

# ***Explore Music 7: The Art of Guitar***



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The instructional hours indicated for each unit provide guidelines for planning, rather than strict requirements. The sequence of skill and concept development is to be the focus of concern. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these suggested timelines to meet the needs of their students.

To be effective in teaching this module, it is important to use the material contained in *Explore Music: Curriculum Framework* and *Explore Music: Appendices*. Therefore, it is recommended that these two components be frequently referenced to support the suggestions for teaching, learning, and assessment in this module.

### Icons Used in this Module



Formative  
Assessment



Summative  
Assessment



Listening



Key Point



Extension



Cross  
Curricular



# ***Explore Music 7: The Art of Guitar***

**(26 Instructional Hours)**

## **Overview**

### **Rationale**

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The emphasis in this module is on the development of general musicianship with the guitar serving as the medium through which the creative talents of the students will emerge. The young guitarists in grade 7 will learn to communicate thoughts, feelings and ideas through music making while developing in areas of repertoire building, technical proficiency, and music literacy. These fundamental principles are the pillars of general musicianship and are essential and all-inclusive in providing the aspiring young guitarist with a life-long experience of musical enjoyment and continued learning.

The developmental process of music learning in this module will occur through an introductory look at a variety of guitar styles aimed to stimulate the interests of all students. Sharing a worldview of music with students of diverse cultural backgrounds should be a fascinating undertaking since so many of the fundamentals of music are shared among the different genres and cultures. Students will explore and enjoy contrasts and celebrate music's cultural diversity.

### **Outcomes Addressed**

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- Learners will analyse how rhythm, meter, and tempo communicate meaning.
- Learners will analyse the role of melody and harmony in the communication of meaning.
- Learners will evaluate the role of texture and form in communicating meaning.
- Learners will evaluate how composers and performers synthesize the elements of music to communicate meaning.
- Learners will analyse how the cultures of local and global communities are expressed through music.
- Learners will create original musical works reflecting personal, social, and cultural contexts.
- Learners will perform music in ensembles to communicate meaning.

## Materials

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- acoustic Guitars
- a sufficient supply of .76mm or 1mm guitar picks (half gross)
- two guitar tuners for class use
- music stands
- extra single strings especially 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> strings (one dozen of each per class)
- at least six full packages of strings, four acoustic, two nylon
- 2 sidewinders

## Developing Musical Understanding Through Guitar

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The charts below – *General and Specific Musical Understandings* – indicate those skills that students will be expected to demonstrate at the end of this 26-hour guitar module. It is understood that all students will be expected to achieve results. One student may do well with chords and struggle in reading notation. Another student may prefer to play simple melodies yet find theoretical concepts difficult. Results will invariably come in different forms and at different times according to individual tastes, strengths, backgrounds, and attitudes. However, learning will occur as students begin to enjoy music making as a means of personal expression through which they may in time contribute to the art and culture of their community.

General Musical Understandings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Development of simple repertoire using harmony (chords) &amp; melody</li><li>2. Achieve basic technical proficiency through scales and rhythm exercises</li><li>3. Expansion of theoretical concepts and musical vocabulary and to determine purpose and meaning of the music being learned.</li></ol>

1. Specific Repertoire Requirements for Guitar	Strategies / Materials	Indicators of Achievement
Building repertoire through music reading	Essentials Elements (E.E.)	Music reading in class with others
Ability to play 4 to 6 pieces from memory	E.E.	Confidence & eagerness to play
Can accompany repertoire of others using a variety of major and minor chords	Pages 94 - 95 E.E. chord diagram - most chords	Playing with others expressively
Own composition, e.g. 12 Bar Blues	Curriculum guide, Internet, other	Performing with class members
2. Specific Technical Understandings for Guitar	Strategies / Materials	Indicators of Achievement
Know 4 - 6 major scales 1 <sup>st</sup> position, Same keys in pentatonic form	Internet (Chordbook.com) additional charts or handouts	Regular review, fluent, good tempo
Know at least 3 minor scales (E natural, E harmonic, E minor pentatonic) One other if possible (A minor)	Hand-outs, regular review	Memory, fluent tempo
Can play a variety of rhythmic patterns using chords in a variety of meters 4/4 3/4 in 4 – 5 keys	Exercises on down/up removal of strokes to create new patterns	Use of contrasting songs
All chords pages 94 – 95 E. E. played smoothly. Chord changing with no break in time	Chord changing exercises with teacher guidance	Songs in different keys, minor/major
3. Specific Theoretical Understandings for Guitar	Strategies / Materials	Indicators of Achievement
Expand vocabulary in communicating music's purpose and meaning. Guitar specific terms	Appendix, Teacher regular use	Spoken often in class discussion
At least 6 Italian terms and definitions to describe tempo variation, loudness, style, meter.	Appendix, Teacher regular use	Regular reference to pieces played
Note names, durations, rests, staff, Can improvise using notes in scales and chords	E.E. & Charts,	Repertoire & music reading
Understanding of meter: 4/4 3/4 2/4 Can play in a variety of meters in 4 – 5 keys	Teacher/student initiated	Group performing

## PRESENT AND FUTURE LEARNING

As its global popularity has shown, and due to its historically adaptive nature, a wide variety of guitar styles is readily available to capture student interest. During this 26-hour module teachers can expect to introduce a small portion of guitar repertoire in the popular genres. Planting the seed for future learning is key, and a balance of work in the areas of repertoire, technique, and music literacy is fundamental to the growth of young musicianship. Strive for quality and not quantity as students progress through the

module. It is better that students learn to play fewer pieces well than many pieces poorly. This approach will maintain student interest, build confidence and self-esteem, and allow expected outcomes to be met.

As a foundation for ongoing learning is laid, students will steadily learn to play and present music in an expressive and skillful way. To facilitate this goal, it is hoped that student abilities and interest will be nurtured and supported by teacher guidance and the available resources.

With these points in mind teachers should not be overly concerned that all suggested materials be covered entirely. Teachers should reach for realistic goals with an expectation for the unknown circumstances that invariably may occur. Inspiring students and encouraging them to continue musical studies beyond the timeline should always be kept in mind.

### **PREREQUISITES AND FOLLOW-UP FROM PREVIOUS YEARS**

Students will have knowledge and skills acquired in *Music P-6* and the *Explore Music 7: Introductory Module*. It is often found that when a new instrument is introduced the application of previously learned musical concepts to the new medium is challenging. Therefore, a review of some of the basics of music is recommended. Begin by talking about music learned in earlier years and explain that much of the musical ideas and concepts already known will now be expressed through the new medium of the guitar. Remember, it is music that is being presented; guitar is simply the medium through which it will be expressed.

Begin to establish a teacher/student relationship at the outset of the course. Ask questions about the music listened to and the idols students may wish to emulate. Then, assure students that the learning environment created for them in class will allow their aspirations to be realized.



# Unit 1: The Origins (7 Hours)

## Introduction

This grade 7 guitar module will expose students to the art of music through the art of guitar. Students will explore many of the musical styles made popular over the last century. This introduction to the guitar will provide a means of personal expression and a sense of connectedness to the world of music in which we live.

## Learning, Teaching and Assessment Process

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### PART A: GETTING STARTED, TECHNIQUE, AND MUSIC READING (1.5 HOURS)

Open the session by getting acquainted with the students and conduct a needs assessment. Take time to find out who may already have some guitar experience and who may be taking private lessons. This will assist when forming small groups and partnerships in class and assist in a student-based cooperative learning strategy. It will also fix a starting point and help determine what can reasonably be achieved in this module. Students who have played before might be invited to demonstrate skills they already have. Preliminary observation of incoming abilities may bring to light some specific weaknesses that need to be addressed and assist in the overall planning of the module.

During each class create an interest in historical research. Use *A Brief History of Guitar* (see Supporting Materials) to inspire students in further study. Students must begin to show an understanding of the origins of the various styles of guitar prevalent in a world of cultural diversity.

While using the new words found throughout the module, students will expand their music vocabulary and learn to speak about music's relevance to the changing attitudes of society at large. This will inspire a greater appreciation for the varying perspectives found within the community.

A fine musician once said, "Technique is the ability to leave the music alone." This profound statement reveals that music, as it appears on manuscript, is in a near perfect state. A musician's underdeveloped or weak technique may cause less than desired results. However, when music is played with sufficient technical skill, the music will seem to have been *left alone* in the respectful state of the composer's intent.



Encourage students to continue working toward a stronger technique. For self-assessment of technical problems students may use the form entitled *My Observations* found in Supporting Materials. By comparing ongoing notes to regular observations in class, a formative assessment for learning will assist in determining which specific technical issues need to be addressed. An *Assessment for Learning Record* is found in Supporting Materials.

*Tips for Teaching Success*

Begin each class with a few warmup exercises. Such exercises will help develop the technique necessary to achieve a better performance of repertoire. Warming up in this way prepares the muscles for smoother playing while allowing for greater musical focus.

## Warm up Exercise # 1



- Using the left hand fingertip press the 1st string at the 1st fret with the 1st finger. Use a down stroke with the guitar pick. Then remove the finger and pick the same string using an up stroke. (this is the open string).
- Repeat, using the 2nd finger at the 2nd fret, but remain on the 1st string. Then remove the finger and with an up stroke pick the open string.
- Repeat at the 3rd fret (1st String), open, and then the 4th fret, and open.
- Do this four-finger/four-fret pattern on each of the remaining 5 strings. Depress the string (closed) followed by the open string. Match finger with fret. e.g. 1st finger 1st fret, etc.

This exercise should be done regularly as a class warm up and also during home practice time.

*Essential Elements for Guitar*, page 77, shows how the notes on the fingerboard can be represented in tablature (tab).

Warm up exercise #1 above can be represented in guitar tablature like this:

E 1 <sup>st</sup> string	__ 1 __ 0 __ 2 __ 0 __ 3 __ 0 __ 4 __ 0 __
B 2 <sup>nd</sup> string	_____
G 3 <sup>rd</sup> string	_____
D 4 <sup>th</sup> string	_____
A 5 <sup>th</sup> string	_____
E 6 <sup>th</sup> string	_____

## Warmup Exercise #2

Try the reverse (starting with the pinkie) on each of the 6 strings

E 1 <sup>st</sup>	4 0 3 0 2 0 1 0	Continue on all six strings
B 2 <sup>nd</sup>	_____	
G 3 <sup>rd</sup>	_____	
D 4 <sup>th</sup>	_____	
A 5 <sup>th</sup>	_____	
E 6 <sup>th</sup>	_____	

## Warmup Exercise #3

### Music Excerpt

All notes played on the second string

The above excerpt is based on a familiar rock song. Played quickly, students may recognize its origin. Here is the same excerpt transcribed into guitar tablature.

