

The Five Pillars of Great Guitar Playing



*How to Simplify What You Learn On Your Guitar
So You Can Practice LESS While Improving MORE*



by Graehme Floyd

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THE FIVE PILLARS OF GREAT GUITAR PLAYING



***HOW TO SIMPLIFY WHAT YOU LEARN ON YOUR GUITAR
SO YOU CAN PRACTICE LESS WHILE IMPROVING MORE***

BY GRAEHME FLOYD

MORE MATERIAL BY GRAEHME FLOYD

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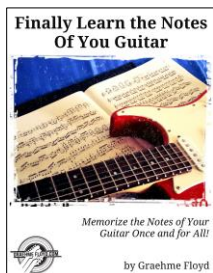
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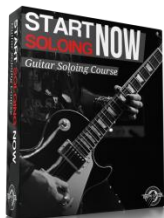
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INTRODUCTION

Hello this is Graehme Floyd and thank you so much for grabbing a copy of *The Five Pillars of Great Guitar Playing*.

This book will teach you my personal approach to breaking down and organizing the multitude of things there are to learn on the guitar.

This way of understanding music and the guitar was something I developed over the course of a decade of teaching and nearly two decades of learning to play.

I consider my journey as a musician to be ongoing and never ending; there is always more to learn and explore!

What you are about to learn is my current working approach to learning and teaching the guitar. As I continue to learn more about the guitar and teaching, this approach will also improve.



WHAT WILL YOU LEARN BY READING THIS EBOOK?

By the time you have finished reading this book you will have learned the answers to the following questions:

- **What are the Five Pillars of Great Guitar Playing?**
- **Why should I be aware of the Pillars?**
- **What will the Pillars do for my guitar playing?**
- **What will the Pillars do for my guitar practice time?**
- **How are the Pillars broken up into smaller pieces?**
- **How do I apply what I have learned about the Pillars to start improve my guitar playing?**

WHY ARE THE PILLARS IMPORTANT?

As with any new idea that you are attempting to understand, it is important that come to the Pillars with an open mind.

*My aim is to help you
get really good at
playing your guitar as
quickly as possible.*

But, you should still be critical of what you are learning. I encourage you to ask “Why?” with regards to this approach and seek to understand it.

You may find my way of organizing things works for you, or you may want to take what you’ve learned and adapt it into your own approach.

Ultimately, it doesn’t matter to me whether you use everything or just a few small pieces, as long as these ideas help you to improve your guitar playing.

Here are the benefits that you will gain by understanding and implementing the Pillars into your own approach to learn the guitar:

- **Improve As A Guitarist Much Faster**
- **Organize and Simplify What You Need to Learn**
- **Prioritize What is Important to Learn Right Now**
- **Maximize Your Results; and...**
- **Minimize the Time It Takes to Achieve Those Results**

Ultimately, the main benefit of the Pillars comes down to **time**.

It seems like you never have enough time and any extra time that you do have doesn’t get used on the things that you want.

***Learn the Pillars with
an open mind.***

The purpose in knowing and applying the Pillars is to make the best use of your time in order to maximize your guitar playing.

My aim is to help you get really good at playing your guitar as quickly as possible, or at least in as little time as possible.

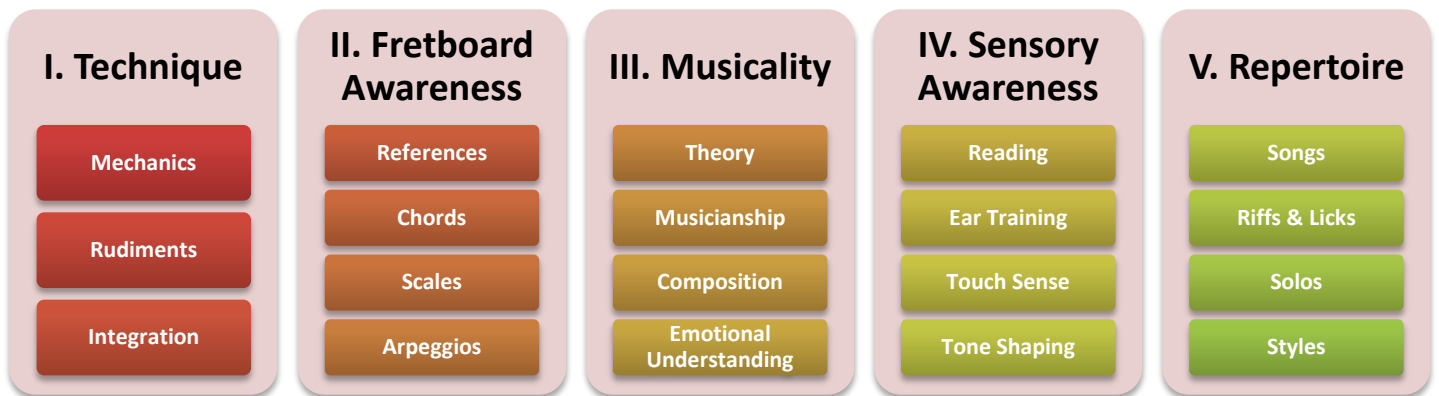
When you follow the Five Pillars of Great Guitar Playing you will be able to gain significantly more from your practice time compared to other forms of practice.

I will be going into greater detail of how to use the Pillars later on in this book, but before you can learn HOW to use them, you need to know WHAT the Pillars are...

WHAT ARE THE FIVE PILLARS?

The Five Pillars are a way of breaking down and organizing all of the things that there are to learn on your guitar, so that prioritization becomes easier.

Here is a very quick overview of each of the Pillars and how they may be further broken down into smaller, sub-categories:



We will be going into *much* greater depth with each of the Pillars, as well as their sub-categories very soon. For now it is enough to know *what* the Pillars actually are.

ORGANIZATION

One of the things that you will find as you progress as a guitarist is that there seems to be an ever-increasing number of things to learn and practice.

Songs, solos, chords, scales, licks, arpeggios, and technique...the list goes on and on.

There is always something to practice and yet you never have enough time to work on all of it.

With so much to practice, it is very easy to become overwhelmed, leaving you feeling helpless, and paralyzing your ability to improve. With too many choices, we often choose to do nothing at all!

Part of my goal in teaching you the Pillars is to simplify what there is to practice on the guitar *and* help you decide what to focusing on during your practice time.

***Spend time working
on something from
each of the Five
Pillars every day.***

The Pillars will help you by simplifying your choices of what to work on making it easier to decide and start practicing.

The easiest way to apply the Pillars is by making sure you work on something from each of the Five Pillars every time your practice, even if that means for just five minutes.

Now, with only five minutes spent practicing a specific area, you might be wondering HOW you would every make progress.

The answer is to make sure that you are taking a step forward with whatever you are working on - even if it is a very small step! Over time, these small steps add up to big improvements.

Looking at your daily practice as a whole, this means that you have to take FIVE steps forward in your playing, one for each Pillar, every single time you practice.

MAXIMIZING WHAT YOU GET FROM YOUR TIME

If I'm being completely honest, I've wasted a lot of time "practicing" over the years.

I know there have been times when I've set aside an hour or more to practice and at the end of it, really only accomplished something that should have taken 10 minutes to do.

Does this sound familiar? If so, have you ever wondered why this happens?

This is mostly due to the attitude or mindset that you take when you actually sit down with your guitar to practice.

***Set goals in five
minute increments.***

Most people will approach practicing like an open road.

They get to their guitar and just start practicing. They don't think about what they want to actually accomplish, but instead just try to play better...whatever that means.

They will work on something until they feel like is better...or until they get bored and start playing a few riffs that they know.

After 10 minutes of playing, they realize they should be practicing and shift back to what they working on.

This cycle of switching between practice and playing continues throughout the entire practice session.

By the time you are done, you've really only spent about 10 minutes on focused practiced, but because it was broken up so much, it won't be as effective as if it was continuous.

What you need to do instead is STAY FOCUSED. This is certainly easier said than done...

If you are anything like me, you probably find it hard to stay focused on something for longer than about five minutes.

This is why you will set goals in five-minute increments.

You only have to stay focused for five minutes at a time, but in that time you have to do your best to try and achieve the goal you've set.

