

# TEACHER MANUAL

GuitarCurriculum.com

This document is designed to provide a thorough understanding of the overall musical and technical goals for the levels of advancement upon which the GuitarCurriculum sequence is based. It is essential to develop an understanding of these goals and the framework of 9 levels in order to most effectively use the repertoire, sight-reading and supplemental materials supplied at GuitarCurriculum.com.

As you learn about the GuitarCurriculum sequence, keep in mind that some music created for GC is designed to serve classes with varying levels represented. Non-beginner students entering a class should be evaluated through audition and should be assigned a skill level. Mixed level repertoire is available on the website in the music library where you can search specifically the parts with levels represented in your classroom and find music catered to the precise needs of your students. All skills and knowledge are taught within the context of the repertoire at GC. This allows students to make the immediate association between technique or theory and the artistic outcome. For that reason, there are minimal supplementary exercises and tasks outside of the music we play.

Our overarching goal at GuitarCurriculum is to help you create a learning environment where students can express themselves as artists and valued community members, a place where they encounter appropriate technical challenges alongside many opportunities to inspire and to be inspired.

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# THE 5 ELEMENTS

## Theory and Assessment

The 5 Elements of engagement for the guitar classroom is a theory developed by Austin Classical Guitar based on decades of teaching, observing and researching students and instructors in the guitar classroom. The following five elements consistently occur in learning environments where students and teachers are engaged, motivated and accomplished. These elements are not only part of any healthy arts education community, but also central to human engagement in all aspects of life. These ideas will help you support your students in flexible, individualized ways that lead to artistic success and strong teacher-student relationships. In short, these are the building blocks for your classroom community.

### **1 - Safety and Trust**

When a student with little or no musical experience signs up to take a guitar class, there is an inherent risk. For many young people in secondary school, the thought of making mistakes or demonstrating a lack of competence publicly is terrifying. Yet, the raw enthusiasm for the instrument is so motivating that the student is willing to take this risk, to trust. In a safe learning environment, guitar students feel free to make mistakes in front of their teacher and peers. The classroom environment is such that mistakes are positive steps towards an end goal. And the student trusts the teacher to help ameliorate gaps in knowledge or performance skill. The student trusts peers to be supportive and not judgmental.

*Key Questions: Do the students we are serving trust us to have their best interests in mind, to keep their thoughts, feelings and person safe? Do they believe in our expertise and investment in them personally? Do they feel free and connected?*

### **2 - Individual Importance and Personal Responsibility**

In the highest functioning guitar classrooms, students have a clear understanding of their own personal growth as a musician as well as a sense of personal responsibility to the success of the ensemble as a whole. Guitar class is unique in that there are often parallel performance goals for each student involving large ensemble repertoire where the performer is contributing one part to a greater whole as well as solo performance goals. Autonomy and choice play a key role in motivating a student with a sense of individuality and artistry. Personal responsibility to the group helps to build community around common performance goals.

*Key Questions: Do the individual students we are serving feel that their role/purpose is important, even crucial to the process? Does the student know why we are doing this? Is the goal important? Do they feel that they can make choices, and impact the process?*

### **3 - Small Moments of Adversity and Perseverance**

Highly skilled teachers in any domain have a clear vision of student success and a clear end goal. They tactfully present small challenges to students that illuminate gaps in knowledge or skill but are easily fixed in a short amount of time. These moments happen consistently throughout instruction, and, over time, these little victories add up to noticeable progress and growth. Adversity and perseverance are key components of learning at the most fundamental level. These little struggles change the chemistry of our brain. Great teachers understand how to present a small challenge to a student, to allow that student to truly experience the small challenge before intervening with help, and to ultimately ensure that the student succeeds.

*Key Questions: Do the individuals we work with meet and overcome small obstacles throughout each class? Is there only slight challenge and discomfort or is the experience overwhelming? Do they push through this feeling and continue trying? Are there many small moments of success?*

### **4 - Performance**

By far, the most motivating and engaging experience for any student in a music classroom is success through performance. If too much time passes between episodes of unambiguous success, frustration and doubt ensue and motivation is stifled. Healthy guitar classrooms are full of episodes of performance success both large and small. Music classrooms are unique in that there are hundreds of small opportunities for success each day presented in small performance tasks and success can be monitored moment to moment. We are constantly refining small moments of music for better accuracy, expression, togetherness, tone etc... The best teachers leverage these moments to ensure student progress.