(frets)  
2<sup>nd</sup> string only 0 7 0 4 0 7 0 4

*Repeat above line several times then....*

(frets)  
2<sup>nd</sup> string only 0 8 0 5 0 8 0 5

*Repeat several times then play 1<sup>st</sup> line again and continue*

Tablature (tab for short) is a method of representing music specific to the guitar. It is a useful way to get students working on the instrument and playing immediately. Tablature has become more sophisticated since its sudden popularity in the 80s. At that time there was no method of indicating note duration. Now tab borrows stems, beams, and flags from conventional notation to indicate durations. Tablature can be useful when it serves to provide a pathway to music notation – the conventional method used when writing for all instruments. Young guitar students need to be aware that if they want to open up greater possibilities, they must learn to read music notation. This direct path to greater music literacy will provide:

- the ability to write for other instruments
- the option to play music written for other instruments
- the opportunity to join a concert or jazz band
- the ability to become a studio musician
- the option to write arrangements for large groups (ensembles, orchestras, etc.)
- greater access to music (music is more readily available in notation than tab)
- great fun and enjoyment

#### *Tips for Teaching Success*

Once every two or three classes devote a segment of class time to “Tab Time”. Students or teacher can present a new song written in tablature. Tablature is quite readily available on the Internet where most popular songs can be found written this way (notation will often have copyright issues). When a new piece is introduced in tab it can be considered as class repertoire. To maintain student interest, short excerpts from present and past popular songs can also be learned by tab. To add context, be sure the pieces are supported by relevant information such as artist’s name, country of origin, cultural influences, and purpose. Excerpts may not take a lot of time to learn, they can be fun, and they can expedite the search for contrasts and comparisons in different musical genres.

*Essential Elements for Guitar*, Book 1 is the recommended textbook for this module. Teachers will work primarily with the music reading exercises and place special attention on hand positioning as illustrated in the diagrams. A good instruction book such as *Essential Elements for Guitar* will introduce chords and note reading to ensure that both skills develop at the same time. Although these two skills are essential to early development, it is suggested that note reading to the third string occur first.

The left hand functions differently when playing single note melodies compared with the group movement of fingers used in chord playing. By learning the note names and their positions on the first three strings students will soon be playing some familiar songs. Chords will be introduced shortly thereafter with an in depth study in Unit 2.

After the beginning section to page 3, jump to pages 9 and 10 to introduce note reading on the first string. Follow with pages 13 and 14 for the notes on the 2<sup>nd</sup> string, and then move to pages 21 and 22 for the notes on the 3<sup>rd</sup> string. This will familiarize students with a variety of notes on the fingerboard and how they are represented in music notation. This knowledge will be useful in building an initial repertoire. The accompanying CD in the *Essential Elements for Guitar* is recommended for study purposes. It should also be used for listening and analysis where students can focus on the aspects of tone production and articulation.

Assign students one of the note reading exercises on page 22 (these songs are played on the 1<sup>st</sup> three strings only) to be converted from music notation to tablature. This exercise reinforces both methods of writing for guitar and ties the two together for a better understanding of the layout of the guitar fingerboard.

There are many freeware programs for music writing. One such program can be found at: <http://www.musescore.org/en/node/908>.

Students should become familiar with basic theoretical concepts and notational systems used in music and those relevant to guitar such as tablature and chord symbols. These theoretical tools will enable students to better express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas about music.



Use the *Assessment for Learning Record* (Supporting Materials) to record student progress in the understanding of the above reading and musical literacy concepts. The *Individual Performance Evaluation* (see Supporting Materials) can be used either at the end of each unit or at the end of the module only.



*Left hand*  
*Right Hand*

Show students how the left thumb is positioned behind the neck  
Show students the proper method of holding the pick. Illustrate the relaxed movement of the hand and wrist as opposed to a stiff wrist where playing is done only from the elbow.



Students will follow a self-assessment process involving the periodic verbal expression in class of the new things learned, and routine journal entries of new thoughts and ideas (such as *KWL* in Appendix D of *Explore Music 7–9: Appendices* and *My Observations* found in Supporting Materials). Students will also learn to accept feedback from others and provide feedback to others so as to aid in their own personal development.

Students will realize that certain skills may not be perfected during the classes but will be developed over time with the guitar and continue beyond the duration of the course. Teachers will want to encourage continued learning and instill in students the notion that excellence is the goal and that perfection is not a realistic expectation. Through the aural, written, and practical activities in class, teachers will become aware of the information retained and the skills developed by the students. By assessing for

learning, teachers can better shape the delivery of the program content. The teacher and student will work together in matching teacher expectations with realistic student goals. For ongoing assessment of new skills teachers can use the *Individual Performance Evaluation* and the *Assessment for Learning Record* (see Supporting Materials).

To allow students to self evaluate and recognize personal achievements it is important that assessment methods be available. The KWL chart found in in Appendix D of *Explore Music 7–9: Appendices* is one that serves this purpose well. Hand this chart out early and encourage students to use it throughout the module. A second helpful method of self-assessment is the *Individual Self Assessment Report* (see Supporting Materials). Students will find these very useful in addressing specific problems and challenges.

With a positive mental attitude to succeed and a strong work ethic, any student can enjoy tremendous accomplishments. Good assessment tools are essential in allowing a positive attitude and solid work habits to materialize into fine young musicianship.

#### *Tips for Teaching Success*

Teaching is much like serving an appetizing meal in an exquisite dining establishment. The food is well received and enjoyed only after a comfortable atmosphere is created, courteous hospitality, and a feeling of anticipation stirred by a slice or two of warm fresh bread. Teachers may have on hand all the resources and years of playing experience they feel necessary to permit successful teaching. However, if a suitable learning environment is not created in advance, and a personal connectedness to individual students is not established, teaching will be much less effective. Teachers must create an atmosphere in which students feel that learning is occurring, and music is being enjoyed.

Students must be rewarded with incremental and noticeable successes in the nurturing process. Within a short time, teachers should be able to assess learning potential over time through work efforts and progress in class.

Early gratification is necessary for students in maintaining interest and confidence. All students are capable of achieving although progress may occur at different rates and in various ways. Some students may grasp technical concepts quickly. For them, discussion of the music’s societal context may be expressed subsequent to performance. For others conversing about the music beforehand may not only clarify the music’s purpose and meaning but may also deepen the technical challenges of the music.

A typical daily lesson plan may be broken down into the following areas:

- *Tuning and discussion* – While the teacher tunes the guitars, students may tell the class about things they have learned in or outside the class or talk about songs they want to learn (no playing while tuning). This non-playing segment allows for reflection, assimilation of new ideas and thoughts, and helps set a relaxed tone for the class. If discussion seems to be more engaging than expected, a few more minutes may be added (10 minutes).
- *Technical warmups, drills, and listening* – Introduce a new guitar riff found in a popular song to inspire or pique interest. Students may offer suggestions. Balance this time with periodic listening of recorded music for analysis. The pieces in *Essential Elements for Guitar* with a listening icon may also be used. Listening journals could be used (15 minutes).
- *Review material already learned* – Music reading review and repertoire. Not all learned pieces will get reviewed each class. Use a rotational method or use discretion according to need, e.g. upcoming recitals, or testing (10 minutes).
- *New material* – New songs, music reading, and handouts. (15 minutes).
- *Class Review* – Ask students to reflect on what was learned. Talk about the difficulties and successes that occurred during class today. Notes can be written at this time about what to practice and about what they would like to do in the next class. Use an Exit Card as an assessment for learning. This will assist in determining student retention and possible content for subsequent classes.



Note: See Appendix D of *Explore Music 7–9: Appendices* Exit Card samples

#### EXIT CARD

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

State two main points from today’s lesson you will want to remember and practice.

- 1.
- 2.

(To be handed in when leaving class)

The guitar class should be structured using a variety of teaching methods, learning tools, and the input and responses of the students themselves. Flexibility along with the principles of differentiated learning will be key to delivering the essential elements of music, meeting outcomes, and making studies of the guitar exciting and satisfying. With this adaptive music-learning program in place, students will discover for themselves their own musicianship, their artistry, and their personal expressive qualities.



Methods of accumulating information are provided to assist teachers in the assessment for learning process. The students may use the *KWL* chart and the *Specific and General Listening Response Journals* found in Appendix D of *Explore Music 7–9: Appendices*. These will provide feedback for an assessment of student progress.

Students will learn to understand that as we mature our attitudes change through life's experiences and many challenges. A performance of music at one time may sound quite acceptable, but the same music played a few years later will undoubtedly show improvements in technical and expressive qualities. Changes in the refinement of music performance over time occur naturally as a result of personal and musical growth. Therefore, the maintenance and continued development of repertoire will allow a performer to maintain a state of freshness and preparedness when attempting to please an appreciative and often critical audience.

## Practicing and Inspiration

Talk to students early about how to practice at home. Daily practice is a skill in itself and is essential to continuing development. Generally, a typical practice session is divided into three parts: first, technical warmups, review of existing repertoire, and then work on new material. Students can follow the practice record on page 96 of *Essential Elements for Guitar* or prepare their own personal practice record. Refer to Appendix A of *Explore Music 7–9: Appendices* for information on effective home practice.

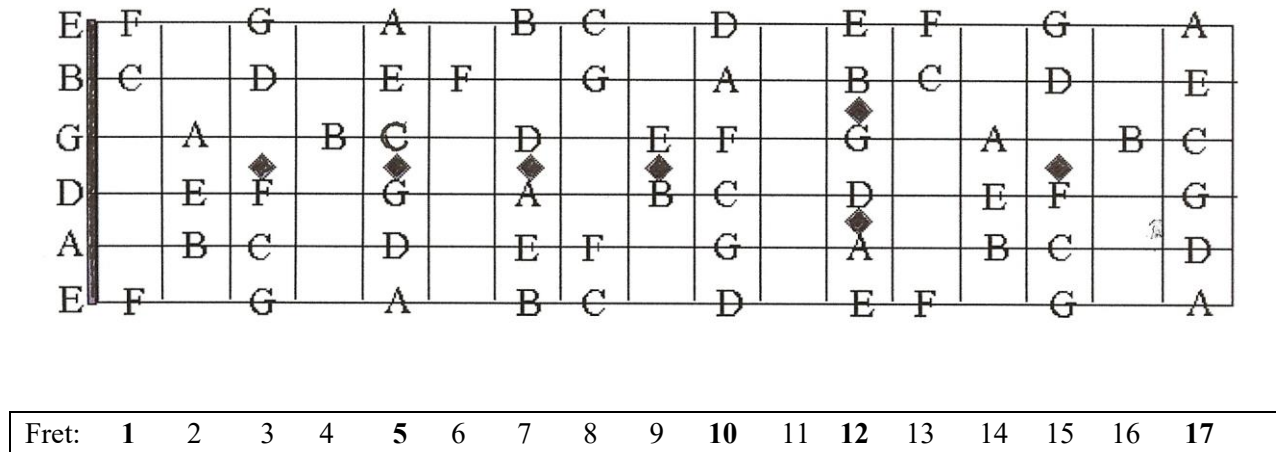
### *Tips for Teaching Success*

Divide the class in teams of 3 to 5 students. Ask each team to choose a name based on a favourite guitarist or band. Assign a team leader who will accumulate and record the daily practice times of each member. The total practice time of each team will be posted on a wall poster. Should teams not be of equal size use an averaging method. At the end of each unit determine the winning team. Then at the end of the module the winning team will receive the applause of the class and perhaps something special provided by the teacher.



