

PLAY 
GUITARS

The Ultimate Guide to **LEARNING GUITAR** (the easy way)

STEP-BY-STEP TIPS, TRICKS & TOOLS

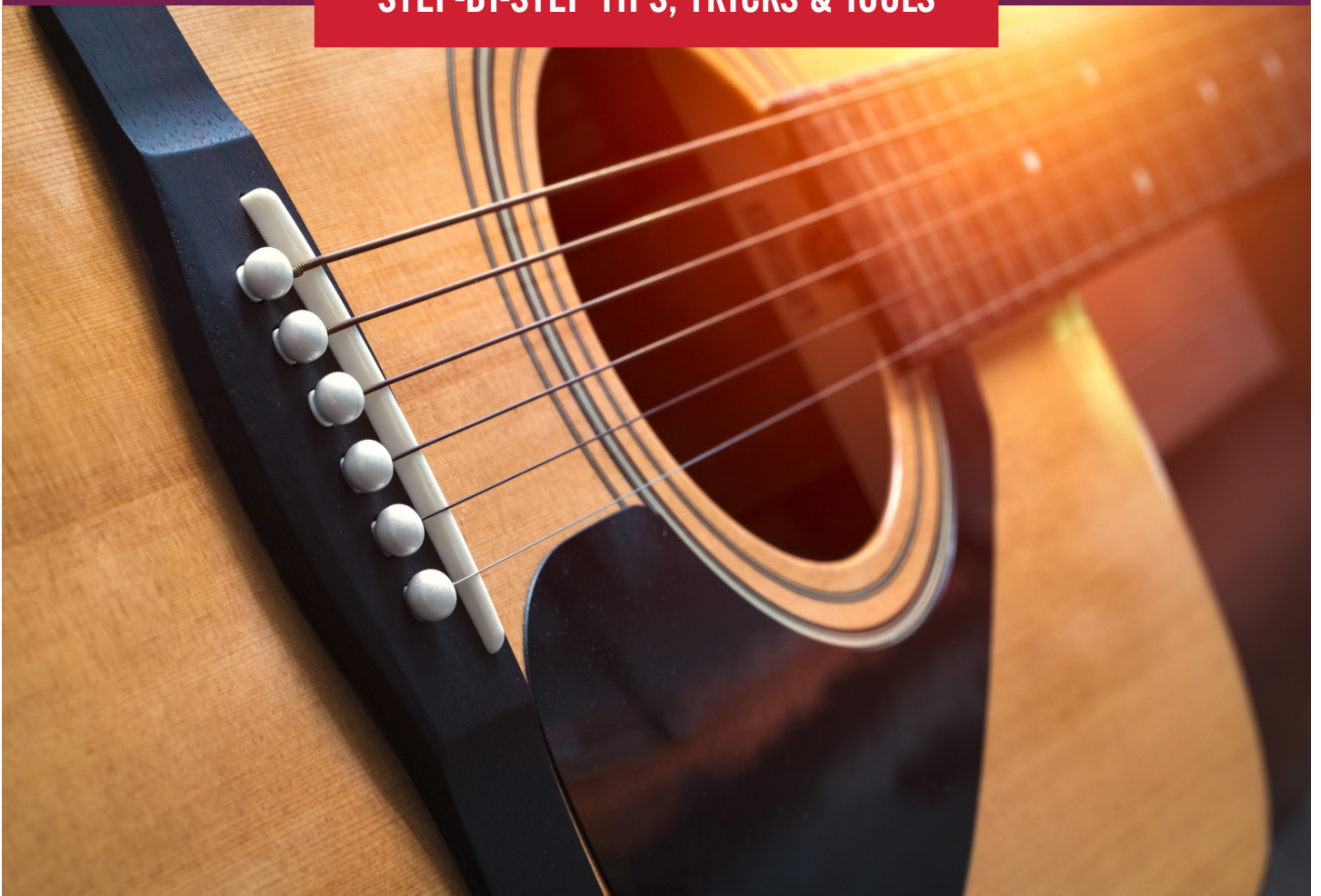




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“As long as you’re excited by what you’re playing, and as long as it comes from the heart, it’s going to be great.”

-JOHN FRUSCIANTE



What if you could play guitar quickly and easily? This guide will ensure that your learning experience is smooth, informative, and FUN!

