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Home > Guides > 8 Tips For Stronger Guitar Fingers Building calluses and flexibility in our guitar fingers takes time & effort Let us help you break down how to build up those hands! Over 100,000 guitar-learners get our world-class guitar tips & tutorials sent straight to their inbox: Click here to join them Get our best guitar tips & videos 8 tips for stronger guitar fingersThe Eric Clapton method for quicker callus buildingThe importance of the right guitar stringsHow to clean your strings the right way! We need to harden those calluses so we can shred our favorite instrument with ease.Maybe youre brand new to the guitar and your calluses arent developing as quick as you thought they would; or maybe youve been away from the guitar for a while and youve lost most of them.Either way, we need to get those fingers in top shape if were going to play awesome music.Creating a good set of guitar fingers takes time, patience and a lot of work. Today were going to break down some great hacks for tougher fingers that wont quit on you.But why do we need calluses in the first place?Guitar Fingers: The Importance Of Good CallusesWith good practice come good calluses.With good calluses come better and more capable guitar fingers.Calluses are formed out of heavy friction against our skin, and the irritation that comes with it.Cool, right?As a defense mechanism, our skin forms a hardened, protective layer to stop it from getting cut and irritated repeatedly. If it sounds gross, thats because it kind of is.But is this bad for you? Absolutely not!Calluses make guitar playing way easier, and once we get past the initial irritation stage we will be able to play for longer periods of time.With that being said, if youre just starting out playing guitar you may experience a limited practice time frame before your fingers get extremely sore.This is normal, but you should make sure to take frequent breaks to let your fingers rest in between practicing.Even playing for 30 minutes and breaking for 10 works wonders!Pro Tip: Dont play guitar when your fingers are wet! Youll end up shaving your calluses off and setting yourself back weeks (or worse).Make sure your fingers and hands have dried before you play, and wash your dishes with latex gloves to avoid softening your hands too much during the beginning phases of building your guitar fingers. Where should we send it? Stop struggling. Start making music. Learn beginner-friendly versions of every chord. This is our most popular guide and it will improve your chord ability quickly! Get your own personalised guitar-learning plan Get a custom guitar-learning plan here: Click here for GuitarMetrics Hardening Your Guitar Fingers Doesnt Require A Guitar!Some of the best exercises for building sturdy guitar fingers can be done anywhere.One of the first things we should do is keep our nails properly.This helps us in two ways:Removes any barrier between our fingers and the strings.Ensures that we dont scratch or dent the fretboard with our nails.Keeping your nails in good condition can positively affect your guitar playing in a big way, but leaving them unattended for too long can cause problems. Keep your nails in check!Using your thumbnail to work in the skin on your fingertips in another great (and weird) way to help introduce your fingers to calluses.Pro Tip: Listen to the wise words of Eric Clapton Apply a bit of rubbing alcohol to a cotton ball and dab the tips of your fingers with it.This will help to dry the skin out, creating a nice and even dry patch for a callus to form.Be careful to apply this only to the tip of the finger, as we dont need to dry the whole finger out!If thats not enough, we can always do it the old-fashioned way.Create Better Guitar Fingers With Your AcousticThe acoustic guitar is the tried-and-true method for creating calluses that dont quit on you.Steel-stringed acoustic guitars are tough on our fingers, and help us build up an effective layer of skin that will help us play with grace and ease as time wears on.Practice makes perfect, and its a great rule of thumb to practice often on an acoustic guitar.If you dont own an acoustic guitar, consider renting one for a few weeks to help get your fingers into the swing of playing guitar without discomfort!Be warned, however You might very well fall in love with the acoustic guitar.If youre in need of some great acoustic guitar exercises, you should start with your chords.Playing chords evenly is a difficult task when we first start building up our guitar fingers.Focus on making sure that each note rings out evenly, and youll be on the right track for building some serious calluses.Pro Tip: Chords challenge our fingers when we first begin playing, and thats what makes them such great tools for practice.This is also a musical practice tool, which means it benefits your ears in the process! Practice holding a chord for an extended period and strumming evenly without releasing your grip of the chord. Tougher Guitar Fingers Require The Right StringsWhether youre playing on an electric or acoustic guitar, the wrong strings can ruin our experience playing guitar.There are two types of wrong guitar strings, and one type of right guitar string:Guitar strings can be a bad fit for your hand, or they can be a bad fit for the guitar itself.If the strings are too heavy for your hands, you wont enjoy playing as your guitar will fight you too much.If these heavy strings are strung on a guitar that is set up for lighter-gauge strings, the neck will bow from the weight of the strings.This pulls the strings further from the fretboard, making it more difficult to play.The right set of strings can make all the difference in the world, and it can be easier than you think to find them!Pro Tip: Head over to your local music shop and speak with the store clerk. Ask them if there is a guitar tech on site who can recommend you the right strings.If not the tech, many music store clerks are more than happy to help you find the ideal set of strings for you.While were on the topic of guitar strings, lets talk about rust and grime.Never Play With Rusty Or Grimey StringsGot