

# Stage 1

## Fingerboard Orientation

A complete mastery-based guide to the foundational map of the guitar

| STAGE   | PREREQUISITES     | TIME TO MASTERY           |
|---------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 of 14 | None — start here | 4–8 weeks (mastery-based) |

1

### Note Names — The Complete Map

Every note, every string, every fret — automatic and instant

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### 5 Areas — Neck Geography

Five overlapping regions; understanding the boundaries and crossings

3

### 7 Positions — Precise Landmarks

G major scale positions as reference points, not boxes

4

### 3 Triad Diagonals — The Highway System

Three inversion paths that tile the entire fingerboard

5

### Integration — All Systems Together

Merging note names, areas, positions, and diagonals into one map

*"Learn these three systems until they are as natural as breathing. You are not memorizing shapes — you are internalizing the geography of your instrument. Once the map is in your hands, music can flow without interruption."*

— TED GREENE

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# Note Names

Learn every note on every string — not patterns, the actual names

## TED GREENE

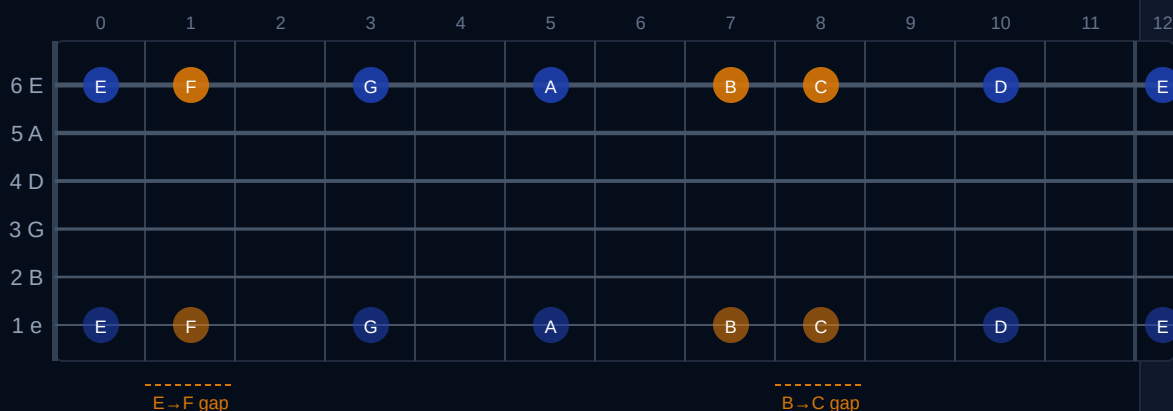
Before we touch a single chord shape or scale pattern, I need you to do something that most teachers skip — and it's the reason most guitarists spend their careers navigating in the dark. I need you to learn the actual names of the notes on every string, at every fret, from memory.

Not the patterns. Not the shapes. The *names*. E, F, G, A, B, C, D — and all the sharps and flats between them.

I know what you're thinking: "Can't I just learn the patterns and connect them?" You can. Most guitarists do. And most guitarists spend their entire careers with a 20% map of a territory that should be completely transparent to them. The note names are the alphabet of the instrument. You cannot write literature until the alphabet is automatic. So we start here, and we don't rush it.

## Why We Start With Strings 6 and 1

The low E string (string 6) and the high e string (string 1) have exactly the same note names, in the same order, at the same frets. This means if you fully learn string 6, you've simultaneously learned string 1. These two strings also carry the most musical weight — string 6 carries the bass foundation, string 1 carries the melody lead.



## The Two Gaps — Your Most Important Landmarks

The musical alphabet has no note between E and F, and no note between B and C. These are half steps — adjacent frets, nothing between them. On string 6: open = E, fret 1 = F. No gap. Fret 7 = B, fret 8 = C. No gap. These pairs are your landmarks whenever you feel lost.

#### WATCH OUT FOR

**The most damaging mistake: counting up from the open string.** "Open is E, fret 1 is F, fret 2 is F#, so fret 3 must be G..." This is calculation, not memory. That counting chain breaks under any musical pressure. Stop counting the moment you notice you're doing it.

## The Memorization Sequence — String by String

### Sessions 1–2 String 6 (low E), natural notes only

E F G A B C D E — open through 12th fret. Play each fret, say the name out loud before looking. Up, then down, then random. Five minutes per session. Goal: names in your mouth and fingers simultaneously.

