



How to Practice

Practicing the guitar is really not much different than practicing any other sport. Yes, I did say sport. You may ask how you compare guitar playing to a sport. Well for one I don't get all that sweaty when I practice my guitar compared when I'm working out but the concepts are the same. You may isolate weak areas of your playing just as an athlete. You work on form and making sure your technique is correct just as an athlete. In all honestly I see few differences, beside the sweaty part.

One thing that we guitar players do not do a very good job of is keeping track of our progress. Athletes love to track their progress, weight they have gained or loss, how much they can bench press, how fast they can run a mile. As a guitar player most of us do not track anything like this. I would expect if I was in a room full of players and I asked if anyone had improved over the last year, most everyone would stand up. Then if I would ask for proof, I don't think many could provide any proof.

Keeping a log of what you practiced is a great way for you to overcome this. Not only will you be able to look back on how much you have progressed but it will boost your confidence and you can see that your time is not being wasted. I've been using an excel spreadsheet I made a while back, but you can also use graph paper to track your practices. Make sure you keep them, and look back on them ever now and again.

Everyone has a different level of experience on the guitar, and different goals. This guide is about how to take the limited time you have and make the most of your guitar playing to help maximize your improvement from day to day, week to week, and month to month.

It's important to understand that practice is different from playing. Looking at our analogy of the athlete the athlete does not enjoy running miles and miles and sprinting (well some may). They understand that in order to excel at their sport that they are training for they need to work on these other skills. Guitar players are no different having the knowledge or skill to play chords and scales will help you master what song you're currently working on, or one you may be working on in the future.

With this in mind it's important that you practice when you practice and play when you play. Your practice time is not the time to be playing. I would recommend setting some time at the end of your practice to play. It's a great way to wind down at the end of a session.

Something you can do to try and optimize your time is find a place where you will not be bothered when your practicing. Don't practice in front of the TV, don't practice with other people are around who may interfere. Practicing in an unused room is ideal but sometimes you may



need to lock yourself in the bathroom just to get away and have some quiet time. By all means, don't answer the phone. The good lord gave us answering machines for a reason they can leave a message.

Another important thing is to make sure you are well organized. Have your practice material together. Some people like three ring binders divided into different sections. Some like folders of loose papers. For you environmentally concuss users I would encourage you to use Microsoft Onenote or an applications similar to that (word or openoffice writer will also work). This will keep all your practice material in one location so you will not need to spend more than a second in searching for your data.

I compared practicing guitar to the training of an athlete. Most professional trainers will target certain body parts in one session and then different body parts in the next. Now you may wonder how to do this when practicing the guitar. Well, guitar players tend to really focus all their time and energy on their fretting hand. In time they lose sync with their picking hands. Especially when getting into advanced topics like sweep picking (I'm guilty of this). For every other or even every couple of practice sessions spend the entire session or even part of it focusing on what your picking hand is doing. You can keep practicing your chords, scales or arpeggios but just be mind full of that other hand.

Every time you sit down to practice, play with a drum machine or metronome. This helps you build up that natural timing that is important to all guitar players. This will also allow you to track and build speed in your playing.

You should not practice daily and not try and practice in a marathon. If you plan on an hour a day for your practice and something comes up and you cannot practice for a few days. Don't try and make up that time by having a 3 hour practice session. Just start where you left off, as if you didn't miss anything. I'm in no way saying never extend your practice session if you have the time. If you really close to getting a technique down and you think if I just spend a little more time, then by all means keep working on it.

The last thing I wanted to touch on is you should learn some songs. Start with some easy songs and work toward more difficult ones. Even if you have been playing the guitar for years learn some songs. As you learn music theory apply it to those songs, those chords, etc. This will help you when you go to jam with other musicians that you have a collection of songs. Nothing will ruin an audition easier than going there and not knowing any songs, and just having some theory and technique.

In warping up this article, I hope you can understand how following some basic steps you can greatly improve your playing and knowledge of the guitar.