It might only be playing 10bpm faster than you've done before, but if you've improved that much in five minutes, you **HAVE** improved.

This kind of focused practice is how you make the most of your time using the Pillars. You must work to achieve a single, tangible goal every time you sit down to practice.

That being said, what exactly is practice?

I remember very vividly finishing my weekly guitar lessons and being told by my teachers to go home and practice what I had learned.

But, they never really explained what practicing actually means.

So, what do you think practice really is? Take a minute and try to come up with a clear definition of what practicing means.

After years of practicing and helping my students learn to practice, I describe practice as being as being the follow:

- 1) Learning something you don't know
- 2) Getting better at something you do know.

THAT'S IT! If it isn't one of these two things, it isn't practice!

***You must work to
achieve a tangible
goal every time you
sit down***

Yes, playing your favorite songs is a lot of fun, but if you aren't actually getting better at playing that song, then it's just PLAYING.

You must learn to know the difference between playing your guitar and actually practicing if you want to make consistent improvements to your playing skills.

I'm not saying that playing your guitar is a bad thing, but you need to make sure that you make time for practicing **AND** playing, not just playing.

GET BETTER FASTER

How do you measure how good of a guitar player somebody is? Is it by...

- ...how fast they can play their guitar?
- ...how many notes they can play in a certain space of time?
- ...the number of chords or scales they know?
- ...their knowledge of music theory or how many songs they've written?
- ...how well they can sight-read or learn a song by ear?
- ...the number of songs, solos, or riffs they've learned to play?

In my opinion, the way you measure the skill of a guitar player isn't just one these, but ALL OF THEM!

Every aspect of your guitar playing contributes to your skill as a guitarist, no matter how separate or unimportant it might seem.

In fact, the more balanced your abilities are across the board, the better a player you will tend to be over all. Let me explain...

Let's say you've focused all of your time practicing Technique.

You spend hours a day practice picking, so much that you neglect all of the other areas like learning to play songs, practicing scales, understanding theory, and reading music.

Even though you might be able to pick 16th notes at 300 bpm, because you haven't learned any MUSIC, you won't even be able to play the simplest of songs.

Similarly, if all you do is spend your time learning music theory, you might understand what is going on inside of the music, but you won't be able to actually play it!

However, if you have an average ability in every area, you could actually be a better player....

If you have:

- Enough Technical ability to play what is needed in the music,
- A firm grasp of how your Fretboard works,
- A working knowledge of Music Theory,

***Every aspect of
your guitar playing
contributes to your
skill as a guitarist,
no matter how
separate or
unimportant in
might seem***

- The ability to Read music or Learn it by Ear, and...
- A solid collection of Songs under your belt,

You will be a much more effective musician compared to a technician with no musical sense or a theorist who can't play a song to save their life.

The key here is *balance*. If you are too far out of balance in any one area, you will be held-back by your limitations in the other areas.

What you should do is strive for balance with each of the Five Pillars!

PILLAR #1 – TECHNIQUE

Each of the five Pillars can be thought to answer an important and fundamental question about playing the guitar.

The first pillar of great guitar playing answers the question “**How?**”

How are you going to make sound on your guitar?

How are you going to physically play it?

The answer is by using **Technique**.

Before you rip into a great solo, perform that favorite riff, use a new piece of theory, or imitate your guitar heroes, you must learn how to physically create sound on your guitar.

This is what the Pillar of Technique is all about. You will be focusing on the subtle and not so subtle, physical motions used to play your guitar.

Technique for the guitar is a very big topic. As with all of the Pillars, Technique can be broken down further into a several sub-categories which may be explored more easily.

The sub-categories of Technique are **Mechanics**, **Rudiments**, and **Integration**. Let’s take a look at what is involved for each one:

MECHANICS

Mechanics are the smallest building blocks of Technique there are.

Some examples of mechanics include how to hold the pick, hammer-ons, pull-offs, downstrokes, upstrokes, slides, and bends.

There is a plethora of different mechanics used by guitarists out there to be learned and experimented with, however you don’t have to learn them all.



Technique is the Physical Ability to Craft Sound On Your Guitar



Mechanics are the Building Blocks of Technique

It is possible to play a lot of music by learning a dozen or so.

When it comes to practicing mechanics, your goal should be to learn all of the ones that are needed for your chosen style of music on the guitar.

You should also strive to have control over the mechanics you use to as high level as possible.

For instance, you may already be able to do a bend, but how accurate is your intonation – is your bent note actually in tune?

MECHANICS EXAMPLES

- Downstrokes
- Upstrokes
- Rest Strokes
- Free Strokes
- Pickslanting
- Cross Picking
- Hammer-Ons
- Pull-Offs
- Motion Mechanics
- Bending
- Vibrato
- Slides

RUDIMENTS

Rudiments are the next step up from Mechanics. They involve using one or more of the mechanics to play a simple sequence of notes.

If Mechanics are bricks, then Rudiments are like a wall made from those bricks.

For example, you may be familiar with *Alternate Picking* which can be categorized as a type of Rudiment; it involves several different mechanics, including:

- 1) Downstrokes
- 2) Upstrokes
- 3) A Motion Mechanic – how the pick is moved



**Rudiments are like a Wall
built from Mechanics**

We could go ever further and specify the type of motion mechanics: *wrist vs. elbow, flexion vs. rotation vs. deviation*, and more.

Ultimately, the specific mechanics you use will depend on how you personally approach playing the guitar, but the result is usually the same; you have played the Rudiment.

Because Mechanics are combined to create Rudiments, the number of possible Rudiments is enormous – doesn't it seem like every guitar player has their own way of doing things?

To keep things simple, I would advise you start by learning the Rudiments which are the most common in guitar playing.

To help you do this, I have created several Volumes that teach the Guitar Rudiments. I recommend starting with the first two volumes which focus on each hand separately, namely Picking and Legato. You will find the guide by following the links below:

[Guitar Rudiments: Volume 1 - Picking Rudiments](#)

[Guitar Rudiments: Volume 2 - Legato Rudiments](#)

Once you have the basic Rudiments down, you can start to explore some of the more exotic and unique approaches used by specific players.

Or you can experiment with creating a few new Rudiments of your own.

RUDIMENTS EXAMPLES

- Alternate Picking
- Gallop
- Alternate One
- Alternate Four
- Solitary Three
- One-Way Vector
- Vector Three
- Open Dual
- Trill

INTEGRATION

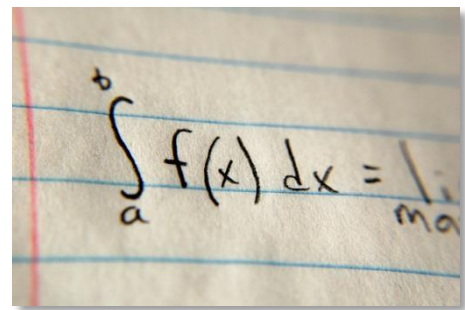
The final sub-category for Technique is the idea of Integration.

Have you ever noticed that the very best guitar players seem to use all sorts of different techniques when they are playing?

They are able to weave many of them together like *picking, legato (hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides), bending,* and more into one seamless lick or phrase.

Great guitar playing is organic; it is composed of many different elements that work together harmoniously.

Imagine listening to music that just used one kind of approach, say *alternate picking*, all of the time. Although the playing may still be amazing, after a while the lack of variety will likely get boring.



**Integration is Key
to Great Technique**

The best players will switch between many different techniques and will do so quite often, sometimes using several within a single phrase or lick.

As an example, take a look at this excerpt from 'Under a Glass Moon' by John Petrucci of the band Dream Theater:

'Under a Glass Moon' - Guitar Solo Excerpt (4:53 - 4:56)

The image shows a musical score for a guitar solo. It consists of two staves: a standard musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a guitar tablature staff below it. The tablature staff is labeled 'T', 'A', and 'B' on the left. The notation includes various techniques such as slides, bends, and vibrato, indicated by arrows and the word 'full'. The excerpt is marked with the number 155.

