

# Diatonic Tablature Numbers for Sibelius

The tablature numbering normally produced by Sibelius consists of fret numbers on the 12-tone chromatic scale, for use with instruments having chromatic frets, such as the guitar.

Certain instruments, such as the Mountain Dulcimer (also known as Appalachian Dulcimer), have a fretboard with frets arranged on a diatonic scale: in the case of the traditional Mountain Dulcimer the scale is Mixolydian. Users of such instruments prefer tablature displaying the diatonic step number, rather than the chromatic one.

The DiatonicTab fonts are a set of small fonts (supporting only digits), which use OpenType features to convert a chromatic step number to a diatonic step number. When used as the font for Sibelius Text Style “**Tablature numbers**”, they cause diatonic step numbers to be displayed on the TAB staff. Chromatic note pitches intermediate to the basic diatonic steps will be indicated by the diatonic step number below with a ‘+’ symbol, and if quarter-tone notes are present in the TAB staff, they will appear with ‘¼’ or ‘¾’ symbols. The score itself remains unchanged (apart from the font selection for tablature numbers): only its external visual rendering changes when viewed or printed.

If the Sibelius score file (or an SVG graphic exported from it) is transferred to another computer, then the relevant DiatonicTab font must be transferred with it and installed on the destination computer. This is not required when transferring exported PDFs to other computers.

Fonts are provided for all seven modes of the diatonic scale: Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian. For the Mountain Dulcimer, the Mixolydian font (DiatonicTabMix) should be used.

Limitations known:

1. These fonts do not work with Sibelius versions earlier than 7.0.
2. These fonts work for display, printing, PDF Export, and graphics export. If you wish to compose a note on the TAB staff, then you must type in what the chromatic fret number would have been for that pitch: it will convert to the diatonic number as you type.
3. The diatonic tablature choice affects all instruments in the score: it is not possible in one printing of a score to have some instruments using diatonic TAB and some using chromatic TAB. If you need such a combination, then print one copy of the score with a DiatonicTab font configured for “**Tablature numbers**”, then print a second copy of the score with a normal text font configured for “**Tablature numbers**”, and ask the players not to look at each other’s TAB!
4. When displaying an SVG graphic exported from Sibelius, whether the fret numbers display in chromatic or diatonic form depends on the capabilities of the application displaying the SVG.

Usage:

1. Install the DiatonicTab fonts using the font-installation procedures of your operating system.
2. Launch Sibelius *after* having installed the DiatonicTab fonts.
3. Open or create a score containing a TAB staff for an instrument with a diatonic fretboard.
4. In Sibelius, click ribbon tab **Appearance** -> **House Style** -> **Engraving Rules** -> **Guitar** -> **Tab**, click the button “**Edit Text Style**”, in the pull-down “**Font**” choose your desired DiatonicTab font, then click **OK** all the way out again.
5. The TAB staff will now display diatonic fret numbers.

Robin Walker, 2021 June 2.

# Diatonic Tablature Numbers

Dulcimer

Dulcimer

D  
A  
D-0 0+ 1 1+ 2 3 3+ 4 4+ 5 6 6+

Dulc. 4

Dulc.

Dulc.

7 7+ 8 8+ 9 10 10+ 11 11+ 12 13 13+

Dulc. 7

Dulc.

Dulc.

14 14+ 15 15+ 16 17 17+ 18 18+ 19 20 20+