a guitar that you havent played in a while?Like, more than a year?Chances are your guitars strings have built up some grime (and maybe even some rust) since the last time youve played it.If youve kept it in a good case, you may not encounter this problem.For those of you that leave your guitars out in the open however, youll have some maintenance ahead of you (and probably some dust to blow off too.)Grime and rust slows the speed of our strings and make it difficult to play with efficiency. Techniques like sliding become much more difficultTheres nothing better than the feeling of fresh strings but theres also nothing worse than the feeling of slow, grimey, rusted strings.These will take all of the fun out of playing guitar, so make sure to arm your guitar fingers with the strings they need to succeed.Pro Tip: To keep your strings feeling fresh for longer, grab yourself a microfibre cloth for cleaning your strings after practice. This will help extend the life and voice of your strings and keep them from dulling out too quickly!Finger pressure is another huge factor in building calluses Lets discuss below!Watch Your Finger Pressure!Applying too much pressure to the strings as we play can cause our notes to sound weird and slightly off. When we press too hard on the strings, we cause them to overshoot the note we are intending to play.This is an annoying side effect of playing guitar.Finding the right amount of pressure to apply to the strings depends largely on the type of guitar that youre playing, so it will take some time to find the sweet spot.Having a guitar that is well set up helps to make this process easier, as the guitar strings will be the right distance from the fretboard and wont cause you to overcompensate with pressure.Be patient and experiment to find what sounds right!Stretch Those Guitar Fingers!Creating a good set of hands for playing guitar isnt just about the calluses its about the rest of your fingers too.A good stretching routine will make all the difference in your guitar fingers, and it will make playing a breeze.As you venture forward on your journey as a musician, you will find that the more you play, the more you are required to stretch.Keeping ourselves in good shape for playing guitar helps in a bunch of different ways.Most notably it helps with good blood flow and circulation, as well as keeping your finger joints feeling fresh and energized.Pro Tip: The basic arm and finger stretches work wonders to keep your guitar fingers in good shape.Theres a great video you can watch here from GuitarLessons365 that will show you a basic stretching routine.Its important to stretch before you play, but also after.Remember that playing guitar can wind up the tendons in our forearms, creating tension.Make sure you stretch out all that tension after a solid practice session! It's hard to understand whichscales work with whichkeys. So we created a cheat-sheet! A key and scale-finder that you can use again and again. Get your personalised guitar-learning plan Get a custom guitar-learning plan here: Click here for GuitarMetrics Stop Biting Your Fingers & Nails!Lets face it, folks were all guilty of it.Whether its a nervous habit, anxiety or just boredom biting our fingers and nails can have an effect on our guitar fingers as well as our playing.We want to keep our fingers free of the messiness that comes with biting them.Maintaining our fingernails (in our fret hand especially) helps us avoid digging into the fretboard with our nails; and avoiding biting our fingers means that our calluses will stay clean and smooth.If youre into fingerpicking at all, this will affect you in both hands as you will need to keep your fingernails at a decent length and well-trimmed.Pro Tip: If you want a great article on how to maintain your fingernails for guitar, click here.It may sound silly to some, but a nail care routine is important for guitarists of all genres. Even if its as simple as filing your nails often, you will notice more consistency in your guitar playing.Many touring guitarists keep a nail kit in their backpack to keep them in check while theyre all the road.Proper guitar fingers have the nails kept clean and smooth calluses that dont get picked at.Nobody wants to hit a bad note as a result of an unchecked fingernail!This last point is crucial and extremely important, so weve saved it for last. Keep reading for our last secret to great guitar fingers!Take Frequent Breaks!Thats right hang it up for a while!The best guitarists know when to call it in for the day. Being aware of stress and strain on our forearms and fingers as well as when enough is enough is super important as a guitarist.If youre trying to build a solid set of guitar fingers for better playing, one of the best things you can do is determine how long you will practice before taking a break.Make a schedule for yourself. If youre planning on a long day of practice, try playing for 45 minutes and taking a fifteen minute break.This break time is a great time for stretching so that we can keep our guitar fingers in top condition.Pro Tip: There are many yoga videos online that are short enough to fit into a fifteen minute practice break.Many of these routines will help you center your body and mind so that you can come back to practice with a fresh perspective and increased focus.Personally, were huge fans of Yoga With Adrienne on YouTube! This awesome woman has a Yoga routine for everyone, and theyre all free on her channel!Cool, right?Heres a link to our favourite routine Yoga For Musicians!This one is great to use before you get started with your practice routine (or if youre like us and playing guitar full-time, first thing in the morning!)If you want a routine that you can fit between practice sessions, click here!Namaste friends, and keep those guitar fingers moving!Where Do I Go From Here?If youre looking for more ways to strengthen your guitar fingers, we recommend the following:Pickup a guitar exercise book herePractice to a metronomeDo some yoga to help bloodflow!Watch a guitar workout video like this one hereRecommended ResourcesIf you enjoyed this free guide on building better guitar fingers, youre