

Bass Guitar — Workbook

This workbook turns the Bass Guitar course into daily practice you can actually do with the instrument plugged in. Each section matches a course module and mixes hands-on exercises, fill-in worksheets, and checklists that build groove, timing, and clean technique from the first session. Work through it with your bass, a tuner, a metronome, and a simple drum loop, and use the editable templates to track tuning, practice time, fretboard notes, and the songs you are learning.

The Instrument, Setup, and Both Hands

Confirm your tuning, strap height, and hand positions so every later session starts from a relaxed, tension-free setup.

Exercise: Tune and Cross-Check

Plug in, set your tuner, and tune all four strings to standard pitch, always tuning up to the note. Then verify by ear using the 5th-fret method before you play anything else.

- Tune E, A, D, G in turn; does each open string read dead centre on the tuner, reached by tuning up to pitch rather than down?

- Press the 5th fret of the E string (A) and compare to the open A string; do they sound identical with no wavering beats?

- Repeat the 5th-fret check for A-to-D and D-to-G; which pair needed the most correction?

- Are the open-string pitches roughly E around 41 Hz, A 55 Hz, D 73 Hz, G 98 Hz on your tuner's frequency readout?

Worksheet: My Bass Specifications

Fill in the details of your specific instrument and setup. Keep this on hand for string changes, amp settings, and resetting your strap to the same height each time.

Bass make and model (P-bass, J-bass, other)

Scale length (34 inch long / 30 inch short)

Number of strings and tuning

Current string brand and gauge

Date strings last changed

Strap height mark / hole setting

Tuner or app I use

Amp and main go-to settings

Exercise: One-Finger-Per-Fret Warm-Up

Play the 1-2-3-4 chromatic exercise (frets 5-6-7-8) on every string, ascending then descending, with strict one-finger-per-fret. Keep the thumb low and centred on the back of the neck.

- Is each finger pressing just behind its own fret on the very tip, with curved, lifted knuckles?
 - Does the pinky (finger 4) fret cleanly on its own, or is it collapsing or being avoided?
 - Is your thumb behind the neck (not hooked over the top), and is the grip relaxed enough that your forearm does not ache?
 - Are all notes ringing clear with no buzz or dead spots as you move across all four strings?
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Checklist: Setup and Posture Check

-] Strap set so the bass sits the same height sitting or standing, body near the navel
-] Neck angled slightly upward, headstock a little higher than the body
-] Both wrists as straight as comfortable, no sharp fretting-wrist bend
-] Shoulders down and level, not hiking the fretting shoulder up
-] Thumb low and centred on the back of the neck, no baseball-bat grip
-] Pressing only hard enough behind each fret for a clean, buzz-free note

Plucking Technique: Fingers and Pick

Lock in even two-finger plucking and confident pick playing, plus the two-hand muting that keeps your low end tight.

Exercise: Even Alternating Fingerstyle Drill

Anchor your thumb, then play one note per metronome click on a single open string, strictly alternating index then middle with rest strokes, at 60 to 70 bpm. Record one take to check evenness.

- Are you truly alternating i, m, i, m, never playing the same finger twice in a row?
 - Does each finger produce the same volume and tone, or is the index louder than the middle?
 - Is each pluck a rest stroke that follows through to rest on the next thicker string?
 - On playback, is your timing even, or do you hear rushing or uneven gaps between notes?
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Exercise: Pick Technique and Tone Compare

With a 1.0 to 1.5 mm pick held between thumb and curled index, play a simple root-note pattern using alternate down-up picking. Then play the same pattern fingerstyle and compare.

- Is the picking motion small and from the wrist, with downstrokes on strong beats and upstrokes on off-beats?
 - Can you add palm muting near the bridge for a tighter, chunkier tone when you want it?
 - Playing the same groove with pick versus fingers, how does the attack and feel differ, and which suits the song better?
 - Does the pick stay put in your grip during faster passages, or does it slip and need a grippier pick?
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Exercise: Floating-Thumb Muting Test

Play notes across all four strings while resting your plucking thumb on the next-thicker string to mute it. Then play a single note and silence everything to test for unwanted ring.

- When you play the D string, is your thumb resting on the A string and helping quiet the E?

- Can you stop a fretted note by relaxing the finger to touch (not lift off) the string, with no click?

- Play one note then mute all strings; do you hear true silence, or a faint chorus of ringing strings?

- As you switch strings, does the thumb travel with you so it always rests just below the string you are playing?

Checklist: Right-Hand Fault Finder

- Uneven volume between fingers: drill single-string alternation slowly with a metronome
- Accidentally playing i, i, m, i: consciously enforce strict alternation
- Thin or flappy pick tone: switch to a heavier 1.0 to 1.5 mm pick
- Muddy low end with notes ringing into each other: apply floating-thumb muting constantly
- Open strings ringing too long: mute them the instant you move off
- Want a brighter or fatter tone: move the plucking point toward the bridge or the neck

The Fretboard, Roots, and the Pocket

Know where the roots live, lock them to the kick drum, and build the steady internal time that is the bassist's core job.

Worksheet: E and A String Note Map

Fill in the natural notes on the E and A strings up to the 12th fret from memory, then verify on the bass. These two strings hold most of your root notes.

