SOFTWARE & TECH

Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795584179808411

Introduction: Unlocking the Magic of Tom Petty's "Fallin'" on Guitar

For decades, Tom Petty has been a guiding light for guitarists who love melody, simplicity, and soul. His vast catalog is filled with iconic riffs and chord progressions that feel both timeless and accessible. Among his many gems, the song "Fallin'" — a track from his 2006 album *Highway Companion* — stands out as a beautifully understated piece. The gentle, rolling guitar work carries a quiet emotional weight that rewards players willing to dig into its nuances. If you've been searching for the **Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab**, you're not alone. This song has become a favorite among fingerstyle enthusiasts and acoustic players alike. In this article, we'll break down the essential elements of the tab, explore the song's structure, and share practical tips to help you master it. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced guitarist, you'll find valuable insights to bring Petty's subtle artistry into your own playing.

Understanding the Song: "Fallin'" in Tom Petty's Repertoire

Before diving into the tab, it's helpful to understand the context of "Fallin'." The song was written during a period of reflection for Petty, following his divorce and a move toward a more stripped-down, folk-rock sound. The guitar work, performed by Petty himself on a vintage acoustic, is delicate and sparse — a far cry from the driving rock of "American Girl" or "Refugee." The **Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab** reflects this simplicity: open chords, subtle fingerpicking patterns, and a gentle tempo that demands control rather than speed. Lyrically, the song explores falling in and out of love, and the guitar parts mirror that ebb and flow. For any guitarist, learning this piece is an exercise in phrasing and dynamics, two skills that elevate a simple part into something deeply expressive.

Why This Tab Matters for Guitarists

Many tab sites list "Fallin'" as an intermediate piece, but its real challenge lies in the touch. The tab typically shows standard open chord shapes like D, G, A, and Em7, with a few embellishments. Yet the magic happens in the right hand — the way Petty alternates between a steady bass note and a delicate melody on the higher strings. When you look at a **Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab** online, you'll often see a hybrid picking approach: thumb for the bass, index and middle for the treble. This style is quintessential Petty and echoes influences like Bob Dylan and the Byrds. Mastering this technique will not only help you play the song accurately but will also open doors to countless other folk-rock classics.

Breaking Down the Main Riff: A Step-by-Step Guide

The core of "Fallin'" is a repeating fingerpicking pattern built on a D chord. If you find a reliable **Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab**, the first few bars will almost certainly show a D shape with a walk-down in the bass. Let's dissect it measure by measure.

The D Chord Foundation

Start with a standard open D chord: xx0232. Petty often adds a slight variation by lifting the second finger (on the first string, second fret) briefly to create a melodic pull. In the tab, you'll see numbers like:
0—0—2—3—2—0 (strings from low E to high e). The thumb (p) plays the open A string as the root, then the index (i) and middle (m) handle the B and high E strings. The pattern is: bass (A string), then pluck B and high E together, then bass again, etc. This creates a steady, hypnotic pulse.

The Walk-Down to A

After a few D measures, the song moves to an A chord. The tab often shows a transition where the bass note steps from D down to C# (on the A string) then to A. This is a classic Petty move — the bass line subtly descends while the treble strings ring out. In the **Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab**, you might encounter:
D: 0—0—2—3—2—0
D/C#: 4—0—2—3—2—0 (hold treble shape while bass moves to 4th fret)
A: 0—0—2—2—2—0
Practice this change slowly; the trick is to keep the top strings unchanged while your fretting hand shifts.

The Em7 and G Sections

The verse and chorus also incorporate Em7 (022030) and G (320003 or 320033). In the tab, you'll see the same fingerpicking pattern applied: bass note followed by a double pluck on the B and high E. For Em7, the bass is the open E string. For G, it's the low E string (third fret). The **Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab** usually notates these with consistent rhythmic notation: eighth notes in 4/4 time, with a slight swing feel. Listen to the record to capture that laid-back groove.

Chord Progression and Structure

Understanding the overall chord progression will help you internalize the song and even improvise your own arrangement. The verse follows a simple pattern:

- D – D/C# – A (two bars each)
- Em7 – G – A (one bar each, then back to D)

In the chorus, the chords shift slightly:

- G – A – D – G (one bar each)
- A – D – G – A – D (finish)

When you study a printed **Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab**, you'll notice that the rhythm guitar stays fairly consistent, while the lead (or second guitar on the record) adds subtle hammer-ons and pull-offs. For solo performers, you can combine both parts by emphasizing the melody notes that fall on the strong beats.

