

guitar tips



YOU'LL HATE TO MISS

UMASTERY COLLECTION

Preface

WORDS FROM THE AUTHOR

We believe this can help you on your road to master your Art!

Learning the Arts can be a confusing and depressing process when you don't have a clear roadmap on how to get from where you are to where you want to go. In this information-intensive age, it is possible to get valuable insights and advice from various sources, but they are often so sporadic and scattered that it is difficult to organize them in your thoughts and this difficulty in seeing how each advice can build on top of another will prevent you from making use of them effectively in your learning.

UMastery created this book, in hopes that it will provide some guidance and aid for those who are on their guitar learning journey. This book provides a structure on how you can approach the subject of guitar learning, so that even in future, when you come across something new, you will know how to fit that piece of insight into the overall picture. If you are a guitar learner or prospective guitar learner, and think that you need or want someone's advice on learning the guitar, We have created this book just for you.

In the following pages, you will get a comprehensive coverage of each topic and aspect of guitar learning. We would describe this book as a list of general rule of thumbs and guidelines. In addition, the rationale behind every piece of advice is explained as clearly as possible, so readers can decide for themselves whether to take it or leave it.

This book is meant to be a light read, so don't worry about plowing through long passages, you will see information presented in a straightforward fashion and in bite-sized portions.

UMASTERY
You Can Master Your Art!

To Read BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

A few things to keep in mind before you start flipping through the pages:

1

DON'T TRY TO FINISH THIS BOOK IN ONE SITTING

Taking in all the information at once, especially if you are a beginner, will overwhelm you and make the learning process seem harder than it really is.

2

PICK AND CHOOSE THE TIPS THAT INTEREST YOU

Not every tip listed in this book is equally important or can be applied of the same effect. A tip is only useful when you can apply it immediately to your current situation. Ensure that what you are reading is relevant to what you want to do now, because no matter how potentially useful a piece of information is, if it does not apply to your situation you can't extract any utility out of it.

3

APPLY AND SEE WHICH ONES WORK BEST FOR YOU

Not every tip listed in this book can be applied of the same effect. Every person is different and some tips that are useful for many others may not work as well for you. The only way to find out the effectiveness of a tip is to take time to experiment on it.

4

NOTHING CAN REPLACE PRACTICING

These guitar tips can be helpful to your learning but cannot and should not replace practicing on the guitar. Good practice is still the best way of improving your skills.

5

TIPS ARE ONLY AIDS FOR LEARNING AND CANNOT SUBSTITUTE WHAT A LESSON OR LEARNING WITH A MENTOR CAN DO FOR YOU.

To get better tips that fit your individual learning style and needs, you can easily find a suitable mentor online who can teach you and cater to your goals and needs on **www.umastery.com**. Let's get started....

PREFACE



SECTION I: GETTING IN THE RIGHT MINDSET

Chapter 1: Motivation to Learn

Chapter 2: Managing Expectations

SECTION II: STRATEGIZING AND PLANNING

Chapter 3: Strategizing Learning

Chapter 4: Structuring Practice

SECTION III: PREPARING FOR PRACTICE

Chapter 5: Setting up Practice Area

Chapter 6: Guitar Setup, Tuning and Maintenance

Chapter 7: Holding the Guitar

SECTION IV: ESSENTIALS FOR DEVELOPMENT I

Chapter 8: Principle of No Tension

Chapter 9: Streamline Motions

SECTION V: ESSENTIALS FOR DEVELOPMENT II

Chapter 10: Strumming/Picking Hand

Chapter 11: Fretting Hand

SECTION VI: ESSENTIALS FOR DEVELOPMENT III

Chapter 12: Music Theory

Chapter 13: Aural Skills

Chapter 14: Learning Songs

SECTION VII: ESSENTIALS FOR DEVELOPMENT IV

Chapter 15: Articulation

Chapter 16: Rhythm

Chapter 17: Phrasing

SECTION VIII: FURTHER DEVELOPMENT I

Chapter 18: Faster Improvements

Chapter 19: Improvising

Chapter 20: Songwriting

SECTION IX: FURTHER DEVELOPMENT II

Chapter 21: Creating One's Own Style

Chapter 22: Change as Agent for Growth

Chapter 23: Getting Help from a Mentor

AFTERWORD



CONTENTS



SECTION I:

GETTING IN THE RIGHT MINDSET

Chapter 1: Motivation to Learn

Chapter 2: Managing Expectations

Chapter 1:
MOTIVATION
TO LEARN

~
**INTENSE MOTIVATION TO
LEARN THE SUBJECT IS THE
SINGLE KEY DETERMINANT
TO WHETHER YOU WILL
BECOME AN EXCELLENT
GUITAR PLAYER OR A
MEDIocre ONE.**
~

~
**THERE ARE MANY LEARNERS
WHO WERE BRILLIANT AND
TALENTED AT PLAYING THE
INSTRUMENT BUT DIDN'T
END UP AS PROFESSIONAL
GUITAR PLAYERS BECAUSE
THEY WEREN'T MOTIVATED
ENOUGH TO MASTER IT.**
~

HOW CAN I STAY MOTIVATED?

Tip #001

HAVE A PASSION FOR MUSIC

Those who have the passion for music don't quit easily. Even in periods of self-doubt, they will still have the drive and determination to keep practicing.

When you hit a plateau in learning, it will be difficult to see visible improvement in your playing; that is when most people will start to lose their motivation. Only those who have passion for music can keep at it because they find joy in the process of

learning, so that even when there is no progress, they don't feel that practicing on the guitar is a waste of time.

*Having great passion for something doesn't only mean that you want to get better at it, it also means that **you are able to find satisfaction in the activity itself, regardless of the outcome, and in absence of tangible positive results.***

Tip #002

RECOGNIZE YOUR PROGRESS

Take a look at what you have already accomplished. Your confidence is not unfounded because you have advanced so much beyond your starting point.

A recent set-back cannot undermine all the progress you have made so far and

not making further improvements doesn't mean that you are back to square one.

Rest in the confidence that you have already made it so far, and that you can always try again and again for the goal from this safe point.

HOW CAN I STAY MOTIVATED?

Tip #003

SET MANY SHORT TERM GOALS

The sense of achievement feeds the motivation to learn. Since short term goals are easier to achieve and won't take you too long to accomplish them, you are able to experience that thrilling sense of achievement sooner and more frequently.

Tip #004

REWARD YOURSELF WHEN YOU REACH YOUR GOALS

You need an incentive that is large enough to spur you on towards your goals. Also, given the hard work you have put in, you deserve suitable compensation.

Tip #005

REWARD YOURSELF AFTER EACH PRACTICE SESSION

The reward can be as simple as allowing yourself to play whatever piece you like. After practicing all the boring technical exercises, give yourself a bit of time at the end of each practice session to play whatever you want.

HOW CAN I STAY MOTIVATED?

Tip #006

ENTER A POSTIVIE REINFORCEMENT CYCLE (BUILD ON CURIOSITY)

In such a cycle, the motivation to learn is continual and generated effortlessly because the momentum builds on itself.

The more you learn about the subject, the more you will realize how much more there is to learn, and this will stir up your curiosity, propelling you to spend more time studying the subject in-depth and this is a positive reinforcement cycle that leads to mastery of the subject.



HOW CAN I STAY MOTIVATED?

YOU CAN ENTER THIS POSITIVE
REINFORCEMENT CYCLE BY...

Tip #007

...ADOPTING AN INQUISITIVE MIND

Learn to ask more questions and to not be satisfied with getting simple answers. Take the initiative to investigate into the matter when you don't get the answers you were looking for.

Curiosity quickens the process of acquiring knowledge and is the reason why you see so many scientists, mathematicians and musicians etc. gain mastery in their respective fields at a very young age.

Tip #008

...LEARNING A NEW MUSICAL IDEA

The more you learn about this new musical idea, the more you will wonder how it can be applied in different contexts and this will create a thirst to know more and more about this idea and other related concepts.

HOW CAN I STAY MOTIVATED?

Tip #009

ENTER A POSTIVIE REINFORCEMENT CYCLE (BUILD ON SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT)

In such a cycle, the motivation to learn is continual and generated effortlessly because the momentum builds on itself.

The more you practice, the better your playing gets, and the more fun it is to play it. When you play well, you will also get more compliments from the people around you and this makes it more enjoyable to play the instrument. When the experience and result of learning is positive, you will have more motivation to practice on the instrument. Eventually, with enough practice and learning, you will gain mastery over the instrument.



HOW CAN I STAY MOTIVATED?

YOU CAN ENTER THIS POSITIVE
REINFORCEMENT CYCLE BY...

Tip #010

**...SIMPLY LEARNING
HOW TO HAVE FUN**

*When an activity is not fun, it is unlikely
that you will continue doing it.*

Tip #011

**...NOT DOING
DRY TECHNICAL
EXERCISES ALL THE
TIME**

*Set aside time to make music. Learning
a melody will give you a sense of making
music and make the whole experience of
practicing more enjoyable.*

Tip #012

**...JUST PICKING UP
THE GUITAR AND
START PRACTICING**

*By practicing even when you don't feel
like it, you would have entered this posi-
tive reinforcement cycle. After some time,
you would realize that despite how you
feel, your playing will get better and that
will in turn make you want to practice.*

Tip #013

**...SETTING
ASIDE SOME TIME
FOR NOODLING**

*It is a time when you can be not serious
and mess around on the guitar. When
you are noodling around, you can be not
so critical on yourself, and you don't need
to be pick and dwell on the small mis-
takes you make here and there and this
make guitar learning fun.*

HOW CAN I STAY MOTIVATED?

Tip #014

FIND A GUITAR BUDDY

You need someone who can understand and share your frustrations in learning the guitar, so find someone who is roughly at the same level of proficiency as you are.

You need to feel that you are not all alone in this process. Learning becomes more fun if you have someone who you can practice with.

Tip #015

BEFRIEND MUSICIANS

Surrounding yourself with like-minded people will make you enjoy learning music much more.

Create a support network for yourself, so that you can find enough encouragement to continue on this path of mastering the guitar.

HOW CAN I STAY MOTIVATED?



Tip #016

WATCH A GREAT GUITARIST PLAY LIVE

Witnessing first-hand the musicianship of great artists will reignite the passion within you. Through the performer, you will rediscover the wonderful qualities of music and also see the possibilities of what you could possibly do in the future if you are diligent in practicing. After watching an amazing performance and visualizing how you too can perform amazingly onstage, you will feel an urge to pick up the guitar and start practicing.

HOW CAN I STAY MOTIVATED?

Tip #017

KEEP THE GUITAR IN YOUR SIGHT

Seeing the guitar waiting for you at one corner of the room, will motivate you to pick it up and start practicing.

- *After practice, don't put the guitar in the case; leave it on the guitar stand.*
- *Put the guitar in a conspicuous area of the room.*
- *If you can afford it, place a guitar in each of the rooms that you will be spending a lot of time in.*

Tip #018

TURN YOUR FRUSTRATIONS IN LEARNING INTO A SOURCE OF MOTIVATION

Use the learning frustrations you faced today as a reason to work harder the following day.

Don't vent your frustrations by complaining. Keep it to yourself, and you will find that this dissatisfaction can potentially become a strong motivating force in propelling you to outdo yourself and learn more.

HOW CAN I STAY MOTIVATED?

Tip #019

BE HONEST ABOUT YOUR MOTIVATIONS

Ask yourself why do you want to play the guitar and what do you hope to achieve after all your hard work.

Decide what you want to be able to play eventually. Don't lie to yourself because only genuine motivations can have a positive effect on your drive to learn.

Tip #020

WRITE DOWN IN LARGE FONTS YOUR MOTIVATIONS AND PIN IT UP

If possible, place these motivations somewhere where you can see it as you go about doing your daily routine and try to read them aloud everyday.

If your motivations for learning is strong enough, you will be able to overcome any learning obstacles you face. When the going gets tough, revisit these reasons that you have written down and you will be able to keep practicing.

