

25 Tunings to Try

Here are 25 alternate tunings—some widely used, some one-off creations of a particular artist—along with song and artist examples. Arrows underneath tuning notes indicate strings that are altered from standard tuning and whether they are tuned up or down. Next to the notes of each tuning, you'll find the chord degree of the open strings. In dropped-D tuning, for example, if you consider D as the root (R), the other strings are the fifth (A), the root again (D), the fourth (G), sixth (B), and second (E) of a D chord, so the tuning is written as R 5 R 4 6 2. Keep in mind that sometimes the artists raise the tuning (and the key) with a capo.

Many of the songs below have been transcribed in *Acoustic Guitar* magazine; for a complete list with tunings and capo positions, searchable by song title, artist, and tuning, go to www.acousticguitar.com. Songs that have appeared in an *Acoustic Guitar* CD Songbook, which include complete transcriptions along with original performances on a compilation CD, are noted with the songbook title in the right column (more details on these can also be found at www.acousticguitar.com). *Acoustic Guitar's* book *Alternate Tunings Guitar Essentials* includes a more extensive tuning list (60 tunings) along with instruction in various alternate tunings.

Other Web sites that offer valuable tuning information are www.JoniMitchell.com; www.stropes.com, which includes a database of tunings used by Michael Hedges, Leo Kottke, and others; users.plinet.com/~bquade/AlternateTuning102.html, which contains an ingenious, interactive, open-tunings chord guide; and www.harmony-central.com, from which you can download a couple of different alternate-tuning software programs.

SONG	ARTIST	ACOUSTIC GUITAR CD SONGBOOK (See back page)
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BASS- AND TREBLE-STRING DROPS

D A D G B E (R 5 R 4 6 2)

Dropped D.

And So It Goes . . .	Steve Tilston	<i>What Goes Around</i>
Beeswing	Richard Thompson	
Black Waterside	Bert Jansch	
Coryanna	Stephen Fearing	<i>Habits of the Heart</i>
Dust Bowl Children	Peter Rowan	
Embryonic Journey	Jorma Kaukonen	<i>Fingerstyle Guitar Masterpieces</i>
Fishing Blues	Taj Mahal	
Green Green Rocky Road	Kate and Anna McGarrigle	<i>High on a Mountain</i>
Living in the Country	Pete Seeger	
Look How Far	Bruce Cockburn	
Muir Woods	Andrew York	<i>High on a Mountain</i>
Shotgun down the Avalanche	Shawn Colvin	<i>Shades of Blue</i>
When You Give It Away	Bruce Cockburn	
Wondering Where the Lions Are	Bruce Cockburn	

E A D G B D (6 2 5 R 3 5)

The Boxer	Paul Simon (intro/lead guitar)
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SONG	ARTIST	ACOUSTIC GUITAR CD SONGBOOK
Big Yellow Taxi	Joni Mitchell (E B E G# B E)	
Both Sides Now	Joni Mitchell (E B E G# B E)	
Center Stage	Indigo Girls	
Chelsea Morning	Joni Mitchell	
Freedom	Richie Havens	
Frozen in the Snow	David Wilcox	
Golden Key	David Wilcox	
If You Love Somebody	Guy Davis (C G C E G C)	<i>Habits of the Heart</i>
Indian Summer	Chris Whitley	
Kindness	David Wilcox	
Little Martha	Allman Brothers (E B E G# B E)	
Nothing Ever Lasts	Clive Gregson (C G C E G C)	<i>High on a Mountain</i>
One of These Things	Nick Drake	
Police Dog Blues	Jorma Kaukonen (E B E G# B E)	
Prayer in Open D	Emmylou Harris	
Swimming	Pierce Pettis	<i>Acoustic Guitar Artist Songbook, Vol. 1</i>

D A D F A D (R 5 R 3 5 R)

D minor.

Everything in Its Own Time	Indigo Girls	
Hard Time Killing Floor	Skip James	
John Henry	John Cephas and Phil Wiggins	<i>Alternate Tunings Guitar Collection</i>
Little Hands	Duncan Sheik	

D A D E A D (R 5 R 2 5 R)

A close relative of open D and D A D G A D with a distinctive character from the close interval between the third and fourth strings. Related tunings: E B E F# B E.