This two bar phrase contains the following Mechanics and Rudiments:

- Legato Slides
- Alternate Picking
- String Skipping
- Alternate One
- Muted Notes
- Full Bends
- Pull-Offs
- Vibrato
- Positional Playing (Fingering)
- Double Legato Slide
- Partial Pick Three

Your goal when working on Integration is to combine different types of Mechanics and Rudiments together. You should strive to be able to do this instinctually or with as little conscious effort as possible!

There are many different ways of doing this kind of training for Technique.

A simple way to get started is to take a few solos by your favorite guitarists and break them down into the different techniques – like I did above.

Then you work on imitating what they are doing.

INTEGRATION EXAMPLES

- Alternate Picking + Sweep Picking
- Alternate Picking + Legato
- Alternate Picking + Tapping
- Alternate Picking + Bending
- Bending + Vibrato
- Sweep Picking + Tapping
- Economy Picking + Tapping
- Slides + Sweep Picking

PILLAR #2 – FRETBOARD AWARENESS

The second pillar of great guitar playing answers the question of “**Where?**”

Where are you going to play on the guitar?

Where are you going to put your fingers to produce the sounds and notes that you expect to hear?

The answer to this question is **Fretboard Awareness**.

Fretboard Awareness involves creating a deeper connection with how the guitar’s fretboard works musically.

It involves mastering a variety of patterns, shapes, positions, and ideas that connect the fretboard to the different theoretical structures needed to play music on the guitar.

Fretboard Awareness can be broken down into the following sub-categories: **References**, **Scales**, **Chords**, and **Arpeggios**.

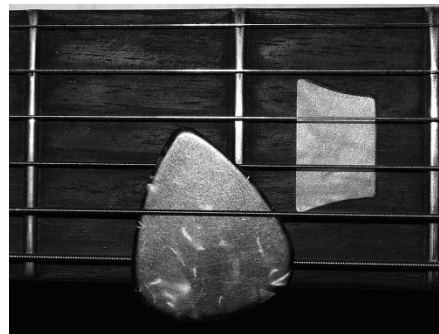
REFERENCES

These are the smallest levels of detail on the fretboard.

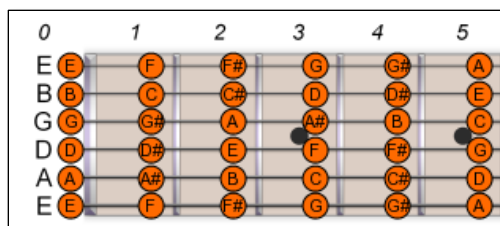
It includes the basic terms and ideas needed to play the guitar such as *fingering*, *fret numbers*, and *string numbers*, but extends to more advanced concepts like *note awareness*, *interval patterns*, and can even look at *functional awareness of notes*.

REFERENCES EXAMPLES

- Fret Numbers
- String Numbers
- Fretting Hand Finger Numbers
- Picking Hand Fingers (Finger Picking)
- Fret Marker Numbers
- String Overlap Points (Tuning)
- Open String Note Names
- Fret Note Names
- Interval Patterns



Fretboard Awareness helps you know Where to Play



References are the smallest details of the Fretboard

SCALES

Scales are one of the basic building blocks of melodies, not just by guitarists, but by musicians.

The most famous scale used by guitarists is the Minor Pentatonic scale.

However, there are many other scales out there to use on the guitar including the Major scale and its related modes, the Minor scales including Natural, Melodic, and Harmonic as well as their modes, and a vast collection of exotic scales.

In addition to the types of scales out there to learn, you can also look at how a scale is laid out on the fretboard.

Positional patterns, three-note-per-string shapes, single-string scales, and even the interconnection of different patterns across the entire length of the fretboard.



Scales are like a Staircases of Notes

SCALE EXAMPLES

- Minor Pentatonic Scale
- Major Pentatonic Scale
- Blues Scale
- Major Scale
- Modes
- CAGED Scale Shapes
- 3-Note-Per-String Scale Shapes
- Single String Scales

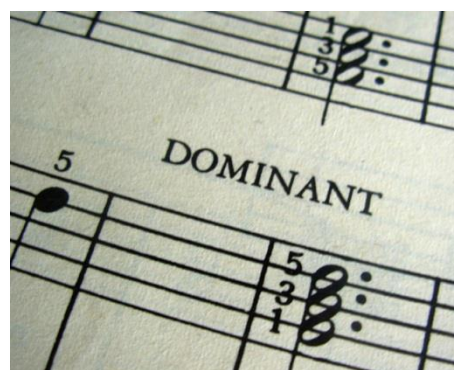
CHORDS

Chords may not be the most fun part of playing the guitar, but if you want to play songs than you are going to need to be well versed in playing them.

This is because about 90% of your time play music on the guitar is going to be spent playing rhythm which very often uses chords.

By traditional musical terms, a chord is made up of three or more different notes – apologies to our old friend, the Power Chord which only has two.

When it comes to practicing chords, there are tons of things to work on.



You Need to Know Your Chords to Be a Great Guitarist

At the very least, it is essential that you become familiar with the basic *open chords* (G, D, E, C, A, Em, Am, Dm, etc.), but beyond that there are many different areas to explore: *chord qualities* including the *basic triads* (Major, Minor, Diminished, Augmented), *7th Chords* (maj7, m7, Dom7, etc.) and even going into *extensions* (9ths, 11ths, 13ths).

Aside from the quality of chords, there are also many different *voicings* to learn; you may know how to play an open G Major chord, but can you play G Major anywhere on the fretboard? By learning different voicings, you will learn things like *moveable chords*, *barre chords*, *inversions*, *drop voicings*, *10th voicings*, *shell voicings*, and *chord alteration*.

CHORD EXAMPLES

- Open Chords
- Moveable Chords
- The CAGED System
- Barre Chords
- Major Chords
- Minor Chords
- Dominant 7th Chords
- Suspended Chords
- Slash Chords
- Drop 2 Chords
- Drop 3 Chords

ARPEGGIOS

Guitarists seem to tie a lot of mystery to arpeggios.

However, they are actually very simple. Arpeggios are really just chords that are played one note at a time instead of all of once; arpeggio means '*broken chord*'.



Arpeggios are “Broken” Chords

Now, in the beginning this may involve picking the individual strings of a held chord, but as you advance you can open up an entire world of musical possibilities.

The larger patterns of arpeggios allow you play more than one note on a single string, unlike chords, so that you can create entire melodies if you wanted.

As with learning chords, arpeggios come in different qualities.

You still have the same ones as with chords like *triads*, *7th chords*, and *extensions*, however there are many more ways of playing these arpeggios compared to their chordal counterparts.

Multi-string voicings, inversions across the fretboard, and *single string stretches* give you the ability to play wide sweeping passages at lightning speeds... if you so desire.

ARPEGGIO EXAMPLES

- Arpeggio Picking Patterns
- Arpeggiated Chords
- Major Arpeggios
- Minor Arpeggios
- Diminished Arpeggios
- Triad Arpeggios
- 7th Arpeggios
- 3 String Arpeggios
- 4 String Arpeggios
- 5 String Arpeggios
- 6 String Arpeggios

PILLAR #3 – MUSICALITY

The third pillar of great guitar playing attempts to answer the question of “**Why?**”

Why is it that certain combinations of pitches sound like noise, while others sound like music?

Why do we use specific notes together when we play?

Why do certain sounds or motions in music make us feel happy or sad?

Why can different instruments play together and not sound like a mess?

To answer these questions, you will need to master the Pillar of **Musicality**.

Musicality is one of the only Pillars that is not unique to the guitar – it applies to all instruments regardless of how they are played or the style of music they are being used for.

Musicality concerns itself with the fundamental concepts that govern all music and instruments, and it is what allows musicians to communicate and work together.

Musicality can be further broken down into the sub-categories of: Music Theory, Composition/Songwriting, Musicianship, and Emotional Understanding.

MUSIC THEORY

Music Theory is a collection of guidelines used to describe how music is organized. The key here is the word *guideline*; they aren't rules and don't have to be followed.

