

50 Ways To Dramatically Improve Your Guitar Playing Today



Elmore Music

Tip 1: Listen to different styles of music

Listening to different styles will open the door to new playing techniques, harmonies, rhythms, effects and more! If you close yourself off to only 1 or 2 styles of music your playing can become one-dimensional.

Tip 2: Listen to different instruments

Focusing on the guitar will only give you one perspective with regards to articulation, phrasing and patterns. Try listening to vocals, horns, drums and strings to improve your ideas.

Tip 3: Study with a teacher

A lot of players start by teaching themselves. After a while, their playing hits a wall and they get in a rut. A good teacher can make sure this doesn't happen while keeping the student inspired, learning proper habits and setting goals to keep the student on the right track

**Tip 4: Practice scales as collections of notes**

Instead of always playing your scales ascending and descending, try making melodies and riffs once you have an idea of where the notes are. This will make the scale a lot more interesting and will motivate you to practice!

Tip 5: Work on rhythms

Rhythms will help you to create better phrases. I always have students learn rhythms early on because it will create an awareness of motifs and theme and variation from a rhythmic perspective. It also helps the student understand how to fit the guitar in with an ensemble.

Tip 6: Practice Arpeggios

A great way to understand the notes that make up a chord is to play arpeggios. It's also a nice way to deviate from "scalar" ideas in your playing.

Tip 7: Learn more chords

This may seem obvious, however not only are we talking about different quality of chords and their extensions, but also the many different voicing's of chords. Learning more ways to play the same chord is great for rhythm and lead playing.

Tip 8: Discipline your picking technique

Your left hand may have the dexterity and muscle instincts to play many patterns, but what happens when we don't balance this technique with our picking hand? We get a bit of a mess! So, developing picking technique is crucial to successful improvement.

Tip 9: Use a metronome

I have had many students tell me that they don't need a metronome because they have great timing. Ok, but working with the metronome is still going to be beneficial. Use the ticker to track your own progress with scale or arpeggio patterns or a difficult riff. Gradually increase the tempo every day or week so you can see that you are making improvements!

**Tip 10: Tune your instrument**

This may seem obvious as well, but sometimes overlooked. Train your ear to hear the tuned strings with an electronic tuner. Next time you tune your guitar, do so without the tuner and double check your work when you are done.

Tip 11: Set small goals

Setting goals for yourself is very important. Not only does this promote good practice habits but it also gives you confidence that you achieved something. Be careful not to dwell on that goal that takes years to accomplish.

Tip 12: Phrasing, Phrasing, Phrasing!

Are you playing all the right notes but it's JUST not sounding the way you want it to? Work on all your left and right hand techniques such as hammer-on, pull-off, slides, bending, staccato, legato, palm muting, dynamics, etc. Now, we're making music.

Tip 13: Watch guitarists in a live setting

One of the best ways to become inspired and learn without actually holding your guitar is seeing a live performance. Observe a guitarist and see how he handles certain situations. What kind of effects is he using? What does he tend to do at specific points in a song?

Tip 14: Surround yourself with better players

You must place yourself in a position to observe and learn as much as possible. Playing with guitarists who are more experienced is a perfect scenario. Ask questions, watch them play, emulate what they do.

Tip 15: Play in a band

Performing, even if it's just in a garage does wonders for you. You learn to listen and play with other musicians. You'll soon realize that in the heat of a performance, you play differently.

**Tip 16: Study the history of guitar**

Studying the history of the guitar can open all kinds of doors for any guitarist no matter what level. Simply learning who inspired your favourite guitarist to play will open a world of styles and players.

Tip 17: Memorize songs

When a musician reads music from a piece of paper, the feel of the song is always more rigid than that of a musician who memorizes the song. If all you have to concern yourself with is you and your guitar, there is direct communication from your fingers to the strings. This will lead to more musical possibilities and great feel.

Tip 18: Do online research

Maybe you heard your teacher mention a concept or a band member was talking about music theory and you are curious to learn more. Online research is a great way to gain knowledge and find new perspectives.

**Tip 19: Learn to practice effectively**

Making efficient use of time is a concept that professional musicians excel at. Practicing only what you need to and knowing how to best approach a session is imperative to maintaining your craft.

Tip 20: Teach

Imparting your knowledge to others will open a lot of doors and make you think differently about everything! Think you know all there is about a major scale...think again. You'll be asked questions you never thought of and teach the same concept many different ways, forcing you to look at new ways to view the guitar.

Tip 21: Learn to play finger style

This is a great technique that can take your ability to the next level. You'll be more versatile as well. Finger style is used in many styles and adds a softer touch. You'll also be able to juggle multiple parts at once with practice.

