

Welcome to the Introducing Guitar for Teens course at Waltons New School of Music.

This course is designed to teach you some essential acoustic guitar skills and introduce you to a range of songs and repertoire. We ask you to keep two important things in mind as you begin:

1. **The more you put into the course, the more you will get out of it.**
2. **Communicate with your teacher** if there is an area you're having difficulty with or something you don't fully understand. Your teacher is here to help you, so don't hesitate to approach him if you're having difficulty with anything.

Practice

Practice is an essential aspect of any music course, and we all know the phrase 'practice makes perfect'. Yet even the most eager learner might cringe when told to practice daily. Perhaps the most challenging aspect of learning a musical instrument is developing a healthy, productive approach to practice. Your teacher will give you guidelines on how and what to practice, but the real work is up to you, and mostly on your own time. Here are a few tips:

- **Aim to practice every day.** Even a small amount of daily practice is much more effective than a long practice session the day before your next class. Make practice a part of your daily routine. Determine when is the best time for you to practice. If you like practicing in the morning, get up 30 minutes early so that you won't be late for school. If you're an evening person, do your practice before going to bed or before you become sleepy.
- **Make your practice area comfortable.** Is the room well ventilated? Is there good lighting? Is your mobile switched off or on silent? Make sure that your practice area is comfortable and free from distractions so that you can concentrate when practicing.
- **Practice for at least 20 minutes.** Why 20 minutes? We find that this is a manageable time for beginners. Note that 20 minutes refers to work on the course material itself. Devote 5 minutes for warm-ups and 5 minutes for cool downs, just as you would for other physical exercise. That means you should try to set aside at least 30 minutes a day for practice sessions – a reasonable length for most adult students. As your interest and skill level grows, you will find that your daily practice time will also increase.
- **Reward yourself.** If you have just learned to play a piece or exercise that you've previously had trouble with, by all means reward yourself! You don't have to splurge; just doing something you particularly enjoy will give you a morale boost and further inspire you to learn.
- **Focus on your practice.** Effective practice requires concentration and focus. If you are rushing to do it or are distracted by other things that need doing, you won't get much out of it. Try spending a few minutes in silence before you begin in order to take a few deep breaths and clear your head of other concerns.

Tuning Your Guitar

Tuning your guitar – and keeping it in tune – is vital to sounding good. Electronic tuners, which can be used to tune each string separately, are inexpensive and easy to use. There are also several tuner apps for smartphones available, some of which are free. However, you should also learn to tune your guitar without a tuner or app, and below are some simple instructions. The open strings of a guitar, from thickest to thinnest, are:

- E, the sixth, thickest and lowest sounding string
 - A, the fifth string
 - D, the fourth string
 - G, the third string
 - B, the second string
 - E, the first, thinnest and highest sounding string
1. **The E string.** Tune the bottom E string as accurately as you can. Chances are it's already in tune; being the thickest string it's less likely to 'detune' itself than any of the others. If you have another instrument such as a piano or keyboard, you can tune it to the second E below middle C. If you have no device or instrument handy, just try to get it as accurate as possible; what really counts when you are playing is that the guitar is in tune with itself.
 2. **The A string.** Place the first finger of your left hand (or right hand if you're playing a left-handed guitar) just behind the fifth fret on the bottom E string. That's an A note. Keep your finger on that fret. Now pick the fifth and sixth strings in turn, gently adjusting the fifth string tuning peg until the two notes are the same.
 3. **The D string.** Place the first finger of your left hand just behind the fifth fret on the A string. That's a D note. Tune the fourth string (the D note) to that.
 4. **The G string.** Place the first finger of your left hand just behind the fifth fret on the D string. That's a G note. Tune your G string to that note.
 5. **The B string.** Place the first finger of your left hand just behind the fourth fret. Note that the B string is the only one that comes from a different position, the fourth fret; the rest are from the fifth fret.
 6. **The E string.** Place the first finger of your left hand just behind the fifth fret on the B string. That's an E note.