

Special Report:

What You Need to Know Before Hiring A Guitar Teacher

by Nicholas Anderson

It doesn't matter whether you want to become the next Jimi Hendrix or if you want to simply be able to play chords and sing songs around the campfire. The guitar teacher you choose could make the process much faster and easier, or if they are under-qualified, slow and painful. Not all guitar teachers are the same, as I hope to point out in this article. Here are a few things you should know before hiring a guitar teacher.

1. Most guitar teachers are hobbyists with little or no formal training in teaching or in guitar

You should ask your potential guitar teacher what kind of formal training they have received as a guitarist and as a teacher. This is not to say that formal training guarantees a person will be effective (think about how many school teachers you had that were absolutely incredible. Not many of them, right?), but having at least *some* formal training will tell you that they are serious about guitar and serious about their ability to teach others how to play guitar. If a teacher is competent, he or she will have spent time and made effort to become the very best they can be in their field. A good guitar teacher is always learning, always improving, and always seeking to be better, both as a guitarist and as a teacher. This should be obvious, but it is not. No guitarist or teacher has "arrived." Ask your potential teacher what books they have read, what skills they are seeking to improve, what they are learning about teaching or what kind of ongoing training they receive. My guess is that you will be met with blank stares and a lot of inane stammering.

Then, ask yourself this question: Do I want to be taught by someone who thinks they are as good as they can be, or someone who is constantly striving to be better? It's a no brainer.

2. Most guitar teachers will teach anyone who walks through the door. This is bad.

Yes, it is bad if a teacher will take on anyone and everyone. It means they are not a specialist. I, for instance, do not teach advanced jazz or blues guitar, simply because that is not my specialty. I teach mainly rock, pop and classical guitar. I specialize in these areas and devote all of my time to them. If you are looking for an advanced jazz teacher, you should find someone who specializes in that field. Think of it this way. Would you prefer to get heart surgery from a general practitioner who performs a dozen heart surgeries per year, or a specialist who performs hundreds of heart surgeries a year? The answer is obvious. This also applies to learning guitar. The phrase, "jack of all trades, master of none" quickly comes to mind.

Look for a teacher who specializes in what you want to learn. You will get better results in the end.

3. Some teachers may not want you to reach your goals

This is painful but true. There are some guitar teachers who do not want you to reach your final goal because guess what happens when you reach your goal? Of course, you stop taking lessons. Naturally, that is bad for their wallet. It is good for you in many ways. You stop spending money and you have finally reached your goal. You can play the way you want to and don't have to spend any more time or money with a teacher. Unfortunately, some teachers will actually hold students back because they fear they will lose them. Do not misunderstand what I am saying here. The majority of guitar teachers are not like this and would not employ such underhand tactics. I think most guitar teachers do not purposefully teach ineffectively and I do not have anyone particular in mind. However, I can safely say from experience there are some teachers who do this regularly.

It's bad for you. It's good for their wallet.

4. Many teachers do not know how to maximize your progress

Generally speaking, teachers teach in the same way they were taught. I used to teach the way I was taught. It is the natural way people go about imparting knowledge. Unfortunately, many teachers do not try to move beyond their own experience and seek out better, more effective ways of teaching. I knew from my own experiences with various guitar teachers that some of them were better than others when it came to helping me progress quickly and effectively as a guitar player.

It may not seem believable at first, but it is absolutely true: there are secrets to making faster musical progress. I call them secrets because most people do not know, understand or fully appreciate how small changes to the things we do as teachers can make a huge impact on the progress of our students. Some of them, when learned, will seem obvious. Some of them are not so obvious. Some of them can be implemented during the first lesson, while others need to be implemented over time.

5. Most teachers use a 1 dimensional approach to teaching

The 1 dimensional approach is the way I taught. It is the long, boring way. It begins with chords. It progresses slowly through chords. You start learning songs. You might learn a little melody here and there. With this method, which is the method used by virtually all guitar teachers, you focus on a single aspect of the guitar. It is a very logical and linear way of learning guitar. It makes sense to people who want everything to flow systematically, neatly laid out, and orderly. Unfortunately, it is very ineffective.