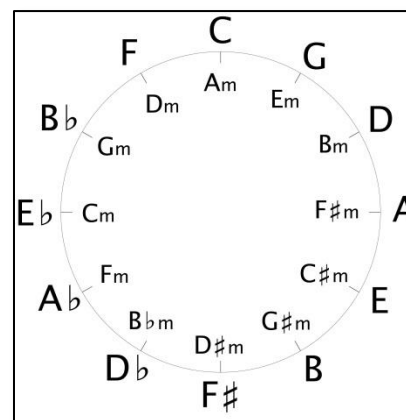
However, in my own experience, the more of these guidelines you ignore, the more likely the average listener is going to think your music is just noise.

That doesn't mean that it IS noise, just that fewer listeners are going to *get it*, whatever *it* happens to be.

Music Theory is often expressed as being the bane of many guitar players' existence, but the truth is that music



Musicality is about the fundamental concepts that govern all music



Music Theory is a guideline for how music is organized

theory can be your greatest ally on your quest to become a great guitarist.

Music Theory can be used to explain all of the things that you do when playing music including *individual notes, scales, keys, chords, progressions, rhythm, accenting*, and even the *tuning* you use on your guitar.

It isn't meant to hinder your creativity, but is instead intended to give you a way of describing and naming all of these interesting musical ideas that you use.

One of the main reasons why you may not be on good terms with theory is that you haven't really seen theory used in practical applications.

Make sure to really use every single thing you learn from music theory.

Analyze and explain what is going on in music that you actually like instead of trying to decipher classical music or jazz – unless you're in to those particular styles of music.

Take time to create new ideas using the theory that you are learning by writing a short solo, lick, or riff that incorporates the new concept. It might expand into an entire piece...you never know.

MUSIC THEORY EXAMPLES

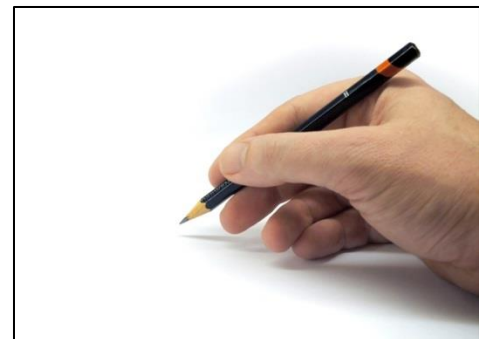
- Notes of Music
- Natural Notes
- Accidentals
- The Chromatic Scale
- Notes of the Treble Clef
- Rhythmic Notation
- The Major Scale
- Key Signatures
- The Cycle of Fifths
- Interval Spellings
- Triad Spellings

COMPOSITION/SONGWRITING

Composition and Songwriting is really an extension of Music Theory, however it deals more specifically with the aspects of creating new music.

This sub-category focuses on concepts that are used specifically when it comes to the process and methods used to write music.

This might include understand song structure, the essential elements that make up a song, hooks, and even lyrics, if you are so inclined.



**Composing is a Skill
in its Own Right**

It is important to understand that songwriting is a skill in and of itself that is separate from learning to play your guitar.

If you want to be a great songwriter you need to hone your songwriting skills in addition to playing the guitar. However, the two skills can be developed in parallel.

You could create a new idea or song that forces you to improve your technical abilities or uses a new music theory concept your learning.

If you aren't really that interested in writing your own music, I recommend that you consider working on developing your songwriting skills anyway.

It will have a direct impact on your guitar playing skills because it exercises your creative muscles.

Other than creating a new song, developing your songwriting skills will improve your imagination, inventiveness, and ability to creating variations, all of which will do wonders for your playing.

It also means that if at some point in the future you actually DO want to start writing music of your own, you'll have already developed the ability to do it well.

COMPOSITION EXAMPLES

- Chords in a Key
- Common Chord Progressions
- Modulation
- Transposition
- Borrowed Chords
- Voice Leading
- Harmonization
- Lyric Writing
- Common Song Forms

MUSICIANSHIP

Musicianship is the professional conduct of a musician. This category is really a broad header that I use as a place to put all the other *stuff* that comes with being a guitarist.

The reason for this specific category is that there are always going to be additional areas to learn and explore that go beyond just playing music.

You need to remember that being a guitarist means that you are also a person and that you are going to be interacting, learning, and working with other people.



**Musicianship is How You
Work In Music Professionally**

In many cases, the things you learn under Musicianship are things that don't just make you a better guitarist or musician; they can help make you a better person.

MUSICIANSHIP EXAMPLES

- Professional Conduct
- Band Roles and Responsibilities
- General Health and Well-Being
- Organization Skills
- Effective Practice Methods
- Equipment Care and Maintenance
- Guitar and Music History
- Problem Solving Skills
- Interpersonal/Social Skills
- Goal Setting

EMOTIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Emotional Understanding is the final and most profound part of Musicality.

In general, when people hear the same music they will tend to *feel* the same emotions. This is because we have a tendency to interpret specific musical ideas the same way.

Musicians, artists, and composers use this concept to create the right mood or atmosphere for their songs.

To master this area, you will need to learn to harness music to a level whereby you can make the listeners feel the exact emotions you want them to feel as they listen to you play.

This is the highest level of musical skill that you can achieve, especially with songwriting.

When you are in command of Emotional Understanding, you won't have to think in terms of chords and keys, but will instead focus on the feelings and emotions that you want to convey.

You will be so attuned to how to create those feelings in the music that you will know immediately how to make it happen.

To develop your Emotional Understanding of music you will need to identify and collect ways in which different emotions may be evoked through music.



Learn to Evoke Emotions Using Different Musical Techniques

It is similar to the way you might collect a bunch of licks by your favorite guitarists, except that the things you are collecting are much more abstract.

As an example, when you play a Major chord such as C Major, it will in general make you feel happy; it sounds warm and comfortable – it reminds me of standing in the warm sunlight on a bright summer afternoon.

However, if you were to play a Minor chord such as A Minor, it will in general make you feel sad; it sounds dark and cold – it reminds me of standing in the rain on a cold, windy day waiting for the bus.

Notice how, when I described the emotions, I didn't just say "*It sounds happy,*" or "*It sound sad.*" I'm trying to give you a sense of what I'm feeling from the sound by describing a vivid picture or memory.

This is the kind of connection that you are going to create when you work on your Emotional Understanding.

Every concept and idea that can be described using Music Theory can have a feeling like this connected with it. Some of them may have multiple emotions depending on the circumstances in which they are used.

Once you understand the theory, you will need to work on figuring out which emotions are connected with it.

The good news is that as a human being, you are already preprogrammed to experience these emotions in music; you just need to identify them and keep track of their effects.

EMOTIONAL UNDERSTANDING EXAMPLES

Learning how to evoke some of the following emotions with music:

- Joy
- Sadness
- Anger
- Loss/Death
- Triumph
- Victory
- Defeat
- Apathy
- Enlightenment
- Pride
- Jealousy
- Disgust
- Radiance
- Insanity
- Anxiousness
- Shame
- Love

PILLAR #4 – SENSORY AWARENESS

The fourth Pillar of great guitar playing is about making all of the other Pillars easier to work with.

Sensory Awareness is about honing the senses that you use when playing music. This includes your sight, your hearing, and your touch senses.

The most important tool you have to be a great guitarist is your mind and in order to use it effectively, you need to be able to get information into and out of your mind as quickly and smoothly as you can. The more effortless you can make this process, the better a player you will be.

Sensory Awareness can be broken down into the following sub-categories: Sight Reading, Ear Training, Touch Sense, and Tone Shaping.

EAR TRAINING

This has to do with developing your ability to recognize and understand what you are hearing when listening to music.

This includes things like instrumentation and timbre, rhythmic awareness, interval recognition, scale identification, chord identification, harmonic function, working out parts by ear, and creating transcriptions.

If you are new to Ear Training then I would suggest that you start with some very simple exercises.

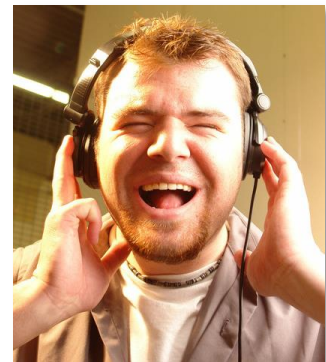
One of the first ear training exercises I ever learned was playing Major scales up and down a single string.

