

Playing Guitar From Scratch



-- *Guitar and table*, Juan Gris

Chapter One:

Approaching the Instrument

In this first chapter, we will discuss the basics of the instrument, including the history and terminology used throughout this series. After this introduction, we discuss guitar accessories, counting basic rhythms, foot-tapping, sitting with the guitar, positioning of the guitar and proper finger motion techniques required in playing the instrument.

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Guitar Lesson: Introduction to the Instrument

The first lesson is an introduction to the instrument.

The GUITAR:

The **GUITAR** is a stringed musical instrument. Guitars are used in a wide variety of musical styles. Guitars are especially well-known for their use in popular styles such as Blues, Rock, Jazz, Country and Folk music. The Guitar is also widely known as a solo classical instrument and for its use in Spanish popular and Spanish Gypsy (Flamenco) music.

Brief History of the Instrument: (from wikipedia.org – Guitar article, 2006)

Instruments similar to what we know as the guitar have been popular for at least 5,000 years. The guitar appears to be derived from earlier instruments known in ancient central Asia as the cithara. Instruments very similar to the guitar appear in ancient carvings and statues recovered from the old Iranian capitol of Susa. The modern word, guitar, was adopted into English from Spanish guitarra, derived from earlier Greek word kithara. Prospective sources for various names of musical instruments that guitar could be derived from appear to be a combination of two Indo-European roots: "guit-," similar to Sanskrit sangeet meaning "music", and "-tar" a widely attested root meaning "chord" or "string".

The word guitar may also be a Persian loanword to Iberian Arabic. The word qitara is an Arabic name for various members of the lute family that preceded the Western guitar. The name guitarra was introduced into Spanish when such instruments were brought into Iberia by the Moors after the 10th century.

The Spanish vihuela "de mano" appears to be an aberration in the transition of the renaissance guitar to the modern guitar. It had lute-style tuning and a guitar-like body. Its construction had as much in common with the modern guitar as with its contemporary four-course renaissance guitar. The vihuela enjoyed only a short period of popularity, the last surviving publication of music for the instrument appeared in 1576. It is not clear whether it represented a transitional form or was simply a design that combined features of the arabic oud and the European lute. In favor of the latter view, the reshaping of the vihuela into a guitar-like form can be seen as a strategy of differentiating the European lute visually from the Moorish oud. (See the article on the lute for further history.) The Ancient Iranian lute, called tar in Persian also is found in the word guitar. The tar is thousands of years old, and could be found in 2, 3, 5, and 6 string variations.

The earliest extant six string guitar was built in 1779 by Gaetano Vinaccia (1759 - after 1831) in Naples, Italy. The Vinaccia family of luthiers is known for developing the mandolin. This guitar has been examined and does not show tell-tale signs of modifications from a double-course guitar.

Modern dimensions of the classical instrument were established by Antonio Torres Jurado (1817-1892), working in Seville in the 1850's. Torres and Louise Panormo of London (active 1820s-1840s) were both responsible for demonstrating the superiority of fan strutting over transverse table bracing. In the 1880's the American company Washburn introduced the first steel-string acoustic guitars.

The electric guitar was patented by George Beauchamp in 1936. Beauchamp co-founded Rickenbacher which used the horseshoe-magnet pickup. However, it was Danelectro that first produced electric guitars for the wider public. Danelectro also pioneered tube amp technology.

Types of Guitars:

There are two basic types of guitars: Acoustic and Electric guitars.

Examples of the Acoustic Guitar:

- 1) the Classical (nylon-stringed) guitar,
- 2) the Flamenco guitar,
- 3) the Steel-string (or flat-top) guitar.

