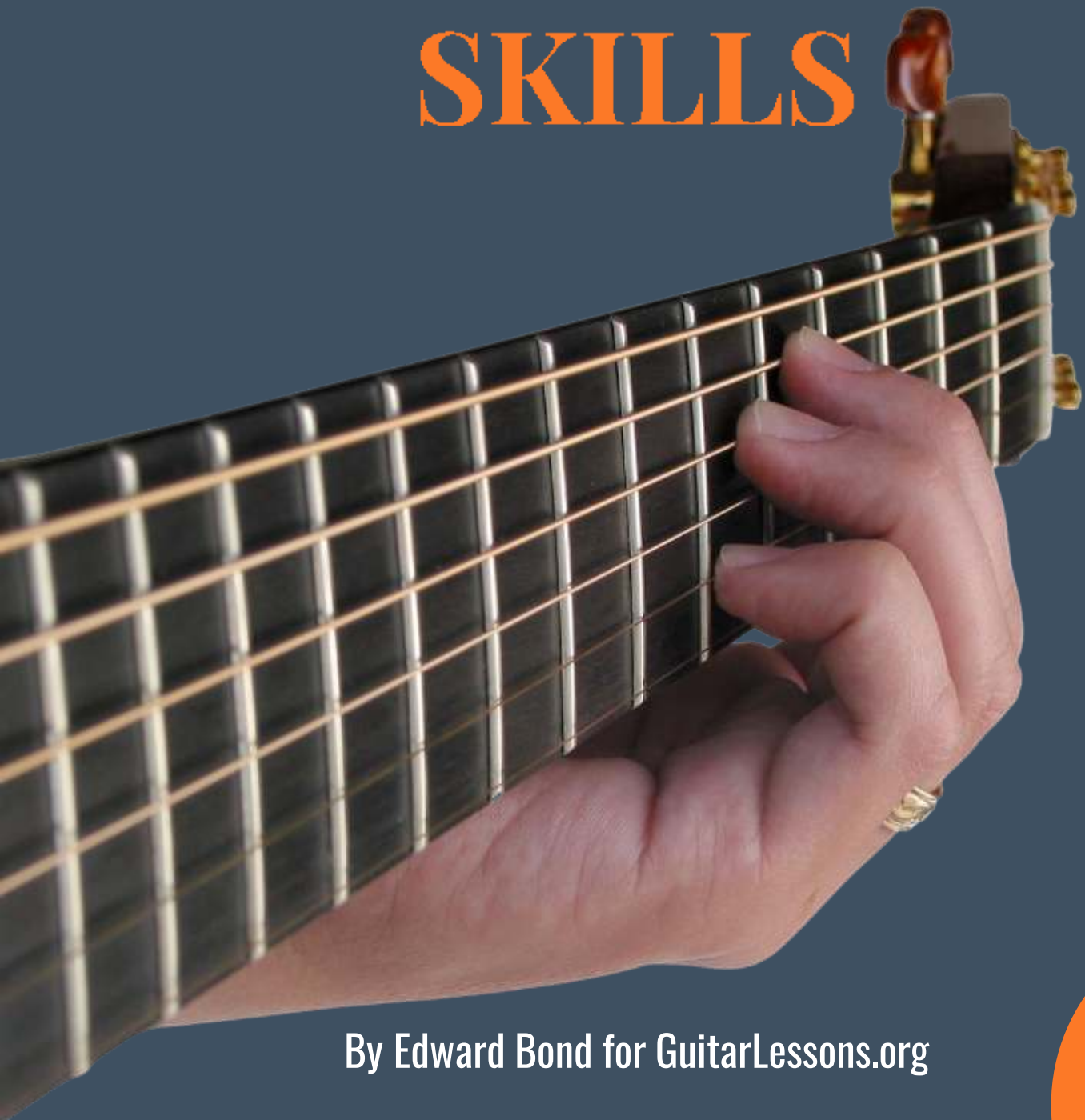


QUICK START GUIDE TO BASIC GUITAR SKILLS

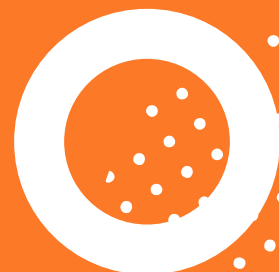


By Edward Bond for GuitarLessons.org



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About the Author

Edward Bond is an active performer, composer, arranger, recording artist, writer, and educator based in Seattle, Washington. He holds a degree in Jazz Studies from the University of Oregon, where he was named the Outstanding Undergraduate in Jazz upon graduating. Edward has composed, arranged, and recorded music for many different settings, and has toured extensively in the U.S as well as in China and Argentina.

