

bucket 'o tab

tablature creation system for windows

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General Information

[About the Bucket](#)

[Registering Your Copy](#)

Creating Tab

[Creating Tab](#)

[The Toolbox](#)

[Adding Rhythm](#)

[Sound](#)

[Customizing Your Tab Layout](#)

[Printing](#)

[Exporting Tab](#)

[Importing Tab](#)

[Saving Your Work](#)

About The Bucket

I've grown tired of ASCII tab. That's how this all started. ASCII tab serves a purpose and is great for exchanging tab via email, but let's face it, it's hard to edit and hard to read.

One night, I sat down and started hacking away. Three months and a whole lot of hours later, I had The Bucket 'o Tab. With it, editing tab is easy, and the printed results look great.

I'd love to see people start exchanging .BOT files, but barring that, The Bucket also does a nice job of exporting ASCII tab, as well as reading it in. Put that together with the ability to play back your transcriptions, and you've got a pretty neat tool.

Acknowledgements

The Bucket 'o Tab was written with Visual Basic 3.0, Professional Edition. Sounds were sampled with GoldWave, a fantastic shareware sound editing utility. The "Bucket 'o Notes" font was created with CorelTrace and CorelDraw 3.0. This Helpfile was created with Visual Help 2.0f, another great shareware application.

Thanks to Brett Foster for ToolButton. Thanks also to my beta testers (read: feature requesters) for their time and valuable input.

The Future...

I don't consider The Bucket done. The next version will have lots of new features, including more objects and MIDI support.

Of course, the next version is much more likely to happen if I get some response from this one, so PLEASE register your copy!

Find a bug? Want a feature?

Great! Bug reports, feature requests, and feedback are gratefully accepted. E-mail them to gse@ocsystems.com.

Onward through the fog!

Scott Evans

Registration Information

This program is NOT freeware. After trying it for 20 days, you are expected to register your copy. Please support the shareware concept and do so!

Registration fee is \$25 US. Send a check or money order, along with your address and preferred media (3.5" or 5.25" disk) to:

Scott Evans
3176-B5 Summit Square Drive
Oakton, VA 22124

Registered users may receive the next shareware version of Bucket 'o Tab for the cost of media and shipping, and will be notified of new products.

The registered version of the software also includes:

- n Sound support: Hear your tab as you enter it! You can also play back your tab after entering it to check for correctness. Includes sampled bass and guitar (both clean and distorted) sounds.
- n The "Created with..." message does not appear at the bottom of every printed page.

Creating Tab

Creating tab is easy:

- n Select "New" under the File pulldown if you want to change the number of strings in the tab.
- n Use the UP and DOWN cursor keys to select the string on which notes are placed.
- n Type a number to enter a note on that fret. For frets above 9, press shift and the first number of the fret. So, for example, for fret 16 type shift-1, 6. For fret 24, type shift-2, 6.
- n Use the toolbox or [keyboard shortcuts](#) to enter other tab objects, such as repeats, hammerons, slides, comments, and so on.

You can also highlight sections of tab with the mouse and perform cut/copy/paste operations on those sections.

See also:

[Adding a Title](#)

[Entering Chords](#)

[Entering Text](#)

[The Toolbox](#)

[Using Rhythm](#)

[Sound](#)

[Saving Tab](#)

Adding a Title

To edit the title of your tab, choose "Title/Comments..." from the Options menu, or click on the title window at the bottom left of the main screen.

There are three fields in the Title dialog:

- 1 The title appears centered at the top of the first printed page. It may be only one line long.
- 2 The subtitle appears centered below the title on the first printed page. It may be any number of lines. The subtitle generally contains the name of the artist whose music is transcribed.
- 3 The "comments" field appears right-justified under the subtitle. It may be any number of lines. This field is generally used for credits, such as "Bass transcription by John Smith".

The fonts that these in which these fields are printed may be customized.

See also:

[Customizing Tab Layout](#)

Customizing Layout

The look of your tab, both on-screen and printed, is flexible. The "Document Layout" dialog is available under the "Options" pulldown.

As you change the values in this dialog, the results are visible in the "Sample Tab" area. If "Save As Default" is checked when you click OK, the current layout settings will be used for any new documents.

