

## Lesson Guides – The First 4 Weeks

Lesson	Learning Objectives in Presentation Order	Practice Strategy	Homework Focus
<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review learning objectives for lesson w/student</li> <li>• Parts of the guitar</li> <li>• String numbers/names</li> <li>• Seating</li> <li>• Right-/left-hand integrity (includes fretting notes / holding a pick / using the thumb)</li> <li>• Locating notes by fret/string number</li> <li>• Partial chords (downstroke): GMaj-GMaj7-G7-Emin</li> <li>• Reading a fingerboard diagram</li> <li>• New Chords: C major, D7 (use diagram to figure out and check for understanding)</li> <li>• Complete progression: G-GMaj7-G7-Em-C-D7-G</li> <li>• Discuss the power of habits</li> <li>• Model practice sequence for homework: 3-beat change strategy with metronome</li> <li>• Review <i>Lesson 1 Practice Guide</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Connecting Chords: Three-Beat Change Strategy</b></p> <p>An extremely efficient practice technique is to play on three beats (in common time) and change/prepare for the new chord on the fourth beat. In this way, you are not rushed to get to the next chord. You have an entire beat to set up for the new chord. This includes preparing your right hand (pick) on the lowest string of the strum. You are also playing in rhythm, which is an important musical habit to acquire.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proper seating</li> <li>• Left-hand positioning</li> <li>• Progression: G-GMaj7-G7-Em-C-D7</li> <li>• Using metronome</li> <li>• Share/perform for a family member</li> </ul>

### Teacher Considerations

Remember, playing guitar (or performing most any human activity) is about building habits (think about driving a car). If you take your time when presenting new skills and help your students build good habits (both physical and mental), the process of learning the guitar will be immensely fun and gratifying.

Your student should always feel a sense of ease. If there is any frustration, one of two things is going on: your student is either experiencing confusion, or trying to perform a task which is too difficult for his/her current ability level (this includes playing too fast). Both of these problems are easy to solve.

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Emphasize sensitivity to confusion. A little is normal for any new endeavour. The trick is not to proceed if your student is confused (not immediately able to demonstrate the skill you are teaching/modelling). Stop and clarify, then continue.

If an element seems too hard, break the objective down even further or model practice with your student for a more extended period of time.

Make sure to model and practice keeping a steady beat with your student in every lesson, even if only using the first several chords in a progression.

Lesson	Lesson Objectives in Presentation Order	Practice Strategy	Homework Focus
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review homework</li> <li>• New chords: Dm6, Am7, E7</li> <li>• Introduce concept of <i>aim-directed movement</i></li> <li>• Introduce chart reading for progression using new chord forms (Dm6-Am7-E7-Am7)</li> <li>• Review three-beat change technique using new chords</li> <li>• New chords: D minor, A minor, E major</li> <li>• Progression: Dm-Am-EMaj-Am</li> <li>• Review <i>Lesson 2 Practice Guide</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Aim-Directed Movement (ADM)</b></p> <p>Aim-directed movement simply means being clear about what you are doing before you do it. A very powerful learning technique is to practice the left hand alone before adding the right hand. Touch, press and release each chord form in sequence. Don't worry about rhythm. Concentrate on the position of your left finger within the fret. It should be very close the fret (just under it) but not on it. This placement will give you the best sound (no buzzing), and also requires the least amount of pressure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proper seating (guitar head at least at eye level)</li> <li>• Left-hand positioning (firm tip joints, near fret)</li> <li>• Progression: Dm-Am-EMaj-Am</li> <li>• Using ADM</li> <li>• Share/perform for a family member</li> </ul>

### Teacher Considerations

In this sequence, your student will be practicing moving his/her fingers as a unit. With these three chords (D minor 6, A minor 7, E7), the fingering will have the same shape,

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but will be on different strings. The D minor 6 chord is quite lovely. Chances are, your student will easily master this progression.

Next, introduce the addition of one finger to each of the chords just learned to create similar-sounding standard chords. By adding the fourth (or third, also typical) finger to the second string, third fret, you get a D minor. The sound is less dissonant than the Dm6, but also quite beautiful.

In a similar fashion, adding the third finger to the fourth string, second fret changes Am7 into A minor.

Finally, adding the third finger to the fifth string, second fret changes E7 to E major.

