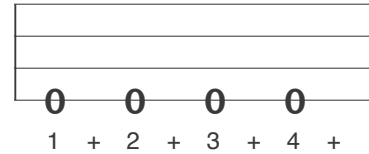


Okay, sit down, put your bass in your lap, strap it on, switch it on, and tune it up. Play the open 4th string, the E string, the one closest to your face, the lowest in pitch, 4 times while counting 1 - 2 - 3 - 4. Your left hand is just cradling the neck.

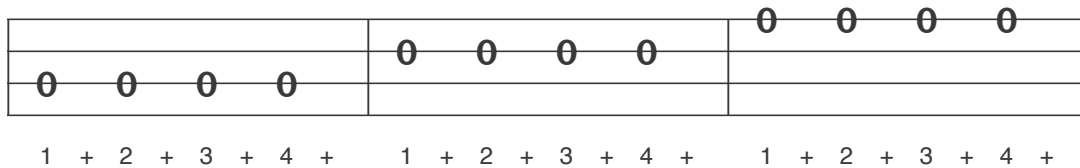
Here's what you just did, expressed in Tab:

Remember, the lowest line depicts the lowest note in pitch, but that's the highest string in elevation.



So that's one measure or bar of 4/4 Time. 4/4 is known as the Time Signature for this measure of music. The top "4" refers to the 4 beats. The bottom "4" tells you that the note value for each of those 4 notes is the Quarter-note, or 1/4 of the measure. (We'll also be playing Eighth-notes, Half-notes and Whole-notes, and you can guess what portion of a measure each one of those notes consumes.)

I suppose the next item on our to-do list is to try the same thing on the other 3 strings:



If you're using a pick, and I kinda hope you are, you can play all Downstrokes (D D D D) or you can alternate Downstrokes with Upstrokes (D U D U). Probably not all Upstrokes. All Downstrokes is stronger, but whether you do all Downs or alternate is up to you.

Passages that need more speed might benefit from alternation; notice that your hand has to travel down and up twice as many times if you do all Downstrokes.

If you're even a little curious about fingerstyle playing, here's one way to do it.

For the E/4th string, plant your thumb on the pickup nearest the neck and alternate your Index and Middle fingers to play those 4 notes, starting with either finger. These will be rest strokes, where you "ram" the fingers into the planted thumb, using it as a brake.

For the other 3 strings, plant your thumb on the E/4th string.

When you play the A/3rd string, the thumb again acts as a brake.
When you play the D/2nd string, the A string acts as a brake.
When you play the G/1st string, the D string acts as a brake.

Try it. Most bassists can play with either pick or fingers.