Tab Spacing

There are three types of tab spacing that may be adjusted with the sliders at the bottom right of the dialog. These adjustments apply to the screen and to printed tab.

- n Note spacing: the amount of space between notes.
- n Line spacing: the amount of space between each line in a staff.
- n Staff spacing: the distance between staves.

Font

Clicking the "Font..." button will load your installed fonts and add a font selection list to the layout dialog (this button is provided because loading all the available fonts can be slow on some systems).

There are five different objects whose fonts you can specify. Select the object type with the pulldown above the font list.

- n Heading, Title: the title that appears centered at the top of the first page of printed tab.
- n Heading, Subtitle: the text that appears centered on the first page under the title.
- n Heading, Comments: comments that appear right-justified under the subtitle.
- n Tablature: the notes of the tab.
- n Text within tab: text objects that appear in tab.

When you select one of the first three types of object, a sample heading is shown to display the results of your edits. When you select one of the last two, two lines of sample tab are shown with a sample text object.

Font modifications affect both screen display and printed tab ("heading" fonts only affect printed tab).

Color

The "Tab Color" and "Staff Color" dialogs allow you to change the color of your tab notes and staves on-screen. Note that these have no effect on printed tab.

See also:

[Adding a Title](#)

[Printing Rhythms](#)

[Printing Tab](#)

Printing Rhythms

Unfortunately, printing rhythms is not as simple as displaying them on the screen. To properly print rhythms you need a musical symbols font. The Bucket distribution includes a TrueType font called "Bucket 'o Notes" that you can use if you do not have another music symbols font.

To support the variety of symbols fonts out there, the mapping of rhythms to characters is completely user-specifiable. For instance, the "Bucket 'o Notes" font uses "Q" for a quarter rest, but another font may use "4".

Editing the Rhythm Character Map

To edit the character mapping and select the font to be used for printing rhythms, use the "Rhythm Font" dialog (available under the "Options" pulldown).

Use the "character mapping" section of the dialog to specify which letters should be used to represent each type of rhythm and rest (triplets are handled by The Bucket). A rhythm may map to more than one character (for instance, a dotted quarter note may be "q.").

As you change the character mapping, your changes will be shown in the sample area.

Resetting the Character Map

The "Reset Map" button sets the character map to the proper map for the "Bucket 'o Notes" font.

See also:

[Printing Tab](#)

[Using Rhythm](#)

Printing Tab



One of the nicest things about The Bucket is its ability to print professional-looking tab.

To print your tab, select "Print..." from the File menu, or click the printer button on the button bar.

Fonts

You can select the fonts used to print your tab in the "Layout" dialog. If you are including rhythms in your printout, be sure that your rhythm font and character mapping are set properly (use the "Rhythm Font" dialog).

Printing Options

Before you print your tab, you will be presented with a list of options for customizing the look of the tab.

- n Break lines at barlines: Some people don't like line breaks in the middle of bars. This option will prevent this; it also "right-justifies" tab so every line goes to the end of the staff. Using this feature is recommended.
- n Attach tab explanation page: This option causes an extra page to be printed containing an explanation of the symbols used in the tab.
- n Include rhythm: Prints rhythmic notation above each staff. If you use the option, make sure that you have the proper font and character mapping selected.
- n Text Position: Text objects may be placed above or below the staves. If you are including rhythm in your tab, it's a good idea to place the text below the staves since it may interfere with your rhythmic notation otherwise.

See also:

[Customizing Layout](#)

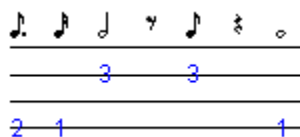
[Printing Rhythms](#)

Using Rhythm



If you like, you can add rhythmic notation to your tab.

To add rhythm, select a rhythmic value from the Rhythm Toolbox (see below). All notes, chords, rests, and ghost notes that you add while a rhythm is selected will have that rhythmic value; you will see the rhythm appear above the tabbed note:



Adding Rhythm to Existing Tab

You can also change the rhythm of existing tab (or, if the tab has no rhythm, add it) without changing the tab itself. To do this, select the desired rhythm with the rhythm toolbox and click on the desired note with the RIGHT mouse button.