Tip 22: Learn inspired guitar parts

When you hear a guitar part on a recording that you think is great ask yourself, "Why do I like this?" Google the song or ask your teacher – better yet – see if you can transcribe the part and find out WHY you like it! This will help you understand the fingerboard and define your style.

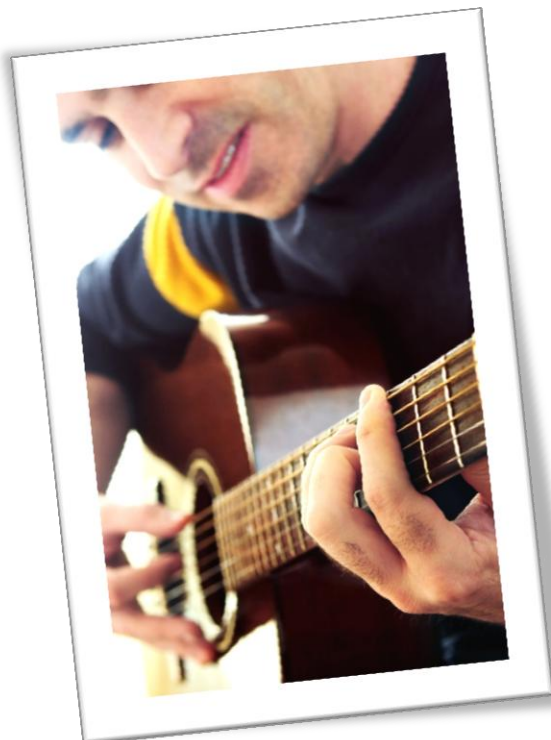
Tip 23: Improvisation

Improvising is one of the best things you can do to improve your playing. This is spontaneous composition.

Improvisation is relative to speaking. Do you rehearse everything you say when talking to someone? Of course not! You know the English language well enough to speak and understand it – same with music.

Tip 24: Music Theory

You can only go so far in your pursuit of being the best player you can be without learning music theory. It's a vast topic, however learning even some fundamentals and working on them daily will help establish a foundation to reach the next level.



Tip 25: Practice mentally (away from your instrument)

Obviously, studying music theory will help you, but also visualizing the fingerboard in your mind and taking a focused journey through part of a practice session will give you confidence because you're focusing 100% on what you need to do and you won't get frustrated nearly as quick.

Tip 26: Read music

If you can read music, you can open a music book anywhere and start playing its contents. You can also play music written for other instruments. If you want to play pit orchestra gigs some day for musicals or theatre or possibly do studio work, you'll need to read to get the work.

Tip 27: Take frequent breaks

Clearing your head and stepping away from the guitar is very helpful in improving and making your practice time effective. The longer you practice without a break, the more likely you are to start making mistakes and get frustrated.

Tip 28: Learn your keys

Knowing what notes are in a key is very helpful. You certainly want to play the correct notes without guessing, right? You may also want to add harmonic or melodic substitution concepts. To apply these concepts, you need to know your keys.

Tip 29: Learn violin or piano music and apply to the guitar

Other instruments play different patterns and phrase differently because the notes are organized differently and the technique to play these instruments is largely different. You'll get more creative playing music written for other instruments.

Tip 30: Work on different fingerings for scales and Arpeggios

Why play your scales and arpeggios the same way all the time? Maybe what you need to do is play different patterns and examine the natural tendencies to play certain phrases. You'll probably discover a nicer way of playing something.

Tip 31: Learn the notes on the fingerboard

This is important especially on the 6th and 5th strings for your barre chords and scales. If you don't know where these root notes are located you'll have a difficult time. Further, the ability to play through chord progressions and executing more advanced rhythm guitar will be virtually impossible.

**Tip 32: Create a new lick every day and play in all keys**

Creating a new lick everyday will build your bag of ideas quickly. Playing your new found ideas in all 12 keys and with different fingerings will give you the confidence to play this new lick in any musical setting

Tip 33: Develop your ear training

You don't want to just let your fingers go flying around without any thought to what you're doing. Do you know what that next note you're about to play will sound like against that particular chord? No? Then you won't always know if that line will work. Hearing ideas and concepts and linking them to the fingerboard is the goal.

Tip 34: Record yourself playing

Accessing your playing is not best achieved while you're practicing. You need to hear yourself after a clear mind and when you're not in the moment of practicing. Recording yourself and listening back later is a very valuable way to access yourself honestly.

Tip 35: Play along with songs

Playing along with a favourite song is a great way to be inspired. It's a lot of fun too! You can also hear more of the nuances and determine if you are emulating the phrasing, sound and techniques exactly the way your hero is.