Chapter 2:
MANAGE
EXPECTATIONS

~

**MANAGING YOUR EXPECTATIONS WELL WILL ALLOW
YOU TO SEE BETTER RESULTS FROM YOUR PRACTICE.**

~

**THE MORE REALISTIC THE EXPECTATIONS YOU HAVE,
THE LESS FRUSTRATIONS YOU WILL EXPERIENCE AND
THE LESS TIME YOU WILL WASTE IN SELF-DOUBTING OR
COMPLAINING ABOUT THE SITUATION,
AND THAT WILL TRANSLATE TO MORE TIME DEVOTED
TO PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY SUCH AS PRACTICING.**

HOW TO MANAGE EXPECTATIONS?

Tip #021

START WITH REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

If you have realistic expectations about your guitar playing, you will be less likely to experience frustrations in learning. The more frustrations you face, the more likely you will feel like giving up. So, cut yourself some slack if you don't see yourself as skilled as you would like to be.

Tip #022

DON'T COMPARE YOURSELF WITH THE GREATS

It is normal that you don't sound like your favorite musicians even after playing for years. A more accurate assessment of your progress is to compare yourself with your past self. What you can expect from yourself is that you become better today than you were yesterday.

Tip #023

EXPECT TO FEEL FRUSTRATED

Whenever you learn something new, you will experience a certain level of frustration. You will also second guess your decision to pick up the instrument and doubt that you will ever be able to gain mastery over it. Whenever you feel those negative emotions, remember that you are your toughest critic and that the situation isn't as bad as you think it is. As long as you keep practicing, you will come to a point where you can comfortably play the songs that you love.

To lessen those frustrations, lower your standards and reduce the number of goals you set for yourself.

HOW TO MANAGE EXPECTATIONS?

Tip #024

PLAY BACK YOUR PAST RECORDINGS TO REALIZE HOW MUCH BETTER YOU HAVE BECOME

Keep a history of recordings of your playing, at least one per month. When you become frustrated with your progress, go back and listen to the past recordings. You will notice that you have improved and that will inspire you to keep practicing. Recordings are an excellent way of tracking and measuring your growth as a guitar player.

Tip #025

GIVE YOURSELF CREDIT FOR THE PROGRESS YOU HAVE MADE

Whenever you feel bad about your lack of progress, look back at how much you have already accomplished. Feeling good about yourself is helpful for your learning as it will give you more motivation to learn and that will lead to more progress made.

HOW TO MANAGE EXPECTATIONS?

Tip #026

DON'T FEEL GUILTY IF YOU CAN'T DEVOTE A LOT OF TIME FOR PRACTICE

In life, there are other important things besides music. Time is limited and there are too many commitments to fulfill. We need to be realistic in the amount of time we can dedicate to practicing the guitar. Just give what you can and don't feel bad that you can't give more.

Tip #027

DON'T EXPECT TO PERFORM ONSTAGE TOO SOON

Playing onstage and in front of an audience is not an easy task and it may take quite some time to be able to do it. If you want to be able to perform in front of people, you need to be less self-conscious and not care too much about how well you play.

HOW TO MANAGE EXPECTATIONS?

Tip #028

DON'T RESIST CHANGE WHEN IT COMES ALONG

Change is good. To make improvements, you need to be open to changes. Even if something new seems incredibly difficult to implement in the beginning, after some time you will get used to it and eventually it will become your second nature. Once you become familiar with the new way (it may take weeks), you may even find it difficult to go back to your old ways.

Tip #029

EXPECT TO TAKE SOME TIME GETTING USED TO A NEW WAY OF DOING THINGS

When you switch to a new learning method or technique or guitar, it will usually take you some time to get used to it.

HOW TO MANAGE EXPECTATIONS?

Tip #030

DON'T START WITH EXERCISES AND SONGS THAT ARE TOO DIFFICULT

If you are too impatient and overly ambitious, you will find that your fingers and mind will have a hard time keeping up with your mind wants. Sometimes simpler exercises and songs are more effective in building skills and techniques. Progress often happens in incremental stages rather than huge jumps.

Tip #031

DON'T BE UPSET IF IT DOESN'T SOUND RIGHT

Most people don't get it right in their first few attempts and some won't even get it after several intensive sessions. All you need is time and persistence to move from where you are stuck at.

Tip #032

DON'T TRY TO BE PERFECT

No matter how hard you practice, your playing cannot be error-free. You can aim for perfection, but you will never reach it. Your guitar playing will always be a work in progress. Accept the fact that you will make mistakes or else you will feel like a failure and that attitude is not conducive for learning.

HOW TO MANAGE EXPECTATIONS?

Tip #033

DON'T BE DISHEARTENED IF YOU CAN'T MEET YOUR PRACTICE DEADLINES

Life throws a lot of unexpected situations at you. When you set those deadlines, you probably didn't take into account the emergencies that would have happened, and couldn't foresee those circumstances that will derail you from your current plan. If you need more time to meet those practice goals, don't be ashamed to move your deadlines that you have set for yourself.

Tip #034

UNDERSTAND THAT LEARNING WILL GET EASIER OVER TIME

Don't worry if your progress is slow initially as you will experience a learning curve. The more you know about guitar playing, the easier it will be for you to comprehend and apply new concepts and musical ideas. The ability to quickly digest and apply new music ideas and materials is something that you will acquire over time.

Tip #035

THE TRUTH IS "YOUR TIME IS NEVER WASTED!"

Learning the guitar is an investment in yourself. Your value as a musician will grow exponentially with time.



SECTION II: STRATEGIZING AND PLANNING

Chapter 3: Strategizing Learning

Chapter 4: Structuring Practice

Chapter 3:
**STRATEGIZING
LEARNING**

HOW TO STRATEGIZE LEARNING?

Tip #036

SET GOALS FOR YOURSELF

Setting goals will give you direction and bring light to your true motivations for learning the guitar. Start with one ultimate goal for your guitar learning and then work backwards to find the steps you can take every day.

Tip #037

LIST ALL YOUR GOALS AND PRIORITIZE THEM

Don't be too ambitious and overwhelm yourself with too many goals to work towards to. After listing them, you need to prioritize which ones are more important than others. Keep the top 3 and discard the rest.

You can only add in a new goal only after you have achieved one of the top 3 goals. At any point in time, you should only have a maximum of 3 big goals for your practice, so that you will be clear on what you need to work on and your effort will not be spread too thinly across different areas. Your goals should cover at least these three areas: repertoire, techniques, and musicality.

Why only 3 goals? Ans: If you are overloaded with goals, it is hard to make progress and move forward.

HOW TO STRATEGIZE LEARNING?

Tip #038

CREATE A BATTLE PLAN

You need to have a plan in place in order to reach where you want to be and that plan needs to be written down. This is about strategizing how you are going to get from point A to point B.

STEP 1: WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT PATHS THAT YOU CAN TAKE TO FULFILL YOUR MUSICAL GOALS?

List all possible strategies and paths you can take to reach your goal. Brainstorm, and make your list exhaustive.

STEP 2: STATE THE PROS AND CONS OF EACH STRATEGY/PATH

STEP 3: WHICH PATH AMONG THOSE YOU HAVE LISTED IS THE BEST TO TAKE?

Determine the best strategy and course of action to take. What can be considered the best solution varies from person to person depending on your criteria:

a. Risk-adverse: taking the safe and sure route

The best strategy according to this principle is the one that has the least potential negative outcome for you.

b. Optimistic: taking the route that gives you the biggest potential benefit

The best strategy according to this principle is the one that will maximize the potential benefits that you can get without consideration of the potential loss.

c. A happy medium. Most people will choose something in between a. and b.

The best strategy according to this principle is the one that can find a good balance between the **potential loss** and **potential gains** from your actions.

YOU CAN CREATE A GOOD BATTLE PLAN BY...

Tip #039

...GATHERING INFORMATION FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

Do a thorough research. You can find out a lot of information from the internet, from television, from journals and books, from friends, from people working in the industry, and from your mentors. There is no shortage of information around us, in fact we are overloaded with it. The real challenge is to find the right kind of information in the vast amount available.

Tip #040

...CONSIDERING THE ACCURACY AND QUALITY OF EACH PIECE OF INFORMATION

Not all information carry equal weight and not all information is error-free and high quality. When considering the best strategy to take, you must check the quality of the information and determine how much consideration you want to give to that piece of information. The process of determining the quality of information is very time-consuming but is important if you want to make the best decision.

Tip #041

...SEEKING THE HELP OF A MENTOR

Your best choice of mentor should be either someone who is already doing what you hope to achieve or someone who has successfully helped others to get on to the right path. They are in the position to give you good advice, having seen it all, to inform you of what other options or alternative paths you might want to consider. A very experienced mentor may even change your mind on what goals you would like to set for yourself and help you revise your current battle plan.

WHEN IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN...

Tip #042

DON'T WORRY IF YOUR BATTLE PLAN IS NOT PERFECT

No matter how flawed your plan is, it is better than to have no plan at all. You can work on improving the plan later on when you start implementing it.

Tip #043

SEEK THE HELP OF A MENTOR

If you take the plan to a competent teacher, he/she can show you the fastest way or most effective way of implementing the plan. With their experience in teaching and performing, they are aware of what works and what doesn't.

Tip #044

TRY IT OUT FIRST TO SEE HOW WELL IT WORKS

Trial and error is the best teacher. No matter how well-crafted your plan is, you may not get the results you want because circumstances change at a fast pace and the information you based your plan on can get outdated very quickly. Therefore, the best way to know whether your plan is good is to test it out on a small-scale first.

We all have different learning styles, so by trying out diverse approaches, you can determine for yourself what works best for you and develop your own personally road-tested methods for effective practice.

HOW TO STRATEGIZE LEARNING?

Tip #045

REVIEW AND REVISE YOUR BATTLE PLAN REGULARLY

Every now and then, you should come back to review the battle plan and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies you have taken. You need to put some distance from what you are currently doing to understand if you are still going in the right direction. If you are not heading in the right direction or the progress is too slow, make the necessary adjustments.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I REVIEW?

Tip #046

REVIEW YOUR BATTLE PLAN EVERY TIME YOU ARE INTRODUCED TO NEW INFORMATION

The industry changes quickly and you may learn something new everyday that you didn't know before. At the point of time when you first created the battle plan, you weren't able to take these things into consideration. So having armed with these new information, you should go back to your battle plan to make changes:

Step 1. Add in any new information

Step 2. Remove any obsolete information (or whatever that was proven to be incorrect according to what you have experienced)

Step 3. Determine once again what is the best course of action to take

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I REVIEW?

Tip #047

REVIEW YOUR BATTLE PLAN EVERY 2-3 MONTHS

Sometimes you are too busy learning new things that you forget to update your battle plan. You can set aside some time during the weekend at the end of each semester or during seasonal holidays to review it. The purpose of a periodical review is to ensure that you are always taking the best approach known to you. You need to make the most use of the limited time you have to make as much progress as possible.

Tip #048

REVIEW YOUR BATTLE PLAN ON DAYS WHEN YOU CAN'T BRING YOURSELF TO PRACTICE

Don't feel like learning something new today? That's ok, you can dedicate the day's practice time to reviewing the battle plan. That way, you will feel that time is not wasted. When reviewing the battle plan, you will also be reminded once again why you are working so hard towards your goals and that helps to recharge your motivation and get you back on track for the next practice session.

Tip #049

REVIEW YOUR BATTLE PLAN EVERY TIME YOUR MOTIVATION DIPS

Perhaps your lack of motivation for learning may be due to your desires no longer aligned with your learning goals, or the rate of progress is too slow for you. Either case, there is a need for you to revise your plan and/or adopt another strategy.

Chapter 4:
**STRUCTURING
PRACTICE**

HOW TO STRUCTURE PRACTICE?

Tip #050

CREATE A PERSONALIZED PRACTICE JOURNAL

Why the need for a practice schedule/journal?

Reason 1. More productive use of practice time

A practice schedule is a tool to help you maximize your guitar practice results. It manages your guitar practice time in a logical manner by designing it around specific goals. If you don't follow a practice routine, you will find that it is difficult to make a lot of progress, since you would be spending a lot of your time messing around the guitar and doing other less effective practices.

Reason 2. Better tracking and recording of practice results

It also allows you to take charge of your own learning and monitor your own progress. You would be able to know what you have learned in previous sessions and whether you have reached the targets that you have set for yourself. It is a concrete way of documenting your progress and tracking your progress so you know how effective your practice has been. Knowing how well your guitar playing is improving will let you know if anything in your practice schedule needs to be adjusted. Few guitar players actually track their progress consistently and so if you do, you can be sure that you are one of those who are advancing at a pace faster than most.

