

Beginner's Guitar Course

Lesson 1

The primary goal of a first guitar lesson is to build comfort, establish good physical habits, and give the student an immediate sense of accomplishment by playing their first sounds or chords.

1. Anatomy of the Guitar

- Parts of the Instrument: Identifying the headstock, tuning pegs, neck, frets, fretboard, body, soundhole (for acoustic) or pickups (for electric), and bridge.
- String Names & Numbers: Learning the standard tuning from thickest (low) to thinnest (high): E - A - D - G - B - E.
- Mnemonic aid: Eddie Ate Dynamite, Good Bye Eddie.

2. Proper Posture and Ergonomics

- Sitting Position: Sitting upright on a chair without arms, keeping both feet flat on the floor.
- Guitar Placement: Resting the guitar on the right leg (for right-handed players) or using a strap to maintain a consistent angle.
- Hand Positioning:
 - Fretting Hand: Keeping the thumb behind the neck, curving the fingers so only the fingertips touch the strings (avoiding flat fingers that mute adjacent strings).
 - Picking/Strumming Hand: Relaxing the wrist and arm, using a pick or thumb-and-finger strumming motion across the soundhole or pickups.

3. Tuning the Guitar

- Teaching how to use a clip-on electronic tuner, smartphone app, or reference pitches to ensure the instrument is in tune before practicing.

4. Basic Mechanics: Fretting and Picking

- First Notes / Finger Independence: Pressing down firmly behind the metal fret wire (not on top of it) and plucking individual strings cleanly to avoid buzzing sounds.
- Simple Exercises: Playing a single-string exercise (such as a 1-2-3-4 chromatic stretch across consecutive frets) to build finger strength and coordination.

5. Introduction to Chords or Tabs

- Reading Guitar Tablature (Tabs): A simple visual system representing the six strings and fret numbers, allowing beginners to read music instantly without formal notation.
- First Chord Shape: Introducing one or two fundamental, beginner-friendly open chords—most commonly E minor (Em) or A minor (Am)—because they require only a couple of fingers and sound complete right away.

6. Basic Strumming Technique

- Practicing a steady down-strum rhythm to a simple 4/4 pulse, focusing on keeping time and developing a fluid right-hand (or left-hand for lefties) motion.

7. Practice Plan and Wrap-Up

- Setting realistic expectations (e.g., 10 to 15 minutes of daily practice focusing on finger stretches and chord transitions).
- Recommending simple exercises to review before the next session.

Lesson 2: Expanding Chords and Rhythm

- **New Open Chords:** Introducing foundational open chords that require more fingers, such as E major, A major, and D major.
- **Chord Transitions:** Practicing moving cleanly between two chords (e.g., switching back and forth between E minor and A minor) without stopping the rhythm.
- **Basic Strumming Patterns:** Moving beyond steady down-strums by introducing the up-strum to create a basic alternating down-up rhythm (e.g., Down - Down - Up - Up - Down - Up).
- **Muted Strings and Clarity:** Troubleshooting common beginner issues like buzzing notes, accidental string muting, and finger fatigue.

Lesson 3: Introducing G Major and C Major (The Core Open Chord Family)

- **New Chord Shapes:** Adding G major and C major to the chord vocabulary, which opens up thousands of popular songs.
- **Mastering the G-to-D Transition:** Practicing one of the most common chord changes in acoustic and folk music.
- **Introduction to Rhythm Counting:** Learning how to count beats 1-2-3-4 out loud while strumming to internalize steady tempo.
- **Simple Song Application:** Applying the learned chords (like G, C, and D) to play through a basic three-chord progression in a real musical context.

Lesson 4: Introduction to Melody and Single-Note Playing

- **The Major Scale:** Introducing the C Major scale or E Minor pentatonic scale across the first few frets to build melodic dexterity.
- **Alternate Picking:** Practicing the fundamental picking technique of alternating downward and upward strokes with the pick for smooth, even phrasing.
- **Simple Riffs or Melodies:** Learning a recognizable, easy riff or melody (e.g., a simplified version of a classic rock or folk intro) entirely on single strings.
- **Timing with a Metronome:** Practicing basic scales or single-note exercises along with a slow click to build internal rhythm and precision.

Lesson 5: Power Chords and Basic Rock/Pop Structure

- **Introduction to Power Chords (Root-Fifth):** Learning the two-finger movable shape used extensively in rock, punk, and pop music.
- **Fretboard Navigation:** Using root notes on the low E and A strings to find where different power chords live on the neck.
- **Palm Muting:** Introducing the technique of lightly resting the edge of the picking hand near the bridge to create a chunky, percussive muted sound.
- **Putting It All Together:** Combining open chords, a simple rhythm pattern, and a newly learned riff into a cohesive mini-song performance to review progress and set goals for intermediate study.