The Rhythm Toolbox

The rhythm toolbox is similar to the object toolbox. You can use it to set the current rhythm, or you can use the keyboard shortcuts shown on each button (note that these shortcuts are all control key sequences; for instance, whole note is ctrl-w). You can toggle it on and off by checking "Rhythm Toolbox" in the "Options" pulldown.



The current rhythm may be a whole, half, quarter, eighth, or sixteenth note. The bottom two buttons are for dotted notes and triplets, respectively (triplets appear with a small "3" next to the note).

Remember that you can exclude rhythmic notation when printing your tab, if you like.

See also:

[Printing Rhythms](#)

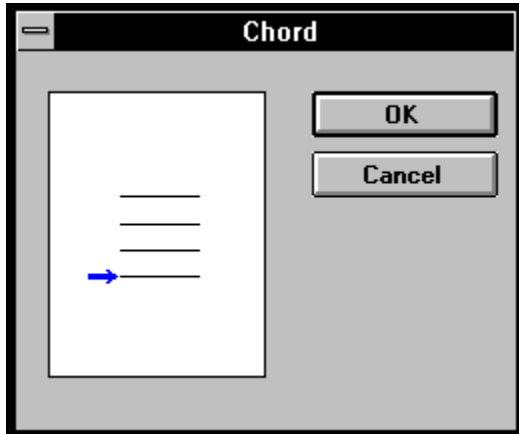
[Printing Tab](#)

Entering Chords



Entering chords is only slightly different from entering single notes.

When you press "c" or click the chord button in the toolbox, you are presented with the Chord Entry window:



Enter notes in this window in the same manner as you do single notes on the staff (press SPACE to clear a line). The blue arrow points at the current string; just as with the regular staff, use the UP and DOWN cursor keys or the mouse to change strings. When you finish creating the chord, click the OK button. If you have a rhythm selected, it will appear over the chord.

To edit an existing chord, double-click on it to bring up the chord window.

See also:

[Creating Tab](#)

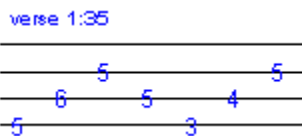
[Using Rhythm](#)

Entering Text



Tab is much easier to use when it includes comments, such as lyric snippets, song times, and so on.

To enter a text comment, press "t" or click the text button in the toolbox. You will be prompted to enter the text. Text appears in your tab as such:



You can select the font used to print text comments.

See also:

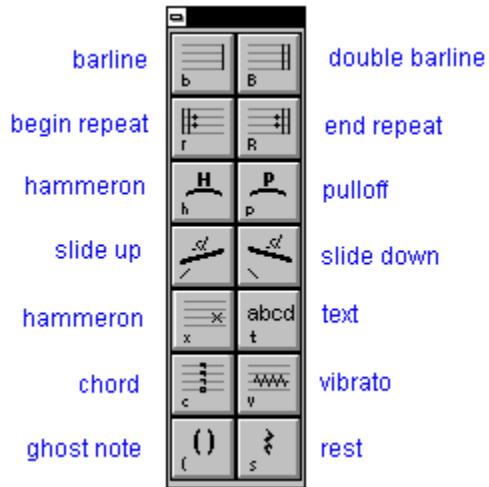
[Customizing Tab Layout](#)

The Toolbox

The toolbox is one way to enter tab objects other than notes. You can toggle the toolbox on and off by checking Toolbox under the Options pulldown.

Clicking a button in the toolbox causes that object to be inserted at the current cursor position.

The toolbox functions are as follows:



Notice that each button has a letter in the bottom left corner. This is the object's keyboard shortcut -- you can also enter the object by pressing this key (which turns out to be much more efficient than using the toolbox).

See also:

[Entering Chords](#)

[Entering Text](#)

[Using Rhythm](#)

Sound



Registered versions of The Bucket support sound.

When you install the registered version, you may install any or all of three possible sound collections: bass, clean guitar, and distorted guitar. These collections contain short 16-bit mono samples of each note of the guitar. Of course, you need a 16-bit compatible sound card to hear these samples.

