

About practicing and reviewing!

Having taught music for more than 40 years has shown that the most difficult lesson seems to be the concept of "reviewing old material"

Students who have progressed to this point will most likely be a relatively dedicated crew because even though it may not seem to be that big a deal, this material is quite challenging to play. Many students will have given up long time before getting to this stage. There may be other factors at work to produce the drop-out rate but probably the most common one is that it seems to take an awful lot of practice to learn to play the guitar. This is very true but it is also the case for all other instruments.

The guitar is the absolutely most popular instrument on this planet. Guitar players outnumber all other musicians by a large margin. (most likely about 10 to 1) Of the millions of guitar players in the world, not all of them are particularly good on the instrument. The vast majority only know how to play a few chords and the overwhelming majority do not read music at all. The guitar has a folk tradition. Most people learn to play a few chords by watching friends or getting some help from them and that is the end of their guitar journey. Well, it is not the end, but they might go through the rest of their lives, quite content to be able to sing a few folk songs and strum a couple of campfire chords. One of the most compelling reasons for the guitar's popularity is that it is very portable and also very affordable.

Perhaps due to the folk tradition, most people do not realize that it is just as hard to play this instrument as any other and in some cases, the guitar is even more difficult. The guitar is a very physical instrument and the dexterity that is required takes a lot of practice.

Professional players practice all the time. They might not be practicing the basic skills but they spend hours, doodling on the instrument. Even doodling is practice because you are working at developing your style and your personal musical ideas.

I spend hours doing exactly this. When I notice that certain dexterity skills have started to get weak, I stop the doodling and go back to basics. A good review of fundamental skills usually hones the playing skills back into shape. Sometimes when I have been particularly lazy, it might take a week or so to get back into good playing condition. When you have developed your technique to a good standard, you never really lose it but it does get rusty when it is not used.

What is the point here?

It is of paramount importance to continue reviewing old lessons and not only the ones in this book but even farther back than that. There is no such thing as being able to play something too well.

You can always push the tempo to a higher level. To play exciting music, your hands have to move quickly. Even a song like the "Flight of the Bumble Bee" would sound pretty ordinary until you are motoring along really smartly.