Days Go By	Duncan Sheik (E B E F# B E)	
That's Why I'm Laughing	David Wilcox	

D A C# E A E (4 R 3 5 R 5 or R 5 7 2 5 2)

Rainy Road into Atlanta	Cheryl Wheeler	<i>Rhythms of the Road</i>
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D A E G A D (R 5 2 4 5 R)

Hejira	Joni Mitchell (B F# C# E F# B)	
My Secret Place	Joni Mitchell (C# G# D# F# G# C#)	
Slouching towards Bethlehem	Joni Mitchell	

D A E F# A D (R 5 2 3 5 R)

Cherokee Louise	Joni Mitchell	
Deep Lake	Bruce Cockburn (C G D E G C)	
Night Ride Home	Joni Mitchell (C G D E G C)	

SONG	ARTIST	ACOUSTIC GUITAR CD SONGBOOK
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Sunny Sunday	Joni Mitchell (C# G# D# E# G# C#)	
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D A D D A D (R 5 R R 5 R)

Highway in the Wind	Arlo Guthrie	
Meditation (Wave upon Wave)	Arlo Guthrie	

D D D D A D (R R R R 5 R)

A favorite of Stephen Stills.

4 + 20	Stephen Stills (E E E E B E)	
Suite: Judy Blue Eyes	Stephen Stills	

G TUNINGS**D G D G B D (5 R 5 R 3 R)**

Open G. Probably the most popular tuning for slide guitar. Often called Spanish tuning, referring to the popular open-G song "Spanish Fandango." Also favored by Hawaiian slack-key guitarists, who refer to it as taro-patch tuning. Related tuning: open A, E A E A C# E.

Arthur McBride The Circle Game Daughter Going to California Marcie Nightshift Penny for Your Thoughts Stack Lee's Blues Water Song	Paul Brady Joni Mitchell Pearl Jam Led Zeppelin Joni Mitchell David Wilcox Peter Frampton Steve James Jorma Kaukonen	<i>Alternate Tunings Guitar Collection</i> <i>Rhythms of the Road</i>
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D G D G B E (5 R 5 R 3 6)

G6: standard except for the bottom two strings tuned down one whole step.

I Still Want To Hurricanes, Earthquakes, and Tomatoes	Catie Curtis Doyle Dykes	<i>What Goes Around</i> <i>Acoustic Guitar Artist Songbook, Vol. 1</i>
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C TUNINGS**C G D G B E (R 5 2 5 7 3 or 4 R 5 R 3 6)**

Low C.

1952 Vincent Black Lightning Just As I Am	Richard Thompson Chet Atkins	
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C G D G B D (R 5 2 5 7 2 or 4 R 5 R 3 5)

Like open-G tuning, but with a nice low C on the bottom. Slack-key guitarists refer to this tuning as C wahine.

Cold Blue Steel and Sweet Fire Golden Day It's Almost Time	Joni Mitchell David Wilcox David Wilcox	
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SONG	ARTIST	ACOUSTIC GUITAR CD SONGBOOK
CGCGCE (R 5 R 5 R 3) <small> v v v ^ Open C. </small>		
Busted Bicycle	Leo Kottke	
Caledonia	Dougie MacLean	<i>Alternate Tunings Guitar Collection</i>
Eye of the Hurricane	David Wilcox	<i>Alternate Tunings Guitar Collection</i>
Foxglove	Bruce Cockburn	
Mango	David Wilcox	

CGCGCD (R 5 R 5 R 2) <small> v v v ^ v Altitude </small>		
	Chris Whitley (C# G# C# G# C# D#)	
Carolina	Patty Larkin	
Scrapyard Lullaby	Chris Whitley (C# G# C# G# C# D#)	<i>Habits of the Heart</i>
Wolf at the Door	Patty Larkin	<i>What Goes Around</i>

CGDFCE (R 5 2 4 R 3) <small> v v v ^ A favorite of Joni Mitchell. </small>		
Coyote	Joni Mitchell	
Don Juan's Reckless Daughter	Joni Mitchell	
Just Like This Train	Joni Mitchell	
Sistowbell Lane	Joni Mitchell	
Woman of Heart and Mind	Joni Mitchell	

CFCFCF (R 4 R 4 R 4) <small> v v v v ^ From the Morning </small>		
Harvest Breed	Nick Drake	<i>High on a Mountain</i>
	Nick Drake	

E-MINOR TUNINGS

EBDGAD (R 5 b7 b3 4 b7) <small> ^ v v A favorite tuning of David Crosby. </small>		
Déjà Vu	David Crosby	
Guinnevere	David Crosby	

EBBGBD (R 5 5 b3 5 b7) <small> ^ v v Not a Pretty Girl </small>		
	Ani DiFranco	<i>Alternate Tunings Guitar Collection</i>

MIDDLE-STRING DROPS

EADGAE (5 R 4 b7 R 5 or R 4 b7 b3 4 R) <small> v Caleb Meyer </small>		
	Gillian Welch	

EADF#BE (R 4 b7 2 5 R or 5 R 4 6 2 5) <small> v Cello Song </small>		
The Embers of Eden	Nick Drake	
Isn't That What Friends Are For?	Bruce Cockburn	
Last Night of the World	Bruce Cockburn	
Mango	Bruce Cockburn	<i>Rhythms of the Road</i>
The Thoughts of Mary Jane	Nick Drake	