Reason 3. Disciplined and regular practice

By following some sort of schedule, there is a higher likelihood that you will practice on a regular basis. Make sure to follow through the practice schedule that you have created as it will make your learning more disciplined and your practice more effective and thorough.

HOW TO STRUCTURE PRACTICE?

Tip #051

CREATE ONE SPECIFIC FOCUS FOR THE DAY

If you learn too many things in a day, you won't be able to give each new concept the adequate time and practice to let it stick well in your mind. Stick with learning one musical idea/technique/song for the whole day and only move to another concept/skill the following day. However, take note that the next day's topic should still be related to the specific focus of the week. All practice sessions held within the day can be covering different exercises as long as they are centered on one specific topic. E.g. Learn a new chord shape, new strumming or picking pattern, new lick.

Tip #052

CREATE ONE SPECIFIC FOCUS FOR EACH OF THE SESSIONS WITHIN A DAY

If you have more than one practice session in a day, aim to cover only one item or exercise in each of the practice session. The mind is the most focused when it has only one thing to learn and a focused mind produces better learning results.

Tip #053

DON'T LOOK TOO FAR INTO THE FUTURE

Focus your attention on finishing today's practice goals and don't worry about tomorrow. When you look too far into the future, you are expending too much of your energy on things that may not happen at all and you would find yourself achieving more if you redirect that energy in completing present tasks.

HOW TO STRUCTURE PRACTICE?

Tip #054

SET A WEEKLY INSTEAD OF A MONTHLY OR DAILY PLAN OF PRACTICE

Weekly is more manageable and flexible than monthly. Daily planning is too tedious and bearing in mind that it often takes at least a couple of sessions or a few days to accomplish a goal like learning a portion of a song or mastering a technique, a weekly plan is good enough.

This time frame also makes sense if you are taking lessons weekly, because during a lesson, your mentor may point out new things/songs/exercises that you should work on. Also, your mentor can give you a more accurate assessment of the effectiveness of the past week's practice, so the time after a lesson is a good time to do reevaluation and planning for the coming week.

Tip #055

DESCRIBE IN DETAIL THE RESULT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE AT THE END OF EACH PRACTICE

You need to be precise in your description so that you can say for sure whether you have been successful or not in achieving the result intended for the practice session. It will be very difficult to measure the effectiveness of an exercise if you are not clear on what is the desired outcome.

E.g. To be able to play a short piece without mistakes 3 times in a row at a particular metronome setting

HOW TO STRUCTURE PRACTICE?

Tip #056

ASSIGN APPROPRIATE EXERCISES AND PRACTICE MATERIALS FOR EACH SESSION

Select practice materials for each practice session with a clear understanding of how it will help you progress towards your goals and how it is aligned with the topic of the day. You need to be as specific as possible when writing down your practice goals and results. The more detailed you record, the better you can measure your progress and evaluate the effectiveness of those exercises and learning methods. Also, by writing down what you will be working on, you can avoid aimless noodling during practice time.

Tip #057

MAKE SURE YOU COVER BOTH MENTAL AND PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF LEARNING

Guitar practice is about theory, which is learning the vocabulary of the instrument, as well as physical playing, which is about acquiring the motor skills to implement the concepts learned. To play the guitar well, you need to enrich your mind with musical knowledge and build up your body to handle the physical demands of guitar playing.

HOW TO STRUCTURE PRACTICE?

Tip #058

TAKE THEORY EXERCISES BEFORE PHYSICAL EXERCISES

Mental exercises give you a better understanding of the concepts and lay the foundation. Physical exercises put those musical ideas into practice. After being introduced to a new musical idea in a music theory session, you can try to incorporate the idea into your physical playing through finger exercises.

Tip #059

ALTERNATIVELY, START FROM PHYSICAL PRACTICE BEFORE MOVING TO THEORY EXERCISES

Physical practice can come before theory too. Start by picking a song that you would like to learn and figure out how to play it by ear. Work out the melody and chords and find out why it sounds so appealing to you. By deconstructing the song and observing the inner workings of it, you are actually understanding the music theory behind it and learning new vocabulary on the instrument.

HOW TO STRUCTURE PRACTICE?

Tip #060

BEFORE YOU JUMP INTO THE ACTUAL PRACTICE, DO SOME SIMPLE WARM-UP EXERCISES

Warming up on the guitar is important if your practice involves physical playing. Go through your warm up routine playing slowly and carefully, as the main purpose of the warm up is to monitor your body posture, position and condition. You are preparing your body for the more intense exercises coming up by ensuring that your shoulders, fingers and other parts of your body are relaxed and not tensed up in any way. You can put together a warm up routine out of your favourite songs or the practice materials (scales, arpeggios, chords etc.) you are currently working on.

Tip #061

DON'T OVER PRACTICE

Some people feel that practicing for hours will make them feel like they are becoming a master of the guitar faster but the truth is you are running the risk of injuring yourself physically. People who practice for long hours are at a higher risk of suffering carpal tunnel syndrome. Over practicing is not only damaging to your body but is also counterproductive because you will pay the consequences by not being able to practice on the guitar for a long time.

Tip #062

LIMIT LEARNING TIME TO ONE HOUR A DAY FOR CHALLENGING OR NEW INFORMATION

The brain cannot absorb and process too much information in one practice session. By limiting the learning time to one hour, your brain can find the time to consolidate and retain the new information and recover before the next session.

HOW TO STRUCTURE PRACTICE?

Tip #063

KEEP TRACK OF YOUR PRACTICE OUTCOME

Ultimately, you need to know whether or not your efforts are bringing you the results you want. To know exactly whether learning has been successful or less than successful, you need to jot down the results of each of your practice. Measure your results against the intended outcome, and check to see if you have reached your own expectations.

Tip #064

TRACK THE SPEED YOU HAVE PRACTICED IN

For all exercises involving speed or technique, you need to write down the metronome settings in the practice journal. There is no way to accurately assess your technical facility in guitar playing or how much progress you have made without reference to tempo.

Tip #065

ACHIEVE YOUR PREVIOUS PRACTICE OUTCOME FIRST BEFORE MOVING TO THE NEXT

If you still need more time to accomplish the goals of the previous session, don't worry about spending another session on it. Don't move on to the next practice item until you have nailed the previous ones, as exercises are meant to build on one another and can't move on to the more advanced techniques with a weak foundation.

HOW TO STRUCTURE PRACTICE?

Tip #066

DON'T STOP PRACTICING FOR DAYS AND THEN GO ON A PRACTICE SPREE ON A PARTICULAR DAY

Constant regular practice is the most effective way to make progress because long-term muscle memory takes time to develop. A few minutes a day will produce better results than not practicing for a week and then binge practice for many hours on end

Tip #067

PRACTICE AT LEAST 20-30 MINUTES EVERYDAY IF YOU WANT TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS, AND AT LEAST AN HOUR A DAY IF YOU ARE SERIOUS ABOUT MASTERING THE GUITAR

You need to devote sufficient time to practice for all the practice items to be covered. If you maintain high concentration during practice, you can get a lot of things done in a few sittings that add up to an hour or one full hour-sitting.

WHAT CAN I DO TO NOT PUT OFF OR FORGET TO PRACTICE?



Tip #068

LINK PRACTICE TO A ROUTINE ACTIVITY

Link your guitar practice sessions to a routine activity, so that you will always make time for practice.

Think of those activities that you will do nearly every day (e.g. meals, baths, sleep, exercise, work, brushing your teeth etc.) and then schedule your practice session right before or after those activities.

It saves you time in figuring out where to

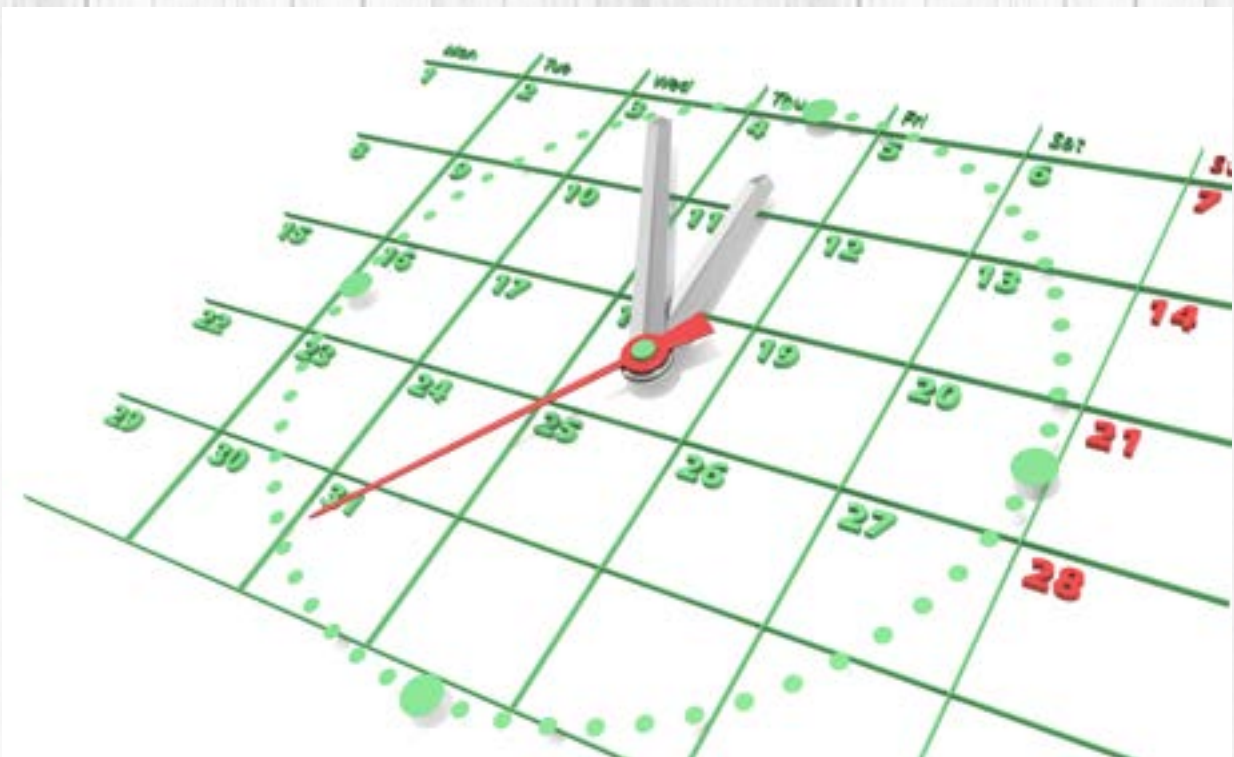
squeeze in those practice sessions and makes it easier for you to follow through.

E.g. Schedule a practice session after getting home from work or school

E.g. Schedule a practice session before or after dinner

E.g. Make guitar practice a part of your morning routine.

HOW CAN I FIND MORE TIME TO PRACTICE?



Tip #069

TRY TO SCHEDULE MANY 5-15 MINUTES PRACTICE SESSIONS INTO THE DAY

It is easier to find 5 to 15 minutes breaks than an hour of free time in your schedule. So, if you plan for short practice sessions, it is more convenient for you and even when you are busy, it is likely that you can still find the time for practice.

Furthermore, it is difficult to commit to an hour of practice, simply because the task is mentally daunting. Whereas, a short practice session feels less tiresome, so you will be more willing to accept it as part of a daily routine, and that increases the likelihood that practice can evolve into a habit.

HOW CAN I FIND MORE TIME TO PRACTICE?

Tip #070

PRACTICE BEFORE YOU GO TO SLEEP

Go through some of the learning materials before you go to bed as you will be able to retain more information that way. While you sleep, your brain can better process the information.

Tip #071

USE THE POWER OF VISUALIZATION

You don't always need your guitar around to practice. There's plenty of time in the day being wasted that you can use to improve your playing.

Whenever you have time to daydream or waiting in a queue or have nothing else to do, you can make use of those idle time to practice using the power of visualization.

Visualizing means using your mind's eye

and ears to imagine how you would be practicing scales or songs or exercises in the perfect manner.

