

Playing in EADEAE

Doug Young

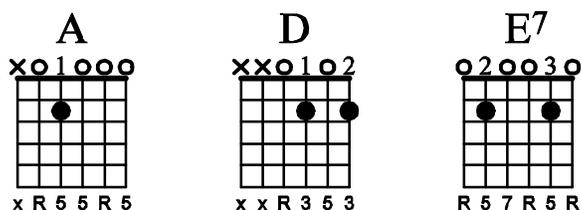
EADEAE is an alternate tuning that offers some interesting sonic possibilities to guitarists. This somewhat unusual tuning was apparently discovered by English guitarist Martin Carthy, who used it as a “pipe tuning”. Although the tuning can produce a droning sound that is useful for Celtic music, it is a versatile tuning that has many uses. I have found that it works well even for delicate, pretty pieces. Pat Kirtley uses the tuning extensively for his Kentucky thumbpicking style, and Ed Gerhard chose EADEAE for his popular piece “The Handing Down” (Featured in *Fingerstyle Guitar Magazine* #6).

To tune your guitar to EADEAE starting from standard tuning, simply tune the 2nd string down a whole step to an A. You can check it against the 5th string’s 12th fret harmonic. Next, tune the 3rd string all the way down to E. You can compare against the E on the 4th string, 2nd fret.

The lowered 3rd string makes this tuning a bit unusual, and at first you may feel a bit lost, but with a little exploration, it’s not too hard to start playing interesting things. With all those open E strings, you might be tempted to think of EADEAE as an E tuning, but it’s more useful in the key of A. In A, the open strings provide the Root (A), the 5th(E), and the 4th(D) tones of the scale, which would make this an A suspended tuning.

Basic Chords

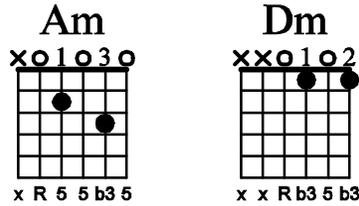
A good way to get started with any new tuning is to learn a few basic chords, such as the I, IV, and V chords in the various keys. In EADEAE, you can play the I, IV, and V chords of the key of A in the first position like this:



Here’s a simple example that uses these chord shapes.

The image shows a musical example in EADEAE tuning. It consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is written in the bass clef. Above the treble clef staff, four chord diagrams are shown, corresponding to the chords A, D, E7, and A. Below the treble clef staff, a guitar tablature (TAB) is provided, showing the fret numbers for each string. The TAB is written in a standard 6-line format, with the strings numbered 1 to 6 from top to bottom. The TAB shows the following fret numbers: 0 0 2 0 0 0, 0 0 2 0 0 0, 2 0 0 2 0 0, 0 0 0 0 0 0.

To play in the key of Am, you can use the following Am and Dm chord shapes, along with the E7 shown above.

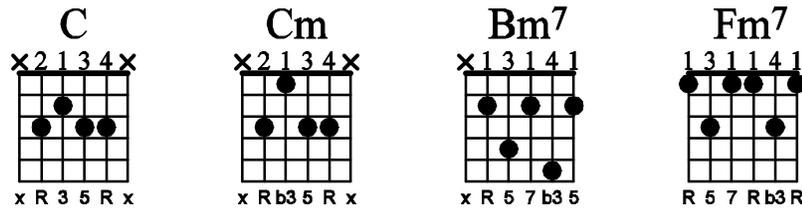


Here's a simple fingerstyle example in Am:

Am: x01030
Dm: xx0102
E7: 000032
A: x02220

T: 3 2 0 0 1 0 0 2 0 0
A: 0 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0
B: 0 0 0 0 0 2 2 0 0

You will discover many other chords as you explore the tuning. Moveable chord shapes are especially useful, since by learning one shape you immediately know many different chords. The following shapes are all moveable. So, for example, the C shape can be slid up the neck to play D, E, F and so on.