going to love the other free resources we have in store for you below: Take our 60-second quiz & get your results: Take The Quiz Join the world's best online guitar school Get your own personalised guitar learning plan(customised just for YOU). World-class online guitar courses. Learn at your own pace. Community Campus & Learning Forum - A friendly community! Connect with our team & students. Beginner Song library with chordsheets, tabs and tips. (Songs suitable for all levels!) Regular live streams, seminars and Q&A sessions- Learn from world-class guitar educators. Get all your questions answered! Click here to learn more about National Guitar Academy membership Cool Guitar T-shirts Look cooler! Check out our merch: Click here to see our merch store Want free guitar tips and video lessons delivered to your inbox? Join over 100,000 guitar-learners and subscribe to our guitar-tips-by-email service. (It's free.) We'll send you a series of lessons that will move you to the next level of your guitar journey. Learn how everything fits together quickly, easily and effectively. We share ninja tips (for instant fun!) but also timeless fundamentals that will deepen your understanding. Get our best guitar tips & videos Practice for at least 15 minutes every day to toughen your fingertips. Try playing with medium or heavy strings to build up your calluses faster.Soak your fingertips in apple cider vinegar or wipe on some rubbing alcohol to dry out and toughen up your fingersbut avoid lotions and skin-softening soaps.Avoid picking at your calluses. It takes time to harden your fingertips for guitar, and the more you scratch them, the slower your calluses will grow.Play for at least 15 minutes a day to gradually toughen your fingers. Be consistent with your practice routine to harden and maintain your calluses. As your fingers start hurting less, aim for 34 daily practice sessions that are each 15 minutes long.[1]If you dont feel sore after finishing a session, switch over to a single 45- to 60-minute practice and see how you feel.Put your guitar down and rest if you feel an intense or stinging pain in your fingers.Avoid taking days- or weeks-long breaks from playing your guitar, or your fingertips will start to soften. Advertisement Youll develop harder fingertips playing on bigger strings. Remove the old guitar strings from your guitar and replace them with new ones labeled medium or heavy. Since the new strings are wider, theyll press against your fingertips more and form calluses faster.[2]You can buy guitar strings online or at your local music store.If you're a beginner, thicker strings may make playing chords a little more difficult.Avoid playing on thin or light strings since theyre more likely to cut your skin if you dont have calluses built up. The thick steel strings on an acoustic guitar toughen your hands faster. Since they use larger strings higher off the frets, acoustic guitars make you press down a little harder than you would on an electric. The thickness and friction of the strings, plus the added pressure from holding them down, makes your fingers harder.[3]Even if you normally play or perform with an electric guitar, use an acoustic for practice.Acoustic guitar is actually more difficult to play, so youll feel a lot more comfortable when you switch back to an electric guitar.If you notice pain in your wrist or elbow while youre practicing, slightly loosen your grip on the strings. Advertisement Mimic the pressure of guitar strings even when youre not playing. Press your fingernails or the edge of a credit card into your fingertips. Mimic where the guitar strings press into your fingers. Push hard enough so your skin indents but not so much that it causes pain.[4]You can do this anytimewhile waiting in line, sitting in class or a meeting, or watching TV.Buy a finger strengthener tool online or from your local music store. These tools have spring-loaded buttons to help you develop calluses and finger strength. Long nails prevent calluses from forming. Cut your fingernails short with a pair of nail clippers. Press down on your guitar strings and see if your fingernails scrape the surface of your fretboard. If your nails touch the fretboard, trim them shorter.[5]Keeping your nails short also prevents you from scratching your fretboard or damaging your nails when you slide your hand. Advertisement Rubbing alcohol dries out your fingers and helps harden calluses. Rubbing alcohol may also relieve some of the soreness you feel from playing guitar. Soak a cotton swab in rubbing alcohol and wipe your fingertips with it. Repeat this process 3-4 times a day.[6]Even Eric Clapton used this trick before he played! Apple cider vinegar strengthens your calluses. The vinegar dries out and toughens up your fingers so that the calluses will develop more quickly. Pour some apple cider vinegar into a small bowl and leave your fingers in it for at least 30 seconds. Do this 30-second dip before and after you practice, but make sure your fingers are completely dry before playing.[7]Apple cider vinegar also helps alleviate pain and soreness in your fingertips.You can use the same apple cider vinegar that you would use in your kitchen. Advertisement Moisturizers and soaps soften your calluses and make them disappear. While you can moisturize the rest of your hand, avoid applying lotion or any skin conditioner onto your fingertips. Even calluses youve been building up for months could go away and get rid of all the work youve done.[8]A lot of hand soaps have skin softeners as well. If you can, try washing your hands with a waterless sanitizer instead.Protect your hands and calluses by wearing gloves whenever you have to do something that will soak your hands, such as washing your hair or doing dishes. Calluses wear away when your fingertips are wet or overhydrated. Wait one hour after washing your hands before practicing your guitar. Make sure your skin is completely dry.[9]Playing guitar with wet fingertips may also be more painful, as the skin on your fingers is more delicate when wet. Advertisement Avoid scratching at your calluses or picking off loose skin. If you pick your calluses off, youll have to start building them up again. Let your fingertips keep hardening over time so you dont lose them. Otherwise, it will be painful to play guitar again.