*Key Questions: Do the students we serve get opportunities big and small to show what they have accomplished each class both as an individual and group? Do they get to play for friends, family and community on a regular basis? Are they treated as artists offering their creative gifts to others?*

### **5 – Celebration**

Celebration of students' successes is a crucial piece to the learning experience. Celebration helps to solidify skills and knowledge acquired over time. Celebration and acknowledgement of success couples a positive emotional memory with the difficult process of learning a complex skill. Simply put, it's the payoff. In healthy guitar classrooms students and teachers experience many episodes of small and large celebration.

*Key Questions: Do students experience small moments of joy and celebration in the classroom every day? Are individual moments of perseverance emphatically acknowledged? Is there time taken to celebrate successful performances and reflect?*

## The 5 Elements in Practice

The 5 Elements described above can serve as daily guideposts for structuring rehearsals. These elements can exist on a micro level. Meaning that they can be included in moment-to-moment rehearsal goals. For example, the teacher might acknowledge that we are coming up on a particularly hard passage of a piece and assure students that mistakes are a part of getting this tough excerpt (Element 1). In the first performance of the passage, the director might remind the guitar three part how important they are to the character and expression of this particular moment in the music, that the ensemble is relying on them for executing this (2). The passage selected is appropriate in length and difficulty for the group to encounter some challenge, but they are able to persevere and be successful within 3-5 minutes (3). The group and individuals within the group would have multiple opportunities to perform the passage expressively and accurately (4). The teacher might then invite the choir director into the classroom from next door to listen to the group play with exceptional expression and togetherness, offering many opportunities to celebrate the joyful moment (5).

These Elements can also serve as long-term cornerstones of your program, helping to structure your year. For example, you may want to make sure you are providing ample opportunity throughout the year for Social-Emotional Learning where the students can offer personal stories or narrative around creative songwriting or composition exercises. This might help them know that their personal life experience is important to the classroom community and these projects might contribute to their feeling of safety and belonging (1). You may plan for a big trip with your group to give a high-profile concert at the end of the year and livestream this performance for all to applaud (4 and 5). Regardless of short or long-term implementation of the 5 Elements, as teachers, we can always look to these ideas for a way to ground and stabilize our program.

# LEVEL OVERVIEW (1-4)

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Level	Theory/Fundamental	Technical
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify parts of the guitar and associated equipment.</li> <li>- Identify staff, time signature, lines and spaces.</li> <li>- Read open strings on the staff.</li> <li>- Read rests and notes half, quarter, eighth.</li> <li>- Identify right hand letters/left hand numbers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sit in proper playing position including right and left-hand placement.</li> <li>- Play single free stroke with p, i &amp; m with "fixed fingers".</li> <li>- Play music involving the left hand by rote only.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Read in first position on strings 1,2 &amp; 3</li> <li>- Read accidentals.</li> <li>- Read dotted quarter rhythms.</li> <li>- Identify key signatures C ,G, and D major</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Play G major scale 1st position.</li> <li>- Play ima rasgueados with simple chords (G, G7, Am, Em, E, C, Dm).</li> <li>- Play a 5 note C major scale.</li> <li>- Play music involving left hand bass notes by rote.</li> <li>- Continue to play all notes with free stroke p, i &amp; m, "fixed fingers".</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Read in first position on strings 1,2 &amp; 3</li> <li>- Incorporate accidentals, dotted rhythms all note values</li> <li>- Read sixteenth notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alternate i &amp; m</li> <li>- Right Hand string-crossing</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Read in 1<sup>st</sup> position on strings 4, 5 and 6.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Play a two-octave G major scale</li> <li>- Play a one-octave C major scale</li> <li>- Play a finger in chords</li> <li>- Play block chords using pima</li> <li>- Play one-octave D major scale</li> </ul>