Think in your head how you would execute the moves like an expert and how it would sound like in the real situation. If you do this repeatedly, your mind and body will be more synchronized, so that the next time you pick up the guitar, you will find that your playing becomes more effortless and accurate.

HOW TO GET MORE OUT OF YOUR PRACTICE SESSION?

Tip #071

PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU ARE DOING

Be mindful of what you are doing right and wrong. Your progress depends on your mental faculties of troubleshooting and problem-solving.

The more focused you are during the practice, the more progress you will make because when you pay attention:

- *You will be able to identify more mistakes*
- *You will be able to detect those mistakes faster*
- *You will be able to come up with better solutions to fix those mistakes*
- *You will be able to find ways to fix those mistakes faster*

Tip #072

DON'T THINK ABOUT "I" WHEN YOU PRACTICE

Your mind can only think of one thing at a time. If your mind is focusing on yourself, it is not thinking about the music. People are naturally self-preoccupied, so your ego (and all its related emotions and thoughts e.g. competitiveness, jealousy, feelings of inadequacy) will try to get in the way of learning, make sure not to let it succeed in drawing attention away from the guitar practice itself.

HOW TO GET MORE OUT OF YOUR PRACTICE SESSION?

Tip #073

DON'T PRACTICE WHEN YOU ARE IN A BAD CONDITION PHYSICALLY OR MENTALLY

When you are exhausted or stressed, you will have trouble focusing. If you insist on practicing in such conditions, you are more likely to be engaging in poor practice, which is not helpful at all. Instead of forcing your body to practice or your mind to learn, you should take a nap or sleep. After a good rest, you will be in a better condition to practice.

Tip #074

PRACTICE WHEN YOUR MIND IS RELAXED AND ALERT

Find the time of the day when your mind is the most alert to do practice. For some, it is after they wake up in the morning, and for others, it is when they come back home after school or after work in the evenings.

Tip #075

DRINK ENOUGH WATER

When you are dehydrated, you are less able to concentrate. Your body discomforts will also detract your attention away from what you are practicing.

Keep a bottle of water in your practice area so that you don't have to move away from your practice area to get water.



SECTION III: PREPARING FOR PRACTICE

Chapter 5: Setting up Practice Area

*Chapter 6: Guitar Setup, Tuning and
Maintenance*

Chapter 7: Holding the Guitar

Chapter 5:
SETTING UP
PRACTICE AREA

HOW TO SET UP PRACTICE AREA?

Tip #076

CREATE A SPECIFIC SPACE AWAY FREE FROM ANY DISTRACTION

TV, laptops, iPads, game consoles placed near to your practice area will distract you and make it difficult for you to focus on learning the instrument. Choose a place where you can be totally free from distractions and log out from social media and emails and turn off any electronic device, including phones, that is not related to your learning. If food is a distraction, make sure your practice area is also not near the fridge or dining place or any place that will remind you of food.

Tip #077

PLACE ALL THE PRACTICE ITEMS IN AN ORGANIZED MANNER IN THE PRACTICE AREA

Put the practice items there so that you won't waste time finding them. Practice items include the guitar, guitar stand, tabs and scores, exercises, music stand, pick, chair, pencil, practice journal. Get all your learning materials including audio tapes and exercises ready to be practiced on. Put at least one pencil on the music stand so that you can make notes on the exercises and scores. You can also place the practice journal on the music stand or somewhere near you in the practice area because you might want to jot down notes in it. All these learning materials should be set out and ready for you to use them.

HOW TO SET UP PRACTICE AREA?

Tip #078

PUT YOUR MUSIC SHEETS ON A MUSIC STAND AND POSITION IT RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU

The height of the music stand should be around your chest height and placed directly in front of you. Don't put your exercise sheets and scores on a surface that is perpendicular to your body e.g. bed, table, sofa because you would have to rotate your body to see it. Practicing the guitar in such a strained position for a long time will give you neck and back problems.

Tip #079

IF YOU ARE SITTING DOWN DURING PRACTICE, SIT UP STRAIGHT IN A CHAIR

When you play or practice the guitar on a bed or couch, you will tend to not sit up straight and that will cause you backaches. Sitting up straight in an armless chair will protect your back. The chair should have a straight back and no arms or if you cannot find one, sit on a stool instead. It is easier to sit up straight when you keep your feet flat on the floor and your knees at a 90 degree angle.

HOW TO SET UP PRACTICE AREA?



Tip #080

USE A MIRROR

It is a good way to allow you to observe how you implement the left and right hand technique on the guitar. You are better able to correct a poor technique with the help of a mirror because its frontal reflection makes it easy for you to check the positions of your fretting hand and strumming hand. You won't need to strain your neck to see the fingerboard, so you are also less likely to get neck pain. If the mirror is big enough, you will be able to check whether your whole body posture is correct too.

Practicing in front of a mirror gives you the advantage of accurate feedback on your finger positioning and posture that you won't otherwise get. A full-length mirror that is on wheels is optimal as its improved mobility makes it easy for you to practice in different location.

Chapter 6:
**GUITAR SETUP,
TUNING & MAINTENANCE**

~

THE GUITAR IS YOUR “PARTNER” AND NEEDS TO BE IN THE PERFECT CONDITION FOR YOU TO GET THE BEST RESULTS IN PLAYING AND PRACTICING.

~

SETTING UP THE GUITAR PROPERLY WILL ENSURE THAT YOUR PRACTICE IS MORE PRODUCTIVE AND THAT YOU WILL IMPROVE AT A FASTER RATE.

ABOUT STRINGS...

Tip #081

USE LOW ACTION STRINGS FOR PRACTICE

Light gauge or nylon strings are more suitable for practice than high action, heavy strings. High action strings go out of tune much more often and you would be wasting too much of your practice time tuning the strings if you use them.

Tip #082

BEGINNERS SHOULD USE LIGHT GAUGE STRINGS

Light gauge strings are easier on the fingers, so you won't get sore fingers too quickly. Thicker strings require you to press harder on them to produce a sound, so unless you have callouses on your fingers, it will be quite uncomfortable for you to practice on them for long sessions.

Tip #083

CHANGE GUITAR STRINGS REGULARLY

You should change all strings every few months because the buildup of dirt and oil on the strings will affect the sound produced. If you are diligent at practicing, your strings will become "old and worn out" sooner and you will have to change the guitar strings even more often.

ABOUT TUNING...

Tip #084

TUNE THE STRINGS UP TO PITCH

Always tune up to pitch rather than down to pitch so that the strings will stay in tune longer. If you tune the string down to pitch, the string can get caught in the nut of the guitar and drop below pitch during playing. When you find the guitar string is sharp, you should first loosen the string first to go below the pitch before bringing it up to pitch. Loosening the string will prevent you from tuning the string past the pitch and snapping it.

Tip #085

CHECK THE INTONATION (ACCURACY OF THE PITCH) OF THE ELECTRIC GUITAR

The harmonic at the 12th fret should be at the same pitch as the one you hear when you hold down the string at the 12th fret.

Tip #086

CHECK THE STRINGS' TUNING AFTER YOU FASTEN A CAPO

The string may be slightly sharper or flatter after the capo is placed because of the change in the tension of the string. If a string is sharper, loosen the string at the peg and tug on the other side of the capo then tune up the string. If strings are flat, just tune them up to pitch. strings even more often.

ABOUT TUNING...

Tip #087

GET AN ELECTRONIC TUNER

A chromatic tuner is not only able to tune the six open guitar strings, but all notes too, making it very convenient for you to use during practice. After tuning to a digital tuner, you should double check to ensure strings are in tune with each other using relative tuning between strings.

Tip #088

LEARN HOW TO TUNE WITHOUT AN ELECTRIC TUNER

Sometimes, you don't have your electronic tuner around and you must know how to tune your instrument using a reference pitch. Start by tuning one string with the help of the piano or tuning fork. Then using the principles of harmonics you can tune the rest of the strings by ear. How to tune?

Tune the lowest string and then fret at the 5th fret of the lower string to tune the next string higher (except for tuning B open string, you need to fret at the 4th fret of the G string). Start by tuning the low E string (6th string). Make sure that the A open string (5th string) matches the 5th fret of the low E string. Make sure that the D open string (4th string) matches the 5th fret of A string. Make sure that the G open string (3rd string) matches the 5th fret of D string. Make sure that the B open string (2nd string) matches the 4th fret of G string. Make sure the high E string (1st string) matches the 5th fret of the B string. To double check the tuning, strum both the high E string and the low E string to hear if they match.

ABOUT GUITAR ACCESSORIES...

Tip #089

DON'T PUT THE PICK IN THE STRINGS

A pick placed in the strings may fall out or become bent or damaged and difficult to hold in your hand. Find a proper pick holder to put your picks in so that they will have a longer shelf life.

Tip #090

HOLD THE PICK CORRECTLY WITH THE WIDE AREA HITTING THE STRINGS

Instead of using the narrow point of the pick to strum and pick, it is more effective to use the wide area of the pick as it provides more leverage and creates a more even strum across the strings. Let the narrow tip point inwards, towards the palm and leave one-third of the wide area sticking out to be used for strumming. To get a good grip of the pick, curl your index finger to pinch the center of the pick against your thumb and extend the rest of the fingers to form an "ok" sign. Your extended fingers of the strumming hand should point at your thigh towards the floor.

ABOUT GUITAR ACCESSORIES...

Tip #091

USE A GUITAR STRAP TO INCREASE THE STABILITY OF THE GUITAR

Get a good adjustable strap to keep the guitar secure, especially if you are playing standing up, so that you don't have to worry about dropping the guitar. If you always play with your guitar strap on, there will also be no difference to you while playing either sitting or standing.

Tip #092

GET A SECURE STRAP IF YOU ARE MOVING AROUND A LOT WHILE YOU PLAY

If you are moving around too much, sometimes the strap can become loose and the guitar will fall. To prevent that from happening, use a more secure strap lock system. Even though some strap lock systems are expensive to purchase but they are worth the money because they are much more effective in securing the strap to your guitar compared to the simple strap button. Get a good quality strap lock system if you think your showmanship can potentially interfere with your playing.

Chapter 7:
HOLDING
THE GUITAR

HOW TO HOLD THE GUITAR?

Tip #093

YOUR STRUMMING ARM SHOULD BE ABLE TO REACH OVER THE TOP OF THE GUITAR EASILY

Make sure you are not distorting your shoulder or elbow to reach over the top of the guitar, as sometimes this will happen if you are playing large acoustic guitars. If you find your strumming arm having trouble reaching over the guitar, try to push the guitar neck a little away from your body so that the rest of the body of the guitar will swivel back closer to your strumming arm.

Tip #094

BIG SIZED GUITARS ARE EASIER TO PLAY WHEN STANDING UP

If you are playing or practicing on a large sized (acoustic, dreadnought, jumbo) guitar, you should try to do it in a standing position. When you play them sitting down, you may sometimes find that you have a problem reaching over the guitar to strum or pick.

Tip #095

USE THE SAME ARM AND SAME HIP AS YOUR STRUMMING HAND FOR MORE SUPPORT

When you are in the standing position, you can use the same arm and hip as your strumming hand (usually the right arm and hip) to further support the guitar and improve its stability. Find creative ways of stabilizing the guitar so that it will be easier for you to work your fingers on the fretboard.

HOW TO HOLD THE GUITAR?

Tip #096

THE GUITAR SHOULD LEAN ON YOUR CHEST AT AN ANGLE

If you're seated, letting the guitar rest on your chest will help make it more secure in a certain position. When the guitar is leaned towards you slightly, it makes it easy for both of your hands to move around your guitar.

Tip #097

CROSS YOUR RIGHT LEG OVER YOUR LEFT TO HOLD THE GUITAR SECURELY IN YOUR LAP

When you cross your right leg over your left, your legs create a cavity in the center of your lap for your guitar to rest in. To secure the guitar, you should let the widest portion of the guitar rest between your legs.

Tip #098

THE GUITAR SHOULD BE SLANTED AT AN ANGLE WITH ONE SIDE CLOSER TO YOUR BODY THAN THE OTHER SIDE

The guitar neck should be positioned further away whereas the guitar body (where your strumming hand is) should be closer to you and touching your stomach.

HOW TO HOLD THE GUITAR?

