



40 QUICK GUITAR PLAYING TIPS

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40 Quick Guitar Playing Tips

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The first element you should know is where all the notes are on the guitar's fretboard. Can you find all the G notes? How about all of the Db notes?

That's the first fundamental you should put right. A great way to get all this information in your head is to draw the neck out on big pieces of paper. And then write every note out across the fretboard.

You can turn it into a game, whenever you pick up a guitar call out a note name and then try to find it in every position on the guitar.

#2: Scales

There are over 4000 scales, while you don't need to know all of them, but you should know the following: Major pentatonic, Minor pentatonic, Major scale, Harmonic minor, Melodic minor and Bebop dominant.

You probably know a few of these already.

If you don't know all of them, then buy my ebook on scales and plug any gaps you have - it will be more than worth it.

#3: Chords

Like scales, we have thousands of chords on guitar. Did you know there are 24 ways to play a C major 7 chord on guitar? Well, there are!

I bet you know the basics ones, such as G, C, D, E, A. Knowing these will be a good starting place.

Once you have that down, you'll want to learn about the CAGED system which allows you to find and use chords across the whole neck.

After that, you will want to learn some theory so you can take what you know and build chords all over the neck.

#4: Rhythm and Timing

Rhythm and timing are the basis for everything in music.

If you don't have good time or you can't play a simple rhythm over an extending period of time then chances are you will be hard to play with and people won't play with you.

My number one rhythm tip is, you have to slow down to get it together in order to go fast.

Try playing simple rhythms with a metronome set on 40BPM and keep on, until you can play the same rhythm for 5 minutes straight without mistakes.

#5: Music Theory

Music Theory is simply, knowing why and how music works. It's really critical to understand the theory.

If you don't you can't properly teach yourself nor can you really know what you're playing. The good news is you don't have to become some musical scholar to understand and apply the basics. You also don't need to go too deep either.

The basics are not hard to learn or understand. It just might take you a short time to get your head around it. It worth it as it will teach you how and why music works. Start with my FREE Music theory book, which will enable you to learn quickly!

#6: Reading Music

You should be able to read music. Sight reading is optional.

However, you should be able to look at a piece of music and after a short time be able to play what's written. This is another critical element of being a good guitarist and musician.

Most confuse the two and sight reading is an advanced skill practiced and mastered by a few [who usually depend on the skill for their income].

#7: Listening

Listening to great music is key. As they say: good input = good output.

The same goes for bad!

So, are you listening to great music?

Are you going deep into the style of your choice?

Are you listening to more than just guitar players?

#8: Natural Tone

You need to work on your basic unplugged sound. Does it sound like you hear it in your head?

If you are fluffing notes, you need to sort that. Do you need to sort any buzzing frets?

If you do, either find out what to do or visit a local tech who will be able to solve that problem for you.

Remember your guitar amp is just there to make the sound you currently have louder. If what you're starting with is bad, no amount of tone shaping, pedals or expensive gear is going to change that.

However, practice will so, let's get working!

#9: Focus

However long (or short), you get each day to practice, focus all your energy on practicing the guitar.

Don't get distracted by wanting to mess around with a song you already know or by small things that will still be there when you've finished, like your phone or computer.

The power of single-mindedness will ensure you see progress straight away.

Remember Focus!

#10: Mistakes

Make mistakes a thing of the past! Start with this simple mistake policy: **"I restart when I make a mistake"**

It will annoy you at the start and just might drive you mad but it will make you seek excellence in your guitar playing. In the long term, you will find your overall level improve; you'll be happier with your playing plus you will find it easier to improve.

The best way to stop making mistakes is to slow everything down. So it's time to grab your metronome and put it on its slowest speed and work on your foundation. You will never become completely mistake free but you can minimise the number of mistakes you make down to a tiny fraction of what they are now.

#11: Practice vs Playing

If you don't know the difference between Practice vs Playing, then you might have wasted years and be frustrated in your progress.

The difference between Practicing and Playing is massive.

Practice means to work on something you can't do. For example, that song you couldn't play the solo of, that needs work - you can practice that.

Playing is something you do for enjoyment. It's good to do and it will help to solidify what you have practiced. However, you need to work on it first.

#12: Daily practice

Daily focus on guitar practice is essential and it's what separates the men from the boys.

Even if it's just an hour each night, a small step (or a few steps) each night will mean noticeable growth in your abilities by the end of the first week/month.

You might not be able to move a mountain in one go but you can certainly move it in small chunks little by little.

Get started today and don't look at how tall the mountain is.

#13: Listen when you practice

When you are practising, listen to what you working on.

Most people run scales without listening to what they are playing and therefore get bored and make mistakes.

If you were to listen you'd hear mistakes and be able to fix 'em!

#14: The different types of practice

There are three types of practice:

Playing practice - where you're applying something you have learnt into a song so that it becomes second nature.

Learn songs for gigs - if you're gigging fairly regularly you'll need to spend time before each gig practicing the songs, licks, solos etc. that you need to know.

Everyday Practice - learning new ideas, concepts and song just to widen your musical knowledge and ability.

