

7 motivation ideas for beginner guitarists

- **Learn easier arrangements of your favourite songs.** It can seem like a long road learning to play the songs of your guitar heroes. However there are some great books that carefully adapt classic tracks to be beginner friendly and yet still sound close to the originals. A couple of examples are Trinity's Rock and Pop series and Hal Leonard's 'Graded Guitar Songs'. And no, sadly I've not been paid to recommend those books.
- **Keep listening to new music.** Not only can this renew inspiration, but it also develops your musical 'ear' by familiarising you with new forms of harmony, rhythms, styles of playing etc. If you'd like some ideas, here is a totally biased list featuring some of my favourite guitarists: Jeff Beck, Django Reinhardt, Joe Pass, Guthrie Govan and Stevie Ray Vaughan.
- **Improvise.** For me this is one of the most expressive and satisfying ways to play the guitar. It's a bit like being given a palette of paints and a canvas and being told to do what you like – wonderful! It also helps keep things feeling fresh in your practice routine so that you're not simply going over the same scales, riffs etc. all the time. Even if you only have minimal scale knowledge you can improvise; it is not just for advanced players. There are online guides to improvisation and countless backing tracks on Youtube for you to solo over.
- **Set targets and rewards.** I owe one of my students thanks for this idea, as he recently told me that he was keen to buy a new guitar but wanted to create a target that he would have to reach first. I think this is a great idea and a good target could be learning to play a certain song. Of course a reward can be as small or as big as you like – from a new plectrum to a new amplifier.
- **Play with others.** If you're lucky enough to be learning alongside someone else (as I was when I started), then you can spur each other along and share in your frustrations and successes. If not, there are other options such as jam nights and open mic nights where even if you don't feel comfortable performing, you can meet other guitarists and share advice, enthusiasm etc.
- **Use Apps.** A few of my students are using apps to help them with guitar practice at the moment and there seems to be plenty to choose from. A quick search online brought up this list: www.guitarworld.com/25-best-guitar-and-music-apps Having a database of chords, licks, scales, songs etc. on your phone sounds pretty cool to me!
- **Keep track of progress.** The initial stages of learning guitar can be a challenge and so to keep perspective you could try measuring your progress. This way you can see how you are improving and aren't as likely to feel 'stuck in a rut'. One example for this is practising in time to a metronome to see how the speed of your playing is increasing. Another idea from world-famous tutor Justin Sandercoe relates to one of the most common problems for beginners – changing between chords quickly. He calls it 'one minute changes' and for this you write down how many times you can change between two chords in one minute. Then when you manage to beat your record you can see for yourself that you are progressing.