

Some practical advice!

There was a similar page some time back in this book with suggestions on practicing. Once again, the trick is to continue reviewing the old lessons and work on pushing the tempos up to a higher level. Popular music seldom moves slower than about 110 beats per minute. Yes, of course there are many exceptions to this rule. Many slow ballads have much more lethargic tempos.

In order to do justice to good latin style rhythms and swing beats, you must be able to play at least at about 150 beats per minute. This should be feasible with eighth notes and even jazz eights. Triplets may be very challenging at that speed. Sixteenth notes at that speed would be out of the question for beginner players. Luckily, sixteenth notes are much more rarely seen in fast popular music. A metronome is nearly mandatory to push the tempo to new heights.

Students practicing a half hour per day are probably at the point where advancement will be either slow or non-existent. Truthfully, a half an hour per day will barely be enough to retain the callouses on your fingertips. At least one half of your total practice time should be spent on review. At a half hour per day, that does not leave a whole lot of time for new material.

It would seem more appropriate to be doing at least an hour of practice each day and maybe more on the weekends if you are still in school. Learning to play any musical instrument takes a lot of work regardless of how much natural talent you might have. No one is born with the ability to play an instrument of any kind. Some very young virtuoso players exist but they are rare individuals.

Experience has shown that organized sports and music seldom make a good mix. Team sports have schedules which often demand so much from parents and the children involved in the sport that music takes a second seat. It also seems that no sooner is one sporting season done but another one begins. There is no question that sports are good for kids and adults but the highly organized team sports can get very excessive in time consumption.

If you are going to be involved with music, be sure that you will have the time to devote to that task. A half hearted effort will usually result in similar musical performances.

Regarding "jazz" improvisation:

There are a number of compositions in this book which are referred to as "jazz improvs." They are not really improvisations because they have been written specifically to demonstrate some of the musical and technical aspects which a guitar player might use in an improvisation. Some of the "improvs" are quite challenging both melodically and rhythmically. Perhaps a better name for these solos would be "disguised and embellished old songs." The pitch range has been kept within the limits of what has been proposed in this book. Experienced jazz players would likely explore some of the higher limits of the guitar but this book uses notes which are available up to about the fifth or sixth fret and maybe a rare exception above that.

Students who can sight read the improv solos are in an exclusive group. The solos would pose a reading challenge for even skilled readers. Take some time to work out these solos to a good tempo. Most of the improv type solos will sound more melodious when there is a chord accompaniment. The melodic ideas are sometimes very "jagged." Admittedly, many of the improvs already have too many notes to be considered "good solos." (G.A.)