## PART B: FINGERBOARD NAVIGATION AND EARLY STAGES (5.5 HOURS)

The importance of knowing and navigating the fingerboard will be of utmost importance to the student's continued progress on the guitar. The daily practice of identifying notes along the strings should be encouraged, and time should be permitted in class for this task. While referring to the fingerboard diagram below, have students follow the step-by-step method of understanding the layout of the fingerboard.



- Learn the names of the open strings and their octaves at the 12th fret. Strings are numbered 1 – 6 from thin to thick or high to low. In the above diagram string: 1 – high E, 2 – B, 3 – G, 4 – D, 5 – A, 6 – low E
- Identify the natural notes (not sharps or flats yet) in the first three frets and memorize their locations.
- Memorize the natural notes up to the 5<sup>th</sup> Fret.
- Notice the natural semi-tones (notes one fret apart); only two: E to F and B to C; all other notes are two frets apart.
- Find patterns or shapes. e.g. G is always lower by one string and in the same fret as C, except from the 3<sup>rd</sup> string to the 2<sup>nd</sup> string where there is a fret in between.
- Randomly play the notes in the 1<sup>st</sup> three frets to a slow but steady beat while naming them. A real challenge!
- The frets not named all have a sharp name and a flat name derived from the natural name above or below. For example, Fret 2 is named F<sup>#</sup> (sharp) in reference to F at the 1<sup>st</sup> fret; it can also be named G<sup>b</sup> in reference to G at the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret.



Test individual students to find notes on the fingerboard. Allow five seconds to locate and play a named note. The teacher can begin with pairs of notes that are a letter name apart. This will allow for an assessment of the understanding of the alphabetical sequencing of notes on the guitar fingerboard. Next time reduce the time to three seconds.

Here are the note names as they occur along the fifth string.

Name	A	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	B	C	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	D	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	E	F	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	A
Fret	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

- Where **A** is the open 5<sup>th</sup> string and moving from fret to fret, the next **A** will be found at the 12th fret. The notes on each string will follow this same pattern although the starting point will be different according to the string name. This 12-note sequence is called the *chromatic scale*.

**Note:** A sharp sign (<sup>#</sup>) is used to raise a note one fret (one semitone or half step, page 58 E.E.) The flat (<sup>b</sup>) does the opposite, lowers the note by one fret.

- The word *enharmonic* refers to a single note or pitch having two names. In the sequence above A<sup>#</sup> and B<sup>b</sup> are two names for the note at the 1<sup>st</sup> fret on the 5<sup>th</sup> string.
- The word *octave* describes the distance between the first and last notes of the complete 12 note chromatic scale where both notes have the same name yet are different in pitch. With reference to the guitar fingerboard, the distance from the open string to the 12th fret is an interval of one octave. An octave can be measured from any position on the fingerboard to a note 12 frets higher or lower.

Students can make a chart of their own of all six strings on the guitar showing the chromatic scale on each string. Remember, the notes will follow the same sequence as they do on the 5<sup>th</sup> string shown above but the starting note (open string) will be different (see page 92 *Essential Elements for Guitar* for open string note names) See also: Essential Guitar <http://www.essentialguitar.com/>

#### *Tips for Teaching Success*

Have a guitar fingerboard poster contest where the class votes on the most attractive and clearest poster to be displayed on a classroom wall. There can be more than one winner.

Begin a “Music Word Bank”. Each time a new word is introduced into the music vocabulary write it on the board along with its definition. This added vocabulary is part of music literacy and essential to music learning. Teachers will invite students to regularly contribute to the Music Word Bank.

Teachers should reinforce music vocabulary by using it daily so students can use this growing vocabulary to express their thoughts and ideas about music’s relevance to the changing attitudes of society at large.



Use an *Assessment for Learning Record* to measure overall progress to this point (see Supporting Materials).

After warmup exercises, proceed to page 6 of *Essential Elements for Guitar* and introduce the two simple three-string chords C and G7. Have students accompany the songs on pages 6 and 7 (“He’s Got The Whole World” and “Water Come A Me Eye”). Additional songs that use these chords may serve as supporting material. Some students may be ready for the full C and G7 chords found on page 94. These students may try these full chords but with caution so as not to delay the chord changes.

Continue to pages 11 and 12 for the G and D7 chords and accompany a few more songs, or other similar songs of choice. Students wishing to sing while playing them may do so. Perhaps the teacher can sing or play the notated melodies while students play the accompaniment. Use simple down strums on the beat. Since chord playing serves to accompany melodies by providing both rhythm and harmony, it is important that students hear the melody while playing the chords. Hearing both parts will lead to playing chordal accompaniment by ear.

Go to <http://www.usborne-quicklinks.com> or [www.ezfolk.com](http://www.ezfolk.com) for a great resource of many familiar songs that can be used in the early study of chords and accompaniment.

By the end of the module students should be able to show an ability to perform melodies in a variety of musical styles and to accompany other students in an ensemble setting using basic chords and rhythmic patterns. *Essential Elements for Guitar* and the additional resources listed are aimed at achieving these goals.

*Tips for Teaching Success*

Each new chord can be added in diagram form that is displayed in the classroom for quick reference. Ask students to volunteer for the task.

By this time students will have learned about reading notation and tablature, can play some single note melodies in the first three frets, and can strum some basic chords. Teachers will spend the last hour of Unit 1 with review, some listening, journal entries, and doing some preliminary assessment.



Using the *Magic Triangle* rubric (see Supporting Materials), an assessment can be done to determine where students are at this point in the module in terms of their ability to recognize notes on the guitar fingerboard and accompany songs using simple chords.

## LEARNING TARGETS FOR THIS UNIT

In this unit students will have learned:

- the initial steps in identifying the notes as they are located on the guitar fingerboard
- technical improvements
- to read music notation in the first three frets on the first three strings and can play some simple songs
- to understand guitar tablature and how it can be related to music notation
- at least four basic chords, C, G7, G, D7
- to expand their vocabulary using musical terminology

## Unit 2: Chords and Rhythm (7 Hours)

### Introduction

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One of the reasons guitar is so popular is that it functions as both a melodic instrument and a rhythmic or percussive instrument. The word percussive is used because the striking of the strings produces the sound. Guitar players are therefore challenged with the task of developing skills in areas of both melody playing and rhythm accompaniment.

Chords consist of several notes taken from a key or scale played together to create a harmony to a given melody. Chords change at different points in a song consistent with the flow of the notes in the melody. These chords can be played in a variety of ways on the guitar. One such way is to *strum* by using a brushing or sweeping motion across the strings.

Strumming can involve a guitar pick or thumb using a downward motion (down stroke) from low to high strings, usually one down strum on each beat. A more interesting strumming pattern may include an upward motion (up stroke) from high to low following each down stroke. Both down and up strums are usually played in the time of one beat. For a more balanced and pleasing sound the down stroke may include all strings while an up stroke includes one or two strings. Sometimes down strums may alternate between the lower strings and upper strings.

### Teaching, Learning and Assessment Process

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#### PART A: LEARNING TO STRUM (2 HOURS)

During the next two hours students will work primarily on playing rhythmic accompaniment using a variety of right hand strumming patterns. An infinite number of patterns can be played using a plectrum (guitar pick) or the fingers of the right hand. Each method of strumming produces a different sound quality, and both are widely used. Generally, the flamenco, classical, and folk players use the right hand fingers while the rock, country and jazz players use the pick (see Supporting Materials for more information about Finger Picking).

Invite students to explore the different methods of playing rhythm. After a time experiencing both pick and finger methods, students may choose a right hand method that pleases them. Some students may wish to be versatile and use both right hand techniques.

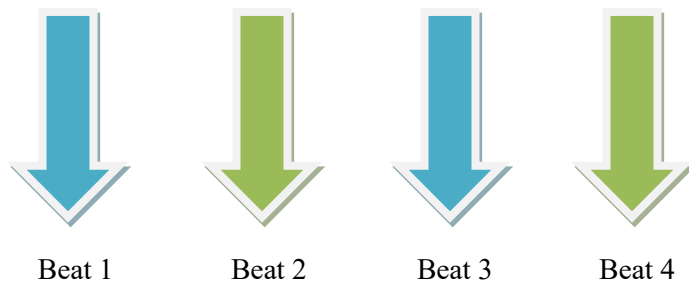
When playing chords, students must understand that at first, they will use a basic one strum per beat method to accompany songs. In time, they will work toward providing more interesting and contrasting rhythm patterns to the songs they play. Understanding the upcoming strumming exercises will challenge students and open their eyes to the art of rhythmic accompaniment.

Remember, left hand fingers are identified using numbers (*Essential Elements for Guitar*, page 4.). The right hand fingers are identified by the letters, p i m a, as shown in Supporting Materials.

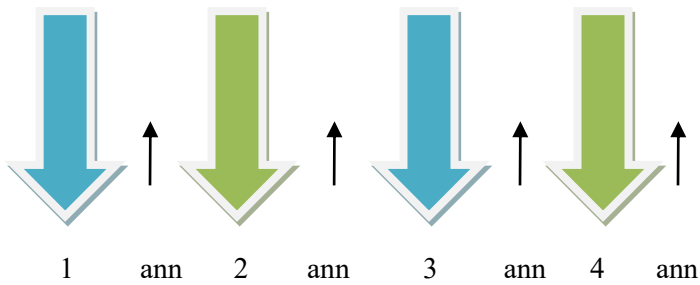
The common rhythm patterns that follow should be well understood since they are essential to the development of good right hand accompaniment techniques.

### Common Strumming Patterns

When there are four beats to a measure of music, the right hand will strum a chord in the following way.

