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## **GUITAR TECHNIQUE FUNDAMENTALS checklist**

**David Shere studio**

This is a summary (but by no means comprehensive) checklist of basic fundamentals of good physical technique that I look for in teaching my students to play steel-string, electric, nylon-string, and electric bass guitar, both developing (beginner) and progressing (intermediate/advanced).

### **Fretting hand (typically LH)**

1. Chord diagram comprehension and basic G chord formation
2. Proper finger arch and curvature of fingers to the fingerboard
3. Proper placement of the fingertips on the strings
4. Proper placement of the thumb behind the neck and engagement/use of the thumb muscle
5. Good angle of the neck
6. Good callous development (6-12 weeks)

### **Plucking/picking hand (typically RH)**

7. Proper placement of the plucking hand between sound hole and bridge/saddle
8. Proper pick grip between thumb/index finger
9. Proper curvature and use of thumb/index/middle fingers for plucking (electric bass and intermediate guitar)
10. Good tone (both strumming full chords and plucking individual strings)
11. Proper palm muting with side of palm (intermediate)

### **Posture and body position**

12. Seated upright
13. Guitar waist supported on same leg as plucking hand
  - “classical” orientation for nylon string guitar differs, with guitar supported on fretting hand leg and guitar body in the middle; fret hand leg elevated on footstool
14. Feet planted in front of chair, weight on heels/backside (“tripod”)
  - leg supporting guitar body may be elevated using a footstool if needed

15. Relaxed shoulders
16. Relaxed breathing
17. Comfortable positioning of the instrument with upper waist of guitar body under armpit, slight backward tilt, neck slightly elevated

## **Curriculum**

18. Major and minor open string chords
19. Sight-reading (typically Hal Leonard method)
20. Open string diatonic major scales (C/D/G); advanced scale fingerings (intermediate)
21. Basic pentatonic scale fingering (Gmaj/Em open, Bbmaj/Gm closed)
22. Common chord progressions, strumming and picking patterns
23. Learning and development of that fretting hand barre and barre chord technique (intermediate)
24. Listening playlists
25. List of 5-10 songs as performance goals

## **Repertoire and technical context**

The development of guitar playing technique beyond the fundamentals is extremely individualized and personal depending on the music and repertoire the student is interested in. Guitarists as artists are an extremely iconoclastic and liberal group. Classical, jazz, and popular forms of music all employ a wide variety of contextual techniques which must be learned “in situ,” so to speak, as they apply to each new piece of music. Even in the classical guitar world, *technique is not a conclusive or universal body of ability*. There exists a practically infinite variety of extended techniques and variations which cannot be comprehensively addressed.

Nearly every piece of music is a separate project, with a unique set of challenges. It is critical therefore to know what music the student is interested in playing as early as possible, in order to steer the student’s technical progress in that direction.

*Training the student extensively in traditional classical guitar technique, for example, is of little to no use in teaching the student jazz guitar accompaniment and scale improvisation; these are separate bodies of technique with almost zero overlap. I state this as a conclusive fact based on over (4) decades of experience.*