



# HOW TO PLAY DROP D TUNING ON GUITAR

## Drop D Tuning

Drop D tuning is one of the easiest and most useful altered tunings on the guitar.

Only one string changes from the standard guitar tuning.

The 6<sup>th</sup> string, normally tuned to a low E, is tuned down a whole step to a D.

So, the strings end up being...

6<sup>th</sup> – D  
5<sup>th</sup> – A  
4<sup>th</sup> – D  
3<sup>rd</sup> – G  
2<sup>nd</sup> – B  
1<sup>st</sup> – E

This tuning is great for creating a low, full sound particularly when in the key of D.

## Exploring Drop D Tuning

Let's first get familiar with the sound and layout of the new tuning.

Here's a D major scale played on the 4<sup>th</sup> string up the neck with the added drop D notes.

**D**

T																
A	0	2	4	5	7	9	11	12	12	11	9	7	5	4	2	0
B	0															

Try playing the scale up an octave on the second string as well.

Next, let's play the D major scale up an octave in 3rds on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> strings. Incorporate the middle D, A and low D along or in between the notes.

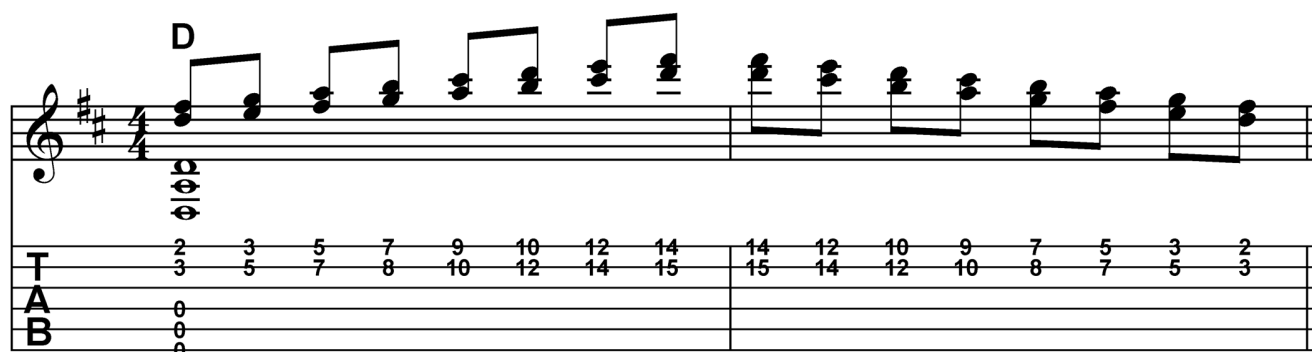


Diagram showing the D major scale up an octave in 3rds on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> strings. The scale is written in treble clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of two sharps (D major). The scale starts on D4 (open 2nd string) and goes up to D5 (15th fret, 1st string). The drone strings are T (Treble), A (Middle), and B (Bass).

Fret	2	3	5	7	9	10	12	14	15	14	12	10	9	7	5	3	2
T	3	5	7	8	10	12	14	15	15	14	12	10	9	7	5	3	2
A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Now, let's play the D major scale in 6ths up the neck as shown. Add the open D, A, and low D drone strings to improvise a rhythm.