[10] Add New Question Question How long does it take for your fingers to get used to guitar? Aaron Asghari Professional Guitarist & InstructorAaron Asghari is a Professional Guitarist and the lead guitarist of The Ghost Next Door. He received his degree in Guitar Performance from the Guitar Institute of Technology program in Los Angeles. In addition to writing and performing with The Ghost Next Door, he founded Asghari Guitar Lessons, where he was the primary guitar instructor for many years. It can take a couple of weeks to a few months for your calluses to develop, depending on how often you practice. Question What if I don't have a grip master and cannot buy one? wikiHow Staff Editor Staff Answer This answer was written by one of our trained team of researchers who validated it for accuracy and comprehensiveness. If you don't have a grip master, try pressing your fingertips against the edge of a thin plastic card, such as a credit card or ID card. Question How do I keep my fingers conditioned when I'm not able to play guitar? If you have fingernails on your thumbs, alternate pressing the nails against the tips of your other fingers. See more answers Ask a Question Advertisement Thanks Thanks Thanks The advice in this section is based on the lived experiences of wikiHow readers like you. If you have a helpful tip youd like to share on wikiHow, please submit it in the field below. Strengthening or warming up your hand can help prevent RSI (repetitive strain injury). Play a few scales before you start in on more complex chords, and take breaks when your hand feels fatigued. I try to learn a new song everyday so my calluses develop quicker. If you don't play every day, it can take up to a few months for calluses to develop. Advertisement Thanks Thanks Advertisement This article was co-authored by Tomas Michaud and by wikiHow staff writer, Sophie Burkholder, BA. Tomas Michaud is a Guitar Teacher and Owner of the Real Guitar School and Starland School Of Music in Alameda, California. With over 40 years of experience in the music industry, Tomas creates step-by-step lessons for adult beginners that want to play acoustic guitar and create their own music. He is passionate about making fun and accessible material for people wanting to learn a new instrument. He has recorded six CDs and has a B.A. in Music from California State University - Easy Bay. This article has been viewed 220,090 times. Co-authors: 31 Updated: March 17, 2024 Views:220,090 Categories: Guitar PrintSend fan mail to authors Thanks to all authors for creating a page that has been read 220,090 times. "This article has helped me understand how to make my fingertips stronger. Now, I will be able to play the guitar easily."..." more Share your story Guitar finger exercises are a great way to warm up before playing any song or performance and also a great tool to get full control over the fretboard.If you type guitar exercise on Google, you will find thousands of patterns and sequences that you can obviously try.But today in this post I have laid down 8 exercises that will not only improve your overall technique but also help you to build finger dexterity, strength, and independence.You might have noticed how experienced guitarists pick up a cheap guitar and still sound awesome!Well, they are able to do that easily because of the guitar exercises they have practiced for countless hours.When you will do these drills every day for 15-20 minutes, your fingers will become stronger and when you play anything on the guitar it will feel lighter instead of getting fatigued.Also, Read How Slash Learned to Play The GuitarSo, here are 8 guitar finger exercises that you must practice dailyCredit BERNTHThis is a chromatic exercise that is very simple yet tricky yet powerful. This exercise is perfect to improve the synchronization between your picking and fretting hand.To play the exercise correctly, start by picking the 5th fret of the 6th string with your 1st finger, then the 6th fret with your 2nd finger, the 7th fret with your 3rd finger, and the 8th fret with your 4th finger.Here the important part is when you complete all the notes on the 6th string and when you jump to the 5th string, play the 5th fret of the 5th string with your 1st finger while keeping the rest three fingers, i.e, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th on the 6th string itself. (If you find this confusing, please refer to the first exercise mentioned in the above video)Now lift your 2nd finger to play the 6th fret of the 5th string while keeping the rest 2 fingers on the 6th string itself and so on. You have to repeat this on every string and make sure to play as slowly and clearly as you can.This is a very common exercise among guitarists but if this is new to you, you may experience string buzz in the beginning. As you practice it for some time, you will notice a huge difference in the synchronization between your fretting and picking hand.In the beginning, make sure to start as slow as you can because this exercise wont work if not played correctly. After you are done with this pattern, you can apply the same principle on different frets, for example, 6-7-8-9.Also, Read 7 Common Guitar MistakesThis is again a chromatic exercise that is angular in motion. As we already know that the arpeggios are angular in shape, this exercise is going to improve your arpeggios playing ability and smoothen your chord plucking skills.As you can see in the tabs, the first note is starting from the 1st fret of the D string and travels to the 2nd fret on the G string, 3rd fret on the B string, and 4th fret of the 1st string. You can also see that the notes are descending back from the 1st fret of the 1st string to the 2nd fret B string to the 3rd fret of the G string and stopping in the 4th fret of the D string.Here you have to use 1 st finger for 1st fret, 2nd finger for 2nd fret, 3rd finger for 3rd fret, and 4th finger for 4th fret.Make sure to start slow and use alternate picking to play this exercise. This is one