

# THE 8 STEP BEGINNERS GUIDE

A photograph of a man with short dark hair, wearing a shiny, textured silver jacket over a white t-shirt and a grey vest with a white star pattern. He is leaning forward, playing a black electric guitar. The background is dark with some stage lighting effects, including a faint, glowing pattern of dots in the upper right corner.

**TO BEING A KICKASS  
GUITARIST!**

*Dan Thorpe*

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# 1) First Off, Get One Lesson Off 5 DIFFERENT Guitar Teachers

Have **1 x 30 minute lesson per week** (or 1 x 60 minute lesson per week if you can afford it) for at least the first 6 months of your guitar playing. Try out as many guitar teachers in town as you can.

**Five should be about right before you find an awesome teacher.** Once you have tried them all out, stick with the best teacher.

Just like anything in life, there are good and bad guitar teachers. The cheapest may not necessarily be the worst and the most expensive may not be the best, but price is usually an indicator of quality.

Having the confidence to be the most expensive teacher in town usually means the teacher has years and years of experience and LOTS of skills that have been developed.

When I started teaching, I was the cheapest guitar teacher in town, and then I gradually increased my prices until I am now the most expensive in town. My price reflects my skill and experience. Most teachers think along the same lines.

A few things to look out for are:

- Can they play the styles you are interested in?
- Can they **actually** teach?
- Are they a competent guitarist?
- Do they teach lessons tailor made for you or is it a rigid syllabus they teach?
- Are they qualified?
- Do they communicate well?
- Do they give you materials to take home and practice?
- Do you `click` with him or her?
- Do they inspire you?

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Make you sure try out at least 5 different teachers. **Find the awesome one.**  
Stick with them.

A great guitar teacher will save you days, weeks and even months of frustration.

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books

## 2) Get Your Posture Correct From The Start

You won't believe how many guitarists start off on a very bad foot when it comes to posture. They slouch back on a soft chair, or they are hunched over the guitar with the headstock pointing downwards in a cool looking **but very inefficient way**.

Bad posture might look a bit cooler but it can cause problems to the wrist and hand, **leading to repetitive strain injury and injuries to the tendons and joints as well as back problems**.

You may not play classical guitar, and you may never really want to but by mimicking the way a classical guitarist sits, you will make life easier in the long term as well as the short term.

When you are sitting down, this is the sort of posture you should be (loosely) replicating...



Don't worry about copying this guy exactly. Just look at the principles of how he is sitting and apply it to your own playing. If you need a foot stool, get one. They are often useful.

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Whenever in doubt about posture, just remember the following...

- Place the guitar in between your legs as opposed to the round part being placed on the right leg.
- Point the headstock upwards as opposed to the lazy guitarist who points the headstock downwards.
- Raise your left leg on a small footstool to allow your left hand to be at a comfortable height.

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### 3) Don't Be A Gear Nerd...BUT Invest In The RIGHT Gear

#### *Buy The Right Guitar From The Outset*

Many new players spend a lot of time reading on the internet about which guitar is a great bargain and which guitar is suitable.

Honestly, don't bother reading about guitars, just go and try a load out. Try not to look at brands - *just play them!*

- Find one you like the feel of - particularly the neck
- Find one you like the sound of when playing
- Find one you like the sound of when listening to someone else play

Those three things will help you get the ideal guitar for YOU.

#### *Purchase The Essential Accessories...*

##### *Buy a variety of quality picks -*

**For acoustic players**, make sure your picks are Nylon. They sound much better on acoustics. Buy at least 6 different gauges ranging from 0.4 to 1.0.

Experiment with all of them. Buy loads of your favorite thickness. These [here](#) are perfect for finding your ideal pick thickness.

**For electric playing**, I use the Dunlop Jazz iii XL picks, but beginners nearly always find them too thick.

Instead of the Jazz iii, I recommend getting a set of thinner tortex picks such as these from [Dunlop](#). Experiment to find the one you like most.

Don't be tempted to buy those cheap Tiger picks. For a few extra pence you can get the good ones.

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## ***Buy a capo***

Get the best you can afford. Capo`s are awesome and will make your playing sound better and much more varied. You can **`fake it till you make it`** with a capo.

