

# OCTOBER'S GUITAR LESSON

## *Open Strings: By Aaron Vasquez*

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Understanding when and how to use open strings is a great resource for guitarist. They can be used in various ways to achieve different musical expressions. In addition, they can really spice up your playing. There are specific keys that very much compliment open string guitar playing. In this month's lesson, we will cover the key of E Major.

E Major works great because the guitar's first string, E, is the tonic. The 2nd string, B, is the dominant. These are the primary scale degrees that are used for pedal points in classical composition. In a way, this is the type of musical technique that is associated in Figures 1,2, & 3. However, for the purposes of this article, we will not focus on the music theory associated with the examples (For a more information on pedal points, see the [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedal\\_point](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedal_point)).

*Figure 1* shows an open string idea that works great as a lead guitar idea in slower worship songs. The tempo of this example is set at 76 BPM. This lick is sequential in nature as each measure contains the same rhythm, hammer-ons and pull offs. It is recommended that a delay, set at 8th notes, is used. Keep the mix of the delay fairly high at around 50%. Chords have been provided to accompany the lead guitar line in *Figure 1*.

It is important to notice a very prevalent connection between the lead guitar part (tab) and the chords. When comparing these two things, you will notice that the 2nd note of each measure is actually the root note of the provided chord. For example, the first chord of measure 1 is a C# minor chord. The second note in measure 1 is a C# note. The note before, or 1st note, is just a scale degree below (B). This is the same in each measure. For example, in measure 2, the harmony is an A chord. Therefore, the lead guitar part starts on the scale degree below (G#) and then a hammer-on is utilized to the tonic note (A) of the chord. Knowing this can allow the player to comfortably shift this lick around and improvise over different chord progressions.

**FIG. 1**

♩ = 76  
C#m A E B

The image displays two staves of guitar tablature. The top staff is labeled 'E. Guitar' and the bottom staff is labeled 'E. Gt.'. Above the top staff, a tempo marking '♩ = 76' and a key signature 'C#m' are shown. Above the bottom staff, a key signature 'E' is shown. The top staff has four measures with chords C#m, A, E, and B indicated above the staff. The bottom staff has four measures with chords E, B, E, and B indicated above the staff. The tablature shows notes on the strings with fret numbers and techniques like hammer-ons (H) and pull-offs (P). The top staff starts with an open string (0) and a hammer-on to the 4th fret. The bottom staff starts with an open string (0) and a hammer-on to the 9th fret. The rhythm is consistent across all measures, with notes on the 4th and 6th strings of the top staff and the 3rd and 9th strings of the bottom staff.

Next, in *Figure 2*, I will demonstrate how to use the high E (Tonic) and B (Dominant) strings as pedal points for some great sounding chords. These chords work great for both acoustic and rhythm electric guitar players. Each chord will leave the high E and B strings sustaining to create a very legato style of chord playing. *Figure 2* shows 3 different variations of open string chord shapes in the key of E Major.

**FIG. 2**

Variation 1

Ac. Guitar

E F#m G#m A B C#m D#° E

Variation 2

Ac. Guitar

Variation 3

Ac. Guitar

*Figure 3* requires you to play pull-offs to the open E note. These kind of licks are fun and can really add flash to an individuals solos. In addition, typically licks such as this can be played extremely fast. Remember to keep the left hand pull offs light. It's not about how hard you pull-off, but rather the way in which the finger leaves the fret that produces the open string sound. Have fun with this one and keep shredding for the Lord. God Bless.

**FIG. 3**

♩ = 180

E. Guitar

E. Gt.