### Session 3 String 1 (high e) — confirm it matches

Play string 6 fret 5: A. Now play string 1 fret 5: A. Confirm every fret matches. String 1 should feel like something you already know.

### Sessions 4–5 Sharps and flats on strings 6 and 1

Fill in the in-between notes. The two gaps (E-F, B-C) have nothing between them. Work slowly — natural note, then its sharp, then the next natural.

### Sessions 6–8 Strings 5 (A) and 2 (B)

String 5 opens on A. String 2 opens on B — notice fret 1 is C immediately (B-C half step). Once string 6 is solid, string 5 comes faster.

### Final phase Strings 4 (G) and 3 (D) — close the map

String 4 opens on G, string 3 opens on D. Verify every note. When all six strings are solid, you have the complete map of the instrument.

#### PRACTICE TIP

**Practice away from the guitar.** While waiting for something, mentally call a random fret and string: "Fret 9, string 6..." Answer before reaching for the instrument. Verify when you pick it up. The mental map matters as much as the physical one.

## What Mastery Feels Like

The test: have someone call random frets and strings while you're distracted — making coffee, in the middle of a conversation. If you answer correctly without stopping what you're doing, you're done. If you have to pause and think, you're not done yet. Keep going.

### DEFINITION OF DONE — STEP 1

Check each item only when it's genuinely automatic — not possible with effort, but effortless.

- ☐ Name any natural note on string 6 (low E), fret 0–12, in under 2 seconds — without counting from open.
- ☐ Name any natural note on string 1 (high e) at the same speed. Confirm it matches string 6 at every fret.
- ☐ Name any note — natural or sharp/flat — on strings 6 and 1. Under 2 seconds.
- ☐ Extend to all 6 strings: any fret, any string, answer before you have to think. Automatic, not fast.
- ☐ Pass the distraction test: answer correctly when a fret/string is called while you're focused on something else.

## 5 Areas

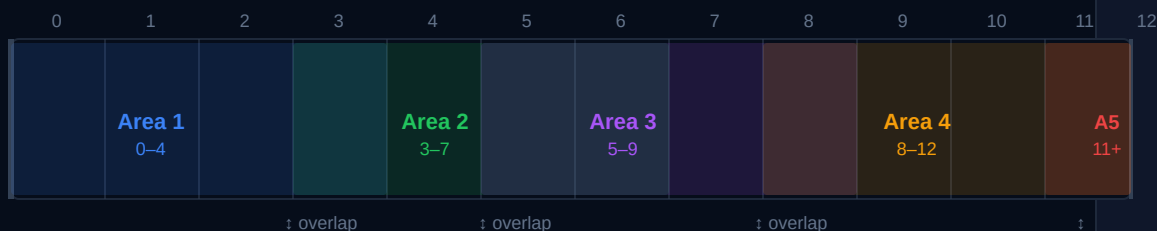
Five overlapping regions that organize the neck into navigable neighborhoods

### TED GREENE

Now that you have the note names, we need to organize the neck into zones. Having the notes is like knowing every word in a city's street map. The Areas are the neighborhoods. Without them, you have information but no structure. With them, you know not just where a note is, but *what territory* it lives in.

Most systems divide the guitar into four regions. CAGED does this. I don't use CAGED, and I want to explain why. CAGED ties geography to chord shapes — five open chord forms mapped onto the neck. The problem is that when you're working on voicing navigation, you need geography that's independent of any particular shape. My five areas are purely geographic. The chord forms come later and fit into these regions — not the other way around.

The other key difference: my areas *overlap*. This is not a bug. It's the most important feature of the system.



The 5 areas and their overlapping fret ranges. Overlapping zones are where adjacent areas share harmonic resources.

### The 5 Areas

#### ● Area 1

Frets 0–4

Open position. Open chords. Low bass register. First natural position.

#### ● Area 2

Frets 3–7

5th position area. A-shape chords. Clear mid-register. Overlaps Area 1 at frets 3–4.

#### ● Area 3

Frets 5–9

7th position area. D-shape chords. Bright midrange. The "sweet spot" for many voicings.

#### ● Area 4

Frets 8–12

9th–10th position. G-shape chords. High register. Upper voicings live here.

## ● Area 5

Frets 11+

12th fret and above. Octave of Area 1. Same shapes, one octave higher.

## The Overlap Map

### Frets 3–4

First crossroads. Open-position shapes and A-shape voicings coexist here.

