

Top 10 Tips for Success...



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1. Learn something new - Educating yourself is the first step to becoming a better guitarist. Whether you choose to believe it or not, there's always something new to learn and master. If you are currently studying music in a conservatory, at school, or in college, you will find that learning will come more easier to you. If not, I highly recommend that you get in a program. While I believe in teaching yourself, I also know from first hand experience that motivation and encouragement from a teacher is priceless. Once you conquer the subject that you were learning, push yourself to learn something that you're not quite comfortable with. Learning within your comfort zone often results with you running around in circles.
2. Make your time count - Practicing does not make perfect, it makes permanent. That makes the time you spend playing your guitar all the more important. Don't waste your time fiddling around on your guitar. Dig in and learn something that will aid you on your quest for musical success. Set goals and work towards achieving them. Whether it's technique, tricks, or a new song, you can become better just by using your time more wisely.
3. Listen to more music - The more music that you are exposed to, the better guitarist you will become. Listen to the bands that you enjoy most and draw inspiration from them. Take note of what the musicians are doing in their songs and make a list of the techniques you want to learn. This can be the motivating force that gets you to play your guitar more often.
4. Surround yourself with excellence - When you play your guitar with people who are better guitarists, you not only learn from them but feel motivated to push yourself to keep up. At first this idea seems obscure. Why would you expose yourself to that kind of stress? Let's face it, if there's one thing that will make you get motivated quickly it's the fact that people are counting on you. Don't play with musicians who are arrogant and rude. Embarrassment doesn't foster self-esteem and will only get you down. The people you want to learn from are patient and understanding. Eventually you will find yourself at their level. It happens faster than you might think.
5. Ask yourself what will you do when you obtain the skills you want - What do you want to do with what you learn? Perhaps you want to make a CD or join a band and play at some local venues. Start planning for it now and use what you currently have. This ties into setting goals but is not to be underestimated. Knowing how you want to use your talent is important. Create a vision and use goals to act on it. Whether you want to play for others, or to the wall in your bedroom, the choice is yours.



6. Teach someone how to play guitar - To teach is to learn. If the only chord you know how to play is a G chord, show someone that. Why? Because it reaffirms what you know and solidifies your knowledge. I can tell you from personal experience that I have learned more through teaching than I ever learned through being taught. It forces you out of your comfort zone and when questions are asked, you need to know the answer. I'm a firm believer that anyone can teach someone something if they want to. Give it a shot and see the results for yourself.
7. Believe in your ability - Yes, I know how cliché this sounds. However, you need to hear it. You can do anything you put your mind to and if you choose to play guitar well, chubby fingers or not, you can! Don't listen to what others say and be true to yourself. This can be hard seeing as we live in a critical society that doesn't realize how much words can hurt. Keep at it and surround yourself with supportive people. More of a life lesson than a guitar lesson, but as far as I'm concerned music is intertwined with daily living.
8. You are incomparable - In case you haven't picked up the hint yet, you are the ultimate guitarist. There is no one like you and there will never be anyone who even comes remotely close to being like you. Integrate who you are into your music and you will never have a shortage of material. Your music will soon form into your own tone and style.
9. Learn what worked for others - Whether you research your favorite guitarist or talk to your guitar teacher, ask others what worked for them. I don't claim to know all the answers but when everyone puts their heads together, some really neat ideas start to flow. Networking allows you to give and receive at the same time.
10. Crush your weakness - We all know where we lack the most in the guitar realm. For me it's in technique and finger picking, for others it's something different. Whatever it is, don't ignore it while enjoying your recent victory. Keep attacking your weak points and you'll soon see improvement. The secret is that you never stop seeing problems and you continually get better over time. You'll never be stuck without something to do. Take out a sheet of paper and write them down. Then find the resources you need to help you destroy them. It's not unlike a war, but in the end you always win.

Don't Believe The Popular Myths

You may be surprised to hear that a lot of the common advice distributed amongst guitarists couldn't be farther from the truth. There are myths and tokens of advice that get passed along and guitarists like yourself use them. Try as hard as you like, but you'll end up realizing that what meets you at the end of the road is failure.



To avoid that, let's look at some of the most common myths floating around:

All good players can play all styles: While great in theory, it doesn't work out in practice. Trying various genres of music and become a more cultured guitarist. However, very few people (if any) are able to master all of them.

The fact is that it takes a lifetime to master one style. Some take up two genres that mix well together, such as blues and rock, but those genres are the exceptions. You will never hear a neoclassical shred guitarist play country. Many jazz musicians take decades to perfect their craft and even then they still see areas that need improvement.

If you want to be a great guitarist, take the genre and style that you're passionate about and focus on it. Don't get distracted with other music. Your guitar heroes are heroes because they mastered a genre. Very few will ever play outside of their specialty and that's just the reality.

You either have "it" or you don't: Let's face it, some understand music more easily than others. That doesn't mean that you can't be as good as them. Everyone can play guitar, it just depends on the effort and time you want to put in.

There are dozens of specialties within music and no one knows all of them from the time they are born. Perfect pitch is developed, as is technique and originality. Look at where you started from as opposed to where you are now. Would you say that you are just as original as you were when you first picked up the guitar? I know I'm not.

While things may come easier to others, remember that we all have our own struggles within music and that we are in it together.

To sound good, you need the best gear: The best gear is nice, and yes, you do sound better. However, it's unnecessary for those who aren't interested in professional music or are just starting out.

Beginners love to see the rack of guitars at their local music store and say, "I want the £2000 one." That was me for years but the truth is that a guitar of that caliber is useless to someone who can't play it. Learn on something modest and work your way up.

Not only will the experience be more rewarding, it's also nicer on the instrument and your self-confidence. In the end, the guitar is only as good as the person who plays it.

I have heard cheap guitars sound half-decent when played by someone who knew what they were doing. The same applies to you. For those who can afford £5000 guitars, my advice is go for it.

For the rest of us, I say save your money and work towards being the ultimate guitarist. Think about it, if you sound good on a cheap guitar, how much better will you sound on something that can really produce a good tone?



You need to be the most talented to succeed: All too often, as mentioned above, we tend to compare ourselves to others. The ultimate guitarist is you meeting your goals and making progress.

There will always be others who sound better in certain areas but who cares? Be the person you want to be and music will be far more enjoyable. Success is measured on a personal level, not on how many CD's you sell.

The famous musicians in today's society often find themselves wishing they weren't so pressured by record labels. They want to be in your shoes where they have the choice to do what they want to do. Enjoy yourself and the rest will fall into place.

