

# Guitars



LEVEL E-4 • Written by Elfrieda H. Hiebert



Instruments like guitars were played in ancient Egypt.

# Guitars Past and Present

A guitar is a stringed instrument. To make music on a guitar, people stroke or pick the strings. This movement makes the strings vibrate. When the strings vibrate, they make sounds that create music.

Most guitars have six strings. Some have four and others have as many as twelve. While many guitars are made of wood, guitar strings are usually made from bronze, steel, or a special kind of plastic.

Instruments like guitars were first made 3,000 years ago in ancient Egypt. Later, people from Africa invaded Spain. The invaders brought with them an early type of guitar. From Spain, guitars were taken to other European countries. Over the next several hundred years, people created different types of guitars. Today, guitars are played in countries around the world.

## Key Notes:

**How are guitars different from one another?**

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**Andres Segovia played  
a Spanish guitar with  
six strings.**

# Spanish Guitars

Early guitars looked different from today's guitars. They were not as wide as modern guitars and they had a different number of strings. In the late 1800s, a Spanish guitar maker changed the instrument's shape. His guitars looked more like the ones we play today.

Guitars became very popular in Spain, where a special style of guitar music was developed. However, some musicians didn't respect the instrument because composers of classical music did not write music for the guitar. They thought it couldn't be used to play classical music.

A Spanish musician changed people's ideas about the guitar. He played classical music that had never before been played on the guitar. He also wrote his own music for the guitar. Today, the guitar is one of the most popular musical instruments.

## Key Notes:

**How did one musician change the way people thought about guitars?**

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**Electric guitars can make loud sounds.**

# Acoustic and Electric Guitars

When a guitar string vibrates, it causes the soundboard, a wooden piece on the front of the guitar, to vibrate and make sounds louder and easier to hear. A guitar that makes sound in this way is called an acoustic guitar.

An electric guitar makes sound in a different way. Most electric guitars are not hollow and do not have a soundboard to amplify the strings' vibrations. This signal is sent to a speaker, which can make the sound very loud. That's why music that's made on electric guitars is louder than music from acoustic guitars.

## Key Notes:

**How does an acoustic guitar make sound?**

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Guitars have been used in rock music for many years.



# Rock-and-Roll Music

In the 1950's, a new kind of music, called rock and roll, appeared. Teenagers enjoyed rock and roll because of its loud music and fast beat, or rhythm. Compared to other kinds of music at the time, teenagers thought rock and roll was very exciting, and they enjoyed dancing to its beat. The rhythms of the music often seemed more important than the words in the songs.

Many of the musicians who first made rock and roll popular were guitar players. Most of them played electric guitars, which became the most important instrument in rock music. Most of the bands people listen to probably have at least one guitar to keep the music's rhythm. Rock music has changed over the years, but the guitar remains a big part of it.

## Key Notes:

**How are guitars used in rock music?**

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