GENERAL

how to play smoke on the water

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Introduction: The Classic Rock Anthem That Never Goes Out of Style

When most guitarists first pick up a six string, they dream of playing the riffs that have defined generations of rock music. One song that instantly pops into everyone's mind is Deep /Purple's **Smoke on the Water**. Its simple, yet unforgettable opening line is instantly recognizable, even to people who have never heard a single note of the track. For many, the desire to learn how to play **Smoke on the Water** is the first step toward becoming a true rock guitarist.

In this guide we'll walk you through every aspect of the song—from the gear you need to the exact picking patterns, chord shapes, and timing. Whether you're a beginner looking for an approachable first lesson or an intermediate player eager to add a classic track to your repertoire, this article will give you everything you need to master the song.

Why Smoke on the Water Remains a Must Learn for Guitarists

There are several reasons why **Smoke on the Water** is a staple in guitar lessons worldwide:

- Memorability – The main riff uses only four notes, but their placement creates a hook that sticks in your head.
- Playability – The riff can be played cleanly on a single string or with a simple power chord shape, making it accessible for beginners.
- Musicality – The song balances rhythm and lead, providing a chance to practice both strumming and single note picking.
- Historical Significance – The track is often cited as one of the greatest rock songs of all time, and learning it gives you a deeper appreciation for the evolution of hard rock.

Because of these qualities, many guitar teachers use the track as a teaching tool. By the end of this article, you'll not only know how to play **Smoke on the Water** but also understand why it's such a powerful learning aid.

Essential Gear: What You Need to Get Started

Although the song can be played on a variety of instruments, the most common approach is to use a standard electric guitar with a distortion pedal or a rock oriented amp. Here's what you'll need:

- Electric Guitar – A Fender Stratocaster, Gibson Les Paul, or any solid body electric will work fine.
- Amplifier – A small practice amp or a full size rack mount amp with a clean channel and a distortion channel.
- Distortion Pedal – A classic overdrive or a fuzz pedal can emulate the gritty tone of the original track.
- Pick – A medium to heavy pick (0.9–1.0 /mm) for a crisp attack.
- Capo (Optional) – If you want to play the song in a different key, a capo can make it easier to find the right frets.
- Metronome or Drum Machine – To keep your timing tight, especially when you're practicing the riff in isolation.

Breaking Down the Song: A Step by Step Guide

1. The Iconic Riff

The riff that defines **Smoke on the Water** is built around a simple four note pattern played on the low E string. It's usually transcribed as:

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E|--------------------------------|
B|--------------------------------|
G|--------------------------------|
D|--------------------------------|
A|--------------------------------|
E|-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-
3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-
3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-
3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-
3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-
3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-
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3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-3-0-5-3-0-0-
3-0-
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