

Getting the most out of your Hugh Tracey Alto Kalimba

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Congratulations on your purchase of an Alto Kalimba. The Alto Kalimba has 15 notes and usually covers exactly two octaves in the key of G, but there are many alternative tunings. The tuning will define the universe of songs accessible to the instrument, and there is a huge body of music accessible to the Alto Kalimba in standard G tuning.

The kalimba in this photo has an electronic pickup (that black spot in the lower right corner is the ¼ inch jack). The electronic pickup is an optional feature on many Hugh Tracey kalimbas. This kalimba is mounted on a resonant box - again, not all Altos are box mounted. The Celeste Alto and the Goshen 15-Note are mounted on a sturdy, flat board, gorgeously finished like all our kalimbas. But different though they may appear, they all have exactly the same tuning and all can play the same music



This year I will celebrate 30 years of playing kalimba, and I must admit that the kalimba is one of the best things in my life. Over those 30 years, I figured out a lot about how to play the kalimba and how to keep it sounding good, and below you can find a lot of that information, which can really help you get the most out of your kalimba experience:

Most important is keeping your kalimba in tune:

www.kalimbamagic.com/tuning

If your kalimba develops a buzz on one of the tines:

www.kalimbamagic.com/fundamentals

If you want to learn more about the Alto Kalimba:

www.kalimbamagic.com/alto

Frequently asked kalimba questions:

www.kalimbamagic.com/info/faqs

Most people use their thumbnails to play - learn about nail care:

www.kalimbamagic.com/thumbnails

Learn how to read kalimba tablature (which is used in all books):

www.kalimbamagic.com/tablature

Learn about KTabS, the Kalimba Tablature Software:

www.kalimbamagic.com/ktabs

We have started a new series of Kalimba Tips:

www.kalimbamagic.com/tips

Follow the Kalimba Magic blog:

www.kalimbamagic.com/blogs

Kalimba Tablature

Kalimba tablature is a map of the kalimba with note symbols placed on the tines you need to play, starting at the bottom of the page and working up to the top. The gray columns represent the painted tines, and the black line in the center indicates an invisible dividing line between left and right (that is, the low G is usually played by the right thumb). All of the Kalimba Magic books use this intuitive yet powerful and expressive tablature.

Simple Gifts - trad. Shaker Hymn

4/4 F# D B G E C A G B D F# A C E G 1

F# D B G E C A G B D F# A C E G 9

F# D B G E C A G B D F# A C E G 9

F# D B G E C A G B D F# A C E G 17

Instructional Resources for the Alto Kalimba

The Alto Kalimba in its standard G major tuning is one of the most powerful kalimbas in existence. There are thousands of songs it can play, and there are seven Alto Kalimba books and nine Alto Kalimba downloads to date. If you want to best utilize the books and downloads to learn to play the Alto kalimba, you should stay with the standard G Major tuning.

Alto Kalimba Books:

Alto Fundamentals Book - *a great introduction to playing the Alto Kalimba.*

The Alto Primer - *we include this book with each Alto purchased.*

Christmas Carols for the Alto and Treble Kalimbas - *this is a good book for beginners and intermediate kalimba players.*

The Alto Hymnal - *50 hymns, arranged progressively, provide material for players of all levels.*

Classical Alto - *20 favorite classical melodies, arranged progressively, provide material for players of all levels.*

African American Spirituals for the Alto Kalimba - *21 spirituals are presented in both melody-only and advanced arrangements.*

Advanced Alto Christmas Carols - *20 favorite Christmas Carols presented with Mark Holdaway's personal arrangements.*

Alto Kalimba Instructional Downloads:

10 Traditional Karimba Pieces for the Alto Kalimba

11 Advanced Traditional Karimba Pieces for the Alto Kalimba

Easy Alto Download

Kalimba Latino Download for Alto

Advanced Alto Kalimba Download

30 Peace & Protest Songs for Alto Kalimba

Kalimba Americana - 30 Pieces for Alto Kalimba

21 African American Spirituals for Alto Kalimba

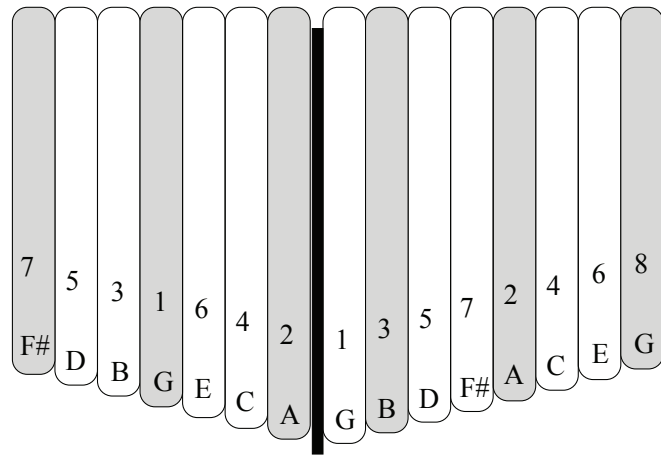
Advanced Christmas Carols for the Alto Kalimba

There are also dozens of videos on YouTube that use the Alto kalimba, and many of them are closeups, permitting you to look over the shoulder of the player so you can learn to play what they are playing. Andrew Tracey says "The best way to learn to play kalimba is from someone else who knows how to play," and YouTube might be the next best thing.

