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THE

JAZZ GUITAR PRACTICE GUIDE

Complete Guide to Learning Jazz Guitar

Appropriate for Beginner to Advanced Level
Learn *How* to Practice Not Just *What* to Practice
Build Fun and Efficient Practice Routines
Audio Examples, TAB, Text, and Notation
Never Waste Another Minute in the Practice Room

Jazz Guitar Practice Guide

Complete Guide to Learning Jazz Guitar

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1 - Intro to Effective Practicing

Chapter 2 - Well Balanced Practicing

Chapter 3 - Building Technique

Chapter 4 - Importance of Learning Tunes

Chapter 5 - Jazz Guitar Fundamentals

Chapter 6 - Learning From the Masters

Chapter 7 - Beginner Practice Guide

Chapter 8 - Intermediate Practice Guide

Chapter 9 - Advanced Practice Guide

Chapter 10 - Practice Journal

About the Author

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to *The Jazz Guitar Practice Guide*, great to see you here.

No matter what your background, this guide will help get the most out of your time in the woodshed.

There's no quick and easy way to learn how to play jazz guitar.

But, there are shortcuts you can take in order to build an effective and efficient practice routine.

These shortcuts will produce visible results in your jazz guitar playing.

Whether you are a beginner, intermediate, or advanced player, there's something for you in this eBook.

So, feel free to adapt any of the exercises and concepts in this book to fit your specific needs as a player.

This'll allow you to study these exercises, and have them take you to the next stage in your development at the same time.

For beginner players, you'll want to start at the first chapter and work your way through the book from start to finish.

For more advanced players, you can skip through the book, find a topic you're struggling with, and work through the book from there.

Either way, this guide will help you become more organized in the woodshed and develop a well-balanced jazz guitar practice routine.

Most importantly, it'll teach you that learning jazz guitar, though not always easy, can always be fun.

Cheers,
Matt

Chapter 1 - Intro to Effective Practicing

One of the biggest problems jazz guitarists face is how to build a well-balanced practice routine.

A routine that works on each of the skills needed to confidently perform as a jazz guitarist.

Too often, you find you're spending most of your practice time running scales, or learning chord shapes, or running licks around the fretboard.

This type of unbalanced practicing can cause your playing to be out of whack and not very practical, or enjoyable.

You might find that you're a better soloist, but your ears are lagging behind your fingers.

Or, you know every scale in the book, but you struggle to comp behind a soloist when you jam with other musicians.

Building and maintaining a well-balanced practice routine will prevent these problems from arising in your playing.

This chapter will help you to analyze your current practice routine.

From there, you'll build a routine that covers each of the essential skills you'll need in order to become the jazz guitarist you want to be.

Time is Your Best Friend

While having a balanced routine is very effective over time, you'll need to exert some patience in order to see growth in your playing.

The hardest lesson to learn when playing jazz guitar, is that there's no magic formula that will get you sounding like Joe Pass overnight.

Time is your biggest ally when it comes to learning how to play Jazz.

Having a balanced routine, coupled with consistent time in the practice room, is the best way to develop your skill set.

Setting Goals in the Practice Room

When first building a practice routine, set out a few long-term goals that you want to achieve as a jazz guitarist.

Examples of long-term goals are:

- Learn to play chord melody.
- Transcribe solos at a quicker pace.
- Expand chord vocabulary.
- Develop your Bebop language.
- Never get lost in the form of a tune.

Once you've set a few long-term goals, you can plan your daily practice routine with short-term goals that'll help you achieve longer-term goals.

There are many short-term goals that would get you to the above long-term goals in your daily routine.

Here are examples of one short-term practice goal for each longer goal from the above example.

- Arrange a chord melody for Summertime.
- Transcribe 3 licks from Wes' solo on Yesterdays.
- Memorize Drop 2 maj7 chords on the top-4 strings.
- Learn the head to Donna Lee.
- Sing root notes over a jazz blues progression.

By setting short-term practice goals, you'll work towards your longer goals, while not feeling overwhelmed in your daily practicing.

As well, you'll be able to track your progress at the same time.

Jazz Guitar Goals Exercise

Write down five long-term goals you want to achieve in your playing as a jazz guitarist.

Then, write five short-term goals for each of these longer goals that you can use in your practice routine today to achieve those goals.

How Much Should You Practice?

This is a question that comes up time and again with my students and other jazz guitarists I meet all over the world:

“How much should I practice each day?”

While it would be ideal to be able to set aside 5-6 hours a day for practicing, this isn't practical for the vast majority of people.

With a job, family, and other hobbies, it's not possible, or realistic, to expect to spend this amount of time each day with your guitar.

Because of this, the better question to ask is:

“How much time can I realistically dedicate to practicing each week?”

Asking yourself this question allows you to build an effective practice routine around the time you can dedicate to your instrument each week.

If you know you have 30 minutes per day, 5 days per week, to practice, you can then set out a plan to use those minutes effectively each session.

With a set amount of time each week, you'll be able to make the most out of every minute you spend in the practice room.

This sort of focused practice will produce results over time.

It just takes consistency and some patience with your practice routine.

As well, make sure that you're flexible with your practice time as your life changes.

Some weeks 30 minutes a day is fine, others you can get in 60, while in others 10 minutes a day would be tough.