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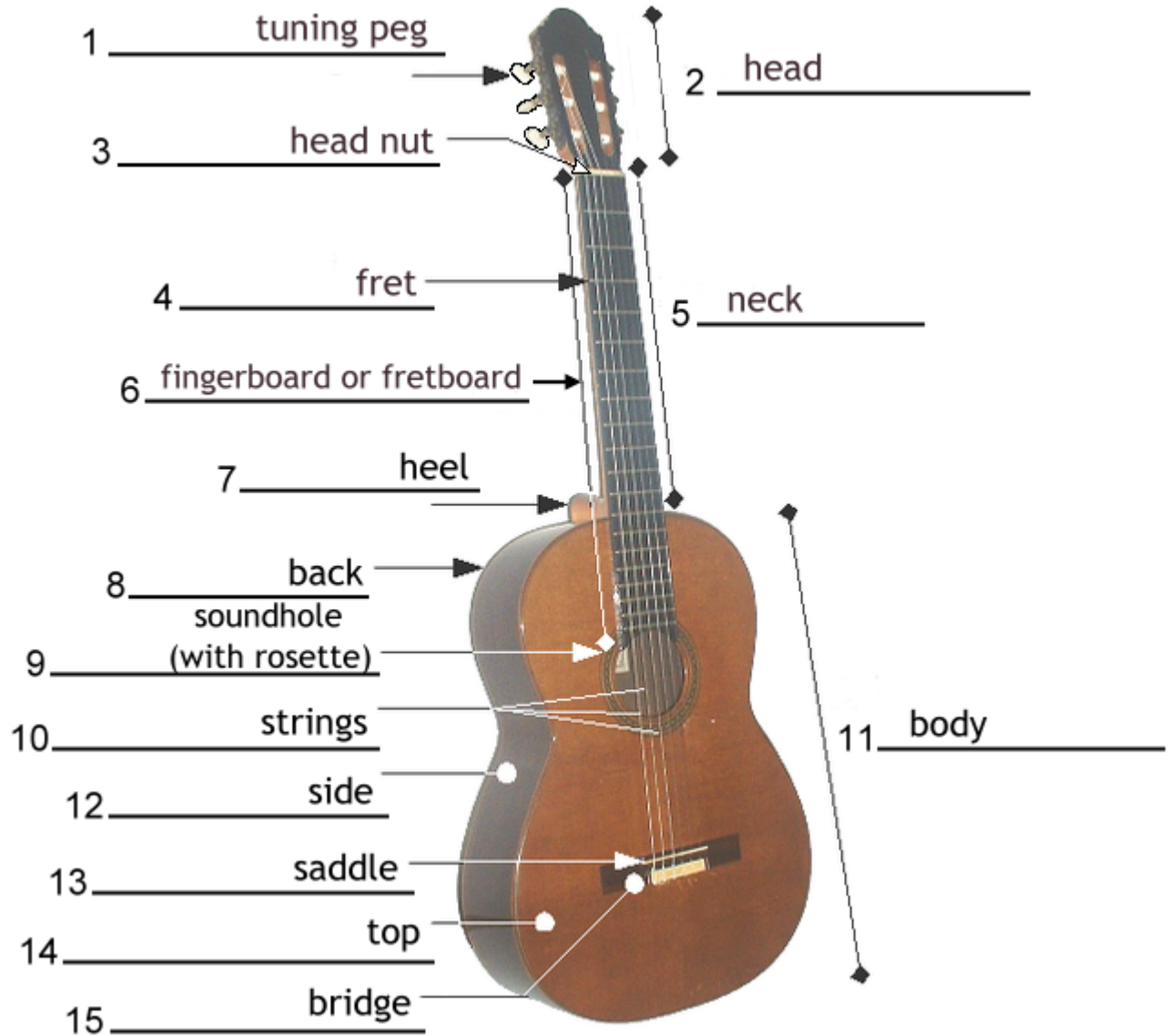
Guitar Lesson: Introduction to the Instrument (cont'd)

Parts of the Guitar:

The important parts of the guitar that need to be understood and memorized are:

body, neck, head (headstock), tuning peg, head nut, strings, fingerboard (or fretboard), frets, bridge, saddle, top (soundboard), soundhole (with rosette), back, side, heel

Examine the diagram below. Be able to name each of these parts:



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Exercises:

Introduction to the Instrument

The only requirement at this point is to make sure you have (or can obtain) a guitar to practice on. Keep in mind that future material will be focusing on classical technique, so I recommend that you purchase or borrow a CLASSICAL or FOLK guitar (acoustic nylon-string). A Flamenco guitar can also be appropriate for this series. For younger students you may want to consider a smaller instrument (three-quarter-size or even half-size).