#15: Record yourself

Sounds simple right?! Are you doing it? Hopefully, you are. If you aren't, then you need to start today!

Why? The recording never lies. You can fudge your own memory after a gig but you can't change the honesty of a recording! Harsh, yes of course, but if you want to accelerate you're playing skills you need to be honest with yourself.

A good tip is to just record you playing along to a metronome. Remember if you want to play over a backing track, you should be able to turn that track right down low so you can get an honest opinion of your playing.

#16: Listen back to recordings

You're recording yourself playing guitar, right? What, you aren't?! Better start!

If you are that's great, listen back to it, make notes on what to do to improve on, when are you rushing, how many mistakes did you make? Is that bend in tune?

#17: Daily Challenge

Take a small amount of time each day to push yourself with a daily challenge. It could be 5 minutes, it could be 1 hour. Think up a few different challenging and then have a go!

A few examples: Put on a CD and call out the chord changes in numbers. Or play a track you've never heard before and try to find the key and a rhythm guitar part by the first chorus

You could try to play a scale from the highest note to the lowest note on one string. Or even, pick four random chords and record them down as a loop and take a solo.

#18: Goals

If you don't have any goals or know what I mean, then you need to change that today. Start by asking yourself where you'd like to be in one week, a month, and next year. If you can answer these questions then you have set yourself some goals.

Next, all you need to do now is to think about the steps you need to take from where you are now to complete this goal. Each step should be measured against the final outcome.

You might have to adjust your plan along the way but if you keep trying you'll get there and reach your aim.

#19: Patience

You need patience. It will take some time to become good, you won't be amazing overnight.

Sorry to say that, but everyone you admire has worked their butts off in pursuit of a goal. You will need to keep on keeping on.

Your journey won't be a straight line, it's more likely to be all over the place, with periods of massive growth, some ruts, and sometimes when you feel that you haven't made much progress.

The best thing for you to do is to keep going.

#20: Local Jam Session

The best way you can grow is to force yourself up on stage at a local jam session and have a go.

Sure, you'll mess up, play bum notes; break guitar strings and all other conceivable problems. But you will be challenged in ways you won't do by yourself.

If you're lucky, you'll make friends with the top players there and they will be able to watch you and give you useful feedback on your playing. This will improve you without you knowing!

Go on find a local jam session!

#21: Hear those chord changes

Do you know what the V chord sounds like? How about the VIIm7? If you can hear the chord changes, you will be able to anticipate where the song is going.

How do you do this? The best way is to listen to a wide range of music and write down in numbers the pattern that the song follows. Of course, you will need to understand some basic theory, but most of all it will take some trial and error.

It might take a while for you to be able to hear the IV chord or an IIIm9 but once you have it, it will be incredibly useful and will keep gigs coming your way.

#22: Surround yourself with talented musicians

"Greatness breeds greatness"

This statement is very true. So, if you want to be great at playing guitar, you have to play with other talented musicians. If you don't know any off hand, go meet some. Local gig or jam nights are a great place to find players.

#23: Make the metronome part of your practice

Work with the metronome to sure up your timing, you will need to work on it time after time and keep it up.

However, you will see your playing get better and feel your personal time (inner metronome) strengthen.

#24: Learn to walk before running

Slowly, precisely and in time. All of these are needed for you to get to the point where you can start to speed your guitar playing up.

You might want to play guitar super-fast - that's great but get it slow, in time and accurate firstly. When you have it slow then work with a metronome to speed it up. Simple!

#25: Transcribe

You might know what Transcribing is already. If you don't know what transcribing is, it's simply the art of hearing a piece of music and then being able to figure out what is being played. Sometimes it involves writing it down. It's a really useful skill to have and even if it does take some time to develop it. It's a key skill, so developing your abilities is most certainly worth it.

Warning: It will be hard at the start and you might want to give up. Don't give it a go. It's a skill, which when learnt, can lead to big improvements in your guitar playing.

You should spend most of your time transcribing your favourite artists and guitar players. Then take one or two ideas and apply them to your playing. You can always transcribe more! Start now!

#26: Learn some new chords

There are 24 ways to play a C major 7 chord. Yes, 24! Try to find them all!

You'll find some chord voicings that you love, some you hate and a few that are ok.

Of course, you don't need to know all of them. However, spending time figuring out a few new voicings will enable you to have more options, a better understand of music theory and help you to explore the fretboard.

The secret with chords is to have a mental box per style of chords you can use. If you're trying to do something that sounds like a piano then you need a set of chords that sound that way. If you're doing a rocky song you will have to adapt your chord choices to that style.

#27: Listen to the radio

Listen to the radio. I know it sounds basic, but hear (pun intended) me out!

Active listening is the process of really engaging with the music you are hearing and making notes (even if they are just mental) of what's happening.

You could note down the chord pattern or sing out the Wah guitar part. You might listen to how the drums fit into the song.

What is the drummer playing? You might want to make some notes so that you can have a go at applying that later to your own playing.

#28: Hunt For New

Hunt For New. Stay inspired!

You should be seeking out new music, new sounds, new guitar tunings, new guitar gear.