of my personal favorite warm-up sequences that I practice every day and it always works. By practicing this exercise every day for 10 mins I can guarantee that it will improve overall techniques like hand synchronization, picking ability, and string judgment.This exercise is like a tongue twister for fingers which you have to execute on a single string at once. As you know that a guitar solo or a melody consists of many twisted notes at different positions of the neck, this exercise will help in freeing your fingers so that it will be easy for you to tackle all the finger movements needed while playing them.As you can see in the tab, the notes are not in order because they are designed to trick your fingers. Here you have to use 1st finger for the first fret, the second finger for the second fret, the third finger for the third fret, and the fourth finger for the fourth fret.Start by playing the 1st fret with your first finger, then instead of playing the second fret, play the third fret with your third finger, then now you have to play the 2nd fret with your second finger and 4th fret with your pinky finger.In the second bar, play the second fret with the first finger, fourth fret with the third finger, third fret with the second finger and 5th fret with your pinky finger. Similarly use the same principle to play all the bars.Start this exercise from the 1st fret of the 1st string and travel all the way to the 12 fret then make sure to descend. Repeat this same sequence on every string including ascending and descending. This exercise will surely help you in freeing your fingers and give your fingers more independence.This exercise is for sure going to confuse you in the beginning because it is designed that way. Make sure to practice it in a slower tempo with a metronome and use up and down (alternate) picking every time.I am sure you have heard about this exercise but this version is a little different from the versions that you will find on the internet.As you can see in the tabs, the notes are ascending from the 1st fret of the 6th string to the 2nd fret of the first string and are descending from the 1st fret of the 1st string to the 1st fret of the 6th string. This is the only exercise on this list that covers all 6 strings.Here you have to use 1st finger for the first fret, 2nd finger for the 2nd fret, 3rd finger for the 3rd fret, and 4th finger for the fourth fret.For the ascending part, start by playing the 1st fret of 6th string with your 1st finger, 2nd fret of 5th string with 2nd finger, 3rd fret of 4th string with 3rd finger, 4th fret of 3rd string with 4th finger. Now you have to play 3rd fret of the 2nd string with your 3rd finger and 2 fret of 1st string with 2nd finger. Now, lets see the descending part.To descend, play the 1st fret of 1st string with 1st finger, the second fret of the second string with the second finger, third fret of third-string with third finger, fourth fret of the fourth string with your pinky finger. Now use your third finger to play the third fret of the 5th string, second finger for the second fret of 6th string, and 1st finger for 1st fret of 6th string.This exercise may seem confusing at first but use the fingers as I have mentioned above. Make sure to start at a tempo you are comfortable with and gradually increase the speed.This is a two-finger exercise that you can use to improve your overall technique. First, you can do this exercise using your first 2 fingers, then 2nd and 3rd fingers, and then 3rd and your pinky finger. You can practice it anywhere on the neck but in this post, we will be using the first two frets.Here you have to use your first finger for the first fret and the second finger for the second fret. So, lets start off with the ascending pattern.Start off by playing the first fret of the 6th string with your first finger and the second fret of the 6th string with your second finger. Using the same principle ascend to the high E string. Now comes the descending part.To descend, play the 1st fret of the 2nd string with the first finger and the second fret of the second string with the second finger.Using the same principle descend to the 6th string. After you are done with the first 2 frets, again do it on the second and third fret using your second and third fingers. Similarly using your third and pinky finger repeat the same pattern on the 3rd and 4th fret.We often miss out on working on our third and 4th fingers, so, by doing this exercise with all the fingers you will make sure that all your four fingers are getting the same amount of pressure and workout. Start off slow and use alternate picking to ascend and descend.This 6-note per string exercise is one of my favorites that I practice often. It is actually in a triplet form and will surely help your fingers to build dexterity and independence.As you can see in the tabs, there are only 6 notes per string but that is actually 4 notes with two repeated notes. Here the 2nd fret and 3rd fret notes are repeated once.For this exercise, we will be using our 1st finger for the 1st fret, 2nd finger for the 2nd fret, 3rd finger for the 3rd fret, and 4th finger for the 4th fret.Start by playing the 1st fret of the 6th string with your 1st finger, 2nd fret with your 2nd finger, and 3rd fret with your 3rd finger. Now you can see that the 2nd fret and 3rd fret are repeating, so again use your 2nd and 3rd finger to play it and lastly, you have to play the 4th fret with your pinky finger.Repeat the same thing on all the strings to ascend and descend. Make sure to start slow and gradually increase the speed.Ascending PatternDescending PatternIf you feel difficult to jump to the next string while playing a scale or a solo then this exercise will help you improve in that area.As you can see in the ascending tab, the notes are starting from the 1st of the 6th string then goes to the 2nd fret of the 5th string, again the 3rd fret of the 5th string, and ends in the 4th fret of the 5th string. Similarly, it continues to the 1st string.Here you have to use your first finger for the first fret, the second finger for the second fret, the third finger for the third fret, and the fourth finger