

MY 12 TOP TIPS FOR BEGINNER GUITARISTS

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1. Number One. **Learn complete songs**, rather than famous riffs. Party tricks can be impressive for a few seconds, but really the guitar player who can get everyone singing around the campfire is going to be way more popular. Start simple, find beginner versions of songs you actually love, not the songs you think you should be learning and memorise them from start to finish.
2. Two. **Keep your guitar out of its case**. I'm sure you know the expression, out of sight out of mind, but it couldn't be truer. Buy a stand for the room in your place that you spend the most time in, then you'll actually be drawn to it and more likely to play. I know it looks gratuitous having a huge guitar stand with all my guitars out, here in my studio, but honestly it makes me pick them up way more to practice and we all know that practice is key.
3. Three. **Make a nice sound**. Even if you can only manage one chord or one riff, play it beautifully. Listen to yourself carefully and check your volume level. Tone is in the fingers and the best way to make the instrument sing is to care about the sound you're making.
4. Four. **Learn to play in time**. Chill out and keep a steady beat. Obviously when you're nervous and up on stage you'll be likely to forget this one and rush through your song or piece and that's the only time it's actually forgivable, however when you're home and nerves and adrenaline aren't causing havoc you have no excuse not to play in time. Even if you want to be a lead guitar player and shred to hearts content, you still need rhythm. Don't get caught out. Use a metronome to guide parts of your practice sessions (use a free app on your phone) and learn to record to a click track. It really pays off.
5. **Call yourself a guitarist** as soon as you start learning to play. It may sound like a small thing but it's not a level-based title, I know a lot of people that play guitar really nicely and yet are scared of calling themselves a guitarist. You don't have to complete 10,000 hours to go from a person who plays guitar to guitarist and it definitely has a psychological impact. It's always easy to downplay your skillset and even I do, in fear of being put under pressure or challenged by someone else to perform, but as soon as you take ownership it'll help you become a much more confident person and player.
6. Saying that, never get arrogant and profess to be an expert, no matter how many YouTube videos you consume, so six. Be open and honest about what you do and don't know and **always ask questions**, never lose excitement about acquiring a new piece of information. The most legendary and proficient guitar players, technicians or luthiers are always humble and remain a student of the instrument.
7. Seven. You've definitely heard this one before and yet it's still tough to hear. **Gear doesn't make you better guitarist**. Practice does. It's so easy to fall into this trap, not just with pedals and amps and recording equipment, but with the actual instrument. However, if you are

looking at buying a new guitar, don't look to the more expensive models and don't feel pressured to buy a certain type for the genre you want to play. Instead find something you love the look of, so even if it's a shredder guitar but you just want to play the blues that's OK. Choose something so that when you wake up in the morning you get excited about picking it up.

8. Eight. **Make the guitar you have, playable.** Remember that an affordable guitar with a good setup will be far more beneficial than an expensive one set up badly. If you're struggling with your guitar and your fingers are taking an absolute beating, why not try a lighter gauge of strings. It's something I'm trying out and it really helps me reduce hand strain too after a long practice session.

9. Nine. Promise yourself that'll you play for **five minutes a day**. The five-minute rule is often suggested because it actually works. You need to sustain a practice routine to see improvement, but you need to make that commitment as easy as possible to fit into your day. Forcing yourself to practice for more time, like an hour, feels too big, so I promise myself that I'll play through a song each day and usually time disappears, and I'll have ended up playing for way longer.

10. Ten. **Buy a strap so you can play standing up.** Sitting down can make playing slightly easier, so this will challenge you to play in a different position and you need to learn to be comfortable doing this if you want to start performing. Maybe even pretend you're performing to a crowd that isn't there. Make sure your strap is a suitable length and allows you to play comfortably though.

11. Eleven. This one is a little weird but honestly, it's helped me visualise performing and that's **practicing in the dark**. To improve fluency on the instrument, its best to not be looking at where your hands are going and improve muscle memory here. Closing your eyes works too but playing in a dark room means you can't cheat.

12. My twelfth and final tip. When you're struggling to master a particular technique or chord sequence and it just isn't clicking, stop before you end up quitting the guitar entirely and have a good long sleep. **Sleep** is proven to be beneficial when acquiring new skills and helps you learn more effectively. Practicing the guitar can be a mental workout and sleep helps you consolidate and recall memories and often things will click into place when you've had a healthy eight hours.