

Progressive Guitar Exercises - Accompanying Notes

Sit in the correct posture, hold the instrument correctly.

Practice each exercise **slowly**.

Repeat each exercise until it's "**perfect**". (Your own definition of perfect). It is completely counter productive to practice playing anything wrong! Don't do it.

Shake out any tension, stay relaxed.

Listen to the sound you are making, record yourself and listen to the play back.

Start each day's practice by going over the exercises you did yesterday, perhaps try to do them a little faster today and include one extra pattern.

Have an objective for each practice session; at the end of the practice how did you do against your objective? Use that info to refine tomorrows objective.

Fretting Hand Technique

Keep the movement of the fingers to a minimum. The more movement there is, the more time it takes and the margin for error is bigger.

Unused fingers should hover 5 mm above the string ready for the next note.

Wherever possible, try to keep one finger per fret, i.e. don't move the hand along the fingerboard more than necessary.

Press immediately behind the fret. Pressing any harder (or in between the frets) can make the note go sharp, tire the fingers and slow down your playing.

Timing & Note Duration

Use the accompanying play-along tracks to keep the timing of each note accurate.

Play the arpeggios 3 ways:

With the notes sustained and overlapping (legato)

With only one note at a time sounding but each one given it's full time value (use left hand damping by releasing the pressure of the fretting finger).

Staccato, short duration notes, again using L.H damping. You can also practice R.H damping.

Volume

Practice each exercise at different volumes, Quiet, Medium and Loud. Does your timing change when you change the volume, try to keep the timing constant.

Practice each exercise keeping the same volume on each note. Do certain strings sound louder or quieter than others.

Also, try varying the volume throughout the phrase, perhaps make it a little louder in the middle and bring it down at the end. This can make it sound more musical.

Try emphasising a specific note in the phrase.

Musicality

Try adding articulation in the form of 'hammer ons' and 'pull offs' where appropriate. It is important to be able to play with and without these effects.

Listen to the sound. Are there unwanted squeaks and other noises coming from the fretting hand when you release the note? Find out what is causing them and eliminate them.

Think about phrasing and expression, how can you make the phrase sound more musical?

Improvise - Now the fun really starts

Make up a short simple melody using only the notes from the exercise you've been working on and play it over one of the backing tracks. In order to do this you have to have the notes under your fingers so confidently that your subconscious can deal with moving the fingers to the right places. The rest of your brain can then be devoted to spontaneously creating music.

Don't overthink it, just do it, and do it again only differently. Make it musical.

A lot of good melodies are made up of 'motifs'. A motif is a very short rhythmic or melodic pattern which is then repeated, often with a slight variation. A repeated motif sounds good to the listener because it sounds familiar as soon as it's repeated. The third time you play it any variation enhances the listener experience because you can fool them into thinking they're hearing something they already know then the variation is a pleasant surprise.

Don't forget you can improvise the rhythms as well as the notes.

Try starting your melody on different beats of the bar. Beat one might be the obvious one to start with but beat two (or the 'and' of beat one) can be very musical. Also, starting on the last beat of the previous bar can be very effective to give a lead-in. E.g. Hey Jude

Once you have completed all the exercises in volume 1 there are several songs from our repertoire which you could play entirely from the notes of the major scale (although you may have to transpose it all to a different key). **TIP:** Streets of London is entirely in CMaj.

Transpose

Once you are really comfortable with a few of the exercises you can then play them in other places along the neck. The whole point of using these patterns is that they are moveable shapes you can use anywhere on the neck. If you slide them down 3 frets (towards the headstock) then you can play the same patterns but now it's in the key of AMaj. To play these with the backing tracks you will have to transpose them as well which many of the 'slow downer / looper' apps allow you to do. If you slide them down 2 more frets you are now in the key of GMaj and the spacing between the frets is significantly wider than it was in C so it's important to practice here as well.