Tip #099

FINGERSTYLE OR CLASSICAL PLAYING REQUIRES A RAISED GUITAR NECK

Raising the guitar neck to a higher angle will give you easier access for playing in the more complex classical or fingerstyle. To make the fretboard become more accessible, adopt the standard position which is to position the guitar on the same thigh as your fretting hand (usually the left thigh) and raise your left thigh by putting your left leg on a small foot stool. Take note that this is different from the standard posture which is to put the guitar on the same thigh as the strumming hand.

Tip #100

FINGERPICKING REQUIRES THE GUITAR TO BE KEPT CLOSE TO THE BODY

To make fingerpicking easier, the guitar should be kept low and tight to the stomach. The indented curve of the guitar should sit on the same thigh as your fingerpicking hand (same as the strumming hand, usually the right thigh).

HOW TO HOLD THE GUITAR?

Tip #101

LEARN HOW TO LET YOUR FRETTING HAND STAY RELAXED

Let your hands hang at your side completely relaxed. Then raise your hand to where the guitar neck is with your elbow bent, and make your palm face up by turning your wrist. The neck of the guitar should pass through your fretting hand and not rest on it.

Tip #102

MAKE SURE THE FRETTING HAND IS NOT SUPPORTING THE GUITAR NECK

All of the weight of the guitar neck should be supported without the fretting hand because it will prevent you from moving across the fretboard quickly enough when you change chords. Also, having your fretting hand supporting the guitar neck will increase the likelihood that it will touch and mute the high E string.



SECTION IV: ESSENTIALS FOR DEVELOPMENT I

Chapter 8: Principle of No Tension

Chapter 9: Streamline Motions

Chapter 8:
**PRINCIPLE OF
NO TENSION**

~

**YOU SHOULD CONSIDER TENSION AN ENEMY AS GUITAR
PLAYING SHOULD FEEL EASY.**

~

**ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TECHNICAL ASPECTS
FOR GUITARIST TO WORK ON IS RELAXATION.**

HOW TO REDUCE TENSION ?

Tip #103

REST WHEN YOU NEED TO

You don't want to unnecessarily stress your muscles by overdoing it. If you feel any fatigue or pain, stop and let your body rest. Be extra careful when you are doing difficult things, as you can unwittingly develop tension in your shoulders.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE NO TENSION:

a. You can create better music when you stay relaxed on the guitar.

When you are relaxed, your fingers can stretch better and have a better reach. The more tensed up you are, the less fluid your playing will be.

b. Too much tension can cause back stiffness, wrist pain or even worse conditions like tendinitis.

Don't wait until you experience pain to understand the importance of playing in a relaxed manner.

c. Tension in one area of the body will affect other areas of the body too.

Tension is symmetrical so if you squeeze too hard on one hand, the other will follow. So if any part of the body is tense, another part of the body will experience tension too.

HOW TO REDUCE TENSION ?

Tip #104

TAKE DEEP BREATHS

When you are frustrated or nervous, you tend to hold your breath. Learning how to take good slow deep breaths can make yourself calmer, and your playing will become looser, better and you get a better tone.

Tip #105

DON'T BEND OVER THE GUITAR TOO MUCH

Bending over the guitar will compress your lungs and make breathing less comfortable. When you can't take deep breaths, your body will become tense. To enter the desired relaxed state for practicing and playing, you need to sit up straight and not lean on the guitar.

Tip #106

DO NOT BE AFRAID OF MAKING A MISTAKE

The more you are afraid of doing wrong, the more likely it will happen. Having a mentality of wanting to be error-free will make your body become tensed up and that will work against you. Maintain a focused yet relaxed state of mind to get the best playing results.

HOW TO REDUCE TENSION ?

Tip #107

DON'T SQUEEZE THE GUITAR NECK

Squeezing the guitar neck will reduce your agility and make it difficult for you to move from one position to another position on the fretboard. If you are playing fast passages, it is important that you keep your fretting hand relaxed so that it can shift around fast enough.

Tip #108

DON'T PRESS YOUR FINGERS DOWN TOO HARD ON THE STRINGS

Using too much strength on the strings will create a lot of tension and pain in your hand that is not necessary. You will find yourself pressing too hard on the strings when you are stressed or too concentrated on practicing, so help avoid this from happening you need to make a conscious effort to enter an alert but relaxed state. lean on the guitar.

Tip #109

IF ANY PART OF YOUR BODY FEELS TIGHT, STOP PLAYING FOR A WHILE

Don't be too tough on yourself, because overusing your body can cause injury. Look out for signs of fatigue or tension. Pay attention when your body sends out red light warning signals to you. Many professionals suffer hand problems because they don't stop playing or practicing even when their body is asking to stop. A short break of 3-5 minutes will not break your momentum, so don't be afraid to take a break when you need it.

Chapter 9:
**STREAMLINE
MOTIONS**

Tip #110

STREAMLINE PLAYING MOTIONS

The key to efficient guitar techniques is to streamline the playing motions and keep the hand movements to a minimum. The aim is to achieve economy of motion.



WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO STREAMLINE PLAYING MOTIONS:

a. It will enable you to move faster across the fretboard and hence play at faster speeds. It will make you a much faster guitarist.

b. It will reduce the probability of making mistakes.

You are less likely to make a mistake when there is not too big of a change in the finger positioning from one note to another.

c. Less wasted energy.

If you need to perform for hours on end, you need to find more effective fingerings so that all that playing won't be so taxing on your fingers.

HOW TO STREAMLINE MOTIONS ?

Tip #111

MOVE ONE FINGER AT A TIME

Efficiency of moves can be achieved on your fretting hand by moving one finger at a time. When changing from one chord to another, instead of holding your entire hand up to reposition all your fingers, try repositioning one finger at a time. Since a lot of fingering for chord progressions allow at least one finger to stay in the same place, by having the rest of the hand stay put while moving one finger at a time, hand motion can be reduced to the minimal.

Tip #112

KEEP FINGERS CLOSE TO THE STRINGS

Even when you don't need certain fingers to play a particular chord, try to keep them close to the strings. By placing your fingers close to the strings, you give your fingers more time to react and to line up correctly on the strings when they are needed.

Tip #113

APPLY JUST ENOUGH PRESSURE TO PRODUCE A CLEAR NOTE

Try to get a good sound, without hearing the buzzing sound, using the lightest possible touch. Train your hands to play as lightly as possible as using more pressure than needed can make some notes go sharp, push the string out of tune and make your chord sound unpleasant. Using more pressure than needed will also create unnecessary tension in your muscles and make you more prone to injury.



SECTION V: ESSENTIALS FOR DEVELOPMENT II

Chapter 10: Strumming/Picking Hand

Chapter 11: Fretting Hand

Chapter 10:
**STRUMMING/PICKING
HAND**

Tip #114

DON'T HIT THE STRINGS

When creating a rhythm, our natural response is to hit something, but you shouldn't do that when you are strumming the strings. To create a good tone that is not too harsh, you should resist the temptation to hit the strings.

Instead of attacking the strings, you should be stroking them. The proper strumming motion is to lean onto the first string in contact and then drag the pick across the strings with more speed

before decreasing the speed to come out of the last string slowly.

Dragging the pick across the string can prevent the pick from sticking onto any particular string. You can rely on gravity to move you from one string to another on the down stroke.

For picking, you should also use the same technique of gentle entry and let your pick lean on the string before playing it.

Tip #115

STRUM WITH A SLIGHT ARC

Instead of strumming straight up and down, the correct motion is to draw an oval shape. It should resemble that of a narrow figure 8 over the strings.

Come into contact with the string from slightly below the string rather than horizontally. When someone stand at your side, he/she can see that it is an

elliptical motion.

When you strum down, you should angle the pick towards your chest, and when you strum up, the pick should angle towards your leg.

The motion should seem like you are dragging the pick across the strings.

Tip #116

LEARN HOW TO MUTE STRINGS

At the end of the song, use your strumming hand palm to deaden the strings after they have sounded for their proper measure. Alternatively, you can use the other side of your strumming hand to stop all the six strings at the same time.

Tip #117

UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STRUMMING AND PICKING MOTION

Picking is harder than strumming because it requires a more accurate and smaller motion. Picking motion also comes from just the wrist compared to strumming which involves both the elbow and the rotation of the wrist. When picking single note lines, you should feel that all the motion comes from the wrist and not elbow.

Tip #118

USE CORRECT METHODS OF FINGERPICKING

Don't pluck the strings outwards. You should use your thumb to pluck downwards, and use the other fingers for the upward motion. To achieve an even tone for all the notes, you should keep your picking thumb close to the rest of the fingers.

Tip #119

WHEN FINGERPICKING, WRIST SHOULD HANG DOWN IN A RELAXED POSITION

Finger picking is plucking the strings with your fingers or fingernails instead of using a pick. It is easier to arpeggiate chords using your fingers rather than a pick and this technique is commonly seen in folk and blue styles.

To get a better tone from your picking, you need to ensure that your wrist is hanging down and that all the plucking motion comes from the movement of the fingers.

Tip #120

WHEN FINGERPICKING, PLACE YOUR PICKING HAND SOMEWHERE ON THE GUITAR AS A REFERENCE POINT

By placing your picking hand somewhere near the strings to be played, you give your fingers a reference point to work with and make accurate picking easier. You can use your hand or one of the fingers as a reference point and place them on the bridge of the guitar or on other strings that you are not playing or other parts of the guitar.

Whichever place you decide to make as a reference point, make sure that your hand remains relaxed and free to move across the strings. You don't have to adhere to a certain fixed reference point and can choose to adopt to different reference points to help you control which strings you are plucking.

Chapter 11:
FRETTING
HAND

Tip #121

BEGINNERS SHOULD START LEARNING HIGHER ON THE NECK, THEN WORK THEIR WAY DOWN TO THE LOWER FRET SECTION SLOWLY

The frets are narrower higher on the guitar neck, so beginners with untrained fingers will not have problems of over stretching their fingers. When guitar playing does not create too much discomfort for them, they are more likely to spend more time practicing and will feel less frustrated.

Tip #122

DON'T PLACE THE FRETTING FINGERS THAT YOU ARE NOT USING BEHIND THE FINGERBOARD AND GUITAR NECK

If you place your fingers, especially the pinkie, behind the neck, it will change your hand's position and thus affect your playing. The correct position for the fingers you are not using is to extend them in the air.

Tip #123

FRETTING FINGERS SHOULD PRESS ON TOP OF THE STRINGS AT A 90 DEGREE ANGLE

When your fingers are at a 90 degree angle, they are pointing directly into the guitar fingerboard and with this optimal position, you can use the least effort to push down the string.

Tip #124

POSITION YOUR FINGER AS CLOSE AS YOU CAN BEHIND THE DESIGNATED FRET

Put your fingers as close to the frets as you can without touching the fret. For example, if the note is on first fret, you should put your fingers right behind the first fret, in between the nut and first fret bar. If the note is on the third fret, you should put your finger right behind the third fret, in between the second and the third fret bars.

The optimal finger placement is right behind the designated fret because at this position you don't have to press down too hard on the string to play the note, so your fingers will not ache that much.

Tip #125

KEEP YOUR FRETTING HAND'S FINGERNAILS SHORT

When your fingernails are long, your fingers will not be able to press down on the string from a perpendicular angle in a proper manner without digging into the fretboard. As a result, your fingers will lie too flat on the fretboard and that is a bad technique that you shouldn't practice in. It is necessary that you trim your fingernails often so that they won't affect your playing.

Tip #126

DON'T FILE YOUR FRETTING HAND'S FINGERNAILS IN THE MIDDLE OF A PRACTICE SESSION OR PERFORMANCE

It will take some time for you to get used to the new shorter fingernails, so it is best if you could file the fingernails the night before or at the start of the day. File and not clip or cut your fingernails because clipping or cutting can sometimes result in microscopic fractures in the fingernails.



SECTION VI: ESSENTIALS FOR DEVELOPMENT III

Chapter 12: Music Theory

Chapter 13: Aural Skills

Chapter 14: Learning Songs

Chapter 12:
MUSIC
THEORY

Tip #127

LEARN HOW TO READ NOTES

It is important that you know how to read music notation because it

a. Improves playing of songs.

Understanding music theory will give you the ability to truly know the song inside out. You will be able to name the chords, the scales, and the key the song uses and then understand how the song should be played to achieve the intended optimal effect that the composer has in mind.

