

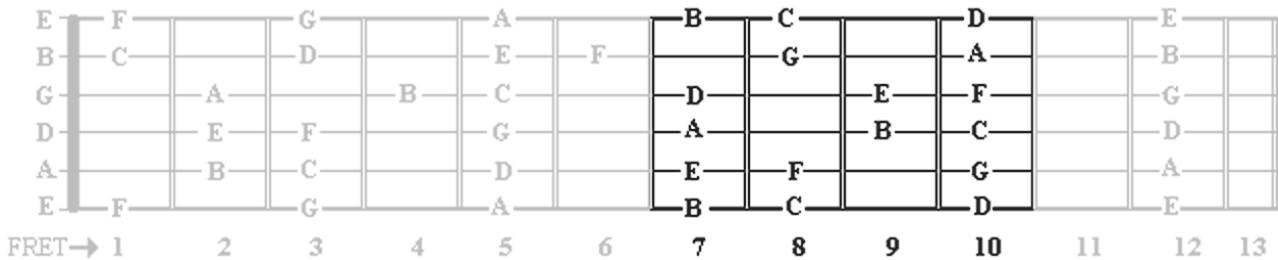
I write a lot of ensemble music, and as soon as the music extends beyond three parts, it's necessary to ensure that each part has a suitable margin between the parts above and below. And that means that it becomes essential that the tune moves further up the neck of the guitar.

The seventh position is excellent when playing in the keys of C, G and D, the simpler keys.

A "position" is numbered from one upwards, and the basic definition is that the n'th position is when the left hand first finger is on fret n, and so in the n'th position frets n .. n+3 are available under fingers 1 .. 4

What's where?

VII posn encompasses frets 7, 8, 9 and 10, and takes us as high as top D.



In many respects VII posn feels like II posn. For example

- In II posn, fingers 1,2 and 4 give you F#, G and A on the top string
In VII posn, the same fingers give you the same notes but on the second string
- In II posn, fingers 1,3 and 4 give you A, B and C on the third string
In VII posn, the same fingers give you the same notes but on the fourth string

Broadly speaking, the same notes are under the same fingers in II and VII, (but on the next string down in VII posn).

- There are new notes on the first string
- We lose some of the bass notes

However, because the gap between the 2nd and 3rd strings is different to all the other strings, it means that the notes on the second string in II posn aren't quite in the same place on the third string in VII posn. You won't believe me when I say you soon get used to this, but you do!

Learning how to play up the neck

Classical Guitarists are about as far from jazz players as it's possible to get!

- Classical players often learn music slavishly, working out where every note is then trying to remember what *finger* goes where, instead of what *note* is where
- Tab players are worse - they just do what it says and don't even know what notes are where!
- Jazz players, on the other hand, have an intuitive feel for notes and the degrees of the scale - given a note, they can easily find the notes around it

Most classical tutor books will give you a diagram like the one above, and then a piece to be played up the neck. That will get you playing up the neck, but not really learning the neck intuitively. It's having the intuitive feel that means that new pieces come good quickly, that memory is more reliable, that playing is more fun

Here's a better idea - armed with some simple tunes in simple keys (elementary recorder, violin and flute books are ideal), attempt to play them in VII posn. There's only one way to understand the neck, and that's to see what you can do with it!

What VII can't do

A look at the chart above will show you that in VII, Bb is not available on the top string, nor on the second string, so VII is not suitable for F Major or D Minor.

In the same way, G# is not available between the fourth and fifth string, and so not all pieces in A Major or F# Minor will be under the fingers.

In the higher positions, however, it becomes much easier for the first or fourth finger to reach one extra fret and pick up all the missing notes.