Areas 1 & 2

### Frets 7–8

Mid-neck crossroads. A-shape and D-shape territory. Huge harmonic movement.

Areas 2 & 3

### Frets 8–9

Upper-mid crossroads. D-shape and G-shape. Bright and present in a mix.

Areas 3 & 4

### Frets 11–12

Octave boundary. Area 5 is Area 1 one octave higher — identical shapes.

Areas 4 & 5

## THE INSIGHT

**Area 5 is the gift most players discover by accident.** It begins at fret 12 — the exact octave of the open strings. Every shape you know in Area 1 works identically in Area 5, one octave higher.

## DEFINITION OF DONE — STEP 2

Check each item only when it's genuinely automatic.

- ☐ Given any fret number 0–12, immediately name which area or areas it falls in — no hesitation, no diagram.
- ☐ For every overlap zone (frets 3–4, 7–8, 8–9, 11–12), name both areas without looking.
- ☐ Find and play one chord voicing you already know in each of the 5 areas.
- ☐ Transition between adjacent areas through the overlap zone — stepping through, not jumping over.
- ☐ Explain why Area 5 mirrors Area 1, and play one specific example demonstrating this.

# 7 Positions

Precise landmarks within the areas — reference points, not boxes

## TED GREENE

The Areas gave you regions. The 7 Position Theory gives you something more precise: *specific landmarks* within those neighborhoods. If the Areas are like knowing which part of a city you're in, the Positions are like knowing the cross street.

I use the G major scale as the template. Not because G major is more important — it isn't — but because in standard tuning, G major allows us to use open strings in the first position, giving you a natural anchor where you can hear the relationship between open strings and fretted notes.

Each position is named by the scale degree whose root falls on the 6th string. If you've done the note name work, you already know which note is at every fret on string 6. The position system is that knowledge given an organizing structure. You're not learning something new. You're organizing what you already know.



The 7 positions of G major — each anchored by its root note on string 6. Position I (G) to Position VII (E open).

## What a Position Actually Is — and What It's Not

A position is not a box. A position is a *reference point* — it tells you where the root of the scale falls on the 6th string in that region. The position tells you *where you are*. From there, the music tells you what to play. The position is the address, not the room plan.

## The Full Position Map in G Major

| POSITION | FRET ON STR<br>6 | ROOT<br>NOTE | NOTES |
|----------|------------------|--------------|-------|
|          |                  |              |       |

|     |          |   |                                                                               |
|-----|----------|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I   | 3        | G | Open-position area. Uses open strings. Most familiar starting point.          |
| II  | 5        | A | Second scale degree. Sits at the Area 1/2 overlap. A-shape territory begins.  |
| III | 7        | B | Third scale degree. Core of Area 2. Many upper voicings available.            |
| IV  | 8        | C | Fourth scale degree. Area 2/3 boundary. Notice B → C is one fret (half step). |
| V   | 10       | D | Fifth scale degree. Mid-Area 3. Strong, open-sounding from this position.     |
| VI  | 12       | E | Sixth scale degree. Area 4. Octave of Position VII. Shapes mirror low neck.   |
| VII | 0 (open) | E | Open E. Start here as anchor — the full neck seen from the nut.               |

#### THE INSIGHT

**The positions also give you a chord vocabulary shortcut.** Once you know your position, you know which chord forms from G major are available nearby without a large shift. Position I gives you G, Am, Bm, C, D, Em, F# dim — all reachable without moving far. This becomes the basis for harmonic navigation in Stage 2.

#### DEFINITION OF DONE — STEP 3

Check each item only when it's genuinely automatic.

- ☐ Name the position you're in from the root note on the 6th string — without a chart.
- ☐ Play the G major scale in Position I, ascending and descending, all notes named aloud.
- ☐ Play the G major scale in all 7 positions. Know the root on string 6 before starting each.
- ☐ Shift from any position to the adjacent one above and below without stopping or searching.
- ☐ When a position number (I–VII) is called out, you're there within 3 seconds.
- ☐ Describe which area each position falls in. Both maps visible simultaneously.

