

DICTIONARY OF BRAILLE MUSIC CODES  
Commonly used in  
GUITAR MUSIC

by Tina Davidson  
Available for free from [www.ctdcreations.com](http://www.ctdcreations.com)

LEFT-HAND FINGERING

The left hand fingers press down on the strings to form a chord or single note. The fingering is indicated using numbers placed after the note or interval:

- ⠠ (dot 1) First finger: index finger
- ⠡ Second: middle finger
- ⠢ Third: ring finger
- ⠠ (dot 2) Fourth: little finger
- ⠠ open string: no finger

RIGHT-HAND FINGERING

The right hand fingers pluck the strings. The fingering is represented using the letters p, i, m, and a (defined below) The letters are transcribed on a separate line beneath the notes or intervals affected. The letters are aligned with the note or interval and not with an accidental, octave mark, left-hand fingering, or other modifying signs. The letters are not preceded with letter signs or capital signs.

- ⠠ Thumb (pulgar)
- ⠡ Index (indice): first finger
- ⠢ Middle (medio): second finger
- ⠠ Ring (anular): third finger
- ⠡ Little finger (chico): fifth finger

STRING SIGNS

The string sign prefix (⠠) is followed immediately by the string number (listed below). A continuation is shown with a doubling of the string number and ended by repeating the single string sign (with number) before the last note affected.

The string sign symbols precede a note and its octave sign or accidental, articulation, ornamentation, or irregular-grouping sign, but follows an opening bracket

slur, word-sign expression, or a position sign (since the player needs to know the position before knowing which string to play).

- ⠠⠠⠠ First string (highest pitch)
- ⠠⠠⠠ Second string
- ⠠⠠⠠ Third string
- ⠠⠠⠠ Fourth string
- ⠠⠠⠠ Fifth string
- ⠠⠠⠠ Sixth string (lowest pitch)

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### POSITION SIGNS

The position sign prefix (⠠⠠) is followed immediately by the position number (listed below). The terms *positions* and *frets* are used interchangeably. The “first position” means the left hand is moved so that the first finger (left hand) is on the first fret. Second position means move to the second fret, etc.

A line of continuation is shown with two dot 3s immediately after the position sign and number. It is terminated with a termination sign (⠠⠠⠠) or a new position. A single dot 3 is added at the end of the position number when the first braille character after a position sign contains dots 1, 2 or 3. The position sign precedes the string sign and note. The first note after a position sign requires an octave mark.

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- ⠠⠠⠠ First position (first fret)
- ⠠⠠⠠ Second position
- ⠠⠠⠠ Third position
- ⠠⠠⠠ Fourth position
- ⠠⠠⠠ Fifth position
- ⠠⠠⠠ Sixth position
- ⠠⠠⠠⠠ Seventh position: the dot 6 preceding the position sign distinguishes this from the sign for the termination of a hairpin crescendo.
- ⠠⠠⠠ Eighth position
- ⠠⠠⠠⠠ Ninth position
- ⠠⠠⠠⠠ Tenth position
- ⠠⠠⠠⠠ Eleventh position
- ⠠⠠⠠⠠ Twelfth position

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### BARRED POSITIONS

The bar (or barré) can be placed across all the strings (*full* or *grand barré*) or across fewer than six strings (*partial barré*). The signs (listed below) is placed immediately before the position sign.

- ⠄⠄ Full bar
- ⠄⠄⠄ Partial bar

### VERTICAL BRACKET BAR

A full or partial bar can be indicated in print by a vertical bracket (solid line or dotted line). When the bracket is used, a dot 4 is inserted before the position sign, for either a full or partial bar. If no position number is given, the dot 4 is followed by the position sign prefix (⠄⠄) and no number. The dot 4 is not used if the full or partial bar signs are used.

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### SHIFTS, SLIDES OR GLIDES

When the left-hand finger slides between two consecutive notes, rather than lifting, dots 41 (⠄⠄) are placed immediately after the finger number of the beginning note. If the notes are not immediately adjacent, two signs are needed for the opening and closing of the shift.

- ⠄⠄⠄⠄ opening shift sign, placed after the opening finger number
- ⠄⠄⠄⠄ closing shift sign, placed before the last note to be fingered

### GLISSANDO

A glissando is a slide from one note to another on the same string, sounding all of the intervening notes as a rapid scale. In print, the first and last notes of a glissando are shown with a slanted or wavy line in between these two notes. A glissando is brailled the same as a slide or shift, except that the abbreviation “gliss.” (dot 3 period) is inserted after the beginning note and before the shift sign (dots 41).

[For a more detailed list of braille music codes used for guitar music and examples of music transcriptions, please order: “Transcribing Guitar Music” by Christina Davidson and Richard Taesch, or “Handbook for Braille Music Transcribers” (3rd edition) from the National Braille Association, Inc. Rochester, NY. ([www.nationalbraille.org](http://www.nationalbraille.org))]