You can put a capo on, play a couple of chords in a certain order, then move the capo and change the order you play those chords in and **you will have a totally different sounding song.**

Getting a capo is one of the keys to unlocking the guitar.

Get a quick release one like [this](#). Do not get one you have to screw in. If it is a pain to use it, you won`t want to.

## ***Buy a simple clip-on tuner***

Don`t bother with tuner apps; you want something you can leave on your guitar all the time.

Instead you should get something like this [simple tuner](#), and pretty much just leave it on the headstock of your guitar permanently.

## 4) Learn ONLY These 5 chords. Yes, JUST 5!

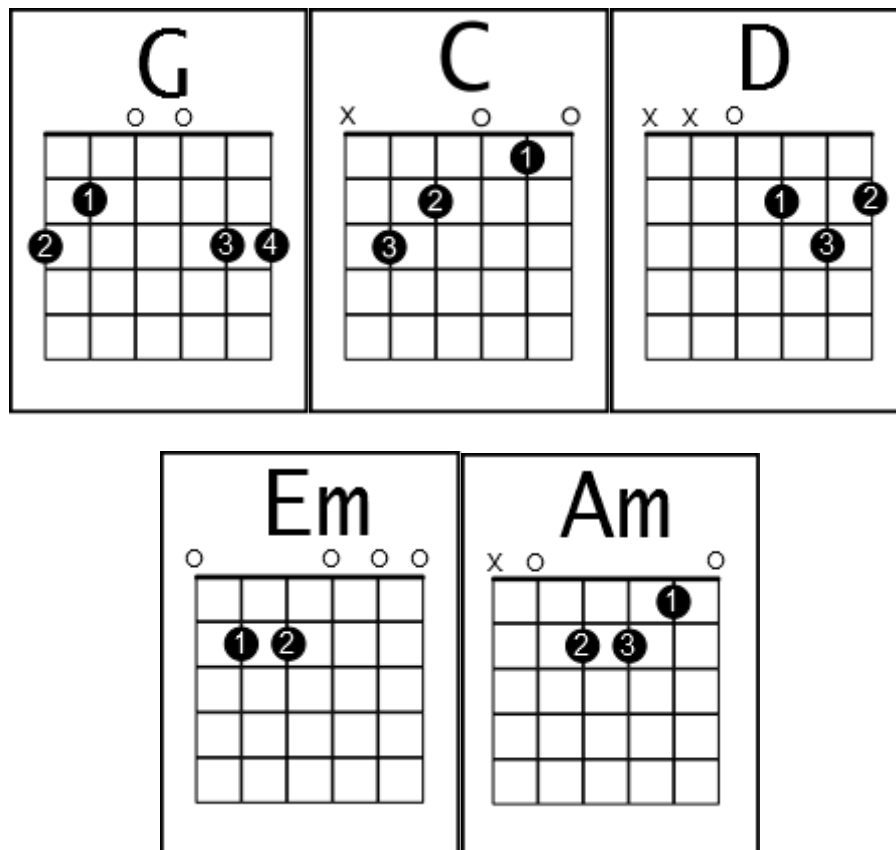
Learn only these five simple chords when starting out. **Don't learn any more until you master these five or until you need a new chord to play a song.**

One fundamental lesson when learning guitar is to **only learn things you will use**. Be honest are you going to need that Bm7b5 chord just yet?

Probably not for the time being. Throw away your chord book for now.

Learn to play the chords of **G, C, D, Em, Am PERFECTLY** until you can change between them in your sleep. You can play millions of songs with just those 5 chords plus the use of a capo.

Armed with a capo, these 5 chords, and some really cool rhythm, you will blow people away with your playing.



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## 5) Strum Like A Superstar...And Wow Your Audience

Most guitarists don't actually know how to strum properly. They don't consciously know any exact strum patterns and therefore their rhythm playing is often dull and haphazard.

Find a strum pattern book and learn at least 5 awesome strum patterns. You can use my eBook [Strumming 101: How To Strum Your Guitar Like A Pro!](#) to help. (Sign up to my mailing list [here](#) if you want to be informed about days you can get it for free.)

