.H. fingering

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

**Example 2** uses the same notes of the C scale but using a different finger, fret combination and using only three strings.

## C Major Scale (2<sup>nd</sup> Position)

Musical notation for the C Major Scale in 2<sup>nd</sup> Position. The notation is in 4/4 time and begins on the A string, third fret. The left hand fingering is indicated by numbers 1-4 below the notes. The strings are labeled T (Top), A (A), and B (Bottom).

L.H. fingering

2	4	1	2	4	1	3	4	3	1	4	2	1	4	2
3	5	2	3	5	2	4	5	4	2	5	3	2	5	3

**Example 3** begins on the E string, eighth fret, yet uses the same fingerings as **Example 2** with only the bass strings.

## C Major Scale (7<sup>th</sup> Position)

Musical notation for the C Major Scale in the 7<sup>th</sup> position. The treble clef staff shows the scale with fingerings: 2, 4, 1, 2, 4, 1, 3, 4, 3, 1, 4, 2, 1, 4, 2. The label "L.H. fingering" is placed below the treble staff. The bass clef staff shows the fret numbers: 8, 10, 7, 8, 10, 7, 9, 10, 9, 7, 10, 8, 7, 10, 8.

**Example 4** begins on the low E string (7<sup>th</sup> position); the next uses the Segovia Style finger shift.

## 2 octave C Major Scale (7<sup>th</sup> Position)

Musical notation for a two-octave C Major Scale in the 7<sup>th</sup> position. The treble clef staff shows the scale with fingerings: 2, 4, 1, 2, 4, 1, 3, 4, 1, 3, 4, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 4, 2, 4, 3, 1, 4, 3, 1, 4, 2, 1, 4, 2. The label "L.H. fingering" is placed below the treble staff. The bass clef staff shows the fret numbers: 8, 10, 7, 8, 10, 7, 9, 10, 7, 9, 10, 8, 10, 7, 8, 7, 10, 8, 10, 9, 7, 10, 9, 7, 10, 8, 7, 10, 8.

## 2 octave Segovia Scale (finger shifts)

Musical notation for a two-octave Segovia Scale with finger shifts. The treble clef staff shows the scale with fingerings: 2, 4, 1, 2, 4, 1, 3, 1, 3, 1, 2, 4, 1, 3, 4, 3, 1, 4, 2, 1, 3, 1, 3, 1, 4, 2, 1, 4, 2. The label "L.H. fingering" is placed below the treble staff. The bass clef staff shows the fret numbers: 3, 5, 2, 3, 5, 2, 4, 5, 7, 5, 6, 8, 5, 7, 8, 7, 5, 8, 6, 5, 7, 5, 4, 2, 5, 3, 2, 5, 3. Annotations "shift 1st finger to V" and "shift 3rd finger to IV" are placed above the treble staff.

These forms of alternate positions can be applied to other scales including the keys of G, D, and A.

