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# What is Bucket o' Tab?

Bucket o' Tab is an easy-to-use tablature editor. Until now, the only option for creating tab with a computer was to use ASCII, which is slow and clumsy along with being hard to read. BOT not only produces great-looking tab, it will also play it back through your soundcard or another MIDI device. This makes it easy to proof your tab or familiarize yourself with a tune.

Since lots of people are still in the dark ages using ASCII tab, BOT can also import ASCII tab. This means that, for instance, you can grab tab from the Internet and import it. Then you can play it back or print a professional-looking version that's easy to read.

See also:

[About the Bucket](#)

[Registration Information](#)

# About Bucket o' Tab

## A Little History

Bucket o' Tab has followed a rather interesting path to this point. It began as shareware. A second version was distributed commercially by Artic Software under the name "Tabestry". However, Artic has since closed their doors, so I have decided to release what was essentially Tabestry as shareware once again, changing the name back (they own the name Tabestry).

## The Bucket's Future

At this point, the future of BOT is unclear. Though it would be great to have a 32-bit Windows 95 version with all the trimmings, I'm not sure that will happen. Tens of thousands of people have downloaded BOT 1.0, but I've received very few registrations, which isn't very encouraging. If registrations pick up, future enhancements are much more likely to happen.

## Acknowledgements

Tabestry was written with Visual Basic 3.0, Professional Edition. The "Bucket o' Notes" font was created with CorelTrace and CorelDraw 3.0. This Helpfile was created with Visual Help 2.1e, another great shareware application. MIDI support comes via Artic Software's MIDI CoolTools.

Thanks to Brett Foster for ToolButton, and to Arthur Edstrom for being easy to work with.

# Registering Bucket o' Tab

Bucket o' Tab is shareware. It is NOT freeware. You may evaluate BOT for 30 days; after that you are expected to register your copy. Please support the shareware concept and register! Your registration greatly increases the likelihood of a BOT version 3.

When you register, you will be sent a full installation of BOT on a 3.5" floppy. This version has all features enabled.

To register, send US\$25 to:

Scott Evans  
PO Box 316  
Oakton, VA 22124

- For non-US registrants: the registration fee is still US\$25. Most registrants decide that International Money Orders are too expensive for this purpose, so they send well-hidden US cash. That's fine.

See also:

[About the Bucket](#)

# Creating Tab

Creating tab is easy:

- Select "New" under the File pulldown if you want to change the number of strings in the tab.
- Use the UP and DOWN cursor keys to select the string on which notes are placed.
- 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, 4.
- 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](#)

[Changing Tuning](#)

[Entering Chords](#)

[Entering Text](#)

[Setting Preferences](#)

[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 "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.

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

- Heading, Title: the title that appears centered at the top of the first page of printed tab.
- Heading, Subtitle: the text that appears centered on the first page under the title.
- Heading, Comments: comments that appear right-justified under the subtitle.
- Paragraph Text: text in paragraph objects.
- Tablature: the notes of the tab.
- Text within tab: text objects that appear in tab.
- Time Signatures: time signatures, which you often want to appear in a different font.

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 three, two lines of sample tab are shown with a sample text object. Selecting "paragraph text" will show a sample paragraph in the selected font.

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.

## Save As Default

Checking this box will cause BOT to use these values for any new documents you create.

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 BOT 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 BOT). 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 great-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.

- 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.
- Attach tab explanation page: This option causes an extra page to be printed containing an explanation of the symbols used in the tab.
- 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.
- Label String Tunings: Places the letter for each string at the beginning of each line of tab.
- Margins: the amount of space between the tab and the sides of the page.

See also:

[Changing Tuning](#)

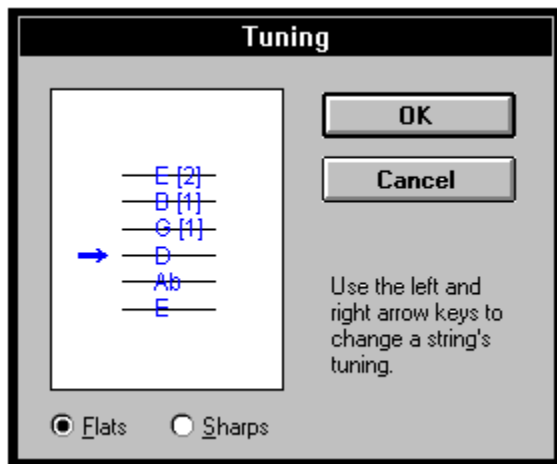
[Customizing Layout](#)

[Printing Rhythms](#)

## Changing Tuning

Since everyone doesn't use standard tuning, BOT allows you to change the tuning for the tab you're entering. Of course, the tab looks the same; however, if you are using playback, this is the only way for tab written for altered tunings to sound correct.

Bring up the tuning dialog by clicking "Tuning" under the Options pulldown, or by clicking the "Tuning" label at the bottom of the main window.