The approach I use is 3 Dimensional. Yes, you will learn chords. But you will not focus on one aspect of the guitar. You will focus on many aspects of the guitar at the same time and gradually integrate them together. This is why my students make faster progress than any students I taught in the past using the staid, 1 dimensional approach. Students also have more fun, which increases their level of interest in guitar. That causes them to be more motivated, which is a critical part of making progress. The 3 dimensional approach builds multiple areas of your guitar playing at the same time so you are

not lopsided, unlike many players who come to me for lessons. They can play every chord with ease but can't play a melody to save their life.

Ask your potential teacher if he does anything like this.

6. Most method books used by teachers are ineffective

Can you think of a single method book that is by far the best method book on the market? I would guess not. That is because there isn't one. Most method books teach in a 1 dimensional way. In fact, I have yet to come across a method book that teaches any other way than 1 dimensional. This is not to say someone cannot learn guitar by using a method book, because you can. But, it is the long road to your goal. Many teachers use these books because they are logical, linear, and make their life a little easier (they don't have to prepare much before your lesson).

I use a couple of books, too, but I also supplement them with my own proven material. The books I use are not 1 dimensional method books. They teach in a completely different way that is 3 dimensional and far more effective in getting people to play real music right from the offset (read point 5 above).

Ask your teacher what book he or she uses. If it is published by any of the major music companies, it is most likely to be a 1 dimensional method book.

Run :)

7. Most teachers do not provide anything in addition to what you get in your private lesson

I have never had a guitar teacher who gave me additional material that supplemented or complimented the information I receive during my private lessons. Almost no guitar teachers do this or even anything like it. With 99.9% of guitar teachers, you will show up at your lesson, get some new material and an explanation, play a little and then simply go home. That is fine, as far as it goes, but it could be much better. What if your teacher provided free material in addition to your private lessons? What if he provided videos, audio recordings, and written instructions that save you time and money? What if he provided the opportunity to participate in and attend Master Classes where you learned techniques that are more advanced, received immediate feedback, and saw how other players were progressing and the challenges they face? Do you think that would help you tremendously?

Ask your potential teacher if they provide extras similar to what I have listed above.

8. Most guitar teachers do not know the #1 most critical aspect of making maximum progress

I am not going to share it with you in this article, but I will give you a hint. If you ask me, I will tell you. The most critical aspect of making maximum progress on the guitar is not immediately apparent to most people. When I tell you what it is, you may not fully understand. It actually has very little to

do with the actual physical part of playing guitar, though it does relate to it and subsequently has a profound effect on it.

Because most guitar teachers are hobbyists and have little or no formal training as teachers, they neglect this integral aspect of their student's progress. If they knew about this, they would quickly become much better teachers. Their students would stay longer. They would make more progress. They would reach their goals faster.

9. Most guitar teachers neglect a lot of aspects of guitar playing that are critical to your progress

After taking lessons for many, many years and after experiencing good and bad teachers, I can say that most guitar teachers neglect certain aspects of playing guitar that would almost instantly make you a better player. Progress on guitar is not always directly related to time. Sometimes it is related to how time is spent. Sometimes it is related to the effectiveness of the techniques being taught.

There are certain things a guitar teacher can do to help you make much faster progress. These things include picking hand discipline, integrated practice techniques, effective practice habits, goal setting, mental awareness, motivation, "real life" playing, and many others. Typically, a guitar teacher will give you material, explain it, play it, tell you to play it, and then quickly send you on your way. This is the basic way in which instruments have been taught for hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

Today, we know from scientific research and the experience of many guitar teachers, that there are ways to speed up the rate at which a student learns. Part of this is focusing not only on the obvious aspects of guitar playing, but also some of the less obvious aspects.

Ask your potential guitar teacher about this. He has probably not thought about it.

Conclusion

Hiring a guitar teacher is an important step in reaching your musical goals. Even the greatest guitar players took lessons. You should, too. A great teacher can make reaching your goals a faster and easier process. Take the time to make sure you are getting the most out of your lessons by choosing the best teacher you can find.

Ready to get started? [Click here to request a free trial lesson.](#)