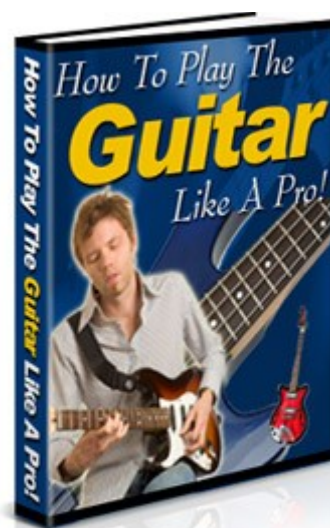


# How to Play the Guitar like a Pro!



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## History of the guitar

The guitar has been one of the most popular musical instruments today. Most of the kinds of music that one hears from the radio use guitars in many ways. Pop, rock, reggae, blues, ballads and everything else is influenced by the guitar.

The guitar, together with the drums and the piano compose the modern music scene equipment set. The playability of the guitar has made it one popular instrument. A guitar can be played by a learning child or an experienced guitar player. It's not picky with its players.

Today, the electric type of guitar is mostly used in musical production. The guitar has got a very good accompaniment in the form of the effects box.

Today, guitars can emulate the sounds of a piano, a violin, even the sounds of the human voice. The guitar is continuously widening its horizons.

With the functions and features of the modern electric guitar, one can't help thinking about the beginnings of the instrument. Where did the guitar come from? This article tries to give a brief history of the wonderful musical instrument, which is the guitar.

The creation of the guitar cannot be traced to a single person. The guitar came about through the evolution of its predecessors. Its image has also undergone change throughout the centuries. Today, playing the guitar is a symbol of talent and musical prowess, but during the early times, the guitar was actually a symbol of being poor and it was refuted by most classical musicians.

### ***Predecessors***

There have been many guitar-like musical instruments in the ancient times, up to at least 5,000 years ago. Instruments which look like the guitar were seen in statues which were recovered in archeological expeditions in the Iranian region of Susa. However, the very first documented mention of the instrument dates back to the fourteenth century. Back then, the said guitar-ancestor had three pairs of strings (usually referred to as double courses) and a single string with the highest tone.

Some say that the word “guitar” came from the word “qitara.” Qitara is an Arabic name for the different kinds of lutes during the early times.

## ***Evolution***

The guitar, as we know it, is said to originate in Spain. It is believed that the people of Malaga invented the instrument. The guitar evolved from having three pairs of strings to four pairs of strings and eventually six single strings.

The guitar began to become popular in the 16th century. It was played by the lower and middle classes as a counterpart for the vihuela which was played by the aristocrats. The vihuela was tuned like a lute but had a body similar to that of the guitar.

The guitar took serious evolution during the 18th century: the double strings were replaced by single strings and a sixth string was added. In the 1800s, Antonio Torres de Jurado gave birth to the classical guitar. Basically, he increased the size of the body of the guitar. The guitar still struggled during these times because it was considered as an instrument for the taverns - an instrument which cannot be used for classical music. In Spain, where people hated the piano, the guitar found refuge. However, it was also tainted with views that guitars are for undesirables.

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## ***Electric guitar***

The modern electric guitar was born in 1931. The electric guitar uses electronic “pick-ups” to be able to produce sound. The pick-ups convert the vibrations from the strings into electric signals. The body of the electric guitar is semi-solid or solid, depending on the design. The structure of the guitar took a great leap when the electric guitar was born, no longer did its sound depend on the structure and construction of the body, but on the quality of the pick-ups and soundboard.

The sounds of the electric guitar can also be altered to be able to achieve a desire tone. The use of guitar effects box has given the guitar a wide array of sounds. The electric guitar is continuously garnering popularity in all fields of music, even in classical music.

The guitar is a very dynamic musical instrument. Through evolution, the guitar has made its mark on the modern music scene. From crude instruments with many variations, the guitar has become a real and much-sought after instrument.

# **What are the different kinds of guitars?**

## ***An Introduction***

The guitar is one of the most popular musical instruments today. There are different kinds of guitars that are available out there for different guitar players. Guitars are different in terms of playability, overall appearance and sound quality.

Here are some of the types of guitars that guitar players or aspiring guitar players can choose from:

## ***Acoustic***

If one wants go get into the guitar world, you can start learning with an acoustic guitar.

Acoustic guitars are dependent on their structures and body shapes in resonating sounds. Unlike the more modern electric guitars, they don't rely on other external devices in making sounds. The natural vibrations of the strings are resonated by the body of the guitar.

Acoustic guitars are generally made out of wood. The neck is usually made from mahogany and the fret board is made out of maple or rosewood. There are many kinds of acoustic guitars, here are some of them:

### **1) *Classical***

Classical guitars are very popular. They are usually the choice guitar for beginners. The strings are usually made from nylon. These are usually played in a standard sitting position and used in playing classical music.

Classical guitars produce thick and whole sounds which are very warm to the ears.

Flamenco guitars are almost similar to the classical guitars; however, these guitars produce crisper and thinner sounds than the classical ones.

### **2) *Steel-top***

Steel-top guitars are much similar to the classical guitar. These, however, are constructed to be more resilient. The parts of the steel-top guitar are reinforced and their bodies are significantly larger than the classical guitars.

They produce a warmer tone than the classical guitar.



### **3) 12-String guitar**

A normal guitar usually has 6 strings, but the 12-string guitar, as its name implies, has 12 strings. Each string is accompanied by another string with the same note but is usually tuned in a higher octave. This kind of guitar produces a semi-chorus effect which is very pleasant to the ears.

### **4) Resonator**

This type of guitar is similar to the steel-top guitar, but the steel in the middle of the soundboard is used to resonate the sound from the vibration of the guitar strings. This produces a very thin and distinct sound. These guitars are usually used in playing the blues. There are also variations of the resonator guitar; the square-neck resonator guitar is played on the lap like a piano or organ. The round neck resonator guitar is played like a common guitar. Resonator guitars work very well with glass or metal slides.

## **5) Archtop**

The archtop guitar is inspired by other instruments such as the violin and the cello. An archtop guitar usually has the f-hole design. Jazz players prefer archtop guitars. Some archtop guitars can reach prices of about \$25,000 USD.

## **6) Acoustic Bass**

Acoustic bass guitars are bass guitars without electronic pick-ups. The body of the guitar is used to produce the sounds. These are usually 4-stringed guitars but there are acoustic bass guitars which have 5 or 6 strings.

