

# Intermediate To Advanced Roadmap:

The Ultimate Guide To Pro-Level Guitar Skills



Hey, I'm Josh.

This is the skeleton of every course I've ever made (and a few that are still in the works).

If you're the DIY type, you can use this to roll your own music education. If you prefer a more done-for-you, do-this-one-thing-today approach, I hope you'll check out my courses.

This guide is a roadmap; the courses are turn-by-turn GPS.

Thanks for reading,

Josh

ps. There's a ton of extra resources available too—editable backing tracks (change the tempo, key, or style), intelligent flashcard decks, and my continually growing personal collection of sheet music... you can unlock it all by sharing this guide on facebook.

**CLICK HERE TO SHARE & UNLOCK** 

# Overview of The Roadmap:

- 0. Before We Begin
- 1. Time & Feel
- 2. Effective Practice
- 3. Music Theory
- 4. Ear Training
- 5. <u>Playing The Changes</u>
- 6. Reading Music
- 7. Repertoire
- 8. Transcribing

# Before We Begin

#### Theory of Constraints

Here's a concept borrowed from the world of manufacturing: you can only improve the performance of the whole system by addressing its bottleneck.

Let's say you, me, and Dave Grohl are trying to make pizzas as fast as we can. I toss the dough, you ladle on the sauce, and Dave sprinkles on the cheese. Then our boss comes in and yells at us to pick up the pace.



I pulled Dave's name out of a hat, but amazingly, this is what comes up when you search "Dave Grohl pizza."

You and Dave are ladling and sprinkling as fast as you can, but you're held up by how long it takes for me to toss the dough. The constraint is me. No amount of improvement to sauce or cheese speed will result in more pizzas per hour.

Improving something that's not your real limitation won't make you better overall.

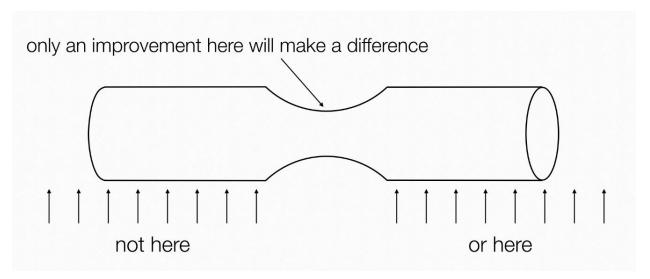


image lifted from this excellent primer on the theory of constraints

That's the Theory of Constraints: identify the constraint, fix it, repeat. Improving anything else doesn't actually help.

#### The Critical Path

Here's another business world concept that's a perfect analogy for learning guitar: the critical path. The critical path is simply an acknowledgement that the *order* you do it in is important.

If we stick with our pizza example:

- → you can't give the pizza to the customer before you've cooked it
- → you can't cook it until you've assembled it
- → the assembly has to be done in the right order (dough->sauce->cheese->toppings)

So many things about learning guitar are only difficult because we're doing them in the wrong order. Far too many of us ignore the critical path. For example:

- → Working on speed before time & feel? Waste of time.
- → Practicing inefficiently for a long time? Waste of time.
- → Trying to learn theory with TAB? Waste of time.
- → Studying modes before chord progressions? Waste of time.

There's a reason I'm telling you this stuff: do it in the right order, and you'll save yourself a lot of wasted time and frustration.

Follow this guide in this order, and each successive section will be easier because of the work you did earlier. And as an added bonus, even if you bail out before the end, each section (and subsection) will be useful on its own.

Up next: time & feel ⇒

## SKILL ONE: Time & Feel

Far and away the most important skill a musician can have is the ability to play in time and with good feel. Badass professionals are obsessed with getting the music to groove. This means not just maintaining an even tempo, but also not pushing too far forward (rushing) or backward (dragging), all while subdividing the beat in a pleasing way.

Sound super abstract? It is.

That's why most people shy away from trying to teach it (or end up teaching it with oft-repeated-but-not-especially-helpful platitudes). Here's how you can get your time & feel together.

## Time & Feel Exercise One: Bury The Click

- 1. Set your metronome at 70bpm.
- 2. Adjust the volume so that it's ever so slightly quieter than your guitar.
- 3. Now play along with muted strums or staccato chord stabs.
- 4. Can you hear the metronome?
- 5. If yes, then you're not truly on top of the beat. You're either rushing or dragging.
- 6. This is INSANELY common—most people hear the beat in a place where it isn't.
- 7. Resetting your feel is as simple as logging enough time with this exercise that you can reliably make the click disappear under your playing.
- 8. Simple, but not easy.
- 9. Once 70 bpm is no longer challenging, try slowing it down more. If you can keep it together at 40 bpm, you have this mastered.