for the fourth fret.You have to make sure that you ascend and descend using alternate picking and one note per click. As you feel comfortable at a slower tempo, you can gradually increase the speed.This string-skipping exercise is similar to the above one but here you have to skip the second string and directly jump to the third string.Using this same principle you have to ascend and descend using up and down picking and playing one note per click.At first, this exercise will confuse you but as you practice with a metronome or a beat it will feel much easier to play. After practicing this exercise for 1 week daily for 10 mins I can guarantee that there will be visible results.Practice these 8 guitar finger exercises every day for 5 to 10 mins and I guarantee that after a week you will start seeing some visible results. Your fingers will feel lighter whenever you play anything on the guitar. Though I recommend you to practice all 8 patterns, you can pick out your favorite exercise from these 8 and include it in your daily practice routine.Affiliate Disclosure Some of the links on this post are affiliate links, which means that we may get a commission if you click on the link and sign up. We only recommend products and services that we trust and believe in. Thanks for supporting our site! Guitar finger exercises are a proven way to improve our guitar technique. Whether just beginning or highly advanced, daily guitar finger exercises continue to help us make progress with our guitar playing. When we add a few minutes of exercise routines to our day, we see more improvement in less time. Before anything too strenuous, its healthy and smart to warm up the muscles. If we jump into difficult guitar exercises too fast, we risk injury and pain. So exercises are often best saved until later in a guitar practice session. We also may be practicing scales and arpeggios (fingerpicking patterns) in our daily practice routine. And these, along with chord shapes, are great finger exercises as well. For any guitar exercise, use good form and positioning. This will keep your fingers safe, and make the exercises more effective and beneficial. Make sure you know how to hold a guitar and practice with attention and focus. Below youll find 12 exercises for guitar to help you develop your left and right hand technique. Take a look at each video to see if it sparks your interest. Enjoy! 1. First Guitar Exercise for Beginners Here is a wonderful exercise to get your fingers moving and allows you to work your way around the guitar. Its simple enough to memorize quickly. And gives you just enough challenge to build your skills. Expect more control and finger dexterity in a short time with this routine. We can call this finger exercise 1234s for the sake of simplicity. You can use any right-hand finger to play the notes. Or you can just press the strings with the left and omit the right. This makes for quiet but productive guitar practice. To make this fingering exercise more challenging, we can use alternate picking in the right hand (alternate index finger and middle finger). Tips: Start slow and place one finger at a time just behind the fret. Increase the speed bit by bit. You may notice difficulty stretching between the 2nd and 3rd (middle and ring) fingers. No worries. Just do your best and it will improve. 2. Finger Independence Exercise Simple but Challenging! Next, we can use the 1234 exercise above but add another challenge. Here we hold all four fingers on the string. Then we move a finger at a time to the next string. The other fingers stay where they are. Heres how it works (also see the video): Place each of the four fingers (left hand) on each of four frets on a string (you can start with the first fret of the low e string if you like, or any other). Keep all the other fingers still. Then move just the first finger over to the next string (same fret). Keeping all other fingers in place (including the index finger you just moved), move only the second finger over to the string with the first finger. Do the same for the third, then fourth fingers. See the full tutorial on this guitar independence exercise here. Tips: Keep a nice C shape, with the big knuckles parallel to the guitar neck. Stop if you feel any discomfort or pain. Go slow. If you speed up, you may lift your fingers early without realizing it. Speed is not the goal of this exercise. The goal is for each finger to move independently. You can increase speed so long as you can keep the form and movements precise. It sounds counter-intuitive, but slow practice on classical guitar is one of the fastest ways to play more smoothly, more confidently, and with more speed. 3. Hammer-Ons as a Guitar Finger Exercise This and the next exercise are two of the best for training the left hand on the guitar. It develops finger strength, precision, and control for any guitar player. In classical guitar, we often call these slurs. In Spanish flamenco tradition, they are often called guitar ligado. Hammer-on is a more descriptive name. And as a bonus, we use these in music. So as you progress, youll use these more and more in your daily playing. This is true of any style of guitar playing, from classical to rock, folk to metal, polka to cha-cha-cha. To play hammer-ons, first place a finger (not the little finger) on one fret (any string). Play that note. Then, while the note rings, place another finger on a higher-sounding fret on the same string. The new note will also ring, without plucking a second time. The right-hand plays once for every two notes on the left. We can choose two fingers and perform the exercise on each string. We can also use the 1234 format and play once per string, sounding all four notes as hammer-ons. Finger combinations: 1,2 2,3 3,4 1,3 2,4 1,4 You may not get to each of these every day, but it is helpful to cycle through them when playing guitar. Tips: Mind your form and position. Keep a nice C shape at all times. Keep the little finger over the string youre playing. Keep a steady rhythm. Use a metronome if you can. If you find a finger combination more difficult than the others, start with it each day. Focus on placing the