Now as a beginner, the guitar may take some getting used to.

Not gonna lie:

You may feel uncomfortable and your fingers might not stretch far enough.

You'll start to develop calluses on your fingertips.

You will probably strum too hard and over-tune in the beginning.

DO NOT let this deter you!

All the effort is so worth it when you can finally play your favorite song from start to finish.

And it will happen, my friend.

You have the determination, now all you need is the right direction to go in.

Finally get those fingers strumming with this easy guide to playing guitar, step-by-step. Let's ROCK!

1

STEP ONE

Choose the right guitar.

Warning: Your first guitar will likely take on a lot of wear and tear!

You want to be able to rely on your first guitar and keep it around even when you move on to better, more high-end guitars.

You'll look back at your first guitar like your first kiss, and remember back to a time where you first learned your skills.

It might have been awkward and cringe-worthy at the beginning.

But when you get to be a pro, you'll look back fondly.

You may even want to pass down your first guitar to a family member or your kids. So keep it around if you have the room (and if you don't need to sell it to upgrade)!

Purchase a dependable guitar that is not too expensive.

A \$150 to \$300 guitar will work for you just fine as a beginner guitar player. Anything less than that, and you may be compromising sound.

You can easily find a great guitar on Amazon, and have it in your hands in days.

Aside from comparing prices and reviews, look for a guitar that is easy to pick up and play, without amps and cords. If it's a bundle that comes with some accessories, even better.

Keep in mind that learning acoustic guitar may be more of a challenge than an electric guitar.

It's worth learning on acoustic first, so that you can really strengthen your fingers and understand placement for chords and progressions.

Then your transition to playing electric guitar will be much easier.

The other way around, not so much. Just keep that in mind.

My choice for beginners is the reliable [Rosefinch Acoustic Guitar Basswood](#).

It's a good size, sounds great, and it's the best to learn on. You can purchase it as a [bundle with goodies](#) all for under \$130 bucks.

Ultimately, the best guitar is one that keeps you coming back to practice.





2 **STEP TWO** **Get to know your instrument.**

There's no point rushing into complicated guitar solos or complex chord progressions before you have nailed the fundamentals!

You want to get real cozy with your instrument.

Learning how to play the guitar starts with the guitar basics.

I'm going to cover all of that here.

Let's dive in.

The basics consist of:

- **Strings**
- **Fretboard**
- **Picking**
- **Finger Placement**

2

STEP TWO CONTINUED...

Get to know your instrument.

STRINGS

What are guitar strings?

The purpose of the string is to vibrate and produce a particular musical note.

A standard guitar has 6 strings that vary in size and is tuned in the following configuration:

E-A-D-G-B-E

From top to bottom the strings are numbered 6-1.

The thickest string that sits atop the guitar is called the low E or the sixth string.

After the low E, the strings decrease in size in the order of A D G B and high E.

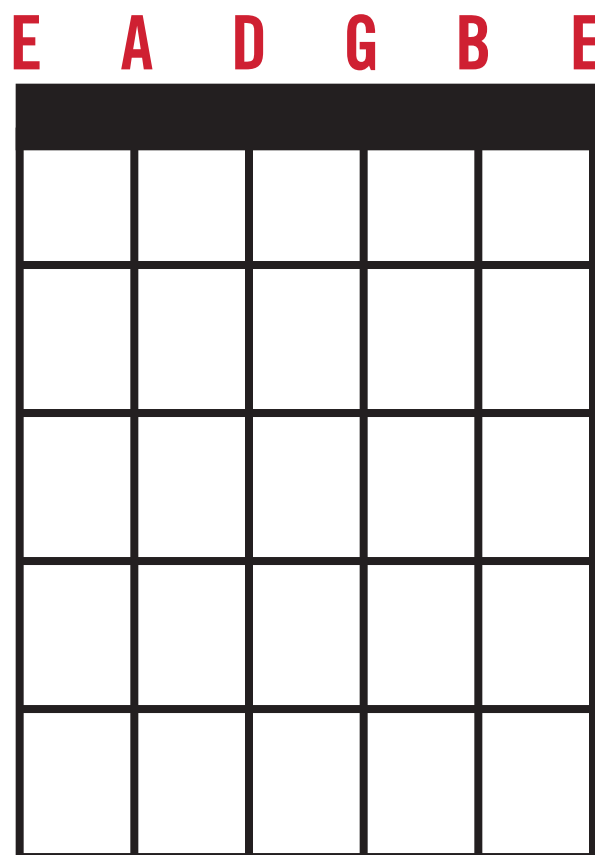
The low E has the deepest or lowest sound.

