



## Tips for Budding Guitarists

1. The first tip to remember is *learning to play the guitar should be fun!*
2. Why do you want to play the guitar? Here are some good reasons. I bet you could come up with quite a few of your own!
  - a. Music is a real stress-buster. Playing the guitar is a great way to relax and forget your problems, at least temporarily!
  - b. Music is good for your brain. Really! Practicing music releases endorphins that make you feel good. Who doesn't want to feel better? Listening to music is great, but playing music is even better. Playing music requires you to really use your gray matter – it is good exercise for your brain.
  - c. Are you interested in learning a skill that can add to your social life? There are dozens of local gatherings for musicians to get together and share music. Let the good times roll!
3. One of the questions I hear the most is: “Do I have to practice?” *Only if you want to learn to play!* Yes, practice is going to be necessary to master the techniques you will need to play what you want to play. There is just no getting around it. Before you decide to make a commitment to learning the guitar, you should look at your schedule and decide if you can make time to practice.
4. The next question I hear after “Do I have to practice?” is “How much time do I have to practice?” Practice time is something that needs to be built up gradually. To start, 10 or 15 minutes at a time will be good, and your fingers will be able to gradually build up the calluses you will need to be able to play for longer periods. It is better to do two 10 or 15 minute practices at least an hour apart than to try to play for a straight 20 or 30 minutes. As your fingertips toughen up, and your study material increases, you will easily move into longer practice sessions.
5. What kind of guitar should I get? This is partially determined by the style of music you want to learn. For example, if you want to learn to play classical guitar, but you have an old electric guitar up in the attic, I do not recommend you use that! Different styles of music require different styles of guitar. The first



question to ask yourself is: “What do I want to learn?” Nylon string guitars work well for the study of classical and Spanish style music; steel string acoustics are wonderful for finger style, blues, bluegrass, and traditional music, as well as country and pop music. And of course, for Rock, Pop and Blues, there is always the electric guitar!

Once you have determined what kind of music you want to play, you can begin the search for the right guitar. No matter the style, *the guitar must be playable!* By playable, I mean the strings should not be too high off the fret board, the neck should not be warped and the guitar must stay in tune. There are many wonderful inexpensive guitars on the market now, so it will not be difficult to find the perfect starting guitar.

6. Do I need to learn to read music to play the guitar?
  - a. My recommendation is yes. Learning to read music is a wonderful stimulant for your brain. When you are reading music, you are activating both hemispheres of your brain. No other activity has been shown to be more effective at challenging the brain than reading and performing music.
  - b. Learning to read music will introduce you to music theory, which will help you understand how music is put together and why it works.
  - c. That being said, many adults start out with the belief that they do not want to learn to read music and do not need to learn theory. Some people find it more natural to learn to play by ear. Playing by ear can also be a great way to keep your brain fit. Each person must decide which way suits them the best.

**Questions or Comments?** To learn more about how Guitar With Gail can help you learn to play the guitar, please contact me by email at [gail.lees@guitarwithgail.com](mailto:gail.lees@guitarwithgail.com) or call me at 240-415-8572. I would love to hear from you!