## **Electric**

Electric guitars make use of electronic pick-ups to amplify the vibrations of the guitar strings. They are usually connected to electric amplifiers. Electric guitars usually have a solid or semi-solid body type. They don't use the body for sound resonance and thus, they usually make very little or no sound when played without an amplifier. The concept used by electric guitars is- the energy of the strings are diverted into electrical impulses are not directly into sound to be able to achieve an amplified sound.

Electric guitars usually have control knobs for changing the volume or the tone of the guitar. There are also pick-up selectors in electric guitars. Many electric guitars use multiple pick-ups to achieve the best guitar sounds. These pick-ups gather and produce different tones from the guitar. The tone knobs are usually used to shift from a bass-intensive sound to a treble-intensive sound or vice versa.

Some electric guitars also have whammy bars. These bars are attached to the guitar to shift notes without changing the finger positions in the fret board. Whammy bars are used to produce “crying” guitar sounds. This is a very useful tool in doing rock and roll songs or even ballads. The use of the whammy bar in less expensive guitars is not advised because it may cause the strings to go out of tune.

These are some of the basic types of guitars that are available out there for everyone. Guitars are made to fit into the preferences of the player in terms of playability and sound. Choose the guitar that best fit your preferences.

## Learning guitar lingo

The guitar is one of the most sought-after musical instruments today. Its popularity is manifested all through-out the radio stations and the music videos in MTV. Almost all types of music in modern pop culture have been influenced by the guitar in one way or another.

For people who would like to get their hands on a guitar, they must first learn the guitar lingo. The guitar lingo is made up of weird-sounding words that are unique to the guitar world.

The guitar lingo also applies to the guitar parts. You must be able to know the parts of a guitar to be able to know how to play it. Here are some of the guitar parts:

### **-Body**

This is also referred to as the sound box. This is the largest guitar part and it comes in different shapes and sizes. The acoustic guitars usually have a hollow body, while electric guitars have solid or semi-solid bodies. Acoustic guitars have hollow bodies because they rely on the body structure for sound resonance. Electric guitars use electronic pick-ups to amplify the sound.

### ***-Headstock***

The headstock is the part at the end of the guitar which holds the tuning keys. It is connected to the neck of the guitar.

### ***-Nut***

The nut is the piece between the guitar neck and the head. It is a small rod with indentations to hold the guitar strings in place.

### ***-Neck***

The neck is the long section which holds the fret board.

### ***-Fret board***

The fret board is divided into different notes by small metal rods. The number of frets in a fret board varies depending on the type of guitar and the brand. Modern electric guitars usually have 20-22 frets in the fret board.

### ***-Bridge***

It is a part of the guitar's body and it is important in sound resonance. It gives some sort of elevation for the guitar strings so they can produce nice vibrations.

### ***-Pick-up***

The pick-up is an electronic device which acts like a microphone. It picks up the vibrations from the strings and converts these vibrations into electrical impulses. They are usually found in electric guitars

### ***-Amp***

The amplifier is like a speaker box where the sounds of the electric guitar come off.

## **-Capo**

This is a device which is attached to the fret board. This thing allows a player to play the same chord structures but on a different key.

Listed below are some of the different words that one might encounter in learning how to play the guitar.

## **-Riff**

Guitar riffs pertain to musical pieces which are parts of a song.

## **-Reverb**

It is added to the sound of the guitar through an effects box or through amplifiers to make the sounds a little bit more natural.

## **-Tablature**

Guitar tablatures or more commonly known as guitar tabs are written music for guitars. It is similar to musical pieces (with notes and other musical

symbols) but the notes are translated into guitar frets. It's a useful tool in learning how to play the guitar.

### **-Vibrato**

It refers to a guitar technique where the string is slightly bended in a fast rate to make a longer resonating sound.

### **-Arpeggio**

This refers to a technique where one takes out notes from a specific chord. He can then use these to make an adlib lead technique or add to the rhythm of the song.

### **-Pick**

This is the small device which guitar players use in striking the guitar strings. It is usually made of plastic.



### ***-Whammy bar***

This is an attachment to the bridge of electric guitars which can be used to bend the pitch of the notes. One can pull the whammy bar to be able to make his guitar “cry.”

### ***-Plucking***

It's a picking technique where a player does not strum the strings all at one but hit the strings one by one to be able to get a softer and more defined tone.

### ***-Palm mute***

This is a technique where a player uses his picking hand (usually the right hand) to mute the strings while strumming to be able to get a distinct tone. It is very popular in the punk rock world.

The world of guitars is composed of many other new words. One must be able to master these or at least have an idea of what these are to be able to appreciate the wonderful instrument that is the guitar.

## Exploring the parts of a guitar

Guitars have been used with so much diversity in many musical forms. The instrument is known by many as a classical solo instrument and the basic musical instrument in rock music.

In the previous chapter we looked at the “lingo.” Now, let’s apply some of what we learned and get acquainted with this magnificent instrument; know its parts:

- 1. Headstock.** This is found at the edge of the guitar’s neck. It is tailored with the instrument’s head for adjusting the pitch.
- 2. Tuners.** The tuners keep the strings of the guitar stretched beginning at the base down to the knobs. Tuners likewise allow the guitar player to alter or modify the pitch either flat or sharp, depending on the player’s choice of music.
- 3. Nut.** This is a tiny strip of hard medium or material which supports the strings in the intersection whereby the “headstock” meet up with the “fret

board”. The strips can be made of plastic, bone, graphite, brass or any hard medium and indented so as to secure the stings in position. The nut acts as one of several endpoints assisting the tension of the string.

**4. Fret board.** Also known as the fingerboard, it is a lengthy wood plank inserted with frets of metal that composes the top of the guitar’s neck.

The fret board of a classical guitar is flat and is a little curved diagonally on an electric and acoustic guitar. The curve is calculated by the radius of the fret board that is the range of a “hypothetical circle” of which the surface of the fret board makes up a segment.

The smaller is the radius of the fret board, the more that the curve is evident. When a string is pinched against the board, the string’s “vibrating length” is shortened thus creating a higher pitch sound or tone.

**5. Frets.** These are strips made of metal, particularly nickel alloy set in alongside the fret board that are positioned in points in conjunction with the string’s length that mathematically divides it.

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When the strings are pushed down from the rear of the frets, this cuts the string's length of vibration to give off different tones or pitches.