The high E sits at the bottom of the guitar and is the thinnest chord, resulting in the highest pitch.

QUICK TIP

One way to remember the name and order of the strings is with a mnemonic. Try this one:

Elephants **A**nd **D**onkeys **G**row **B**ig **E**ars



2

STEP TWO CONTINUED...

Get to know your instrument.

FRETBOARD

What is a fretboard?

The fretboard is the long wooden fingerboard of the guitar in which you place your fingers.

A standard guitar consists of 22 frets. Each fret has a metal barrier separating it from the other frets.

The 1st fret is the one closest to the head of the guitar.

Frets are numbered in order from 1-22.

When practicing the basics of the guitar, count the frets to familiarize yourself with each of their placements.

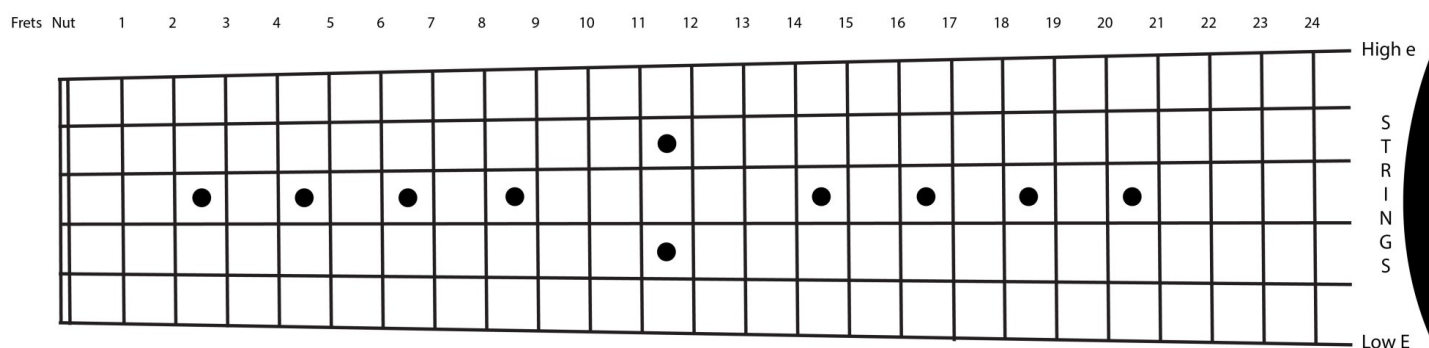
When you place your finger on a fret the key or sound of the string will change. Each fret results in a different note for every string.

For example, when placing a finger on the first fret of the low E string, the note will change from an E to an F.

As you progress as a guitarist you'll learn how to easily navigate the fretboard.

As a beginner, you'll likely stay around the first few frets when you practice. The first basic guitar chords you learn will be based on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th frets.

Guitar Fretboard Blank



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STEP TWO CONTINUED...

Get to know your instrument.

GUITAR PICKING

What is guitar picking?

Picking is a group of hand and finger techniques you'll use to set the guitar strings in motion to produce notes.

There are many different ways to pick, so experimenting with how you hold the pick and strum will depend on you.

Here are the fundamental things you need to learn about picking:

1- A guitar pick should be held between your thumb and pointer finger.

The pointy edge of the pick will face the strings of the guitar. The rounded edge will be placed under the thumb and on the side of the pointer finger.

2- It's important to feel comfortable when using a pick.

Most guitar picks for beginners will be light and easy to use. When you become more advanced you can begin to use firmer picks.

The important thing to remember is not to let the pick get in the way of your playing.

3- Different styles and genres of music require different picking techniques.

Depending on your favorite genre of music you may learn to pick in a certain way. It's always useful to be aware of how different musicians and genres utilize picking styles to enhance the musicality of their song or piece.

If used properly the pick will help to give your strums a full and round sound. Similarly, a pick can enhance the percussive sound of your playing and unlock new avenues of expression for your playing.

As a beginner, you may want to stick to just using your fingers but you should also give a pick a try. It's an easy way to add a new dynamic to your playing without necessarily altering your practice routines.



