

# 7 DAY STARTER

## PRACTICE GUIDE

YOUR FIRST WEEK PLAYING GUITAR



MILWAUKEE MUSIC LESSONS

# WELCOME TO GUITAR

Learning guitar doesn't start with big solos or perfect technique – it starts with tiny wins. In the beginning, any victory is a good victory. Showing up. Tuning your guitar. Setting up your practice space. Strumming anything at all. These early steps might feel small, but they're building the habits that lead to real long-term success. Everyone learns at a different pace, and that's exactly how it should be. Your only job right now is to keep going. If you don't quit, you don't fail. Make practice a habit first, and we'll iron out the details one session at a time.

## What You'll Find In This Guide

- A seven day task list designed to get you into the habit of playing
- Simple warm-up exercises
- Daily skill focus
- Tiny wins to celebrate
- Instrument-specific tasks
- Video demonstrations

## If You Need Help Buying An Instrument Or Accessories

You can view our special buying guide which we update on our website every year by clicking this link: **[\[CLICK HERE\]](#)**



# DAY 1 – JUST SHOW UP

**Goal** – Build the habit by touching the instrument and creating a practice space.

## **What to Do Today:**

1. Set up a practice spot.
2. Do 5 minutes of warm-ups.
3. Learn to tune the guitar and read.
4. Celebrate the win.

## **How To Tune The Guitar**

**Instructions:** Your guitar has six strings, and most players start with what's called Standard Tuning.

The standard tuning is **E A D G B E**. A great way to remember this is with the phrase: "Eddie Ate Dynamite, Good Bye Eddie." (**Note:** Memorizing the string names is extremely important, so review them early and often.)

Tuning can feel tricky for beginners, so most players use a dedicated guitar tuner or a tuning app on their phone.

Here are a few quick tips:

- Each string should sound higher than the one before it. For example, your thickest string (low E) should sound lower than the next string (A).
- The musical alphabet loops: A, B, C, D, E, F, G... then back to A.
- A sharp (#) is NOT the same as a natural note. If you're tuning to D and your tuner shows D#, that is a different note.
- Be patient. Tuning takes practice, just like playing does.
- Tune your guitar every time you pick it up – especially in the beginning.

# Warmup Exercise - The Caterpillar

**Instructions:** Your guitar has six strings. To change the sound of a string, you press your finger down behind one of the metal lines under the string. These metal lines are called frets. The most common way we read guitar music is with something called tablature (or "tab").

In tablature, the lowest line represents the thickest string, and the highest line represents the thinnest string. When you see a number on a line, it tells you which string to play and which fret to press.

For the exercise below, assign each finger to a fret:

- Pointer = 1
- Middle = 2
- Ring = 3
- Pinky = 4

Don't worry about speed. Focus on using the correct fingers and making every note sound clear.

Listen to a recording of this exercise: [\[Click Here\]](#)

The tablature shows two systems of six-line staves. The first system has fret markers 1, 2, and 3. The second system has fret markers 4, 5, and 6. Each fret marker is followed by a sequence of numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 on the strings, indicating the fret to be pressed. The strings are labeled T (top), A, B (bottom) on the left side of each staff.

# DAY 2 – BUILD THE ROUTINE

**Goal** – Choose a daily practice time and start a streak.

## What to Do Today:

1. Pick a consistent time to practice
2. Tune your guitar.
3. Do 3 minutes of warmups
4. Play the first line of 'Ode to Joy'.

## First Song – Mary Had A Little Lamb

**Instructions:** This song is great because everyone already knows it. You have a clear picture of what it should sound like, which makes it easier to notice when something feels off.

Your goal today isn't to master the whole song. Focus on a small section and get it sounding solid. Even two measures is great progress – and if you're feeling confident, try pushing yourself through the entire first line.

Listen to a demonstration of this song: [\[Click Here\]](#)

## Mary Had A Little Lamb

Standard tuning  
♩ = 70

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# DAY 3 – FOCUS BEATS LENGTH

**Goal** – Ten to twelve minutes of focused practice on a small section of song.

## **What to Do Today:**

1. Tune your guitar.
2. Do 3 minutes of warmups
3. Pick 1-2 measures and focus on playing them really well.

## **Why Focus Is Better**

Playing too much of a song at once can actually slow you down. Repetition is helpful, but short bursts on small sections will get you farther, faster, and with way less effort.

The goal here is simple: see how well you can play just 1-2 measures of a song. When you zoom in like this, your hands learn the movements faster, and later on the full song becomes easier because you already have one section locked in so solidly that it barely needs practice.

**Tip:** A great way to memorize a passage is to slowly cross out notes as you learn them. For example, if a section has eight notes, play all eight a few times. Then choose one note to memorize, cross it out on your music, and play the passage again. Keep crossing out notes one at a time until the entire section is memorized.

# DAY 4 – HEAR IT FIRST

**Goal** – Try to hum your song. Either out loud or in your head.

## **What to Do Today:**

1. Tune your guitar.
2. Do 3 minutes of warmups
3. Before practicing your song, you should know what it sounds like before you play it.