**6. Neck.** The neck is composed of the guitar's fret board, frets, tuners, truss rod and headstock; all are fastened to long extension made of wood.

Usually, the wood that is used for the fret board will be of a different kind from that used on the remaining neck parts.

The firmness or stiffness of the guitar's neck in accordance to its body is one determining factor of whether it is of good quality or not.

**7. Body.** The acoustic guitar's body is an echoing cavity projecting the vibrations through the guitar's sound hole which enables the audio of such instrument to be clearly heard even with no amplification.

In acoustic guitars, its body is a big determining factor in the overall sound it produces. The soundboard or guitar top is a delicately engineered and crafted component that is usually made out of red cedar, spruce or mahogany.

This very thin slice of wood, generally measuring only 2 - 3 mm thick, supported by different kinds of internal brackets, is the most pronounced and important element in influencing sound quality.

Most of the sound is produced by the guitar's top vibration as the momentum of the vibrating cords is transmitted to it.

**8. Pickups.** This is what really amplifies the cords sound. Most guitars have one to a maximum of three pickups. The kind of pickup is reasonably important, depending on a particular sound that you are aspiring for.

**9. Pickguard.** Commonly called the scratch plate, is a plastic guard or any laminated medium which protects guitar's top finish.

The pickups as well as almost all electronics in other electric guitars are framed and inserted atop the "pickguard". On "acoustic guitars" and several "electric guitars", the pickguard is directly inserted to the top of the guitar, and on guitars having carved tops; the "pickguard" is raised.

**10. Bridge.** On acoustic guitars, the key objective of the guitar's bridge is to hand over or shift the string's vibration to the "soundboard", which then

shudders the air within the guitar, thus increase and strengthen the sound created by the cords or strings.

Go ahead, explore the parts of your guitar to better acquaint you with this wonderful instrument, test it too and see where it will take you. Enjoy!

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## **How to care for your guitar**

### ***Caring For Your Guitar:***

*(Effects Of and Solving Humidity Problems)*

The major idea in understanding and being aware of facts about humidity is that what meteorologists refer to as "relative humidity." This applies to the air's ability to take in water or retain or to dry up objects that contain moisture that air surrounds.

The best or perfect level of humidity for a guitar changes from one musical instrument to another, subject to the humidity situations in the workshop or factory where the guitar was assembled.

The humidity at the time that the instrument was being assembled set up the primary dimensions of your guitar. This configuration of dimension is permanently sealed into the entire structure when it is being assembled. Therefore, when humidity changes, each component will expand or shrink unevenly, yet the dimensions of the guitar's structure will remain uniformly constant.

The most frustrating problem in the care and maintenance of a guitar of high quality is the wood's tendency either expands or shrinks with humidity changes. Damage brought about by humidity changes requires costly repairs.

Guitars of high quality are made from solid wood all over, which is why these expensive kinds sound much better compared to low-priced instruments. However, solid woods are very much susceptible to changes in humidity because of the fact that they easily can expand or shrink.

High humidity connotes a "waterlogged" sound from your guitar; it will lack projection and volume having a lifeless and damp tone. The guitar can also be damaged structurally when in high humidity.

Usually "bloating" at the back is a problem, most especially when the back of the guitar is made of extremely hard wood, particularly rosewood. This problem is brought about by the expansion of wood causing the glue on the brace's edge to detach.

When a guitar is kept in the basement, a problem that may occur is wood deterioration triggered by intense humidity resulting in a damp basement area.

The problems brought about by extremely low humidity levels are even more severe. Excessive loss of moisture in the tone woods makes the sound of the guitar brittle. At some point stress on the wood can result in cracks due to uneven shrinkage.

***Here are ways to fight humidity:***

1. Watch your guitar closely. Examine it every so often so you can watch out for signs of humidity. Observe its back; when there is a drop in it will sink a bit and you can notice this clearly. When humidity rises, backs grow an arch. If the back becomes very, very flat, introduce some moisture, such as placing a dish of water in your storage area.



2. Store your guitar in its casing away from any heat, especially in winter.

Keep the case lying flat on the floor and never let it lean or hang it on the wall.

3. During certain periods when the humidity is extremely high, keep your guitar in a room where there is available air-conditioning system as it dries out the air.

When outside conditions are not too hot, such as in spring or a rainy day, keep your instrument in a warm room, but do avoid the basement, as it tends to cool a lot.

4. There are many available devices to handle with extreme dryness. When low humidity occurs in your area only in chilly or cold weathers, a furnace-mounted of good quality humidifier can be very effective as well as hassle-free.

There are also console humidifiers having rotating belts that are very efficient and space saving, ideal when your space is limited.

"Dampit," is a very effective device that is placed inside the guitar to discharge moisture that is directly inside your guitar.

A guitar that is good sounding now can be a wonderful sounding guitar even ten years later as long as it cared for properly and carefully.

The sound of a guitar is created by the echoing of wood. When the wood matures the echoing quality will improve, increasing your guitar's worth. This, plus the model, make and style that later will not be produced anymore, your guitar could be valued many times your purchase price now, in 15-50 years.

Just keep in mind that a good quality guitar is also an investment worth your trouble.

## **How to Hold the Guitar**

### ***How to Properly Hold the Guitar***

A guitar can be an easy and fun instrument to play. Start by learning the correct method of handling the instrument. Here's how:

## **Your body and posture:**

You must be comfortably seated, resting your back adjacent to the backrest of your chair making sure that your legs are in front and feet flat to the ground. This position is now your "footing" or support that your guitar is going to rest upon.

Picking up the guitar, held it close to your chest or stomach ensuring that the back of the guitar's body touches your chest and the neck's bottom is parallel to the ground.

The guitar's thickest string must be directed close to the face and the thinnest string must be directed close to the ground.

Generally, a right-handed individual holds the guitar in such manner so that the "headstock" is pointing towards the left, while a left-handed individual holds the guitar in such manner that the headstock is pointing rightwards.

To play the guitar in a seated position, the guitar's body should be resting on either one of your thighs. In most guitar playing approach, the instrument should be resting upon a leg that is farthest from "the

headstock". Meaning, a right handed individual handling a guitar will naturally rest the instrument on his right leg, and a lefty will rest the instrument on his left leg.

### **Your right arm and hand:**

Using the correct hand position is crucial in guitar playing. You will face many problems should your hand be in the incorrect position; your hands will easily tire, it will be difficult to for you to play particular chords and you could even hurt or injure your hand when you continue playing in the wrong hand position.