2

STEP TWO CONTINUED...

Get to know your instrument.

FINGER PLACEMENT

What is finger placement?

The position that your fingertips press down in order to hold a note or chord.

Before you play notes and chords you have to be comfortable with the placement of your fingers.

As you begin, your finger dexterity will stink.

You WILL find it difficult to press down on the string...especially more than one!

But the more you practice, the more your fingers will get used to contorting, reaching, and settling on the strings.

Here's the technique:

Relax your wrist.

Grip the neck of the guitar in the "C" shape that is formed between your thumb and fingers.

Your wrist should feel relaxed and free to move.

Get comfortable with your body so that you can press down on a fret with the tips of your fingers.

Fingertip on the string, the rest of your finger is curling away from the string.

Simple rule is:

The thumb is used to hold the neck of the guitar. The pointer, middle, ring and pinky fingers will all be used on the fretboard in different places.

- **Pointer** finger is for the **1st fret**
- **Middle** finger is for the **2nd fret**
- **Ring** finger is for the **3rd fret**
- **Pinky** finger is for the **4th fret**

When you get the 5th fret, the finger placement will reset, once again beginning with your pointer. This idea will remain the same for the remainder of the fretboard.

IMPORTANT!

Many beginners give up at this point. There is a stage of pain and discomfort on the tips of your fingers. You might have a hand cramp or two. The guitar may get thrown down in frustration while you run to get a cookie.

Just remember it will take some resilience but you'll be rewarded for it very soon!

QUICK TIP

Stretch your hands and fingers before and after practice. Ice down or heat up if you need to after a session.

3

STEP THREE

Find a guitar learning app.

If you really want to learn how to play guitar step-by-step, the easiest way is by finding a learning tool and creating a routine.

You should always be working towards a goal. This will help you stay motivated and keep pushing you to progress your skillset.

Nobody becomes proficient in learning anything if they try to rush the process. This is especially true with playing guitar.

Using a guitar learning app can help you develop the best guitar learning system possible.

A good app can be something you can rely on as you develop your skills and become a proper musician.

It can be difficult to create self-taught guitar lessons by yourself. And with COVID-19 safety measures right now, taking local lessons or hiring a private instructor may not be feasible.

Now, there are plenty of guitar learning apps on the market.

(Trust me, I've looked at a lot of them.)

And most take you down a long road of frustrating practice or music theory.

I found that the best way to learn the guitar at home is with an app like [Guitar Tricks](#).

With this app, you'll actually practice less and play more.

You won't get bored or lost with repetitive lessons.

Or waste time cramming confusing theory into your mind.

And you can forget about practicing chords until your fingers bleed.

You'll get immediate results from your guitar.

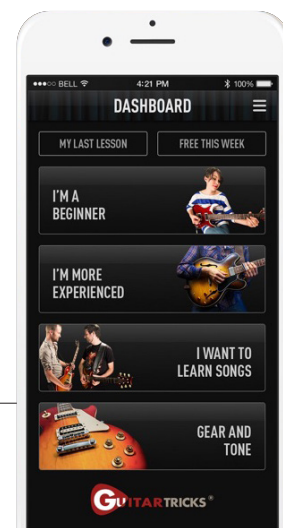
The desktop or mobile app gives you exercises to learn the basics and easy-to-follow guitar lessons, explaining guitar step-by-step!

This is also one of the fastest ways to learn guitar because you'll have access to these tools anywhere and at any time.

Guitar Tricks provides beginner lessons for strings, chords, notes, tabs, tuning, as well as entire songs.

If you want to do your homework to find the right guitar learning app for you, here are my top three favorites:

- [Guitar Tricks](#)
- [JamPlay](#)
- [Fender Play](#)



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STEP FOUR

Create a guitar practice schedule.

One of the things that can prevent or stall progress with learning guitar, is the lack of a structured schedule for playing and practice.

When you're first starting out, you need to take at minimum one lesson per week. *At minimum!*

This will prevent falling behind and allow the previous week's lesson material to still be fresh in your mind. This will also enable you to document your progress.

Ideally, you should pick up your guitar every day. Forming a good routine will help you progress quickly as a guitarist.

The sooner you develop your guitar skills the more you'll enjoy practicing. Even the best guitar-playing advice can't help if you're not willing to practice consistently.

