STEVE BAILEY'S FRETLESS BASS

The Ultimate Fretless Bass Workout

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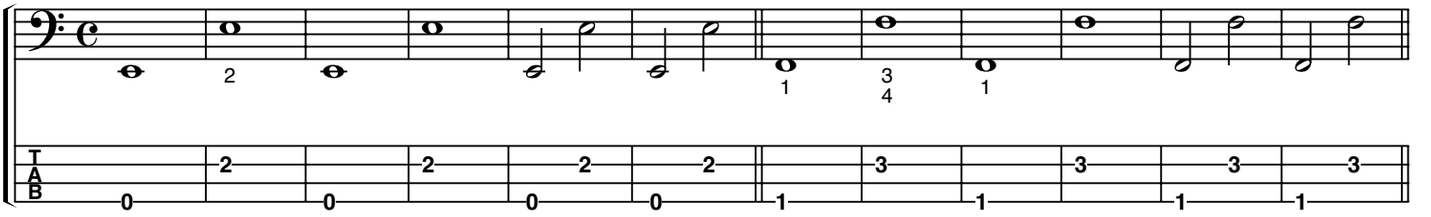
Unit 1: Basic Octave Intonation

Exercise 1: Let the notes ring so you can hear the "waves" in the intervals. The waves, or chorusing, indicate that one of the pitches is slightly out of tune. Re-attack them to be sure of the pitch.

Slow

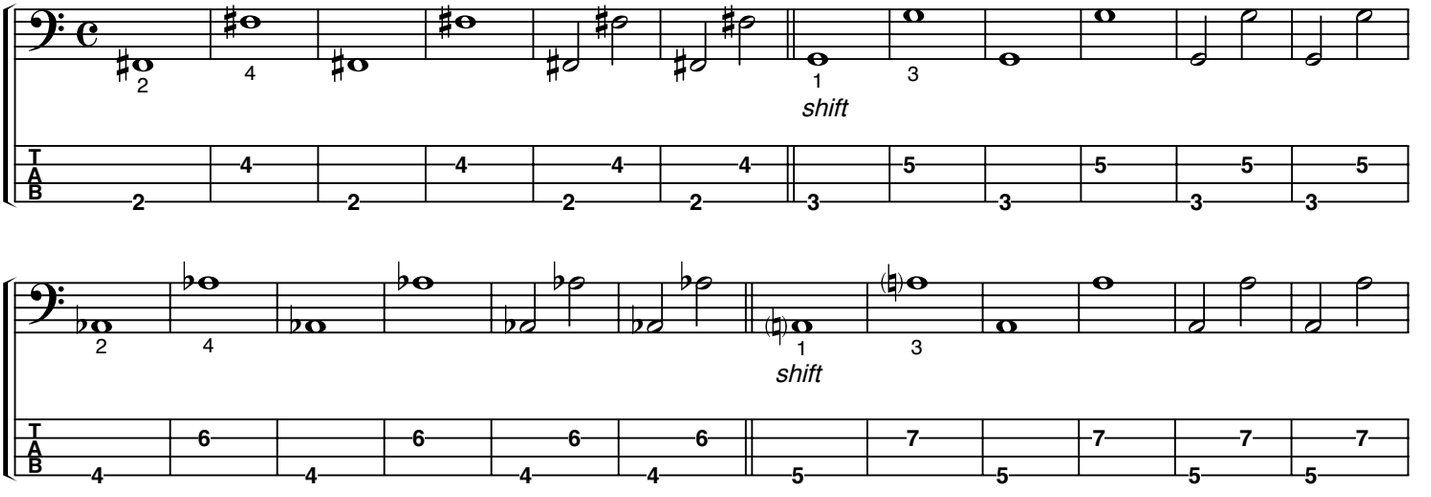
(Let all notes ring.)



As Exercise 1 becomes solidly in tune, combine it with Exercise 2. Once this feels good, combine Exercises 1–4 and continue to the top range of your instrument.

Exercise 2: I try to group octaves in a 1–3 or 2–4 left-hand finger configuration. If your hands are extremely small, use 1–4. Using 1–3 and 2–4 facilitates faster octaves and keeps the "one-fret-per-finger" concept consistent the entire length of the fretless board.

