Middle School Guitar Syllabus

Overview

Have you ever dreamed of playing the guitar? Whether you love music, want to play guitar for your family and friends, or desire to be a music star, this course is a great place to start. No prior music experience is needed. You will learn the fundamentals of music and the basic skills necessary to play a wide variety of music styles. Student guides, Carlos and Summer, will guide you through each step of this journey towards becoming a skilled guitarist and musician.

Course Materials

You will need a playable six-string guitar and a way to record and submit a video performance to your instructor.

A guitar is “playable” if it is the correct size for the guitarist, is easy to press the strings down against the frets, and plays in tune up and down the fretboard. There are three common types of six-string guitars: classical, steel string, and electric. If you do not already have a guitar, you may want to seek the advice of an experienced guitarist, a guitar teacher, or your local music store.

Most guitars are built to be played right-handed, so that the right hand would pluck the strings and the left hand would press the strings down against the frets. Many left-handed guitarists play right-handed guitars. Many guitarists and teachers recommend that left-handed students try playing on a right-handed guitar when first learning. There are some guitars available that are built to be played left-handed. This course is taught using a right-handed guitar. Students choosing to use a left-handed guitar will need to adjust accordingly.

Prerequisites

None

Course Length

2 segments / 32-36 weeks

Content Overview

Segment 1
• Three basic types of guitars: classical, steel-string, and electric
• Basic guitar parts
• Guitar care and maintenance
• Holding the guitar: Three positions (classical, casual, and standing)
• Choosing a position
• String names
• Tuning the guitar
• Right-Hand tools: strums, rest strokes, free strokes
• Keeping a steady beat
• Making a music video
• Left-Hand finger ing and form
• “Four-Finger Workout” (develops left-hand skills)
• Melody and harmony
• Reading guitar tablature
• “Good Morning to All” (using tablature)
• Research the lives of famous guitarists
• “Spanish Rock” (using a simple right-hand finger pattern)
• The E minor pentatonic scale
• Creating your own music (improvisation)
• Creating a rock guitar solo (using the Em pentatonic scale)
• Fretboard/chord diagrams
• The E minor chord (Em)
• The A dominant seventh chord (A7)
• Em-A7 chord progression: “Blues for Two”
• Alternate fingering
• Copyright vs. Public Domain
• Music in your community
• Exploring chord quality (comparing the E minor, E major, and E dominant seventh chords)
• Common fingers
• “Easy Strumming” (using the Em, E, and E7 chords)
• D-A7 chord progression: “London Bridge”
• Ear training
• Am-E7 chord progression: “Land of the Silver Birch”
• Moveable chord shapes
• “Sounds of Spain” (using the moveable E-chord shape)
• “Shades of Cool” (using the moveable E-chord shape)
• Music fundamentals/standard music notation (music staff, lines and spaces, letter names, treble clef, bar lines, measures, and ending bar line)
• Time in music (4/4 time signature)
• First note G
• Rhythm studies (using quarter notes, half notes, and whole notes)
• “GA Blues” (using G and A)
• Notes vs. TAB
• Three fun melodies (using G, A, and B): “au clair de la lune,” “Hot Cross Buns,” and “Merrily We Roll Along”

Segment 2

• 3/4 time signature
• Dotted half note
• “Canon in Three” (in 3/4 time using G, A, B, and C)
• Two great melodies (using G, A, B, C, and D): “Ode to Joy” and “Going Home”
• Memorizing music (new practice skill)
• Patterns in music: AABB form and ABA form
• “Russian Folk Song” (using AABB form and the notes A, B, C, D, and E)
• “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” (using ABA form and the notes G, A, B, C, D, and E)
• Rests in music (quarter rest, half rest, and whole rest)
• “Bluegrass Kickoff” (using rests and the notes G, A, B, C, D, E, and F)
• “Surprise Symphony” (using the natural notes on the treble strings: G, A, B, C, D, E, F, and G)
• The G major chord (G)
• The D dominant seventh chord (D7)
• G-D7 chord progression: “Simple Gifts”
• The C major chord (C)
• Chord change challenge (new practice skill)
• G-C-D7 chord progression: “Home on the Range”
• Building major, minor, and seventh chords (basic introduction)
• “Scarborough Fair” (using the Am, G, C, D, E7, and Em chords)
• Music in America (overview of the origins of American music styles)
• Ensemble basics: importance of proper tuning, timing, and balance of sound
• Explore the score: importance of examining the music score before you begin to play the music
• “Time to Jam” (duet using melody and chords)
• “Twice as Nice” (duet using melody and countermelody)
• Create your own melody (a fun and simple introduction to creating a melody)
• Create your own chord progression (a fun and simple introduction to creating a chord progression)
• Final project: Create your own melody with chord progression, and perform them on your guitar!

Assessments
Assessments can be in the form of music video performances, self-checks, multiple choice questions, essay writing, small projects, discussion-based assessments, collaborative assignments and numerous strategies for practicing, performing, analyzing, and composing music. Instructors evaluate progress and provide interventions through the variety of assessments built into a course, as well as through contact with the student in other venues.