

Lesson: Introduction to the Electric Guitar

Overview

In this lesson, students learn to identify the different parts of the electric guitar. Students will look at and listen to examples of guitar innovations.

Ages: Elementary, Middle School, High School

Estimated Time: 25-45 minutes

Objectives: Students will be able to...

- Identify the parts of an electric guitar.
- Compare and contrast the sound and look of different styles of electric guitars.

Washington EALRs:

- The Arts 1.1, 2.3

Materials Provided by EMP|SFM

- Electric Guitar diagram
- Image of 1952 Gibson Les Paul Standard Electric Guitar
- Image of 1954 Fender Stratocaster Electric Guitar
- Guided Notes: Parts of the Electric Guitar
- Vocabulary List

Materials Provided by Teacher

- Listening samples (see playlist)

Playlist

- AC/DC, "Back in Black" (Gibson Les Paul)
- Chet Atkins, "Yakety Axe" (Gretsch Hollow-body Electric)
- Eric Clapton, "Lay Down Sally" (Fender Stratocaster)
- Bo Diddley, "Bo Diddley" (Custom-made Gretsch)
- Jimi Hendrix, "Little Wing" (Fender Stratocaster)
- Les Paul and Mary Ford, "Alabamy Bound" (Gibson Les Paul)

Procedure

1. Play two or three songs from the playlist. Ask students if they can identify what they all have in common. Can students identify any of the artists or genres of music? Which songs do they like best? Tell them that even though the songs may be very different, all of them feature influential electric guitar players. Tell students that today they will learn the parts of the electric guitar as well as the different styles and sounds of electric guitar. (10 minutes)
2. One at a time show students each of the three electric guitars and ask them to make observations about how the guitars look. Which guitars look familiar? Which, if any, look strange? What do the guitars have in common? How do they differ? How do they work? Why do they think there are differences? Tell students that they will learn about the parts of the guitar before learning more about these guitars (5–10 minutes).
3. Hand out guided notes worksheet. At the overhead, lead students in identifying and labeling the parts of the electric guitar. (See vocabulary sheet for explanations of what each part does.) (10–15 minutes)
- 4) (Optional) Musicians definitely have preferences for what type of instrument they want to use. Bo Diddley (play sample) famously played a custom-built square guitar. Many rock musicians, though, have chosen between several popular models, including the Gibson Les Paul and Fender Stratocaster. Display the image of the 1952 Gibson Les Paul and play "Alabamy Bound." Tell students that Les Paul, in addition to being a talented guitar player, actually helped figure out the design of the electric guitar. Next show the 1954 Fender Stratocaster and play "Little Wing." Tell students that Jimi Hendrix helped popularize the Stratocaster with rock musicians, who had previously regarded the Stratocaster as a country music instrument. (For more listening examples, see EMP|SFM's Guitar and Bass Timeline <http://www.empsfm.org/flash/guitbass/index.html>)