The DADGAD Connection

It's interesting to realize that EADEAE is closely related to the well known DADGAD tuning. If you consider the relationship between the notes in DADGAD in the key of D, the open strings are Root, 5th, Root, 4th, 5th, Root, (or R5R45R to use an abbreviated notation). The open strings in EADEAE, relative to the key of A, are 5R45R5. Notice that the sequence "5R54R" appears in both tunings. EADEAE has the same string relationships as DADGAD, just shifted over one string. This may be easiest to see if we line up the tunings like this:

DADGAD: R 5 R 4 5 R -
EADEAE: - 5 R 4 5 R 5

So any lick or phrase you can play on the top 5 strings in DADGAD can also be played on the bottom 5 strings in EADEAE, although the key will be different.

For example, here is a very simple arrangement of the Celtic traditional tune, The South Wind, in the key of D, using DADGAD tuning:

South Wind (DADGAD)

Now, let's try the same tune in EADEAE in the key of A. Notice that the notes of this arrangement are exactly the same as the DADGAD arrangement, just shifted over by one string. This arrangement is in the key of A.

South Wind (EADEAE)

Understanding the similarity between EADEAE and DADGAD allows you to leverage certain techniques that are often used in DADGAD. For example, as in DADGAD, EADEAD offers easy access to octaves. There are octaves available between the 6th and 3rd string, the 3rd and 1st string, and the 5th and 2nd strings.

Also like DADGAD, EADEAE has a major 2nd interval between two strings, which can be exploited in several ways. In EADEAE, the major 2nd is between the 4th and 3rd strings.

It is easy to play unisons using these strings, since any note on the 3rd string is also available 2 frets up on the 4th string.

You can also get the harp-like effects many people associate with DADGAD in EADEAE. For example, try the following A scale, letting the notes ring as long as possible:

When figuring out scales, don't forget that the bottom 3 strings in EADEAE are the same as they are in standard tuning, so scales and partial chords that use these strings will be unchanged.

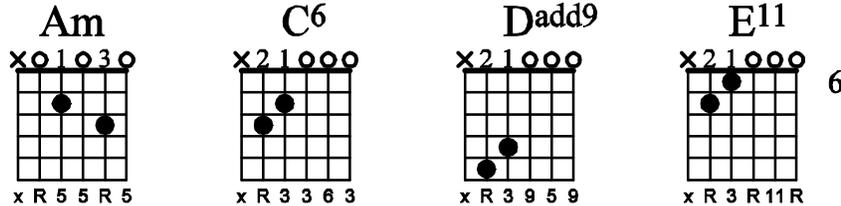
A Simple Tune

A good way to learn a new tuning is to arrange a few simple tunes. The following arrangement of the children's song, Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star makes a good tune for this purpose. This arrangement uses some of the chords described earlier, as well as a few new ones. The tune is played very simply the first time through. The second verse adds some embellishments based on the chord shapes. You can use this example as a starting point and explore additional variations as a way to get comfortable with the tuning.

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Luck of the Draw

My tune *Luck of the Draw* uses EADEAE and provides a slightly more complex demonstration some of the chords and techniques we've discussed in this article. The tune is based on a simple Am C D E chord progression, with a repeating bass line that follows the chord progression. The basic chord shapes used in the tune are:



The main theme starts at measure 1 and is 8 bars long. The doubled E in the opening Am chord gives the chord a distinctive resonant sound and allows a pulloff from C on the second fret to A while keeping the other notes ringing. The D and E chords are based on partial chord shapes that are similar to the same chords in standard tuning. Measures 10-17 as well as 26-41 are just variations over the same chord progression and you could easily extend this tune by improvising over the chord changes.

Measures 9 and 33 exploit the open E strings and the 2nd interval between the 4th and 3rd strings with a rhythmic lick consisting mostly of E's with a hammer on from the open D.

The B section starting at measure 18 introduces some dissonant sounding harmonies with a somewhat percussive break. It is difficult to assign meaningful names to the chords used here, but they are various voicings of Asus with other colors added. The focus in this section is on the rhythmic accents, which are meant to simulate a horn section. Notice the octaves in measure 21.