To further your interest in learning guitar you may investigate any of the sources below (these exercises are optional for this lesson).

1) Read more about the guitar and popular guitarists in one of several magazines available at newsstands and on the web:

Guitar World
Acoustic Guitar
Guitar Player
Fingerstyle Guitar
Classical Guitar
Soundboard
Play Guitar
Total Guitar

2) Read about the history, development and terminology of the guitar in your favorite Encyclopedia or online at:

<http://wikipedia.org> -- search for Guitar
<http://answers.com> -- search for Guitar

3) Read a book about music, guitar or guitar instruction:

- a. *Making Music: The Guide to Writing, Performing and Recording* (1983), edited by Sir George Martin
- b. *All You Need is Ears* (1979), by Sir George Martin
- c. *Learning the Classic Guitar*, Part 1, 2 and 3, by Aaron Shearer
- d. *Solo Guitar Playing*, Volume 1 and 2, by Frederick Noad
also by Frederick Noad: *First Book for the Guitar*, *Playing the Guitar*, *The Renaissance Guitar*,
The Baroque Guitar, *The Classical Guitar*, *The Romantic Guitar*, *100 Graded Studies*
- e. *The Natural Classical Guitar*, by Lee F. Ryan
- f. *Approaching the Guitar*, by Gene Bertocini
- g. *The Art of Classical Guitar Playing*, by Charles Duncan
- h. *Classical Guitar Answer Book*, by Sharon Isbin
- i. *The Segovia Technique*, by Vladimir Bobri
- j. *Andres Segovia as I Knew Him*, by John Duarte
- k. *The Christopher Parkening Guitar Method*, by Christopher Parkening, Jack Marshall and David Brandon
- l. *Pumping Nylon* and *Basic Classical Guitar Method*, by Scott Tennant
- m. *Classical Guitar Method*, by Mateo Carcassi
- n. *The Classical Guitar, a Complete History*, by John Morrish
- o. *The Keys to Flamenco Guitar*, by Dennis Koster

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Exercises: Introduction to the Instrument (cont'd)

- 4) Watch a documentary about or involving guitar performance:
- a. Julian Bream: Guitarra! A Musical Journey Through Spain (1997)
 - b. Andres Segovia - In Portrait (2005)
 - c. Segovia Style: Classical Guitar of the Maestro with Eliot Fisk (2004) (Video)
 - d. The Beatles at Shea Stadium (1966)
 - e. Woodstock (1970)
 - f. John Williams: The Seville Concert (1994) (Video)
 - g. Led Zeppelin: The Song Remains the Same (1976)
 - h. Julian Bream: My Life in Music (2003)
 - i. Yessongs (1975)
 - j. Pink Floyd: Delicate Sound of Thunder (1989) (Video)
 - k. My Generation (2000)
 - l. We Will Rock You: Queen Live in Concert (1982) (Video)
 - m. Imagine: John Lennon (1988)
 - n. Carlos Santana: Influences (1995) (Video)
 - o. John Lennon Live in New York City (1986) (Video)
 - p. Stevie Ray Vaughn and Double Trouble: Live from Austin, Texas (1995) (Video)
 - q. Let It Be (1970)
 - r. We Jam Econo: The Story of the Minutemen (2005)
 - s. The Search for Robert Johnson (1992) (TV)
- 5) Watch a fictional movie about guitarists or involving guitar:
- a. Crossroads (1986)
 - b. The School of Rock (2003)
 - c. Sweet and Lowdown (1999)
 - d. This Is Spinal Tap (1984)
 - e. A Hard Day's Night (1964)
 - f. Help! (1965)
 - g. Back to the Future (Part I or II) (1989)

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Guitar Lesson: Guitar Accessories

There are several important accessories that assist in the practice, performance and storage of your guitar. Try to obtain each of the items below to help support your journey with the instrument. We will talk about the use of each accessory as needed in our future lessons.

a) footstool



e) plectrum or "pick"



b) guitar support



f) electronic tuner



c) guitar strap (for standing position)



g) guitar stand (to safely support the guitar outside the case)



d) music stand (regular and folding)



h) guitar case (for storage and transport of the guitar)