About GuitarLessons.org

GuitarLessons.org offers expert lessons, gear reviews, and helpful tips to make you a better guitar player. The site brings together experienced guitar teachers to make the process of learning how to play guitar easy and enjoyable. Find helpful articles, chord diagrams, in-depth gear reviews, and more at www.guitarlessons.org.

Welcome to Guitar

Learning guitar is extremely fun and exciting and there is no better time than the present to start learning. As a beginner, it can be enticing to watch every video and check out every guitar “guru.” However, with so much information available to you via internet guitar sites, YouTube, Instagram, etc. it can be difficult to figure out exactly what you should practice.

Diverting your attention and scattering your focus is not a successful strategy to learn guitar. If you want to make solid and consistent progress in your guitar playing, then you need a solid and consistent practice routine. Progress on the guitar, and most everything else in life for that matter, is made by consistent, steady effort.

By creating a steady practice routine, you can take the guesswork out of your guitar playing. You will minimize the stress of figuring out what to practice and instead you will use your time more efficiently. And after some time, you will be pleased with your results and feel inspired to pursue new pathways. Let's explore some basic ideas you can use to build a simple and effective practice routine for yourself.

How Long Should You Practice?

How long should you practice when starting guitar? The short answer is - as long as possible. If you practice more, you will progress faster. It is as simple as that.

However, it is not always practical for people to practice guitar for hours a day. This is one reason why having a simple practice routine is such a valuable tool. If you have only an hour, or maybe even only 20 or 30 minutes, you know exactly what you are going to do. That way, you make the most out of time.

What Should You Practice?

Of course, then the question of what exactly you should practice arises. Thinking of your guitar skills as little modules can be a helpful way to build a routine. That way you can grab smaller concepts and spend some amount of time working on them.

Examples of guitar “modules” could be: finger exercises, melodies and scales, chords and progressions, rhythm, ear training, etc.

By stringing together segments of time on different “modules”, you can build effective and simple practice routines that will develop your guitar playing abilities much more efficiently. Let’s dive into some specifics of what these modules could look like.

Reading Musical Notation

Learning how to read notated music is a useful skill. Many guitarists struggle to read musical notation. However, guitar has a notation system called tablature that can be helpful for beginners to understand concepts quicker.

Guitar tablature consists of six horizontal lines that represent each of the six strings of the guitar. The lowest line corresponds to the low E string and the highest line corresponds to the high E string.

Numbers are placed on the lines to indicate a particular fret on that string. For example, if you see “2” on the 6th line, that means the 2nd fret of the high E string. If you see “3” on the 2nd line, that means 3rd fret on the A string.

All examples in this guide will be notated in guitar tablature. Some examples have also been notated in traditional musical notation. It is not necessary to read traditional musical notation to use this guide. However, it is strongly recommended that you take the time to learn

Finger Exercises

Learning some basic finger exercises is a good place to start if you are interested in expanding your facility and dexterity on the guitar. Guitar finger exercises are a combination of the unique properties of the guitar fretboard and the chromatic scale, which is the scale in music that contains all twelve notes.

These sorts of finger exercises are great to warm up with. However, they are not the most musical, so it is not recommended to spend that much time with them for any other purpose. Here are some examples.

Finger Exercise #1



Musical notation for Finger Exercise #1, showing two systems of guitar staves. The first system has three measures: the first measure has fret numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 on strings T, A, and B; the second measure has fret numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 on strings T, A, and B; the third measure has fret numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 on strings T, A, and B. The second system has three measures: the first measure has fret numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 on strings T, A, and B; the second measure has fret numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 on strings T, A, and B; the third measure has fret numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 on strings T, A, and B.

This basic finger exercise does a great job of warming up the fingers and familiarizing them with the frets and basic distances on the guitar. You can practice it up and down the fretboard as far as you like.