Practice using the ADM technique with your student to help them avoid confusion and error.

Lesson	Lesson Objectives in Presentation Order	Practice Strategy	Homework Focus
<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review homework</li> <li>• New chords: E minor, G major</li> <li>• Introduce <i>pressure drills</i></li> <li>• Discuss which finger to think about moving first while changing chords (left-hand choreography)</li> <li>• Practice changing new chords using ADM</li> <li>• Review 3-beat change technique using new chords</li> <li>• New progression: G-Em-Am-D7-G</li> <li>• New chord: C major</li> <li>• New progression: G-Em-Am-C-D7-G</li> <li>• Review <i>Lesson 3 Practice Guide</i> (and Review <i>Lesson 3.1 Practice Guide</i> if appropriate)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pressure Release Technique</b> This practice technique is extremely effective and extremely simple. It is aim-directed movement to the max! Position your left hand's fingers in the proper place on each fret (slightly behind the fret) for the chord form. Press down. Feel the weight of your hand (and pectoral muscles) pulling the guitar toward your body. Use minimal force with your thumb. Relax and release finger tension (fingers still touching string but not pressing). Hover fingers over strings. Repeat 6–10 times.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proper seating (guitar head at least at eye level)</li> <li>• Left-hand positioning (firm tip joints, near fret)</li> <li>• Chord-changing practice log</li> <li>• Using <i>ADM</i></li> <li>• Using <i>pressure drills</i></li> <li>• Progression: G-Em-Am-D7-G</li> <li>• Progression: G-Em-Am-C-D7-G</li> <li>• Share/perform for a family member</li> </ul>

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### Teacher Considerations

In this sequence, your student will be learning three new chords (E minor, G major, and C major), two new progressions, and a new practice strategy (*pressure release drill*). If the student has not mastered (i.e. reached the point where he or she can play with fluency / rhythmic accuracy, proper technique, and confidence) the previous lesson's material, use supplementary handouts for lesson 2 to practice with the student as the focus of this lesson.

In general, do not introduce new material until the student can demonstrate mastery of the previous learning objectives. Some students won't get to the second progression during the lesson. Use your discretion. Older students, or students with some previous musical experience, may be able to complete the assignment independently for homework.

Otherwise, wait to introduce the C major chord and new progression until your next lesson. For this reason, the student practice guide for the C major chord and corresponding progression is separate from the *Lesson 3* practice sheet.

Lesson	Lesson Objectives in Presentation Order	New Technique	Homework Focus
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review homework</li> <li>New chord: G7</li> <li>Practice <i>pressure drills</i></li> <li>Review 3-beat change technique to practice changing from new chord (G7) to familiar chords (focus on chords in this week's progression)</li> <li>New progression: C-Am-Dm-G7-C</li> <li>Practice changing chords in new progression using ADM</li> <li>Introduce new bass/chord strumming pattern using the familiar progression from lesson 3 (G-Em-Am-D7-G)</li> <li>Review <i>Lesson 4 Practice Guide</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Bass/Chord Strumming Pattern</b></p> <p>Pluck the root (for now, the lowest note or bass) of the chord on the first beat of each measure. On beats two, three, and four, use downstroke strums and don't worry about hitting all the strings. It will sound more musical if the strums are varied. This is similar to the three-beat change drill. It gives you a little extra time to get your fingers in place. This technique also sounds great. You will hear this type of strumming all the time in country, rock and folk music.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proper seating (guitar head at least at eye level)</li> <li>Left-hand positioning (firm tip joints, near fret)</li> <li>Chord changing practice log</li> <li>Using <i>ADM</i></li> <li>Progression: C-Am-Dm-G7-C</li> <li>Share/perform for a family member</li> </ul>

### Teacher Considerations

In this sequence, your student will be learning a new chord (G7), a new progression using some familiar chords, and a new strumming pattern.

You may want to spend some time during the lesson practicing changing from G7 to C and G7 to Dm to ensure you perform enough modelling for the student to feel confident. Remember, for the first few months of lessons, your primary aim is to model efficient practice strategies for your students.

A considerable amount of time during each of these beginning lessons should be spent on guided practice with your student. Guided practice includes demonstration, turn taking, playing together, and asking leading questions. It will help your students learn to process new information more efficiently.