The sound of the Major scale follows the well-known pattern of “Do – Re – Mi – Fa – So – La – Ti – Do;” if you’ve ever seen the film “The Sound of Music,” then you may remember this pattern.

This system of putting vocal sounds to specific degrees of a scale is known as *Solfège*.



Sensory Awareness is about your sense.



Ear Training is Understanding the Music You Hear

Returning to the exercises, you will start by choosing a lower fret on your chosen string and will then try to play the correct frets needed to produce the Major scale by ear.

If you can, try to ignore the names of the notes used for each scale – you are trying to do this by ear and remember the note names would defeat that purpose.

The idea is to train your ear to hear the spaces between each note so that you can hear where the next note lands.

EAR TRAINING EXAMPLES

- Identifying Instruments by their Sound
- Hearing Specific Instruments in a Recording
- Identify Lower or Higher Pitches
- Singing a Scale
- Singing Back a Melody
- Identifying a Chord Progression by Ear
- Identifying a Rhythm by Ear
- Transcribing Music

SIGHT READING

Sight Reading involves reading **any** written form of music.

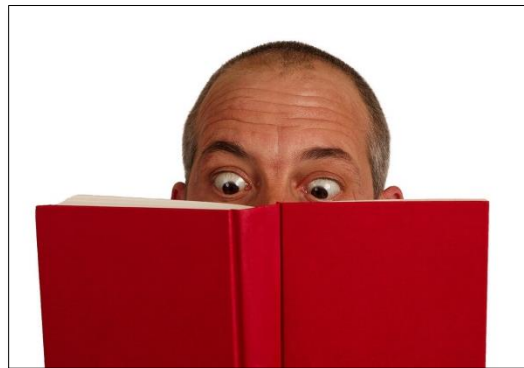
This means that any written form of music for the guitar including: guitar tablature (TAB), rhythm notation, chord diagrams, fretboard diagrams, scale diagrams, chord charts, lyric charts, standard notation, lead sheets, Nashville Number sheets, and any other written forms are included.

Knowing that there are so many different forms of notation for the guitar, I want to you to remember that you don't have to be a master at reading them all.

What you need to do is figure out what kinds of notation are important for your specific aspirations are on the guitar.

That being said, I recommend that you become familiar with all of the forms of notation out there; you should be familiar with them and be able to work with them if necessary.

Unfortunately for some of you, what this means is that you ARE going to have to learn to read basic rhythmic notation and musical notation for the guitar.



Most Guitarists Can't Read Very Well...Don't Be Caught Off Guard!

One of the best ways to make sight reading standard notation easier is to first [learn the names of the notes on your fretboard](#) first.

Luckily, we've already covered this under the Fretboard Awareness Pillar.

TYPES OF READING EXERCISES

It is also helpful to understand the different kinds of sight-reading exercises.

My piano teacher and music mentor taught me that there are really only two different kinds of reading exercises that you can do and that each one will give you different results and benefits:

“True” Sight Reading

Real sight reading is like reading a book.

You start from the beginning, move through it at a fairly consistent speed, it sounds more or less like it is supposed to, and you DON'T go over parts that you screw up.

You don't try to fix mistakes.

For this to actually be possible, the piece of music you are reading has to be fairly easy for you to play or your reading skills have to be extremely well developed.

Anything else you do when it comes to reading will actually be a...

Reading Study

A reading study is when you practice a piece of music you are reading over and over again until you get it right.

You are “studying” the music and learning how to play it because you aren't able to just play it outright by reading through it.

This normally means that the music is at a level where it challenges you to play it; you must take your time to carefully learn how to play it properly.

As I stated before, both True Sight Reading and Reading Studies provide you with benefits:

Sight Reading improves your reading skills and trains you to continue moving forward in the music even if you make a mistake.

Reading Studies allow you to improve your playing skills and memorization by isolating problem areas and training your hands and mind to do something it hasn't done before.

I recommend that you spend time doing both activities on a weekly basis, if not daily.

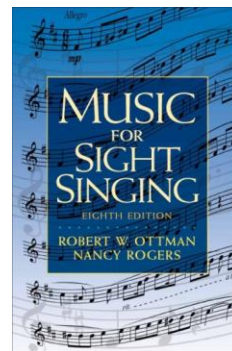
Sight Singing

A nice way of tying your Ear Training and Sight Reading together is working on Sight Singing.

Many university level music programs train all of their students, not just the vocalists, to sight sing music as it creates a strong level of musical literacy.

You begin to be able to know what written music will sound like without having to play it!

Any simple melodies may be used for sight singing, however I found it useful to follow a good sight singing method; my preferred method is “Music for Sight Singing” by Ottman & Rogers.



Great Sight Singing Method

SIGHT READING EXAMPLES

- Reading Tablature
- Reading Rhythmic Notation
- Reading Standard Notation
- Reading Chord Diagrams
- Reading a Chord Chart
- Reading a Lyric Chart

TOUCH SENSE

Touch Sense is a subtle and extremely personal side of playing the guitar. You are learning to connect with the vibrations of the instrument.

The notion of vibration may immediately send your “hippie” radar into caution mode, so before I go any further on the subject of Touch Sense let me be clear.

I don’t consider myself to be a “new age” kind of person. If you study physics at a university level, then you will learn that at the lowest level we are all supposedly just vibrations of energy.

The world is the vibration of energy and the idea behind touch sense is to tap into that vibration to use with your playing.



I don’t consider myself to be an expert on the subject of touch sense, in fact it is something that I myself am continuing to learn.

If you are looking for material on the subject, I strongly recommend Hans Holzner's "Sensory Guitar Method" which goes into much more detail on the subject.

I personally have found it to be a very inspiring approach to developing Touch Sense.

TOUCH SENSE EXAMPLES

- The Feeling of Playing a String You Are Fretting
- The Feeling of Playing a String With Your Finger/Pick
- The Feeling of Holding Down a Chord
- The Feeling of Playing a Scale
- The Feeling of Playing a Lick/Riff
- How a Note is Attacked (Soft, Hard, etc.)
- How a Note is Sustained (Short and Quick, Long and Sustained, etc.)

TONE SHAPING

Tone Shaping is your ability to create a particular sound or tone when playing your guitar.

Tone is often prized by guitar players and with good reason; if your guitar tone doesn't sound good, even if you are a great player, people won't want to listen to your music.

Tone Shaping is a very complicated skill and requires a lot of time and patience to hone.

To improve your tone involves a number of different skills and knowledges all coming together to accomplish one particular goal.

A large part of your tone lies in your hands and fingers; it comes from how you play the guitar.

If you aren't getting the sound you want from your guitar, small changes to the way you play can change the sound dramatically.

How you hold your pick, where you play along the strings, how hard you fret the strings, and even tense your hands are will all have an impact on your tone.



**Tone Shaping is Producing the Tone
You Hear In Your Head**

Be clear about what kind of sound you want and spend time making changes until you get what you are listening for.

On the other hand, the musical equipment that you are using will also have an impact on your tone.

String gauge, pick vs. fingers, the type of pick you use, effects pedals, amps, speakers, the list goes on and on. The entire equipment chain contributes to the sound that you get.

Keep in mind that you don't need to spend thousands of dollars on gear to get a great tone. Some of the best guitar sounds I've ever found came from an old, beater guitar plugged into a practice amp.

To learn about your gear, RTFM which means "**Read the F***ing Manual**". The engineers who built your gear put a lot of time into telling you how it works.

They might not always give you exactly the information you are looking for, but you may just stumble upon some useful tidbit of info by going through the book.

Next, try looking for information or tutorials online. This might include articles, videos, reviews, or demonstrations of the equipment.

You could also sign up for a forum to chat with other guitarists.

Finally, don't be afraid of experimenting with your equipment.

Do you really think that the people who made the equipment put all those knobs and dials on the thing just so that only one combination would sound good?

No, so try playing with the controls and listen for what changes.

You will always have your favorite settings, but by doing this you will learn more about how your gear works and how to find sounds you like – you might even find some new ones!

If you aren't getting the tone you hear in your head, don't be too quick to blame the equipment. The gear will only sound as good as the one who is using it.

A poor player can make great equipment sound like junk, while a great player can make strings on a cardboard box sing.



