

Introduction to Studying Music

Hello! I'm so happy and excited that we have the opportunity start learning about music and the guitar together. Music is a lifelong pursuit, and a lifelong companion. It is also a powerful tool that we can use to express ourselves, when words can't really do it justice. It's also fun! I enjoy nothing more than playing music with my best friends.

Maybe you're just starting to learn for the first time, or maybe you are picking it up again. Or, maybe you're feeling like you want to get to the next level, but don't know what that entails. In any case, my job is to guide you. I can show you which trail I think is the best (which are often the ones that worked for me), but it's up to you to climb the mountain. I'll help you when you get stuck, hit a dead end, or lose the steam to keep going; but, in the end, it's up to you to pick yourself up and carry on!

There are a lot of assumptions that people make about learning music. After all, some of our greatest heroes (well, mine!) are musicians, and they make it seem so effortless. So let's go over a couple common misconceptions.

1. **Music is a lifelong study** - A lot of people think that you can sort of "learn" music, and one day it will all click and you'll be there. I thought this way for a long time. It is really easy to get discouraged – something we want to avoid at all costs – when you think about music like this. There is always SO much to learn. So, it's really important to keep in mind that music is something that you are always learning. I have spoken to many incredible musicians whom I consider masters, and they have confirmed this time and time again – you will always feel like a beginner, and if you don't, that's a problem! When you stop thinking like a beginner, you stop growing. And music is all about growing and developing ourselves!
2. **Music is a personal quest** – It is crucial to remember that everyone is different, everyone learns at different speeds, everyone expresses themselves in different ways, and the only person who can set the bar for you is you. When we hear someone who is really good, and we choose to compare ourselves to them, it can lead to discouragement and jealousy. If we change our perspective, we can learn new things from them, find a fresh direction, and become immensely inspired.
3. **Learning is a cycle** - Because music is a lifelong pursuit, we will all experience ups and downs in our relationship with music; sometimes you're really in the zone and loving it, and others you're totally disinterested. This can be over the span of a few days, a few months, or even years. The important thing to remember is that you don't need to have the focus and drive of a musical prodigy, and, more importantly, you shouldn't force yourself to do it if you aren't in the zone – this leads to burn out and frustration.
4. **Slow and Steady wins the race** - Often, we feel the urge to try and skip ahead somehow; we see the goal, and we just want to jump right to it. When we do this, it compromises our understanding of music or our instrument, which puts a handicap on how well we can learn new things and express ourselves. So try and remember that consistent effort beats out bursts (5 minutes a day is better than 30 minutes once a week), and that whatever you are learning will be helping you become a better musician.

5. **You can't learn music if you don't listen to it!** - I've had a lot of parents sign their children up for music lessons, and when they aren't making any progress I find out that they don't listen to music, ever. What?! Can you learn to cook if you never eat? If you don't have music you love, then you won't have any motivation to learn. If you don't find new music you love, you'll lose what motivation you had. Push your musical boundaries, be open, and come back to your favorites when you feel like it (often!) – but keep those ears open.

Now that we know what learning music will be like, there are a few things that should be totally foreign to you. If you even feel any of these, it's time to stop playing, reevaluate what is going on, and/or ask for advice: **Discouragement, frustration, boredom, obligation, or physical pain.**

So, why do you want to learn music? What are your goals? Maybe you want to learn a certain song, maybe you love a certain musician, or maybe you want to be a rock star. All of these are great goals to have, but it's important to acknowledge your motivation and actively work towards it. Read this over with your parent, partner, friend, whoever, and bring in 3 musical goals that we can talk about.

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