## **Why This Is Important**

This idea comes from something called ear training. High-level musicians can often hear what something sounds like before they even play it – including songs, licks, or patterns they come up with on the spot.

It works the same way we read. When you look at a sentence, you first hear the words in your head. Then you say them out loud. Music should work the same way.

But a lot of people skip that step because their instrument “does the talking” for them. They rely only on muscle memory and hope their hands will figure it out.

Just like phonics, ear training is a skill you have to spend time developing. If you avoid it, you’ll eventually hit a wall in your playing and either get stuck or have to go back later and rebuild your ear from the ground up.

# DAY 5 — THE PRACTICE PYRAMID

**Goal** – Build a balanced routine that is both fun and structured.

## **What to Do Today:**

1. Tune your guitar.
2. Do 3 minutes of warmups
3. Before refining your song some more, spend five minutes playing something you already enjoy or noodle and explore for fun!

## **Why This Is Important**

The goal of practice is to push your limits, but that doesn't mean it has to be painful or overwhelming.

One way to keep practice fun is to dedicate part of your session to something familiar – a comfort song, a favorite riff, or even some creative writing time.

Try structuring your session into three parts:

- **Warmups**
- **Work Time**
- **Play Time**

You can do them in any order you like, as long as you stay structured and don't let "play time" take over the whole session.

**Tip:** Creativity is a huge part of becoming a musician. Just like teachers ask students to "put it in your own words," improvisation does the same thing for music. It reveals what you truly know and helps your brain build stronger connections as you explore new ideas.

# DAY 6 — RECORD YOURSELF

**Goal** – Listen back to yourself in an unbiased way.

## **What to Do Today:**

1. Tune your guitar.
2. Do 3 minutes of warmups
3. Take out your phone or computer and record a 10-30 second segment of you playing.

## **Why Recording Yourself Is Important**

Just like many people don't like looking at pictures of themselves, a lot of musicians can't stand hearing themselves play. The version of ourselves we think we sound like rarely matches what the recording shows.

But that doesn't have to be a bad thing. Being able to look at yourself honestly is an important part of growing at anything.

For others, the opposite is true — they're overly critical and need to give themselves permission to say, "Hey, that sounded better than I expected."

Recording a short clip of your playing helps with both. It gives you a chance to evaluate yourself clearly while also reminding you not to take things too seriously.

**Tip:** When you're done reviewing your recording, don't delete it. Add a quick date or timestamp and save it. Weeks or months from now, you'll be able to look back and see real, undeniable progress.

# DAY 7 — CELEBRATE + STRETCH

**Goal** - Choose next week's goal + one dream goal.

## **What to Do Today:**

1. Tune your guitar.
2. Do 3 minutes of warmups
3. Play your cleanest section on your instrument and celebrate the win.
4. Set a goal for next week as well as a big 6-12 month goal.

## **Why Setting Long-Term Goals Are Important**

“Shoot for the stars and you'll land on the moon.” Having a big long-term goal gives you focus and clarity on the days when practice feels tough. It's just like driving a car or riding a bike — you don't stare right in front of the tire. You look further down the road so you can move in a straighter, more stable line.

**Tip:** Don't be afraid to set a wild goal. We call this a BHAG — a Big Hairy Audacious Goal. Having a BHAG doesn't guarantee you'll hit it, but too many people set tiny goals just to avoid failing.

It's much better to fall a little short on a big, exciting goal than to set the bar low and hit something you knew you couldn't fail.

# BONUS SONGS AND EXERCISES

## The Caterpillar - Full

Listen to a demonstration of this exercise: [\[Click Here\]](#)

Guitar TAB for 'The Caterpillar' exercise. The exercise is in 4/4 time and consists of 12 measures. The notation is as follows:

- Measure 1: 1 2 3 4
- Measure 2: 1 2 3 4
- Measure 3: 1 2 3 4
- Measure 4: 4 5 1 2 3 4
- Measure 5: 1 2 3 4
- Measure 6: 1 2 3 4
- Measure 7: 7 4 3 2 1 8 4 3 2 1 9
- Measure 8: 4 3 2 1
- Measure 9: 4 3 2 1
- Measure 10: 4 3 2 1
- Measure 11: 4 3 2 1
- Measure 12: 4 3 2 1

## The Pentatonic Scale

Listen to a demonstration of this exercise: [\[Click Here\]](#)

Musical notation for 'The Pentatonic Scale' exercise. The exercise is in 4/4 time and consists of 3 measures. The notation is as follows:

- Measure 1: 1 2 3 4 5 6
- Measure 2: 5 7 5 7
- Measure 3: 5 8 5 8

# BONUS SONGS AND EXERCISES

## Ode To Joy

Listen to a demonstration of this song: [\[Click Here\]](#)

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The image displays a guitar score for the song 'Ode To Joy'. It consists of four systems of music. Each system includes a treble clef staff with a 4/4 time signature and a guitar tablature staff below it. The tablature staff is labeled 'TAB' and contains numbers 0, 1, 3, and 3, which correspond to the notes on the strings. The first system covers measures 1-4, the second system covers measures 5-8, the third system covers measures 9-12, and the fourth system covers measures 13-16. The score ends with a double bar line at the end of measure 16.