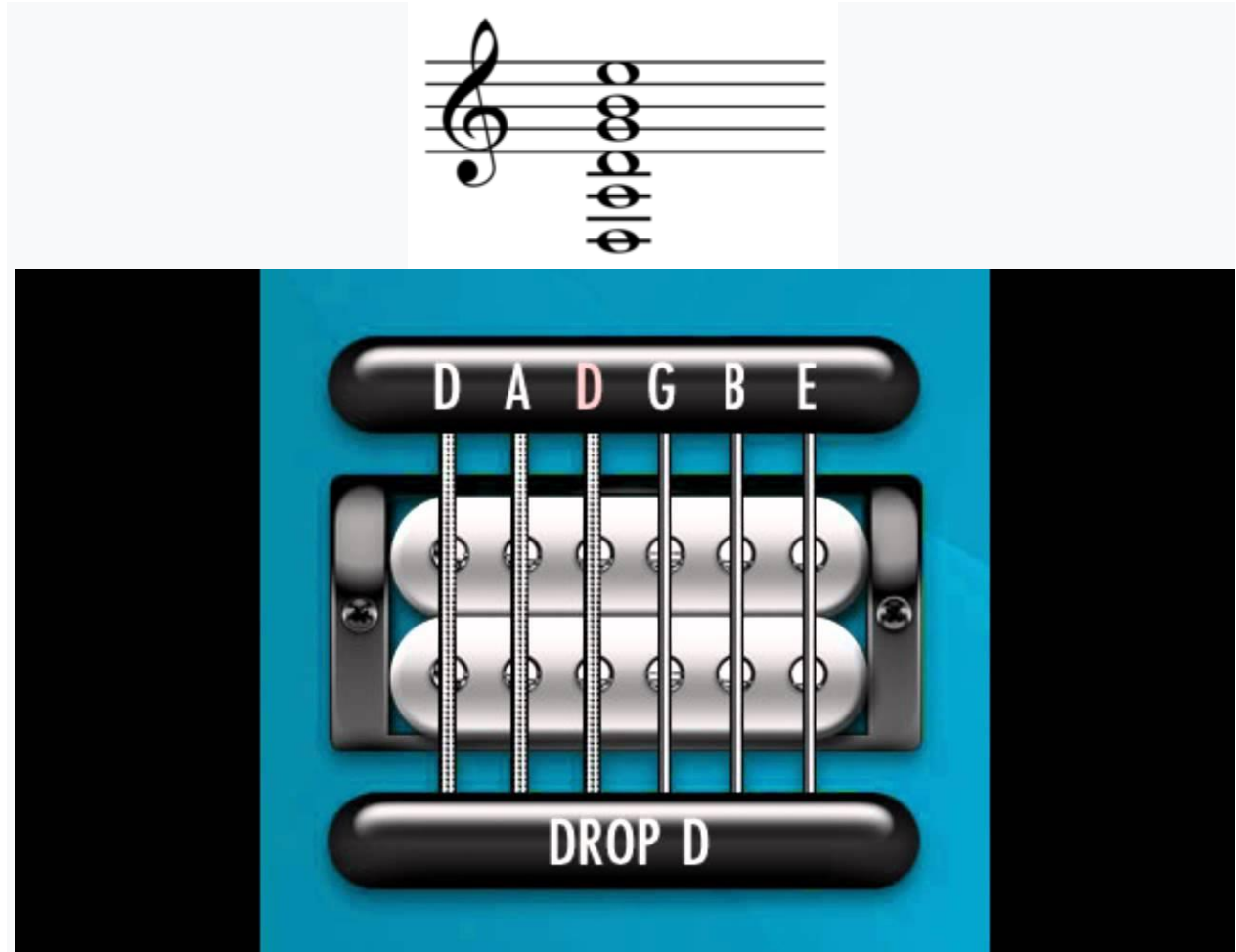


# Drop D tuning

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*Not to be confused with [D tuning](#).*



Drop D tuning

**Drop D tuning** is an alternative form of [guitar tuning](#) in which the lowest (sixth) string is tuned down from the usual E of standard tuning by one whole step to D.<sup>[1]</sup> Drop D tuning, as well as other lowered altered tunings, are often used with the [electric guitar](#) in [heavy metal music](#). It is also used in [blues](#), [country](#), [folk](#) (often with [acoustic guitar](#)), and [classical guitar](#).

