

# Guitar From Scratch in 12 Lessons

## Notes for the Instructor

*Let's get the **basics** out of the way  
So **you** can teach them how to **play***

Greetings, Fellow Guitar Teacher. I'm Bruce Emery, the guy who wrote it.

I hope you can get some use from ***Guitar From Scratch in 12 Lessons***.

There must be as many strategies for teaching beginning guitar students as there are guitar teachers. This is mine, and if it happens to be compatible with yours, it might serve as the foundation for your own efforts.

Here, some of the heavier lifting has already been done.

It's a ***chord-first*** approach, systematically introducing **20+** simple chords and putting them right to work, playing familiar songs and transposing them into different keys. ***Scales*** are introduced along the way so that students can start learning the techniques for playing melodies and lead lines.

***Playing songs*** seems to be the strongest motivating factor for beginners, the main reason most people want to pick up the instrument in the first place.

*Specifically, this method lays out (1) the simplest, most important **chords** in the most important keys and chord families on the guitar (**C-A-G-E-D**); (2) several simple **strum patterns** (rock, folk, country); (3) Major and Minor **scales** for single-string playing; (4) twelve bar **blues** and the Pentatonic Minor scale for jamming; (5) **barre** chords; and (6) basic **fingerpicking**.*

***What this book does NOT do is employ song examples that are less than 70 years old, due to copyright law.*** But this is where the teacher takes over and tailors the lessons to the needs of the students. As a chord vocabulary is being established, you and your student can seek out Music of Interest.

***You*** can teach them the songs of the Beatles, Kurt Cobain or Taylor Swift that this book cannot.

## *Note Layout and Tuning*

I'm not sure when is the best time to introduce Relative Tuning. You could just tune your student's guitar *for them*, jump right into Lesson One, and get them to bring in an electronic tuner for the next lesson, when you can show them how to use it.

When I started guitar, all we HAD was Relative Tuning, so it was imperative. Still, I'm sure I was playing out of tune most of the time because my "ear" was still in training, and it just felt too time-consuming to stop and try to tune up.

### *Lesson One: Three Basic Chords: Em, E and Am*

Right away, let's introduce (1) alternate fingerings for the same chord (**Em**), and (2) learning to move the fingers in a chord shape *as-a-unit* (**Am** to **Em**), which they probably won't be able to do at first, but we can plant the seed.

### *Lesson Two: Add Three Chords: C, G and D*

No one likes learning the **C chord**, with all that stretching and arching of the fingers, and muting the 6th string. Again, we're just planting a seed, as it doesn't *hurt* to let the 6th string ring in a **C** chord. And if the student can get even 3 strings to ring, that can be a minor victory.

Then comes more trouble, the **G chord**. I make the argument for the *second* fingering, the **2-3-4** way, but I learned and played it the **1-2-3** way for a year until my second teacher switched me over.

Then for the **D chord**, muting the open 6th string still isn't critical, as long as your student can be encouraged to avoid hitting it. It *is* dissonant here.

### *Lesson Three: Chords in the Key of G (G Chord Family)*

This can be a tedious time for both teacher and student, this switching from chord to chord and back again, and students just need to be allowed to struggle, unfortunately. Why not add some other **1-4-5** songs that you or your student know, in addition to the YouTube examples? Even if the song were in a different key, it could be transposed to **G** for them. Whatever holds their interest.

### ***Lesson Four: More on the G Chord Family***

I don't think it's too soon to introduce common chord progressions and more variety in chord types (**C/G**, **Am7**). Plus, now they'll have 4 ways to finger a **G** chord and can start making decisions about the sound of a chord given the effort needed to finger it.

### ***Lesson Five: Strumming***

This is a good time to stop and look at the strumming hand before moving into a second key. Strumming is next to impossible to learn from a book alone, so the student really needs to follow along with a teacher to get the mechanics.

### ***Lesson Six: Chords in the Key of C***

A new key and a new hardest chord, the **F** chord. After letting them struggle a bit, I usually let students stand the 1st finger *up* on the 2nd string while muting the open 1st string, and use the thumb to mute the dissonant open 6th string---doesn't sound great but it's playable. Have them *try* the proper **F** chord in subsequent lessons.

### ***Lesson Seven: Chords in the Key of D***

Now they have the three most important keys on the guitar, and are realizing that any song can actually be played in any key. Might be a good time to review the roles associated with the **1**, **4** and **5 chords** by comparing one song in all 3 keys. Like, **G** is the leader of the pack in the **Key of G**, but it's the *pushy* secondary chord in the **Key of C** and the *friendly* secondary chord in the **Key of D**.

### ***Lesson Eight: G, C and D Major Scales ..... Chords in the Key of A***

The big thing here is introducing Alternate Picking, with the same Down-Up motion they learned for strumming in Lesson Five. Playing the same melodies in all three keys reinforces the *any-melody-in-any-key* characteristic of music.

When I first saw the **2-1-3** fingering for the **A** chord, I didn't understand it, but now I can see its value. It can really speed up the **1-4-5** transitions.

### ***Lesson Nine: Twelve Bar Blues ..... Chords in the Key of E***

Finally something that feels like fancy guitar playing. It's really hard to express in writing the difference between the slow, swingy shuffle and the faster, more even rhythm of Johnny B. Goode; that really needs to be demonstrated by the instructor.

I like to show this third possible fingering for the **A** chord in the **Key of E** to reinforce the policy of seeking different fingerings in different settings.

## ***Lesson Ten: Barre Chords and Power Chords***

Not much to add to what the text says. It's just hard, unforgiving work, and barre chords may even be beyond the scope of this book, but people need to see them and try them. Some students will want to dig in, but most will be grateful simply to know those Cowboy Chords from the **C-A-G-E-D** keys.

## ***Lesson Eleven: Minor Scales and Improvising the Blues***

Everyone loves to try to make up solos on the blues scale. Here's a chance for you and your student to swap off comping and soloing on the Twelve Bar Blues in **E**.

## ***Lesson Twelve: Review and Chord Dictionary: Useful Guitar Chords***

Not strictly a lesson, but a way to open students up to dozens of additional chord qualities that can be plugged into the **C-A-G-E-D** keys, grouped into the Major, Minor and Dominant categories within the keys. This is something you can keep coming back to even in the lessons after the course is complete.

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## ***The First Meeting with a Beginner***

Since this can be stressful time, the only concern is to put the student at ease. Self-doubt and fear of failure abound. If you want to demonstrate some playing, try not to get too fancy right away, but show them something that would seem to be within their reach. The next thing is to find out how much, if anything, they can already play, and here I try to be all encouragement, refraining from making corrective comments yet. No point, really. This is just an opportunity to calm the waters, establish a rapport and get acquainted.

I ask about favorite songs or genres that I can (hopefully) demonstrate to get them excited about possibilities. Building confidence here, showing I mean them no harm. Once they are actually playing something for me, the **positive** feedback comes first. They can get multiple things wrong, muffled notes, terrible rhythm, and I'll say, "Good. You got some strings to ring." Then we proceed to fix one problem at a time, because there really is no multi-tasking in beginning guitar.

All you really need to be a successful teacher is to have decent playing skills and a metric ton of **patience**. Let your students come along at their own pace; there's no rush. Be light and lively, and make it fun. Best of luck!

Bruce