Notes on the Fretboard

How to Read Chord Diagrams

20 Common Chords

An Introduction to Tab

Tablature, or tab, is a notation for music for stringed, fretted instruments. Each line represents a string. Numbers on the lines mean "press down the string in the numbered fret and pluck the string". Tabs are read from left to right, and are sometimes broken into measures with "|" symbols.

A|----3-0------------------------3/5-3---7-5-3--- <= from "Breakdown" by Jack Johnson
E|----0--3--3------------------3/5-3-3-8-5-3---
C|--0-0---2/4---4-2p0-------------4---------
G|----0----------------------------------------

(1) Single notes: The first part of this tab is a 0 (zero) on the C string. A zero means pluck the open string.
(2) Chords: The next part has zeros on the G, C, & E strings and a 3 on the A string. This means press down the A string in the 3rd fret, leave the G, C, & E strings open, and strum all the strings once. You just played a C chord.
(3) Slides: A few notes later there is a "2/4" on the C string. This means press down the 2nd fret, pluck the C string, then slide your finger up to the 4th fret (all the while pressing down).
(4) Pull-offs: A few more notes later we see a "2p0" on the C string. This means press down the 2nd fret, pluck the C string, then slide your finger off the string, plucking the open string.