## 3 Triad Diagonals

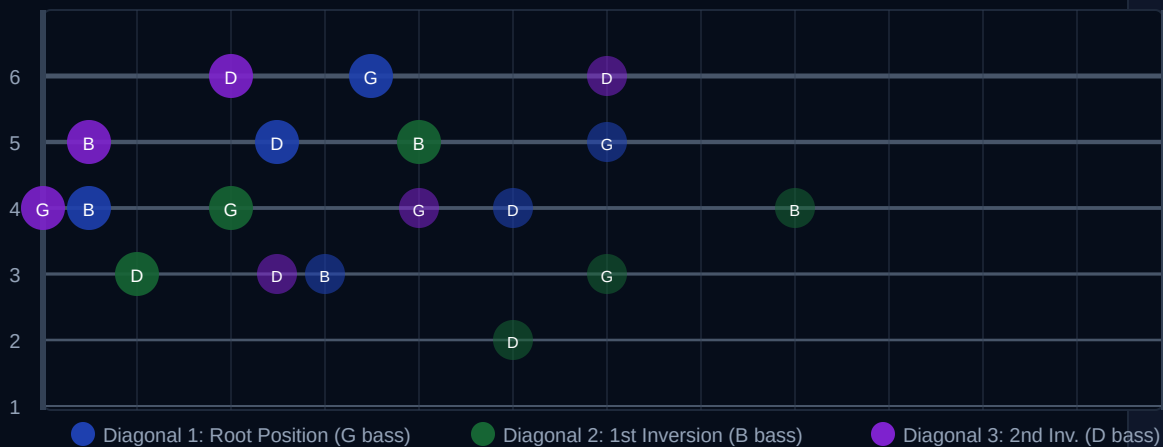
Three inversion paths that tile the entire fingerboard — the highway system

### TED GREENE

This is the system I'm most proud of. When most guitarists look at a triad on the fretboard, they see a shape. Those shapes work fine — until they need to stay in the same chord while moving across the neck, or connect chord tones to a melody. Then the shapes-as-isolated-objects approach fails.

The three triad diagonals solve this. Any major triad appears in three inversions — root position, first inversion, and second inversion. Each inversion traces a diagonal path across the neck. These three diagonals together tile the entire fingerboard. There is no place on the neck that isn't covered by one of the three paths.

Think of the diagonals as highways. On a highway, you're always in the same state, always making harmonic progress, but you have exits to different voicings. Once you can follow any diagonal path for any key, the neck is no longer a collection of isolated shapes — it's a continuous, navigable terrain.



G major triads — three inversion paths shown on strings 6-5-4 and 5-4-3. Faded = same inversion higher up the neck.

### The Three Paths

1

Root Position

G in bass · G–D–B

The most stable. Grounded and resolved. Ascends steeply from string 6 toward string 1. Most players encounter this first without knowing it's a diagonal at all.

## 2 First Inversion

B in bass · B–G–D

Less stable — creates forward motion. The 3rd in the bass gives a slightly sweeter quality. Excellent for voice leading because the bass moves by step when transitioning to/from root position.

## 3 Second Inversion

D in bass · D–B–G

The most unstable inversion — it wants to resolve somewhere. Instability is not a problem; it's a resource. Second inversion creates tension that resolves beautifully to root position.

## The Practice Sequence

**1 Phase 1:** One diagonal, one string set. Diagonal 1 (root position) on strings 6-5-4. Play slowly, say "root position" as you play. Don't move to the next string set until this is solid.

**2 Phase 2:** One diagonal, all string sets. Follow Diagonal 1 across all four string sets: 6-5-4, 5-4-3, 4-3-2, 3-2-1, ascending without stopping. This is the diagonal path in continuous motion.

**3 Phase 3:** All three diagonals, one string set. Take string set 6-5-4. Play all three inversions — root, first, second. Listen: hear the stability shift from grounded to sweet to tense.

**4 Phase 4:** All three diagonals, full neck. Run all three diagonal paths for G major across all string sets, fret 0 to 12, without stopping. Takes weeks to master. The continuous movement is the point.

**5 Phase 5:** Apply to C major. C major root: fret 8 on string 6. Same shapes, different root location. If it feels unfamiliar — that's correct. You're applying understanding, not muscle memory.

### PRACTICE TIP

**Why G major unlocks every other key.** The shapes of the three diagonals are identical in every major key. Only the root location changes. Once you can run G major diagonals smoothly from fret 0 to 12, applying to C major means shifting the root to fret 8 and running the same shapes. The understanding transfers completely.

#### DEFINITION OF DONE — STEP 4

Check each item only when it's genuinely automatic.

