

Bob Ferry's Superimposition of Fingerings for Guitar

A comprehensive guide
to the fingerings necessary
for the realization of any
goal on the guitar

FOR ALL STYLES AND GENRES

with **Robert Denson**

BOB FERRY'S SUPERIMPOSITION OF FINGERINGS FOR GUITAR

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DIATONIC HARMONY

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THE SUPERIMPOSITION OF FINGERINGS

...simply put, is a method for the visualization of one fingering on top of another so that not only do the fingerings go together, but they also go together harmonically and musically. These fingerings and musical relationships occur over and over in all repertoires so much so that they can be recognized and defined as separate chord progressions which are composed of individual sequences of chords. The understanding of how chords work is called Functional Harmony.

When a chord is played it suggests a scale, more times than not it is the scale the chord comes from. Chords are built from scales, the scales are re-applied to the chord, creating a match that sounds in the harmony or relevant to the chord. Making music is a matching game. No note better matches the chord than a note of the chord itself. Also, there are extensions of the chord itself that are called 'tensions' or 'color tones'. These notes add a special character to the chord. Notes of the chord, called 'chord tones', and those extensions of the chord, called 'tensions', are included in the parent scale of the chord. The *Superimposition of Fingerings* graphically portrays fingerings together so that it displays the necessary related notes and the possibilities on chords. The guitarist will understand what is musically possible both in and out of the harmony through the visualization of fingerings.

The *Superimposition of Fingerings* is a visual approach for learning fingerings. Guitarists see fingerings in their minds-eye as shapes and/or boxes. The graphic nature of guitar fingerings is perfect for visualizing. The shape of the fingering informs the ear. The visualization and the sound of the fingerings become one. This enables the guitarist to play what he hears and then hear what he plays. The possibility of a fingering can be explored because what notes work, or sound good, are contained in the fingering. The notes that a player hears can be found in the fingering he knows and sees on the fret board.

There are two ways that music is made on the guitar. Number one is to play by ear – in other words playing what you hear or using ones internal voice to inform note selection. Number two is from the knowledge of possibilities found through the visualization of fingerings. Music reading, although helpful and necessary for the complete musician, is not necessary here. The fingerings are presented on fret board diagrams to exploit the all-important visualization. The *Superimposition of Fingerings* shows fingerings as they go together so that the musical possibilities available on any chord or chord progression are easily seen and understood. The possibilities available are recognized through the related fingerings superimposed over each other in a six fret position. Imagine each related fingering on separate panes of glass stacked up so you can see each separate fingering and/or all fingerings in that position at the same time. All the information you need to make music is there to be seen and played.

Fingerings are everything on the guitar. It is only through a fingering that you know where you are, what you can play, or conversely, what you cannot play. Finally, guitar fingerings are organized from the chord and its role in functional harmony and put together the way they are used in every song. The *Superimposition of Fingerings* encompasses all styles of music. Musical style has little to do with notes. All notes, whether framed in chords, arpeggios, or scales can be used in every style of music. A thorough knowledge of fingerings is necessary for the realization of any musical goal on the guitar.

Traditionally the guitar has been taught by working in the first position using open strings. The *Superimposition of Fingerings* starts with moveable fingerings that contain no open strings since that is the largest part of the guitar fret board. A moveable fingering can be played anywhere on the neck. A fingering played with open strings, although, possessing a special character can only be played in one position or in one place. Fingerings with open strings are covered and learned after the moveable fingerings are learned.

The *Superimposition of Fingerings* is the ultimate guitar based logical presentation of fingerings ever presented based on sound principles of guitar organization. We follow the rules of position playing to tell us which fingerings to use. The position you are in will be determined by the first finger

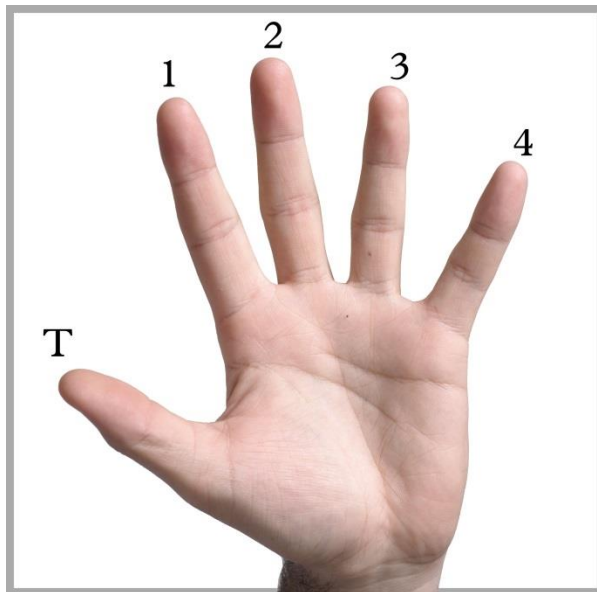


FIGURE 1

The fingers of the left hand will be as represented in the picture. As the diagram shows, the thumb, index finger, middle finger, ring finger, and pinky finger will be labeled as T, 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively.