I usually try to add a backbeat to *Luck of the Draw* wherever possible by striking the strings with the back of my right hand nails on the 2nd and 4th beat. The first verse has no backbeat, but I begin to add it in the second verse, saving some drive for the final choruses.

If you use light gauge strings with EADEAE, you may find that the lowered 3rd string is a bit floppy, which can feel odd, and may also cause some intonation problems. I often use a capo with this tuning, which seems to minimize these problems. *Luck of the Draw* is capo'd at the 2nd fret on the recording.

I hope you enjoy *Luck of the Draw* and have fun exploring EADEAE!

Luck of the Draw

Tuning: EADEAE (Capo II)

♩ = 128

Doug Young

A

MEASURE 1: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 3, 0, 2, 0, 0, 4, 5.

MEASURE 2: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 7.

MEASURE 3: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 3, 0, 2, 0, 0, 4, 5.

MEASURE 4: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 0, 0, 0, 0, 2, 0.

5

MEASURE 5: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 3, 0, 2, 0, 0, 4, 5.

MEASURE 6: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 7.

MEASURE 7: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 3, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0.

MEASURE 8: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: (12), (12), (12), (12).

A1

9

MEASURE 9: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 0, 2, 0, 0, 2, 0, 2, 0.

MEASURE 10: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 7, 5, 0, 5, 3, 5, 3, 0.

MEASURE 11: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0.

MEASURE 12: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 7, 5, 0, 5, 3, 5, 3, 0.

13

MEASURE 13: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 4, 2, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0.

MEASURE 14: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 7, 5, 0, 5, 3, 5, 3, 0.

MEASURE 15: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 3, 5, 5, 0, 5, 7, 7.

MEASURE 16: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. Fingering: 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0. Bend.

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Luck of the Draw

17 **B**

T
A
B

0 5 0 3 2 0 3 | 0 12-X 10 X | 3 X 5 X | 12-X 10 X

10-X 8 X | 3 X 3 X | 10-X 8 X | 11-X 9 X

11-X 9 X | 3 X 4 X | 11-X 9 X | 0 0 0 0

21

T
A
B

5 3 0 0 5 3 | 12-X 10 X | 3 X 5 X | 12 12 10 10 X 7

10-X 8 X | 3 X 3 X | 10 10 8 8 X 0

11-X 9 X | 3 X 4 X | 11 11 9 9 X 6

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

25 **A2**

T
A
B

7 6 6 7 6 6 | 8 7-8-7-5 0 3-2 0 | 0 0 0 0 | 8 7-8-7-5 0 3-2 0

0 3 4 5 6 7 | 0 3 0 0 0 0 | 0 3

29

T
A
B

0 0 0 8 7-8-7-5 0 3-2 0 | 0 0 0 0 | 3 0 0 0 0 0

4 2 0 2 | 0 3 4 5 6 7 | 0 3 0

Luck of the Draw

A1

33

TAB: 0-2 0 0-2 0 2 0 | 0 3 | 4 5 6 7 | 0 3

37

TAB: 4-2 0 0 0 | 0 3 | 3 5 3 7 5 7 | 0 2 4-2 0 2

B2

41

TAB: 0/5 0 3-2 0 3 | 0 3 X 5 3 4 | 3 3 0 0 2 0 3 0 | 0 3 X 5 3 4

45

TAB: 12 X 10 X 3 X 5 3 4 | 3 3 0 0 2 0 3 0 | 3 3 3 5 5 X 7 | 0 11 X 8 X 3 X 4 3 3 3 4 X 6 7

A

49

TAB: 7 6 6 7 6 6 | 0 2 0 0 2 0 0 4 5 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 | 0 2 0 2 0 0 4 5

Luck of the Draw

53

53 54 55 56

57

57 58 59 60

61

61 62 63 64

65

65 66 67 68

69

69 70 71 72