Speed and fluidity will be more easily achieved when you grasp the concepts behind the music you play. Understanding the musical idea you are working with will make it easier for it come out of your fingers with much less practice than if you didn't analyze it at all.

b. Improves songwriting and improvising ability.

Helps you recognize those same elements and aspects of music in other songs. Once you can see patterns on the fretboard, you will find improvisation and composing much easier because you can translate what is in your head onto the fretboard. Your musical idea is no longer just an idea, but notes that can be played and heard immediately.

c. Helps you memorize the song.

You will be able to see more connections and how one note relates to another in the song. The ability to know where all the notes are on the guitar and where to find the notes of any guitar phrase you hear in your head is the key to fluent and free playing.

Tip #128

BE FAMILIAR WITH WHERE THE NOTES ARE ON THE FRET-BOARD

Understanding the placement of the notes will make it easy for you to move about the guitar neck because you will know exactly where to locate the same note on every string. The reason why you should memorize the fret board is because it allows you to play create chords in different shapes, find notes in different areas of the neck and opens up playing in different parts of the neck.

Tip #129

MAKE SURE YOU DON'T ONLY SEE BUT ALSO HEAR THE THEORY YOU STUDY

Music theory is about giving sounds a name and is created to support your aural knowledge. A good guitarist should be able to recognize music by both sight and sound. If you hear a chord or interval you like the sound of, find out the notes that it is made up of and its name, it would give this sound an identity or name that you can remember it by.

Tip #130

AFTER PRACTICING A PIECE, EXAMINE IT AGAIN USING THEORY

You can use music theory to support what you are learning from the pieces. Theory should always follow practice, so that you can understand the music you play in-depth. After learning a new part from a song, use theory to understand how the notes relate to the harmony and how the line develops. notes, you should keep your picking thumb close to the rest of the fingers.

Chapter 13:
AURAL
SKILLS

Tip #131

SING THE NOTES OF THE OPEN STRINGS

You can practice pitch training by humming the notes of all the open strings of the guitar. Singing adds another dimension to your aural memory (other than what you hear on the guitar) and makes it more vivid, increasing the chances that you can recall the correct pitch.



WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO DEVELOP A GOOD MUSICAL EAR:

Having critical listening skills come in handy in situations when you have to play out a melody without the help of sheet music or tablature. A well-trained ear is able to recognize chords and melodies when they hear them.

Tip #132

USE YOUR EARS TO TUNE THE GUITAR

Tune the guitar by using the principle of relative tuning of the different strings and it will help train your relative pitch perception. Spending more time using your listening skills will heighten your auditory senses and help you build your aural memory.

Tip #133

TAB SONGS BY EAR

Tabbing songs is extremely helpful in making you aware of the different components that make up a piece of music. Through trial and error, figure out some simple melodies that you are familiar with.

Pick one of your favorite songs and replay it over and over to figure out what the key the song is in and what are the chords and the riffs. Write down what you hear on a piece of paper. In the process, your ear will learn to recognize melodies and chord changes.

Chapter 14:
LEARNING
SONGS

Tip #134

MASTERING ONE SONG IS BETTER THAN KNOWING MANY INCOMPLETE SONGS

Taking time to get to know and learn a song thoroughly gives you a lot of benefits.

Why?

- a. You will be able to perform the song in front of people and add it to your repertoire list. You can't present a half-baked song in front of an audience.*
- b. You will be able to play with a type of assurance that can only come only with the knowledge that you have mastered the piece and that confidence can greatly improve both your playing and stage presence.*
- c. It can make your ego feel good. There is a sense of achievement in knowing that you are one of the best when it comes to a playing a particular song.*
- d. Enrich your learning experience as you will be aware of the fine details of a song that usually go unnoticed unless you delve in deeper.*

Tip #135

ORGANIZE THE SONGS YOU HAVE LEARNED IN A FILE

Put all the songs you have learned in a file to start building your repertoire. Keep the songs organized in alphabetical order so that you can find them quickly whenever you need them. Slot the music sheets in plastic sleeves so that they won't get stained or wet or crumpled and also to make it easier for you to shuffle songs in the file. Bring your song file with you to jams, classes and performances.

PROCESS OF LEARNING NEW MATERIALS...

Tip #136

GET FAMILIAR WITH THE MUSIC

Listen to famous or well-executed recordings of the piece you are learning. Check out the recordings and live concerts of how other people play the piece on YouTube and other audio or video sharing media and you will learn a lot from other interpretations.



Tip #137

PAY ATTENTION TO HOW THE MUSIC MAKES YOU FEEL

Take note how the phrasings, intervals and tonal colors can convey a certain emotion and feel to the song. Music is an expression of emotions and it is immensely helpful for any musician to know what technique is able to trigger a certain kind of emotion in the listener.

PROCESS OF LEARNING NEW MATERIALS...

Tip #138

LEARN HOW TO READ A CHORD CHART / GUITAR TAB

You need to use the tablatures to navigate the guitar fretboard, so try to learn the notes for the chords and scales. Also, learn the note names of each fret along each string. The better you can read tab, the easier it is for you to play the guitar.

Tip #139

READ CHORDS FROM THE LOWEST NOTE UP TO THE HIGHEST

Chords are usually strummed from the lowest note to the highest with a pick, so instead of reading from the highest note downwards, this way will make chord reading much easier.

Tip #140

BEFORE YOU START PRACTICING AND PLAYING, READ THROUGH THE TABS/MUSIC SCORES FIRST

Identify these things:

- 1. What are the chords used in the piece*
- 2. Position changes from one chord to another*
- 3. Suitable fingerings for each chord*

PROCESS OF LEARNING NEW MATERIALS...

Tip #141

PLAY THE MELODY AND BASS LINES SEPARATELY

Try to perfect the melody or bass line on its own, then put them together to make them fit each other and sound the same. Working on the two simultaneously can be a difficult task, but once you break it down, it will seem simpler and you will find more patience for practice.

Tip #142

BREAK DOWN THE SONG INTO MANY SMALLER SEGMENTS

To make a challenging piece much more manageable and less daunting, you need to simplify the learning by breaking the song into shorter segments. Practice things in sections will make it easier for you to dissect and understand each passage in detail. Analyze your finger movements and figure out what exactly gives you trouble or else there is no hope of fixing it.

PROCESS OF LEARNING NEW MATERIALS...

Tip #143

DON'T PRACTICE AT FULL SPEED

Good practice and playing is not about speed at all. By practicing too fast you will end up making lots of mistakes and start to develop bad habits. Play it slowly, at half speed or less, so that you can focus on the technique.

Tip #144

MAKE A LOOP OUT OF YOUR TROUBLE SPOTS

By repeating the small part in a loop you can become very familiar with it and will be able to correct your mistakes.

Finger memory is a motor skill and the best way to develop it is through repetition. Muscle memory decreases the need for attention and will create maximum efficiency, so musicians need to train their fingers to reproduce exact movements automatically with hours of repetitive practice. Practice is successful when your fingers know what to do accurately without your brain needing to tell them.

PROCESS OF LEARNING NEW MATERIALS...

Tip #145

PRACTICE THE PART PERFECTLY FROM THE FIRST TRY

Practicing guitar is training your muscles and nervous system and if you play wrongly, your muscles will remember the incorrect movement over time. So it is necessary to practice perfect to not develop the wrong muscle memory. Instead of cycling a part ten times but making mistakes in half of those ten tries, it is better to play the part perfectly for five times. Spend time to figure out how to play the passage perfectly and get it right from the first try.

Tip #146

DOWNLOAD A GUITAR TAB PLAYER APP AS A LEARNING AID

A guitar tab player app can help you in learning a new piece accurately with the right timing by giving you control over the speed of the song. You just insert the tabs you want and slow the tempo down to play along with it. You can first play it at a tempo you feel comfortable with it and then speed it up when you are more familiar with the passages. This makes practicing and mastering difficult passages easier.

PROCESS OF LEARNING NEW MATERIALS...

Tip #147

IF YOU STILL CAN'T PLAY ACCURATELY, YOU NEED TO FURTHER BREAK IT DOWN AND PLAY IT EVEN SLOWER

Further break it down and slow it down is exactly what you have to do even though it is counterintuitive. This is a psychologically hard action to take because it feels like after many rounds of practice, instead of picking up speed, you are taking a step backwards. However, if you can accept this, you will save yourself a lot of frustration and progress will come much more easily than any other way.

Your priority is to make the task of perfect practice possible. With the low speeds and breaking down, you can train your fingers to move to the correct positions. After you have build the correct finger memory, you will be able to play accurately at high speeds sooner than you realize it.

Tip #148

INTERNALIZE ALL THE MATERIAL BEFORE YOU START WORKING ON SPEED

To internalize something, you need to play it 20 times without mistakes. It is easy to add speed after you can play something accurately, but very hard to fix mistakes at high speed. Don't pick up the speed until you can play the part fluently without making mistakes. And even when you have mastered the passage at a slow speed, increase the speed gradually.



SECTION VII: ESSENTIALS FOR DEVELOPMENT IV

Chapter 15: Articulation

Chapter 16: Rhythm

Chapter 17: Phrasing

Chapter 15:

ARTICULATION

ON ARTICULATION...

Tip #149

LEARN THE DIFFERENT ARTICULATION TECHNIQUES

You should learn what string bending (bending notes from semitone to one-and-a-half-tones in pitch), grace and ghost notes, slurs (slides and pull-offs), hammer-ons, legatos (long notes), staccatos (short notes), vibratos (classical and rock styles), tremolos, double-stops, trills are.

Tip #150

PRACTICE ARTICULATION BY EXAGGERATING

For every new technique you learn, learn to exaggerate it in practice. For example, you can play through a scale, starting from piano and crescendo to a forte at the top note before decrescendo to end the last note at a piano. Try to play forte very loud and piano very soft, so that your motor memory can register the difference between the two. Likewise, play staccato very short, and legato as connected as possible for both your practice exercises and pieces.

ON ARTICULATION...

Tip #151

USE DIFFERENT ARTICULATION TECHNIQUES ON A SIMPLE MELODY

To improve your articulation, find a simple easy-to-play melody and concentrate on using a particular technique on the melody. For example, play the melody as legato (smoothly) as possible once through, then when you play the melody the second time, do it as staccato as possible.

Tip #152

USE DIFFERENT ARTICULATION TECHNIQUES ON A SCALE

For example, you can develop dynamic variation with scales. Try practicing at different volumes. Start at a low volume, then increase the volume on your way to the top and then decrease the volume on the way down the scale.

Try to be as drastic as possible in the beginning, then experiment with more subtle variations when you have more control over the technique. Eventually, you want to be able to play as many levels as possible in between soft and loud, so that you can play with more interesting variation of dynamics.

When practicing, focus on changing the volume in a steady manner and pay attention on how you decrease volume as it is far more difficult to decrease volume steadily than it is to increase it.

Chapter 16:

RHYTHM

Tip #153

LEARN HOW TO PLAY ON THE BEAT BY PRACTICING WITH A METRONOME

Don't enter the measure too late (behind the beat) or too soon (ahead of the beat). Practicing with a metronome plays a major role in helping you internalize a solid sense of rhythm.

Always work on the metronome whenever you are doing speed or technique exercises. This is an essential tool to improve your rhythmical accuracy and sense of music by developing your awareness of time.

If you are playing in a band, timing is essential and you need to learn to work with the metronome for all your technical exercises to synchronize your playing with the beats.

Eventually, it may even help you develop a precise sense of rhythm. If you practiced often, you will know the difference between 60 beats per minute and 50 beats per minute.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE GOOD RHYTHM:

Rhythm is an important element of music yet is often overlooked by guitarists. A simple melody played with great rhythmic energy sounds better than a super advanced melody played with a sloppy rhythm.

Getting the timing right is also more important than getting the notes or fingering right. To be an effective and valued musician, you need to be able to keep time. Without right timing, it is impossible for you to collaborate and make music with others, so don't spend all the practice time working on note choices only.

ON RHYTHM...

Tip #154

ACCURACY IS IMPORTANT WHEN WORKING WITH THE METRONOME

Aim for accuracy, playing every note evenly with the beats of the metronome. Watch that there is no slight pause when you are changing chords. Don't pick up the speed until you can play all the notes clearly and with the right timing.