## Uses

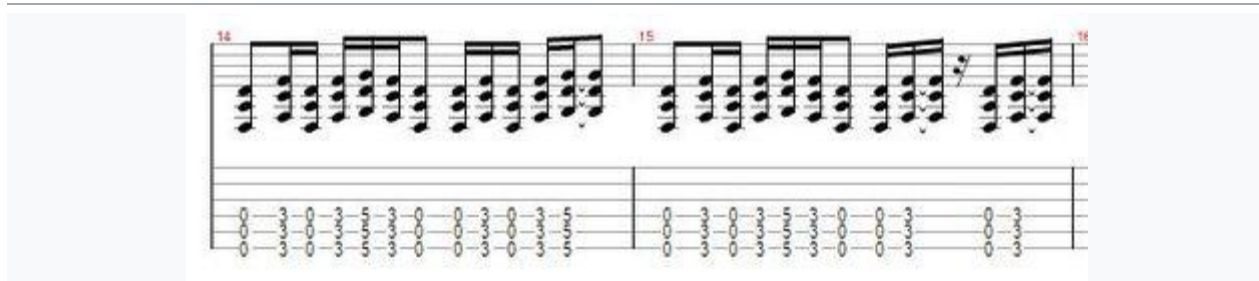
In drop D, the three open bass strings form a D5 [power chord](#). Other fifth chords are made when barred with the index finger of the fretting hand shifted up the [fretboard](#). Drop D tuning is frequently used in [heavy metal](#) and its various subgenres, as guitarists in these styles often need fast transitions between power chords. Drop D is also used in

metal because it adds two lower semitones to the bass range of the [rhythm guitar](#), which adds two more low-range power chords (Eb and D) and enables a "heavier", deeper sound. The tuning has also been used in many other styles of music, including [blues](#), [country](#), [folk](#), and [classical](#). Due to its similarity to standard tuning, drop D is recognised as a useful introduction to alternative tunings, leading logically to an exploration of [DADGAD](#), [open D](#) and drop D drop G (in which both the 5th and 6th strings are dropped a tone) tunings.

The tuning allows for chords with a root or bass note of D to be played with a D an octave lower than with standard tuning. It also allows the playing of open D chords that include the fifth and sixth strings, letting the full sonority of the guitar be heard. This can be especially useful for songs in the keys of D major or minor and is particularly effective on acoustic guitar. Drop D also allows [fingerpickers](#) to play chord shapes higher up the neck while maintaining an [alternating bass](#). The bottom three strings, if left open, will vibrate [sympathetically](#) and, using chord shapes limited to the top three strings, a [drone](#) effect can easily be achieved.

The trade-off is the loss of the open bass E note in chords or fingerings, which the player can adjust to include fretting the sixth string at the second fret (now E). [\[dubious – discuss\]](#)

## In rock and metal



Tabulature of main riff of "Flower" by [Soundgarden](#). It is played in drop D tuning. Its rapid changes are almost impossible to play without using a drop D tuning.

Although the drop D tuning was introduced and developed by [blues](#) and [classical](#) guitarists, it is well known from its usage in contemporary [heavy metal](#) and [hard rock](#) bands. Early hard rock songs tuned in drop D include [The Beatles'](#) "[I Want You \(She's So Heavy\)](#)" and [Led Zeppelin's](#) "[Moby Dick](#)", both first released in 1969.<sup>[2]</sup> Tuning the lowest string one [tone](#) down, from E to D allowed these musicians to acquire a heavier and darker sound than in [standard tuning](#). Without needing to tune all strings (Standard D tuning), they could tune just one, in order to lower the key. Drop D is also a convenient tuning, because it expands the [scale](#) of an instrument by two semitones: D and D#.

In the mid 1980s, three [alternative rock](#) bands, [King's X](#), [Soundgarden](#) and [Melvins](#), influenced by [Led Zeppelin](#) and [Black Sabbath](#), made extensive use of drop D tuning.<sup>[3]</sup> While playing [power chords](#) (a chord that includes the prime, fifth and octave) in standard tuning requires a player to use two or three fingers, drop D tuning needs just one, similar in technique to playing [barre chords](#).<sup>[4]</sup> It allowed them to use different methods of articulating power chords ([legato](#) for example) and more importantly, it

allowed guitarist to change chords faster. This new technique of playing power chords introduced by these early [grunge](#) bands was a great influence on many artists, such as [Rage Against the Machine](#) and [Tool](#). The same drop D tuning then became common practice among [alternative metal](#) acts such as the band [Helmet](#), who used the tuning a great deal throughout their career and would later influence many alternative metal and [nu metal](#) bands. <sup>[5][6]</sup>

