

Unpopular guitar playing tips

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Things I wish someone had told me when I began learning to play the guitar

- ♥ Unless they are visibly corroded, or break, you don't need to change your strings. Acoustic guitars may sound warmer with new strings - electric guitars need no such pampering.
- ♥ Great tone is not something you find in an amp, guitar or expensive strings. It's in your fingers. And you will thumb your nose at this comment until one day when you finally hear it for yourself. Great guitar players can play sh*tty guitars through crappy amps and make them sound amazing. Every note is like a gymnast sticking a landing - how you arrive at that note is important. Did you almost slip? Did you fall? Was it clumsy, or did you have hesitation? Did you waver? Was your finger not in just the right spot? Did you bend the string and not mean to? Did you not bend to the right pitch? When you are sticking the landing on every note, you will hear that your fingers have an auditory personality that is unique - the sound is pure, original and warm. That is where the great tone is coming from. Your execution of the notes.
- ♥ F*ck music theory. Your ears and your creativity are the only theory you need. Punk rock utilizes zero music theory. Its strength is in the passion of the music itself and a determination to color outside the lines, and this can be applied to any genre. Live dangerously. Explore your instrument. No seatbelt, no rules, no boundaries. The amount of time you invest in learning music theory is time you could be crafting your songwriting skills. All you need are three chords and a dream to set the world on fire.
- ♥ Your fingertips are going to hurt when you first start playing. Deal with it.
- ♥ Practice is what you make of it. If you see it as a chore, change what you're doing. You need to always be in a place where picking up your guitar is the best feeling in the world.
- ♥ You don't need to know the names of the chords and notes you play. Oftentimes, it's better not to know.

- ♥ If it sounds good to your ears - don't let anyone on earth tell you otherwise. Trust your instincts.
- ♥ Do not learn to read music. How many guitar players do you see on stage with sheet music in front of them? It's the Algebra of music. You will never use it in the real world.
- ♥ Switch guitar teachers often. Look for instructors whose passion for music is not the music you are interested in playing. You will learn valuable lessons from them that you otherwise would never have been exposed to.
- ♥ Write the song you would want to listen to. Do not write what you think others will want to hear.
- ♥ When you first write a song, you may say: this is not good. Let it marinate, give it time. If it's really not good, you will not come back to it. If it is good, you will not be able to let it go.
- ♥ We are our own worst critics.
- ♥ You are not as bad as you think you are.
- ♥ You are not as good as you think you are.
- ♥ Find individuals that share your musical passions and make new music with them. Incorporate their ideas into your songs. It could make your songs even better.
- ♥ Find individuals that share your musical passions and let them hear your new songs and tell you what they think.
- ♥ In every new guitar pedal are hundreds of new song possibilities.
- ♥ You don't need an expensive guitar.
- ♥ You don't need 10 guitars.
- ♥ Tune down, tune up, change tunings, tune one string differently, tune all of them the same, or just a few. Put a capo on. Try to create sounds that would be very difficult for someone else to replicate.
- ♥ Buy a tuner - always play in tune and check tuning often. It looks cool to tune by ear, but no one cares about that shit. Just be in tune.

- ♥ Learn to be the best rhythm guitar player you can be, before learning a single guitar solo. Play with a drum track and lock into the groove.
- ♥ Learn the major and minor open chords before all those others.
- ♥ Guitar instructors will tell you to learn scales. You will do this. You may even memorize some. You will forget most. Learn that the shapes of scales are most important, because you may apply them anywhere on the neck.
- ♥ Bend strings with two fingers. It's so revelatory it feels like cheating, but it's an absolute guitar hack that will accelerate your lead guitar playing and most importantly, your vibrato. If two fingers are still a struggle, use three.
- ♥ Practice your vibrato. You can land on the best note in a solo and it will sound great. If you land on the best note and have a warm vibrato it will sound euphoric.
- ♥ Edit yourself. Kill your darlings. Cut the clever parts. It's easy to do this. Make a copy of the song and a 'radio friendly' version. Be ruthless. Brutal. And you will probably never go back to listen to the original version.
- ♥ Don't baby your guitars. They are not fragile. Play them hard. Hang them on the wall. Play in the rain and the sun. If you're so worried about your guitars that you keep them out of the daylight and in a room with humidity control, you should be a curator in a museum, not a guitar player.
- ♥ You can spend less than \$500 and secure a wonderful sounding guitar that will last a lifetime of bands.
- ♥ Play to your strengths on stage. Audiences can sniff out insincerity. Be who you really are, because there's no one else on earth that is as strong or convincing as you being your true self. Whether they like you or not is not up to you.
- ♥ Push yourself into uncomfortable zones in the studio and flirt with doing what you thought was beyond your skill level. You have to play it poorly for hours and hours before you can play it well.
- ♥ Your lead guitar solos need to be melodic, beginning to end. Anything less is noodling.

- ♥ There are all sorts of 'systems' for learning guitar playing. CAGED, 'Master the Fretboard,' etc. They all involve tedious memorization of notes, chord charts, scales and fretboard patterns. You will spend a lot of time and money on these systems and they may or may not be beneficial. If you are curious about learning that stuff - have at it. I would rather just write songs, make up my own chord progressions and solos using my ears and what sounds good to them.
- ♥ You should be able to hum your guitar solos, start to finish.
- ♥ No noodling guitar solos. Don't waste notes. If it doesn't need to be there, or lift the solo, leave it out. This is another good reason to forget all those tedious scales you thought it was a good idea to memorize.
- ♥ Phrasing in guitar solos is important. Accent the right note at the right time. You will instinctively know when you do this successfully.
- ♥ Silence where there could be a flurry of notes is powerful.
- ♥ Never mind verse, chorus, verse, chorus, bridge. Not every song needs a bridge. Or a chorus.
- ♥ Bridges have been abused by the songwriting industry - they believe every song needs one. This has resulted in millions of otherwise great songs with sh*tty bridges that are there because someone had to crowbar them in. A change in key or mood within a song is terrific, as long as it actually works. It should feel euphoric, not like a change for the sake of a change. When you come back to the verse it should feel like a satisfying resolution. If it doesn't evoke these feelings, you are just writing a bridge to fill space - leave it out.
- ♥ Never mind what everyone else is doing. Trust your musical instincts. Write as if you are the only one who will ever hear the song, because that may very well be the reality.
- ♥ Write songs for yourself. There is no one else more worth writing for.

- ♥ Learn to play cover songs. Even ones you don't like. It will improve your perspective and introduce you to new styles and ultimately, make you a better player. You don't need to learn them note for note - just pay attention to the structure and what works well within it. The chord changes, the tempo, the melodies. You'll never be able to emulate the songs like the original artist so don't waste hours trying. Just get close. But most importantly, don't settle for being a cover band.
- ♥ The song is the star. If it is good, no matter how sh*tty the recording, it will still be recognized as a good song.
- ♥ Learn your favorite songs. Play cover songs. But always write your own songs. No one can tell you you're not playing them right.
- ♥ No matter what your skill level, play with conviction.