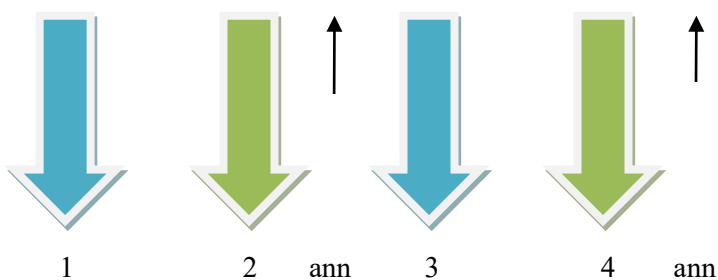


- With the pick, strum down on the lower three or four strings on counts one and three and down on the higher strings for counts two and four. Practice accenting the first and third beats and then try accenting the second and fourth beats. After applying each of these accenting possibilities to a given song, ask students which they prefer and why?
- If students choose to use the fingers of the right hand, the first beat can be played with the right hand thumb, the second beat with the fingers opening into a brush stroke (no hand movement, just fingers), then repeat for counts three and four. Practice accenting the first and third beats, then accenting the second and fourth beats and compare.
- Without using a left hand fingered chord, have students strum this pattern on the open strings at a slow *tempo* (speed). Accent the first of four beats, then accent the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> beats, then the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> beats.
- When this is sounding reasonably steady using one chord, have students play it again continuously using two chords or more. At first, students can change chords randomly named aloud by the teacher. Then use a fixed repeated two-measure pattern using two chords like G followed by D7. For example, eight strums on G followed by eight on D7.
- For a more challenging effect add an up stroke after each down stroke. The up stroke will fit between the down strokes on the second half of the beat and will include one or two strings at the most.
- This basic down-up pattern is also illustrated on page 18 of *Essential Elements for Guitar*. For greater clarity and a proper technical understanding, students will play through the following exercises.

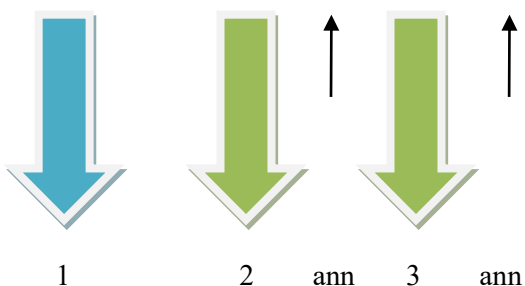


- With the pick, strum down on all strings holding the pick in a relaxed hand as shown earlier and then gently sweep up on no more than two strings. If using the right hand fingers, strum down with the thumb on count one, up with the right index finger (one or two strings only), then down with the fingers on count two followed by an up stroke with the index. Repeat for counts three and four.
- In the meter of three, where 3 strums are played in each measure, accent count one and then play two more unaccented strums on counts two and three. See waltz rhythm.
- Once students feel comfortable with these rhythm patterns have them experiment with creating rhythms of their own. Try leaving out a stroke or two, or even more, but without the loss of time. This is a real challenge because even though a stroke or two may be omitted, its place in time still remains so that the number of beats per measure does not change. This has to be practiced first at a slow steady tempo working on one or two variations at a time. As students become skilled at creating new rhythms, a whole new world of possibilities will unfold. In time, the recognition of rhythms indigenous to various cultures and genres will begin to occur. Here are some examples:

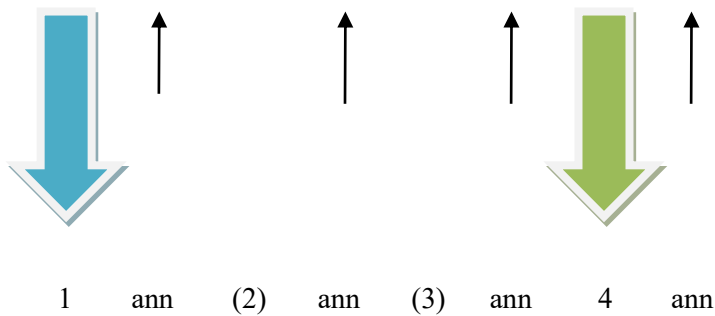
A typical country rhythm



A good waltz rhythm



### An interesting Calypso rhythm



This can be a lot of fun for students since it challenges their ability to understand the pulse of the music. Soon students will develop a sense of the independence between the mechanics of playing, or motor skills, and keeping a pulse in maintaining a sense of time.

Experimenting with a variety of rhythmic patterns will prevent getting hooked on one or two familiar patterns. It is also good to change a strumming pattern within a song to give the verse a slightly different feel than the chorus. This will encourage variability in the rhythm accompaniment and will continue to stir and stimulate the creative process. Students are encouraged to learn more chords as shown in the charts on pages 94 and 95 of *Essential Elements for Guitar*. (Some of these chords are: C G7 G D7 Em D A7 Am A Dm E B7 E7 F)

### Tips for Changing Chords

Using the chord diagrams on pages 94 and 95 of *Essential Elements for Guitar*, select any two chords. These few simple steps will improve the left hand's ability to change from one chord to another. As chord fingerings begin to come easier, students can apply this new skill to more songs. Here are some tips:

- Correctly place the fingers of a chord on the strings. Use the tips of the fingers unless otherwise specified. The fingers should be just beside the fret whenever possible – not between the frets.
- Be sure that a particular finger is only touching the string that it is assigned to and not touching or *muting out* another string.
- Press firmly and pick all the strings of the chord separately to determine clarity. Adjust finger angle and positioning if needed.
- Once the chord notes are sounding clear, practice lifting the fingers off about an inch and then returning them to the same positions. This is not always easy. Continue until the chord begins to feel more comfortable and the fingers are beginning to return to their respective positions at the same time. Students who do not yet have clarity can still proceed with this exercise, nevertheless.
- Next try placing the fingers around the fingerboard at the twelfth fret. Then in one motion only, race to a specified chord formation. The fingers must arrive and fall into place all at once. A good player can drop the fingers from anywhere on the fingerboard into a new position without ever missing a beat.
- Pick two chords and practice repeatedly moving smoothly from one to another.



- Start using chords in as many new pieces (from *Essential Elements for Guitar* or teacher's choice) as possible and look for pieces that introduce new chords; there are many chords to learn, many more rhythms to play, and even many more songs to enjoy.

Have students arrange a chord progression of their own. Choose a series of chords and experiment following one chord with another. Standard songs consist of a four, eight, sixteen or thirty-two measure form. If something else sounds appealing it may also be used. Groups of students can combine their efforts to create a chord progression using a simple rhythmic pattern of their choice. The teacher may even challenge a group to simultaneously play two different rhythm patterns over a simple series of chords.

Using *Essential Elements for Guitar*, have students work on the rhythm parts for the songs on pages 15, 16, 18, and 19. Other materials from the suggested resources may be used if desired.



With students, co-construct a rubric based on the above criteria for chord changes and use this while observing individual students as they perform in class. Students may use the *My Observations* record for self-evaluation of specific problems with rhythm. Teachers can use the *Magic Triangle Rubric* and the *Assessment of Learning Record* for assessments of student progress at the end of Unit 2 or the end of the module (see Supporting Materials).

## **PART B: MELODY, ACCOMPANIMENT, AND FURTHER NOTE READING (3 HOURS)**

### *Tips for Teaching Success*

Near the mid-point of the module invite a guest artist or speaker to come to the class. Ask the students if they have a parent, relative or acquaintance that could come to the class to play and speak about music and their experiences. The guest does not need to be a musician but may be someone who has had some interesting opportunities involving musicians or the music business. For example, they may have worked in a restaurant and met some recording artists who passed through, or they may have been involved in events management and came in contact with some featured guest artists.

Continue moving forward in *Essential Elements for Guitar*. The first three strings were introduced together in hours 1 and 2. The 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> strings will be introduced in the same way during the next two classes. Whereas the students are developing rhythmic and accompaniment skills using chords, they must also apply these new accompaniment skills to notated songs or exercises.

Divide the class in half where one half plays the melody to a song while the other half plays the chord accompaniment. Do the same for the songs on pages 47, 48, and 49 *Essential Elements for Guitar* (5<sup>th</sup> string exercises) and then page 53 *Essential Elements for Guitar* (6<sup>th</sup> string exercises). Always review the reading exercises prior to playing the songs. After progress begins to show have the class switch parts.

Use the split class method to develop skills in both chords and note reading. The next task may be more challenging. Pair the students up and have them select a song. Allow 15 minutes to work out who plays

which part. If possible, have students play their pieces twice where they switch parts the second time. This will allow the teacher to assess the abilities of the students in areas of note reading and chord playing.



Have the duos present a finished arrangement to the class. The listeners in the class will become a respectful and quiet audience as music is presented. As students are performing, assessment can be done using the *Individual Performance Evaluation* and the *Assessment for Learning Record* (see Supporting Materials).

For a more high-level performance, students can work on their song selection in groups during one or two classes. Practicing at home can be encouraged between classes. If possible, students can get together with their partners outside class time. Then in a subsequent class the arrangements can be performed. Progress can be measured by comparing a presentation after 15 minutes of practice in class to a presentation that involved practice time outside of class.

## **PART C: TUNING (1 HOUR)**

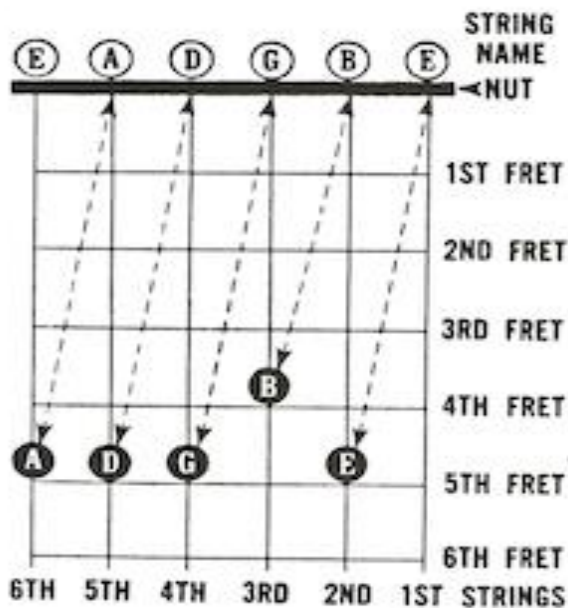
### **Tuning the Guitar**

To this point teachers have had the task of tuning the guitars. Now that the students are more familiar with the sounds of the strings, they should be ready to learn to tune their guitars themselves. In time, and with regular tuning practice, students will develop an ear for intonation (accuracy of pitch) and learn to adjust conform to the standards used by all musicians.

An experienced player can strum a chord and know instantly which string is out of tune and make the adjustment in seconds. Students will soon develop this skill by first learning a simple tuning method that can be used each time they play or practice.