To change tuning, simply move the arrow with the up and down keys to specify a string, then use the left and right arrow keys to change that string's tuning. A number in brackets (as on the G string above) specifies the number of octaves above or below "normal".

Selecting "Flats" causes all accidentals to be flats (i.e. B♭, D♭, etc.), while "Sharps" uses sharps instead (i.e. A♯, C♯).

See also:

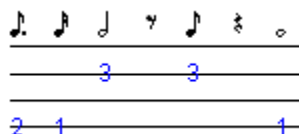
[Printing Tab](#)

# 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, sixteenth, 32nd, or 64th note. The bottom two buttons are for dotted notes and triplets, respectively (triplets appear with a small "3" next to the note).

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

See also:

[Printing Rhythms](#)

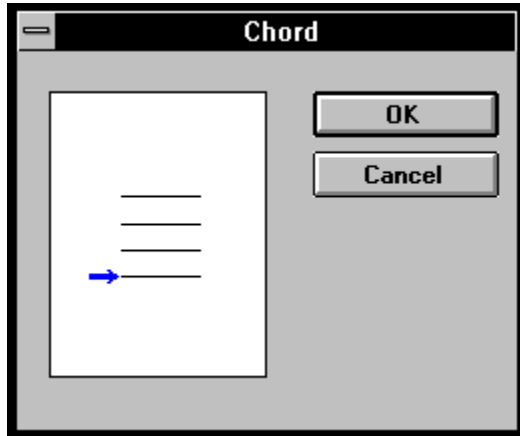
[Printing Tab](#)

# 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.

You can also use most symbols (such as slides and hammerons) in chords; to do so, just use the symbols' hotkeys while editing the chord. This makes it possible to have a number of slides, pulloffs, etc. vertically aligned.

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

See also:

[Creating Tab](#)  
[Using Rhythm](#)

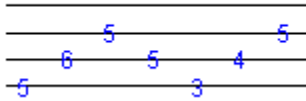
# Entering Text



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:

verse 1:35



IMPORTANT: Clicking "t" will place the text over the staff, while "T" inserts text under the staff. You can intermix the two.

You can select the font used to print text comments.

See also:

[Customizing Tab Layout](#)

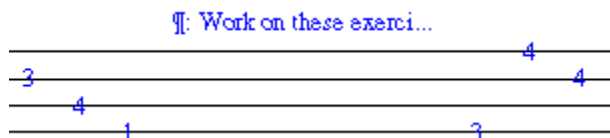
[Entering Paragraphs](#)

# Entering Paragraphs

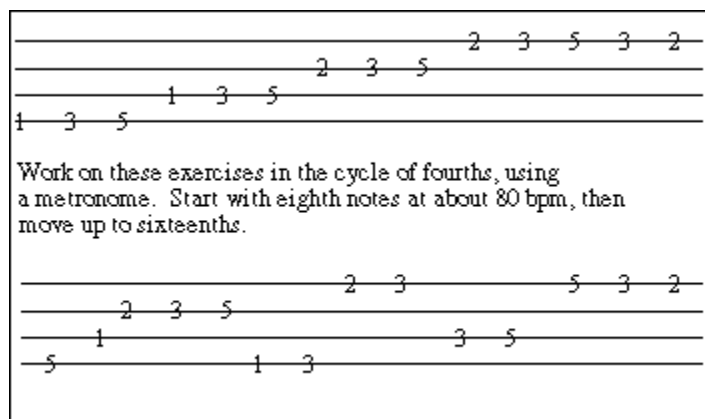


While it's useful to have text above or under your staves, sometimes it's necessary to have a full paragraph of text, separate from your tab. Bucket o' Tab isn't a full-blown word processor, but it does provide a mechanism for including simple paragraphs of text.

To enter a paragraph, click the paragraph button on the toolbar or press "g". This will bring up a paragraph dialog in which you can enter as much text as you like. The paragraph text will appear in your tab on the screen like this:



However, when you print this tab, the paragraph will appear by itself between staves, like this:



Note that you can always double-click on a paragraph to edit its contents.

You can also select the font in which paragraphs appear using the Layout dialog.

See also:

[Customizing Layout](#)  
[Entering Text](#)

# User Preferences

There are a number of preferences you can set. To bring up the preferences dialog, click "Preferences" under the Options pulldown.

- Attempt to Follow Repeats on Playback: Clicking this box will cause BOT to follow repeats the proper number of times while playing back tab. Otherwise, repeated sections are played only once.
- Cut/Copy to Windows Clipboard: When this option is checked, using BOT's cut and copy functions will place an ASCII version of the highlighted tab in the Windows clipboard. You can then use the "Paste" operation in other Windows applications, like Notepad, to insert the tab.

See also:

[Creating Tab](#)  
[Sound](#)



# Sound



Bucket o' Tab allows you to hear your tab as you enter it, or to play it back in its entirety.

BOT uses MIDI for playback, which makes it fairly flexible. If you don't have any MIDI devices, almost all soundcards have built-in MIDI support. If you have some synths or a sampler, you may have great guitar or bass sounds that you can use instead.