Finger Exercise #2



Musical notation for Finger Exercise #2, showing two systems of guitar staves. The first system has three measures: the first measure has fret numbers 1, 3, 2, 4 on strings T, A, and B; the second measure has fret numbers 1, 3, 2, 4 on strings T, A, and B; the third measure has fret numbers 1, 3, 2, 4 on strings T, A, and B. The second system has three measures: the first measure has fret numbers 1, 3, 2, 4 on strings T, A, and B; the second measure has fret numbers 1, 3, 2, 4 on strings T, A, and B; the third measure has fret numbers 1, 3, 2, 4 on strings T, A, and B.

Here is a variation on the previous exercise that includes a basic finger skipping pattern. Pairing this exercise with the first is a great way to develop some basic flexibility with your fingers.

Finger Exercise #3



Musical notation for Finger Exercise #3, showing two systems of guitar staves. The first system has three measures: the first measure has fret numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 on strings T, A, and B; the second measure has fret numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 on strings T, A, and B; the third measure has fret numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 on strings T, A, and B. The second system has three measures: the first measure has fret numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 on strings T, A, and B; the second measure has fret numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 on strings T, A, and B; the third measure has fret numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 on strings T, A, and B.

This exercise is commonly called the “spider” exercise and is a fantastic way to build dexterity and comfortability moving between strings on the guitar.

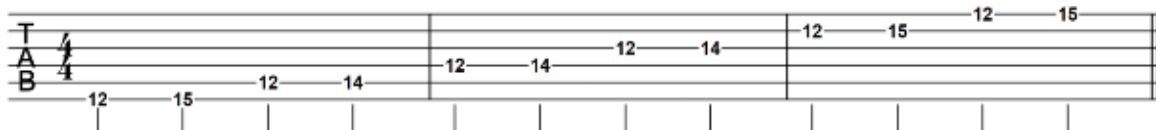
Melodies and Scales

Learning simple melodies is a great way to build your guitar skills and enjoy yourself simultaneously. At the beginning, find simple melodies that you enjoy. Practice singing them inside your head until you have them memorized and then try to find them on the guitar.

Even if you are able to figure out just a little bit of the melody, that is fine. The exercise builds your ability to hear music and learn it, which is a necessary skill to develop as a musician.

Learning some [basic guitar scales](#) will go a long way to developing your sense of melody, in addition to providing you with expanded technique. A great place to start is with the minor pentatonic scale. The minor pentatonic scale is a five note scale that is used heavily in rock, blues, jazz, RnB, funk, and pop music. In short, it is everywhere.

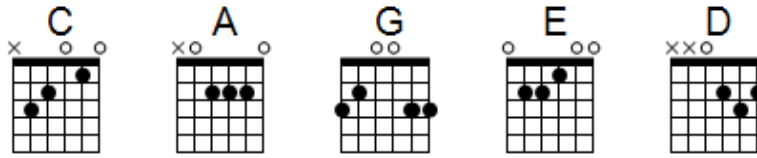
The E minor pentatonic scale is spelled E - G - A - B - D - E and looks like this from the twelfth fret on the low E string:



Learn Basic Open Chord Shapes

Learning some [basic chords](#) is a crucial part of progressing on the guitar. At the beginning, you may feel overwhelmed with just how many chords there are. It is true, there are hundreds of guitar chords you can learn. But, if you have a method of practicing and learning guitar chords, you will find that it is really not that complicated at all.

Start by learning the basic chords C major, A major, G major, E major, and D major:



Once you master these 5 basic shapes, you can move them up and down the fretboard to create just about any chord you desire. Practice combining them to create your own progressions or use them to play chord progressions from songs you enjoy.

Building Chord Progressions

Once you feel comfortable with the five open chord shapes C major, A major, G major, E major, and D major, you can start to build them into progressions. The cool thing about chord progressions is they can be just about anything. You can combine any two chords together and you have a chord progression.

