

# Accelerate your guitar progress

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*To get the results you want from your guitar playing you need to understand how to practise effectively and efficiently. Practice doesn't "make perfect" – it's what you practice and how you practice that counts... This, more than anything else, will determine how quickly you progress.*

## Why do I need to practise?

To get better ☺

Long-term memory and habit are developed over time, through repetition.

Music is not just the notes – dig deeper into the music, go beyond the notes.

You'll be able to play with less thinking!

Motor skills only develop through repetition.

## "Practice" vs "Playing"

Need a balance if you want to progress.

Too much playing, get stuck in a rut, always play the same stuff.

Too much practice, get stale, what's the point.

## How to practise

Depends on what we are practising:

⇒ Motor memory –trained by repetition, can practise for many hours.

⇒ Data memory – short bursts of time. Conceptual data: scale construction, harmony, "thinking" things.

Don't spend long, unfocused periods on conceptual data.

Equally, there's no short cut to motor skills.

Dig deep.

## Tips to accelerate learning

Work on everything SLOWLY. Speed is a by-product of accuracy. Do not make the same mistake more than once. Play only at a tempo where you can play without a mistake.

Stay away from printed page as much as possible. Snapshot. Mental rehearsal.

Recall sounds, visualise fingerings.

Practising away from the instrument – rhythms, sing modes, sight reading etc

Practise the problems – zoom in and deal with issue: eg. chord change/scale passage or melody with tricky fingering.

## What to practise

Depends on goals (see below)...

- 1) Develop core skills – rhythm, chords, technique, ear training, theory, scales, vocab, reading etc
  - 2) Repertoire – genre specific?
  - 3) Creativity – improvising, composition
- “You play what you practise”.

## What not to practise

Mistakes.

Material you can already play easily.

Material unconnected to your goals.

## How much time do you need to practise?

Whatever you can manage (less than you think).

Regular practice is the key – daily practice for shorter periods.

Learning guitar is not a short-term project – be prepared to take your time and use it wisely.

## When to practise

Find a regular time. Make it a habit. Becomes like breathing.

Conceptual data – brain needs to be fresh. Motor skills – end of day, allow muscles to recover.

## Goals

“What do you want to be able to do with your guitar?”

Could be songs you want to learn, someone you want to be able to play like, an area of guitar playing that excites you, a genre of music etc.

- ✓ Make a detailed list.
- ✓ Break it down.
- ✓ Determine what you need to practise to achieve each part of this.
- ✓ Make a start!

Eg. “*Want to play blues guitar.*” Electric or acoustic? “*Electric – SRV.*”

What elements/roots – Albert King, Hendrix, Buddy Guy, Sumlin etc.

Soloing. Vocabulary (language). Technique – bending etc.

(Scales). Sound. Rhythm guitar. Repertoire. Play with other people.

Do you need to read music? Tapping? Sweep picking?

As you start getting into it your goals might change...

## How to develop a practice schedule that works for you

Define your goals. Work out time available.

Write a schedule. Define and isolate problems. Aim to practise in a way that covers more than one thing at a time.

Chinese menu idea – big list, alternate days?

Least enjoyable things first - accept some things less enjoyable but necessary.

Maintain motivation, sense of achievement, small rewards.

## Sample practice schedule

1) Warm-up – technique/scales/chords. Core skills.

2) Work on new material.

3) Go over existing repertoire, “play”.

*Eg current 90mins schedule*

*1) Ear training (15mins).*

*Scales (15mins) - apply over loop.*

*2) Transcribing (30mins) – Donna Lee. Fingering. Analyse language. Play along.*

*Work with ideas. / Blues solo.*

*3) Play some standards/jam over tracks (30mins).*

## Tools to help

Teacher/mentor/coach ☺

Get organised! - folder/music stand etc.

Book time and space to practice.

Metronome – work on rhythm and time.

Recording device – hear what it really sounds like; see progress over time.

Timer/stopwatch – to help keep focused.

“Slow down” software – to play with recordings.

## Balancing fun and self-discipline...

Always remember your goals – why are you doing this? Fuel desire/motivation.

Measure your progress, see how you’re getting towards your goals.

Prac schedule and keep focused as you practice each item in your schedule.

Have ways of applying what you are practising – play with others, write music, record etc.

*Also see “How of Practising” article.*