

**Fearless Fingerstyle – A**  
**Step By Step Guide To**  
**Stunning, Confident, And**  
**Practical Fingerpicking**  
**Guitar Technique**

***The Lost Chapter –***  
***‘Harmonics’***

# Harmonics

A **Harmonic** is a unique way to get a different tone from your guitar.

Upon playing a harmonic, you will hear a **pure, high pitched, harp-like tone** that isn't achievable otherwise.

The cool thing about harmonics is that they ring out a while after you have taken your fretting hand away, which means that they are incredibly useful as other notes can be played around them.

The unique quality of the sound and the fact they still ring out while you take your fretting hand away makes them a wonderful tool for any creative guitarist.

Harmonics sound their strongest when played above either the **5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, or 12<sup>th</sup> frets**.

These frets tend to give you the loudest harmonic in addition to sounding great.

You can actually play harmonics above any fret (particularly the frets with dots on them), but some are incredibly difficult to achieve and require an electric guitar with lots of gain and sustain to **actually hear the harmonic**.

Therefore stick to the 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> frets when learning to play harmonics.


## How To Play A Harmonic

### Example 1

**[Click here to listen to the examples](#)**

Ex. 1

**Harmonics**



*mf*  
let ring

*<7>*

To play a harmonic, you very lightly place a finger **directly above a fret** on any string of your choosing.

The finger must be placed **directly above** the fret and not behind the fret as when fretting a note ordinarily.

Don't push the string down onto the fretboard - instead touch it gently.

For the first example, we are playing a harmonic on the **G string at the 7<sup>th</sup> fret.**

For most guitarists this is one of the easiest harmonics to play that sounds good.

Place a finger (it doesn't matter which) directly above the 7<sup>th</sup> fret on the G string.

Don't press down - instead lightly caress the string. Imagine your finger is as light as a feather.

Once your finger is in position, pluck the string loudly and listen for the high pitched ring of the harmonic.

Upon hearing it, remove your fretting hand finger from the fretboard.

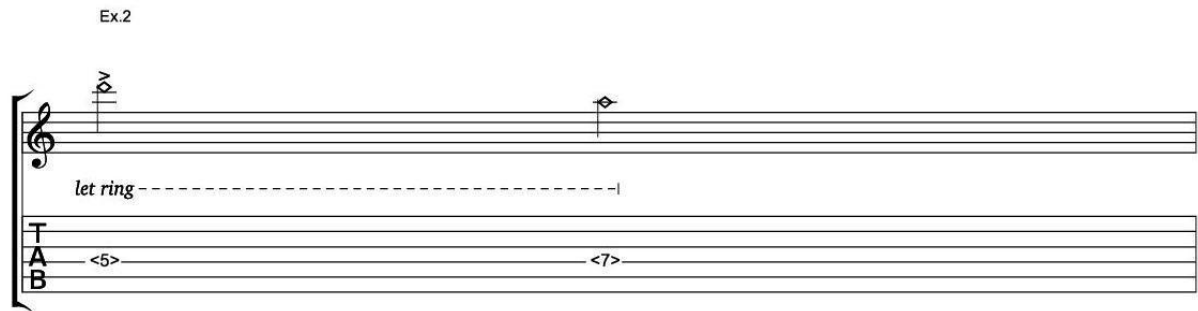
If you have done it correctly, the harmonic will still be ringing out a few seconds afterwards.

Keep trying it until you hear a nice high pitched sound with an almost harp or bell-like tone.

It is a unique sound, and one that requires a little practice to get so take your time.

## Example 2

[Click here to listen to the examples](#)



You can also play a harmonic on the **5<sup>th</sup> fret**.

For this example we will play one at the **5<sup>th</sup> fret of the D string**.

Lightly touch the **D string** above this **5<sup>th</sup> fret** and pluck to create the first harmonic.

Once you hear it, move your finger away from the **D string** and then place it above the **7<sup>th</sup> fret** of this same **D string**. After which, pluck again to create another harmonic.

You have now just played two harmonics, one after the other.

It important to not move your finger along the string when moving to the second harmonic, as this kills off the sound of the first harmonic.

Instead, raise your finger above about an inch (no more) from the string as you travel to the 7<sup>th</sup> fret harmonic.

This ensures that the first harmonic rings out for as long as possible.

### Example 3

[Click here to listen to the examples](#)

Now we will play harmonics on **different strings**.

The **12<sup>th</sup> fret** is another place that harmonics sound great on.

This time, we will play **all four harmonics at the 12<sup>th</sup> fret**.

Ex.3

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a guitar tablature below it. The staff has four notes, each marked with a diamond symbol, representing harmonics. The first note is on the high E string (line 1) and is labeled 'D'. Below the staff, the tablature shows the strings T, A, and B. The first string (T) has a diamond symbol at the 12th fret, labeled '<12>'. The second string (A) has a diamond symbol at the 12th fret, labeled '<12>'. The third string (B) has a diamond symbol at the 12th fret, labeled '<12>'. The fourth string (D) has a diamond symbol at the 12th fret, labeled '<12>'. A dashed line with the text 'let ring' spans across the first three strings.

For this example we start with a harmonic played at the **12<sup>th</sup> fret** on the **high E string**.