The right hand will be used to "strum" the guitar's strings in order to produce the varying chord sounds. Rest your right hand and arm over your guitar. The bicep must rest on the topmost part of the guitar's body and the hand must be properly placed directly on top of your guitar's sound hole (where sound will be produced). Attune your body as needed, so that your position is comfortable.

A left handed individual, have two alternatives. The first of which is to purchase a guitar that is right-handed then re-string it (reversing the

sequence of the guitar's string), and the other option is to purchase a guitar that is left-handed.

Give focus to your "fretting hand" or the hand that is near the guitar's neck, when seated in proper guitar position. Your fretting hand's thumb must be resting at the back of the guitar's neck, having your fingers positioned in a slight curled manner, balanced on top of the strings. Keeping these particular fingers at a slight curl at your knuckles is very important.

### **Your fingers:**

Your fingers at your left hand should be bent as well as it should be pressed down onto the guitar's strings that are located on the "fret board". The neck's back should be curved, in order that the hand is molded into the neck's shape.

Remember that it is alright for you to press or push the thumb at the back of the neck when creating your chords, though this is common when one is "playing scales". Sample out or test certain thumb positions so you will know which one you are most comfortable with.

Do not worry too much about the strings that the fingers in your left hand

are pushing down at this time; as still, you are just in the process of acquainting yourself with your instrument.

Never worry too, when you can not play a good tune at this early stage.

There are still many things to be learned, many stages to go through and practices to do, in order for you to get the right tunes and the right notes to play. You are just beginning, so be patient.

The important factor here, is that you can comfortably hold the guitar, being at ease with it, then the rest of techniques still to be learned will just automatically flow, at your fingertips!

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## **Methods for tuning your guitar**

### ***Essential Guide to Tuning Your Guitar***

The guitar is such a simple and convenient instrument: just open the case and start playing. Well, it's not THAT simple. A good practice before playing the guitar is to tune it first.

Tuning the guitar prior to playing it will ensure that you will create harmonious music; for each string has a specific note to play and even if one goes out of tune, the rest will sound disarrayed. Note that some guitars may not need as frequent tuning (well constructed = expensive), but if ever it is well played (to the point of abuse, actually), then that just needs tuning as well. Read on for an essential guide on guitar tuning.

The guitar presents a particular kind of difficulty in tuning because it has six strings, each of which has an individual pitch or a place in the musical staff assigned to it. The string numbers, as more popularly known, from top to bottom are 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, while their musical counterpart are mi, la, re, sol, si, and mi or E, A, D, G, B, and E respectively.

In order to tune the guitar correctly, one must have an axis or a reference pitch. You will need the commercially available pitch pipe or, better yet, acquire a tuning fork in case you don't have a reliable instrument at hand to give you an axis. Pitch pipes have a bad reputation of changing pitches after some time. Tuning forks are more reliable and easier to use.

*(Of course these days you may find downloading a 'Tuning App' to your mobile phone. These can be perfect for the beginner and pro's alike).*

First, make the fork vibrate by tapping it lightly on any hard object while holding the handle. Then, let the handle touch the guitar's soundboard below or above the sound-hole while gently moving it towards the bridge. This will locate the spot where the resonance is at its loudest. You are supposed to hear a high pitched A (la) which should be the same as the sound produced by striking the first string while it is being depressed on the fifth fret.

Now that you have tuned the first string (E/mi), its open sound is the same as the sound of the second string pressed on the fifth fret. The third string on the fourth fret is equal to the open second string (B/si). Furthermore, fourth string/ fifth fret equals open third string (G/sol); fifth string/ fifth fret equals open fourth string (D/re); and the sixth string/ fifth fret equals open fifth string (A/la).

In order to check the accuracy of your tuning, gently or lightly touch the fifth string directly above the fifth fretwire, without pressing the string to the fingerboard. By striking the string in this manner, it should sound similar to that high-pitched tone produced by the tuning fork. Sounds of the string produced this way are called "harmonics."



Harmonic 5 (Harmonic on the fifth fret) of the sixth string equals harmonic 7 of the fifth string (which is also similar to the open sound of the first string). Harmonic 5 of the fifth string equals harmonic 7 on the fourth string. Harmonic 4 of the third string is equal to the harmonic 5 of the second string and harmonic 7 of the first string. Incidentally, harmonic 4 may require lots of practice for some, so I suggest that harmonic 7 of the sixth string be used to tune the open second string. These pairs of harmonics, when sounded together, should produce only one steady tone. If the sound they produce clashes or seems wavy, they are not in tune.

These two methods of tuning must always go together. You may use the harmonics method first then check with the other or vice versa. If, after crosschecking, the strings do not agree with each other, you may have to repeat the whole process. If you still cannot get them in tune, your strings might be defective. If your strings are new, this may even be worse—your ears need tuning!

To avoid all the hassles of manual tuning, a costly electronic device called a strobo tuner is available. Just turn the dial to the string's name and it will pick the string's sound through a condenser microphone and tell you if it is in tune through a meter.

Other conventional methods of tuning are through imitation of pitches from different musical instruments like the piano, flute, etc. You can even use that portable but silly investment, the pitch pipe set. But you have been warned!

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## **Learning chord structure**

### ***Simple Instructions to Learn Chord Structure Easily***

A technical knowledge of harmony is not an absolute prerequisite to the enjoyment of music, but the amateur musician and listener alike should be aware of harmony as an element of guitar chord structure. He should be cognizant of certain basic principles, properties and uses of this element.

Harmony as an element is more sophisticated than rhythm and melody. It is virtually non-existent in primitive cultures. Moreover, it is an element which appeared comparatively late in the history of music, and which was developed primarily in western civilization.

Harmony is a musical element based on the simultaneous combination of musical tones (as distinguished from the consecutive tones of a melody), or the accompaniment of a melody by chords.

A combination of three or more tones played simultaneously and perceived as sounding as a whole is called a chord.

A few rudimentary principles will help you understand the nature of conventional chord construction. The simplest chord is the major triad, which consists of three tones. We can build a triad by selecting the tonic of a certain major scale and by adding two or more tones above it on alternate degrees of the said scale. For example, if we start with the tone C as “do”, the tonic of the C-major scale, we get the triad do-mi-sol, 1-3-5, or using the letter names C-E-G.

