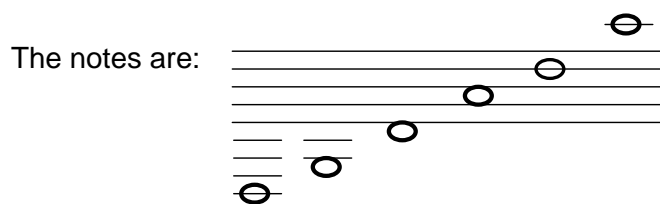# Installing the String Jack

A single String Jack can span 2, 3 or 4 strings and can be placed in any combination on top of the fretboard. Let's start with a String Jack that spans 3 strings. To position it, loosen the 1st, 2nd and 3rd strings until you can easily lift them off the fingerboard. About 8 turns of the tuning peg. Next, while lifting the 1st, 2nd and 3rd strings above the fingerboard, place the String Jack beneath the strings centered just before the 10th fret. Make sure it is square with the neck and the strings are resting correctly in the grooves on top. It should look like the figure below.
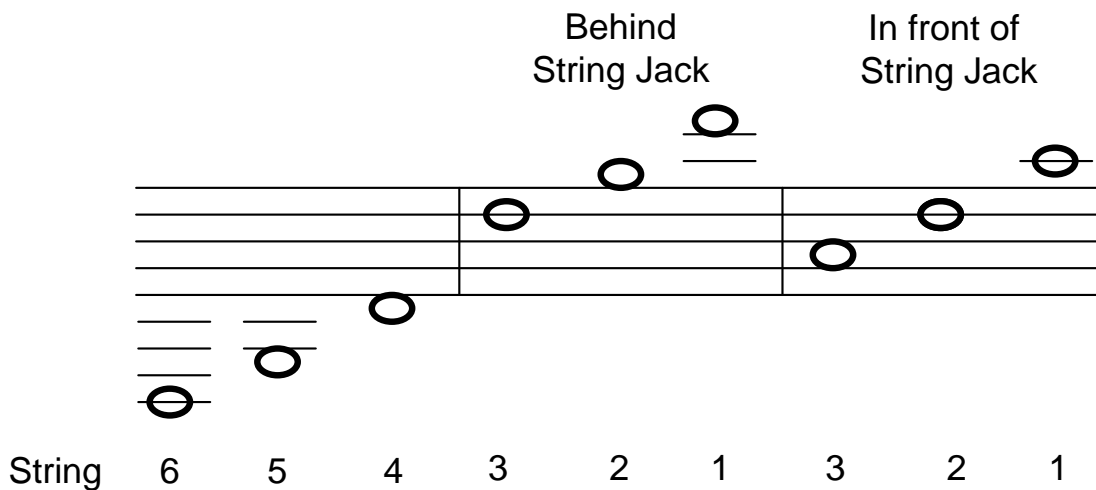
Getting Started

Now that the String Jack has been positioned we need to tune the strings. For the first exercise let's tune the 1st string to A, the 2nd string to D and the 3rd string to A. Drop the low E to D and A to G. The notation used to describe this configuration is:

$$D\ G\ D\ (A\ D\ A)\ 4^{th}|10$$

The notes are:

Notice the strings in parenthesis are the ones supported by the String Jack and the pitches are the ones sounded in front of the String Jack. The 4th indicates the interval the pitch behind and in front of the String Jack makes. The 10 indicates the nearest fret to align with the center of the String Jack. You will know when the String Jack is properly positioned when an interval of a fourth is made. The below figure shows all the available notes that can be made with the open strings.

Behind
String Jack

In front of
String Jack

| String | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Let's work through a musical example. Below is an excerpt from "Amazing Grace". The small number above each note is the interval of the bend. For example, the 3 in the first measure means bend to a major 3rd, the 2 means bend to a major 2nd. When bending a string to a pitch use the frets as a reference for where to apply downward pressure. The first bend for example, can be executed by pushing down the 2nd string **until it comes in contact with the fingerboard** with the 3rd finger behind the 7th fret. The next note is played by pushing down on the 2nd string with the finger behind the 5th fret. After some experimentation you will find the "pocket" for each note.

D G D (A D A) 4th|10

3

Let's work through another musical example. Below is an excerpt from "The Arkansas Traveler".

Tune the 1st string to F#, the 2nd string to D and the 3rd string to A. For the open strings drop the low E to D. The notation used to describe this configuration is:

D A D (A D F#) 4th|10

D A D (A D F#) 4th|10

Conclusion

One of the unique qualities of the guitar is the ability to tune it however you want. Although there are practical advantages to standard tuning, there are many tuning configurations to explore. Playing guitar with a String Jack can be a similar experience to playing with an alternate tuning. It can inspire new musical ideas. It can allow you to configure the String Jack to a song, or compose a song around a String Jack configuration.

The String Jack makes two other techniques more accessible on the guitar – applying the slide bar and violin bow. Like a Dobro guitar the high action of the String Jack makes applying a slide bar easier. And when used in combination with bending behind the String Jack it can produce unusual results. For the avant garde guitarists, a violin bow can be applied in front or back of the String Jack.

Here are some practical things to consider when using the String Jack.

- Loosen the strings before positioning the String Jack. About 8 turns or so.

- After a String Jack has been positioned the string tension should be less than normal.

- The area where to press down on a string to sound an interval will be more predictable if the String Jack is consistently positioned on the fretboard

- The String Jack is an experimental device. Care should be taken when placing it on the fretboard.

The combinations of using the String Jack and alternate tunings are endless and are waiting to be explored.

Have Fun!