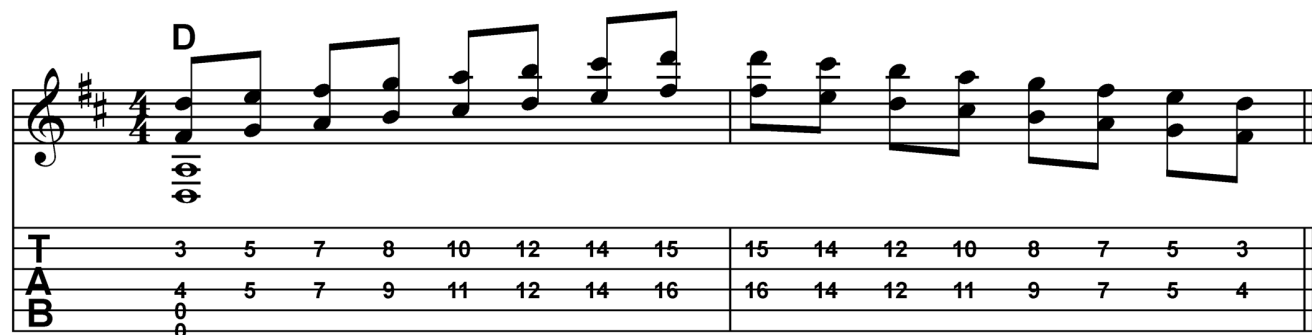


Diagram showing the D major scale in 6ths up the neck. The scale is written in treble clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of two sharps (D major). The scale starts on D4 (open 2nd string) and goes up to D5 (15th fret, 1st string). The drone strings are T (Treble), A (Middle), and B (Bass).

Fret	3	5	7	8	10	12	14	15	15	14	12	10	8	7	5	3
T	3	5	7	8	10	12	14	15	15	14	12	10	8	7	5	3
A	4	5	7	9	11	12	14	16	16	14	12	11	9	7	5	4
B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Next, let's make each chord a triad.

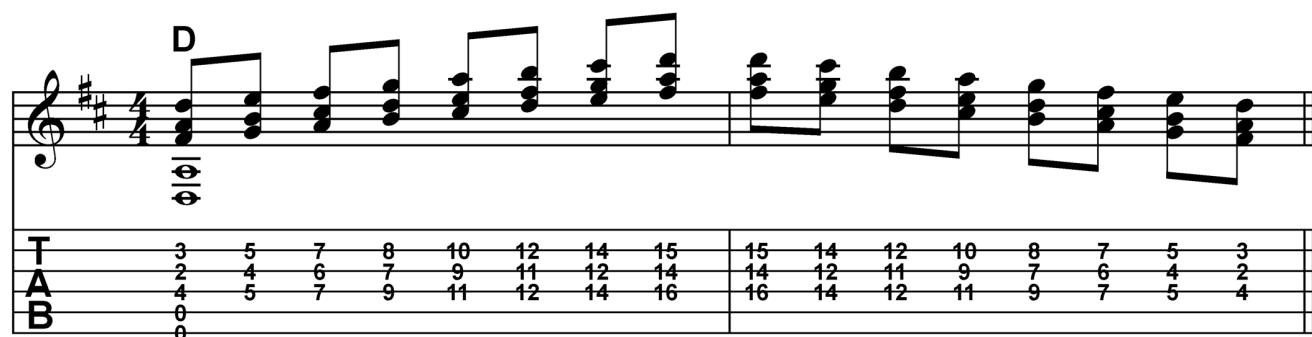
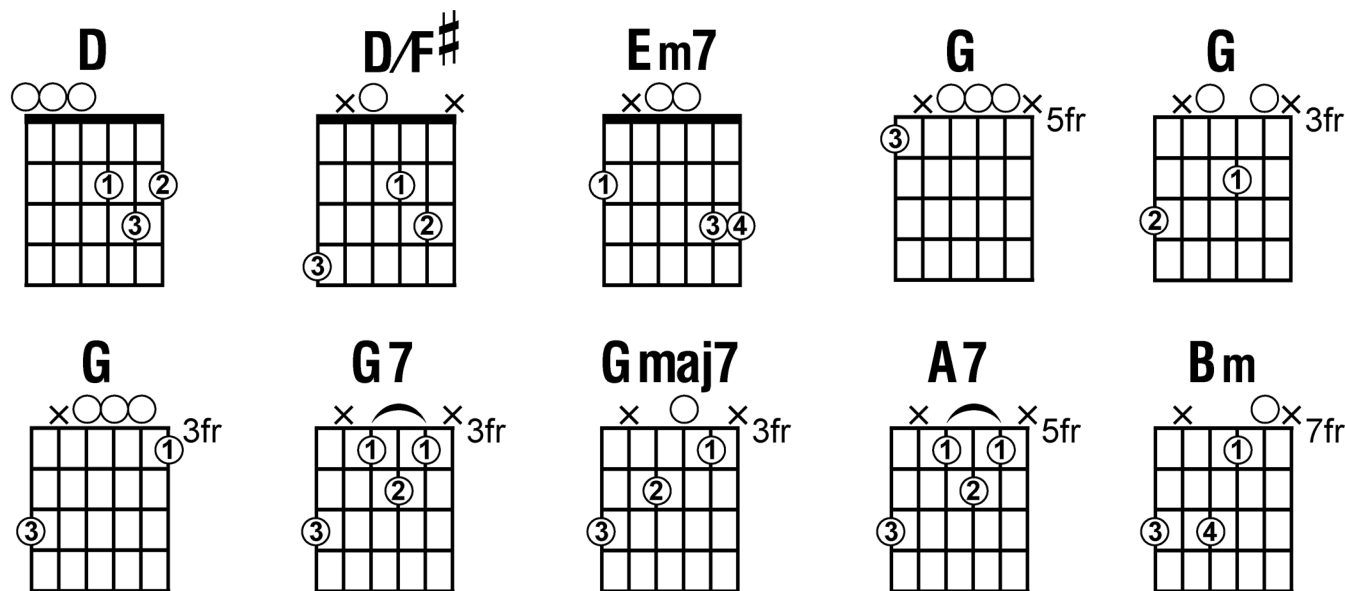