hammered note just behind the fret. Speed will come with time, but accuracy is a better goal. The more accurately you play these, the less pressure you need to sound the note. 4. Pull-Offs: Perhaps the Best All-Around Guitar Fingering Exercise Pull-offs are the descending counterpart to the hammer-ons described above. The hammer-on goes from lower pitch to higher. Pull-offs start with the higher note and sound a lower note. Of all the available finger exercises in existence, pull-offs may be the best for overall control, strength, and independence. They do wonders for the left hand. Fair warning most people find pull-offs difficult at first. This is normal. If they were easy, they wouldnt make for such a good guitar finger exercise. But there are a few tweaks you can make to improve your comfort level with slurs. To play a pull-off, place two fingers on the same string, behind 2 frets. Then, play the string. This will sound the upper note. To perform the pull-off, pull the upper finger down and into the fretboard. It will slide off the string and pluck and lower note. Be careful not to flip the upper finger up into the air. This makes for weak pull-offs and lackluster finger exercise. (More on this in the video.) Like the hammer-ons, the left-hand plays two notes for every one stroke in the right. Use the same finger combinations found above in the Hammer-ons section. Find more about slurs here. Tips: Play in a steady rhythm. Use a metronome if you can. Keep a slow tempo and focus on form and movement. No extra points for sloppy reps. Hold a nice C shape. Spend more time on finger combinations with which you struggle. 5. Extension Exercises for Both Hands Rasgueados (No Guitar Required!) This exercise uses a Spanish flamenco strumming technique called rasgueados (pronounced rahs-kay-ahh-dohs). But instead of playing it on the guitar, we use both hands to work out on our lap. Since no guitar is needed, you can do this guitar exercise many times throughout the day. They are also useful for travel. It makes a big difference if you add this to your daily schedule, You can expect to see drastic improvements in a short time, and after a month of these and youll be a completely different guitar player. Heres the exercise routine: 1. Shape your hand as if you were holding a tennis ball. Now place this shape onto your thigh (sitting). Your fingernails should curl under and touch your leg. And youll have an open space within your palm. 2. Now, in a quick burst, flick your pinkies (fourth fingers) out straight, leaving the other fingers where they are. 3. Then, without pulling your pinky fingers back in, push out your ring fingers (3rd fingers). 4. Next continue with your middle and index fingers on both hands, one at a time. 5. Lather, rinse, repeat in a steady rhythm. Feel the burn! This can be strenuous, like lifting weights. Youll feel it at the top of your forearms. The more downward pressure with which you push, the harder it is to flick your fingers outward. You get more resistance. Tips: Make sure to keep your wrists straight. Think of your fingers coming out from your elbows. Dont overdo it! If you do this too much, you can inflame your knuckles. This is true with any exercise. Injuries are major setbacks. Ease into it. Pay close attention to the signals your body is sending you. And if you are experiencing some pain, here are a few helpful strategies for managing injuries. 6. Compound Slur Exercises Using Digital Patterns This routine combines a few of the previous ones. We use our 1234 pattern, as well as changing the finger order. And we use both hammer-ons and pull-offs. These are sometimes called extended slurs. One of the advantageous things about this guitar finger exercise is that it uses the pinky finger more than any other. This gives it the extra training it needs to meet the ability of the others. This exercise works on any string, from the low E to the high E. And you can start on any fret. To create more interest, move up a fret with each repetition, then back down. This acts as a score-keeper for a set number of reps as a goal. You can take this exercise in stages if you like. To begin with, you can do only the first half. This means you play 1234 as hammer-ons (playing only the first note with the right hand, then the 234 as hammer-ons). Then you pluck the string on the 4, then do pull-offs for 321. The full pattern is:1234-4321-1434-1424 The right plays on the starting note of each grouping. So the right-hand plays once for every four notes on the left. Tips: If youre a beginner, save this routine for later. Instead, spend time on the hammer on and pull off routines above. Quality over quantity. Make sure to do clean pull-offs, pulling your fingers down and into the fretboard. Listen to each note in turn. Stay focused on the current moment. Keep a steady rhythm. Again, a metronome is helpful here. Have fun! 7. Guitar Exercise for Speed and Precision The next exercise focuses on guitar speed. We practice going from one speed (quarter notes below) to double that speed (8ths below). With practice, youll launch into fast passages with accuracy and aplomb. Youll increase your overall speed and accuracy. For this practice routine, we begin using four adjacent frets on one string, played with all four left fingers. This is called a chromatic scale or pattern. In other words, first fret, second fret, third fret, fourth fret. Up one note at a time. In the right hand, use quick-prepping with I and M alternation (index finger and middle finger alternating back and forth). The technique of quick-prepping helps us become more confident and precise in our movements. This type of picking pattern (alternate picking) improves both scales and pattern-playing. It synchronizes the hands and leads to greater confidence and security. Begin with steady, evenly spaced notes, focusing on synchronizing the hands. Next, alternate between slow steady notes, and bursts of the pattern at double-speed. When youre ready, increase the length of the fast bursts. See the full guitar lesson on these here. Tips: Make sure to keep a very steady rhythm and focus on one fret at a time. Pay close attention to