The tones of any chord may be arranged in different order, and they may be duplicated an octave above or below without changing the essential nature of the chord. This is the reason why oftentimes we see chords such as C/E, (the first inversion of the C major triad using the chord tone E as the bass) or C/G (the second inversion of the same triad using the chord tone G as the bass)

Building chords in thirds (on alternate scale degrees as described) was the basis of all conventional harmony from 1700-1900.

In the twentieth century serious music composers have expanded chord vocabulary by additional means of construction for the sake of more colorful and complex effects. Although additional means of construction have been introduced, modern pop, rock and jazz music still follow the conventional way of chord construction – by thirds.

Going back to the major chord, you may be wondering why there are lots of fingering for a certain major chord. This is possible because in the 12 frets of the guitar, the notes simply repeat themselves in increasing octaves, at their corresponding string. C, for example, is on the first fret at the B string, third fret at the A string, fifth fret at the G string, and on the eighth fret at the E strings. As reference, here are the other notes and their possible fingerings:

D: 3rd fret at B, 5th fret at A, 7th at G and 10th at E;

E: 2nd at D, 5th at B, 7th at A, 9th at G and 12th at E;

F: 1st at E, 3rd at D, 6th sy B, 8th sy S snf 10th at G;

G: 3rd at E, 5th at D, 8th at B, 10th at A and 12th at G;

A: 2nd at G, 5th at E, 7th at D, 10th at B and 12th at A;

and B: 2nd at A, 4th at G, 7th at E, 9th at D and 12th at B.

So depending on how the melody of the song is arranged, the chord formation can assume any fingering position as long as the triad is formed and however it is conveniently played.

Now that you have an understanding of the major chord, let us investigate its parallel counterpart the minor chord. If the third of the major triad is altered by lowering it to one semitone (one fret on the guitar and two frets for each whole tone), the resulting triad will be C-Eflat-G, which is the minor triad.

Check the fret board and investigate all the possible fingerings, for the minor chord. You may see that if comparing it with the major chord fingerings, only one string is lowered when forming the minor chord, unless there is a doubling of the minor third (Eflat).

If ever you are wondering why all the examples mentioned here are on the C chord, well, it now your turn to apply the lesson here. Chart down the major and minor chord triads for the rest of the notes and ... start strummin'!

## **How to practice changing chords**

### ***Practical Guide to Practice Changing Chords***

How quickly can your fretting hand switch from one chord to another? The speed and confidence one has in doing chord changes will be the key to further mastering the guitar and successfully playing and creating music for the instrument.

The key to learning any instrument, like most intricate human activity, is to develop brain and muscle coordination, more commonly called, the muscle memory needed to play the instrument. If you picture a basketball player, for instance, the key to a good shooting performance is the proper hand-to-eye coordination in order to bring the ball up, prepare, aim, and throw it towards the hoop. The different muscles of the arms, wrist and hands will

learn the right movements and strength needed to score. Constant practice will condition the brain, eyes and entire body to know the routine of shooting the ball.

This is similar to guitar playing. The muscles involved would be the arms, wrists and the fingers, with the eyes, ears and brain working in unison to relate the movements to the music being read and the notes produced by the guitar. This is the mechanism that works when a guitar player starts to change chords.

Luckily, there are simple techniques that can help the beginning guitar player to develop these muscle memories and ear training for proper chord changes. Read on below and you will see that chord changes are not that difficult to do.

When changing chords, first memorize all the chords involved in the song. Then visualize exactly which fingers of the fretting hand are involved in playing the chords. When playing simple barre chords, the most important finger is the index finger, which will squeeze all 6 strings across the fretboard. So as you move towards playing the chord, you have to position the index finger across the proper fret, or place, along the fretboard before positioning the other fingers of the chord.

When playing a broken or simple chord, it is usually the index finger that is the most important finger. Primarily, the index finger and the thumb will form a stable anchor on the guitar neck in order for the other fingers to press the other strings of the chord. The index finger is usually played on the lowest fret and the highest string (by pitch, or string 1), where it could more easily find the proper note, and the other fingers can follow to complete the chord.

When playing a particular song, keep time with the music, but anticipate in which bar and on which beat the next chord will continue. For beginners, it would be safe to practice the entire song slowly from beginning to end, taking care to change to each chord on time and on tempo.

When the student can play the entire song like this without chord errors, he can start increasing the speed to the song's proper tempo. It would also be helpful to identify particularly tricky chord changes.

For instance, 2 consecutive barre changes would be a relatively simple change, because the guitar player needs only to slide his index finger (which is already in the barre position) to its proper position on the fretboard and quickly press in the other strings of the chord.



Changes from simple chords to barre chords – and vice versa – and chords that are positioned at a far distance from each other along the length of the neck would be more difficult to do. Isolate these difficult changes and practice the chord changes.

If it is still too difficult with the slow tempo, don't play the last beat of the last chord and use the time to move your fret hand into position for the next fret. Keep practicing these changes until the short passage can be played without error.

Afterwards, go back to playing the entire song as discussed above. When you can play an entire song properly, try different strumming styles to accentuate parts of the song, or a particular beat. Or alternate strumming and light plucking to give volume and variety to the music of the song. First, it is best to complete the song by actually copying how the original artist played it on the guitar. Then, you can add your own twists and extra technique according to your ear and taste. This will help you develop your hands for more difficult chords and finger playing techniques.

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Do this for every song, and before you know it, you'd be playing a new song like a seasoned guitarist in no time.

## **How to toughen up those fingers**

### ***Stronger Fingers for Guitar Playing***

Guitar playing is one of the most popular ways to personally play and enjoy music. The appeal of the guitar is mostly due to its presence in practically all popular and rock music recordings. Furthermore, it is an instrument that is very portable, versatile enough for many kinds of songs and occasions, and is more practical as an accompaniment to vocalists or other instruments.

Playing the guitar requires more than the requisite musical ability, dedication and practice. A guitar player's fingers must be dexterous and agile to allow quick single string or chord changes in rhythm or solo musical performances. However, those fingers also need to be tough and strong to be able to press the strings enough during those quick changes to produce clean tones.

All beginners will remember the first time they played the guitar for an extended period. Our fingertips are originally soft at the very end, with thin skin protecting them. First, we feel pain after pressing down on the strings too much.

After continuing to play, blisters will develop on the fingertips of the hand playing the fretboard, specifically all fingers except for the thumb. If the aspiring musician hasn't given up by then and continues to practice playing, the blisters will eventually dry up and leave calluses on the fingertips. These calluses will protect the fingertips from the pain of playing, for a little bit.

