

Irish Guitar Podcast

Book 1

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Introduction

Welcome to the Book 1 of the Irish Guitar Podcast.

Audio files for this chapter can be downloaded free of charge from www.irishguitarpod.com.

We hope you'll find this a useful resource for learning to play traditional Irish music on the guitar.

This lessons in this chapter are meant to be taken in sequence. As the lessons progress, new elements are introduced.

Lesson 1 – The Blackthorn Stick

This is a popular jig, and we play it in the key of G.

It's also a good one to start with because it's played entirely in the open position – which means you don't have to move your hand up and down along the neck of the guitar as you're playing.

Playing the Tune

Each bar in an Irish jig contains 2 groups of 3 short notes (quavers) or the equivalent – and this gives the jig its characteristic rhythm. When counting, you would normally say:

One and a **Two** and a...

There's an emphasis on the first beat in each set of three.

When you're using your pick, you go:

Down up down **Down** up down

Even though this is not the most efficient way to pick (because there are consecutive down strokes) it will nevertheless give you the correct lilt or feel – so make sure you put the effort into doing this correctly.

Accompanying the Tune

There are a few ways to accompany jigs but the most basic form is to play a bass note of a chord held for the length of two of two quavers (a crotchet), followed by a not too heavy strum of the chord.

You count **One-a Two-a** for each bar.

Reading the Sheet Music

As this is our first lesson, we'd better explain the notation.

If you don't read sheet music, don't worry. As you progress through the lessons, you'll find that you begin to pick it up little by little. For now, all you need to know is how the fingering is indicated. This is shown on the tablature, or tab – which is the lower part of each line of the sheet music.

The image shows a musical score for guitar. The top part is a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 6/8 time signature. The melody consists of two measures. The first measure is a G chord, and the second measure is a C chord. Below the staff is a guitar tablature with three lines labeled T (Treble), A (A), and B (B). The tablature shows fingerings: 3 on the second line, 3 on the first line, 2 on the first line, 3 on the first line, 0 on the first line, 3 on the first line, and 0 on the first line. A white box highlights the first two measures of the tablature.

You'll notice numbers on the lower part of each line of music (highlighted in the diagram above). These refer to your fingers. The index finger is 1, the middle finger is 2, the ring finger is 3 and the little finger is 4. Where you see a zero, that means you play the string open – without any finger on it.

The lines in the tablature refer to the strings on your guitar. An easy way to remember which string is which, just remember that the highest link in the tablature is the highest pitched string (E) – also referred so as the first string. The second line down is the second highest (B) and so on.

For these lessons, we use standard tuning, so from first to sixth strings, the notes are: E, B, G, D, A, E.

So the very first note is played with your third finger on the second string, then:

- third finger on the first string
- second finger on the first string
- third finger on the first string
- first string open (no finger)

... and so on.

The chords, you'll notice, are above each line in the sheet music, as shown below (chords G and C appear above the line).

G C

T 3 3 2 3 0 3 0

A **G**
8

B

Blackthorn Stick

G C G C G D G D

G C G C G D G

G Em G C D

G C G C G D G