

Extra projects with *Guitar QuickStart*™

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Guitar QuickStart™ provides an excellent fundamental start for beginning students from upper grades through adulthood. Although developed in college classes, the presentation is basic enough that it can be used with students 10 years old and up, at a pace best determined by individual teachers. The material can be covered in one college semester in classes meeting once each week for 2 hours. It was developed in elective college classes for adult beginners, who typically had a wide variety of backgrounds (or non-backgrounds!) in music. Their goals in taking the class were as varied as the students themselves.

Inevitably teachers will have classes with students who want to do more sophisticated work. *Guitar QuickStart*™ can be supplemented with other materials oriented toward plectrum or classic techniques and literature. However, there are projects “hiding” in *Guitar QuickStart*™ that can stimulate students to understand the guitar in more depth, or that can be assigned for extra credit or testing. They are described here, with references to material in *Guitar QuickStart*™ as the bases for additional work.

These suggestions encourage flexible thinking on the fretboard, and can be done with virtually any age student, any level of background.

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A special note:

Typically guitarists do a lot of crossover performance of styles, several of which are improvisatory: rock, pop, jazz, country, classical. However, the teaching of classic guitar now has reached a level of sophistication and maturity that enables students to focus on this field and its heavy requirement of music reading, and possibly bypass the benefits of chord knowledge and improvisation. As one who came to guitar - both classic and folk style accompaniment - after strictly classical training on piano and organ through childhood, college, and a first master’s degree, I cannot emphasize enough the value of meshing the experience of improvisation into the classical training program. After all, most of the great classic composers were phenomenal improvisors.

A student who has worked on improvisation at some level can, for example, see and hear Bach with new eyes and ears. She can bring these insights to bear in learning and memorizing the great classics. It is this writer’s opinion that one of the greatest benefits of experience in improvisation is reducing “stage fright,” because an improviser has an increased chance of keeping both the music and himself going if a problem arises.

Using the material in *Guitar QuickStart*™ beyond the stated text instructions can help students develop the flexible thinking and knowledge of the fretboard that will set the stage for continuing development in either improvisation or advanced reading skills.

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- p. 28, "Ode to Joy," fifth and ninth positions.
p. 29, "Swedish Folk Song," fifth and ninth positions.
p.30, "Ode to Joy," (lower strings), fifth and seventh positions, with a jump to the low G on string ⑥.
p.31, "Aura Lea," fifth position, with the jump to low G, string ⑥. It can also be played entirely on string ⑥, jumping as needed.
p. 32, "Good King Wenceslas," fifth/fourth positions (to accommodate the "B").
p. 33, "Aunt Rhody," (lower notes), can be played entirely on string ⑥.

4. Octave transposing: Write both notation and tablature an octave lower or higher than shown, and play.

- "Swedish Folk Song," p.29, octave lower.
"Aura Lea," p. 31, octave higher.
"Good King Wenceslas," p.32, octave lower.
"Aunt Rhody," p.33, octave higher.

The two versions of "Ode to Joy" are already notated in higher and lower octaves.

5. Improvisation, locating chord roots on the fretboard, charts pages 45-46.

As a "baby step" toward improvising melodically and developing rhythm awareness, some students may play the chord roots as single notes, varying rhythms, anywhere the letter occurs on the fretboard, while the instructor or others in the class play the chords. Those with background in music theory can work with complete chord spellings and perhaps even chord extensions, as in jazz.

6. Additional note reading, lead sheets, pages 53-56, pages 65-69.

Explain new rhythm reading as needed.

7. Basic instrumental solo arranging, selected songs.

Simple arrangements can be made by playing the melodies and adding the chord roots in the bass with the thumb. This is essentially a finger-oriented technique, as it requires skipping strings with the playing hand. Plectrum players who understand the concept can add chord tones between the bass and melody, while being careful that the melody string is the highest one played. When ready, finger players can also fill in extra chord tones.

For some of the songs, the melody must be transposed one octave higher to accommodate the added chord root on a low string. Where a chord lasts more than one measure, the arranger may wish to repeat the chord root on the first beat of each measure. Those using a finger/classic technique should play the melody with a rest stroke and the bass with the thumb using either a light rest stroke or freestroke.

Be sure to explain key signatures as needed.

As a comprehensive study approach, to help students in relating the sounds of melody and harmony, a single song can be played several ways:

- Read notation for the melody alone.
- Play the chord chart alone, using the strumming or freestroke techniques suggested.
- Transpose the melody, if needed, and play it alone.
- Work out the instrumental solo, combining the melody with the chord roots.

p. 53, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." transpose the melody one octave higher and play in first position. The chord roots A and E are open strings.

p. 54, "When the Saints Go Marching In." Play the melody as written, first position. The G and C chords require fingered roots on the lower strings. The melody note A and the bass D in measure 4 are on adjacent strings, requiring freestroke rather reststroke for the melody.

p.55, "Down in the Valley." Play as written in first position, with a jump to the high A, fret 5, string ①. The D and A chord roots are both open strings. Second position fingering is possible, thus placing the high A under the 4th finger and eliminating a need to "jump."

p. 56, "The Wabash Cannonball." Play as written in first position. Only the G chord requires a fingered bass note. Second position fingering is a good solution.

p. 65, "Riddle Song." Play as written in first position. The high B is fret 7 on string ①. Second position fingering is possible. Be sure students understand the slash-chord symbols. For G/D, the bass note is D. (G is the underlying chord harmony.) For Em/A, the bass note is A. (Em is the underlying chord.)

p.66, "Greensleeves/What Child is This?" The melody must be transposed one octave higher. This will require playing several higher notes on string ① - as high as D on fret 10. The fingering of melody plus chord roots is tricky at times, but entirely possible. The most awkward place is at measures 18 and 26, where the 10th fret D is supported by a G chord. The low G, string ⑥, is not reachable. Although the voice leading is not the best, the open G, string ③, will do for a beginning arrangement.

p.67, "Scarborough Fair." Play as written, first position. The fingered basses are G and C. Where there are rests on the first beats of the measure, play the chord root alone and follow with the melody notes.

p. 68, "All Through the Night." Play as written, first position. The slash chords all have A as basses.

p.69, "Aura Lea." The melody must be transposed one octave higher. This will involve a high B and C, frets 7 & 8 on string ①. In measures 5 and 8, the chord root B can be fingered at fret 7, string ⑥ (the same fret as the melody note). In measure 9, an open G, string ③, can be used as bass. It is possible to reach the low G, string ⑥, fret 3, from the high B, but may be difficult for a beginner. (This version of the well-known song is taken from a copy of the original as published in the 19th century, and is more faithful to the original melody and harmonies than most guitar book versions. Yes, the original is spelled "Lea," not "Lee.")

8. Harmonizing "by ear," using primary key chords.

Teachers may wish to challenge more advanced students - especially music majors or minors - to create the chart of a well-known song "from scratch." This is a valuable exercise especially for applying "head" -learned theory to the experience of sound. Don't underestimate the value of this activity to students at any level of background.

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