- ☐ Play all three G major diagonal paths on string set 6-5-4, naming each inversion as you play it.
- ☐ Follow Diagonal 1 (root position) across all four string sets, fret 0 to 12, without stopping.
- ☐ Run all three diagonals across the full neck in sequence — the complete exercise.
- ☐ Name any triad inversion (root / 1st inv / 2nd inv) by ear and by hand without thinking about it.
- ☐ Apply the same diagonal structure to C major — same shapes, root at fret 8 on string 6.
- ☐ Describe how the diagonals pass through the area overlap zones — both systems visible simultaneously.

# Integration

Merging note names, 5 areas, 7 positions, and 3 diagonals into one unified map

## TED GREENE

You now have four things in your hands: the note names across all six strings, the five areas of the fingerboard, the seven positions derived from the G major scale, and the three triad diagonals that connect inversions across the neck. Each works on its own. But they were never designed to work in isolation.

Integration is the step where these four separate things stop being four things and become one: a complete mental model of the guitar fingerboard. When that happens — and it does happen — you stop thinking about the instrument and start thinking only about the music. The map becomes invisible. You're just navigating.

Here's how I knew when a student was ready for Stage 2: I would pick a chord quality — say, G major 7 — and ask them to play it in all five areas without stopping. If they could do that, name the area they were in, and tell me which diagonal connected that voicing to the next one up the neck — we were ready. That's not a test. That's what fluency looks like.

## Integration Drills

### Note → Area → Position

Call out a note — say, B $\flat$ . Find it on string 6. Name the fret. Name the area. Name the position. Then find the same note on all other strings. For each occurrence, name the area and position it falls in. This drill forces all three systems to describe a single note. You should feel them click together.

### Chord → Area → Diagonal

Play a G major chord in Area 1. Name the voicing — which inversion is in the bass? Now follow the diagonal to the same inversion in Area 2, then Area 3. Move continuously through the overlap zones. Don't lift your hand — step through the boundaries. Name each area as you enter it.

### Position → Scale → Chord

Call out a position — Position IV. Go there immediately (C at fret 8, string 6). Play the G major scale from that position. Then find a G major triad voicing in that same position region. You've just connected the positional anchor to both scale and chord content simultaneously.

## Blind Spot Audit

Ask yourself honestly: which area feels least natural? Which position do you have to search for? Which diagonal inversion is haziest? Those are your blind spots. Go there deliberately — not to the comfortable parts of the neck. Comfort is not the goal. Completeness is.

## Continuous G Major Triads — Full Neck

Play G major triads across the entire neck without stopping. Move through all five areas using the diagonal connections. Change inversions as the diagonal dictates. Name each area as you enter it. This is the master integration exercise for Stage 1. Expect weeks of practice before it flows.

## Apply to D Major

D major root: fret 5 on string 6 (Area 2, Position II). Run the three diagonals for D major. Name the areas as you pass through them. If the systems are truly integrated, this should feel like the same exercise from a new starting location — not a new exercise. That feeling of "same exercise, new location" is fluency.

### WATCH OUT FOR

**The comfortable-corner trap.** Every guitarist has a region they return to by default — usually around frets 5–9 in the middle areas. Integration practice means leaving that region deliberately. If you only practice where you're already comfortable, you're maintaining existing fluency, not building new fluency. Go to Area 1 with its open strings. Go to Areas 4 and 5 where the neck feels sparse. Make the uncomfortable feel like home.

## The Milestone Moment

There is a specific moment most students can recall when Stage 1 is complete. It's usually not during a practice session — it's during a musical moment where you needed information and it was just there. A chord in your head, your hand went to it, and you knew exactly where you were on the neck and exactly how to reach the next chord. No counting, no calculating, no pattern-hunting. Just fluency.

### DEFINITION OF DONE — STAGE 1 COMPLETE

All systems integrated. Greene's final standard: the neck feels like continuous terrain, not isolated shapes.

- ☐ Given a note name, find it in all 5 areas within 5 seconds — every occurrence, every string.
- ☐ Play a chord, immediately name the area, position, and diagonal inversion it represents.
- ☐ Play G major triads continuously across the full neck — all areas, all string sets, diagonal connections.
- ☐ Apply the three-diagonal system to C major and D major without rethinking the shapes.
- ☐ At any overlap zone, name both areas and both positions simultaneously.
- ☐ Greene's final criterion: any note, any string, any fret — automatic and instant, under any condition.
- ☐ The neck feels navigable as continuous terrain, not as a collection of isolated shapes.

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### THE TED GREENE GUITAR SYSTEM · STAGE 1 OF 14

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