



HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD SUCCEED IN GUITAR LESSONS

Learning how to play the guitar is a difficult task for a child or teen. At 7th Fret Guitar Studios, we want every student to have the best opportunity to succeed. Fortunately there are plenty of things parents can do to help their child learn how to play. Here is a short list of things you can do for your child from the very first lesson.

- 1. Attend lessons with your child.** For children ages 5 – 8, you should plan on attending all the lessons. Take notes for your child so you can serve as your child's coach at home. The best students have a notebook filled with highlights from each lesson. For children ages 9 – 12, try to attend each lesson, but simply observe. You may take notes for your child if they allow you. However, their teacher may tell them to write down notes for themselves. For students ages 13 and up, you may attend lessons on occasion if they allow you. Bring something to read and quietly listen in to see and hear what your child is learning and how he/she should be practicing.
- 2. Make a THREE MONTH commitment with your child.** You and your child should commit to attending every lesson for the first three months. Most students know at the end of three months if playing the guitar is something they want to do. For students that make it past the three month period, they almost always continue for at least a year. In fact, 90% of our students who do the "three month commitment" continue with lessons for over 12 months. It's sad to see students with sporadic attendance in the first three months give up playing the guitar early on because they never gave themselves the chance.
- 3. Help your child practice at home.** For younger students, you will play an active role at home. You will be their practice coach by manning the CD player and helping them count, saying note names, or humming along. For children ages 9 – 12, you may help your child practice in subtle ways. Ask them to play for you twice a week. Remind them when it's time for their daily practice. Ask them to teach you how to play. For teens, simply ask about their lesson; ask what they learned. Just talking about the lesson will help to reinforce concepts. However, with teens, they are very self-motivated so it's best to show interest but stay out of their way. Note: Ideally, students should practice at least 5 times a week. Younger students can practice 5 – 10 minutes each session; older students 10 – 20 minutes. It's also best to practice in the first few hours after the lesson to reinforce concepts learned earlier that day. Help your child establish a regular daily practice time (e.g. every day after dinner). Consistency is key!

- 4. Have the appropriate supplies available for your child in a guitar corner.** Every beginning student should have: a properly sized guitar that stays in tune, a footstool (or a stack of phone books/newspaper), music stand, electronic guitar tuner, metronome, CD player, and a folder/binder for music sheets and notes. If possible, have a space dedicated to your child's music making. If the guitar is easily accessible, your child is more likely to play it frequently. The child's practice area should also be in a room where they are unlikely to be disturbed or unlikely to disturb others. Also, they should have a chair without arms to sit on. You can find a chair similar to the ones we use in the studio at any home improvement store.

A few other things you can do for your beginning guitarist as he/she grows . . .

- Ask your child to perform for you. For teens, they may not want to play for you and that's fine, too. Don't pressure them. Younger students, however, almost always enjoy playing for parents as they seek their parents' approval.
- Give your child opportunities to listen to guitar music. Buy guitar recordings. Go to guitar concerts. Imagine trying to bake cookies if you've never seen or tasted a cookie before. The same concept applies in trying to play the guitar without hearing good guitar playing. Listening is important!
- Nothing helps a guitar like putting on a set of fresh strings. Students should change their strings every 3 months. Help them change their strings using the instruction sheet handed out in class (ask for one if you did not receive one).
- Be prepared to purchase new guitars as your child grows. Always ask your teacher for suggestions on how to purchase a new guitar.
- If you or your child has specific goals, such as pursuing music in college or playing a mini-recital as a fundraiser or at a church/hospital/nursing home, please let your teacher know. Communication is key to a healthy learning environment.