

# A Tensional Guitarist

*Tensions for guitarists of pressing note:  
the creative use of dissonances.*

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## Foreword

For the benefit of those with a less formal or no jazz education in music I would like to begin by explaining that when we add a **tension** to a chord, and use it in the way that I describe in this book, we are creating **passing chords (and dissonances)** going from one chord to another.

Now let me define a few important terms:

*A **tensional guitarist** is a guitarist who uses the scales and tensions of the chords he or she is playing to fill out and enhance the music. Understanding this will help you place the information in this book in the right frame.*

*A **tension** in music (particularly jazz) is any note brought into a consonant chord which introduces a new dissonant sound, or turns it into a discord, thus creating more movement and tension in a short period of time. The use of tensions is very helpful when improvising on a set chord sequence.*

*A **chord** may be defined as any harmonic combination of two or more (many definitions insist on three or more) musical sounds at different pitches, which are played so as to be heard simultaneously. (Chords are more fully discussed in the first section and throughout the book.)*

*A **consonant chord** is one that is pleasing to the ear; sounding complete in itself.*

*A **dissonant chord** is one that jars, or leads the ear to desire a resolution of its disturbing effect or dissonance.*

This book is, in essence, about how to use your creativity around the chords that you play as a guitarist. It will show you how to create new sounds and moods, colouring your music with the rhythms and the sounds you have inside you. Not necessarily the sound you think you have, but the *real* sound that comes out naturally.

The colour-coding is rather standard in this type of book, but I have included both music notation and tablature because the longer I spend in this profession the more I realise that as a practicing musician you need to be fluent in both forms of music representation. The “Advice in a Nutshell” sections are primarily things that I have seen and experienced as a teacher; tips and techniques that give guaranteed results.

I hope that this book will find you spending a lot of time in front of it, studying how to master the nuances of sound and rhythm that only *you* can find because only you are you.

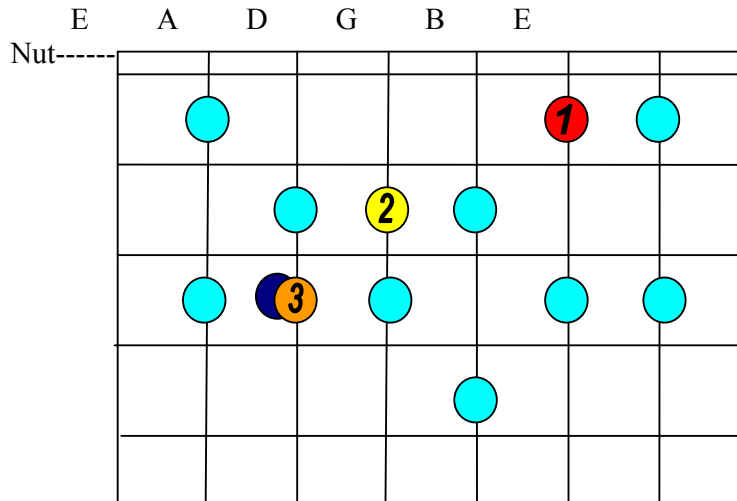
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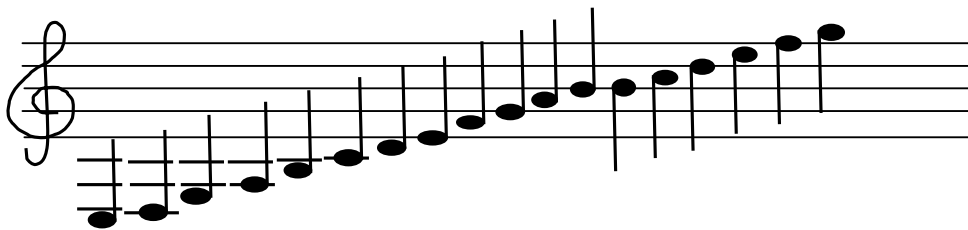
The C chord is, of course, based on the C scale and thus there is a specific pattern of notes on the fretboard that is related to this chord. Always remember that your chord dictates the pattern you use when you add tensions.