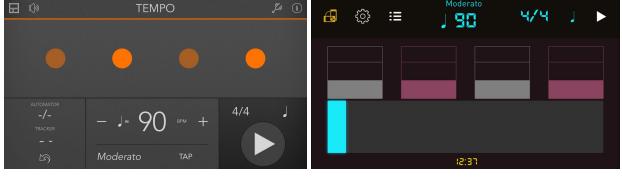
Bonus: Record yourself into a DAW (GarageBand, StudioOne, Ableton, etc) and view the waveforms of your playing against the tempo grid. Humbling, but crazy effective in fixing your tendency to rush.



#### Time & Feel Exercise Two: Backbeat Click

Listen to any rock or pop song, and you'll find that 90% of the time the drummer is playing the snare on beats 2 & 4. Practicing with a metronome on beats 2 & 4 is waaaaaaayyy more musical than practicing with it on all four beats.

My favorite metronomes make it easy to start with the click on all four beats, and then mute beats 1 & 3.



(Tempo—my personal fave for iOS)

(Pro Metronome—for Android users)

If you get lost, you can still look down at the metronome to reorient yourself.

**Bonus:** Once you have it down that way, try leaving the clicks on but halve the tempo, then count your way into the backbeat click.



(half the tempo, but a click on each beat)

**Double bonus:** If you can do that, take <u>the Stars & Stripes</u> <u>Challenge</u>.

Time & Feel Exercise Three: Cartoon Gravity *Bury The Click* fixes your tendency to rush.

The Backbeat Click gets your subdivisions groovier.

Cartoon Gravity trains you to maintain tempo across the whole song.

- Set the metronome to 4/4, enable Coach Mode (Tempo) or Rhythm Trainer (Pro Metronome)
- 2. Set it to play two bars on followed by one bar of silent counting.
- 3. Play along with that until you can reliably play through the silence and still be in time when it resumes clicking.
- 4. Then up the ante: two bars on, two bars off.
- 5. Repeat until you can keep it together through two bars on, four bars off.

Bonus: Combine Cartoon Gravity with Bury The Click or the Backbeat Click. Or both.

## SKILL TWO: Effective Practice

I asked dozens and dozens of badass professional musicians: what's the most important thing you learned in music school?

Unprompted, they answered almost unanimously: *how to practice.* 

Want to get better faster? Learn *how* to practice. These are the biggest levers you can pull:

## Effective Practice One: Narrowing

Practicing a whole song is a terrible way to practice. You're bound to make a mistake somewhere along the way and... Badasses don't practice making mistakes.

If you can't play the song you're working on perfectly, you're biting off too much. What's the most difficult part? Is it the verse, the chorus, the bridge, the solo? Ok, of that section, which line, measure, or handful of notes is giving you the most trouble?

Keep cutting the problem in half until you have something that you can get 95% mastered in this one practice session. Work on only that section until it's easy.

Then repeat the process to find your next bottleneck. It might feel tedious, but it is MASSIVELY more efficient.

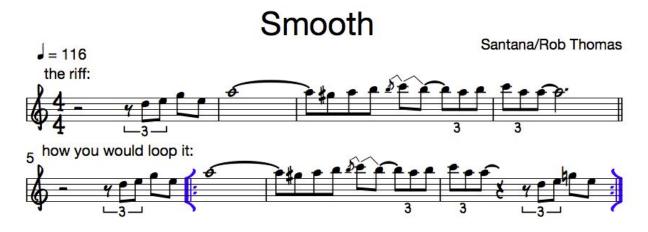
**Bonus:** Can you play it in isolation but you still mess it up in context? Go back and widen the chunk you practiced to include the notes or measures that lead up to it.

## Effective Practice Two: Looping

Ok, so you found the most difficult bit and you narrowed it down to something that you can master today... now what?

Loop it. Play it over and over, without stopping, to a click.

This requires some idea of how the phrase sits in the measure. Some easier things will be a measure (or less) long, but most of the time you'll need enough rhythmic awareness to know that (for example) the riff starts with the pickups "+4+", or that it ends on beat 1 and you need to wait for it to come around again.



not sure what this means? want to see it in action? video here.

