

GUITAR LESSONS - HOW YOU CAN HELP

- a guide for all parents

Parents often worry that they don't know how to help their children with practice. You don't need to be a musician yourself. In some ways it's better if you are not. Here are some tips:-

1. The first thing to understand is that what happens at home is just as important as what happens in the lessons. If nothing happens at home, progress will be nil.
2. Practice = repetition. There is nothing magical about practice. It is simply a case of going over the same sequence of movements of the fingers repeatedly. You have to work carefully and methodically, really thinking about what you are doing. In general you need to practise each phrase separately and then join the phrases together. In the early stages, a phrase usually consists of just two bars of music.
3. What you should hear if a child is practising well, is **slow repetition of a sequence of sounds**, which should gradually become clearer and smoother, and maybe **slightly** quicker. Speed is not as important as fluency and accuracy.

Guidelines for effective practice:-

- a) Make sure left-hand fingernails are short.
- b) Check that your guitar is in tune. An electronic tuner is a big help.
- c) Sit properly. Use a footstool (or equivalent), like we do in the lessons.
- d) Know the name of each note you play, and which fingers (of both hands) you are using.
- e) Listen. Does it sound right?



How often should practice be done and how long should it go on for?

How long is a piece of string?! The more you practise, the quicker you improve, but it's not worth spending money on lessons unless an average of 10 minutes – preferably 15 minutes - a day is maintained. 1% of the total time available in a week should not be too much to ask, even of a seven year old. Use every available means (bribery and corruption included!) to ensure that practice happens REGULARLY.

How do I know what they should be practising?

Anything highlighted in yellow should be repeatedly played until it has been dated as approved by me.

Performance

Exams, concerts and simply playing to entertain family and friends are excellent motivators. Please encourage your child to put their skills to good use – and to enjoy playing with and for other people.

Logistics

Some pupils struggle to remember to bring their guitars to school, and/or to take them home. It's even more important that they bring their book(s). Perhaps you could make sure they get everything ready the night before the day of the lesson – and that both guitar and book(s), etc. come home with them after school.

....and finally, please check to see whether there is any correspondence from me lurking in their bags!

Thank you. A little support from you will make a world of difference.