Tip 36: Work on your weaknesses

The first thing a lot of undisciplined guitarists do when they practice is play something they know well. This may be fine for a warm-up, but if you're going to be serious about improving your skills, you need to access your weaknesses and focus on those. These may become your favourite things to do!

Tip 37: Practice with quality equipment

It's not very motivating to be playing with an amp that breaks up at low volume levels or a guitar that won't stay in tune. Worse yet, tearing your fingers up on sharp frets! Practicing on quality gear will help promote more practicing that is enjoyable for you and your fingers.

Tip 38: Experiment with effects

All it takes sometimes is hearing a particular effect on your sound that transports you to another world! A chord or a single note can sound totally different and give you an idea for a new riff or even a whole song!

Tip 39: Warm-up before you play

Never jump into your practice session without warming up first. Even if you don't think you really need it, it's a very good habit. You never know when you'll cramp up or even feel pain because of no warm-up period. It only takes a few minutes of slow, stress free exercises on the fingerboard as well as some light stretching.

Tip 40: Feel comfortable with different time signatures

Not everything you play will be in 4/4 time. You may need to play in 3/4, 6/8, 5/4,

5/8 or 7/8! These time signatures have a very unique groove with some variations that sound very cool. You won't find these in dance songs but if you're reading this you're probably not just playing dance songs!

Tip 41: Study drums for a little while

I believe that having a strong understanding of rhythm is crucial to becoming a good, versatile guitarist. If you're going to improve your playing, be sure you have as complete understanding as possible of rhythms. Your solos, riffs, rhythm playing and ensemble playing will greatly benefit.

Tip 42: Create your own exercises

Creating your own exercises is always a good thing because you know what your weaknesses are. Be honest with yourself and access what you need to work on. You may find part of a solo or riff that applies the techniques you need to work on.



Tip 43: Play less

This applies to soloing more than anything. Many times, when you hear a guitarist soloing, they don't take a breath! What I mean is, there is no punctuation to their phrasing. There generally needs to be space between phrases so that the listener can digest what was just played before moving on to the next statement. The sign of a mature guitarist is that he'll create themes and motifs throughout their soloing. Remember to avoid "run-on sentences" with your playing and you will improve.

Tip 44: Transcribe music

A fantastic way to improve your abilities and understanding of the guitar is to transcribe music. Now, you don't have to notate what you hear – just play it back and make sure it's correct. You'll learn a lot about chord progressions, soloing, and song writing and more just by actively listening and transcribing. When you get good at this, it's almost like a taking a lesson from your favourite artist!

Tip 45: Play slow

Bruce Lee once said, "Slow down to go faster". This is very true with many things, including improving your speed on the fingerboard. Practice everything slow so you can analyse what your hands are doing. Minimal movement to achieve a maximum result is the goal.

Tip 46: Don't compare yourself with other players

Never compare your abilities with another player. There will always be more skilled and less skilled players than you. Learn from everyone and enjoy your goals. You too have something to teach someone.

Tip 47: Imitate guitarists that inspire you

Who inspired you to pick up the guitar? Remember back to the first time you heard the guitar and describe how it felt. Now, try to imitate this and inspire someone else! Never lose sight as to why you originally started playing guitar. You'll most likely find new ways to play by imitating these artists.

Tip 48: Play in an organized ensemble

What I mean by this is to get involved with an ensemble or band that has a certified coach. The jazz ensemble at school, guitar ensemble, stage band, or perhaps a music school has an ensemble you can join. The coach will help you with what to listen for, when to adjust volume, when to play and not to play

and much more! You'll learn about arrangements and your timing will be very keen.

**Tip 49: Relax**

Of course to make everything I talked about work you need to be relaxed. Tension will work against what you are trying to achieve. Remember to breathe when you play. Many times I'll watch students playing something they need to think about and they don't breathe! Making a conscience effort to warm-up and stretch before every session and taking some deep breaths will go a long way. The easiest way to relax when playing is simple. Breathe.

Tip 50: Have fun!

The last ingredient we need to be better players is to make the experience as enjoyable as possible. If you're not having fun making music, people will notice. Be disciplined in your approach, but also realize that this journey is about having positive experiences back into it.

Thank You ...

We hoped you enjoyed these 50 tips to improve your guitar playing.

There is never a better time to pick up your guitar and get

You've always wanted to learn the guitar, it's been a dream and you are living it.

Remember the day you bought your first guitar and the fact that you didn't need any guitar practice motivation.

Or the time you looked forward to your first lesson, no guitar practice motivation was necessary.

Chances are you are a bit frustrated but don't let this frustration stop you from taking your guitar playing to the next level.

Next time you start slipping back into a rut just think about what Jimi Hendrix once said...

"Sometimes you want to give up the guitar, you'll hate the guitar. But if you stick with it, you're gonna be rewarded"

Be Awesome



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