**Every Knob and Switch Does
Something...Find Out What!**

What I mean is that you are going to have to spend time learning how your equipment works AND improving your playing.

TONE SHAPING EXAMPLES

- Using the Guitar's Controls
- Getting Different Tones with a Pick
- Using the Amplifier's Controls
- Using Distortion/Overdrive
- Using Modulation Effects
- Using Delay Effects
- Using Reverb
- Equalization
- Compression
- Guitar Pickups
- Amp Size & Power
- Speaker Size

PILLAR #5 – REPERTOIRE

The fifth and final pillar of great guitar playing answers the question of “**What?**”

What will you be playing?

What combination of notes and patterns are you going to use to play?

The answer to this question is **Repertoire**.

Traditionally, Repertoire refers to the collection of songs that you have prepared on your instrument and are capable of performing.

However, I prefer to extend the idea of Repertoire much further to include any and all prepared musical materials that you are capable of using to play music.

This creates a much larger group to work with and it encourages you to incorporate more material into your collection of useable ideas.

SONGS

These are, of course, the source of the original meaning of the word Repertoire.

Songs are pieces that you know how to play on your instrument.

They might be standards for a particular style, popular hits, or even original works of your own.

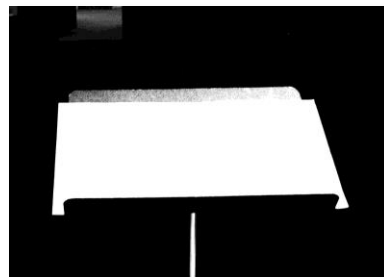
This next point is extremely important when learning songs: you must learn to play the **entire** song.

It doesn't have to be a note-for-note reproduction of the original version, but you should be able to go from start-to-finish and have the listener be able to recognize it.

Variations or interpretations are fine too, just as long as the audience can still hear the original in there somewhere.



Repertoire is what you will be playing



Songs are complete pieces you can play

SONG EXAMPLES

- Standards
- Top 40 Hits
- Covers
- Original Songs
- Traditional Pieces
- Jam Tunes

SOLOS

Solos are complete, melodic ideas played, usually, on an instrument.

They are a chance for you to highlight your skill as a guitarist, as well as continue the general feeling and character of a piece of music.

It is very useful for you as a guitarist to add well known solos in your preferred genre of music to your Repertoire.

Not only are they useful to play with standards, but learning them will also teach you a lot about how soloing is normally approached in that style.

For example, learning solos by Jimi Hendrix will teach you a lot about the language of pop/rock guitar playing and will give you a lot of reference material to use when creating your own solos.

This is the essence of influence in guitar playing. You learn from the players that inspire you by working through their material.

This allows you to absorb their approach so that you can then create your own music in a way that is similar – just don't blatantly copy them.

Once you've gone through the process of learning from three or four different players, your own new and unique approach to playing the guitar will be born that is a mixture of them all.

You will have developed your own playing style that is influenced by your favorite players!

SOLO EXAMPLES

- "Stairway to Heaven" by Led Zeppelin
- "Nothing Else Matters" by Metallica
- "Eruption" by Van Halen
- "Comfortably Numb" by Pink Floyd
- "All Along The Watchtower" by Jimi Hendrix



**Learn existing
solos from songs**

RIFFS

Riffs are well-known guitar phrases, which are typically used for the rhythm section of a song.

When it comes to guitar parts in a song, riffs are the parts that are normally the most catchy and repeatable.

Few of your average listeners will remember how a guitar solo goes, but if you were to ask them how the guitar part of a song goes, they will probably sing the riff.



Riffs are well-known guitar phrases used for Rhythm playing

RIFF EXAMPLES

- “Satisfaction” by the Rolling Stones
- “Smoke On the Water” by Deep Purple
- “Enter Sandman” by Metallica
- “Day Tripper” by the Beatles
- “You Really Got Me” by the Kinks

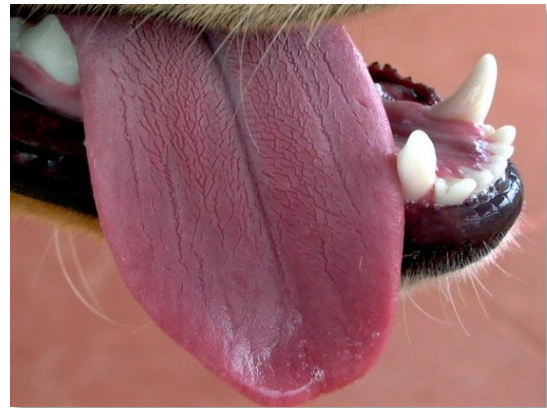
LICKS

Licks are common melodic phrases used for lead playing.

Most musical styles played on the guitar have a plethora of licks that have been passed down from player-to-player over the years.

When it comes to learning licks, don’t try to avoid learning the clichés.

Those licks are clichés for a reason – they work extremely well and have stood the test of time.



Licks are pre-learned ideas for lead guitar playing

Once you have learned the clichéd licks and have gained what you can from them, THEN you can take a look at the less common stuff.

By doing things this way you will have learned the basic language of your chosen style and will have become accustomed to the way it is typically played.

RUNS

Runs are typically smooth, linear passages played through scales and can vary in use from style-to-style.

This is much smaller group under repertoire and can be considered part of the licks or riffs group.

However, it can be useful to focus on specific runs that may be used as part of a solo, melody, or improvisation.

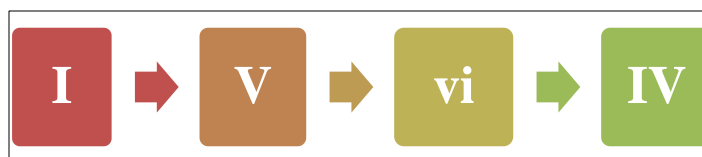


Runs are a series of notes moving up or down

CHORD PROGRESSIONS

Chord progressions are simply the arrangement of chords used to outline the song.

As you start to learn, memorize, and analyze chord progressions, you will notice a lot of similarities and patterns popping up.



Chord Progressions are common movements of chords in music

Chord progressions are used over and over again in many different songs and styles because:

- A) There are few combinations that are sonically pleasing to most people, and...
- B) You can't copyright a chord progression so anyone can use them without getting sued 😊

Depending on the genre, song, and even the arrangement of the song, chord progressions can vary immensely.

For example, some simple pop songs may use only three or four chords while some classical and jazz pieces span many dozens of chords across a number of different keys.

When it comes to learning chord progressions I recommend that you focus on doing two things:

- 1) Learn and memorize the common progressions and patterns that get used over and over again. You'll be playing them a lot, so it is worth learning them sooner than later.

2) Learn to understand what is going on inside the progression – how it is built. You will need to develop your Musicality (Music Theory) to do this fully.

CHORD PROGRESSION EXAMPLES

- Perfect Cadence (V – I)
- Plagal Cadence (I –VI)
- 12 Bar Blues
- ii – V – I
- VI – V – I
- The Four Chord Progression
- Pachelbel’s Canon Progression
- The 50s Progression (Earth Angel)

STYLES

A style is a way by which all of the different elements and components of music are combined together to create a form of expression.

Styles or genres are how we generally tend to categorize the music that we listen to.

Some examples include rock, blues, country, jazz, classical, metal, and many more.

Some styles may be associated with particular time periods such as the Baroque era (1600 – 1750 A.D.) or the Disco style of the 1970s.

When it comes to improving your ability as a guitarist, Style can be one of the biggest subcategories under Repertoire.

This is because it connects directly with all of the other Pillars of Great Guitar Playing and dictates the general way in which each Pillar may be used to play that style.

As an example, if you were learning to play rock music you would be learning about how the different kinds of musical elements are used in rock.

Here are a few questions focusing on rock music which you could try to answer when learning more about Style. Feel free to substitute other styles as you like.

TECHNIQUE

- What kind of technical playing skills do you need to be able to use?
- Which playing mechanics are used in rock music?
- What types of rudiments are commonly used in rock music?
- How are those mechanics and rudiments applied to rock music?



Styles are how all the other things are used in different styles of music

FRETBOARD AWARENESS

- What kinds of chords do you need to know?
- What kinds of scales and patterns are used in rock music?
- What kinds of arpeggio patterns are used in rock music?
- How are each of these things actually used when playing rock?