The simple method of tuning is the *Fifth Fret Method* (*Essential Elements for Guitar*, page 92) whereby strings are matched and tuned by comparing a pitch found depressed on one string to an adjacent open (non-fingered) string. Adjustments are made by carefully turning the tuning keys (which changes the tension of the strings) while listening carefully to a corresponding change of pitch. The method shown in on their song selection is brief. A detailed tuning method is as follows.

## Tuning - Fifth Fret Method



1. Tune the 6<sup>th</sup> string E to a tuning device or keyboard that you know is in tune.
2. Place a finger on the 5<sup>th</sup> fret of the 6<sup>th</sup> string and while allowing it to ring, play the open 5<sup>th</sup> string. These two notes are both A and should sound alike. If not, determine if the open 5<sup>th</sup> string is higher or lower and adjust its tuning key slowly and carefully until it sounds the same as the 6<sup>th</sup> string at the 5<sup>th</sup> fret.
3. Place the finger at the 5<sup>th</sup> fret of the 5<sup>th</sup> string and strike the open 4<sup>th</sup> string D. Adjust the 4<sup>th</sup> string tuning key if necessary.
4. Place the finger on the 5<sup>th</sup> fret of the 4<sup>th</sup> string and tune the open 3<sup>rd</sup> string G.
5. Place the finger on the 4<sup>th</sup> (not 5<sup>th</sup>) fret 3<sup>rd</sup> string and tune the open 2<sup>nd</sup> string B.
6. Play the note at the 5<sup>th</sup> fret 2<sup>nd</sup> string and tune the open 1<sup>st</sup> string E.

### Tuning Tips

- If no reference note is available for the sixth string as a starting point use a bit of instinct and caution to come close to what is thought to be correct. The guitar will then be tuned relative to the low sixth string. If another player is close by and is in tune, tune string by string while listening and tuning carefully. Never turn a key too many turns too quickly. Strings break easily if tension is changed abruptly. A quarter turn can make a significant difference in the change of pitch. And do not adjust the key without sounding the string.
- By experimentation students will discover which way to turn a key to raise or lower the pitch. Key turning for tightening and lowering may not be the same for every guitar.
- Tightening the string tunes the string higher in pitch, loosening the tension drops the pitch. Determine first if the string being tuned is higher or lower and then carefully make the adjustment. Turn the key, listen, and continue until the string is tuned.

- Use a guitar tuner when having difficulty but use it to develop the ear too. Tune one string with the tuner, then from this reference point, tune all the others by ear or use the fifth fret method, then check with the tuner for accuracy. This method develops the ear significantly.

### *Tuning Practice Exercise*

Walk around the classroom and deliberately put the guitars out of tune by secretly turning just one or two tuning keys. Give students five minutes to determine the out-of-tune string(s) and make the adjustments. Students must use their ears first, not electronic tuners.

Some students may be ready to tune their own guitars while others may need more time. During the classes that follow, teacher and students will work together during tuning time. While tuning in class, students may work in pairs, if they wish, and teachers can assist when needed to save time. Ask students if they can have their guitars tuned at home under the guidance of an experienced player so that only minor adjustments need be made in class.

#### *Tips for Teaching Success*

Encourage those who have guitar tuners to tune by ear first and use the tuner to confirm the pitches.



Assessment for learning tools can be used over time as the students develop the skill of tuning. Learning the tuning method, listening for intonation discrepancies, and attempting to adjust on a regular basis all should come first. Accuracy follows through practice.

## **PART D: REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT (1 HOUR)**

This last hour of Unit 2 can be spent in a variety of productive ways. Some students may need to catch up with work, journal entries, or collaborate with group members on specific materials. Allow this hour to be a practice session in which students choose what they will do. Position the students or groups in strategic areas of the classroom for greater privacy.



While the students are working, the teacher may walk about and observe individual progress. Teachers may also take time to collect and review student journals.

## LEARNING TARGETS FOR THIS UNIT

In this unit students will have shown development in:

- working with a small variety of rhythms using most of the chords found on pages 94 and 95 of the Essential Elements book
- building skills in accompaniment to use in a small repertoire of songs in contrasting keys and meters
- technical areas where chord changing is becoming smoother and stylistic
- note recognition and the familiarity with positions, names, and notation of notes in the first three frets
- a basic method (the 5<sup>th</sup> Fret Method) of tuning the guitar and identifying intonation problems

## Unit 3: A Deeper Understanding (6 Hours)

### Introduction

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The *Blues* is an African-American music that expresses a wide range of emotions through its simple yet meaningful form. Blues became popular in the early twenties as African-American musicians from the south moved northward to the urban areas of the United States. They began to settle in the booming towns and cities like Detroit where the automobile manufacturing industry was in its heyday. Blues music was one of the first musical styles to thrive in the early days of the recording industry giving song artists like Bessie Smith and Robert Johnson historical significance. As blues began to impact on the popular music of the time a style called *rhythm and blues* developed to become one of the origins of today's rock music. Blues was often based on a simple structural form, often just twelve measures, and supported by a very simple chord progression. It will be of benefit to students interested in pursuing studies in rock music to explore the blues in terms of its history and cross-cultural significance. Students will learn to understand how music can reflect past and present societies.

### Teaching, Learning and Assessment Process

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#### PART A: BACKGROUND RESEARCH (2 HOURS)

Begin the class with tuning and warm-ups followed by a review of a song or two in *Essential Elements for Guitar*. After a short time begin an open discussion about the blues. Ask students what they already know about blues and what blues artists they may have heard before.



This would be a good time to listen to some recordings of Bessie Smith or Robert Johnson or perhaps some of the more contemporary blues artists like Eric Clapton and B.B. King.

As an assignment, students can research early American history from the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century with a focus on the historical and geographical context of the blues. Students will discover how environmental influences shaped an art form that has had a significant impact on popular music and dance for over a century. This will permit both cross-cultural and cross-curricular learning and add to the greater appreciation of this early style of music. Supplementary historical material can be found in Supporting Materials.



Have students speak to the class about their findings. Teachers will assess students based on both the objective and subjective expression of their presentation. Objective statements may simply be facts and dates about blues history while subjective statements would include the student’s personal feelings and attitude toward the significance of the blues.

For this part of the unit, have students work on pages 78, 79, and 83 of *Essential Elements for Guitar*. Some good examples of blues songs are found here that will set the tone for this unit.

## **PART B: THE TWELVE BAR BLUES (4 HOURS)**

These four hours will be spent on the opening exercises of tuning, warmups, and short review of developing repertoire. Students should spend at least half the class time on blues compositions and arrangements. They will write a melody with their own meaningful and expressive lyrics based on a theme of their own. Students may work in groups of two to four. The groups may be named after popular artists (as used in the practice contest). Students will write their work in a convenient notational system showing all the individual parts.

Before beginning to write, introduce students to a common 12 Bar form and chord structure over which hundreds of blues melodies and lyrics have been written. The *12 Bar Blues* refers to a twelve-measure form usually in the meter of four and divided into three equal sections. The first section of four measures is often referred to as the *statement* (lyrics often sad in nature). The next four measures contain a *response* (which may include a reiteration of the statement), and the closing section, is usually a *conclusion*. The old blues standard, *Come On Down To The House* (Anon.) can be used as an example.

Statement: *Come on down to the house, Come on down to the house,*  
 Response: *I'm just sittin' here, lonely as a church mouse, Come on down to the house,*  
 Conclusion: *I'm just sittin', singing the blues, So come on down to the house.*

To accompany a simple 12 Bar Blues form three basic chords can be used. These chords can be found built on the first (tonic), fourth (sub-dominant), and fifth (dominant) degrees (steps or notes) of the major scale. Letters names and numbers (Roman Numerals) can be assigned to these scale steps in this way:

Scale note name:	<b>C</b>	D	E	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	A	B	C
Roman Numeral:	<b>I</b>	ii	iii	<b>IV</b>	<b>V</b>	vi	vii	C
Technical name:	(Tonic)			(Sub-Dominant)	(Dominant)			

**NOTE:** Scales are not yet introduced in *Essential Elements for Guitar* although some students may already have some experience. The Internet website [www.chordbook.com](http://www.chordbook.com) is an excellent resource for more scale information.

*Tips for Teaching Success*

A simple trick for determining the I, IV, and V chords in a key is to use the hand guide: The thumb is the key (I) and by counting alphabetically from the thumb, the other two related chords, IV and V, will be found on the ring and pinkie fingers. (Remember, the musical alphabet only goes to G).

Here is a typical progression of chords commonly used in the 12 Bar Blues. Each numeral indicates a measure of four beats. Assigning numbers to the letter names allows for easier transposition to other keys.

I (four beats...)	I	I	I
IV	IV	I	I
V	V	I	I (or V, if repeating)

Using letter names of the chords in the key of C the sequence would look like:

C (four beats)	C	C	C
F	F	C	C
G	G	C	C (or G, if repeating)

Transposition to Other Keys

Roman Numeral	<b>I</b>	ii	iii	<b>IV</b>	<b>V</b>	vii	vii	VIII
Scale of C	<b>C</b>	D	E	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	A	B	C
Scale of G	<b>G</b>	A	B	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	E	F#	G

Now just the key and principal chords:

Key of E	<b>E</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B7</b> (easier to play than B)
Key of A	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E7</b>

An interesting thing about the Blues is its flexibility of tempo. A Blues can be played or sung at any tempo so long as the lyrics can be articulated clearly and with expression (the V7 can replace V for a different and bluesier colour.). Refer to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtONaR05B6s> for a look at a power chord demonstration. This will help understand the following blues accompaniment.

Have students play this blues accompaniment to *Come On Down To The House* in the key of G using power chords. (Chord names are stated in bold along the top of each music staff)

The power chords written in music notation are not the melody but rather the accompaniment. The lyrics written below can be sung to a melody created on the spot at the player's discretion or can even be sung



to a single pitch as in rap style. The lyrics can also be sung in any rhythmic phrase structure so long as it conforms to the form of the 12 bar duration.

## Come On Down To The House

Anon.

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of three staves of music, each with a guitar chord indicated above the staff. The first staff starts with a G chord and contains the lyrics "Come on down to the house, Come on down to the house,". The second staff starts with a C chord and contains the lyrics "I'm just sittin' here, lonely as a church mouse, Come on down to the house.". The third staff starts with a D chord and contains the lyrics "I'm just sittin' here singin' the blues, so Come on down to the house.". The music is a simple, repetitive melody of eighth notes.

G  
Come on down to the house, Come on down to the house,

C G  
I'm just sittin' here, lonely as a church mouse, Come on down to the house.

D G  
I'm just sittin' here singin' the blues, so Come on down to the house.

This is how the same piece would look transcribed to guitar tablature.