Strumming vs. Fingerpicking

While the original recording uses fingerpicking almost exclusively, many tabs offer a strumming version for beginners. If you're using a **Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab** for strumming, stick to downstrokes on each beat with a gentle accent on the "and" of beat two. However, to truly capture the song's delicate atmosphere, I recommend learning the fingerpicking pattern first. It's not difficult once you build muscle memory, and it will sound far closer to Petty's own performance.

Tips for Mastering the Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab

Here are some practical suggestions to help you play the song with confidence and expression.

Start Slow with a Metronome

The tempo of “Fallin’” is around 80 BPM, but many players rush the fingerpicking pattern. Set your metronome to 70 and play the D section until it feels effortless. Gradually increase the speed, but never sacrifice clarity. The Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab will be much easier to follow if you internalize the rhythm first.

Focus on Right-Hand Dynamics

Petty’s touch is light and even. Avoid digging into the strings. Use a light brush with your thumb for the bass and a gentle pinch for the treble double stop. Record yourself and listen back: if the bass is too loud, lighten your thumb. If the melody notes sound buried, increase the pressure from your index and middle fingers.

Incorporate Hammer-Ons and Pull-Offs

In the original, there are small embellishments — a hammer-on from the open B string to the second fret on the B string during the D chord, or a pull-off from the second fret to open on the high E. These are often notated in the **Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab** as “h” and “p” symbols. Adding these ornaments makes your playing feel more authentic and less robotic.

Learn to Sing and Play Simultaneously

If you plan to perform the song, practice singing while fingerpicking. The vocal melody follows the chord tones quite closely, so once you know the tab, try humming along first. Then add the lyrics. This is a great way to internalize the piece and make it your own.

Common Mistakes to Avoid When Using the Tab

Even experienced guitarists can fall into a few traps with this song. Here are the most common errors and how to fix them.

- Muting the open strings: In the D chord, the A string is open and should ring. Many players accidentally touch it with their thumb. Keep your thumb positioned behind the neck, not over it.
- Rushing the walk-down: The transition from D to D/C# to A can feel unnatural. Practice the bass movement alone until your fingers find the frets without looking.
- Stiff strumming: If you use a pick, try to mimic the softer attack of fingerpicking. Use a thin pick and play near the neck for a warmer tone.
- Ignoring the rests: The song has subtle pauses, especially at the end of each phrase. Listen to the recording and notice where Petty lets a chord decay before the next one. The Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab might not always show these rests, but your ear should guide you.

Where to Find Reliable Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab Resources

Not all tabs are created equal. Some community-generated tabs contain errors in chord voicings or rhythm notation. For the most accurate **Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab**, consider these sources:

1. Official songbooks: Hal Leonard publishes Tom Petty guitar tab collections, including Anthology Through the Years. These are professionally transcribed and include both standard notation and tablature.
2. Ultimate Guitar Pro: The “Pro” version of the tab often syncs with the original audio, allowing you to slow down sections without changing pitch.
3. YouTube tutorials: Many instructors offer free video lessons that walk through the tab note by note. Watching a human hand can clarify tricky positions.
4. Online forums: Sites like the Tom Petty fan forum (The Wildflowers) have dedicated threads where experienced players share corrected tabs and tips.

Whichever source you choose, cross-reference at least two versions to ensure accuracy. A small error in the tab can throw off your entire practice session.

Understanding the Right Hand Technique: Travis Picking

The picking pattern in “Fallin’” is a variation of the classic Travis picking style, named after Merle Travis. Petty used this approach extensively on his acoustic albums. For the thumb hits the root and fifth (e.g., A string and D string for D chord), while the index and middle pluck the first and second strings. The pattern is:

Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab

Thumb (p) on beat 1 (bass note), then index (i) and middle (m) pluck together on the “and” of beat 1. Repeat on beat 2. This creates a steady, rolling sound. Practice this pattern without chords first — just on open strings. Once comfortable, apply it to the chord shapes listed in the tab.

Adding the Melody Notes

One reason the **Tom Petty Fallin Guitar Tab** is so rewarding is that it often weaves a simple melody into the picking pattern. For instance, during the D

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