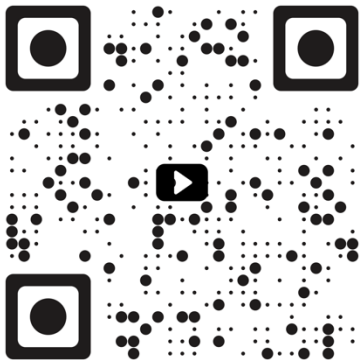
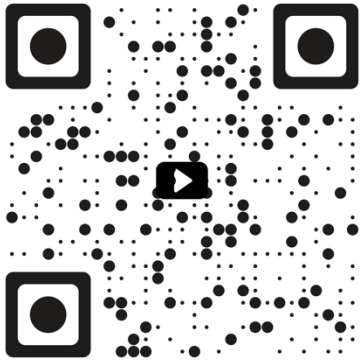
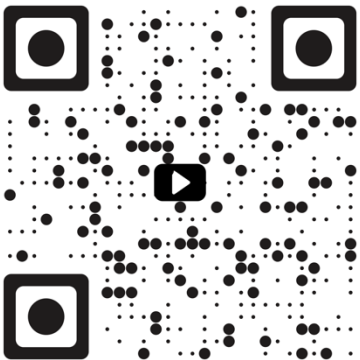
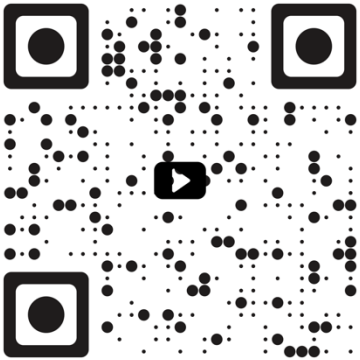
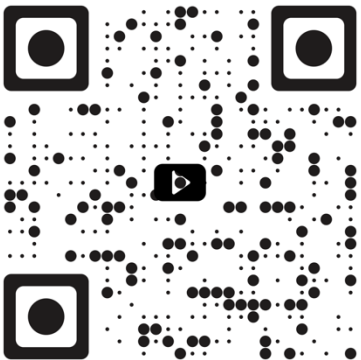

# LEVEL OVERVIEW (5-9)

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Level	Theory/Fundamental	Technical
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Read fluently on all strings in first position</li><li>– Read multiple rhythmic combinations alternation</li><li>– Read multiple keys</li><li>– Sight read block chords</li><li>– Finger new pieces</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Develop speed in scales and IM</li><li>– Play simple slurs</li><li>– Play multilinear music</li></ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Identify all common key signatures major and minor up to 4 sharps and 3 flats</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Play with timed, prepared extensions in the right hand</li><li>– Play arpeggios PIM, PIMA</li></ul>
7		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Play arpeggios with alternation PIMI, PIAI, PIMIAI (Giuliani RH Studies)</li><li>– Play ascending/descending slurs</li><li>– Play using bars in the left hand</li><li>– Develop speed in scale and arpeggio playing</li></ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Read in 2nd, 3rd, and 5th positions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Combined Skills, Shifting</li><li>– Play rest stroke</li></ul>
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Play and read in all positions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Intermediate/Advanced Performance</li></ul>

