

GUITAR PRACTICE TIPS

Practice can be an unpopular word when it comes to musical instruments **BUT...** the more you practice, the better you get at the techniques and skills necessary to **have fun playing your guitar!** The better you get, the more you enjoy playing, so give your guitar playing the best chance to develop by practicing regularly!

Follow these simple but important guidelines to get the most out of your lessons and all the playing you do in between:

- ✓ **PLAY EVERY DAY...** Daily practice, even smaller amounts, will get you further faster than infrequent, longer practice sessions.
- ✓ **HAVE A DESIGNATED PRACTICE AREA...** “Out of Sight, Out of Mind” is an old saying that bears truth. Keep your guitar out where you can see it and will be reminded of it. Set up your own area just for playing guitar and keep everything you need right there (music, music stand, picks, amp, etc.) so you’ll be ready to play at any time.
- ✓ **LISTEN TO MUSIC...** It sounds simple enough... listen to music you like and listen to it **often**. Music is what inspires us to play an instrument in the first place. Listening helps develop your ear and your musical sense. It will also help you as you practice because you will be more familiar with how what you are learning should sound. Download and read my article on “Active versus passive listening” for more helpful information. You will find it on my website under **Downloads**.
- ✓ **LISTEN TO YOURSELF...** Listen carefully to **what** you are playing and **how** you are playing it. Be as objective as possible. There are no minor details because everything about your playing is important in shaping you as a musician. Listen as though you are listening to someone else play. It’s not easy at first but you’ll get better at it as you go. You’ll notice details about the way you play (some will be good and some not so good) and these will help you fine tune your playing sessions to allow the most improvement for your time spent. You can even record yourself playing and then put your guitar down and listen back. By doing this, you will very likely hear things you don’t notice while you are playing. This will help you to improve your playing even more!
- ✓ **DIVIDE & CONQUER...** Work on pieces of music in manageable sections when first learning them. You will improve more quickly in smaller sections than by trying to play a piece from beginning to end right away. It will allow you to keep track of all the elements of the music more easily and also master the techniques needed in a shorter period of time. Once you have the parts learned then work on putting the sections together and playing the piece all the way through until you are happy with your results.
- ✓ **JAM WITH FRIENDS...** Playing with other musicians not only gives you more opportunity to play but also helps to develop your playing in different ways. One noticeable difference for many players is their improvement in timing. You can gain the ability to “lock in” (play in time) with other musicians, which can really polish your playing and even take you to another level of musicianship altogether!
- ✓ **TEACH SOMEONE SOMETHING...** I’m not suggesting that you run out and become a teacher for hire, but try teaching someone how to play a chord, a few notes, or something you are enjoying learning. Even just explain a concept or some music theory. Teaching requires you to really understand something and, sometimes, even be able to explain it in more than one way. You need to be able to plan how you will get someone else to understand information that you possess. Figuring out how to do that can help you gain a deeper understanding of what you are doing and why you do it.
- ✓ **FIGURE OUT A TUNE...** Try to figure out a simple song, tune or melody. Pick one you are very familiar with. Figuring it out by trial and error will assist you in developing your “musical ear”. Start with a single-note melody and build from there!
- ✓ **Last but not least... HAVE FUN!** It’s a lot of fun to hear yourself getting better! Remember, what we call practice is still actually playing. It’s not a chore, it’s a way to become better and have more fun playing your guitar. Isn’t that **why** we play in the first place? Don’t just take my word for it... try it for yourself!

Print this page and keep it visible where you play your guitar!