## Effective Practice Three: Enjoying

The best musicians truly enjoy their practice time. They look forward to doing it each day.

If you want to be like them, figure out how to enjoy your practice. Apply the same creativity that you use in your music to your practice.

Run some experiments. Make some adjustments. <u>If you can't get</u> out of it, get into it.

Ask yourself: What would change what I *need* to do into what I *want* to do?

Maybe that's making a game of it, or competing with your friend, or subbing a drum machine for the metronome, or trying a different teacher's method. Only you can answer this.

But Josh! This is totally obvious! Give me something advanced!

Oh yeah? It's obvious?

Then let me ask you something: are you doing it?

The world is full of people who are stuck on things with obvious fixes they don't implement.

Uρ next: Theory ⇒

# SKILL THREE: Theory

For some reason, we guitarists have developed the notion that "music theory" is some crazy, byzantine system that's incredibly difficult to learn, but teaches us the "right" way to approach any musical situation.

Total nonsense.

Theory is just giving names to the commonly occurring things in music, so we can organize our thinking and communicate our ideas.

It's only difficult because we have unaddressed holes in our knowledge further upstream.

And even when we get a solid handle on it all, it still doesn't tell us what to play. All it can do is describe what other people have played before us, so we might stand atop their shoulders.

What's the 80/20 of music theory, and what order should we learn things in to avoid making life difficult for our future selves?

## Theory One: Note Names

We guitarists have internalized the fretboard as a series of coordinates, but music theory is about giving those coordinates names.

- 1. Start by finding the "natural notes" along one string.
- 2. Natural notes are the ones with no sharps or flats: A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
- 3. (The musical alphabet repeats after G.)

- 4. There's a one-fret distance between B & C and between E & F.
- 5. The rest are two frets apart.
- 6. It might take you a minute, but you can work your way up the string and through the musical alphabet.
- 7. Now put on this backing track in the key of C Major, and solo using those notes while saying their names out loud.
- 8. Go slowly. Use just one finger.
- 9. It should be fairly easy to do them ascending/alphabetically.
- 10. Descending/reverse alphabetically is a little trickier...
- 11. ...and randomly jumping between them is tricker still.
- 12. When random is no longer challenging, move on to the next string.
- 13. Repeat with all six strings.

Bonus: the notes you're avoiding—the ones with the sharps and flats—are called "accidentals." They have two names: a flat name, and a sharp name. Which name you use depends on the context. For example, the same note might be called D# or Eb depending on how it's being used. More on this in a minute.

## Theory Two: Pilotage & Dead Reckoning

These are terms borrowed from the world of navigation.

- → *Pilotage* is finding your way by knowing something's name.
- → Dead Reckoning is finding your way in relation to something else.

Most guitarists think about guitar exclusively with dead reckoning: "go up x strings from the floor, then go up y frets from the nut."

On its own, it's a terribly limiting system. But combined with your newfound note name knowledge? It's a terrific tool for filling in the holes in your understanding, and it works in both directions—using shapes to find names or using names to find shapes.

- → What's the name of the note on the 4th fret of the 1st string? Well, it's in between the G and the A, so depending on the context, it's either a G# or an Ab.
- → How do I play an Eb chord? Well, if I have a barre chord that I use for D or E, I can find Eb by putting that same shape on the frets between them.
- → What notes are in a D chord? I already know the shape of an open D chord, and I can use the note names to figure out that it's D, F#, and A.

As your knowledge grows, the usefulness of this navigational pairing expands.

**Bonus** — For an eye-opening romp through the powers of pilotage & dead reckoning as it relates to building chords, check out <u>Chords: A Family Tree</u>.

## Theory Three: Nashville Numbers

Music theory is about understanding & communication, and one of the most popular means to do both of those things is with "Nashville Numbers" or "Roman Numeral Analysis" or "Chord

Scale Degrees"—all names for putting numbers to chords based on their function.

You've already used this if you've ever referred to a blues as being "one four five" or heard a jazzer talk about "two five ones."

The numbers are written with roman numerals. You'll see them a few different ways, but I like to use lower case for minor chords and uppercase for major: I ii iii IV V vi vii°

Here's a chart with all the numbers in each key. I think you'll find it illuminating.

Some ways you might use this:

- → easily transpose a song,
- → arrange a second guitar part with a capo, or
- → explain chord changes without having to account for down tunings.

But most importantly, you can use it to begin seeing the common threads & underlying patterns that are in the music all around you.