## Come On Down To The House

<b>E 1st</b> <b>G</b> (four measures)		<b>C</b> (two measures)
<b>B 2nd</b>		
<b>G 3rd</b>		
<b>D 4th</b>	5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5	
<b>A 5th</b>	5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3	
<b>E 6th</b>	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3	
<p>Come on down to the house.      Come on down to the house.      I'm just sittin' here lonely as a church mouse,</p>		
<b>E 1st</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>B 2nd</b>		
<b>G 3rd</b>		
<b>D 4th</b>	7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7	
<b>A 5th</b>	5 5	
<b>E 6th</b>	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
<p>Come on down to the house.      I'm just sittin',      singin' the blues, So come on down to the house.</p>		

Have students try a twelve bar blues, chords only, in another key. Regular chords can be used first, then try power chords. Use quarter note values for each strum. Ask students to describe the stylistic differences in sound between the different chord methods of accompaniment.

## Writing the Blues



In groups, assign students the task of creating a blues piece. Allow time for students to experiment with some musical ideas that may be found in *Essential Elements for Guitar* or by asking for teacher guidance. As this blues creation begins to take shape walk about the class making observations during the ongoing process.

When the blues work is completed as a functional instrumental arrangement, it can be performed before a small audience or for the class. The performance will indicate each individual's ability to meet certain criteria consistent with the specific learning targets for this unit. The *Assessment for Learning Record* (see Supporting Materials) can be used to assess the learning targets below.

### LEARNING TARGETS FOR THIS UNIT

- expresses historical significance of the blues using appropriate language
- awareness of other instruments and sensitivity to balance
- illustrates technical proficiency of assigned part
- supplies creative rhythmic and melodic ideas to the work
- plays part with expressive qualities in the style of the blues
- an understanding of the 12 Bar Blues and its basic harmonic structure
- an ability to interact with others and demonstrates good relationships and interpersonal skills

## Unit 4: Originality (6 Hours)

### Introduction

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Often composers and musicians use their music and popularity to bring public attention to global events. Being attentive to local and world news issues students may find it exciting to respond to a particular issue with a creative work of their own.

In this unit students will explore their creative abilities. It is not expected that students will have mastered all textbook pieces and materials studied to date. However, the application of skills learned to this point can be used in this project to serve as a refinement process for continued development. The first hour in this unit will be spent reviewing learned materials and working with new vocabulary. Hour two will consist of an introduction to the art and skill of improvisation. The remaining four hours will be dedicated to a class creative project.

### Teaching, Learning and Assessment Process

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#### PART A: THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC (2 HOURS)

During the first hour of the unit, review the theoretical concepts covered to date. This is a good time to use the flash cards from *Essential Elements for Guitar*.

As an in-class activity, assign groups a selection of musical terms. Give each group a different set containing about 6 to 10 words. Allow them about ten minutes to prepare a 2 or 3-minute group conversation using their assigned words. These conversations should include statements, questions, and opinions using the language of music.

Have students in small groups choose a piece of music to perform for the class. Once the piece has been heard, ask the remaining students – the audience – to comment using appropriate language and terminology specific to the music and its performance.

Next, have each group play a more challenging piece. Have the individual members comment on their own group's performance using appropriate language and terminology.



This assignment should be done at the beginning of each remaining class in this unit as conversational skills develop, and students become familiar with the language of music. Make note of such points as coherency, meaning, fluency, and context. A music vocabulary-building rubric can be prepared for this purpose.

## **PART B: THE ART AND SKILL OF IMPROVISING (1 HOUR)**

Begin with a review of learned or developing pieces or a blues song. Allow students to make suggestions. Some of this material may be memorized through repetition and practice allowing students to play songs by ear. As students begin to play by ear, they will find themselves ready for an exciting new level of musicianship – *improvisation, or soloing*.

Playing by ear through the memorization of songs provides opportunities for creative changes to the rhythms and notes in the melody. A long note played over the time of two repeated notes of shorter values is one way to begin. A repeated note may replace a single long note of equal duration. Notes can be reversed or changed to reshape a simple melody into something new. As this skill in music reconstruction develops and music begins to flow more freely, students may break away from the melodic structure altogether to create a whole new melody. To play or solo freely in this way is to enjoy the freedom of *improvisation*. Some students may not yet be ready for this concept; however, making simple changes to a melody is always the first step from which improvisational skills can develop. While making these changes, great or small, students must be careful not to wander too far from the basic melody too soon. This may result in getting lost in the form or structure of the music. Encourage students to keep it simple at first. As improvisational skills develop, students will enjoy a new means with which to express their personal feelings and ideas about music.



Students can be assessed over time based on their developing ability to make small changes to a given melody without losing the sense of the phrase length or rhythmic structure. If a melodic fragment happens to be four notes played during two measures, for example, the notes can be rearranged, or their values changed. However, the altered phrase cannot exceed the time of the original two measures.

Improvisation need not be structured from a given melody. Free improvisation may involve creating music on the spot from ideas that may just come to mind. From this spontaneous process may come melodic ideas that can be used in the composition of new songs, or *motifs* (short melodic fragments), which may in turn be applied to other musical works. Students should be encouraged to think in short phrases as if they were speaking the notes in much the same way a vocalist sings the lyrics. This concept permits ideas and musical thoughts to come to mind and helps develop a sense of phrasing.

Using assessment for learning procedures a teacher can monitor the ongoing development of the creative process. Through experimentation and good listening, what may seem at first like random notes being played in no coherent order, can come catchy melodic ideas.

Assess students' use of a chord progression of four measures in length (a suggestion might be I, V, V, I played as 4 measures of four beats each). Have the class repeat this short progression as a rhythm accompaniment while one student at a time is selected to play a solo. When all students have played, run through the cycle again permitting a more detailed assessment. Melodies found in websites like: [www.ezfolk.com](http://www.ezfolk.com) and [www.chordbook.com](http://www.chordbook.com) can be useful material for the new soloists.

## **PART C: A CLASS CREATIVE PROJECT (3 HOURS)**

Introduce students to examples of how some musicians have responded to the issues of the day.

### **Music Highlights in the News**

This may be handed out to the students for historical interest and relevance.

(Quotes from *Rock On Almanac*, by Norm N. Nite)

1962

Peter, Paul, and Mary give a major boost to a rekindled interest in folk music and lay the groundwork for a new form of music, protest songs that drew attention to the ills of society.

1967

Scott MacKenzie's "San Francisco" (Be Sure To Wear Flowers In Your Hair) becomes a virtual anthem for the "Flower Power" movement in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco.

1969

After months of wrangling over the show's anti-Establishment tone and its showcasing of anti-Vietnam War singers, CBS-TV pulls the plug on The Smothers Brothers.

1972

The 1950s musical *Grease* opens on Broadway, setting the tone for a nostalgia craze that will sweep the nation.

1977

The British-based Clash starts to create awareness in America of their politicized punk rock sound.

1984

To provide medicine and supplies to the famine victims of Ethiopia, Bob Geldof of the Boomtown Rats organizes members of 15 different rock acts into the group Band Aid to perform the song "Do They Know It's Christmas?" Participating in this historic recording session in England are Geldof, David Bowie, Phil Collins, Paul McCartney, Sting, Jody Watley, George Michael, Paul Young, and members of Culture Club, Duran Duran, Kool & the Gang, and U2, among others. This single, released worldwide, generates millions of dollars for famine aid.

1986

Hands Across America takes place on Sunday, May 25. Some 5 million participants in 16 states, including President Reagan, link hands to raise money for the hungry and the homeless in the United States.

(Source: *Rock On Almanac*, Norm N. Nite, The First Four Decades of Rock “n” Roll”)

On a smaller scale and under the guidance and discretion of the teacher the students, have the students attempt a similar project.

The events previously listed are just a few examples of how music can serve a political purpose, stir interest, and raise attention, or create a movement in support of a specific cause. Students will reflect on the music of their time to determine similar feelings or attitudes within their global community or events occurring in their own homeland. After class warm-ups and review of one or two textbook pieces a good portion of the class can be spent allowing students to work in small groups to create a work of their own. This work may reflect something occurring at school, neighbourhood, or perhaps even an event heard in the news recently.

Students will work as a group to write lyrics, construct a chord progression, and create a catchy simple melody. It is not necessary to jump deep into song writing methods or compositional structures at this point. Rather allow current knowledge and skills to work along with environmental influences. With the collaborative efforts of group members and a little inspiration it may be surprising to see how easily the music can flow.

Some students may consider the related and supportive work that occurs behind the scenes yet nevertheless is essential to the success of a project. Students will decide how to promote an event that would serve a political or humanitarian cause. Then plan the event to be broadcast and delivered with the greatest impact. Students can write their behind-the-scenes support work in a report. It is important to have all students involved in the project. Duties may be delegated within the group according to strengths, skills, and personal interests.

Students could be encouraged to get together outside class. For example, rehearsals may be permitted at a classmate’s home, if it can be arranged. In class, set aside a portion of time for group discussion of the project’s intent and theme and the writing of the lyrics. When using guitars, groups could be situated strategically in different areas of the room.



## Tips for Keeping it Simple

- A student may *rap* words while others play a musical background.
- A student might wish to read the message before the group plays their theme.
- A chord progression may be borrowed from a song found in the E.E. with new lyrics added.
- A melody may be used with new lyrics with an interesting and perhaps quirky arrangement.
- Some students may wish to stand or add some choreography to the routine.
- Themes may be close to home, like a soccer game or sports event that just happened.
- A “green” theme might be used with the music. Borrow melodies containing the word “green” like, *Green Sleeves*; or use something in the style of a song by the band Green Day; or present a message along the lines of Kermit the Frog’s, *It’s Not Easy Being Green*.



Assess the individual groups according to music content, thematic material, interaction of members and the passion shown for the musical work. Make note of individual contributions and the synergy found within the group collaboration. An informal summative assessment of the final work would be conducted at this time. Teachers might use the *Assessment of Learning Record* found in Supporting Materials.

## LEARNING TARGETS FOR THIS UNIT

While collaborating and creating music in the Class Project students will:

- expand their music vocabulary, and as they learn to talk about music and its relevance to the changing attitudes of society at large they will develop a greater appreciation for the perspectives of people around them
- be introduced to the notion that they are first human expressive beings, artists, and musicians expressing themselves through music using the medium of the guitar
- study and play the music of others past and present and learn to express themselves by creating their own music and sharing with others
- learn the importance of collaborating with and respecting the input of others — while presenting their musical ideas they will receive feedback with which to re-evaluate their music and its intended content

## SUMMARY

Teachers will enjoy working with the young grade 7 guitar enthusiasts by nurturing their talents and appreciating their musical and diversified interests. There is an abundance of material available in music books, magazines, and online websites to inspire and motivate students. With careful guidance and strategies teachers will expand the realm of the young musical minds by providing relevance and context to the rapidly unfolding musical and non-musical events in their artistic environment. The objective is to have the students enjoy music making, expand creative abilities, and begin to share their musical talents with their respectful audiences and communities.

