

# GUITAR SCHOOL

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# THE GUITAR CLASS

## Background

It has only been in the last thirty years that guitar instruction has made its way into the school music curriculum. Organized guitar classes first appeared in the late 60's. At that time, very few colleges and universities offered any instruction on the guitar. Music educators had to scramble to obtain the skills and information needed to organize and teach the guitar class.

As music educators, we are continually challenged to learn and update our skills and knowledge. Our job responsibilities often require that we teach in areas in which we have not been adequately trained. We start our careers and realize that we need more information on how to teach voice and choir, on how to teach strings and an orchestra, on how to teach the jazz

ensemble, on how to teach the band. As band directors we might find ourselves in charge of an orchestra program. We attend conferences, take classes, study privately, go to workshops, ask our friends for help, bring in clinicians — whatever it takes to gain the knowledge we need. Can a non-guitarist teach a guitar class? You bet they can — and do.

## Teacher Preparation and Class Size

Music education majors have traditionally been required to enroll in so-called “technique of teaching” courses in band and orchestra instruments. Exposure to the guitar is sometimes included but most often it is ignored. The minimal requirements of these technique courses are:

- An understanding of the pedagogy of the instrument
- Knowledge of basic adjustment, maintenance and care
- The ability to demonstrate correct playing positions
- Some knowledge of the repertoire

The *Teacher's Guide* assumes no past experience with the guitar. It is a guide designed for the music teacher who has little or no experience with the guitar or with teaching the guitar class. While you can learn along with your students, it is advisable to take some guitar lessons to strengthen your knowledge of basic right and left hand playing techniques. For experienced guitar teachers, the *Teacher's Guide* offers many valuable suggestions, teaching strategies and supplemental materials based on the author's thirty

years of experience in teaching and writing materials for the guitar class.

The guitar class should be an elective class with a maximum enrollment of 25 to 30 students. In a high school, it most often meets every day for a semester or for the school year. It attracts a heterogeneous group of students.

## Facilities and Equipment

Many of the classes are taught in the band room where music stands are available. The following items are very helpful in teaching the class:

- a good capable sound system
- storage for guitars and supplemental music library
- a VCR and TV monitor
- practice rooms or a small ensemble room
- a piano
- school amplifiers
- a chalk board or marker board
- a PA system and microphones for “showcase” performances

## Selecting a Guitar

In most schools, the students are required to provide their own guitar. I recommend acoustic nylon or steel string guitars, but it is okay to allow electric guitars as well (no amps except in practice rooms or for performances). There is no substitute for a quality guitar purchased from a dealer that will stand behind its product. A poorly set up guitar with high action is difficult to play and will discourage the student.

### *Nylon Strings*

The nylon string guitar (classical) is an excellent choice for the beginner. There is less tension on the strings than on the steel string guitar, making the strings easier to depress. A distinguishing characteristic of the nylon string guitar is its open peg box. The tone quality is dark, mellow and somewhat delicate. Do not put steel strings on this guitar.

### *Steel Strings*

There are about a hundred pounds more pressure on the neck of a steel string guitar. An easy to play steel string guitar will be slightly more expensive than a nylon string guitar. Light gauge strings make this guitar easy to play for beginners. The neck is fairly narrow and the tone is bright, brassy and forceful.

# COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an elective course offering beginning instruction on the guitar. It covers open chords, power chords, moveable chords, accompaniment techniques and a variety of playing techniques and styles including both the pickstyle and finger-

style approaches to the guitar. The course also includes music fundamentals, theory, songs, performing, listening, composing, improvising, analyzing and learning how to read standard music notation and tablature.

## Goals

- To learn how to play chords, accompaniment and melodies on the guitar
- To learn how to read music notation, chord frames and tablature
- To develop an understanding of music fundamentals and theory
- To learn how to perform, write and create music
- To develop the ability to analyze, describe and listen to music
- To develop the ability to match pitch and sing on pitch
- To develop an understanding of music in relation to history and culture

## Guitar Technique

### Chords

- Principal chords -in first position in the Keys of D, G, A, E, Em, Am and C
- Secondary chords — ii, iii and vi
- Embellished chords — major and minor 6ths, major and minor 7ths, add9
- Altered chords — suspended, minor #7th, dominant 7thb9
- Moveable chords -major, minor, 6th, 7th and dominant 9th type chords

### Accompaniment

- Pickstyle strums — various pop, blues, ballad and jazz styles for rhythm guitar performance
- Fingerstyle — various styles of strums plus arpeggios and plucking patterns using free strokes (tirando)