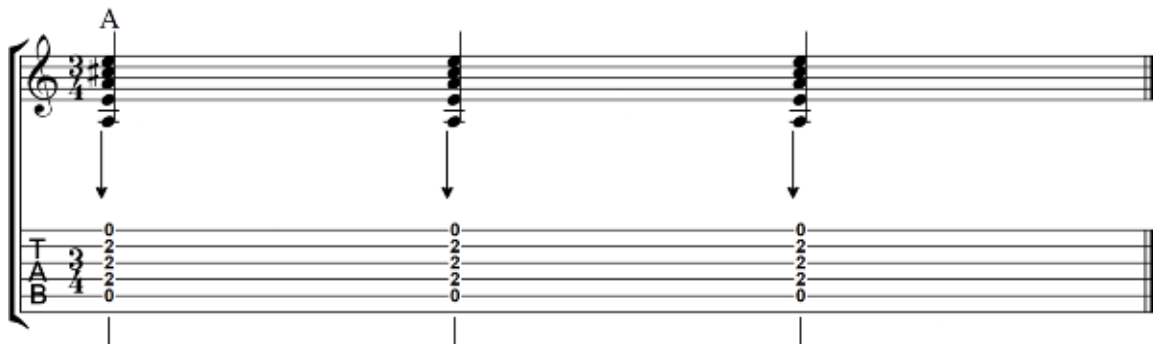
However, there are some basic chord progressions that we see all the time in music. For example, progressions like C major to G major, G major to D major, D major to A major or E major to A major happen all the time. Mastering these common movements will make learning songs so much easier.

Once you start learning songs, you will often find that many popular songs have identical chord progressions. For example, "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" by Green Day and "Wonderwall" by Oasis share a nearly identical chord progression - but the songs could hardly be more different. Learning to identify these types of patterns will help you unlock the secrets of music.

Strumming Patterns

Of course, a fundamental aspect of learning chords and chord progressions is learning strumming patterns. Strumming patterns can be one of the more frustrating concepts for beginners to master, simply because strumming a chord progression requires the coordination of both hands. Here are some ideas to get you started with strumming:

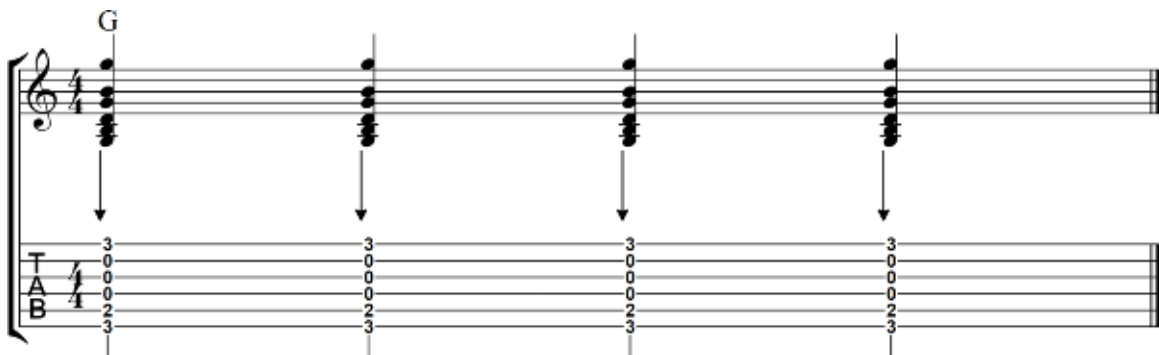
Strumming Idea #1



Musical notation for Strumming Idea #1. The top staff shows an A major chord in treble clef, 3/4 time. The bottom staff shows the guitar tablature for the A major chord (0-2-2-2-2-0). Three downstrokes are indicated by arrows pointing to the chord shapes on the staff.

Start this idea with an open A major chord. Strum three even downstrokes in a row. Not too hard, right? Once you are comfortable, try switching chord shapes.

Strumming Idea #2



Musical notation for Strumming Idea #2. The top staff shows a G major chord in treble clef, 4/4 time. The bottom staff shows the guitar tablature for the G major chord (3-0-0-0-2-3). Four downstrokes are indicated by arrows pointing to the chord shapes on the staff.

This strumming idea is nearly identical to the previous one. The only difference is you will start with an open position G major chord and strum four even downstrokes.

Counting to three and counting to four - you won't need much more

Strumming Idea #3

This strumming example builds on the previous example with an added twist. Start again with the open position G major chord. On the third downstroke, add in a faster upstroke before the fourth and final downstroke. This faster strum is called an eighth note.

