

# The Value of Transcribing Music

By Shawn Leonhardt for [Guitar Tricks](#) and [30 Day Singer](#)

The art of transcription is the ability to translate heard music onto a piece of paper, and most people have lost that skill. Many guitarists and musicians cannot read music let alone notate and transcribe it, which leaves a huge gap in their studies. Knowing some of the basics can give you a boost in your playing and knowledge, even for someone just learning [how to play guitar](#). You will get a lot from the value of transcribing music, if you put the practice in!

## What Is Transcribing in Music?

Over the years the music education of the public has declined drastically to the point where concepts like transcribing are rather unknown. This can make the process seem a little daunting, but if you approach music transcription like any other [guitar lesson](#), it is accessible. The basic point is that you are writing down the notes you hear played, that is one of the best parts of this process, ear training!

You must listen for the notes and [guitar chords](#) played on the guitar and then write them on the proper part of the note staff. Along with the right notes you need to write the correct note length and rhythm of the piece you are listening to or composing. It is an all-encompassing process that will likely involve learning a few new skills!

One way to make the process easier is to have a piano keyboard or even an app on your phone with keys. Even though you want to transcribe guitar it will be a lot easier to learn to read music with a keyboard. The guitar is tuned in fourths (and one third) so the fretboard can make learning to read music tough. Make the process easier by referring to a keyboard on occasion.

Also make certain to start with the easiest songs ever! Do not attempt to read or notate crazy hard jazz solos or fast heavy metal. Look at kids' music, traditional folk tunes, and the most basic songs you can find!

## How to Learn Transcribing on a Guitar?

First learn both your bass and treble clef notes on the piano and guitar, standard [guitar tuning](#) starts at E2 and can go higher than E6. This is not only a good exercise for transcribing but it also gives you a better idea of where the notes lie on your fretboard. Learn the notes on both clefs and then go find some very simple sheet music.

In most cases you will be reading the music in treble clef, which is fine as that is where you will be transcribing the guitar notes later. Even though the guitar spans the bass and treble it is a transposing instrument, that means we shift it up to the treble clef for

easier reading. Don't let transposing scare you now, just start practicing reading music notes.

Easy sheet music should mostly have quarter notes and occasional eighths, pay attention to note lengths and study the different kinds. As you learn your notes and rests, start advancing in harder music. Find the music that accompanies the sheet you have and follow the notes as you listen, this is better practice than any ear training course you can find!

Now after you have practiced these basics you can start working on placing the guitar notes you play on the correct part of the treble staff. Keep it very simple with quarter notes and basic movements, and just like regular guitar practice this needs to be done a lot so the process begins to imprint itself into your muscle memory.

It is a long journey to get to the point of listening to complex music, in the meantime work on your own compositions as practice. You can use a DAW or music software to play into, it will turn your music into a transcription to help see if you are doing it correctly. However these programs are not always as right as the human ear.

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How complicated you go with this process is up to you, obviously the more you learn, the better the benefits will be. It is a real hassle that many musicians, especially guitarists, avoid! It is such a new concept for so many that they are often overwhelmed but keep with it and it will be worth it!

Even making the simplest transcriptions of the notes and chord changes is great ear and fretboard training. Your transcribing can be very basic and still make you a much better player, but if you keep learning the value of transcribing music goes up quite a bit. Because so many people lack the skill it is a potential way for you to make a little money in the music field!

When you know how to arrange music it makes it easier to put together a band, sell your music, and provide the service of transcribing for customers in need. For those guitarists who want more than a hobby, learning to transcribe music will put you a step ahead of competition. Not only will you be a better musician, but you will also have more sales points to cash in on that fact.

But even if you have no dreams of money, being a Rockstar, or passing your music down to future generations, transcribing music is worth all the pain! Being able to listen to a piece and copy it on guitar or notate it is a true gift and holy grail for many people. Plus the whole time you are struggling to figure out notation you are always practicing guitar, so you continue to get better at that!

Transcribing music you hear or play will give you a better grasp on theory and make you a more active listener. Not only will you learn more about the notes you play on guitar

but you will discover new rhythms and styles once you can read and notate music. This is a great process for anyone taking [online guitar lessons](#). Taking a big step into more advanced music education is never a bad idea, just remember to go slow and don't try to jump ahead! Music transcription is not an easy path, but with dedication you will get there!