E string naturals: open / fret 1 / 3 / 5 / 7 / 8 / 10 / 12

A string naturals: open / fret 2 / 3 / 5 / 7 / 8 / 10 / 12

Where the octave of any note sits (strings and frets away)

Every fret position of the note C within the first 12 frets

The 5th-fret rule in my own words

Exercise: Octave Box and Note-Finder Game

Pick a random note and find every instance of it on the neck within 12 frets as fast as you can. Then use the octave shape (two strings up, two frets higher) to find octaves on demand.

- Pick the note G; can you find it at the 3rd fret of the E string, 10th of the A, 5th of the D, and 12th of the G string?

- From an A at the 5th fret of the E string, can you instantly jump to its octave at the 7th fret of the D string?

- How many seconds does it take to find all instances of a random note? Is it getting faster each day?

- Can you name the root of a given chord and land on it without hunting?

Exercise: Lock the Root to the Kick

Play a four-bar progression of C, A minor, F, G over a drum loop at 80 to 100 bpm, hitting the root of each chord exactly when the kick drum hits (typically beats 1 and 3).

- Does your root note land at the exact instant the kick drum hits, so the low end feels like one unified thump?

- Start with one whole note per bar, then half notes, then quarters; at which density does your timing start to slip?

- When the chord changes (C to Am to F to G), do you move to the new root while keeping the same rhythmic feel?

- Played back, does the bass-and-kick feel locked, or do they drift apart and weaken the groove?

Checklist: Timing and Pocket Routine

- Bury a single root note under the metronome click at 70 bpm
- Move the click to beats 2 and 4 only and keep quarter notes steady
- Subdivide out loud (one-and, two-and) even on slow notes
- Practise sitting slightly behind, right on, and slightly ahead of the click
- Raise the tempo only after three minutes with no drift
- Spend ten minutes daily grooving to a real drum loop

Pentatonic Grooves, Walking Bass, and Reading

Move beyond roots into movable pentatonic shapes and walking lines, and read both tab and chord charts to learn any song.

Exercise: Minor Pentatonic Box Builder

Learn the A minor pentatonic box from the 5th fret of the E string (A, C, D, E, G), play it ascending and descending with a metronome, then slide the whole shape to new roots to prove it is movable.

- Can you play the box cleanly: A (5 E), C (8 E), D (5 A), E (7 A), G (5 D), A (7 D), always knowing which note is the root?

- Slide the shape up two frets for B minor pentatonic and down two for G minor pentatonic; does the spacing stay identical?

- Over an A minor drum groove, can you build a simple two-bar pattern using root, fifth (E), octave (A), and flat seventh (G)?

- Are you keeping the groove sparse and rhythmic rather than cramming in every note of the box?

Worksheet: Walking Line Planner

Plan a one-bar-per-chord walking line over a short progression using the root on beat 1, chord tones on 2 and 3, and an approach note on beat 4. Write the notes, then play it locked to a metronome.

Chord progression I am walking (for example C to F)

Beat 1 note (root of current chord)

Beats 2 and 3 notes (chord tones: fifth, octave, or third)

Beat 4 approach note (half or whole step to next root)

Which approach note pulled most strongly into the next chord

Exercise: Read Tab and Chart the Same Song

Pick a simple song. First learn its bassline from tab on Songsterr or Ultimate Guitar, then write out just its chord chart and play your own root-and-groove version from the chart alone.

- Reading the tab, can you correctly translate numbers on the lines (G, D, A, E top to bottom) into frets and notes?
- Do you recognise the common tab symbols: h (hammer-on), p (pull-off), / and \ (slides), x (muted note)?
- From the chord chart alone, can you find each root and build a groove without the tab telling you what to play?
- Which is easier for you right now, tab or chart, and what would help you graduate toward reading charts?

Checklist: Bandready Readiness

- I can find any natural note on the E and A strings without counting
- I lock my roots tightly to the kick drum over a drum loop
- I play the minor pentatonic box and slide it to any key
- I can build a simple walking line with root and approach notes
- I can read bass tab and recognise its common symbols
- I can play a groove from a chord chart alone

Your Action Plan

1. Week 1: Learn the parts and string order, set your strap and posture, and tune reliably by tuner and the 5th-fret check.
2. Week 2: Drill the one-finger-per-fret chromatic warm-up (frets 5-6-7-8) on every string, committing to the pinky from the start.
3. Week 3: Build even alternating fingerstyle with rest strokes, one note per click at 60 to 70 bpm, recording to check evenness.
4. Week 4: Add pick technique with a heavy pick and alternate down-up strokes, then compare pick versus fingers on one groove.
5. Week 5: Drill floating-thumb muting until a single note can be played and then silenced into true silence.
6. Week 6: Memorise the E and A string notes and the octave shape, and play the daily note-finder game.
7. Week 7: Lock roots to the kick over the C, Am, F, G loop, moving from whole notes to quarters as your timing holds.
8. Week 8: Sharpen timing with the metronome on beats 2 and 4, subdividing out loud, and practise sitting in the pocket.
9. Week 9: Learn the minor pentatonic box, slide it to new keys, and build sparse two-bar grooves over a drum loop.
10. Week 10: Build a simple walking line over a 12-bar blues in G, learn one song from tab, then play it from a chord chart.