Rhythm and Ear Training

You can easily tie rhythm and ear training practice into these modules. For example, you can practice learning melodies and chords to your favorite songs by ear. This is a great and intuitive way to learn music and will help you immensely when it comes time to play with other musicians.

Sit down with your favorite album or playlist and listen through to it with your guitar. Try to pick out as much of the melodies, chords, and rhythms as you possibly can. Maybe you will only be able to find one or two notes at first that work.

Eventually, you will be able to identify chord progressions, melodies, and rhythms quickly and easily. This is a fun and refreshing way to practice guitar, listen to music, and enhance your rhythmic and aural skills all at the same time.

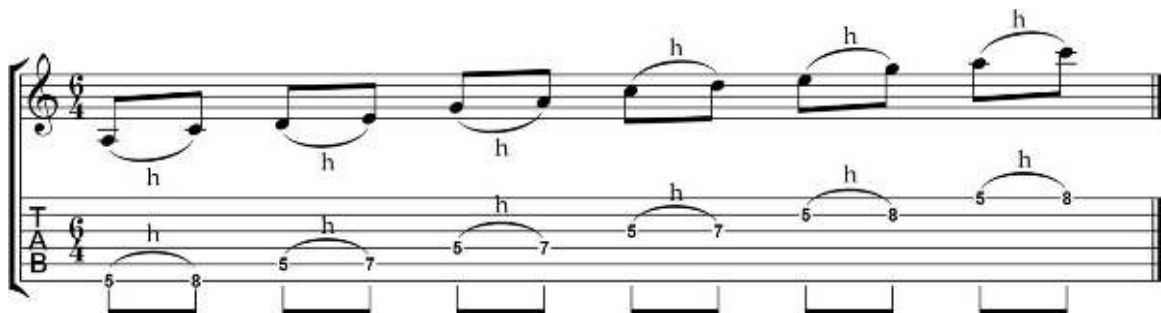
Essential Guitar Techniques

There are several guitar specific techniques that are also quite important to practice. These types of techniques include alternate picking, hammer-ons and pull-offs, and palm muting.

There are many ways to use a guitar pick. Alternate picking, or down-up picking, is one of the most common ways to pick. It is quite easy to practice. You can use any of the finger exercises or scales we explored previously. All you need to do is pick a downstroke followed by an upstroke. Downstroke, then upstroke. Easy. The trick is to practice it enough to make it smooth and comfortable at various speeds and volumes.

Hammer-ons and pull-offs are an essential guitar technique to learn. They produce a characteristic sound that you can hear in all great rock guitarists, from Hendrix to Iommi to Page.

Here is an exercise for practicing hammer-ons:



To perform a hammer-on, all you need to do is fret a note and then push down on an adjacent fret with another finger and without picking. You are literally “hammering” your finger onto the next fret.

In the example above, start with your index finger on the fifth fret. You will then hammer on to either the seventh or eighth frets with your ring or pinky finger.

Pull-offs are basically the opposite of hammer-ons. Instead of “hammering” on to an adjacent fret, you pull your finger off the fret. Here is an exercise for practicing pull-offs:

The image displays a musical score for guitar practice. It consists of two staves. The top staff is a standard musical staff in 6/4 time, featuring a melody line with six measures. Each measure contains a pair of notes (a dyad) connected by a slur, with a 'p' (piano) dynamic marking above the first note. The notes in the melody are: G4-A4, A4-B4, B4-C5, C5-B4, B4-A4, and A4-G4. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature staff, labeled 'TAB' and 'B' on the left. It shows the fret numbers for the two notes in each measure: (8, 5), (8, 5), (7, 5), (7, 5), (7, 5), and (8, 5). Each pair of fret numbers is connected by a slur, and a 'p' dynamic marking is placed above the first fret number of each pair.

Piecing It All Together

Now that you have an idea of what to practice, it will be quite simple to put all the pieces together to build a solid practice routine. You can follow the outline here or experiment with the order, flow and content. The key is to stay consistent over a long period of time.

For example, take a basic routine and follow it for one month. At the end of one month, reflect on your routine and identify what works and what does not. Then, make changes and follow it again for another month. By following this process, you will refine your ability to actually practice the guitar, you will guide your own interests, and you will progress faster and more effectively than you would otherwise.