Setting realistic practice goals at the start of each week, and adapting over time, is the best way to effectively use your time in the woodshed.

Weekly Planning Exercise

Grab a piece of paper and set out the amount of time you'll practice each day this week.

Be realistic, and use your calendar to mark off those times each day.

Review this plan at the end of the week and record your progress in your practice journal to review later on in your development.

Consistent Practice Beats Cramming

Another common problem many guitarists face is practicing 3 hours on Saturday, 3.5 hours on Sunday, then 30 minutes on Wednesday.

Long practice sessions each week, but no consistency.

While you'll feel a sense of accomplishment after those long practice sessions, by Wednesday you've forgotten some of what you learned.

Then, by the following weekend you're spending more time reviewing last week's material than you are learning new concepts.

To avoid forgetting what you've learned between practice sessions, develop a practice approach that spreads out your learning each week.

Rather than cramming your practicing into a few intense sessions that are spread out erratically throughout the week.

Everyone's schedule is different, so this might not be feasible depending on how your week unfolds.

But, if you can, spread out that practice time, 7 hours in the above example, over 7 days rather than over 3 days.

An hour a day of consistent practice will propel your playing forward much quicker than cramming for a few days each week.

That's not to say you can't do extra time on the weekends if you want.

But, plan out a little time each day, or as many days as you can, where you spend time practicing.

Then, any extra time can be used to dive deeper into that material, or to work on weak areas that need attention in your playing.

Though it seems counterintuitive, short, consistent sessions are more effective over the long term, compared to more inconsistent practicing.

Consistent Practice Exercise

If you use the cramming approach, spend a little time practicing each day this week to see how the two approaches compare.

Then you can adjust your practice routine if possible to reflect the best practice routine for you and your schedule.

Seeing Results In Your Practicing Over Time

Now that you know how to plan your time, and set long and short-term goals, you'll learn the best way to measure your practice room progress.

Recording yourself each week, or every day if you can is by far the best way to track your development as a jazz guitarist.

All too often, you'll practice consistently each week, which is great for development, but not great for hearing progress in your playing.

But, if you record yourself playing an exercise, or jamming a tune, you can listen to those recordings over time to hear your musical growth.

This is easier said than done; as you may be shy about recording or only hear negatives in your playing when listening back to recordings.

But, recording is something that's worth struggling through in the beginning, as it's a very effective practice tool in the long run.

The key component to working with recordings of yourself is to listen analytically to your playing.

This means listening from both a positive and critical standpoint.

Whenever you listen back to yourself, start by writing five things you liked about your playing on that recording.

From there, write out three things you can work on to improve your playing between now and the next recording.

This'll help you develop a sense of your strengths, which you can then build upon in your playing.

As well, it highlights your weaknesses, which you can focus on in upcoming practice sessions to rid your playing of those weak spots.

Chapter 1 Checklist

Before moving on to the next chapter, review the following items that you've learned about and applied to your practice schedule this week.

Setting Long and Short-Term Goals

- Write five long-term goals you wish to accomplish.
- Write five short-term goals for each long-term goal.
- Practice one short-term goal for each long-term goal this week.
- Journal your results to see progress over time.
- Adjust your short-term goals as necessary after reflection.

Planning Next Week's Practice Routine

- Ask yourself, "How much time can I really practice this week?"
- Write out a realistic practice schedule.
- Adjust this time next week to reflect time available to practice.
- Cover all five short-term goals over the course of a week.

Avoiding Cramming in the Woodshed

- Review your current practice routine to see if you're cramming.
- If you're cramming, use shorter, more frequent practice sessions.
- Journal your practice sessions to see improvements over time.

Recording for Self Reflection

- Record a practice session or jam this week.
- Record a practice session or jam next week.
- Compare the two to see the progress you've made in between.

About the Author

Like many guitarists, I grew up listening to classic Rock and Blues, and I still love those styles of music.

But it's the improvisation I really love, and that's what drew me to Jazz.

My love of Jazz has taken me from small town Canada around the globe.

I was able to study at three of the top Jazz programs in the world.

Starting with McGill University, then Western Michigan, and finishing with a Doctorate in Jazz from the University of Illinois (UIUC).

It's also allowed me to teach over 5000 private Jazz guitar lessons.

My students have ranged from complete beginners, all the way to Professors of Jazz at NYU, and everything in between.

I've also taught Jazz guitar, popular music, and music business at:

- Western Illinois University
- Western Michigan University
- University of Illinois
- Carleton University (Canada)
- Concordia University (Canada)
- The Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory
- University of Ouro Preto (Brazil)
- University of Sao Joao Del Rei (Brazil)
- University of Juiz de Fora (Brazil)
- Leeds College of Music (UK)
- University of Chester (UK)

My love of Jazz has also enabled me to play over 2000 gigs in 8 countries.

These gigs run from mostly empty coffee shops, to sold out concerts.

I've even shared the stage with Jazz legends such as Randy Brecker, Stefon Harris, and Slide Hampton.

Some of my favorite gigs include shows at:

- Lincoln Center
- International Association for Jazz Education Conference
- NuJazz Festival (Brazil)
- Savassi Jazz Festival (Brazil)
- International Jazz Day Festival (Nepal)

Jazz has been in my life for 20 years, and every day I'm glad I found this great music.

Because of this, I want to share this love of Jazz and guitar with you. You never know where it'll lead you.