Once you have played the harmonic on the **high E string**, remove your finger and place it above the **12<sup>th</sup> fret** of the **B string** then pluck.

Once that harmonic has been played, play one at the **12<sup>th</sup> fret** of the **G string** and then finally at the **12<sup>th</sup> fret** of the **B string**.

All four harmonics should be ringing out throughout.

It can be tempting to try to lightly barre across the 12<sup>th</sup> fret here so that your fretting finger doesn't have to move.

I would recommend you use one finger (index). But ensure it is only touching one string at a time as this will help each harmonic sound nice and clear.

It does take some practice, patience, and a delicate touch to make harmonics sound loud and clear when learning how to play them – so just be patient, you'll get it.

## What Is The Point Of A Harmonic?

Harmonics give you a **unique tone**. The fact is, once you play a harmonic, you **don't have to keep your finger in position for the note to ring out**.

The only other time we can have a note ringing out without keeping our fretting hand in the same position is when playing an open string and harmonics, as I'm sure you are now aware, **sound very different to an open string**.

Having the sweet tone of a harmonic ringing out while our fretting hand is playing a different note will open up new possibilities for us as guitarists as you will see in the following examples.



## Remember...

A harmonic can only be played when you very **lightly touch the string above the fret.**

Although you can play a harmonic above other frets, on an acoustic guitar they sound louder and are easier to create above the **5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> frets** (on any string).

## 'Harmonics' Within A Chord Progression

[Click here to listen to the examples](#)

Ex.4  
♩ = 80

Let's look at the musical notation for Example 4. It shows a chord progression of G, Asus4, and D. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a tempo of 80 beats per minute. The chords are G, Asus4, and D. The notation includes a 'let ring' instruction for each chord. The bass line is shown with fret numbers 3, 5, and 5 respectively.

Let's look at our first example of a harmonic being played within a simple chord progression.

The whole piece uses harmonics and is based around a chord sequence of **G Major, A minor, and D Major**.

If you play this piece over and over whilst another guitarist strums or picks the above chords at the same time, you'll have a lovely and unique sounding guitar piece.

Be careful to take it slow, and make sure each harmonic sounds clear and loud before moving onto the next.

Have a listen to example 4a to hear the above part in isolation, and then listen to 4b to hear how well it works alongside another guitar strumming the chords.

### *G Major*

Fret the **low E string at the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret** with your index finger and pluck the string.

Once plucked, now play three harmonics above the **7<sup>th</sup> fret on the D string, then G string, and then B string.**

### *A minor*

Fret **the low E string at the 5<sup>th</sup> fret** with your index finger and pluck the string.

Once plucked, now play three harmonics above **the 7<sup>th</sup> fret on the A string, then D string, and then G string.**

### *D Major*

Fret **the A string at the 5<sup>th</sup> fret** with your index finger and pluck the string.

Once plucked, now play three harmonics above **the 12<sup>th</sup> fret on the D string, then G string, and finally, B string.**

## The 'Harmonics' Technique Real World Example

[Click here to listen to the examples](#)

Ex.5 - Real World

♩ = 93

G

The first system of music shows a G Major chord progression. The treble clef staff contains a melody of eighth and quarter notes. The bass clef staff shows a simple bass line with open strings (0) and fretted notes (2, 3). The notation includes 'let ring' markings and fret numbers (0, 2, 3, 12) for harmonics. The second system shows an Em chord progression. The treble clef staff contains a melody of eighth and quarter notes. The bass clef staff shows a simple bass line with open strings (0) and fretted notes (10, 12, 13). The notation includes 'let ring' markings and fret numbers (10, 12, 13, 12) for harmonics.

The previous example showed how harmonics can work really well on two guitars, but for our real world example we will look at making harmonics sound great on just the one guitar!

This real world example just goes to show you that you can **mix harmonics with fretted notes and open strings to create some amazingly beautiful sounds.**

The first half of the first bar is a fairly standard picking piece based around a G Major chord.

During the latter stages of this bar we throw in a couple of **12<sup>th</sup> fret harmonics** to add some depth and texture to the piece.

This first bar is then repeated.

The next two bars is where things get really interesting.

The third and fourth bars are based around the chord of **E minor** and are quite intriguing as here we mix up fretted notes with harmonics to create a lovely texture.

It's a good idea to practice each bar and each section in isolation as the big jumps from the **3<sup>rd</sup> fret of the low E string up to the 12<sup>th</sup> fret** are a little tricky, just as switching quickly between harmonics and fretted notes requires a little practice.

Take your time with this piece and listen to it over and over again to get the rhythm stuck in your head.

I hope you agree with me when I say it is a lovely piece and one that is also fun to play!

## Conclusion

That was 'The Lost Chapter' from my eBook: [\*\*Fearless  
Fingerstyle: A Step By Step Guide To Stunning,  
Confident, And Practical Fingerpicking Guitar Technique.\*\*](#)

Thanks so much for reading through this extra chapter. It was a lot of fun to write and I hope you enjoyed learning about harmonics!

Now add them to your own playing!

**Dan Thorpe**

Please note - This chapter is exclusive to those who have purchased the extended version of the eBook. If you have found this version freely on the internet, please report it to [hq@guitardomination.net](mailto:hq@guitardomination.net)