

TABLATURE EQUIVALENCE CHART

ITALIAN TABLATURE

Diagram of a lute fretboard with Roman numerals 0 through 10 indicating fret positions on the strings.

FRENCH (ENGLISH) TABLATURE

Diagram of a lute fretboard with letters n, m, l, k, j, h, g, f, e, d, c, b, a representing fret positions.

GERMAN TABLATURE

Diagram of a lute fretboard with letters g, v, p, k, e, 5, t, o, i, d, 4, s, n, h, c, 3, m, g, b, 2, q, l, f, a, 1, E, D, C, B, A representing fret positions.

FRETBOARD IN GERMAN TABLATURE

chanterelle	5th fret									
5	e	k	p	v	9	ø	k̄	p̄	v̄	
4	d	i	o	t	3	d̄	ī	ō	t̄	
3	e	h	n	s	z	ē	h̄	n̄	s̄	
2	b	g	m	r	y	b̄	ḡ	m̄	r̄	
1	a	f	l	q	x	ā	f̄	l̄	q̄	
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	K	
6th course										

These pitch equivalents are based on a lute tuned in G. This is a modern convention in transcribing lute music and has been given here so that the lutenist can work with modern editions. But the pitch given a lute was by no means fixed during the Renaissance and attention should be given, especially in duets or accompanied songs, to the pitch of the second part.

To save space the chromatic values have been given only once, in the form most often encountered in transcriptions. Thus the note F[#]/G^b has been expressed as F[#], since the key of G major is much more common than D^b major. The other values are not so clear cut, however, and again attention must be given to the specific example.

The Italian system uses the Roman numeral X and dot markings above it past the number 9, to avoid confusion between the fret 12 and frets 1 & 2, etc. The lines represent an image of the strings as viewed in a mirror: the chanterelle is at the bottom and the bass strings at the top.

In the French system, as written in English manuscripts, a letter much like a "y" replaces the "i" and the "c" has a shape like an "r". Note that "j" does not appear.

The German system given here follows Judenkunig's 1523 model. Other systems followed, notably replacing the capital letters for the 6th course frets with the numbers 2,3,4 etc., written with bars above them to distinguish them from the numbers given the other open courses. The diagram at right may make this difficult system clearer. In writing music the first line is always occupied by the fastest-moving voice, not the highest voice; few German editions try to separate the voices by writing them on different lines on the page. Chords are "stacked" with the lowest note on the bottom, though some editions put the highest pitched note on the bottom, stacking the others on top.

The Spanish *vihuela* system is basically Italian tab, sometimes written with the chanterelle on the top line. In all systems the rhythm signs show a great variety.