MUSICALITY

- What level of music theory is used for rock music?
- What kinds of musical patterns are used commonly in rock?
- What keys are used in rock?
- What forms of rhythm and timing are used in rock?
- How are chord progression build in rock music?
- What are the typical song forms in rock music?
- How are songs built in rock music?
- What are the roles of each musician in a rock band?
- What is YOUR role as a guitarist in a rock band?
- What is considered to be professional conduct as a rock guitarist?
- What is the history of rock music?
- What is the history of the guitar in rock music?

SENSORY AWARENESS

- What is the usual way to learn new material when playing rock music?
- How are reading skills used in rock music?
- How do you create a rock music chart or transcription?
- How are aural (listening) skills used in rock music?
- How is the Touch Sense used with rock music? Articulation, nuance, and feel?

REPERTOIRE

- What standards or popular songs are played in rock music?
- What are common or famous solos of rock music?
- What are the most common rock guitar licks?
- What are the most common rock guitar riffs?
- What kinds of chord progressions are commonly used in rock music?

There are many, many more of these kinds of questions that could be asked as you work to learn about just this one style – in fact you could probably fill a book.

The idea here isn't to try and ask all of the questions; it is just to start asking questions about the style itself.

Start to become curious about what is going on in the music.

And, remember that just like with theory, there are no absolute answers when it comes to style.

Just because one guitarist used a particular scale for soloing in rock music doesn't mean that you always have to – it's just a starting point.

Feel free to try different things once you have the basics down!

STYLE EXAMPLES

- How is Funk music played on the guitar?
- How are solos built in Metal music?
- What kind of chord progressions are used in a Latin music?
- How did Jimi Hendrix approach playing the guitar?
- How would Slash approach playing a solo over a certain song?
- How would Yngwie Malmsteen play this lick?

PRIORITIZATION

One of the great things about the Pillars approach to organizing what you learn on your guitar is that it helps to set your Priorities.

WHAT ARE PRIORITIES?

Your priorities are the things which are **MOST** important for you to work on, and you should spend more of your time on.

The Pillars have a built-in approach to Prioritization, which will help you to know where you should spend more time based on your current level of ability on the guitar.

Part of the reason for Prioritization is to ensure that you focus on the things that will yield you the greatest improvement for the time that spend practicing.

Your current level of ability on the guitar will determine how you should prioritize your time and how much time you spend on each of the Pillars.

PARETO PRINCIPLE OR 80/20

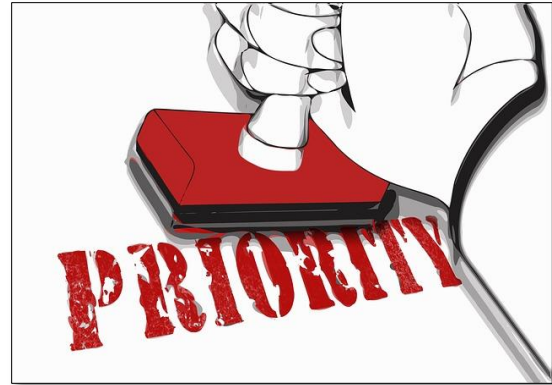
This concept is based on the Pareto Principle or as it has come to be known, the “80/20 Principle”.

The idea behind this principle is that 80% of the results that you gain come from 20% of the things there are to work on.

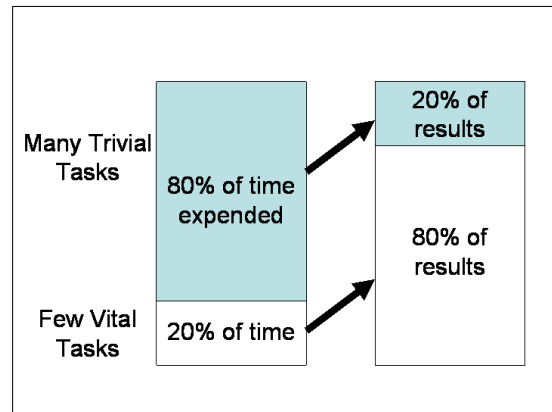
It also means that the remaining 20% of your results will come from the other 80% of the things there are to learn.

“What exactly does this have to do with learning to play my guitar?” you might ask.

The idea is that if you focus on this critical 20%, you will relatively quickly gain 80% of the results you are looking for. This is **MASSIVE** for making good use of your practice time.



Priorities are the things which are MOST important to focus on



80% of your Results come from 20% of the Work

This not only means that you will get A LOT of the results you want, but you can also gain it quickly as working on only 20% of the material is easier than working on all of it!

The hard part is identifying that specific 20% that will give the 80% return.

Right now, it is really difficult to know whether something is important or not because all the concepts are blended together into one big mess.

How are you supposed to know what is important to work on and what isn't?

This is where the Pillars come in. As I said before, your level of ability will determine where you should focus your efforts to improve as quickly as possible.

Before I explain WHAT to focus on, you're going to need to know WHERE you are right now with regards to your abilities on the guitar.

***The Pillars help you
identify the 20%***

To help you identify your current level of ability, use the following guidelines to figure out where you are as a guitarist right now.

Beginner Players

A Beginner Player is someone who is **still struggling to physically play his or her guitar**.

If you have to babysit your hands in order to play anything at all, then you are a Beginner Player.

This doesn't mean that you have perfect technique, far from it, but it does mean that you aren't putting most of your attention on physically playing the guitar as you play it.

Intermediate Players

An Intermediate Player is someone who has **gained physical control of their guitar for simple things**, but who is still **struggling to understand how their fretboard really works**.

If you can play your guitar, but have limited knowledge of your Fretboard including note names, chord patterns, scales, and arpeggios, then you are an Intermediate player.

Advanced Players

An Advanced Player is someone who **has a very good level of playing ability and who has a solid understanding of their fretboard**.

They can play chords in different places on the fretboard and know many different scales and arpeggios, too.

However, Advanced players **struggle to understand the finer details and concepts of music**, specifically how it applies to the guitar.

If you can play well, have a decent knowledge of your Fretboard, but struggle to apply music theory on your guitar, you are an Advanced Player.

Elite Players

An Elite player is someone **who has very good playing abilities** and has a **strong understanding of their Fretboard and music theory**.

Elite players are near the peak of the mountain when it comes to guitar players, but that doesn't mean they are finished learning.

To become a true Master, Elite Players must learn how to fully connect to their guitar and to music itself, to allow them to fully express themselves through music.

This means connecting to the guitar through their various senses and emotionally.

If you can play extremely well, know your fretboard up and down, and have a working knowledge of music theory, but miss the emotionally subtleties of music, you are an Elite Player.

SETTING YOUR PRIORITIES

Each of these four skill levels has a specific Pillar, which should be set as a priority.

Beginner Priorities

Beginner Players struggle with physical playing skills and should prioritize the Pillar of **Technique**.

Intermediate Priorities

Intermediate Players struggle to understand their Fretboard and should prioritize the Pillar of **Fretboard Awareness**.

Advanced Priorities

Advanced Players struggle to understand music and theory, and should prioritize the Pillar of **Musicality**.

Elite Priorities

Elite Players strive to understand the subtleties of expression and emotion, and should prioritize the Pillar of **Sensory Awareness**.

It is important to remember that just because one Pillar may be a priority, does not mean that you should ignore the remaining Pillars.

An Intermediate Player should prioritize Fretboard Awareness, but they should forget about practicing Technique.

Remember, you should be incorporating ALL FIVE of the Pillars into your practice time every day.

Prioritization is used to determine where you should spend any additional time you have to devote in your practice time.

We will be looking at a few examples of how priorities could be used for each skill level of players very shortly.

WHEN IS REPERTOIRE A PRIORITY?

You may have noticed that there is one Pillar which was not set as a priority at any skill level, namely Repertoire. This is not a mistake!

Repertoire should NEVER be a priority, unless you have a gig coming up that you need to prepare for!

Why is this the case?

This is because the Pillar of Repertoire is really the application of all the other Pillars.

In order to learn and play songs you need Technique, Fretboard Awareness, Musicality, and Sensory Awareness.