Bonus: How To Figure Out The Key Of A Song

Uρ next: Ear Training ⇒

# SKILL FOUR: Ear Training

The internet has been a boon for guitarists. But it's also been a massive hindrance. How so?

Online guitar tab in particular has been a disaster for our collective ears. Whereas once we would listen to a song to figure out how to play it, now we use Google.

Professional badasses spend huge amounts of time and effort to get their ears dialed in, and that means you probably should too.

Let's get you started with this free tool for identifying intervals by ear.

The Zen Nippon School of Chick Sexing is one of my favorite educational institutions.



There's the fun name, of course, but their teaching method is what makes me such a fan.

But let's back up a minute. What the hell is chick sexing?



Chick sexing is the practice of determining a chicken's gender while it's still only a day or two old. Farmers are looking for the egg-laying hens, but at that point the hens and roosters look identical.

It would take you or me another six weeks before we could tell the chicken's gender, and when you're trying to raise hens to lay eggs, you don't want to spend your money feeding and housing roosters.

If you can tell the difference between hens and roosters early on, it'll save you a significant amount of money. So: chick sexers.

The chick sexer "reads" the chicken's butt by glancing at it for barely a second, and then proclaims it male or female.

Professional chick sexers have a 97% accuracy rate.

But if you asked a chick sexer to explain to you what it is that she saw that led her to believe that a particular chick was a rooster, she wouldn't be able to tell you.

Sexers arrive at that 97% success rate using only their intuition. Or perhaps phrased more scientifically:

They are using pattern recognition at a subconscious level.

Today we're going to start training you to do the same.

#### The ZNCS Method

In order to train this subconscious pattern recognition, a student works alongside a teacher. The student picks up a chick, looks at its butt, and ventures a guess.

"Male?"

"Nope, female."

They pick up another one.

"Female?"

"Correct."

Then they do it again. And again. And again. Thousands of times per day, for two years.

Whether the student is right or wrong, the teacher provides no additional information. There's no "look at how the bump in the vent is slightly larger, indicating a male."

There's only "correct" and "incorrect."

Constant testing combined with immediate feedback.

It's a technique at the heart of our Effortless Ear Training course.

We use intelligent flashcard software to continually test our ears. We start with just two intervals, and grow from there. With the intervals dialed in, we move on to chord progressions, chord qualities, and identifying intervals over chords. If you want to roll your own, <u>here's a spreadsheet with every note pairing, the answers for the flipside of the card, and which cards go into each deck</u>. Nothing about making these flashcard decks is difficult, but it is pretty time consuming.

If you want the first ten flashcard decks all done for you, <u>they're</u> yours for free with the <u>deluxe roadmap</u>.

## Setting Up Unit One of Effortless Ear Training:

- 1. Download Anki.
- 2. Make or download decks.
- 3. Open the first deck and select Tools > Study Options
- 4. "Max new per day" should be set to 30, maybe lower.
- 5. "Order" should be set to "Display in random order"
- 6. Set a DAILY recurring alarm in your phone for a time of day when you know you'll have 5 minutes to spare.
- 7. Headphones are a big help.
- 8. Try not to think about the answer, just make a guess—your brain will get good at this pretty quickly.
- 9. After a few days, the number of cards to review will slow to a trickle.
- 10.DO NOT CONTINUE ONTO THE NEXT DECK until your workload from all previous decks has dropped well below five minutes. We want this to be effortless, not a twenty minute slog that you'll abandon as soon as your life gets a little hectic.
- 11. This is doubly true once you get to Deck Six and Deck Ten—they're reviews of all the intervals you've learned so far, so they have a lot more cards. The first few days of those decks might take you ten full minutes.
- 12.To repeat: make sure the cards you need to review for decks 1-5 have slowed almost to a stop before you open 6; same for 1-9 before you open 10.

# SKILL FIVE: Playing The Changes

"It totally opened up the fretboard for me!"

"It was a complete game changer!"

These are things you hear guitarists say about learning modes.

But 99% of the time, what they're actually talking about is playing the changes—highlighting key notes from each passing chord.

And indeed, modes are one way to learn to play the changes.

Unfortunately, learning modes directly is boring, labor intensive, and frequently misleading. Fortunately for us, there's a better way to approach it, one that's easy, fun, and shows obvious benefits almost immediately.

Our goal here is to be able to find any chord (and its pleasant-sounding neighboring notes), anywhere on the neck, in real time, as the chords change. It's no small task, but none of the individual steps are difficult.