Eventually, the pain builds up again, until the calluses keep building up and you end up with the thick rough fingertips of a guitarist's left (or fret) hand. And graduating to full chords, the entire 1st and 2nd fingers, which form bar chords across the strings, will also go through the process of pain, blisters and calluses. This process toughens up the guitarist's fingertips, and makes it easy to press on the strings to produce the needed musical tone on the guitar.

The most effective way to strengthen the fingers and improve dexterity is to practice scales and chords on the guitar itself. Chords and scales will help

the beginner become familiar with the different chord progressions and musical setup of the fretboard.

In other words, it will help the student master the instrument. Knowing and playing chords and scales will embed the musical secrets of the guitar to the player and make it simpler to read, learn and perform music, and to create or write your own music for the guitar. As an added bonus, all that practice will greatly improve the strength and agility of the fingers. With the dual advantage of musical training and strength and endurance improvement, a guitarist can develop the ability to perform several full pieces or songs in a long performance event.

However, there is a danger of over-training. Tendonitis is a common affliction of over-exercising and is widely prevalent in professional athletes and musicians alike. Tendonitis is caused by repetitive action of a limited set of muscles, causing inflammation and possible damage to tendons and joints. Because certain athletes and musicians tend to use a focused set of muscles in their activities, they share a certain propensity to this injury.

But this can be easily avoided. Many persons over-train when they choose to ignore pain during practice and instead continue to do their activity. This directly leads to tendonitis. For guitarists, once you feel pain on your wrist

or the tender part of your hands, stop. You should incorporate 5-15 minutes of rest in between sets of scales or chord practices. Put the guitar down and shake your hand for a few seconds. If you are not tired but still feel pain, change the practice method: if you are doing scales, switch to slow strumming with full chords, instead. Changing the set of muscles you exert can help avoid injury and increase the strength of your fingers.

Finally, like an athlete, a guitarist should take care of his body with exercise. Following are two stretching exercises that will improve the flexibility and strength of your fingers:

1. Stand straight with your arms at your sides and hands facing forward.

Stretch your fingers down and outward as far as you can and count to ten.

Relax and rest for a few seconds and make three repetitions.

2. With the same posture, hold the four fingers of your left hand (except the

thumb) with your right and push them towards the back of the hand. Hold

the stretch for ten seconds then relax, doing three repetitions.

Remember, strength and agility is achieved by practice, proper rest, and stretching exercises. Now play on!

# How to Strum

## *How to Strum Like Your Guitar Heroes*

There are few more enjoyable activities for a person than to interpret and create music by playing an instrument. And by far, the most popular instrument that people want to start to learn is the guitar. The guitar can be heard in practically any popular and rock music recordings, which almost all people are aware of. It is also an instrument that can be carried anywhere, and can be played for many kinds of music and songs. Whether you play the guitar with a band, a small instrumental group, or accompany yourself while singing, the instrument always delivers musical enjoyment.

After learning the rudimentary chords on the fretboard, the aspiring guitarist always moves to learning strumming so that he can carry a tune or song. Strumming is one of the most difficult parts of guitar playing for the beginner. Many people would still believe that the key to playing is mainly attributable to learning to keep the strumming hand comfortable, flexible and moving fluidly. However, how the fretboard hand is used is just as important in strumming.

Below is a very short lesson to illustrate and study different 1-bar strumming patterns that can be adapted and applied to songs that the beginning guitarist would like to play.

When playing the guitar in the example, or in any tune, for that matter, it is very important to remember these following reminders:

- Do not tighten the muscles of your strumming hand, keep it very loose;

- When strumming, always use an up and down motion, as one would do when shaking the hands, from the wrist up and down to loosen it up;

- When playing sheet or tablature music, and you encounter a muted chord (shown as notes or tabs with an "x" crossed over them), take the pressure off the strings that you are pressing, and strum the chord. You should hear just a deep scratch of the strings, with no notes ringing;

- If the chord includes open strings, you might have to block them out by very lightly pressing on them with your non-fretting fingers. Also, you can just take the side of your fretting hand and lay it lightly across all 6 strings, and strum the guitar.

-The muted chord is one of the most important aspects of strumming. In addition to stressing the rhythm of the song, the muted chord when strummed can aid a guitar player simulate a percussion instrument together with the regular guitar strumming.

First, let's pick three simple chords that you can interchange for practice strumming. These three chords have a structural relationship to each other and can be usually found used together in one song. Simple songs, such as pop or folk songs, are examples of songs that use these major chords frequently. The E major chord can be played with the open 1st, 2nd and 6th strings. The 1st fret of the 3rd string and 2nd frets of the 4th and 5th strings are pressed to complete the chord. The A major chord is played with the 1st, 5th and 6th strings open. The 2nd frets of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th strings are pressed to complete the chord. The d major chord is played by the 1st 4 strings and the 4th string open. The 2nd fret of the 1st string, 3rd fret of the 2nd string and 2nd fret of the 3rd string are pressed to play the chord.

Prepare by trying to get familiar with fretting just one particular chord (for instance, the A major chord). Try practicing getting both strumming and resting hands in place for muted chords, and then comfortably switching them back into the next position to play a chord. By practicing a few times,



you can do this faster with the fretboard hand. In no time you can alternate muted chords while continuously moving the strumming hand up and down at the same time. This will make your guitar strumming sound a lot better.

In the short sample below, the timing is in 4/4 measure, meaning there are 4 beats to a bar. Down arrows mean a down strumming stroke, up means an upstroke and an “x” denotes a muted chord. Start slowly and complete the bars, then work up to a faster tempo when you are comfortable. Try to change the patterns and chords to develop your own practice. Afterwards, apply this to chords and bars of a song you know, and you're on your way to playing songs on the guitar. The pattern is: ? ? X ? ? ? X ?

## **Learning basic 4/4 rhythm strumming**

### ***Learning the Guitar Basics: 4/4 Rhythm Strumming***

If one is learning how to play the guitar, the basic 4/4 strumming technique is one of the first guitar playing techniques that he must be able to master. This is also usually used by beginners to hone their guitar skills and basically feel the instrument.

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In learning the basic 4/4 guitar strumming, one must be knowledgeable with the different basic requirements for guitar playing:

## ***Strokes***

Guitar strumming is basically composed of two different strokes: the downward stroke and the upward stroke.