## Enabling Sound

By clicking "Select..." from the Sound pulldown, you can enable or disable MIDI playback. Clicking the "play sample" button will play a quick arpeggio through the given sound setup, to allow you to see if you have everything set up properly.

## Using Sound

- 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.
- Playing back tab: Click the play button on the buttonbar (or F5) to begin playback at the current cursor position. This is a great way to check tab for correctness after entering it, or to hear what a song should sound like.

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

- Notes without a specified rhythm are played as if they were eighth notes.

See also:

[MIDI Setup](#)

[User Preferences](#)

# MIDI Setup

Bucket o' Tab provides a number of options for MIDI configuration. Note that using MIDI may require some knowledge of how MIDI works.

## Options

The following options may be set when selecting MIDI for sound output:

- Device: If you have more than one MIDI output device, select the one you wish to use.
- Patch: If this is anything but -1, BOT will send a "program change" message to the MIDI device, changing the program to the given patch number.
- Channel: This is the MIDI output channel. On most soundcard synthesizers, this doesn't matter.
- Volume: Sets the velocity for played notes (0-127).
- Octave: This number causes notes to be played a number of octaves higher or lower than they are currently played. This is a useful option since it allows you to select the range of notes generated.

## Play Sample

This button plays a quick arpeggio through the given sound setup so you can see playback is configured as you want it.

See also:












[Sound](#)

# 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:

barline		double barline
begin repeat		end repeat
hammeron		pulloff
slide up		slide down
dead note		text
chord		vibrato
ghost note		rest
bend		time signature
text paragraph		tempo marker
slap		pop
tap		

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).

## "Sticky" Buttons

The slap, tap, and pop buttons are "sticky"; they stay down when you press them. Any notes entered while these buttons are depressed will have the appropriate symbol over them.

See also:

[Entering Chords](#)

[Entering Text](#)

[Using Rhythm](#)

# 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.

# Exporting Tab

The Bucket allows you to export ASCII tab and MIDI files. Click on the appropriate topic for details on each.

[Exporting ASCII Tab](#)

[Exporting MIDI Files](#)

# Exporting ASCII 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 Bucket o' Tab (they should, but suppose they don't), you'll want to send them ASCII tab.

BOT 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.

- Page Width: The number of characters in each line of tab. 80 is the most common value, though you may want to use a value like 72 to avoid word wrapping in a text editor.
- Spaces Between Objects: 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Label string tunings: Places string tunings next to the strings on each line of tab. This is particularly useful if you are using an altered tuning.

See also:

[Changing Tuning](#)

[Exporting MIDI Files](#)

[Importing Tab](#)

[Saving Tab](#)

# Exporting MIDI Files

Let's say you've created a neat part using Bucket o' Tab, and you'd like to use it with your favorite sequencer. The best way to do this is to export your tab to a MIDI file. You can also play back MIDI files using the Windows Media Player.

## Export to MIDI: Options

There are a number of options available when exporting to a MIDI file.

- MIDI Channel: This is the channel on which the part will play.
- Octave: This is the number of octaves, up or down, which the part will be transposed.
- Patch: If you provide a number other than zero in this field, BOT will insert a "program change" message at the start of the MIDI file.
- Tempo: If you provide a number other than zero for the tempo, BOT will insert a "tempo" message at the start of the MIDI file.
- Track Name: This is the name of the track containing your tab.

See also:

[Exporting to ASCII Tab](#)

# Importing Tab

Bucket o' Tab 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 BOT doesn't have an import filter you'd like to see, let us know!

## 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.

- 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.
- The filter doesn't import rhythmic information (yet).
- 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'Alessio's Bass Tab Creator

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

See also:

[Exporting Tab](#)



# Technical Support

Find a bug? Want a feature? I'd like to hear from you.

## The FAQ

Before asking a question, you should check the BOT FAQ, which answers a number of commonly asked questions. It can be found at <http://www.his.com/~gse/bucket>.

## Email

Otherwise, queries can be directed to me at [gse@his.com](mailto:gse@his.com).

## Phone calls, etc.

Please do NOT contact me by telephone. I will not return phone calls regarding BOT. Sorry!

# What's New In Version 2.5



Bucket o' Tab version 2.5 is pretty much the same as the commercial software that was released under the name Tabestry. There are a number of new features in this version since version 1.0:

- MIDI Sound Support. Since sample-based playback was pretty horrible and made the program much larger, it has been removed.
- Alternate Tunings
- Labelled tunings on printed and exported ASCII tab
- Text can be both above and below tab
- Paragraph Text
- Chords can have symbols in them, such as slides or hammerons
- Playback optionally follows repeats
- Cut and copy optionally place ASCII tab to Windows clipboard
- New objects: bends, slap, tap, pop, time signatures, tempo markers
- 32nd and 64th notes
- Margin options for printout
- ASCII files from UNIX systems import without conversion
- Lots o' bug fixes

See also:

[Registration Information](#)

## **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.