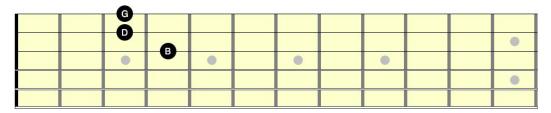
You can use this as a "push" system, where you systematically map out all the common chord movements in all the keys in all the positions across all the strings.

Or you can use this as a "pull" system, where you solve your most pressing problems: how do I solo over that G# chord in Santeria?

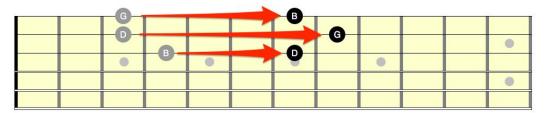
We'll "push" the chords in G major here, but you can use this same framework to solve your other problems as they arise.

# Phase One: Vertical Mapping

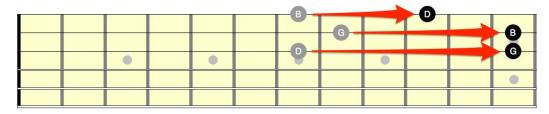
1. Start with the lowest occurrence of the I chord on strings 123. Let's use the key of G:



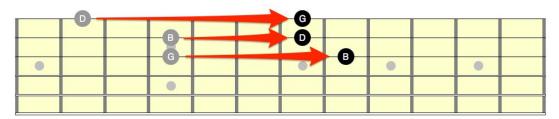
- 2. Now move each note up its string to the next occurrence of the chord tones.
- 3.  $G \longrightarrow B$ ,  $D \longrightarrow G$ ,  $B \longrightarrow D$



- 4. This is your second voicing of the G triad.
- 5. Repeat that process of moving each note up its string to the next chord tone.
- 6. B --> D, G --> B, D --> G



7. This is your third voicing of the G triad. The fourth one is exactly the same as the first voicing, only 12 frets higher.



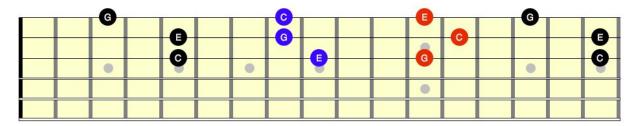
#### Phase Two: Triads In Time

- 1. Fire up this backing track.
- 2. Now practice playing them, switching between the voicings in time and musically.
- 3. So far, pretty boring.

## Phase Three: Common Changes

Here it gets a little more interesting.

- 1. Repeat step one with the IV chord (in the key of G it's C).
- 2. You'll find that the same three shapes get repeated in the same order.



- 3. Take a minute to play those voicings over <u>this C backing</u> track.
- 4. Now practice switching between G voicings and C voicings over <u>this backing track</u>.

Less boring, and super useful—now you know a bunch of ways to move between G and C.

## Phase Four: Meet The Neighbors

And now for something really interesting.

- 1. Put that backing track on again.
- 2. But this time, play individual notes from the chords.

- 3. This is "chord tone soloing," if only barely. We need more notes!
- 4. Which other notes work? Find out by trying.
- 5. Experiment with the notes one and two frets both up and down from each chord tone.
- 6. Some will sound cool. Some will be clunkers.
- 7. Some will only sound good in passing.
- 8. Pay attention to where they fall.

Instead of learning all the notes in a mode and then winnowing them down to the useful ones, we're starting with the guaranteed-to-work notes, and expanding outward. It's vastly easier, more useful, more malleable, and more musical.

## Phase Five: Take It For A Spin

Speaking of which, let's make some music.

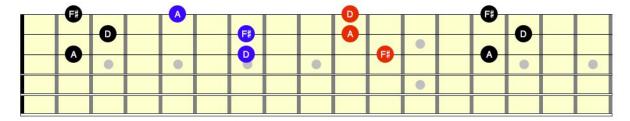
- 1. Put on <u>this backing track</u>, and take a solo on those three strings.
- 2. Pay attention to the chord tones.
- 3. Extra credit for moving decisively from one chord tone to another as the chords change.

#### Phase Six: Repeat On Other String Sets

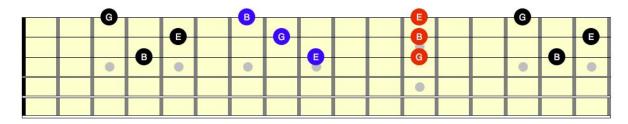
- 1. Repeat phases one through five on strings 234.
- 2. The second time through it should go much faster, because you're really only learning one new string.
- 3. After you take a solo with strings 234, take one with 1234.
- 4. Repeat phases one through five for strings 345 and 456.