the first few notes in the quicker section. Make sure the rhythm is secure, right from the start. Maintain form and position and play just behind the frets. Listen for any buzzes or string noise, and seek to clean them up. 8. Scissors Exercise for the Right Hand This right-hand exercise helps build awareness of the out stroke when alternating the index finger and middle finger. I/M alternation is commonly used for scales and melodic playing. This can lead to more clarity, speed, and precise rhythm in your alternate picking. In all guitar finger exercises, its important to play in a steady rhythm. When we do, our work can transfer over to making better music. In the scissors exercise for guitar, you can use the following rhythm, or make up your own. Tips: Your fingers should straighten from the big knuckle. But your finger does not have to come all the way out (in line with the top of your hand). If you havent been practicing extension exercises, like the rasgueados exercise above, go easy at first. If you overdo it you could inflame your joints. 9. Odairs Favorite Drill An Advanced Finger Exercise In his popular book, Pumping Nylon, Scott Tennant shares an exercise he saw Odair Assad play in a masterclass. He dubbed this Odairs Favorite Drill. And the name stuck. This is a challenging exercise for guitar players, and one worth digging into. Beginners may want to leave this for later. This exercise uses two strings. The individual fingers move between the two strings in a given pattern. As we choose strings further apart, the exercise becomes more difficult. Odairs Favorite Drill In this exercise, there are two main goals: the musical and the physical. The physical is obvious, but the musical goal is easier to miss. The Musical Goal The musical goal of this exercise is to see it as two separate musical lines, and play it so that each line is smooth and connected (legato). The exercise is actually two lines of music, offset. Playing this, we can listen for each note connecting smoothly to the next. Stems up connect to stems up. Stems down connect to stems down. Tips: Listen closely to one note connecting to the next. Separate each movement in your mind. Make each as clean and controlled as you can. Start on strings that are close together. Increase the stretch as you feel able. (But dont overdo it!) Maintain a slow tempo and stay mindful, and youll be crawling over the guitar neck in no time. 10. Sergio Assads Ultimate Guitar Exercise for Left Hand Mastery Sergio Assad is one of the top figures in the classical guitar world today. He and his brother, Odair (from #11 above), have performed as a guitar duo for over 50(!) years. Sergio is also well-respected as a composer and arranger. And he is a guitar teacher at the San Francisco Conservatory. Hes also as nice a guy as you could ask to meet. Hes friendly, warm, and humble. This guitar finger exercise is his method for developing the left fingers. It starts fairly easy and gets progressively more difficult. This method of exercising the left hand for guitar uses two main movements. One is the up and down movement of pressing a fret. The other is theback and forth movement across the guitar neck. Here we take each separately, then combine them. With practice, this leads to much more control and facility on the guitar strings. Youll increase your independence, as well as stretch and dexterity. This routine starts at a beginner level and progresses to advanced. So you can grow with it. Read more about Sergio Assads guitar method here. Tips: You dont have to do the entire routine each day. Just go as far as is feasible in the time given. Form and positioning are important, so watch out for any variance from the optimal. Be patient and give this one time. 11. Guitar Finger Games for Independence (No Guitar Required) Finger games are not normal exercises. They dont work your muscles for finger strength. But they do train your finger independence. And even more importantly, they train your hands to work together. Finger games train the brain and muscle connections. They remove the risk of injuries and can be done away from the guitar. We can think of these guitar finger games as tongue-twisters or brain-teasers for the fingers. When we practice them, our brains create and strengthen new connections. We become more coordinated. Plus, they remove the risk of injuries and can be done away from the guitar. All this leads to better guitar playing. And as a bonus, theyre fun! You can read the full article for more exercises and examples. But as a taste, try this: Tap on the surface in front of you, your legs (or just move your fingers in the air) in the following patterns. You can do each side separately to learn the pattern first if you like. Then do the hands together. Right: I M I M I M I M etc. (index finger and middle finger) Left: 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 etc. (4 = pinky finger, 1 = index finger) As you get these two patterns moving together, youll feel your mind working. As you improve, you can impress your friends and loved ones with your guitar finger prowess! Tips: As always, keep a steady rhythm. Slow down if youre making too many mistakes. Make confident finger-movements. Ideally, each finger hitting the table makes a sound (or would, if you were on a table). 12: Switching Chord Shapes as a Guitar Exercise One of the best skills we can build on guitar is that of switching quickly between chords shapes. Chords happen in pieces of music and are used in most styles and genres. To practice changing chords, first, choose two chord shapes. Then switch between them in a steady rhythm. We can then add a third shape, and/or speed up the chord changes. To make this exercise more effective, practice placing a chosen finger down first on each chord. For example, for each chord shape, press your index finger down before the others. Practice switching chords in this way. Next, change to the second finger as the leading finger. Then the third finger, etc. This exercise, along with the hammer-ons and pull-offs above, will directly improve the music you play, as well as more generally toning your hands. Download Chord Shapes