



Brian Hayes has been providing guitar lessons for thousands of students of all ages since 1996. His playing experience includes over 30 years in electric, acoustic and nylon string guitar in the styles of rock, metal, blues, classical and flamenco. Brian received his degree as a classical guitar major with a piano minor, followed by a study of flamenco guitar with the great flamenco guitarist, Juan Serrano, and later pursuing a study of jazz. Brian currently performs professionally as a solo classical guitarist while still keeping up with his second favorite musical interest, neoclassical metal. In addition to his teaching methods, Brian has published books for solo guitar and many solo guitar sheet music singles, all available at:

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BRIAN HAYES

Master the Guitar (Level 1)

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About the Method

Instrument Setup

The first 26 pages of this method include information on the setup of the instrument, something that I feel every guitar method should include. A student should never begin their pursuit of learning guitar without first having it set up properly. With a proper setup, the student will be able to learn faster and accomplish more on the instrument. I encounter students regularly who were never informed of the need for a set-up and struggled unnecessarily, eventually becoming discouraged.

Music Notation Basics, Tablature & Scales

The brief introduction to music notation, tablature, and scales in this method concludes with an alternate picking scale exercise on page 105 that can be practiced at faster and faster speeds while simultaneously working on the chord and rhythm exercises throughout the method. This scale exercise will serve as a daily warm-up and prepare the student for more advanced scale exercises while improving right and left hand technique and picking speed.

Chord Knowledge, Learning Songs, and Music Theory

After the introduction to music notation, tablature, and basic scale exercises, the method moves on to thoroughly equip the student with rhythm skills and a library of major, minor, and dominant 7th chords; open position chords, first, and then barre chords. For students who aspire to be the singer/songwriter type of musician who presents their music with chord accompaniment and vocals, with or without the use of backing tracks, and for those who wish to play for the worship team in their church, learning the chord and rhythm exercises in this method may be all they require. These students may rely on lyric sheets with chord symbols introduced at the end of Section 10. The chord and rhythm exercises are introduced according to the primary chords of each key, a foundation of music theory that will eventually be needed when learning how to improvise melodies over chord progressions and for moving forward with more advanced music theory in Level 2 of this method series. Instead of incorporating learning songs within this method, song lists are given that the beginning student can choose from to learn with the guidance of an instructor. Since

open position chords are typically easier than barre chords, a list of popular songs that avoid barre chords is introduced once the open position chord section is completed. For students who are learning rock and metal on an electric guitar, a section on power chords is given in Section 11 that can optionally be visited after completing Sections 1 through 6 and then return to minor and major chords afterwards.

The "Dessert First Method"

It's often the rock and metal students in the slightly older age range who are driven to learn songs without spending time on chords, theory, or other basics, and I refer to this as the "dessert first method." These students sometimes even have a knack for choosing songs that are replete with various "riffs" and electric guitar techniques that don't involve chords at all. If this "dessert first method" is used when teaching a student, there will be some crucial things missing as the student progresses. For example, a student who lacks knowledge of the standard notation rhythmic values will have a difficult time learning songs on their own as they progress and can experience some disadvantage when it comes to reading and practicing scale exercises. A student may also reach the point of mastering scales such as harmonic minor, but their lack of music theory prevents them from understanding how and when the scale is used.

For the Instructor

One of the biggest focuses in this method is teaching the student to avoid wasted movement and work on smooth chord transitions while adjusting the speed to enable them to make the switches in time. It seems obvious that practicing efficient movements and setting appropriate speeds are the basis for everything when it comes to learning faster and more efficiently. Other things I stress in this method are the use of backing tracks, an understanding of backbeats, and the iReal Pro smartphone app as possibly being the best choice for introducing these. I build my case for the iReal Pro app and discuss backbeats in more detail in Section 5, page 99. String gauge recommendations, introduced on pages 25 & 26, are obviously going to vary from instructor to instructor. As an instructor, myself, these recommended string gauges are not a reflection of my own personal taste but are recommended due to my focus on the student succeeding with barre chords (especially when playing a steel-string acoustic) and string bending & vibrations for electric players, something that is likely to come up when the student is learning their favorite songs and, more importantly, in the scale exercises introduced in Level 2 of this method series.