**Great rhythm combined with a few simple chords will make you sound awesome!**

***DO NOT play all the strings at once when you strum***

60-80% of the time just play the lower (bass notes) and then play the upper strings as accents **on the beat**.

Less is most definitely more. This will make you sound more experienced than you are.

When you are accenting a chord which is done on beats 2 and 4 **OR** just on beat 3, play all the strings. **This sounds cool and will definitely add groove to the tune.**

An accent in music is simply when something is highlighted. In this case, we play the strings harder and play them all when throwing an accent in.

***Tap your foot along with everything you can play***

You don't want to tap it with every strum, **just tap your foot on the beat**. This is the most underrated tip ever.

Start off simple and get tapping your foot along with a metronome. Then add a few strums in too.

I recommend you tap your foot along with any music you hear whether you

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have your guitar with you or not.

Foot tapping will make you play in time, help you remember where you are in the song and improve your sense of rhythm.

After all, there`s no point in learning an awesome strum pattern but not being able to play it in time.

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## 6) Train Your Ear Everyday...

Having awesome listening skills really helps you to develop your musical `ear`. This is unbelievably useful when playing an instrument. **The better your ear is, the better you are as a musician.**

This is because you will:

- Have better pitch recognition so you will know when something sounds wrong or `off`
- Hear details where others might just hear a `blur` of sound or noise,
- Hear in depth parts and be able to pick out individual instruments and parts
- Be able to judge and assess tone and timbre easily

These tips will help you develop your `ear` from this very moment.

### *Learn to Sing!*

People who can sing often have good listening skills. I recommend every guitarist should try and sing along when they are playing - even if you have no intention of performing in front of people!

For every song you learn to play on guitar, you will want to learn all the words, the melody and be able to sing along when you are playing it.

Record yourself singing regularly. You will be more objective when you listen back to yourself and will be able to tell when you are `off pitch` so you can fix it next time.

Learning to sing is great fun, incredibly useful as a guitarist and above all **sounds fantastic alongside a strummed or picked guitar.**

### *Scat Singing*

The innovative guitarist, Joe Satriani has come up with many great tips for expanding our guitar playing over the years. One tip I really like is his random

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scat singing approach to help develop the ear.

It is a very simple exercise. Make sure your guitar is in perfect tune, then play a random note anywhere on the fretboard, listen to the note carefully, and then try to sing it.

Use the syllables, “gug”, “moom” and “ah”.

“Gug” according to vocal coach, Roger Love is the easiest to start with as the sound itself only allows a certain amount of air through the vocal chords making different pitches easier to hit.

Do this for even 2 minutes per day, and you will train your `ear` to recognize pitches much quicker in the future.

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## 7) Master Your Rhythm Skills

Rhythm guitar is often the most neglected, poorly practiced, and misunderstood element of guitar playing.

If we break music down into its simplest components, we have harmony (chords), melody (such as single note riffs, leads and vocals) and rhythm (which is a HUGE part of everything).

**Every time you play anything on guitar you are using some sort of rhythm.**

Whenever you play a groovy, heavy detuned riff, finger pick some beautiful lush chords, or shred a lightning fast solo, you are using rhythm.

To have great rhythm skills, you really need (as an absolute basic) to master your ability to shift between the following note sub-divisions at will:

- Quarter notes (Crotchets)
- Eighth notes (Quavers)
- Sixteenth notes (Semi-Quavers)

After that there are other great sounding rhythms such as **Triplets and Dotted notes**, but for now we will focus on the above three as 90% of beginner guitarists lack this essential ability.

One of the best exercises you can do to improve your rhythm guitar skills is to:

- Set a metronome to a tempo of 80bpm
- Fret ONE SINGLE NOTE with the left hand (you choose the note)
- Pick this note over and over with a down stroke every time you hear a beep. Keep going until you feel yourself "lock in" with the click or the beep. This is playing all **quarter notes** and there are 4 per bar. Count 1, 2, 3, 4.
- Now pick the note with an upstroke in between the down stroke - keeping every pick even. These are called **eighth notes** and there are 8 per bar. Count 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and.

