



Guitar

An easy guide to learning the guitar

1. What you can expect
2. What your teacher will expect
3. How to practice
4. How long to practice for
5. Setting goals
6. Pathways

Hi! Congratulations on choosing to play the guitar!

You might have a shiny new guitar or an old one that you have borrowed. Whatever the case, the guitar is a very rewarding instrument to learn and this little booklet is here to help you do just that!

We will look at some important things that will help you improve quickly.

The most important thing in improving is to _____.

1. What you can expect
2. What your teacher will expect
3. How to practice
4. How long to practice for
5. Setting goals
6. Pathways



Mechanical metronome



Electronic metronome

Let's look at these things in order.

1. What can you expect.

You can expect that it will be a little slow at first as your fingers adjust to playing the guitar. Your fingertips might hurt (a lot!) until the ends of your fingers become hard. This is perfectly normal.

You can expect that you will **learn to read music** and find the notes on the guitar. This is done in small amounts (1 note at a time). By learning this way we don't get confused.

You can expect that you won't be playing the latest rock songs for quite a while (unless you practice for 2 hours a day!).

You can expect that you will be learning **THE GUITAR** (and music skills) that will eventually make learning the songs that you want to play much, much easier and quicker.

You can expect that there will be times when it seems easy and times when it seems very hard. Just stick with it and results will come.

You can expect to buy a **metronome**. This little gadget clicks at various speeds and is usually battery powered although there are also mechanical ones. It will become one of your best friends as you learn to make music.

At the risk of repeating myself!

You can expect to buy a **metronome**. This little gadget clicks at various speeds and is usually battery powered. It will become one of your best friends as you learn to make music.

You can expect that the books that you will be learning from will guide you towards playing well as quickly and thoroughly as possible. If this is not the case for you, then you need to focus on completing the work in the book..
Treat the books in the same way you would use a school text book.

You can expect to play at a small concert each term where you get to show what you can do.

You can expect that your teacher wants to see you do well and really enjoy this fantastic instrument and will ensure that you are able to play your favourite songs as soon as you are able.

This little practice register below will help you and your teacher to keep up to date with what you are practicing.

Just tick each item after you have practiced it! Your teacher will write exactly what you need to work on.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes- day	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Warm up 2 min							
Scales 5 min							
Chords 5 min							
Songs 10 min							
Theory 5 min							

2. What your teacher will expect

Your teacher will expect you to make it to each lesson on time with all necessary materials ready.

Your teacher will expect you to complete your set homework each week and to play guitar for at least 20 mins each day.

Your teacher will give you simple assignments from time to time and these are to be completed. This might be to put a few of the songs you would like to learn on a USB/CD/iPod and bring it to your lesson. Your teacher will endeavour to write the music out for you.

Your teacher will expect you to listen carefully during lessons and follow directions.

Your teacher will expect that you **will not play** while the teacher is talking unless you are asked to do so.

Your teacher will expect that when you are given written homework that you will complete it at home and therefore not waste valuable lesson time.

3. How to practice

S.....L.....O.....W.....L.....Y

Always play 'in time'. That means practice in the correct rhythm. You may need to play slower than the **metronome** will click but that is ok. Keeping the music 'in time' is very important. Slowly, slowly.

Know what you are meant to be playing and learning from each piece or exercise. It might be a mechanical and repetitive chord change sequence or a tricky fingering in a song.

Play scales slowly and carefully until you know them. Use the 'double-up' principle. That means if you play it and get it wrong, you will need to play correctly 2 more times. If you still make a mistake you will need to play it 4 times etc. Naturally, you will slow all of it down so the mistakes are not made.

Spend a short time on each part of your guitar practice. If you are learning a song from your favourite band that is great.....just make sure that you do the other elements of your practice also. Your teacher will know if you haven't!



Good finger position



Look after your guitar!

4. How long to practice for

The practice register gives a great guide to how long you should spend on each item in your practice routine.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes- day	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Warm up 2 min							
Scales 5 min							
Chords 5 min							
Songs 10 min							
Theory 5 min							

As you become more advanced and require more time to complete your music practice, this register can be extended to include other areas.

You can practice for as **long** as you like (just not as short as you like!)

Have a break every 20 minutes though if you intend playing for longer.

This gives your brain, eyes, fingers, elbows, shoulders and wrists a break.

5. Setting Goals

Your goals can be long term or short term. You might find that short term is the way to go at first. Attempt to play music that is either **at** your level or **slightly** above.

If you try to play music that is too hard for you, you will just get frustrated and confused.

Your goal might be to **master a piece of music** at 60 beats per minute on the metronome. Once you have done that you can aim at a faster tempo (if the song requires it).

One of the longer term goals you can use is to do a **guitar exam**. This requires that you learn some pieces, learn some scales, do some careful listening, sightread some music and answer some questions. Your teacher will prepare you for this over some months to make sure you will attain the best result possible.

Exams are a great way to set goals in your playing and enable you to improve in a gradual and thorough way.

1. Pathways

There are many ways to learn the guitar.

Some teachers have their students trying to play the latest pop song way before they are ready for it. **BIG MISTAKE!!** In my opinion. Imagine that you have just started school and are in grade 1. The teacher comes in and says 'OK today we are going to start doing Grade 12 maths problems'.

Impossible expectations from the teacher. Confusion and frustration for the students in that class. Sadly, this approach to learning the guitar exists where the teacher expects that the student will instantly become an expert at something that has taken the artist years to be able to do.

Learning guitar properly is a gradual process that helps the student to build on skills they have learned and incorporate new ones.

All teachers want their students to be able to play the music they enjoy and should allow the student to make a list of songs they like and work *towards* playing those songs. **HOWEVER**, it takes time to accomplish proper strumming and chording technique and the ability to follow the written music or chord chart.

Learning the basics of music reading (not TAB!) is essential for understanding the instrument and being able to communicate with other musicians. You do not need to be an expert sightreader (very, very few guitar players ever get to this point), but a good knowledge of the notes in the first position will set up a strong foundation to work from. This can be done through allowing a little time each day.

Learning only from TAB is a recipe for disaster. Note names are rarely learned. Every song is a series of pieced together numbers and fingerings that bear no relationship to what is happening musically.

TAB can have it's uses and I certainly use it occasionally to help students to achieve their musical goals and to minimise confusion. Sadly, it has become the only way that some people can learn or play music and this inhibits a great deal of musical accomplishment.

There are genius musicians who require neither TAB or music reading ability. These musicians rely solely on their musical ear and technical skills. If they are genius players who are gifted with the ability to hear and reproduce the sounds they are hearing, or are able to arrange music on their instrument by sound alone, they will probably produce some amazing results. These players are *very much* in the minority. A good teacher will recognise this ability early on and foster the student's interest and curiosity without stifling their innate musical sense.

Not every student is suited to every teacher. There will be times when the teacher needs to say to the student (or parent) that they are not the right teacher for this particular student. This is quite rare but can be expected along the way as teachers and students adapt to each others learning/teaching styles and personalities.