# Supporting Materials

## My Observations

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My Observations	What I can do	What others suggest
My notes are not connected	Hold fingers down longer before moving to next note. Listen for desired sound.	Leave fingers on string when ascending.
I miss strings often	Keep pick closer to the strings. Practice scales.	Pick from right hand wrist, not elbow
Other observation		
Other observation		
Other observation		
Other observation		

My Observations	What I can do	What others suggest
My notes are not connected	Hold fingers down longer before moving to next note. Listen for desired sound.	Leave fingers on string when ascending.
I miss strings often	Keep pick closer to the strings. Practice scales.	Pick from right hand wrist, not elbow
Other observation		
Other observation		
Other observation		
Other observation		

## Individual Performance Evaluation

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<i>Student Name</i>	<i>Music Performed</i>	<i>Date</i>
<b>Technical Accuracy of Notes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Virtually no errors in notes</li> <li>▪ A few isolated errors</li> <li>▪ Repeated errors</li> <li>▪ Many mistakes, overall weaknesses</li> </ul>	Comments:	
<b>Chords and Rhythm</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Changes from chord to chord with fluidity</li> <li>▪ Able to connect most chords without interruption of beat</li> <li>▪ Stumbles on certain chords often</li> <li>▪ Much trouble changing chords</li> </ul>	Comments:	
<b>Rhythm and Tempo</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Secure Pulse and rhythmically accurate</li> <li>▪ A few durational errors</li> <li>▪ Unsteady with errors</li> <li>▪ Very unstable, loss of continuity</li> </ul>	Comments:	
<b>Expressive Qualities Shown</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dynamics and phrasing evident throughout</li> <li>▪ Expressive qualities used at times when technique permits</li> <li>▪ Focused on technique with little expression</li> <li>▪ Struggles at the technical level, few expressive qualities shown</li> </ul>	Comments:	
<b>Reading Abilities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reads both tab and/or notation fluently at this level</li> <li>▪ Weak in either tab or notation</li> <li>▪ Slow at reading tab, little ability reading notation</li> <li>▪ Struggles at both tab and notation</li> </ul>	Comments:	

## Individual Self-Assessment Report

<b>Student Name</b>	<b>My Overall Playing At This Time</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Questions I asked myself about notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do I know all the notes in this music?</li> <li>▪ Do my notes sound clear?</li> <li>▪ Do my notes sound connected?</li> <li>▪ Do I miss notes?</li> </ul>	My Comments about <i>Why</i> , and <i>How</i> I can improve	
<b>Questions I asked myself about rhythm:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are my note values always correct?</li> <li>▪ Do I hesitate and delay certain notes?</li> <li>▪ Do I remember to count the beats for long notes?</li> <li>▪ Do I tend to rush the beat and go too fast?</li> </ul>	My Comments about <i>Why</i> , and <i>How</i> I can improve	
<b>How is my Technique?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do I hold the pick properly?</li> <li>▪ Is my left hand positioned correctly?</li> <li>▪ Do I practice my exercises often enough?</li> <li>▪ Are my fingers beside the frets when I play?</li> </ul>	My Comments about <i>Why</i> , and <i>How</i> I can improve	
<b>How is my Reading?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is reading notation a problem for me?</li> <li>▪ Is reading tablature getting better?</li> </ul>	My Comments about <i>Why</i> , and <i>How</i> I can improve	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How are my chords?</li> <li>▪ Do I know all the chords I should by now?</li> <li>▪ Can I change chords smoothly?</li> <li>▪ Where do I have the most difficulty?</li> </ul>	My Comments about <i>Why</i> , and <i>How</i> I can improve	

## Magic Triangle Rubric

	<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Repertoire Songs with chords &amp; melody</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Starting to play pieces from memory</li> <li>▪ One or two songs with chords</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Plays 3 simple pieces reading notation, 1 or 2 from memory</li> <li>▪ Plays at least 3 songs with chords</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Play up to 4 popular melodies and 4 songs using chords - all from memory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Begins to play with greater expression up to 6 songs chords and notes.</li> <li>▪ One 12 Bar Blues</li> </ul>
<b>Technique Scales, strumming Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Weak L.H.</li> <li>▪ Striking strings with R.H. not yet coordinated with L.H.</li> <li>▪ Can play 1 scale and 2 chords</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scales - 2 major, 1 minor, 1 pentatonic slowly but steadily</li> <li>▪ Can shift 6 chords in time steadily</li> <li>▪ L.H. accuracy beginning to show</li> <li>▪ Coordination developing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Plays 2 major, 2 minor, 2 pentatonic scales</li> <li>▪ Plays most 1<sup>st</sup> position chords in steady time</li> <li>▪ Chord strength developing well</li> <li>▪ Articulation variety showing with clarity of notes</li> <li>▪ Understands meter using variety of rhythms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All required scales, good steady tempo</li> <li>▪ All open position chords played with good L.H. skill and R.H. plays smooth strumming with a good variety of rhythmic patterns</li> <li>▪ Improvises simple lines fluently and stylistically</li> </ul>
<b>Music Literacy Rhythm, reading, finger-board knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Beat is not steady, note values not fully understood</li> <li>▪ Natural notes names first three frets known</li> <li>▪ Beginning understanding of staff and notation</li> <li>▪ Limited music vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Note values understood, little hesitation of the beat</li> <li>▪ Can identify natural notes to the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret</li> <li>▪ Some accidentals are known</li> <li>▪ Can read and find notes in 1<sup>st</sup> three frets on six strings</li> <li>▪ Understands at least 6 musical terms</li> <li>▪ Note values understood, some hesitation of the beat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can locate notes quickly to 5<sup>th</sup> fret</li> <li>▪ Knows location of natural semi- tones and accidentals</li> <li>▪ Reads well but slowly in 1<sup>st</sup> position (4 frets)</li> <li>▪ Can follow through songs using most basic chords</li> <li>▪ Knows more than 10 musical terms</li> <li>▪ Understands meter, rhythm and beat using notes and chords</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can locate all notes on fingerboard</li> <li>▪ Reads well to 5<sup>th</sup> fret on 1<sup>st</sup> string</li> <li>▪ Reads chord charts using all basic chords</li> <li>▪ Good grasp of rhythmic values</li> <li>▪ Can express using clear language and common musical terms</li> <li>▪ Understands basic chord relationships e.g. tonic, dominant</li> </ul>

## Assessment for Learning Record (for use during each unit)

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit # \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment for Learning: Record of General Musical and Personal Skills (use throughout each unit)

1. Development of Guitar repertoire
2. Achievement of basic technical proficiency
3. Expansion of theoretical concepts and musical vocabulary to communicate purpose and context of the music being learned
4. Development of rapport and relationships with peers

1. Repertoire (list songs)	Strategies / Materials	Assessment and Indicators of Achievement
2. Technique (list skills)	Strategies / Materials	Assessment and Indicators of Achievement
3. Music Literacy and Context	Strategies / Materials	Assessment and Indicators of Achievement
4. Relationship and Interpersonal Skills	Strategies	Assessment and Indicators of Achievement

## Assessment of Learning Record (for use at end of each unit)

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit # \_\_\_\_\_

1. The Completion of “stage ready” repertoire
2. Achievement of basic technical proficiency
3. Application of theoretical concepts and musical vocabulary to communicate purpose and context of the music being learned

1. Repertoire (list solid pieces)	Source of Materials (book, internet tab, etc.)	Assessment and Indicators of Achievement
2. Technique (state accomplished abilities)	Strategies Used (drills, rote)	Assessment and Indicators of Achievement
3. Music Literacy and Context (indicate vocabulary and usage in communicating music’s purpose)	Strategies / Materials (text, internet, class discussion)	Assessment and Indicators of Achievement

# A Brief History of Guitar

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## EARLY HISTORY OF THE GUITAR

Although the first sounds produced by the vibration of a string attached to a bow occurred more than 20,000 years ago the instrument resembling the guitar as we know it has been in existence for about one thousand years. The Moors from North East Africa arrived in Spain in about the year 710. After seven hundred years of occupation, a cultural legacy was left behind which included an early precursor of the guitar. However, it was not until the late Middle Ages that the guitar became a widespread form of music making and accompaniment. The earlier popularity of the lute (a pair-shaped stringed instrument) prepared the way for the introduction of the guitar into courtly life. Musicians and bards (story tellers) used three, four and five string instruments to accompany themselves and others in the artistry of singing and poetic recitation.

The Renaissance and Baroque periods of music history between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were significant times for the guitar. There were many types, designs and tunings of the guitar used at this time. Italy introduced the vihuela with five and six paired groupings of strings called “courses”. A smaller instrument called a gittern was popular and produced a pleasant soft sound with only four strings. The vihuela was common in Spain during the explorations of the Spanish only to find itself in Mexico from where it eventually gained significance in North America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The five-string guitar remained popular throughout Europe in the Baroque period (1685 – 1750) and very closely resembled the instrument we know today. Its softer sound with gut strings was a pleasant sound when emanating from this small instrument in a solo setting, and even more so when providing an accompaniment for voice or small ensemble.

Of the many famous composers and performers of guitar music during the Renaissance and Baroque periods, the Spanish composer/performer Gaspar Sanz (Spanish, 1640-1710) was among the finest. Others like Robert de Visee (Portuguese, 1650-1725), Francisco Guerau (Spanish, 1649-1721), Francesco Corbetta (Italian, 1615-1681) and Matteo Carcassi, (Florence 1792 – 1853) were also highly respected in their time. The work of these fine musicians remains significant today as brilliant examples of the musical talents of days gone by.

From the development of the Torres model in about the mid nineteenth century the classical guitar today remains basically unchanged in size, design, and character of sound. (Page 3 Essential Elements)

When steel strings were introduced into a new acoustic body design by luthiers like C. F. Martin, the guitar repertoire began to change in keeping pace with changing attitudes. By the early twentieth century Les Paul experimented with a solid block of wood placed inside a hollow body guitar, added an electrical pickup device, and radically changed music forever. Although the new acoustic and electric solid body guitars garnered their share of the mainstream attention, they did not replace the classical or Torres guitar. Instead, with the assistance of the great Andres Segovia, gut strings were replaced by nylon, and, through his efforts, a new repertoire grew from commissioned and transcribed works to establish the concert classical guitar at center stage and in a position of lasting respect. The recent DVD, “Andres Segovia in Portrait” is a *must see* for young aspiring guitarists. Opus Arte released this documentary in 2005. For more information go *Allegro Films* at: [www.allegrofilms.com](http://www.allegrofilms.com).