The downward stroke is done by drawing the picking hand (usually, this is the right hand) from the uppermost string down to the other side. The upward stroke is the opposite of the downward stroke.

## ***Finger placing***

In reading guitar instructional materials, the fingers are usually assigned with numbers. The left-hand fingers are numbered from 1 to 4. The index finger is numbered as 1, the middle finger is numbered as 2, the ring finger is number 3 and the little finger is 4. This numbering is important to remember because tablatures it guides a beginner how to form chords by placing the fingers right on the fret board.

The fingers of the left hand are supposed to be placed near the succeeding fret bar. This is to ensure that one gets quality sounding vibration from the strings. One must not also stress his fingers when pressing the frets.

## **4/4**

If one is playing the guitar by reading notes, he can refer to the beat indicated near the clef sign to know if the song should be played with a 4/4 beat. It is what one would call the time signature. The time signature looks like a fraction when written in musical notation, the upper number tells one how many beats there are in one measure and the bottom number indicates what kind of note will receive one beat.

## **D-A-G-A**

In learning the basic 4/4 guitar strumming, one can employ the different chord families in practicing. One of the most popular chord patterns which can be used in practicing this particular technique is the D-A-G-A chord pattern. It's very popular because the chord patterns are easy to remember and very easy to do.

One must first memorize the placement of the fingers in the fret board to be able to do the chords. This can take some time but beginners should be patient. Learning the guitar takes time and dedication and cannot be done overnight.

When one is able to master the chords, he should practice doing the chords one after the other, and this is where the 4/4 strumming comes in. In strumming the guitar on a 4/4 rhythm, one is advised to count 1-2-3-4 repeatedly for each chord and shift to the next chord as he repeats the count. One can do downward strokes for each chord when he begins, he can then practice strumming the chords upwards and then downward-upwards.

A beginner will almost always find out that the left hand is left out when practicing strumming. This is due to the fact that the fingers are still adjusting to do the chords properly. It will take time and a lot of practice to do the 4/4 strumming technique but it will be worth it.

When the left hand is being left out, one must not stop the right hand and wait for the left hand to form the chord patterns. He must be consistent in his counting and strumming. This is to prevent the right hand to become slower and will train the left hand to be faster in forming the chord patterns.

When one can comfortably do the 4/4 strumming technique on the D-A-G-A chord pattern, he can then shift into doing other chord patterns such as C-Em-F-G or G-C-F-G. One can also opt to learn the different chords and familiarize his fingers in forming them. However, learning the chords and the strumming should be done simultaneously. This will allow one to be able to learn at a much faster rate and understand the mechanics behind playing the guitar.

One must remember that the guitar is an instrument of passion. One cannot be a guitar expert in one night. There are many things that one must learn about the guitar to truly appreciate the beauty of the instrument.

## **Learning 3/4 Rhythm Strum**

### ***Learning 3/4 Guitar Strumming***

Learning how to strum is one of the most basic steps in guitar playing. After a beginner learns how to do the basic 4/4 strumming, he can then move on into learning the  $\frac{3}{4}$  strumming technique.

If one wants to play a 3/4 song using a guitar, he must first know what 3/4 means. 4/4, 3/4, 2/4 are what musicians call time signatures. In musical notation, the time signatures are usually placed right beside the clef sign. The upper number or the numerator indicates the number of beats per measure, the lower number or the denominator indicates what kind of note will receive one beat.

### ***3/4 Chord pattern***

In playing a 3/4 guitar riff, one has to count 1-2-3 and use this count as a guide in strumming the guitar. In practicing the 3/4 guitar strumming, one can use the chord pattern: D- A7- G.

This is a variation of the 4/4 chord pattern D-A-G-A. Again, this pattern is recommended because of the playability of the chords. This allows the player to be able to concentrate on strumming and chord formation simultaneously without prioritizing one above the other.

The strokes in practicing the 3/4 strumming pattern can be varied, depending on the player's preferences. He can practice the pattern using only downward strokes, or upwards strokes. He can then use both

alternately to get the feel of the guitar.

The traditional song “Down in the Valley” can be used by beginners to be able to practice strumming the guitar on a 3/4 time measure. Another song which can also be used in 3/4 strumming is the song “Time is on my Side” by Jerry Ragovoy.

### ***Chord Shifting***

One of the most important thing that a beginner must learn in 4/4 strumming is chord shifting. This becomes an even harder thing to do in 3/4 strumming but it is not impossible to learn. It just takes time and patience. Don't let frustration get into the learning process.

Let's go back and review some of the important basic things one has to know in guitar strumming.

### ***Playing position***

When a beginner first holds the guitar and tries out some chords, he usually does these things in awkward looking positions. This is acceptable because

beginners will always look at the fretboard; put their heads closer to the left hand, etc. But when one wants to get serious about learning further things about guitar playing, he needs to be able to play the instrument in the right position.

Here are some few tips on how to play the guitar in the right position:

- position the body, legs and arms in such a way that tension is avoided
- if tension is present, reassess the playing position
- tilt the neck of the guitar upwards and never tilt it downwards
- keep the body of the guitar as vertical as possible
- avoid slanting the top of the guitar so that you can see better

### ***Holding the pick***

If one is using a pick to strum the guitar strings, he must hold the pick in such a way that the hand is stress-free. One should not hold it too tight nor too loose. The pick should have good contact with the strings but this should be done in a moderate way.

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## ***Reading tablatures***

When one is comfortable with playing some chords and chord patterns, he can then shift into reading guitar tablatures. Tablatures or tabs are great tools in learning how to play the guitar. They translate the musical notation into readable symbols that reflect the way how to play a musical piece using a guitar. The lines that are in guitar tabs represent the strings of the guitar. If one is to place the guitar adjacent to the tabs, he can see what this is all about. The numbers in the lines represent the fret number which is to be pressed by the player. This is basically all one has to know to be able to start reading tabs. Tabs, however, are comprised of symbols and signs other than lines and numbers. More advanced tabs also indicate the type of plucking or string bending technique that should be used for striking each note.

Learning how to play the guitar is an arduous process, but it's also fun. One must take it step-by-step and should not rush in learning more techniques if he still can't master the preceding technique. Have fun!

## **Feel the beat - how to get it going**

### ***Guitar playing lesson theme***

The reason why most people who try to play the guitar are not up to snuff is that they give up too easily. The problem with these people is that they tend to think that there is something wrong with them and that is why they simply cannot get the strings sound right.