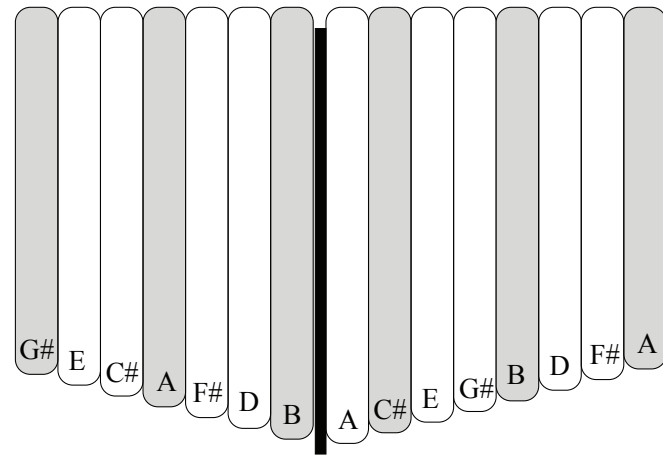
Alternative Tunings for the Alto Kalimba

* Please note that most of the alternative tunings will NOT work with the books and downloads.

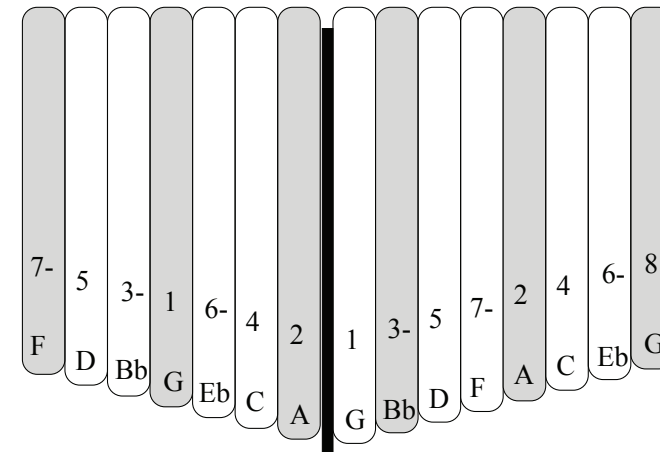
Standard G Major tuning for Alto Kalimba



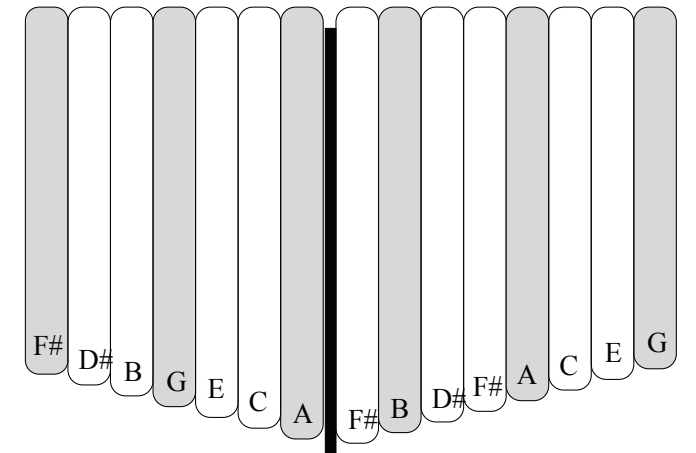
Alto tuned in A Read regular G Alto Kalimba tablature