New doesn't have to mean new, it just means something you haven't heard or tried before.

It could be an album from the 30's or it could be something that was released last week. It could be a vintage guitar or the latest effect pedal.

As long as it's new to you and it inspires you, you will be more likely to enjoy practicing and actually want to do some!

#29: Solid rhythm skills

95% of the time you will be playing rhythm guitar, whether it's chords or a single note idea. To be easy to play with and trust me it matters, you need good solid rhythm skills. Fact!

You need to learn to play in time, in tune and do it with conviction. So, it's time to grab a metronome and a guitar. Set the metronome on the slowest setting [usually 40BPM] and try to play something really simple.

Keep doing this until you can hold a rhythm for 5 minutes without stopping or making a mistake. This is a real challenge, but if you want to be gigging a lot you'll need to be able to play solid rhythm guitar.

#30: Practice not Pedals will cure 99% of your problems

Practice not Pedals will cure most tonal problems you are having as well as building a solid base for you to build a great personal style.

Pedals may cover nastiness for a little while but all will be revealed should they break or if you're handed an acoustic. The horror!

#31: Find musicians who are on another level from you

Find, watch, learn and befriend other musicians who are worlds apart from you musically speaking. They will kick your butt into shape in no time! However, you'll become a great guitar player.

You can find better players at local jam nights, at hot musical night spots and online.

Stay humble and ask a lot of questions; make sure you take notes and apply what you learn to your playing.

#32: Listen to great music ... And take notes

Your input equals your output. If you listen to great music you're more likely to play better and produce great music.

Listening, in this case, is not turning on a CD and doing something else.

It's putting on a CD and really taking in what instruments are being used, when they are playing or not, how dynamics (loud or soft) are being used and the overall arrangement curve.

There is a lot to take in but you can really learn loads from just actively listening.

#33: Listen outside your style

Listen outside your style. If you're into country, start listening to jazz.

If you're into metal go buy some r 'n' b or hip-hop. You'll learn ideas that you can use in your preferred style as well as expanding your musical horizons.

#34: Work on those weaknesses

We all have weaknesses in our guitar playing

If you focused on one weakness of them for half an hour each day by the end of the month you would be better in that area.

If you suck at soloing, then try soloing over everything and making it sound great.

If you pick a major weakness, it will take time to build a solid foundation and to overcome weak areas. Trust me, the rewards are well worth the effort!

#35: String bending

Let's face it, being able to bend in tune is a tricky skill to master. However, being able to do it right separates the pros from the wannabes!

Start on the 10th fret of the B string. Play that note, as you do, sing it. Keep ahold of that pitch in your head. Now try to bend the B string from the 9th fret (known as a half tone bend). Keep singing until the two match.

Next, try it without playing the target note first. Of course, sing the note in your head or out loud! When you can bend up to the right pitch first time, and do it ten times in a row. Then try a whole tone bend. Play the 10th fret and then try to bend from the 8th fret, while holding the target note in your head.

#36: Try learning a different style

Everyone claims learning a new or different style will hurt what you already have, just like learning to read music will kill your mojo. **Thankfully, both are myths.**

If you learn a new style, you will be able to add something new to your existing skill set.

Try thinking about what styles you like that are not what you would normally play. If you're a metal guy, try some Motown/soul music, if you're a country fan, try some early blues.

Everything you learn will help you to raise your game and become the guitar player you've always dreamt off.

#37: To get fast, you must slow down

To be able to be consistent, fast and have a good overall standard you need to slow down and build a strong foundation first.

Building a strong foundation does take time but you will see big improvements fast once you get the basics together. It will all of a sudden click and you will understand why and how the basics slot together.

#38: Rhythm drills

If you have a smartphone you can give this a shot. All you need is a free metronome App. You might want headphones as well, depending on the space you're in. What you want to do is to set the metronome fairly slow and then either clap, click or tap your leg (especially if you're trying to be quiet).

Start slow, by clapping on beat one - whole notes. Next, try two notes per bar. And keep going until your up to 16th notes. Next, you can try two bars of quarter notes, two bars of half notes, and repeat. You can try different pattern and phrases as well.

This will work on your ability to hold time, to feel the pulse, and help in your development of groove. It's worth every minute. Remember good musicians only want to play with people with groove well and who have good time keeping skills.

#39: SPACE: You don't have to play all the time

The best musicians are always listening and reacting to what the other musicians are doing.

They're happy not to play if that's what the song needs or to play something in the background which adds to the song.

If you spend some time listening to music, you'll hear when certain instruments drop out and come back.

You will start to you understand how the pros arrange a song, including the instruments and the use dynamics (how loud or soft the instruments are).

#40: Listen to what's happening when playing

This is really critical, in addition to not playing all the time, you'll want to be listening to what happening. You want to react and respond to what the other band members are playing.

If the song starts to get busy, maybe you want to pull out or just play in the cracks. Heading toward a chorus? Then, it might be time to come in and start playing.

If the keyboard player keeps playing up high; well it could be time to play something low down on the guitar's neck or to find a part that fits nicely around what he's playing.

Always be listening, responding and reacting.





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