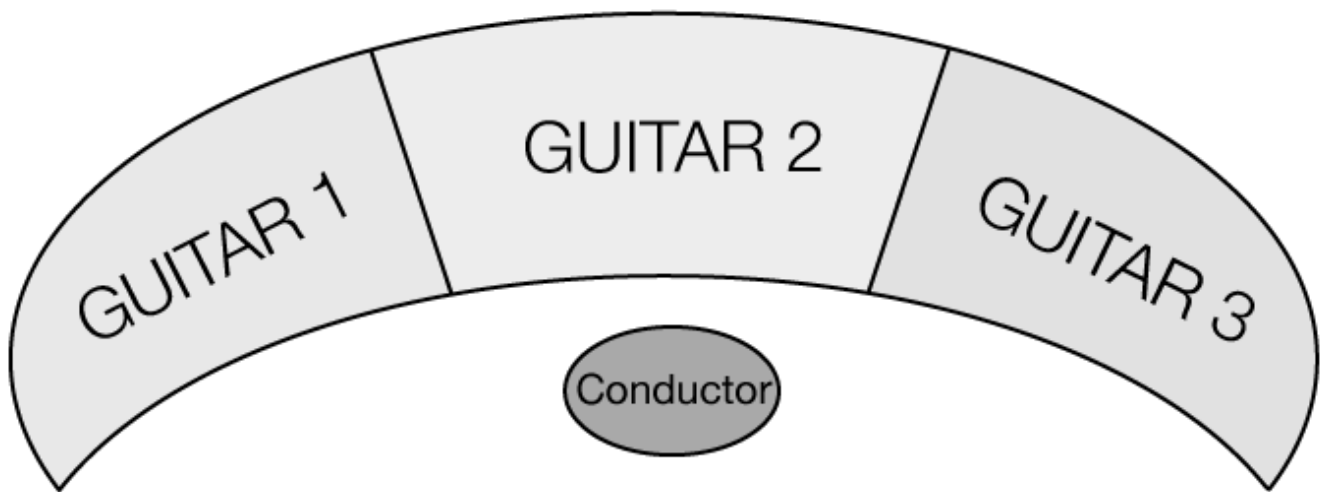
# PERFORMANCE CHECKLIST

## Evaluating Student Performances

Playing Position	Right and Left-Hand Technique	Musicality and Expressiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feet flat on footstool and ground</li> <li>- Guitar neck elevated to 45° angle to the floor</li> <li>- Shoulders are relaxed</li> <li>- Face of guitar is straight up and down, not angled back</li> <li>- Right arm meets the guitar just in front of the elbow</li> <li>- Right hand is situated just behind the rosette</li> <li>- Right wrist is straight and arched (not angled or flat)</li> <li>- Left wrist is flat, not concave or convex</li> <li>- Left thumb is vertical, not sideways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Right hand im &amp; a move inside hand, not up/away</li> <li>- im &amp; a strokes move in with 3 knuckles, including big knuckle</li> <li>- im &amp; a move through strings at an angle, not perpendicular</li> <li>- im &amp; a contact point on string is close to fingertip</li> <li>- Left hand fingers are always placed on the tips and just behind frets</li> <li>- Left hand palm is always parallel to the neck of guitar</li> <li>- Left hand palm does not touch the back of the neck</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Performs all expressive markings on the page</li> <li>- Plays with a consistent, robust tone</li> <li>- Connects melodic lines by timing both hands (legato)</li> <li>- Performs piece without talking, laughing, excessive movement</li> </ul>
  	  	  

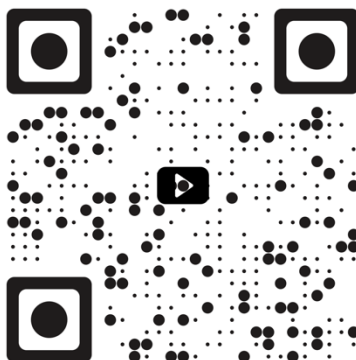
# CLASSROOM SETUP

## Guitar Ensemble



This is the arrangement for a piece in three parts, and how the classroom will look for most of the repertoire at all levels of the curriculum. The students are organized just like an orchestra or choir so that each student can see the conductor and vice versa. It is important that the teacher/conductor can see and hear every student in the class individually as they will be constantly evaluating each student's progress while on the podium.

In this arrangement, parts can be moved around to different sections with ease. In the piece linked below, part one is to the left of the conductor. However, part one might be to the right of the conductor in another. It is also important to note that while the teacher/conductor has a designated podium or space, they will move around the classroom freely and often to help individuals or listen from different places.





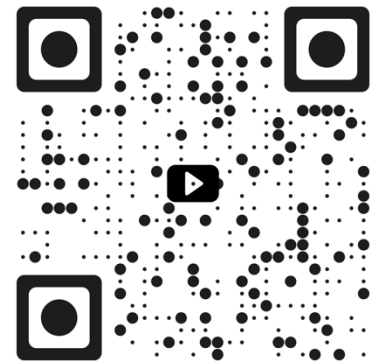
# REHEARSAL TECHNIQUE

## Management Through Music

Classroom management can be one of the most challenging aspects of teaching guitar ensemble. For most teachers, it takes years to develop all of the skills that help us build positive relationships with students in a stable and productive learning environment. And even then, every year we have new students with unique experiences and needs. Be patient with yourself as you navigate these challenges. Set specific student expectations and communicate them clearly from day one. Effective rehearsal techniques that focus on musical expression can alleviate behavior problems before they begin and lead to a productive, joyful classroom. Below are several suggestions for your day-to-day rehearsal that can help engage students as well as some solutions for dealing with challenges.

### **Musical focus is the key to a happy classroom**

Create a hierarchy of importance in your instruction. Sequencing, pacing, technique, and management are all important parts of teaching guitar effectively, but it is important to communicate to the students that artistry and expression (aka tone, dynamics, style, ensemble, articulation, character) are the priority. Bad technique, unwanted behavior, frustration, poor tone, and lackluster performances are all incongruent with artistry. By communicating your passion for beautiful music and focusing on making it via “the good stuff”, your class will be full of happy musicians.