If you're committed to learning the guitar on your own then you have to be disciplined.

Take a look at an example of a schedule I created for myself to learn guitar at home. I'm trying to be super consistent because I want to learn quickly and easily!

► **Print the template on the next page to come up with your own schedule!**

Of course, you can include more break days in your week, or add more practice if you have additional free time in the day.

SUNDAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 to 2 Guitar Tricks lessons • Practice chords for 30 min
MONDAY	Watch 2 YouTube videos related to Sunday lesson
TUESDAY	1 to 2 Guitar Tricks lessons
WEDNESDAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice chords for 30 min • Watch 1 YouTube video related to Tuesday lesson
THURSDAY	Learn a simple song from the Guitar Tricks library
FRIDAY	BREAK
SATURDAY	Watch favorite guitarists play on YouTube, read pages from Acoustic Guitar Primer Book

MY WEEKLY GUITAR SCHEDULE

SUNDAY

MONDAY

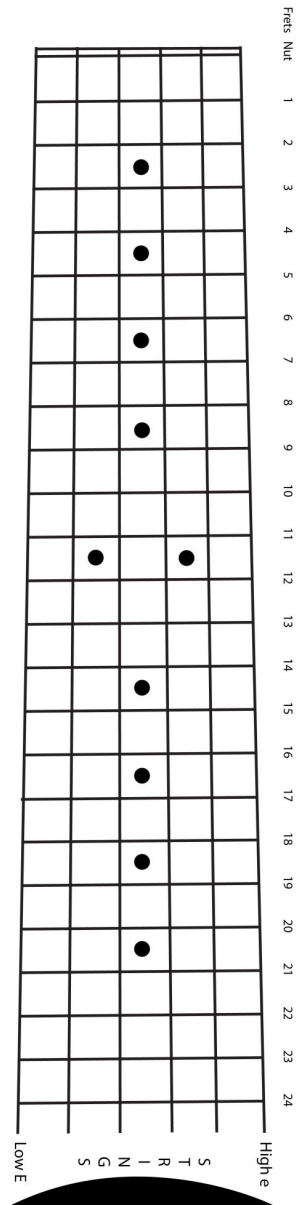
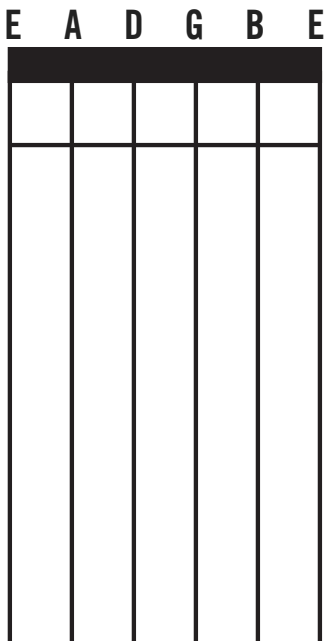
TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY



- WEEKLY CHECKLIST**
- Practice chords
 - Online lessons
 - YouTube videos
 - Learn a song
 - Guitar reading
 - Day off

5

STEP FIVE
Train your ear.

What exactly is training your ear?

When you train your ear, you're learning how to more accurately identify musical elements.

It's important to develop your overall musical sense as well as your guitar skills.

Listening to a wide variety of music is a great way of broadening your horizons and learning more about music.

Over time, having a good ear will be as important as having good fingers!

Being a good guitarist is about more than just shredding and playing all the notes. You need to become a conscientious musician.

As you begin to learn guitar, you'll need to practice tunes over and over again. This can be tiresome but ultimately it's the only way to learn.

Training your ear to pick up tunes quicker is a good way of making your practice more efficient.

A proficient musician will be able to clearly hear the key and rhythm of a piece of music. And as a beginner, this will be difficult.

But eventually, this will become second nature if you engage in active listening.

Training your ear involves intently listening to music. A good example of a natural way to train your ear is by learning a simple lick.

If you want to learn a lick, you will play it over and over again.

Training your ear involves repetition.

By listening to a particular song many times you will begin to get a feel for:

- **Key**
- **Rhythm**
- **Pitch**
- **Dynamics**

All this will help you learn your instrument better and faster.

Often this will involve playing the same 5-second clip of a song or piece of music over and over again.

