

Using Bass Notes In Barre Chords

This was a great idea and was asked by a fellow member. He expressed the following:

"First just want to tell you that I have learned a great deal with the lessons I have been working on everything from day one and keep going back over everything. Just wondering if you are going to get into bass runs? If not can you tell me how to figure out what notes I need to get from one cord to the next I have found some information and some I have just figured out on my own over the years I have been playing. What is the theory of bass runs is what I am trying to say.

Again I have been enjoying this course. Happy NEW YEAR "

That's a **GREAT** question!

I believe what he is referring to is creating a walking bass line using the barre chord forms, which enables you to add spice to existing chords.

Walking Bass Line 1:

	Measure 1	Measure 2
T		
A	4 4 4 4 4	3 3 3 3 3
B	3 0 1 4	3 0 1 2

Measure 1 consists of one overall pattern with the root notes changing. This is where the walking bass line comes into play. The root notes will be on the Low E string and the A string for this exercise.

The very first thing we need to do is establish the root note for the first measure. We start out on the 3rd fret of the Low E string, which is the root note G. This is because of the 12 note order, as you should recall (open E = open chord, F = fret 1, F#/Gb = fret 2, G = fret 3).

Another note listed, which appears on the D string, is the 3rd fret "F" note, again because of the note order D, D#/Eb, E, and then F.

The last note that appears in the very first set of lines is the G string note, played on the 4th fret. This is the B note, due to the 12 note order G, G#/Ab, A, A#/Bb, and then B.

So in all, you've got a total number of notes in the first set of lines of G, F, and B.

Now let's check out how the 1st fret note on the A string matches up:

This 1st fret A string note is an A#/Bb. By using the note order rule, you can determine this every single time. The

next series of notes is the same as the first series, so in total you have the next set of lines as A#/Bb, F, and then B. You're keeping the position of the notes the same, but you're finding the walking bass note within, except for what can be applied to the root note on the Low E and A string.

The next walking bass note is the 4th fretted note on the A string. This is the C#/Db note. Again, the same 'background' notes appear again.

So for these sets of notes, you have the following:

C#/Db, F, and B

Now let's look at the entire measure in order:

G, F, B, **A#/Bb**, F, B, **C#/Db**, F, B

The only changes are in bold. It's up to you how you rearrange them. As long as you stay 'within the box' you can change the order up however you want.

What Do I Mean About 'Within The Box'?

This concept is very easy to figure out. Take a look at the tablature again:

The image displays a musical score and guitar tablature. The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature, showing a sequence of eighth notes. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature with three lines labeled T (Treble), A, and B. The B string has fret numbers 3, 0, 1, 4, 3, 0, 1, 2. The A string has fret numbers 4, 3, 4, 3, 3, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2. The T string has fret numbers 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3.

What do you notice?

Though the tablature shows quite a few changes in the first measure, there aren't really many at all. You've just applied a standard set of numbers and 'walked' around using the Low E and A string. We can call them bass notes because they are going to be the lowest pitch you hear. As you know, the actual bass guitar is played at a much lower pitch than the standard guitar due to the string gauge. If you were to place a standard guitar string on a bass (don't do it though) you would realize that it's not always the actual bass that makes the notes lower, it's the gauge of the string and position on the fretboard. This can be applied to standard guitar as well. The lower notes will always be the bass notes that you will want to 'walk' with. Since our focus in this session of Strumming School are the Low E and A strings, we can assume that these will be our walking bass notes.

Let's get into the next measure now:

Here's the tablature again:

I keep showing the entire tablature because if I were to separate these, you wouldn't be able to see how well a walking bass note lines up within two or more measures.

Now we are playing a completely different set of notes, using all Low E string notes as the walking bass lines.

In the second measure, you start out without playing a walking bass note. The first note that appears, viewing it from the Low E string to the High E string, is the 3rd fretted note on the A string. This is the C note. The 2nd fretted note on the D string is the E note. The 3rd fretted note on the G string is the A#/Bb note.

Those played together are: C, E, A#/Bb. This will stay true throughout this measure, but we are going to switch up the walking bass notes on you. So, keep in mind that the only notes that change are on the Low E string, which is our walking bass line.

On the Low E string **ONLY**, the notes appear as this:

Low E (open), F, F#/Gb

Now let's plug and play the entire measure (bass notes are in bold):

C, E, A#/Bb (played together), E, A#/Bb (played together) **OPEN E**, E, A#/Bb (played together), **F note**, E, A#/Bb (played together), **F#/Gb note** and E, A#/Bb (PLAYED TOGETHER), E, A#/Bb (played together)

Hopefully that makes sense. To finish off this part, let's finger the progression, play the audio, and watch the video.

Fingerings Measure 1:

Are you saying "Whoa?! Wait a minute?!" yet?

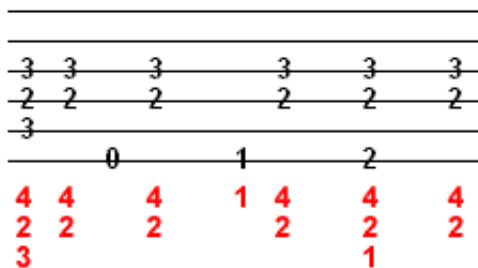
Don't worry. The wonder of guitar is that anything and everything you learn can change in a flash. We just talked about trying to keep your hands positioned with the chord number listed on the tablature, but we don't do that here do we? Why is this?

Simply stated, it's because though we aren't moving 'out of the box,' we ARE applying walking bass notes to add flavor and spice to a song. When you start 'improvising' things tend to change. If you are wondering how in the world I was able to come up with this choice for fingerings, I'll give you a quick hint.

Experiment. It's that easy. When I started working with the tablature, I realized that if I were to play everything fretted out in number format trying to coincide with the tab numbers, there was no way I would be able to finger all the walking bass notes, so I changed my positioning up a little. This is completely normal and is VERY common when playing advanced fingerstyle guitar work, so get used to it. If you play the fingerings as I have presented them, you'll have no trouble playing this exercise.

Now on to measure 2....

Fingerings Measure 2:



If you look at the fingerings from above, and then look at these fingerings, you'll see that the finger placement mostly stays the same. Cool huh? That's why I used this tablature version. You can see that you can move up and down the neck using walking bass notes without varying too much from measure to measure. If you are having trouble, watch the video and it should alleviate any frustration.



Video Reference: Much more material is covered in our Strumming School DVD. Please refer to Chapter 3 "Using Bass Notes" on the DVD for additional information.