Tip #155

USE A RHYTHM MACHINE

You could also use a rhythm machine for practicing your rhythm. A rhythm machine simulates a good drummer and you can work with it to develop rhythm and timing around different chord fingerings. Rhythm machines also have various preset patterns and sounds built in them and this makes them more fun to work with than a metronome.

Tip #156

PLAY ALONG WITH A CD

Playing along with a CD can be as helpful in your development of rhythm as working with another musician. By playing the song over and over again, you will become familiar with the rhythm of the song and even internalize it.

ON RHYTHM...

Tip #157

FOCUS ON WORKING ON A SPECIFIC RHYTHMIC MOTIF

To improve the rhythmic vitality of your playing, you can focus on learning rhythmic motifs one at a time. You will start to give more thoughts into rhythm when you incorporate the rhythmic motif in your practice routine. You can practice your scales and other technical exercises using the specific rhythmic motif. For example, you can change the rhythmic phrases from measure to measure, from quarter notes to quarter note triplets.

Tip #158

PRACTICE POLY- RHYTHMS

Once you are familiar with the different rhythmic motifs, you can try to do more difficult rhythms like playing a three-notes or five-notes phrase over a 4/4 beat or playing a four-notes or eight-notes phrase over a 3/4 beat.

Tip #159

PLAYING WITH OTHER MUSICIANS WILL HELP IMPROVE YOUR TIMING

When you work with other musicians, you have to listen to what others are playing and play off them. This experience will train your ears to become more sensitive to the beats. Furthermore, playing in the presence of other musicians will heighten all your senses and make you more aware of what you are doing on the guitar because your ego is at stake and you don't want to embarrass yourself in front of others.

Chapter 17:

PHRASING

~

**PHRASING ISN'T SO MUCH ABOUT WHAT YOU PLAY. IT IS
HOW YOU PLAY IT.**

~

**YOU CAN PLAY NOTES ACCURATELY AT FAST SPEEDS BUT
WITH POOR PHRASING, AND PEOPLE WILL THINK THAT
IT IS A SHOW OFF OF YOUR TECHNICAL COMPETENCY
AND NOT MUSIC.**

ON PHRASING...

Tip #160

TREAT PHRASING AS PUNCTUATION

Phrasing is as important in playing music as punctuation is important in writing stories. Great phrasing is like great storytelling. It makes music not only comprehensible but also meaningful.

Hearing a song with bad phrasing is equivalent to reading a book that has no punctuation, no capitalization, no paragraphs or chapters. If you don't have punctuation in your writing, it will be hard to read and understand. Similarly, if your performance has poor phrasing (which is stringing notes together without purpose) or is just continuous playing with no pause, the audience will find it difficult to understand your music.

Tip #161

SING WHAT YOU PLAY

Singing along with the song can help you phrase your music better because it forces you to break up your musical ideas. When you stop to catch your breath, you should also put a rest in your playing and that will automatically make your phrasing better.

ON PHRASING...

Tip #162

DON'T SEE NOTES, SEE GROUP OF NOTES

A phrase is a group of notes. By viewing the notes as part of a unit instead of stand-alone individuals, you will automatically play them differently.

A phrase has a shape and every note must be recognized as a member of the phrase they belong to. For example, playing phrasing slurs will definitely make it clear to people that a particular note belongs to a certain phrase.

Tip #163

DON'T TREAT ALL PHRASES AS EQUAL

The end of a phrase does not sound the same as the end of a section and does not sound the same as the end of a piece, so a end-of-the-phrase ritard must be used appropriately.

All phrases have a shape to them, whether it is jagged or flowing, or broken or curving or even circular, squared or triangular. When you play the phrase with a particular shape in mind, it will give the phrase more character. For example, a phrase with a triangular shape may crescendo slightly towards their middle and diminuendo away from it.



SECTION VIII: FURTHER DEVELOPMENT I

Chapter 18: Faster Improvements

Chapter 19: Improvising

Chapter 20: Songwriting

Chapter 18:
FASTER
IMPROVEMENTS

HOW CAN I MAKE FASTER IMPROVEMENTS?

Tip #164

LEARN FROM THE MASTER

Learn personally from the guitarist whose style you appreciate and would like to emulate. Sometimes, only they themselves know the little tricks they pull to create the desired effect on the guitar and there is no better way to learn about it other than seeing them personally demonstrate it to you in slow motion with detailed explanation.

Tip #165

LISTEN TO GREAT RECORDINGS OF THE GENRE YOU ARE INTERESTED IN

As music is an aural form, the feel for music is best learned through listening. Listening attentively to a great song and analyzing it in detail can teach you many things. You can gain a lot of jazz vocabulary by learning solos off records and listen to both live and album recordings.

When listening, pay attention to the dynamics, articulation, textures, rhythms, phrasing, tone and how the different parts work together in the composition. Use headphones or good speakers so that you can hear the subtleties in the music.

HOW CAN I MAKE FASTER IMPROVEMENTS?

Tip #166

REDUCE YOUR DEPENDENCY ON GOOD SOUND SYSTEM

To become more diligent in your playing, you need to be less reliant on good sound equipment. Gain can hide a guitarist's poor playing. By reducing gain, you can no longer get away with mistakes easily and that makes you work harder on honing your skills.



Tip #167

PLAY IN A BAND

Playing with others in a band will give you an incentive to work harder and will give you goals to work towards to for your practice sessions. The reality of performing in front of others will force you to grow into a competent guitar player. In the process, you will also learn to listen to what the others are playing and learn to complement rather than compete with them.

HOW CAN I MAKE FASTER IMPROVEMENTS?

Tip #168

SET A CHALLENGE FOR YOURSELF

Challenges are opportunities for growth. For those who are confident that they have mastered a skill or technique, it is a chance to test their abilities and identify weaknesses that they have overlooked. After being subjected to stressful situations, you will become stronger mentally and you will find yourself more willing to explore creative alternative solutions to reach a goal.

Setting challenges for yourself will also help you conquer boredom of playing the same old pieces again and again. However, don't be obsessed about winning or you can easily get de-sensitized to music.

Tip #169

RECORD YOURSELF PLAYING

Recording yourself is the best way to examine in detail every musical aspect of your playing. Many people think that their playing is good, until they hear themselves in a recording. You can gain insight to your true ability and how you really sound like.

A recording will point out mistakes that you don't hear clearly when you play, so you won't have trouble identifying where you need to work on. By showing your weaknesses clearly, you will be able to work on them promptly and therefore you will improve much faster.

Chapter 19:

IMPROVISING

ON IMPROVISING...

Tip #170

DON'T BE AFRAID OF MAKING TECHNICAL MISTAKES

The important thing in improvisation is not accuracy of technique, but how creatively and broadly you can apply the techniques you know in a given situation.

Tip #171

USE THEORY AS AN AID FOR IMPROVISING

When you are new at improvising, improvising can be made easy by basing it upon theoretical rules. However, as you become more advanced in your learning, you should try to be more creative and not rely on these rules as these theoretical rules are just common patterns observed among songs, and not meant for you to follow strictly.

Tip #172

TRY TO VARY YOUR TEXTURES

To make the start of your improvisation more interesting, you can start with an unexpected texture like double stops. You can also change the texture as you play along by adding extra notes or embellishments like octaves to your melody line. For more ideas on how to have texture variations, listen to how great jazz, funk, blues and country players play.

ON IMPROVISING...

Tip #173

SING YOUR SONGS TO GET IDEAS FOR IMPROVISATION

Sing all the pieces that you have played so that you can internalize their melodies. It will make it easier for you to recall the melodies and use bits and pieces of them in your improvisations.

Tip #174

LEARN TO COPY AND PASTE FROM DIFFERENT GENRES

Little pieces of language in each of the genre can act as a springboard for your creativity. Improvisation gives you an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills you have learned in a musical context.

Tip #175

IMPROVISE WITH ACCOMPANIMENT

You can use backing tracks on the internet or computer programs as a stable accompaniment for your improvisation exercises. Playing with these backing tracks regularly will improve your endurance and feel for groove, and hone your performance and improvisational skills.

As an alternative, you can also improvise along with your favorite songs. You can start by playing along note-for-note as written or heard in the original and then when you are comfortable, practice improvising by introducing nuances or adding short licks you have been practicing into the song, while ensuring that all new elements fit with the rhythm of the song.

Chapter 20:

SONGWRITING

ON SONGWRITING...

Tip #176

WRITE AND PLAY YOUR OWN SONGS

Try to compose and play your own songs rather than someone else's. Music is not only about practicing someone's work; it is also about creating something personal. Through composing you can better express yourself and communicate your ideas to the audience.

Tip #177

START SIMPLE

Don't give yourself undue pressure by expecting to write complete catchy song from the get-go. You can start simple and write one or two lines of catchy guitar riffs.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO WRITE SONGS:

Writing a song with lyrics and vocal melody will help you learn how your guitar playing can fit into songs. When composing you will also be thinking more about phrasing, chord changes and how rhythm and solo parts are fitted into the song, so the whole process is enriching and will give you a greater understanding of songs in general.

ON SONGWRITING...

Tip #178

DON'T NEGLECT THE BASS LINE

Even though melody usually gets all the attention, the bass line plays a part too. You can change an entire piece of music by changing the way the bass is played, so put some effort in creating a good bass line.

Tip #179

CREATE A PATTERN OR A REPEATING MOTIF

Introduce a motif at the beginning of the song and stick to it by coming back to it at different points of the song. You don't necessarily have to present the motif exactly the same each time, you can present it with some variations. A motif is equivalent to the main character/a lead's role in a story.

Tip #180

WORK ON EACH COMPONENT OF THE SONG SEPARATELY

Record the rhythm first and then record other parts of the song such as melody and leads. Then slowly add more layers on top of it such as counterpoints and alternate rhythms. By focusing on one component at any time, you'll find that your understanding of each component deepens. As a result, the songs that you create are richer in sounds, more cohesive and complete.

ON SONGWRITING...

Tip #181

CREATE A STORYLINE

Tell a story through the music you have created. Like all stories, the songs should have a beginning that establishes a pattern and/or backdrop, a middle section that introduces one or more variations and that builds towards a climax, and an ending that wraps up everything. The more it resembles a good storyline, the more interesting it will be.

A good storyline need to make you feel tense at certain areas and relaxed at other times. You can create tension by playing with rhythm and notes. For example, to go from relaxed to tense, you can start slow and then pick up speed, or you can start with whole notes then move to faster beats e.g. semi-quavers.

You can develop a song like how you develop a storyline. Start the song simple with a few notes, then as more time passes, introduce more and more notes and other musical elements.

To make the song interesting, you can throw in a surprise element. Throw hints to make the listener believe that the song will develop in one direction before unveiling a twist that will throw the song in a completely different direction.

Tip #182

LEARN FROM A SONGWRITER OR COMPOSER

A good songwriter can teach you a lot of things that you won't be able to learn from books. An experienced composer will know how to help you develop your musical ideas.

ON SONGWRITING...

Tip #183

COMPOSE YOUR OWN PRACTICE EXERCISES

Etudes are fun to play technical exercises. They are pieces of music that have been inserted with technically challenging passages, so that when you play them you get to practice certain techniques. Practicing etudes will allow you to practice your skills in a musical context and it is a more enjoyable learning experience than working on dry, boring technical exercises.

Writing etudes is also a great way to improve your compositional skills because you get to apply what you have learned in creating music. All great musicians have written etudes. You can start with short and simple pieces and slowly make them more complex and lengthier.

If you don't want to start from scratch, you can also create etudes by modifying existing songs that you play to include some of the new technical elements you have learned, so that you can train your technique every time you practice the songs. When composing etudes, bear in mind to keep them musical rather than technical sounding.

Tip #184

USE THE POWER OF VISUALIZATION

Regular practice of visualization will give you the ability to connect the experiences of what is imagined with the real. When you can see how your mind's eye and ears can lead and tie-in with your physical experience, you will have a greater ease of transferring what you hear and see in your head to your body. This gives you greater confidence in composing, as the notes and moves you imagine in your head can be played out on the fretboard more easily.



SECTION IX: FURTHER DEVELOPMENT II

Chapter 21: Creating One's Own Style

Chapter 22: Change as Agent for Growth

Chapter 23: Getting Help from a Mentor

Chapter 21:
**CREATING ONE'S
OWN STYLE**

ON CREATING YOUR OWN STYLE...