Index finger **1** Middle finger **2** Ring finger **3** Pinky **4** Tension 

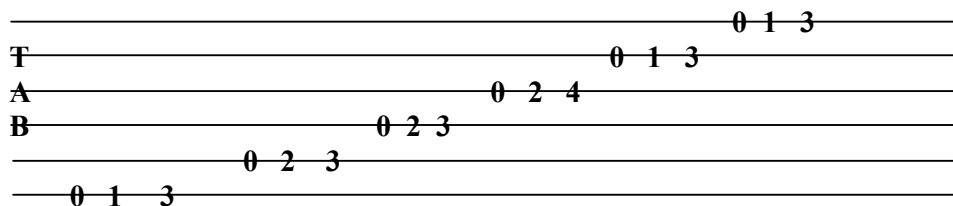


Root  played with the ring finger on the 3rd fret of the 5th string.

(SCALE in NOTATION)



(SCALE in TABLATURE)

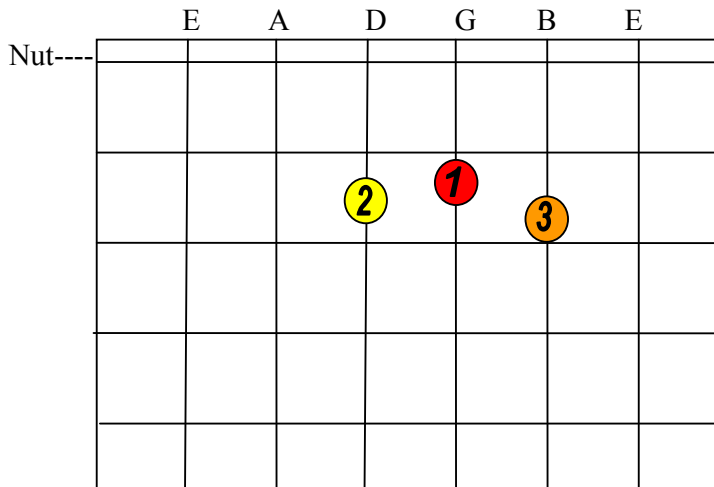


## (9) The A-shape (A, C#, E):

Scale from which this chord is derived: A, B, C#, D, E, F#, G#, A

If we look at the A shape on the guitar, then we find that we can use our little finger quite freely to add tensions and melodic nuances while we are playing this chord.

Index finger **1** Middle finger **2** Ring finger **3** Pinky **4**



The reason for the fingering as above on this chord is that it gives you the easiest access to the tensions of the scale and jazz chords. This fingering also works well for slide and pivot fingers while changing to the other chords of the scale.

**Advice in a nutshell:**

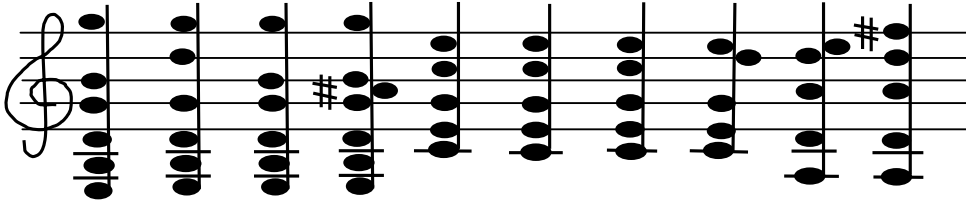
You can only start “practising” a piece once you know it. While you are still learning the piece you cannot call it practice. The frustration all people experience is when they are learning the music; not when they practise it.

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I am now going to give a simple example. Copy this style and see what you come up with.

We will be using a G chord in the open position to work from.

(TABLATURE in NOTATION)



(NOTES in TABLATURE)

	3	3	3	3	0	3	0	3	0	2
<b>T</b>	0	3	0	0	1	1	1	3	3	3
<b>A</b>	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
<b>B</b>	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	0
	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	0	0
	3	3	3	3						