Guitars: The Pursuit of Volume

Guitar Notes: Parts of the Electric Guitar

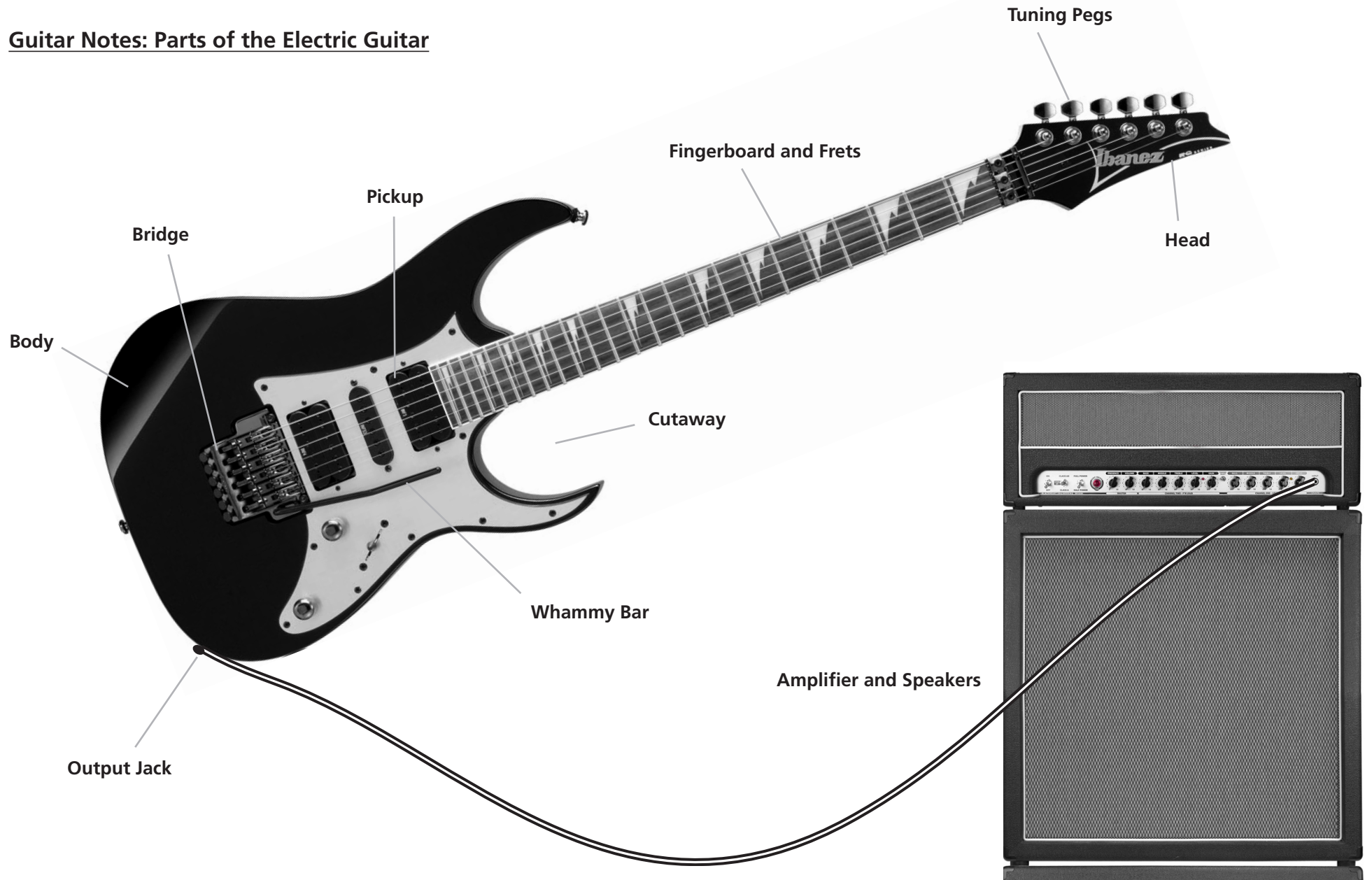


Image #2: 1952 Gibson Les Paul



EMPSFM Permanent Collection

Image #3: 1954 Fender Stratocaster



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Guitars: The Pursuit of Volume

Guitar Notes: Parts of the Electric Guitar



Guitars: The Pursuit of Volume

Vocabulary

- **Amplifier:** a device that converts small electrical signals into large electrical signals; when paired with a speaker, enables electric guitars to project louder sounds
- **Body:** the main part of the guitar where the pickup and bridge are located; may be hollow, solid-body, or semi-hollow
- **Bridge:** the point at which strings are connected to the body of the guitar; the bridge transfers the vibrations of the strings to the body of the guitar
- **Cutaway:** place where the body has been carved away from the base of the neck to allow the player's hands to more easily maneuver along the fingerboard
- **Electromagnetic:** pertaining to or exhibiting magnetism produced by a moving electric charge
- **Electrostatic:** pertaining to electric charges at rest
- **Fingerboard:** the portion of the neck where players press the strings against the frets (also called fretboard)
- **Frets:** metal strips along the neck of the guitar; by pressing the string down over frets, players can change the sound of the note
- **Head:** top of the instrument where tuners are located to tighten or loosen strings
- **Neck:** the piece of wood that connects the head and body of the guitar, along which the strings are stretched
- **Pickup:** device, usually metal, that converts string vibrations into electrical signals that can be sent through an amplifier
- **Sound hole:** in acoustic or hollow guitars, the hole under the strings that allows sound to project from the body of the guitar
- **Strings:** usually made of nylon, wire, or catgut, they are stretched between the head and the body; a standard guitar has six strings
- **Tuning pegs:** point at which strings are attached to the head; are turned to tighten or loosen the strings to change the pitch of each note (also called tuners)
- **Whammy bar:** a metal arm found on the body of the guitar that can be used to stretch strings to alter their pitch; usually removable