

12 Things You Should Know About Your Guitar Journey

I started playing guitar with the same amount of knowledge as everyone. I knew nothing, except that I wanted to play.

Over the years I've learned a variety of techniques, ways to practice, some musical knowledge and the language that enables me to communicate with other musicians. I also realize that I've learned or come to understand a number of more subtle things... Ways of seeing the journey... That are tremendously valuable.

I want to share with you 12 of those "things". Some will seem obvious. Some may not be that clear, and you may even disagree with others. That's okay. I'll consider my time in creating this successful if even one of these things help save you a little frustration and stress.

But I'm confident that much of this will come back to as you go through your guitar learning journey and help you to feel confident and successful.

1. Nothing I Say Is “Absolutely” True

What I teach you here and in my lessons is the best I have to offer from years of learning and teaching guitar. However nothing I say is absolutely true, and certainly not the only way to do things.

In fact no one teacher knows the best way to do everything. There is still value in following a path regardless of whether it's perfect, but try not to get hung up on what is "The Right Way".

2. You Really Can Learn to Play Well

This is a doubt that I know I struggled with. I also see this with many of my students. I'd like to dispel this once and for all. I may not know you personally, but I know without a shadow of a doubt that you can learn to play the guitar. In fact, you can learn to play well.

This belief is not unfounded. It comes from years and years of working with students. I can say in fact that playing guitar is an art, but learning is a science. You just do the right things, over and over, for a period of time and you will play guitar.

3. Everyone Is Responsible for Their Own Progress

This was a hard one for me to accept in the beginning. I wanted so much to attach my progress to having the right teacher, or the right teaching materials, or the right

set of circumstances. But over time I've actually found this to be a liberating belief. I am 100% responsible for my own progress.

It's a belief I choose, and it's actually quite empowering. I highly recommend it for you.

It means an end to blaming circumstances outside yourself and puts you in the driver's seat. The word "responsible" means *the ability to respond*. It's not about who's to blame or who's at fault. It means you always have the ability to respond.

For example... If you're not happy with your progress you put your attention on what you can do. Can you practice more? Can you ask for advice from your teacher? Can you review information or videos? The point is putting the attention and energy on what you can do instead of blaming.

4. Making Commitments Is the Breakfast of Champions

I heard a story years ago about a general in ancient Greece who had his troops sail across a body of water with the intention of defeating their enemies. When they got to the other side the general had them burn the boats so there was no option of retreating. The idea was that the Army would put their full attention on winning and give it everything they had.

Sounds kind of harsh to me.

But the story does make an important point. A tremendous amount of energy is wasted when we waffle or procrastinate. When we make a commitment it helps channel all your energy to achieving a goal.

I'd encourage you to make commitments that you can keep and not overly ambitious... especially if this is new for you. Keeping your commitments becomes a habit. One example of this would be to commit to a modest amount of practice time daily instead of unrealistically longer periods of time. When you keep this modest commitment you'll feel good about yourself and be able to make more commitments in the future.

5. No One Has More or Less Time

If I had a nickel for every time I've heard (or thought it myself) "I didn't have time" as an excuse for not practicing I would be rich. It's just a plain flat out fallacy that I and most people resort to from time to time.

Everyone has the exact same 24 hours in a day. That means if anyone has time to practice then you and I do also. It really comes down to **how we choose to use our time.**

I don't want to dismiss the difficulty in balancing responsibilities and our daily commitments. It's not easy. Everyone has to make choices on how to use their 24 hours... Or let others make the choices for them.

It is clear at this point in my life that one sure road to feeling unfulfilled and disappointment is to constantly use my time in other ways than what is consistent with my values and my dreams for myself.

And I'm much better for my family and friends when I'm happy and fulfilled.

6. Nobody Feels Like Practicing All the Time

I don't feel like practicing all the time. No accomplished guitarist I know "feels" like practicing all the time. But they know practice will get them where they want to go, so they do it anyway.

My point is this: don't depend on "feeling like practicing" to decide whether you're going to practice or not. Nothing of any significance happens if you are always waiting until you "feel" like it. Just make a commitment and practice anyways.

7. Self-Discipline Is Overrated

Self-discipline is doing something that you should do regardless of how you feel about it. Many people think of self-discipline as something you have or don't have. In fact studies have shown that you have less self-discipline when you're tired or when you had to use self-discipline over a period of time.

Instead of focusing on whether you have it or not I found it's much more helpful to just set your life up and do specific things that will help you get where you want to go. Here are 3 things that will help:

- *Know why you want to do something and remember it.* Often people are not disciplined because they lost sight of what they really want and settle for something more immediate.

Take the time to think about and even write down why you want to play guitar. What would it mean to you? Then refer to it from time to time and try to get back to why it was important to start with.

- *Create an environment that supports your goal.* Set up a space so it's easy to practice. Have your guitar set up along with all the tools that you need like a metronome and a tuner.

- *Create a habit by doing it regularly.* It becomes much easier to practice when you just do it for a period of time every day. Think about brushing your teeth. It doesn't take a lot of self-discipline if you do it every morning. In fact you probably don't even think about it. You find yourself at the sink with a toothbrush in your mouth before you realize what you're doing.

When you do something regularly for a period of time it takes much less "self-discipline" to keep it going.

8. Progress Is Never a Straight Line

Some days you'll feel like you've made leaps and bounds... Others... not so much. Of course it can be a little disappointing on the "not so much days", but try not to get hung up on it. Know that over time you will make progress.

9. What Seems Difficult Now Will One Day Be Easy

It's easy to get caught up in thinking that when something is difficult it will always be that way. It's hard for the mind to make the leap from what is now to what it will be like in the future.

I guess in some ways it takes a little bit of faith in the process. But know that any student will agree that everything that seems difficult at one time will someday seem easy.

10. There Really Is No Quick Fix

Because you're here you probably already knew there's no "10 Easy Steps" or "Play the Guitar in 7 Days" method that will really teach you to play awesome guitar. But the good news is that doesn't have to be a bad thing. The confidence and self-esteem you'll develop by going through a tried and true learning system and developing the skills to play with ease are invaluable.

11. Everyone Who Plays Guitar Well at One Time Played Poorly

I know this one kinda seems obvious but it's also pretty profound if you really think about it. Even the most incredible player in the world had to start playing badly. Right? No one just picks up the guitar and plays well.

I know when I pick up the guitar and fumble through something new that thought gives me some encouragement.

12. It's a Lot More Fun to Play Guitar Well Then it Is to Play Poorly

It may not always be fun to practice exercises and techniques, especially if they aren't sounding that great. But it's worth it. You may think of it as a sacrifice, but in reality is an investment. Every minute you spend practicing something that will help you to play beautiful guitar will pay for itself many times over.

The ability to freely play the notes and chords without struggle and strain is a wonderful feeling. To pick up the guitar and know with confidence that you'll be able to entertain and inspire others a gift to humanity. And to be able to express the music that you have inside you is priceless.