In reality, falling short in learning to play the guitar is not based on the capability of the person but more on the kind of style he is using. So to speak, if he is trapped in a certain level of progress in guitar playing, it should likewise be blamed on the person but on the kind of approach that he used.

Hence, when things like these happen, the only way to get going is to change the style, and there will be remarkable results.

In fact, 8 out of the 10 people who were asked what made them continue learning to play the guitar, they answered that it was because they have used

a wonderful technique that some people just take for granted. This approach is known as “feeling the beat.”

In fact, people who are considered as experts in playing the guitar insist that the only distinction that sets a good guitarist from a distinguished guitarist is based on how they apply the approach “feel the beat” to their tune using their instrument.

The basic argument here is that trying to get things going by simply feeling the beat while you play the guitar will absolutely change your style of learning and playing the guitar. This is because when people try to feel the beat as they play the instrument, they get to internalize the pulse of the music as it flows from the strings out to the audience.

This is probably the same reason why some people insist that music is the language of the soul. That is basically the main idea of using this kind of approach.

In fact, music experts assert that it is how the great composers and singers stand out from the rest. When musicians learn to feel the beat, they tend to put the notes into their system, letting every tone flow along with the beat

of their heart.

Therefore, the question now is on how you start feeling the beat. Here are some tips to get it going:

### ***1. Internalize the beat***

When you want to learn how to play the guitar, it is best that you get your emotions ready. Try to feel the beat by listening to the music and bridge some connections between your feelings and the music.

The very core of this approach is to feel the beat of the music flowing into your system.

Once you get the beat connected to your system, take hold of your guitar, and start hitting those strings. Try not to play some song that you already know. The idea is to release the feeling and let the notes flow with what you feel.

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## **2. Play by the ear**

As soon as you learn how to feel the beat, you can already start playing by the ear. This is when you can easily play the song on your guitar just by listening to it over and over again.

In fact, historical reports show that some great musicians learn to play the instrument by using this kind of approach. This is because once they start to sense the pulse of the song; they gradually pluck the notes and begin to play the song as they continue to play.

Moreover, most of the people who play the guitar and write songs do not simply use those tabs and musical sheets. They just try to fathom the song by “playing by ear.”

The bottom line is that learning to play the guitar does not have to be rigid and strict. That is why guitar playing is not specifically exclusive for the talented in music. The instrument is open for everyone, young and old, big and small, boy and girls.

The idea is to take some time to learn the instrument. Trying to feel the beat

does not happen in a snap. You have to allot adequate time to start putting the notes into your system.

The truth is that people who failed to learn guitar playing simply lack the time to do all these things. There is no way to become an expert overnight. Keep trying, make certain you are having fun and before you know it the melodies will come!

## **What is the CAPO?**

### ***The CAPO and guitar-playing***

No, despite the similarity of the words, the capo is not your regular trigger-happy Mafia leader although it does come from the Italian word "capotasto" which means head of fingerboard. Instead, the capo is a harmless gadget or device attached to a stringed instrument like a guitar, to raise its pitch.

Capos come in different brands but the common kinds are the elastic capos which are the least expensive and commonly used by guitar players, the nylon capos and the steel string capos.

While it may look a bit strange and highly technical stuff for non-guitar players, the capo can be easily attached to a guitar. It is placed on any of the frets of a guitar neck. A fret is a small ridge on the fingerboard of a stringed instrument. In layman's term, it looks like equal divisions located in a guitar's neck or handle, the one attached to the guitar's semi-elliptical body.

To use the capo, just attach the device in any of the frets and make sure the clamp can hold all the strings down. Inspect for any kind of pulling of the guitar strings as it may cause the guitar to sound out of tune.

A special kind of capo, the third hand capo, is a gadget that can surely and easily clamp all the strings of the guitar in place. Like the ordinary capos, it allows the guitar player to play tunes that may be difficult to get or to play using the bare guitar strings.

If you have tried singing accompanied by a guitar, or just playing the guitar, you may be familiar with songs that are either too low or too high and you just can't get the right pitch. This is where the capo comes to the rescue, by making the pitch right.

The capo is not only used by guitar experts because it also allows beginners to enjoy different kinds of tunes without any difficulty. However, using the capo can sometimes be frustrating for most guitar players as they can sometimes hinder proper playing or proper hand reaching.

While capos are used in stringed instruments, it is commonly used in guitars. Guitars can either be acoustic or electric, but the basic method of playing the said instrument remains the same. Ordinarily, guitars have a total of six strings but there are 12-stringed guitars. But no matter how many the guitar strings are, it is played by strumming or plucking the strings with a person's right hand. Sometimes, a pick is used to do the plucking or strumming. The left hand is used to hold the guitar in order to come up with a note or chord.

### **A guitarist must possess the following essentials:**

1. Extra Strings-guitar strings usually break when you least expect them to so do yourself a favor by keeping a change of strings for emergency purposes. Guitar strings should be changed every two months even if they do not break. However, if you use your guitar more often than the regular guitar player, then you should try changing strings more than once every



two months to keep your guitar in shape.

2. Picks-stock on this little things because they are easy to lose. Other guitar players who only have one pick and lose them use alternatives like carving a pick image from a hard plastic. However, professional pick is always better.

3. Capo-the capo is a very important device for guitar players because it can help one strum a higher pitch of a song proves too low. You would not want to be frustrated if you cannot get the right pitch so better invest on a good capo.

Guitar teachers advise their students, especially beginners, to use an electronic guitar tuner so they can focus on learning how to play the guitar. Like the basic tuner, the capo is one of the essential accessories a guitar player should have because it can easily change keys that may sound awkward with ordinary strumming.

If you have enough budget, then go for the most durable and reliable capo, even if they are more expensive than the ordinary ones. But before buying a capo, you must first have a guitar where you can attach the gadget.

## **The following are tips in buying and maintaining a guitar:**

Price must be an important consideration because you would not want to buy a guitar which is well out of your budget.

The guitar of your choice must be easy and comfortable to play. Experts suggest that buying a guitar with strings that are close to the fret board would be good for easy playing.

A beginner should not only invest in a good guitar but should also get hold of the essential guitar accessories like the capo.

Keep your guitar rust-free by making sure you wash and drain your hands properly before playing the guitar. Remember, the guitar strings are prone to rusting so take care of them.

Keep your guitars in a safe container and away from sudden weather or humidity changes.

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