Tip #185

UNIQUE = NEW COMBINATION OF OLD IDEAS

Creativity and uniqueness is not about inventing something new but creating an interesting combination of different existing old ideas.

Your unique style is actually a wonderful amalgamation of the music you have heard and enjoyed, the styles of the performers and composers who have inspired you, and the real life as well as imagined experience of both music and non-music subjects. Therefore, it is important to expose yourself to various influences from many sources as that can help you develop a unique style of your own.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO CREATE YOUR OWN STYLE:

You need to create your own sound and style because all great guitarists that stand out have their own sound.

To develop your own style you need a lot of musical intuition and that is acquired by influence from your surroundings.

ON CREATING YOUR OWN STYLE...

Tip #186

LISTEN TO SONGS OF A DIFFERENT GENRE

You can be more creative at guitar playing just by exposing yourself to lots of new material. You can find inspiration through other genres and get fresh new ideas and perspectives on how to develop your own natural style.

Explore the full spectrum of music and immerse yourself in another style completely by listening to the best recordings of each of the different styles of guitar. If you naturally gravitate towards rock and pop, learn to appreciate jazz, classical, blues, folk, reggae, country, flamenco and other styles.

Listening attentively to different genres will develop your ear and expand your thinking beyond just a guitar player to be more like a musician and arranger. Try to incorporate the elements that you like from each of the different genre and style into your current playing to create your own style.



ON CREATING YOUR OWN STYLE...

Tip #187

EMULATE OTHER INSTRUMENTS

Emulating the sound and the phrasing of another instrument can create a different feel to your guitar playing.

A violinist or vocalist will phrase the same piece of music in a different way than a guitarist would. Learning vocal melodies on the guitar can also make your playing sound more melodic and you won't get stuck with the same old licks.

Listen often to different instrumentalists and copy their playing lines and you will realize that there are numerous alternative ways you could construct your lines.

The purpose of emulating other instruments is so that you could produce music and effects that are not so commonly heard on the guitar, which would contribute in building a unique style and identity to your guitar playing.



ON CREATING YOUR OWN STYLE...

Tip #188

SET ASIDE SOME TIME FOR NOODLING

Noodling is freestyle guitar playing. During noodling, you don't have to follow any rules and there is no right or wrong.

This is a time when you can experiment on the guitar and discover unusual chords and ways of playing. Noodling time is not only fun and relaxing but also productive in the sense that it helps you express yourself more naturally on the instrument.

During noodling sessions, you get to bring to surface musical ideas that you have formed in your conscious or unconscious mind and organize them so that they can be seamlessly incorporated in your guitar playing.

However, remember that noodling time should not eat into your practice time and that you should set aside separate sessions for noodling and normal routine practice.



ON CREATING YOUR OWN STYLE...

Tip #189

GO FOR DISSONANCE INSTEAD OF MELODIC LINES

Don't be afraid of using notes that are not related to the key that you are playing in. Get out of the misconception that music should only sound beautiful and be comfortable to listen to. Music can be tactfully designed to sound slightly uncomfortable or unsettling so that it arouses the interest of listeners.

Tip #190

THINK MUSIC IN A TWO/THREE-DIMENSIONAL WAY

Relationship between notes can be linear as well as vertical.

You can add more color and layers to a simple melody line by adding notes in between the existing notes or on top of the existing notes in the same time measure.

You can build a line that sounds melodic linearly using a sequence of dissonant/ blocked chords.

There can be many more combinations to be found once you see notes in a spatial format and not just on a single plane.

Chapter 22:
**CHANGE AS AGENT
FOR GROWTH**

Tip #191

CHANGE YOUR PRACTICE EXERCISES

Introducing changes and forcing yourself into new uncharted territories will open up new possibilities of growth for you. When doing something differently, you will often discover new areas and weaknesses to work on and help reveal a new part of you that you weren't aware of previously.

Changing practice exercises helps to enhance the adaptability and applicability of techniques you have acquired by making you familiar and comfortable with applying the same set of skills in different situations and in unconventional manners.

*If you are bored at playing the same pieces and exercises or find yourself composing the same old patterns all the time, changing your practice exercises can **help you** conquer boredom, stir up your enthusiasm for learning, and freshen up your playing.*

HOW YOU CAN CHANGE PRACTICE EXERCISES...

Tip #192

CHANGE THE PICKING

To make a routine exercise more interesting, you can practice it with reverse picking. For example, if your exercises always begin with a downstroke, you can reverse it to begin with an upstroke.

HOW YOU CAN CHANGE PRACTICE EXERCISES...

Tip #193

CHANGE THE ACCENT

You can experiment with different accent patterns for your technical exercises.

Tip #194

USE YOUR FINGERS INSTEAD OF THE PICK

Guitar playing feels different when you use your fingers instead of the pick. Learn how to fingerpick and see if this style works better for you than using a pick.

Tip #195

PLAY IN OTHER FRETBOARD POSITIONS

Playing licks in different positions can help you think out of the box. Try playing your favorite songs on alternative positions on the fretboard and it will force you to become less rigid in your playing and more adventurous in exploring the rest of the fretboard.

HOW YOU CAN CHANGE PRACTICE EXERCISES...

Tip #196

USE A CAPO

Using a capo will allow you to play your usual progressions in different keys without retuning. It will help you discover more harmonic possibilities because your playing is no longer limited to the few common keys.

Tip #197

TRY DIFFERENT TUNINGS

Learning new tunings besides the typical EADGBE tuning can make learning and playing exciting as you are venturing into unfamiliar territory. For example, playing in an octave lower than the normal tuning will make you experience music and the guitar in a fresh new way and perhaps make your playing and creating process more creative.

Tip #198

USE CHORDS IN PLACE OF NOTES

Play chords instead of notes to form the melody line.

HOW YOU CAN CHANGE PRACTICE EXERCISES...

Tip #199

USE DIFFERENT STRINGS

Playing or practicing on heavier strings can increase your fingering strength and thicken your tone, while lighter strings are suitable for creating bigger bends. Experiment with different string gauge to see what different sounds you can produce.

Tip #200

TRY TO PLAY WITH FEEDBACK AND EFFECTS

Implement effects in the music you play and create. Changing the sound of your guitar will open up new channels of creativity.



OTHER CHANGES TO IMPLEMENT...

Tip #201

PRACTICE IN A NEW ENVIRONMENT

Playing in a new environment with different sound feedback will give you new perspectives on how your guitar playing could sound like. The portability of the guitar makes it easy for you to change locations for your practice sessions.

Tip #202

CHANGE THE PROCESS OF HOW YOU CREATE MUSIC

If you usually start with creating rhythm first then melody, then do the reverse and decide on the melody before you work on the rhythm.



OTHER CHANGES TO IMPLEMENT...

Tip #203

INCREASE SELF-IMPOSED LIMITATIONS

Force yourself to think differently about how guitar should be practiced and played by setting limitations. There are several ways to make you think out of the usual scale patterns and shapes. You can:

- a. Limit playing to certain strings or even on one string only.
E.g. create a melody using A minor chord*
- b. Limit playing to a certain part of the fretboard.
E.g. only play notes that are high on the guitar neck.*
- c. Avoid playing certain notes.
E.g. not ever playing a root note.*
- d. Limit playing to one or two types of rhythm patterns.*



Chapter 23:
**GETTING HELP FROM
A MENTOR**

Tip #204

DON'T BE AFRAID OF GETTING HELP FROM A MENTOR

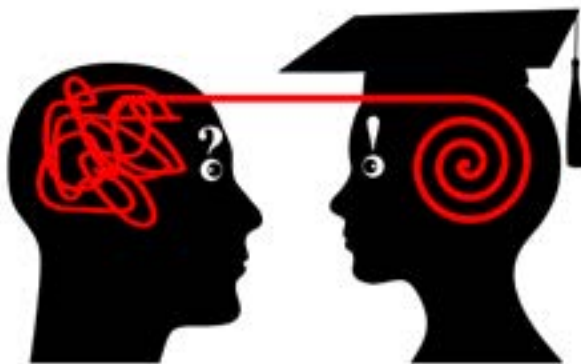
There are many aspects of guitar learning that is best experienced with a mentor in class rather than learning on your own through books and tips given online.

On your own, you may be wasting time practicing things that slow down your progress and hurt your playing or you may hold back your own progress without realizing it due to how you think the guitar should be played.

Without the guidance of a mentor, you can make a lot of mistakes during your practice. When you finally realize that you have been practicing wrong all the time, it will make you feel defeated and that will crush your motivation to learn. That is why there is never a true substitute for learning with a great guitar mentor.

Learning guitar is a long process and getting a good mentor can save you years of aimless guitar practicing and unnecessary frustration.

No matter how good you are on the guitar, you can always benefit from guitar lessons as they are opportunities to pick up new skills and mentors can show you how to experience the guitar in a new and inspiring way.



Tip #205

PICK THE RIGHT MENTOR

A good mentor should not only be simply providing you with information and practice items, but should fulfill these three criteria:

A. Understand what your goals are.

B. Cares about helping you reach your goals.

C. Knows how to help you reach your goals.

Tip #206

A MENTOR CAN GIVE YOU A CLEARER DIRECTION AND BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT YOU SHOULD BE AIMING FOR

One of the most common problems that people face during guitar learning is that they lack a clear direction of what they want, what they can achieve and what aspects of their playing they should work on. Having a mentor/tutor/music instructor will make things less frustrating and the learning process more rewarding and meaningful because the mentor can help you discover your true motivations for learning and can easily show you the different paths to take in order to achieve your goals.

Tip #207

A MENTOR CAN STRUCTURE YOUR PRACTICE SESSIONS TO MAKE THEM MORE EFFECTIVE

A mentor understands which practice items are most effective in training a particular technique and help you devise a practice routine that produces the desired results faster.

Narrowing down the choices of exercises you should do is especially important if you have a busy schedule and cannot commit too many hours of your time on guitar practicing.

A mentor who has taught for many years will also know which exercises are able to help you improve not one but a variety of musical skills. Practice is thus made more efficient because one action you take is multi-fold in effect in the sense that it helps you work towards several practice goals simultaneously.

Tip #208

A MENTOR CAN TRACK YOUR PROGRESS MORE ACCURATELY

Progress made in intangible musical skills such as musicianship and musical creativity is hard to track and evaluate without the help of an expert.

What a mentor can do for you is to tell you precisely how fast you are improving in a certain aspect of guitar playing and accurately evaluate whether or not your practice efforts have been effective, so that you can make adjustments to your practice routine.

Tip #209

DON'T BE AFRAID TO TELL YOUR MENTOR YOUR MUSIC GOALS AND STYLE PREFERENCES

You have more motivation to practice when you are learning the style of guitar that you are interested in. If you are interested in classical guitar, don't design your practice routine around rock music.

Your mentors can better assign appropriate learning materials for you when they are aware of your music preferences. Always tell your mentors and music instructors what you want to learn so that they can make learning fun and interesting.

Tip #210

BE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR OWN LEARNING

*Take responsibility for the lack of progress in your guitar learning.
If you do not care about yourself, no one else will.*

Ask yourself why you are not making as much progress you should have and actively search for help in identifying your problems and coming up with solutions to solve the issues at hand.

Afterword

We hope that armed with these tips you can approach guitar learning in a more systematic and effective way. If you apply what you learn from here in your practicing, playing and creation of music, you will soon see improvements in different aspects of your playing and your confidence in your ability will grow.

If you feel your progress is slow and don't know where to start working on, why not find a guitar mentor and try out one session. If your mentor is good, he/she can help you fix your bad habits, improve your technique and solve your musical problems.

Lessons are not just for beginners and even a seasoned performer can learn from an experienced professional teacher. I am convinced that we all have massive untapped potential and all we need to unleash that potential is good guided advice and a genuine desire to become the best that we can be.

If you would like to consult with a mentor or need someone to give you valuable feedback and advice, book a session with a mentor on **www.umastery.com** today.

Visit us on our social media platforms:



<https://www.facebook.com/umastery>

<https://www.youtube.com/c/umastery>

<https://twitter.com/umastery>

<http://www.pinterest.com/umastery/>

<https://plus.google.com/+Umastery/posts>