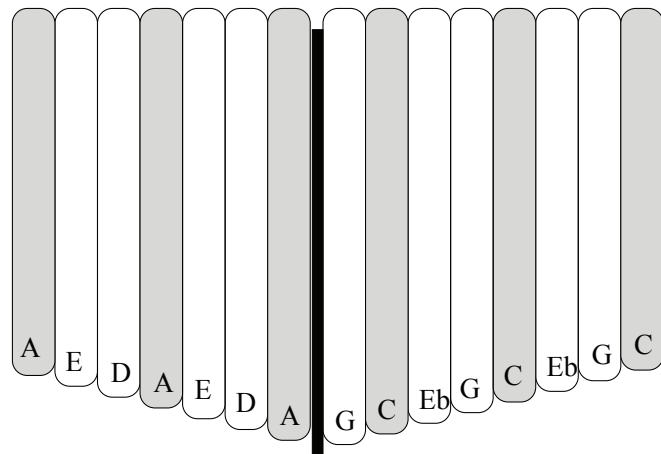
G Minor tuning for Alto Kalimba



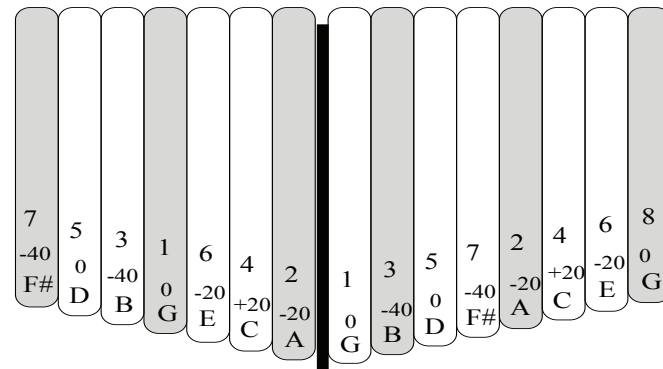
Middle Eastern Scale for Alto Kalimba



Another A Blues tuning for Alto Kalimba

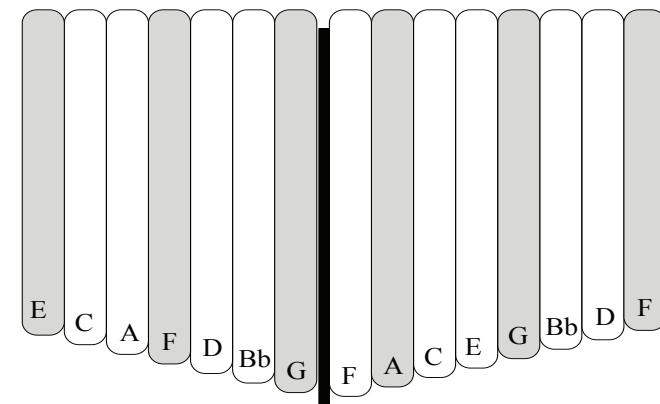


G "African" tuning for Alto Kalimba

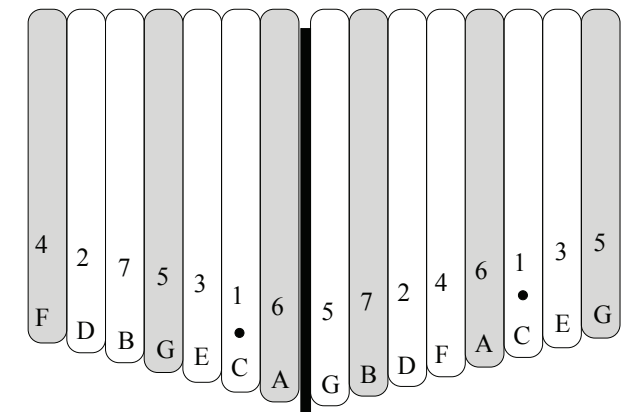


Top row: "degree" of the note in the scale
 Middle row: cents flat or sharp for african tuning
 Bottom row: closest western note

F Major tuning for the Alto Kalimba

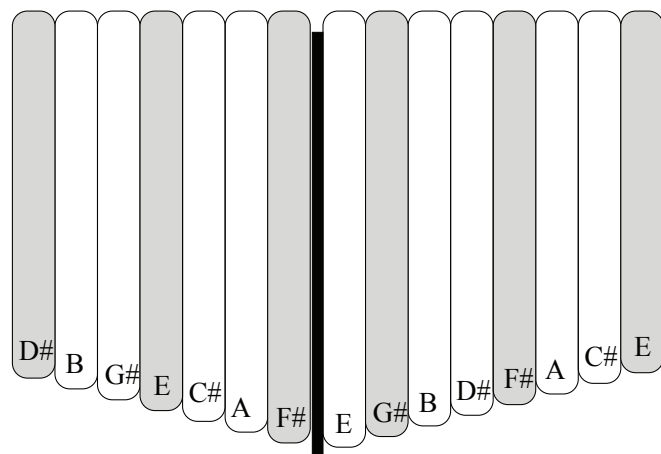


C-tuned Alto Kalimba

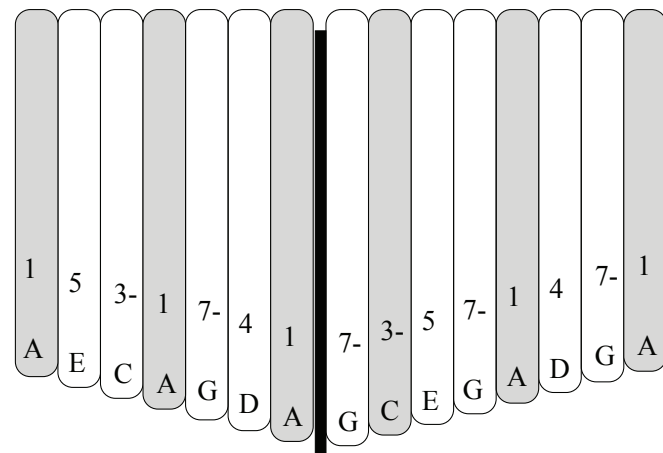


The C tines are marked with "•" to remind this is the ROOT

E-tuned Alto Kalimba - Reads Alto Tabature



Evil tuning for Alto Kalimba



The C-tuned Alto Kalimba is made by changing the two F# tines to F naturals, which is accomplished by pulling them out (making the vibrating length longer) by a few millimeters. This is one of the easiest retunings there is, and if you don't like it, it is easy to put the kalimba back into the standard G major tuning.

With the 5th of the scale in the bass note, different songs are accessible to the instrument.

There is a 66 Song download available for the C-Tuned Alto.