Another reason that Repertoire should not be a priority is because learning more music can be a hit or miss thing with regards to improving as a player.

When you learn a new song, are you sure that you are actually improving? It really depends on the song doesn't it!

If you learn a song that takes no effort for you to play, have you really gotten any better?

Likewise, if you want to improve your Technique with say, bending, but you choose to learn a song, will your bending improve? Again, it depends...

Does the song contain any bending at all? If so, then it might be okay, but if you've chosen a song that doesn't have any bending at all, then of course your bending won't improve.

This is the problem with prioritizing Repertoire. There is too much uncertainty and variety in songs to allow you to focus on improving specific areas of your playing.

Don't get me wrong; you need to work on Repertoire – remember you are supposed to practice all FIVE Pillars every time you practice!

But, what I'm saying is that Repertoire should never be a PRIORITY. So, don't spend extra time on it if you have the time available.

EXAMPLES OF PRIORITIZATION

Let's take a look at a few example of how this concept of Prioritization might be applied to a practice routine for players of different skill levels.

Please understand that the practice routines provided below are not necessarily ones that you should follow every day. They are examples to show you how to apply the concept.

Beginner Practice Routine

The Beginner Practice Routine will prioritize Technique. This means that you spend additional time practicing Technical exercises like picking, legato, or integration.

| Pillar | Exercise | Time (min) |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Technique* | Alternate Picking Rudiment | 5 |
| | Strumming | 5 |
| Fretboard Awareness | Open Chords | 5 |
| Musicality | Notes of Music | 5 |
| Sensory Awareness | Reading Tablature | 5 |
| Repertoire | Learning a Riff | 5 |
| Total: | | 30 |

**Priority*

Intermediate Practice Routine

The Intermediate Practice Routine will prioritize Fretboard Awareness. This means that you spend additional time practicing things like Scales, Chords, or Arpeggios.

| Pillar | Exercise | Time (min) |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Technique | Legato Exercises | 10 |
| Fretboard Awareness* | Notes of the Fretboard | 10 |
| | Barre Chords | 10 |
| Musicality | Key Signatures | 10 |
| Sensory Awareness | Learning Riffs by Ear | 10 |
| Repertoire | Learning a Song | 10 |
| Total: | | 60 |

**Priority*

Advanced Practice Routine

The Advanced Practice Routine prioritizes Musicality. This means that you will spend more time on things like learning theory or understanding the dynamics of working in a band.

| Pillar | Exercise | Time (min) |
|---------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Technique | Tapping Etude | 15 |
| Fretboard Awareness | 3NPS Scales | 15 |
| Musicality* | Interval Spellings | 15 |
| | Harmonization | 15 |
| Sensory Awareness | Reading Standard Notation | 15 |
| Repertoire | Applying a Lick | 15 |
| Total: | | 90 |

**Priority*

Elite Practice Routine

The Elite Practice Routine prioritizes Sensory Awareness. You will spend more time on Sight-reading, Ear Training, or connecting to your guitar on an Emotional Level.

| Pillar | Exercise | Time (min) |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Technique | Sweeping Etude | 20 |
| Fretboard Awareness | 7 th Chords | 20 |
| Musicality | Voice Leading | 20 |
| Sensory Awareness* | Transcribing | 20 |
| | Visualization Exercises | 20 |
| Repertoire | Learning a Solo | 20 |
| Total: | | 120 |

**Priority*

Notice that as the skill level of the player increases, so too does the amount of time spent practicing.

Although not absolutely necessary, it is a good idea to increase your practice time as you improve as a player. More advanced concepts will take longer to learn and absorb compared to beginner concepts.

However, you should always work with a practice schedule that fits to your available time.

SUMMARY

Here is a quick recap of everything that you have learned in this book about the Five Pillars of Great Guitar Playing and how they apply to you:

- Everything you can learn on your guitar can be organized into five different categories called the Five Pillars of Great Guitar Playing.
- The Five Pillars of Great Guitar Playing are:
 1. **Technique** – How you physically play your guitar
 2. **Fretboard Awareness** – How the fretboard is organized
 3. **Musicality** – How music works
 4. **Sensory Awareness** – How you connect your mind to your guitar
 5. **Repertoire** – What you actually play on your guitar
- Each Pillar can be broken down further into sub-categories:
 1. **Technique:** Mechanics, Rudiments, Integration
 2. **Fretboard Awareness:** References, Scales, Arpeggios, Chords
 3. **Musicality:** Music Theory, Musicianship, Composition/Songwriting, Emotional Understanding
 4. **Sensory Awareness:** Sight Reading, Ear Training, Touch Sense, Tone Shaping
 5. **Repertoire:** Songs, Solos, Licks, Riffs, Runs, Chord Progressions, Styles
- Strive for balance in your abilities with the Pillars
- Spend time practicing at least one thing from each Pillar every time you practice
- Prioritize additional practice time to different Pillars based on your Skill Level:
 - Beginners should prioritize Technique
 - Intermediate Players should Prioritize Fretboard Awareness
 - Advanced Players should Prioritize Musicality
 - Elite Players should Prioritize Sensory Awareness
- Repertoire is never a priority – unless preparing for a performance.

To help you start to apply these concepts in your own playing, here are a series of Action Steps to follow:

ACTION STEPS

1. Review all of the concepts in this book and answer the following questions:
 - a. *What are the Five Pillars of Great Guitar Playing?*
 - b. *How does each Pillars breakdown into smaller categories?*
 - c. *How do you apply the Pillars to you daily practice?*
 - d. *What is prioritization?*
 - e. *What determines if you are a Beginner player?*
 - f. *What determines if you are an Intermediate player?*
 - g. *What determines if you are an Advanced player?*
 - h. *What determines if you are an Elite player?*
 - i. *Which Pillar should each skill level prioritize?*
 - j. *Which Pillar is never set as a priority?*
2. Identify what current level of ability on the guitar. Are you a: Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, or Elite? (See pg. 36)
3. What Pillar should you prioritized for your skill level? (See pg. 37)
4. Choose what you will work on for the Pillar of Technique.
5. Choose what you will work on for the Pillar of Fretboard Awareness.
6. Choose what you will work on for the Pillar of Musicality.
7. Choose what you will work on for the Pillar of Sensory Awareness.
8. Choose what you will work on for the Pillar of Repertoire
9. Determine how much total time you spend practicing each day.
10. Organize your practice time so that you spend time practicing something from each of the Five Pillars.
11. Use any addition time to focus on your prioritized Pillar. (Step #3, above)
12. Start practicing!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Graehme Floyd is a guitarist, composer, clinician, teacher, and music coach based in the London, Ontario, Canada area.

With more than 10 years of teaching experience, Graehme has worked to help hundreds of guitarists of varying age and skill level. By providing support beyond mere teaching, including educating, training, coaching, and mentoring, Graehme has helped his students to reach their goals and take their playing to higher levels of excellence.

At the age of 8, Graehme began his musical training with the piano. After 5 years, he moved to the guitar when he discovered the music of Metallica. Since then, Graehme has expanded his musical knowledge extensively and has developed a thorough understanding and application of classical and jazz theory, voice leading and harmony, advanced improvisation, virtuoso technique, composition, music business, and artist development.

With more than 15 years of performance experience, Graehme has worked with numerous professionals and bands including the symphonic metal bands Avidas and Autocratic Oath, and the progressive Rush/Dream Theater cover band Falling into Infinity. Graehme currently plays lead guitar with the hard rock band [Opus Rex](https://www.opusrex.com/).

Online Guitar Lessons: <https://www.graehmefloyd.com/>

Music Lessons in London, Ontario, Canada: <https://www.londoncollegeofmusic.com/>

Opus Rex Band Website: <https://www.opusrex.com/>

Follow Graehme on [Facebook](#) for the latest updates on shows, lessons, and events.

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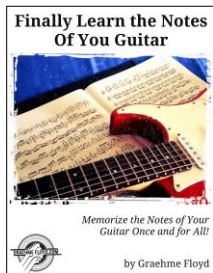
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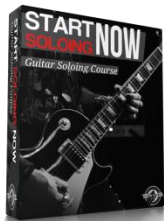
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