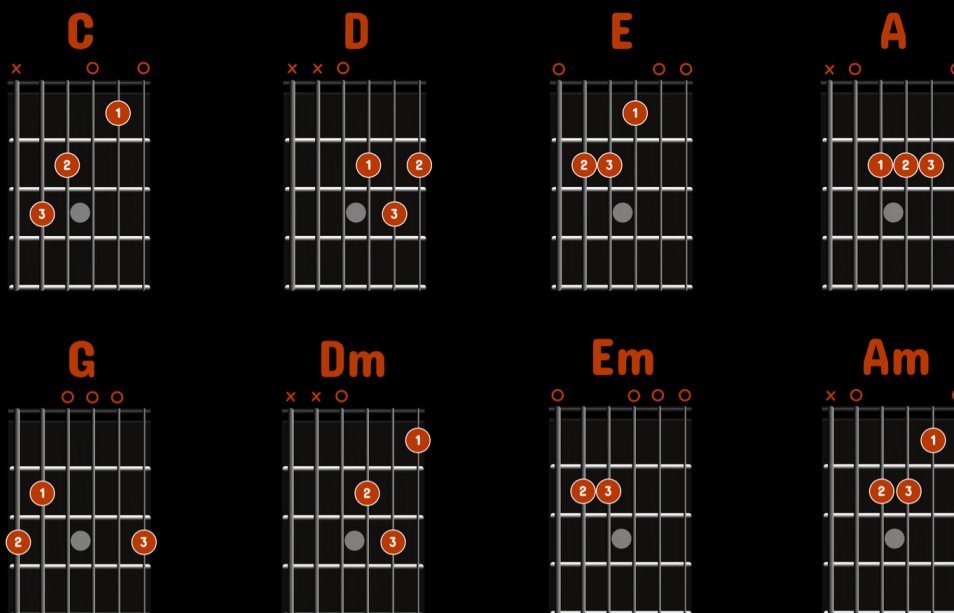
However, this is the best way to familiarize yourself with the nuances you need to develop as a guitarist.

Training your ear is one of the key beginner guitar practices, don't discount it.

As you advance, hone your listening by identifying:

- **Intervals**
- **Root notes**
- **Chord quality**

8 Basic Guitar Chords For Beginners



6

STEP SIX

Learn to play guitar chords.

Ah, guitar chords. The backbone of guitar playing, but beginner guitar chords are a challenge for newbies.

But hold on there, pardner — before you learn guitar chords you really have to learn the guitar strings (see step 2). Go back if you haven't yet.

Once you understand the harmonic relationship between the strings of a guitar you'll be able to come to grips with the chords.

And, once you're comfortable with finger placement and your finger is capable of holding a note without any pain — you're ready to learn chords!

But first: what is a guitar chord?

Basic guitar chords are a set of notes played simultaneously.

In a chord, there are at least two basic guitar notes. A root note is the building block of every chord and defines the key of the chord. The root is typically the lowest sounding note.

For example, a C Major will have a C root note. The chord is built upon a C note — giving the chord its name.

Chords are often the building blocks of songs and it's important for you to get a handle on them early.



6 STEP SIX CONTINUED... Learn to play guitar chords.

Before even attempting to learn and memorize chords, make sure your guitar is tuned.

You can play a chord perfectly, but if your guitar is out of tune, it will sound horrible!

Now that your guitar is tuned, let's get into the good stuff: chords.

There are 8 basic guitar chords which are the most important beginner guitar chords to learn.

These basic guitar chords will allow you to play a whole host of songs.

We'll have you learning Beatles songs and Ed Sheeran tunes in no time at all!

The following pages will give you a clear picture of where to place your fingers on the fretboard, plus a how-to.

- C Major
- G Major
- D Major
- A Major
- E Major
- D Major
- E Minor
- A Minor

CHORDS AT-A-GLANCE

C major



G major



D major



A major



E major



D minor



E minor



A minor



C major



C Major

C Major is comprised of three-finger notes: C, D, and E.

First, place your pointer finger on the 1st fret of the 2nd string.

Next, place your middle finger on the 2nd fret of the 4th string.

Last, place your ring finger on the 3rd fret of the 5th string.

Strum each string except for the 6th string.

It is quite a natural shape for your fingers to form so it shouldn't be too difficult to practice as a beginner.

G major



G Major

G Major consists of three-finger notes, G, B, and D. As a reminder, G is the root note.

