

Lesson 7: Tempo

Basic Music Theory for Guitar

What you will learn: how fast to play the music, and how to use a metronome to practice.

What is tempo?

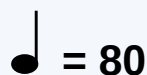
Tempo is the **speed** of the beat. The same song can be played slow or fast. The notes and the time signature stay the same, only the speed changes.

BPM: beats per minute

Tempo is measured in **BPM** (beats per minute). 60 BPM means 60 beats in one minute, so **one beat every second**, like a clock. 120 BPM is twice as fast.

How tempo is written in music

At the top of the music, you often see a note with a number:



This means: play **80 quarter notes in one minute**. Set your metronome to **80**.

Tempo words

Sometimes the music uses an **Italian word** instead of a number. These words are used all over the world:

Word	Meaning	About (BPM)
Largo	very slow	40 - 60
Adagio	slow	66 - 76
Andante	walking speed	76 - 108
Moderato	medium	108 - 120
Allegro	fast, lively	120 - 156
Presto	very fast	168 - 200

Changing the speed

Some words tell you to change the speed during the music:

Word	Short form	Meaning
Ritardando	rit.	slow down little by little
Accelerando	accel.	speed up little by little
A tempo		go back to the first speed
Fermata	(a dot under an arch)	hold this note longer

How to practice with the metronome

The **metronome** clicks a steady beat for you. It is the best tool to learn to play in time. On the Training page, use the **Metronome** button, and the **Slower** and **Faster** buttons to change the speed.

1. **Start slow.** Choose a speed where you can play every note correctly and relaxed.
2. **Play it 3 times** with no mistakes.
3. **Speed up a little** (about 5 BPM), and play it 3 times again.
4. If you make mistakes, **go back** to the slower speed. Playing correctly is more important than playing fast.

Practice

1. Set the metronome to **60**. Play the open string 6 (E) on every click for 4 measures.
2. Change to **90**, then **120**. Play the same thing. Feel how the speed changes.
3. Play the C major scale from Lesson 3 (string 5, frets 3 to 15) at **60**. When it is easy, go up 5 BPM at a time.

Next lesson: The Major Scale