A position number will also be a fret number - the fret played by the first finger in a four fret position. In a four fret position finger number one plays the first fret, finger number 2 plays the second fret, finger number 3 plays the third fret, and finger number 4 plays the fourth fret. (FIGURE 1)

In the picture (FIGURE 2) the fret hand is in the first position with the first finger on the first fret. Once the fret that is played by the first finger is determined, then fingers two, three, and four are placed in order above the first finger.



FIGURE 2

The guitar has many four fingered positions. For example, if the 1st finger is required to be on fret number five, to play the lowest note of a fingering, then the 2nd finger would play fret number six, the 3rd finger would play fret number seven, and the 4th finger would play fret number eight. Once the lowest note in a fingering, in terms of fret number, is found then the other fingers just simply line up. Every finger is assigned a fret and plays every string on that fret. Position numbers will be written with roman numerals. FIGURE 3 shows the fret hand in position V (5).



FIGURE 3

It will sometimes be necessary to expand a fingering beyond four frets. This will be done with a 'finger stretch.' The symbol for finger stretch will be FS.

FIGURE 4 shows the hand in the 2nd position with a first finger stretch (1 FS).



FIGURE 4

The finger stretch does not change the position even though the 1st finger is now playing fret 1, it is simply a 1 FS in the 2nd position. This highlights the importance of always knowing the position you are in. FIGURE 5 demonstrates a fourth finger stretch (4 FS).



FIGURE 5

Here is an example of both a 1 FS and 4 FS in 2nd position. (FIGURE 6)



FIGURE 6

Each fingering family will be identified by two numbers with the number on the left representing the finger and the number on the right representing the string. For example, 1st-4th means that the root note can be found under the first finger on the fourth string. A root note gives us the note name of a fingering. For example, a major fingering with the root note under the 1st finger on the 6th string in the 5th position is called 1st-6th A Major. A minor fingering can have a root note under the 3rd finger on the 6th string so therefore the root note for that minor arpeggio, *Representative Chord*, or scale would be 3rd-6th because the root is found under the 3rd finger on the 6th string.

Music is heard from the bottom up. All of the notes from an arpeggio, chord, or scale are heard relative to the root note. This creates varying intervals, or distances, from the root note to the other tones of the fingering creating the fingering sound such as Major and Minor. To identify the fingerings we are going to use the lowest root note possible. However, due to the unique tuning of the guitar, it is not always possible for the root note to be the lowest note of the fingering.

There are 7 fingering families. A fingering family would be a 2nd-5th Arpeggio, a 2nd-5th *Representative Chord* and a 2nd-5th Scale with all three sharing the same root note. Furthermore, all three are musically related and exist in the same position giving the player a great deal of choices and, ultimately, every note possible in the key or on that chord. The order of fingering families, in the key of C Major, beginning with the lowest fingering family possible with no open strings is; 2nd-5th, 1st-5th, 4th-6th, 2nd-6th, 1st-6th, 1st-4th, and 4th-5th. This is called the order of fingerings. There are three 6th string fingerings, being 1st-6th, 2nd-6th, and 4th-6th. There are three 5th string fingerings, being 1st-5th, 2nd-5th, and 4th-5th. Finally, there is only one fingering on the fourth string called 1st-4th. The fingerings overlap, end to end, to make up the entire fret board.

The fingerings, arpeggio, chord, and scale, all superimpose onto one another to create multilayers of fingerings seen together or apart, containing the information available for that chord or key. We will see the arpeggio as the best musical outline available. An arpeggio, a chord played one note at a time, can be played in order such as the root, then the third, then the fifth, then the seventh, in any position on the guitar. This, however, is not always possible in every chord fingering.

Songs are made up of chords that exist in keys, so we will see the arpeggio and scale together and we will also include a chord fingering that represents the fingering family...2nd-5th, 4th-6th etc.. This will be called the '*Representative Chord*' fingering and it is not meant to include all chord fingerings possible in any given fingering family. In contrast, it is only meant to be a representative fingering of that specific fingering family. The *Representative Chord* will be a chord that is commonly used.

An 'Assumed Root' chord is a chord fingering that does not possess the root note in the lowest voice. We visualize the root note even though it is not part of the actual fingering that we are playing. This gives us the fingering type that chord fingering is from.

In some scales and arpeggios you'll find a unison note. A unison note is the same note played in the same octave. This unison note is used to completely tell the story of any given key in position. If the unison note was left out, then we wouldn't know that note was available to us in that key. The unison note is found in those fingerings that are meant to stay in position and superimpose over *Representative Chord* fingerings and/or Arpeggios. Major scales are arranged with three notes per string with the unison note uniformly existing on the 3rd string in all 7 fingering families. This is a unique feature of the guitar that must be taken advantage of. We want all the notes of the key that can be played in any position to be available to us. In the fingerings that stay in position we are not as concerned with a consecutive flow of notes, however we are concerned with the availability of notes in that key under our fingers in that position.