(Let all notes ring.)

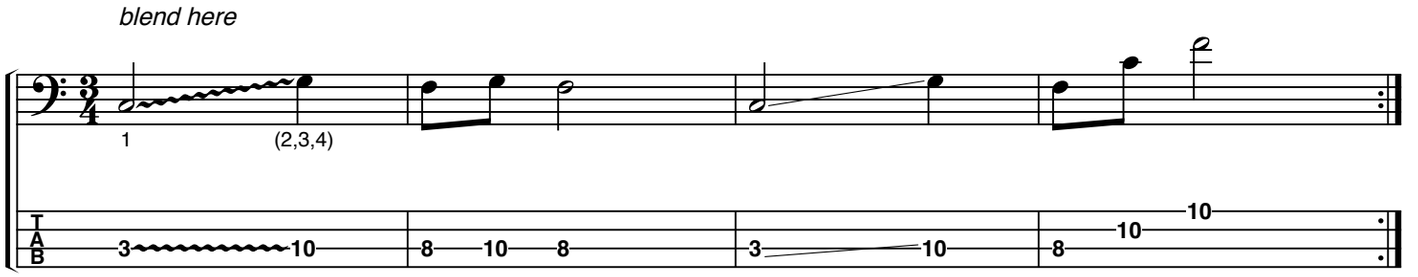


After a while, you may want to double up the rhythmic values to make the exercises go by a little quicker. Be aware of your right-hand finger alternation, and you will develop your right-hand consistency along with your left-hand accuracy.

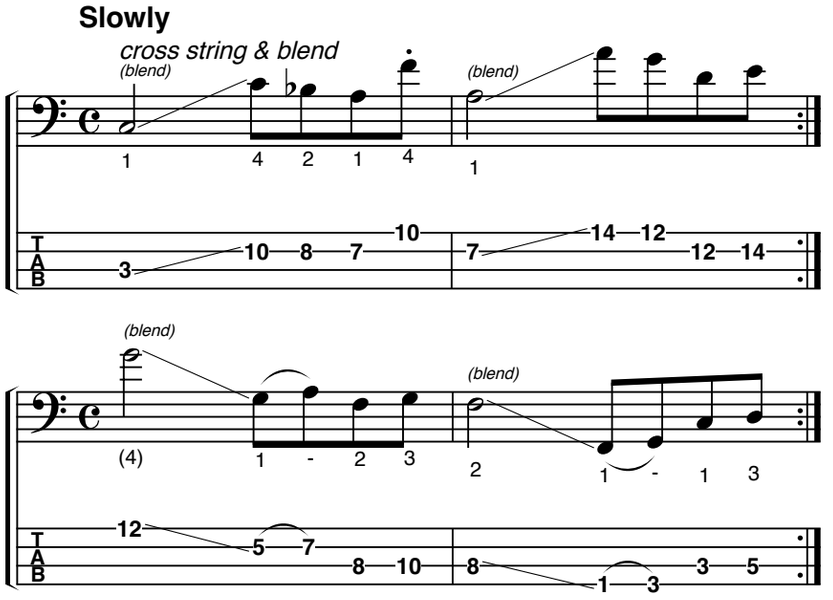
Unit 10: Blending Techniques

In many circumstances, you can get away with switching fingers on your long slides and glissandos; in other words, starting on 1 going up a fifth, you could blend your 1st, 2nd, or 3rd finger in on the way up or down. After a long slide, you might have a rather difficult figure to play. Using this blending technique strategically could make a difficult figure a little more playable by giving you a chance to alter your fingering. Here are some examples to work on.

Exercise 1



As you can see, the F in bars 2 and 4 would be a little more awkward if you did not blend and stayed on the first finger.

When a slide is extremely long, you may choose to start it on one string and end it on the next one (higher or lower). This is another blending technique that requires much practice to make smooth and not obvious. On this one, the right hand gets involved. You must pluck the other string very lightly as you slide and cross the string with your left-hand fingers. Ideally, this string crossing should not be heard.

Exercise 2