First, place your pointer finger on the 2nd fret of the 5th string.

Next, place your middle finger on the 3rd fret of the 6th string.

Lastly, put your ring finger on the 3rd fret of the 1st string.

With your fingers pressed down, strum every string without muting the open notes.

Since every string is strum, G Major is one of the well-known basic guitar chords. It is a staple in many popular songs.

D major



D Major

D Major consists of three-finger notes: D, F Sharp, and A.

To begin, place your pointer finger on the 2nd fret of the 3rd string.

Next, place your ring finger on the 3rd fret of the 2nd string

Lastly, place your middle finger on the 2nd fret of the 1st string.

Strum each string except for the low E and A.

Ask any guitarist: what are the first chords to learn on guitar? They will probably say D, C, and G major.

A major



A Major

A Major consists of three-finger notes: E, A, and C sharp.

This is one of the most basic guitar chords to play because each pressed note is located on the 2nd fret. There is no major stretching required.

Place your pointer finger on the 2nd fret of the 4th string.

Next, place your middle finger on the 2nd fret of the 3rd string.

Lastly, place your ring finger on the 2nd fret of the 2nd string.

Strum each string except for the 6th string. Keep strumming until you hear a full and satisfying sound. It's important to strum all the way through.

E major



E Major

E Major consists of three-finger notes: E, B, and G Sharp.

Place your pointer finger on the 1st fret of the 3rd string.

Next, place your middle finger on the 2nd fret of the 5th string.

Lastly, place your ring finger on the 2nd fret of the 4th string.

Strum every string with this chord. As with the other basic chords, E major will feature heavily in many popular songs.

Try shifting between A and E chords to really get a good feel of the middle of the fretboard. Sometimes it can be difficult to bunch your fingers up. Keep trying!

D minor



D Minor

The standard way to play the Dm chord starts on the 1st fret:

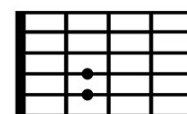
First, place your index (or 1st finger) on the 1st fret of the first string (high E).

Second, place your middle finger on the 2nd fret of the third (G) string.

Last, place your ring finger (3rd finger) on the 3rd fret of the second (B) string.

When your fingers are positioned correctly, strum from the fourth (D) string down. Do not play the 5th (A) and 6th (low E) strings.

E minor



E Minor

E Minor is comprised of two-finger notes: E and B.

Start by placing your middle finger on the 2nd fret of the 5th string.

Next, place your ring finger on the 2nd fret of the 4th string.

That's all. That's the whole chord.

Strum every string with this simple guitar chord. Another easy chord that will open up a whole new avenue of possibilities.

A minor



A Minor

Minor consists of three-finger notes A, C, and D.

First, place your pointer finger on the 1st fret of the 2nd string.

Next, place your middle finger on the 2nd fret of the 4th string.

Lastly, place your ring finger on the 2nd fret of the 3rd string.

Strum each string except for the low E.

Going back and forth between A minor and Major is a good way of learning the differences between minor and major. It's a fundamental concept that you'll have to learn as a guitarist.

7

STEP SEVEN

Play a song.

You're probably thinking: when do I get to play a song, already?!

Here we are, finally on step 7. Are you ready?

The true test of your guitar skills is whether you're able to play a song.

And boy is it an AMAZING feeling when you're able to play your first song without any mistakes!

Of course, it's best to start with a simple song. Try something that has an easy chord progression and a simple melody.

Learning songs also provides a great platform for you to write your own music and develop your skills on the fretboard.

I recommend starting with some songs that use the C, G, and D chords like Free Fallin' by Tom Petty or even the Happy Birthday song.

Every guitar guide for beginners will recommend a different song because there are so many simple songs for beginners to learn.

That's why it's a good idea to learn a song that you already know.

Learning a song that you can sing along to is also a good way of improving your guitar skills. Practice can be tough but you are more likely to pick the guitar up if you enjoy playing.

Once you have a few songs under your belt, you'll start to play more complex chords and melodies.

The only way to truly nail a new song is practice, practice, and more practice!

Here are a few songs that I think might be worth learning if you're a beginner.

(Conveniently, you can find lessons for all of these and more on the [Guitar Tricks](#) app.)