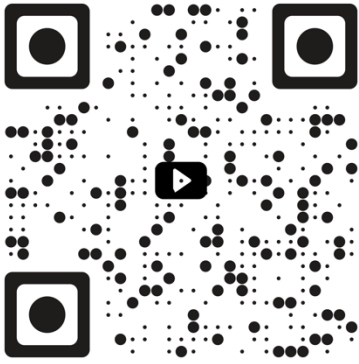
### **Start from scratch each day**

Regardless of whether you are teaching a beginning middle school ensemble or an advanced high school ensemble, begin with a basic stroke focusing on beautiful tone and togetherness. This will call attention to the fundamental techniques that will make your ensemble sound fantastic and engage the student with an easy, meaningful task. Create a high standard for student performance based on a clear aural idea of what the music should sound like and always require that they meet it.

### **Choose appropriate repertoire**

Often times, music teachers push their students with each new piece trying take leaps in technique only to find that students are struggling or frustrated. This can lead to behavior problems and an inability to focus on “the good stuff”. Choose music that is easily attainable by every student in your classroom with one or two new elements to attend to. Focus on expression, character, style, ensemble, articulation etc... Remember, you can always demand more from your students with any piece of music, but it is very hard to push through an unsuccessful, frustrating experience when the piece is too technically challenging.

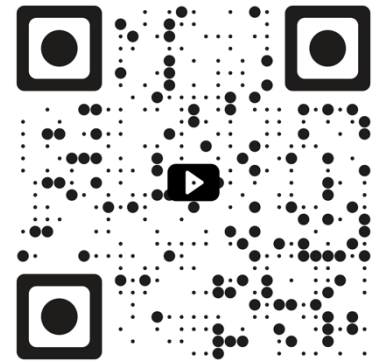
## Create an environment of refining



Create an environment where musical mistakes are viewed as opportunities to fix things and students feel comfortable performing short excerpts individually in front of the class during rehearsal. We fix the ensemble by fixing individual students. Rehearse small sections of music and call attention to all of the little things that can be improved such as crescendo, dynamic contrast, ensemble, and tone. Ask the students to rate these short performances and to articulate issues and solutions. This keeps students listening intently and focused on the quality of their playing. Use specific, unemotional, and frequent negative feedback (statements regarding what needs to be improved) throughout rehearsal. Use emphatic, specific positive feedback only when the students accomplish their goal.

## Listen to individuals and small groups

Many teachers are hesitant to call on individuals or small groups to perform short sections of music because the experience might upset the student. Communicate to your ensemble that guitar class is a place where we are supposed to make mistakes. Let them know that you will call on individuals to play from time to time and this is simply an opportunity to fix something. **We fix an ensemble by fixing individuals.** This is also a very effective way to keep students engaged. It is important to note that we would not want to call upon an individual that we know would not have a successful performance after the teacher gives feedback and makes a few quick adjustments. Make a point to know every student. Have an up-to-date list of each individual student, their strengths, needs, and instructor's goals for that student. Be tenacious. Do not move on from an individual or group rehearsal frame without truly fixing the problem and performing multiple successful repetitions.



## Engaging students who are not performing

Provide the class with a task while listening to individuals or small groups. You can have the other students "shadow play" their part in the left hand alone while other students play. You can also give the class a listening task such as: "I would like you all to listen to Aaron play measures 1-8 and afterwards, I will ask you to give me one positive statement and one area that needs improving for his performance."

## Autonomy support and choices

Each day allow the students to make a few decisions about the music. They can make dynamic or phrasing decisions. An individual can choose her favorite piece to play during the rehearsal.

They can re-title a piece of music based on imagery that the music evokes. It is important to guide these choices so that they are not distracting or counterproductive. Making choices about music is a fundamental part of being an artist and something that we want to foster in our students. Decision-making also gives the students a feeling of volition and personal control over the learning process, which can lead to motivation and engagement. In addition to choices, allow students to communicate narrative and story, especially as it might pertain to the musical story being told. Listening and learning about students' lived experiences will bring layers of meaning to the music-making process and help them feel validated and respected.

### **Establish contingencies**

Everyone's teaching style is different and classroom rules vary widely depending on the environment. But it is important that rules be established, articulated, and re-affirmed each period. The student has to be aware of the rules and know exactly what will happen if they are broken. Find a contingency that functions for that student and follow through without anger or emotional attachment. After enacting an appropriate contingency is carried out, shower the student with positive feedback for engaging in productive behaviors. For example, "It's so fantastic how Chelsea is sitting quietly with her strings down while guitar 2 performs".