Diagram showing the D major scale in triads up the neck. The scale is written in treble clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of two sharps (D major). The scale starts on D4 (open 2nd string) and goes up to D5 (15th fret, 1st string). The drone strings are T (Treble), A (Middle), and B (Bass).

Fret	3	5	7	8	10	12	14	15	15	14	12	10	8	7	5	3
T	3	5	7	8	10	12	14	15	15	14	12	10	8	7	5	3
A	2	4	6	7	9	11	12	14	14	12	11	9	7	6	4	2
B	4	5	7	9	11	12	14	16	16	14	12	11	9	7	5	4

# Drop D Chords

Here are a few helpful chords shapes in Drop D.



## “Everlong” by Foo Fighters Intro

Here are the chord shapes for the Intro and Verse.

**Dmaj7**

**B2**

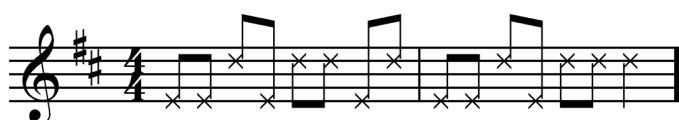
**G2**

**B2**

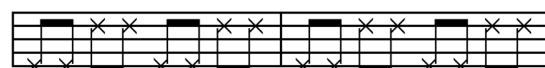
	11	11	11	11	7	11	11
T							
A							
B	9	9	9	9	5	9	9
	0	0	9	9	5	9	9

Here are the rhythms used. Strum the lower notes for the low notes and the upper notes of the voicing for the higher notes. Use rhythm 1 for measures 1-4 and rhythm 2 for measures 5-7.

### Rhythm 1 (Measures 1-4)



### Rhythm 2 (Measures 5-7)



# Drop D Blues Licks

Drop D tuning works great for incorporating blues licks in D.

First, try this simple lick that bends on the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret 6<sup>th</sup> string. Use your 3<sup>rd</sup> finger for all of the fretted notes.

**D7**

3 0 3 0

A more advanced lick based on the same idea is below.

**D7**

TAB

Finally, try to improvise your own blues patterns ending on these licks. Experiment with emphasizing the notes of the G major scale which gives a bluesy sound when played in the context of the key of D.

Learn all you can! – Steve