



## Tips for Parents of Budding Guitarists

1. The first tip to remember is *learning to play the guitar should be fun for your child!*
2. Find out why your child wants to play the guitar.
  - a. Is it because another friend is learning? It can be great fun for your child to have a friend who is interested in learning at the same time.
  - b. Does your child already have a love of music? The guitar is a personal instrument which can be enjoyed alone, but it is also a great way to share music.
  - c. Is there an event coming up that your child wants to participate in? Feeling a part of a greater whole can be very satisfying for your child.
  - d. Is there a particular kind of music your child is drawn to? This is a very important question. If your child is learning what he/she wants to learn, there is a greater chance the child will be successful.
3. Does your child have the time for practice? The guitar is fairly easy to get started on, but a certain amount of practice will be necessary. Practice is important. Your guidance and encouragement through the practice session is one of the most important pieces to enable your child's success with the guitar. Fun practice time will allow the child to relax and enjoy the guitar while they are learning.
4. How old is your child? Most children can easily learn simple songs on the guitar as early as age five or six.
5. What kind of guitar should I get for my child? This is partially determined by the style of lessons you want for your child. Depending on the child's age I would recommend the following:
  - a. Age 5-6: A baritone ukulele or a  $\frac{3}{4}$  size guitar with nylon strings would be best. Children this age have very small hands and tender fingers, and it is easy to get discouraged if the guitar is too big or the strings cut into their fingers.



- b. Ages 7-10: A  $\frac{3}{4}$  size guitar would probably be best, depending on how quickly your child is growing. If your child wants to learn to sing songs with accompaniment, a steel string guitar could work, although nylon strings would be easier on their fingers. If your child shows an early interest in learning to read and perform music, I would recommend nylon strings in preparation for a larger classical guitar as they grow older.
  - c. Ages 10 and up: A parlor or full-size guitar (depending on the child's growth). At this point, the child should have some idea of what they want to learn to play. Steel string acoustic guitars work very well for some finger style methods and accompaniment. A classical guitar would be required for serious study of classical and Spanish style music.
  - d. The most important think to look for is a good, *playable* student guitar. I emphasize the word "playable" as the child will not want to play the guitar if the strings are too high off the fret board or the guitar will not stay in tune. Since the child will be growing, it is not practical to spend too much money on an instrument they will undoubtedly outgrow.
6. Does my child need to learn to read music?
- a. My answer to this is **YES!** Learning to read music is a wonderful stimulant for your child's brain. When a child is reading music, they are activating both hemispheres of their 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 your child to music theory, which will help them to understand how music is put together and why it works. Music theory will help your child advance more rapidly on *any* instrument.

**Questions or Comments?** To learn more about how Guitar With Gail can help your child 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!