### Melody or Lead

- Pickstyle down-and up-strokes
- Fingerstyle alternating rest strokes (apoyando)

### Scales

- G and C major scales in 1st position and 2nd position
- Minor pentatonic scales — Gm pentatonic, Am pentatonic and Em pentatonic

## Notation and Theory

### Fundamentals

- Staff, bar lines, measures, treble clef, note names, meters, chord frames, tablature, counting music, writing music notation, note values, primary bass, roots, fifths, keys, repeat signs, intervals, sharps, flats, tempo markings, dynamics
- Notes in 1st position
- Notes in 2nd, 3rd and 5th positions for the more advanced students

### Theory

- Chords: principal, secondary, embellished, altered
- Common progressions: I-IV-V7, i-iv-V7, ii-V7, I<sup>o</sup>-vi-ii-V7, i-VII-i, i-VII-VI-V-i

### Elements of music

- rhythm, melody, harmony, tone color (timbre) and form

### Ear training

- playing by ear

### Improvisation

### Composition

- learn to write music utilizing the three structural principles: repetition, contrast and variation
- analyze songs performed and studied in class

## Vocal Instruction (optional)

- Learn to sing on pitch and discover vocal range and register
- Learn to sing and play an accompaniment on the guitar
- Learn vocal techniques — breath control, tone production, expression, phrasing
- Learn to sing a harmony part

## Performance

- Perform songs and notation exercises studied in class
- Perform solo or in small groups for the class
- Present “showcases” or concerts to invited students
- Performance test on achievement standards — chord progression, strums, note playing

## Appreciation

- Guest performers/clinicians — invite local studio teachers and performers to the class
- Develop an aesthetic perception for valuing and comparing music
- Develop a historical and cultural awareness of the contribution of music to a society
- Point out the contributions made by various ethnic groups

## Major Activities

- Guitar instruction and practice
- Playing accompaniment on the guitar to songs studied in class
- Singing and playing accompaniment on the guitar (optional)
- Performing for the class in small groups or as a soloist
- Listening to a variety of music that represents many styles
- Learning about music fundamentals and theory
- Writing and composing music
- Improvisation
- Viewing music videos
- Individual study and projects

## Evaluation

Grades in this class will be determined on the following basis:

- Day to day participation, practice, attitude and effort
- Individual playing and performance tests
- Group performance tests
- Successful completion of various Achievement Standards
- Objective tests on the fundamentals of music
- Maintaining a notebook
- Solo and small group performances before the class
- Working up to your ability — based on the teacher's evaluation of your musical aptitude
- This class will observe and follow the school tardy and attendance policy as it pertains to grades



# UNIT ONE

## Chords & Accompaniment

(pages 2–14)

**Introduction:**

Types of Guitars, Parts of the Guitar  
 Holding the Guitar  
 Tuning the Guitar, Names of Strings

**Music Fundamentals:**

Notes and Rests  
 Bar lines, Measures and Time Signatures  
 Staff, Clef Sign, Frames, Tablature

**Chords:**

C and G7 (3 string chords)  
 D, A7, G

**Accompaniment:**

Basic Strum No. 1

**Songs:**

*Marianne, Tom Dooley*  
*He's Got The Whole World*  
*Worried Man Blues*  
*When The Saints Go Marching In*  
*Amazing Grace, Our Land, Surfin'*

## Learning to Read Music

(pages 62–68)

**Introduction:**

Playing Techniques  
 Pickstyle Down-Stroke (♣) and Up-Stroke (♠)  
 Fingerstyle Rest Stroke (*apoyando*)  
 Note Reading Preparation  
 Rhythm Drills  
 Left-hand Drill

**Music Fundamentals:**

Whole Notes  
 Half Notes  
 Quarter Notes  
 Counting Rhythms  
 Note Names

**Notes:**

E, F and G on the 1st String

**Songs:**

*Mist*  
*Chelsie*

## Supplemental Materials

**General Handouts:** *Course Description, Student Survey*

**Worksheet**

- #1 The Guitar, Parts of the Guitar, Names of Strings
- #2 Chord Frames, Notes, Bar Lines, 4/4 Time Signature
- #3 Treble Clef, Note Names, Tablature
- #4 Writing and Counting Music

**Songsheet**

- #1 *Rock-a My Soul, Good News, Alouette* (two-chord songs in the key of D)
- #2 *This Train is Bound for Glory, Beautiful Brown Eyes* (three-chord songs in the key of D)

**Notesheet**

- #1 *First String Warm-Up*

**Unit One Test:** Covers the material contained in *Worksheets #1–4*