



# HOW TO PLAY HARMONICS ON GUITAR

IT'S EASIER THAN YOU THINK!



## Harmonics

One of the most unique things a guitar can do is play harmonics.

What is a harmonic?

The bell-like chime sound that occurs when the string is plucked at very specific places on the guitar.

## Where do Harmonics Happen?

### Played on Fret

- **12<sup>th</sup> Fret** (The Strongest)
- **7<sup>th</sup> Fret** (The Next Strongest)
- **5<sup>th</sup> Fret** (The Weakest)

### The Sound that Occurs

An octave above the open string tone.  
An octave plus a fifth above open string.  
Two octaves above the open string tone.

There are others, but these are the three most useful harmonic positions on guitar.

## Why do Harmonics Happen?

When you divide the string (halves, thirds, quarters) certain frequencies happen. In physics, these division points of a string are called “nodes”. In music, these points are where harmonics occur.

## How Do You Play Harmonics?

Let's start at the 12<sup>th</sup> fret harmonic since it is the strongest and easiest to play.

- **Lightly touch your fretting hand finger to the string directly over the 12<sup>th</sup> fret metal bar.** (Accuracy counts - Make sure your finger is not between the frets, or at the 11<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> fret. It must be exactly over the 12<sup>th</sup> fret bar.)
- **Pluck the string while fretting hand finger is lightly touching the string** – not pressing down – just lightly touching.
- For a clearer sound, release your fretting hand finger just after the note is plucked.
- Plucking the string closer to the bridge will produce a louder harmonic.

# How Are Harmonics Notated?

In music, harmonics are notated as with a diamond notehead instead of the normal notehead.

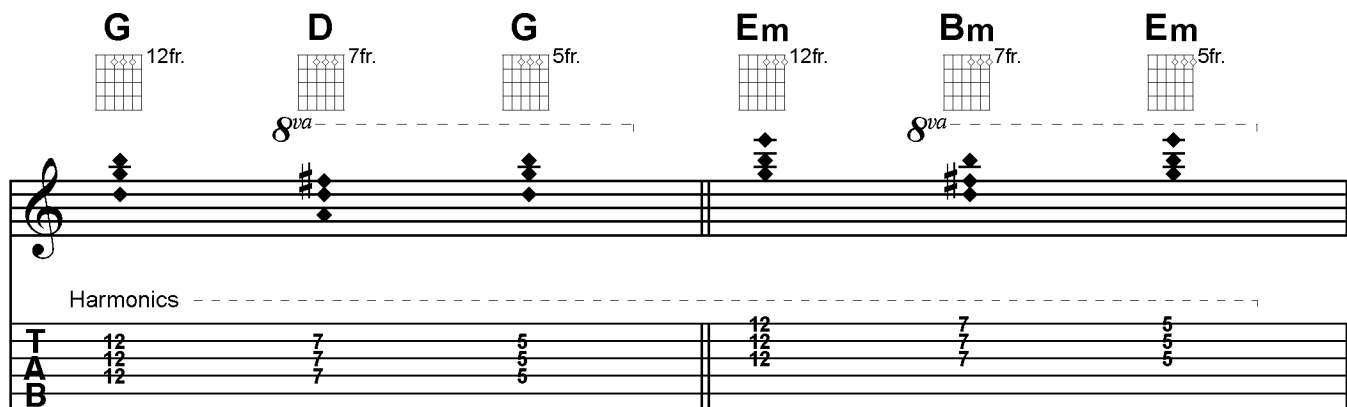


Diagram illustrating the notation of harmonics on a staff and in a guitar tab. The staff shows diamond noteheads for G (12fr), D (7fr), G (5fr), Em (12fr), Bm (7fr), and Em (5fr). The guitar tab shows the corresponding fret numbers for strings T, A, and B.

## Harmonics Licks

Here is a favorite lick in the key of G using the harmonics at the 12<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> fret on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> strings. These harmonics form a G triad and D triad.