Nu metal bands including [Deftones](#) and [Slipknot](#) went one step further and decided to tune "drop" tuning even lower. By lowering the 6th string one whole step in E $\flat$  tuning to D $\flat$ , they created a heavier and grittier sound. Even lower tunings such as Drop D $\flat$ , [Drop C](#), [Drop B](#), Drop B $\flat$ , and [Drop A](#) were also utilized. These tunings are very popular among [Alternative metal](#), [metalcore](#) and [deathcore](#) acts like [Trivium](#), [Emmure](#), [Breaking Benjamin](#), [August Burns Red](#), and [Suicide Silence](#), where fast chord changes are an essential part of the sound. [Progressive metal](#) acts such as [Pain of Salvation](#), [Opeth](#), [Fates Warning](#) and [Dream Theater](#) use these tunings in some of their E-tuned songs.

## Chords in drop D tuning



D chord in drop D tuning [Play](#)

[Chords](#) in drop D tuning are formed as they are in standard tuning, with the exception of the sixth string, which is either omitted or fretted one whole step higher:

Chord	Tab
<b>A</b>	x02220
<b>Am</b>	x02210

<b>B</b>	x24442
<b>Bm</b>	x24432
<b>C</b>	x32010
<b>D</b>	000232
<b>Dm</b>	000231
<b>E</b>	222100
<b>Em</b>	222000
<b>F</b>	333211
<b>F#</b>	444322
<b>F#m</b>	444222
<b>G</b>	520033

Note that these chords are not the power chords commonly played in drop D tuning. Power chords generally mute the higher notes rather than the lower notes.

For purposes of making the table easier to read, spaces are provided between each number when the fret number becomes a double digit. Additionally, the highest note in any 5th chord is an octave from the root note so it is not necessary to play it to achieve a 5th chord.

Chord	Tabs
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<b>A5</b>	777xxx	x022xx
<b>B♭5</b>	888xxx	x133xx
<b>B5</b>	999xxx	x244xx
<b>C5</b>	10 10 10xxx	x355xx
<b>C#5</b>	11 11 11xxx	x466xx
<b>D5</b>	000xxx	x577xx
<b>E♭5</b>	111xxx	x688xx
<b>E5</b>	222xxx	x799xx
<b>F5</b>	333xxx	x8 10 10xx
<b>F#5</b>	444xxx	x9 11 11xx
<b>G5</b>	555xxx	x10 12 12xx
<b>G#5</b>	666xxx	x11 13 13xx

## Relation to other tunings

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Drop D tuning is the most basic type of "drop 1" tuning, where the 6th string is tuned down a [whole step](#) (a tone). A large number of other "drop 1" tunings can be obtained simply by tuning a guitar to drop D tuning and then tuning all strings down some fixed

amount. Examples are Drop D $\flat$ , [Drop C](#), [Drop B](#), Drop B $\flat$ , and [Drop A](#) tunings. All of these use the same fingerings as for drop D tuning.

## References

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1. <sup>^</sup> ["How to tune to Drop D."](#) Justinguitar.com. Retrieved 16 July 2018.
2. <sup>^</sup> Ben Long. ["Drop D Tuning"](#). Archived from [the original](#) on 10 November 2017.
3. <sup>^</sup> Teraz Rock (November 2010). ["Soundgarden Na 12 Stronach!"](#).<sup>[[dead link](#)]</sup>
4. <sup>^</sup> MrHardguitar (13 April 2012). ["What Is Drop D Tuning Guitar Lesson \(how to Tune Guitar to Drop D Tutorial\)"](#).
5. <sup>^</sup> Tolinski, Brad (September 1994). ["Heavy Mental - Interview"](#). Blue Cricket Media.
6. <sup>^</sup> ["Guitar Teacher guide"](#). 6 August 2019.<sup>[[dead link](#)]</sup>

## External links<sup>[[edit](#)]</sup>

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- [Drop D Tuning](#) - Song Examples
- [Tyrannosaurus X](#) - [Guitar Player](#)'s Vincent DeMasi interviews [Ty Tabor](#) about dropped tunings
- [Online Tuners for Drop D, C and B](#) - Drop tuning audio references
- [Ultimate-Guitar](#) - Drop D-Tuning and Basic Chords
- [Music Stackexchange](#) - Why Is Dropped D Tuning Used So Often?