Selecting a Sound Collection

You can choose a sound collection by selecting "Select..." from the Sound pulldown. You can also choose a sound collection when you create a new file (from the File pulldown or the button bar).

Using Sound

- n While entering tab: While entering tab, enabling sound allows you to hear notes you enter them. This is extremely useful, as it lets you catch errors as you go.
- n Playing back tab: Click the play button on the buttonbar (or F5) to begin playback at the current cursor position. Since there is some overhead involved with playing samples, the rhythm may not sound exactly correct, but it's certainly close enough to tell if your rhythm is correct. This is a great way to check tab for correctness after entering it.

To stop playback, press the stop button, or press F6.

Playback speed can be changed with the tempo slider that appears while tab is being played.

Notes

- n For chords, only the root of the chord is played since multiple .WAV files cannot be played simultaneously.
- n Notes without a specified rhythm are played as if they were eighth notes.

Saving Tab



To save your tab, click the disk button on the button bar, or select "Save" or "Save As..." from the File pulldown.

BOT files are ASCII files, rather than binary files, in order to make them easy to exchange via email or the Internet.

Exporting Tab

So you've created some great tab, and you'd like to distribute over the Internet or through email. If your friends don't have The Bucket (they should, but if they don't), you'll want to send them [ASCII tab](#).

The Bucket creates very sharp-looking ASCII tab. To use this feature, select "Export..." under the File pulldown.

Export to ASCII: Options

As with printed tab, you can customize the look of your ASCII tab. The ASCII Export dialog provides a number of options.

- n Page Width: The number of characters in each line of tab. 80 is the most common value.
- n Object Spacing: The number of characters between each note and object. This is similar to the "Tab Spacing" selection in the Document Layout window. 2 produces nice legible tab.
- n Break lines at barlines: Some people prefer not to have a line break in the middle of a bar. This option will prevent just that, though it does not "right-justify" your tab as the equivalent printing option does. The result is a "ragged" looking right margin.
- n Include tablature explanation: If this box is selected, a number of lines will be added at the end of the exported tab explaining the symbols used. It's nice to include this explanation when distributing tab.
- n Include rhythm: Some people prefer not to include rhythm in ASCII tab. In ASCII tab, rhythms are printed as letters: "e" for eighth note, "E" for dotted eighth, and so on.
- n Text position: Text objects may be placed above or below the staves. If you are including rhythm in your tab, it's a good idea to place the text below the staves since it may interfere with your rhythmic notation otherwise.

See also:

[Importing Tab](#)

[Saving Tab](#)

Importing Tab

The Bucket allows you to import tablature from various file formats. This turns out to be a very useful feature. Imagine getting some blah-looking [ASCII tab](#) via email or the Internet -- just import it into BOT and print a fantastic looking version for your use, or play it back to hear how it should sound!

To import tab, click the "Import..." selection under the "File" pulldown. You will be asked to choose which type of file you wish to import, then prompted for a filename.

If The Bucket doesn't have an import filter you'd like to see, let me know! (see "About The Bucket")

ASCII Tab

You can import an ordinary ASCII tab file (such as those often found on the Internet). The filter works well, though there are some guidelines to follow in order to obtain the best results.

- n If the tab itself is prefixed or suffixed by non-tablature information (such as explanatory text), be sure that it does not contain dashes or other characters that the filter may interpret as tab. It's easiest to just remove any header from the file before importing it.
- n The filter doesn't import rhythmic information (yet).
- n The filter recognizes a number of common ASCII notations. However, there are certainly some that it will interpret incorrectly. If you have an object in an ASCII file that will not import properly, try changing that object's notation to another common one.

Mario D'Allessio's Bass Tab Creator

A big relief to many is that The Bucket imports .BTC files. BTC supports a few objects (such as ties) that The Bucket does not, so these objects are ignored. However, rhythms are supported.

See also:

[Exporting Tab](#)

ASCII tab

Tablature created with ASCII characters. Lines are made of dashes, a slash is used for a slide, and so on.

keyboard shortcuts

A quicker method of entering objects than using the toolbox. Each object's keyboard equivalent is shown on the toolbox.

sound collection

A set of samples.