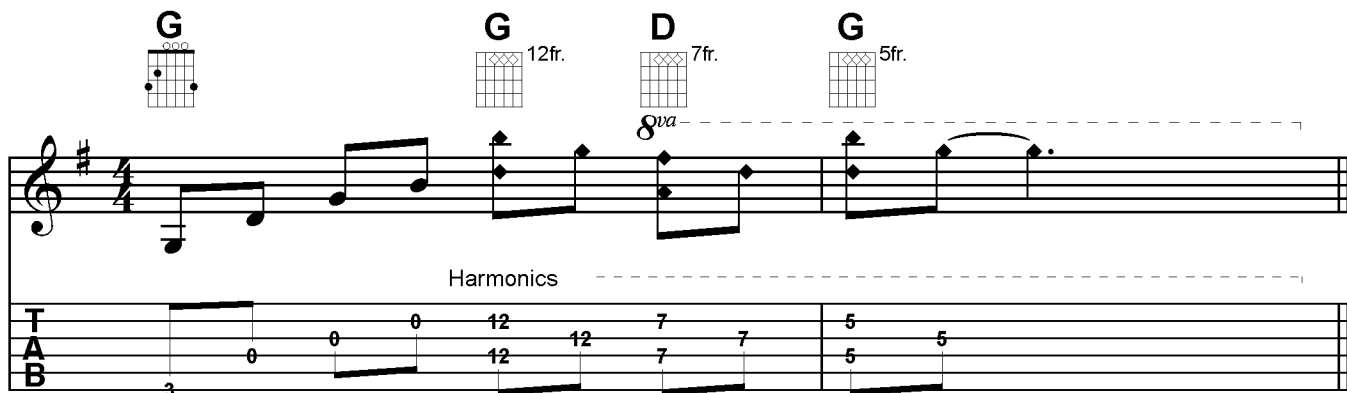


Diagram illustrating a lick in the key of G using harmonics at the 12<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> fret on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> strings. The staff shows a melody using diamond noteheads for G (12fr), D (7fr), and G (5fr). The guitar tab shows the fret numbers for strings T, A, and B.

Here is a similar lick in Em – using the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, & 3<sup>rd</sup> strings.

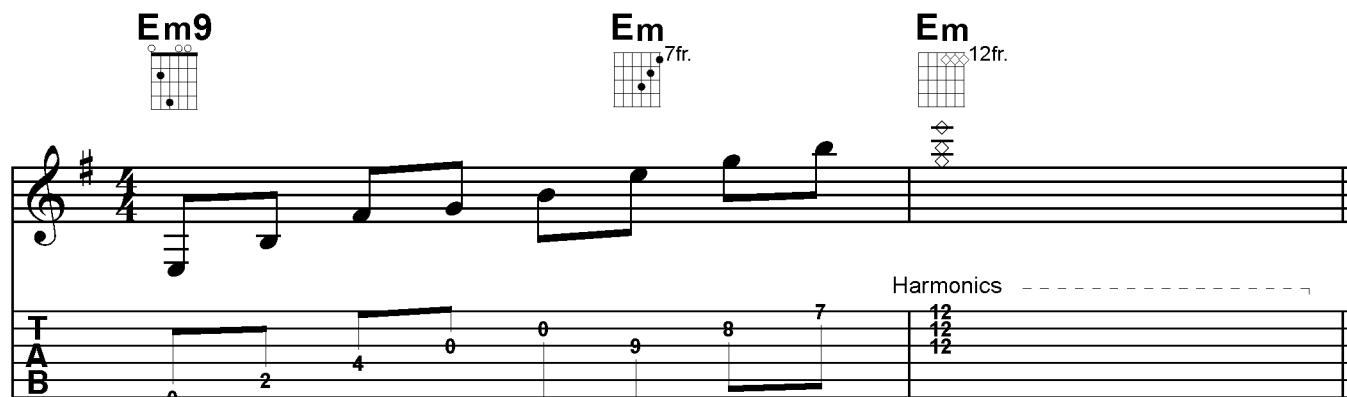


Diagram illustrating a lick in Em using harmonics at the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, & 3<sup>rd</sup> strings. The staff shows a melody using diamond noteheads for Em9, Em (7fr), and Em (12fr). The guitar tab shows the fret numbers for strings T, A, and B.