AIFreeForever

The Bass Tab Guide for 2026

Bass tab (tablature) shows where to put your fingers on the bass, one line for each string. You do not need to read music to use it. This guide covers how to read a bass tab, the symbols, the four kinds of tab, eight genre feels, a practice plan and six original exercises to play.

How to read a bass tab

1. **Lines are strings.** Each line is one string. The bottom line is the lowest string (E on a standard 4-string bass), the top line the highest (G).
2. **Numbers are frets.** Press that fret on that string. 0 means play the string open, with no fret pressed.
3. **Read left to right.** Notes above each other are played together. The "|" marks split the tab into bars.
4. **Spacing shows rhythm.** In the tabs from AIFreeForever, each "-" is a sixteenth note, so a 4/4 bar is 16 columns wide. Count it with the tempo shown at the top.

An example tab

```
Key: E minor · Tuning: E A D G · Time: 4/4 · BPM: 92

[Groove A]
G|----------------|----------------|
D|----------------|----------------|
A|----------------|------------3-5-|
E|0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-|3-3-3-3-5-5-----|
Tip: Pluck with two fingers and keep every eighth note even.
```

Bar 1 plays the open E string eight times. Bar 2 plays G (E string, fret 3) four times, A (fret 5) twice, then C and D on the A string.

The symbols

Symbol	What to do
5h7	Hammer-on: play fret 5, then press fret 7 hard without plucking again
7p5	Pull-off: play fret 7, then pull the finger off so fret 5 sounds
5/7 and 7\5	Slide up or down from one fret to the other, keeping the string pressed
x	Muted (dead) note: a short, toneless click with the string damped
~	Vibrato: shake the note gently
S and P	Slap (thumb on a low string) and pop (finger snaps a high string), written under the notes

The four kinds of bass tab

1. **Groove.** A repeating rhythm pattern of 2 to 4 bars, the part that locks in with the drums.
2. **Riff.** A short, memorable bass line that can be a song's hook.
3. **Walking line.** One note on every beat, stepping between the chords. Common in jazz and blues.
4. **Full progression.** The bass part for a whole short song: intro, verse, chorus and outro.

Eight genre feels

Rock	Steady eighth notes on the root, locked to the kick drum
Funk	Sixteenth notes, ghost notes, octaves and a strong first beat
Metal	Fast, tight picking on the low strings, often with the guitar
Jazz	Walking lines with approach notes and a swing feel
Blues	A shuffle over three chords, root, fifth and sixth patterns
Reggae	Deep, round notes with space, often leaving beat one empty
Pop	Simple roots and fifths that support the singer
Punk	Fast down-picked eighth notes on the root

Six original exercises to play

Standard tuning (E A D G), 4/4. Start each one slowly with a metronome, about 60 beats per minute.

1. Open strings, even eighths

```
G|----------------|
D|----------------|
A|--------0-0-0-0-|
E|0-0-0-0---------|
```

2. Root and fifth in A

```
G|----------------|
D|----2-2-----2-2-|
A|0-0-----0-0-----|
E|----------------|
```

3. Octaves on E

```
G|----------------|
D|--2---2---2---2-|
A|----------------|
E|0---0---0---0---|
```

4. G major scale, one octave

```
G|----------------|
D|----------2-4-5-|
A|----2-3-5-------|
E|3-5-------------|
```

5. Hammer-on and pull-off in E minor

```
G|----------------|
D|----------------|
A|5h7---7p5-------|
E|----------3---0-|
```

6. Walking up and down in C

```
G|--------|--------|
D|----2-3-|3-2-----|
A|3-5-----|----5-3-|
E|--------|--------|
```

Exercise 6 is written two columns a beat, one note on each beat: C, D, E, F, then F, E, D, C.

A practice plan

1. Warm up for five minutes with exercises 1 and 3.
2. Play the new tab at half speed until every note is clean.
3. Add 5 beats per minute only when you play it right three times in a row.
4. Loop the hardest bar on its own, then put it back in the tab.
5. Finish by playing along with a drum loop or a song you like.

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