

READING TABLATURE

Tablature is a simple way of writing out music for people who don't read sheet music. Each of the four lines represents a string on the banjo/mandolin, using the standard "fiddle tuning" G D A E. The heaviest string is G, the lightest is E.

E -----
A -----
D -----
G -----

Numbers on the lines tell you which fret to press, on which string, to give the desired note. A 'zero' means play the string open. For example:

D string ----- 0 ----- 2 ----- 4 ----- 5 ---
 D E F# G

Here are two of the most important scales you need to know for playing Irish music:

D Major

E -----
A ----- 0 ----- 2 ----- 4 ----- 5 -----
D ----- 0 ----- 2 ----- 4 ----- 5 -----
G -----
 D E F# G A B C# D'

And G Major

E ----- 0 ----- 2 ----- 3 -----
A ----- 0 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 5 -----
D ----- 5 -----
G -----
 G A B C D' E' F# G'

(If you are reading the ABC as well as the tab, you'll see that ordinary notes are written as A B C, and high notes are written A' B' C'. Extra-low notes are written A, B, C,).

Sharps and naturals

The notes C natural (written as C) and C sharp (written as C#) are both commonly used in Irish tunes, sometimes both in the same tune.

C natural is the 3rd fret on the A string, C sharp is the 4th fret.