A highly recommended website about the classical guitar is:

*Learn Classical Guitar:* <http://www.learnclassicalguitar.com/Carcassi.html>

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ELECTRIC GUITAR**

One of the most fascinating topics to bring up in a grade seven guitar class is the electric guitar. Unlike the few standard sizes and shapes of the acoustic or classical guitar the electric guitar can be found in a variety of designs, colours, sizes and shapes. If each student in a class of any size were asked to bring in a picture of an electric guitar, it is unlikely to find more than a few that would look the same.

In addition to its aesthetic appeal there is literally no end to the possible tonal colours that can be produced on the electric guitar. This amplified invention created a new world of music where the electric guitar soon found itself placed within the larger dance bands and orchestras.

The electric guitar does not have a single inventor but rather many contributors to its development. Les Paul and Leo Fender through years of hard work and experimentation produced an instrument more closely related to the models popular today. Other well-known contributors were Orville Gibson and Adolf Rickenbacker. Adolf Rickenbacker was believed to have created the first solid body electric based on an existing model of his called the, “Bakelite Steel Guitar”, which was played on the lap of the guitarist. This Lap Steel Guitar was quite popular around the early part of the twentieth century. It had raised strings and was played with a solid metal bar called the “steel” that moved up and down the six strings while changing its pitch. With the addition of an electric pickup consisting of two horseshoe magnets surrounding the strings and a coil of wire beneath the magnets, the vibrating strings could send a signal to an amplifier by way of a connecting patch cord. The guitar amplifier was much like a typical radio of the time.

After the lap steel guitar became successful as an “amplified” electric instrument the idea was applied to the “Spanish” or acoustic style of guitar. Because the acoustic guitar was designed after the Spanish model, they were called Spanish guitars even though the music played on them could have been any other style such as country and western, folk, or early rock and roll. The Gibson ES (Electric Spanish) series introduced many new designs and models like the ES-150, ES-175, ES-335 or ES-355. These guitars were hollow body guitars with two ‘F’ holes in the ‘top’ and a pickup placed under the strings between the bridge and close to the neck joint.

In about 1939, Les Paul began work on a version of a solid-body electric guitar called the “Log”. Les Paul was known to have placed the pickup from a phonograph record player and a telephone mouthpiece in early prototypes (first experimental models). The guitar for the most part looked like a 4” square piece of wood about the length of an acoustic guitar body attached with two single coil magnetic pickups with a bridge and a neck. By 1941 Gibson took the idea into production shortly thereafter naming a solid body guitar after Les Paul, which is still one of the most sought after instruments of today.

The “Log” by Les Paul



Soon after the solid body electric guitar began to show up more and more on the stage, Leo Fender introduced the Fender Telecaster and the Fender Stratocaster. The electric guitar established its reputation as an innovative musical instrument in the United States, but by the 1960s these conventional new designs were being copied by the Japanese and many European countries. Today there are literally hundreds of manufacturers producing large quantities of electric guitars and amplifiers.

Consider the impact the electric guitar has had either directly or indirectly on world economies in terms of employment in factories, warehousing, shipping, and the retail business in addition to musical stage performances, live, radio and TV, the recording industry, and songwriting and the substantial increase in the publication of music and books.

One important name that stands out amongst many is Jimi Hendrix. Hendrix turned the world of rock on its heels in the 1960s and his music is still an integral part of the rock repertoire. Other great electric guitarists are, Peter Dinklage, Buddy Guy, Robert Plant, Carlos Santana, Slash, Eddy Van Halen, Eric Clapton, and Stevie Ray Vaughan.

A website devoted to all aspects of the guitar and offering an abundance of resources including lessons, tutorials, videos, charts, articles and many more guitar facts is:

*Guitar Players Center*, web address:

<http://www.guitarplayerscenter.com>

These YOU TUBE websites will contain video materials of interest relating to rock guitar and the characteristic sounds heard in today’s popular music.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fG8U3vbeH18>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtoNaR05B6s>

## Guitar Music: Levels of Difficulty

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### THE MUSIC AND LEVELS OF DIFFICULTY

The music learned in the guitar modules vary in genre so that students become aware of music's diverse nature. As each new piece is learned it is important that students are asked to consider methods of expressing their feelings and opinions about music. Music must have context, and open forums should take place, even for a few minutes, to determine where the music may have originated, the period in which it was written and performed and its significance to the societal attitudes of the day. It may seem that students are not ready for or interested in such discussions; however, recent brain research has revealed that the prefrontal cortex (that executive part of the brain responsible for reason and planning) of these young impressionable adolescents is having a growth spurt and discussions of this sort assist in this neural development.

Teachers will ask questions such as...

- When was each style born?
- Where did each style come from? (Musically AND Geographically)
- What musical, lyrical, and social characteristics define each style?
- Name some important guitarists from each style and why is each so important?

### ASSESSING THE LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY OF MUSIC FOR STUDY

The Essential Elements guitar method book will serve to provide students with their basic theoretical and technical skills. However, considering the rapidly expanding musical minds and the varied interests of the young guitarists there will be a need for a complement of additional materials. Caution must be taken not to overshoot the student's technical limits. It will be important to provide the student with supplementary pieces that are within their grasp to ensure a sense of achievement and personal satisfaction. In determining the level of difficulty of study material use the following standard rating scheme for classification purposes.

Music is classified into six levels of difficulty:

- Level 1-Very easy: easy keys, meters, and rhythms; limited ranges
- Level 2-Easy: may include changes of tempo, key, and meter; modest ranges
- Level 3-Moderately easy: contains moderate technical demands, expanded ranges, and varied interpretive requirements
- Level 4-Moderately difficult: requires well-developed technical skills, attention to phrasing and interpretation, and ability to perform various meters and rhythms in a variety of keys
- Level 5-Difficult: requires advanced technical and interpretive skills; contains key signatures with numerous sharps or flats, unusual meters, complex rhythms, subtle dynamic requirements
- Level 6-Very difficult: suitable for musically mature students of exceptional competence

(Adapted from NYSSMA Manual, Edition XXIII, published by the New York State School Music Association, 1991.)

The music found in the Essential Elements for Guitar method book would be classified in the first three levels of difficulty. These classifications would conform to the *Magic Triangle* Rubric by considering columns “Beginning” and “Satisfactory” as level 1 pieces, “Proficient” as level 2, and “Excellent” as level 3. If supplementary material given out is classified higher than Level 3 and reasonably challenges a student, consideration should be given in the student assessment. Allow students to reach their personal levels of achievement with new challenges while using caution when extending beyond their technical limits. A student may wish to tackle a popular favourite and show blind enthusiasm and drive in the initial process. While this may meet with support and show teacher flexibility from time to time, the student must still meet expectations in the classroom with little loss of time in other areas. It is acceptable to learn one or two excerpts from a difficult tune. Perhaps an introduction, a riff, or bass line, or even a basic chord progression could be extracted from an advanced piece and used in the lesson. Using this method, excerpt playing may lead to discussion about the origin, meaning and purpose of these short passages within the context of the music. This may inspire some interesting thoughts.

# Finger Picking

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## THE RIGHT HAND OF THE CLASSICAL GUITARIST

Plucking the strings with the fingers of the right hand is a technique as old as the earliest guitar. In ancient times guitarists have used this skill to achieve a rippling harp-like effect in a very harmonically pleasing way. The first step is to get familiar with the idea of using four fingers to pluck strings in different sequences. Have students begin finger picking by following this simple open string pattern.

- 1 – The right hand thumb strikes the low 6<sup>th</sup> string.
- 2 – The index (pointer) finger then strikes the 3<sup>rd</sup> string (counting from the floor up)
- 3 – The 2<sup>nd</sup> finger (middle) of the right hand strikes the 2<sup>nd</sup> string.
- 4 – Finally the 3<sup>rd</sup> (ring) finger strikes the 1<sup>st</sup> string.

Continue repeating this exercise slowly until it feels natural and flowing. A good way to test skill is to try talking through the exercise. Once this has been accomplished the speed or tempo may be increased as long as the notes are evenly spaced, and the notes are balanced in volume and rhythm.

Once this pattern sounds and feels fluent add two notes by re-striking the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> strings. This is a six-note right hand pattern in the meter of 3 using a forward motion (going higher) and downward motion (going lower).

- 1 – The right hand thumb, *p* (pulgar, Italian) strikes the low 6<sup>th</sup> string.
- 2 – The index, *i* finger strikes the 3<sup>rd</sup> string (counting from the floor up)
- 3 – The second finger, *m* (middle) strikes the 2<sup>nd</sup> string.
- 4 – The third finger, *a* (ring or annular) strikes the 1<sup>st</sup> string.
- 5 – Back to 2<sup>nd</sup> string with *m*.
- 6 – Then the 3<sup>rd</sup> string once more with *i* to complete the six-note pattern.

Omit steps 5 and 6 for a four-note pattern for meters of 2 or 4. The Italian term *Arpeggio* is the name given to this harp-like finger style technique.

## SPECIAL NOTE

It is important that the right hand remains still while the fingers move through the arpeggio and that the right hand thumb strikes to the left of the fingers without swinging to the inside of the of the hand. Keep the right hand wrist flat and positioned over the sound hole.

See page 56 E.E. for more information and try songs on pages 57 and 66 E.E.

# References

Nite, N. (1989). *Rock On Almanac*. Harper & Row Publishers, Inc.

Schmid, W. & Morris, B. (2005). *Essential Elements for Guitar, Flashcards*. Hal Leonard Corp. [NSSBB# 25752]

Schmid, W. & Morris, B. (2005). *Essential Elements for Guitar, Book One*. Hal Leonard Corp. [NSSBB# 25751]

Various Artists. *Great Guitar Intros*. Hal Leonard Corp.

Various Artists. *Blues Guitar Riffs*. Hal Leonard Corp.

Various Artists. *Acoustic Guitar Riffs*. Hal Leonard Corp.

## Additional Repertoire

- [www.chordbook.com](http://www.chordbook.com)
- [www.usborne-quicklinks.com](http://www.usborne-quicklinks.com)
- [www.ezfolk.com](http://www.ezfolk.com)

Practical Music Theory for Guitarists

<http://www.essentialguitar.com/>

Rock Guitar Videos

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fG8U3vbeH18>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtONaR05B6s>

Classical Guitar

- [www.allegrofilms.com](http://www.allegrofilms.com).
- <http://www.learnclassicalguitar.com/Carcassi.html>

Musescore

<http://www.musescore.org/en/node/908>