

How to Bend Notes

Bending notes is a basic skill that every guitarist needs to know. Many players can bend but they can't seem to get the ideal sound that they are trying to achieve. But with proper technique your string bends can take on a whole new dimension.

Bends give a bluesy soulful sound to your playing and can be used in a variety of styles. This lesson teaches proper bend technique for half step, whole step and minor third bends.

Bending Technique

Here are a few key tips to remember when bending.

- 1) Bending is always going to be easier on lighter gauge strings.
- 2) There are different types of bends that guitarists use - nuance bends, half step bends, whole step bends, and minor third bends.
- 3) Small nuance bends can be done with any finger as the melody dictates by rocking back and forth the finger fretting the note.
- 4) Larger bends of a half step or more are primarily done with the 3rd (ring) or 4th (pinky) finger with the other fingers helping push the string up.
- 5) Bending properly requires hand strength and a strong, stable hand position.
- 6) Bends work best on the 1st (E), 2nd (B), and 3rd (G) strings from the 5th position and up on the neck.

Bending to a Pitch

The biggest mistake average guitar players make is bending a note up somewhere without going to a defined pitch. This produces a sloppy sound that is easily recognizable.

When you bend, bend to a specific pitch.

Bending to a specific pitch takes a bit more control but it is one of the skills that separate average guitar players from great ones.

Playing Tip

When you bend, bend to a specific pitch.

Half-Step Bends

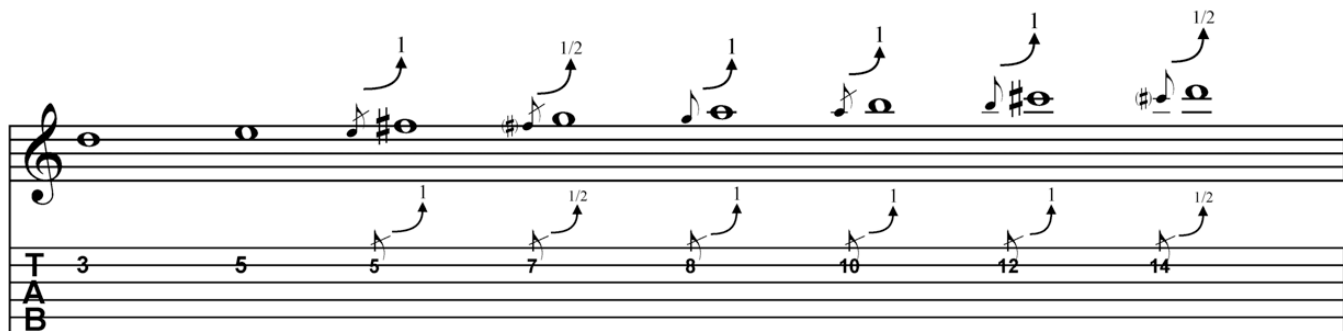
Whole-Step Bends

Minor Third Bends

Scales with Bends Exercises

One of the great guitarists known for bends is the studio guitarist Larry Carlton. Larry describes a simple major scale bending exercise that is great for developing your ear for proper bends. The ascending and descending forms of this exercise are different. The circled numbers indicate the finger to be used.

Another great exercise for practicing bends is to play a major scale on only one string using bends for all of the notes. Here is a D major scale played only on the 2nd string using a mixture of whole and half step bends.



Bends are a great way to add a lot of emotion and color to your playing. It may take extra effort to perfect your bending technique but it is well worth the investment. Your listeners will thank you.

For step-by-step quality guitar instruction check out the award winning Gibson's Learn & Master Guitar course at www.LearnAndMaster.com and the lessons section at www.gibson.com for all the help you need to become the player you want to be!



Steve Krenz

As an educator, Steve is best known for the top-selling guitar instruction course, **Gibson's Learn & Master Guitar** that received the 2011 Acoustic Guitar Magazine Player's Choice Award for Best Instructional Material. As a professional guitarist in Nashville, Steve's broad playing experience includes playing guitar with a symphony orchestra, to jazz big bands, to performing with numerous Grammy-winning artists like Donna Summer, Michael W. Smith, Bryan White, The Fifth Dimension, Israel Houghton, and Tommy Sims.

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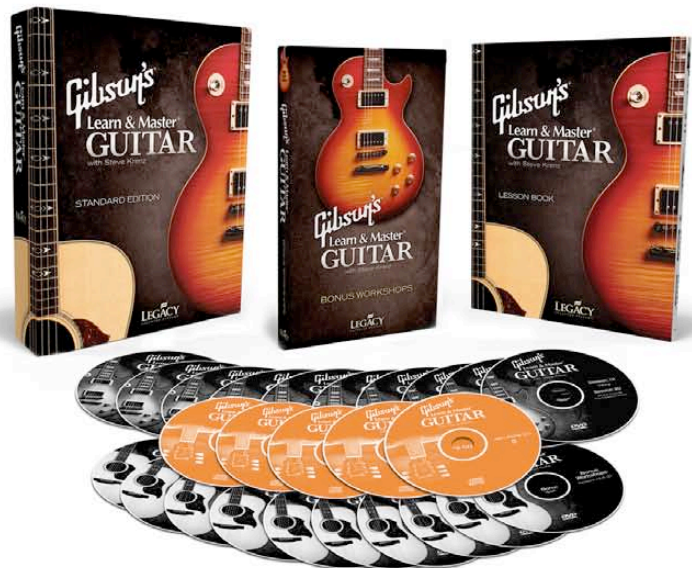
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