- **Knockin' on Heaven's Door** by Bob Dylan
- **Simple Man** by Lynyrd Skynyrd
- **Thunder** by Imagine Dragons
- **Rocket Man** by Elton John
- **All of Me** by John Legend
- **Stay** by Rihanna
- **Perfect** by Ed Sheeran
- **Who Will Save Your Soul** by Jewel
- **All Apologies** by Nirvana
- **Wide Open Road** by Johnny Cash
- **Imagine** by John Lennon
- **Let It Be** by The Beatles

By learning these easy beginner guitar songs, you'll be able to:

- Gain more of an understanding of notes
- Move on to more complex guitar chords
- Be better equipped to take on chord changes and progressions

These are always the first steps for any beginner guitarist.



8

STEP EIGHT

Perform for others.

Playing music for other people is about more than just showing off. Music is a universal language.

Engaging your friends and family with your guitar playing is a great way of improving your guitar skills and gaining confidence.

And even for a beginner, it's important to learn how your playing can affect people.

It doesn't matter whether the people around you are musicians. If they enjoy listening to music they should be able to give you some feedback.

Feedback will make you better.

Responding to feedback is important if you want to know how to learn guitar.

Once you think you've perfected a song, try and play it for your family or friends.

It doesn't have to be a big deal. Small steps like this will make it easier in the future if you want to perform in public.

If you want to know how to learn guitar, performing for other people is a great stepping stone.



9 STEP NINE Speak to other guitarists.

Engage with the musician community. Getting advice from your peers and even experts is one of the best ways to learn to play guitar.

By talking to other guitarists you'll be able to get a more comprehensive sense of the journey it takes to become a competent musician.

Thankfully, there are millions of people all around the world learning to play guitar from beginner to advanced levels.

With social distancing, in-person groups or events may not be readily available. However there are always online channels.

Online communities are a great place to learn and foster enthusiasm for the instrument.

In fact, the thriving guitarist community can be found in these kinds of places, all it takes is a quick search:

- **Facebook groups**
- **Online forums**
- **Subreddits**
- **Memberships**

Once you've experimented with your guitar app, checked out the popular YouTube channels, read the relevant books, and learned songs: it's time to start talking with other guitarists like you!

Conclusion

Is learning guitar hard? Um, yes and no.

It all depends on your commitment and enthusiasm. If you can go into this learning experience with both, you're golden.

The steps I outlined in this guide are a straightforward and simple way to start playing the guitar sooner than you imagined.

This is the way that I randomly decided one day that I wanted to learn to play guitar at home during the coronavirus pandemic of 2020, and progressed to playing songs in under 30 days.

(Secretly, I always dreamed of doing this since my teenage years. So when life gives you a lot of time on your hands, you put your hands on a guitar, I say!)

I wish you the smoothest transition from newbie to full-on musician. Tell yourself when you pick up your guitar:

I AM A GUITARIST.

This will give you the motivation to continue, and avoid quitting like so many other people do.

I mean hey, if playing guitar was easy, everybody would know how to do it, right?!

I know you can definitely do it, or you wouldn't be reading this guide.

Let's review what you learned:

STEP 1: Choose the right guitar

Take the time to find an instrument that fits your budget, needs, and comfort.

STEP 2: Get to know your instrument

Learn what makes the guitar great and how to maneuver around the fretboard.

STEP 3: Find a guitar learning app

Use an app to help guide you through lessons and a learning system at home.

STEP 4: Create your practice schedule

Draw up a plan for consistent learning, so you adopt patterns that fit your life and make it fun.

STEP 5: Train your ear

Listen carefully and press repeat. Intention and repetition will ensure you learn effectively.

STEP 6: Learn guitar chords

The path to learning your first song will involve learning the most important guitar chords.

STEP 7: Play a song

The true test of your guitar skills is whether you are able to play a song, but don't rush into this.

STEP 8: Perform for others

Get comfortable performing for family and friends. You can't learn to in complete isolation!

STEP 9: Speak to other guitarists

Engage with a community of musicians. Learning guitar will become easier and more rewarding.

You made it, now go rock out!

Tell me what you thought!

I love feedback and am always interested in hearing what you think about this guide. Email me at robert@play-guitars.com anytime with your testimonial.

And don't forget to visit play-guitars.com whenever you want fresh content that can help guide you in more detail on specific areas of your guitar learning journey.

Best of luck, and rock on!

>> [Read my review of Guitar Tricks here](#) <<

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