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- Now, double the speed of your picked notes. These are called **sixteenth notes**. If you are strumming your guitar and you played all sixteenth notes you would strum 16 strums which would consist of **8 down and 8 up in a continuous motion**. Count sixteenth notes as 1 e and a 2 e and a 3 e and a 4 e and a.

Sixteenth notes sound pretty fast and will take most beginners a lot of practice to be able to play.

Keep trying **ONE note length** until you are completely comfortable playing in perfect time with the metronome.

Once you are confident of doing the exercise over and over with one note length, instead of playing an infinite amount of bars, practice **ONE BAR** each of quarter notes, eighth notes and then sixteenth notes.

Then switch between all 3 note lengths playing them for **JUST ONE beat each**.

The idea is to be able to switch seamlessly from one note length to another. The less time it takes you to switch between the note lengths, the more awesome your rhythm playing will be.

It will be difficult at first and may take you a few days or weeks to be able to do this comfortably but stick with it.

**Practice this for just ten minutes each day.**

I guarantee if you do this you will be getting a head start on most guitarists out there and many who have played for years.

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## 8) Practice Like A Champ... Not A Chump

If you practice like a champ, you will play like a champ.

### *Focus Your Practice Time On The Sections You Struggle On*

You want to focus on perfecting the sections you struggle with like a shark with a laser beam on its frickin` head.

Break the section down to its simplest form, and keep going for three minutes over and over until you can nail it consistently.

If after three minutes, you can` t nail it, move on. Don` t stress, you will nail it after some more three minute `blasts`.

### *Practice In Short Bursts - Frequently*

You can practice 10 or even 20 times per day but you must have short bursts of practice with at least 20 minutes between each practice session.

There`s a lot of scientific research that proves learning is done best when done in very small doses.

Have 1-2 big sessions for an hour per week for fun.

### *Make A Video Recording Of Yourself*

Use your phone or laptop and record yourself playing what you practiced once per day (songs, scales, chord progressions, strum patterns, etc) to a metronome. Before the next practice routine, watch it.

Be critical, spot your mistakes quickly, and then fix them. Mastering any instrument quickly is about **fixing errors and weak spots as soon as possible**.

### *Allow Yourself At Least 1 Month To Really Be Rubbish*

Everyone sucks for at least 1 month so instead of beating yourself up for it make sure you practice a lot, relax and tell yourself “it`s ok to suck”.

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DON`T give up and don`t tell yourself you`ll start again in the future. Don`t procrastinate.

**Just remember, no matter what happens if you persevere you WILL be the guitarist you dream of being.**

Here are a few useful practice guidelines for beginners. Follow them as much as possible.

- Keep your practice sessions between 10 - 20 minutes per day
- Practice 3 times per day at least
- Have at least a 20 minute break between each practice
- Have 1 day off per week. No more, no less
- Do not learn any more than 10 songs until you can play them to perfection
- Practice every chord, strum pattern, chord change and song you know at least once per day

If you haven`t finished each task, resist the temptation to continue. Simply move on, it will get better next time.

Follow all the above advice and you will without doubt be a kick ass guitarist!

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Thank You For Reading!

If you have any feedback or queries, please email me at [hq@guitardomination.net](mailto:hq@guitardomination.net) and I will get back to you.

I'd love to hear from you.

**Dan Thorpe**

***About The Author...***

*Dan Thorpe is a UK based guitar teacher, writer, and musician. He writes for [Guitar Domination](#) and plays guitar in UK Alternative rock/metal band, [Ribdonor](#)*

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## **Other Books By The Author**

- [Lightning Fast Guitar Chord Changes: 6 steps to rapidly improve the speed of your fingers](#)
- [Guitarists Get Theory: The really useful guide to music theory: .....just for guitar players](#)
- [How To Get An Awesome Live Guitar Sound: The Secrets To Getting A Killer Tone...Easily](#)
- [How To Play Barre Chords: The Simplified Guide For Chord Guitar Mastery](#)
- [The Intermediate Guitar Guide: Learn Embellishments, Ear Training, The Ultimate Warm-Up and More...](#)
- [Strumming 101: How To Strum Your Guitar Like A Pro!](#)

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