PAGE SETUP FOR THE SUPERIMPOSITION OF FINGERINGS

The *Superimposition of Fingerings* describes the arpeggio, the *Representative Chord* that is derived from the arpeggio and the related diatonic scale in separate diagrams and then superimposes them.

Arpeggio + chord + scale = The *Superimposition of Fingerings*.

With the addition of the chromatic scale (not included) All of the information for the creation of a melodic line is shown.

THE SUPERIMPOSITION OF FINGERINGS

The diagram on the upper left represents the notes of the Arpeggio. The individual intervals of the notes in the arpeggio are included in the blackened circles. Laid out on the diagram are the intervals relative to the root note of the arpeggio. The vertical numbers to the left of the diagram explain the fingering in position. 1st Finger Stretch (1 FS), fingers 1,2,3,4, and 4th Finger Stretch (4 FS) gives the player a 6 fret position. In some diagrams unison notes can be found and either one can be left out depending on the convenience of the fingering.

The diagram in the upper right of the page shows the *Representative Chord* Fingering. All chord fingerings are a commonly used shape that represents the fingering family. The finger numbers are found directly under the diagram. The lighter shaded circles in the diagram show the notes of the arpeggio that could be used with the chord, but are not part of the *Representative Chord* fingering. The player is encouraged to experiment with creating various chord shapes within the arpeggio fingering. The diagram in the lower left is the scale or key that the arpeggio comes from, which is the scale that best matches the chord in that specific harmonic setting. The diagram on the lower right shows the arpeggio within the scale. The blackened circles are the notes of the arpeggio and the notes in the diamonds are the available tensions on the chord (2nd, 4th, 6th, 9th, 11th, 13th). It is important to note the various shades of tensions and that not all tensions will always be available for each arpeggio. The 2nd or 9th is the darkest gray shade, the 4th, 11th, or 'Tri' is medium gray, and the 6th or 13th is light gray. These tensions are available on the arpeggio when represented within a diamond. They are not available on the arpeggio when represented within a circle.

Other than the chord tones there are 3 notes left over in the scale. In the lower octave these notes will be referred to as the 2nd, 4th, and 6th and in the upper octave they will be referred to as the 9th, 11th, and 13th, respectively. There are two chords that are exceptions to this and those are Minor 6th and Major 6th. These chords treat the 6th as a chord tone, not a tension, and treat the 7th as a tension, not a chord tone.

The fingering relationships will always remain the same, regardless of the key. This is what the Superimposition of Fingerings achieves. For example, the 1st-6th Dominant 7th Arpeggio and *Representative Chord* fingerings will ALWAYS be in the 1st-5th Major scale or the Mixolydian mode. These relationships must be memorized.

A great method of practice is to recite the interval names out loud while playing them on the guitar. This aids in teaching the student where those all important, colorful, tension notes are while developing the students' ear training. Furthermore, this is a method that may be used away from the guitar by visualizing the fingering relationships. The four diagrams on each page must be seen relative to one another and the arpeggio is seen as the source of the chord. In essence, the chord is a selection of the available arpeggio notes and the scale is simply the arpeggio with scale tones between each chord tone.

- 1) Play the arpeggio
- 2) Play the *Representative Chord*
- 3) Play the diatonic scale
- 4) Memorize the fingering family relationships
- 5) Speak the intervals out loud as the diagrams are played

For triads, simply leave out the 7th, or 6th, of each arpeggio and *Representative Chord*. The relationship to the diatonic scale is unaffected.

The fingerings in this book are written in the key of C or A Minor. Feel free to move them to other keys. The fingering relationships will remain the same.

The diatonic superimposition of fingerings is meant to give the player everything they need to play a diatonic song. A diatonic song may have all the chords that come from the Major scale, as well as some chords that come from the Harmonic Minor, Melodic Minor, Diminished, and Whole Tone scales.

1st-6th Minor 7th Arpeggio as the Aeolian vi Chord with the 4th-6th Major Scale

1st-6th A Minor 7th
Arpeggio

1st-6th A Minor 7th
Representative Chord

The first measure of the musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is shown. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written on a five-line staff, starting on a whole note G4 (first line) and ascending stepwise to a whole note D5 (fifth line). The bass line is written on a four-line staff, starting on a whole note G3 (first line) and ascending stepwise to a whole note D4 (second line). The notes are: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5 in the treble; and G3, A3, Bb3, C4, D4 in the bass. The measure is divided by a bar line.

4th-6th C Major Diatonic Scale

Arpeggio + Chord + Scale = Superimposition of Fingerings