## Phase Seven: Repeat With Other Chord Changes

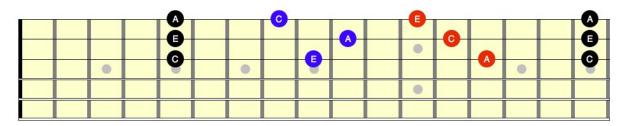
- 1. Now that you've made a detailed map of the fretboard for I-IV in G, add new chords.
- 2. Map V, then work through I-V and I-IV-I-V.



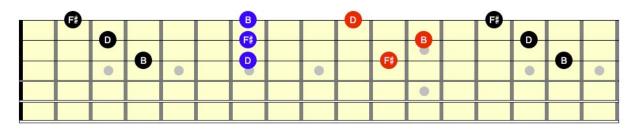
3. Map vi, then work through l-vi and l-V-vi-lV.



4. Map ii, then work through <u>I-ii</u> and <u>vi-ii-V-I</u>.



5. Map iii, then work through <u>I-iii</u> and <u>ii-iii-vi-V</u>.



(<u>Here's a Youtube playlist</u> of each of those backing tracks in order.)

(Want the ability to edit tempo, key, & genre? The iRealPro files are included with the deluxe upgrade, <u>available for free here</u>.)

## Phase Eight: Repeat In Other Keys

The temptation is to repeat phases one through seven for each successive key. Don't. Instead, do phase one with all 12 keys. Then do phase two with each key. Then phase three with each key. And so on.

This way is better training, much more useful, and will leave you better prepared when you (inevitably) get distracted midway through the process and abandon ship for awhile.

(This is massively easier with the <u>iRealPro app</u> and the playlist inside <u>the Deluxe edition</u>—one click and you're transposed to a new key. You'll also get tracks for "borrowed" chords.)

#### See, Visualize, Hear

As you work up your ability to play the changes, you'll peel through a few different layers. First you'll work on seeing the changes on the fretboard. Then you'll start visualizing them while your eyes are watching the chart. Later you'll begin orienting yourself with what your ear tells you is nearby. Then you'll start to anticipate the changes, leading the listener's ear along the progression.

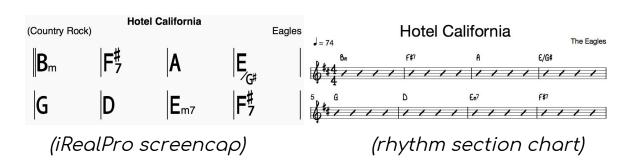
Bonus: You'll also start to notice some patterns emerge in the notes that connect chord tones. Just like there are only so many triad chord shapes, there are only so many scale shapes inside the major scale and its modes. Rather than study these as big, two-octave behemoths that you'll rarely use, practice them as three-string sets in one position, while playing over changes. I think you'll find them much, much easier to master and deploy in real-world situations.

# SKILL SIX: Reading Music

I know, I know: Reading music is scary!

But guess what? When you were playing the changes in the last section? You were reading music!

Most of the music that a working guitarist is called on to read is no more difficult than the chord change charts in those videos.



As for the rest of it, the little dots on the staff?

Well, let me start by acknowledging that reading music is legitimately more difficult for guitar than for most instruments. But it's not nearly as difficult as it's made out to be (and frequently less difficult than the torturous workarounds we develop to avoid notation).

Here's your plan of attack.

Phase One: Know Your Rhythms

Step One: Describe rhythms with beats.

- 1. Count along with songs. 90%+ of them are in 4/4, meaning four beats to the measure.
- 2. Practice counting "1234" as well the "and" on the upbeats—"1+2+3+4+".

3. Now practice identifying where specific hits and melodies land rhythmically. What's the rhythm of the first few notes of Yesterday? The first few notes of the solo in Hotel California? The pickups to Folsom Prison Blues?

Step Two: Learn to read basic rhythms.

There are only so many one-beat rhythmic chunks, and badasses train themselves to read them at a glance. Learn these, then combinations of them:

- → quarter
- → two eighths
- → four sixteenths
- → eighth and two sixteenths
- → two sixteenths and an eighth
- → sixteenth-eighth-sixteenth
- → dotted eighth and a sixteenth
- → eighth note triplets

Step Three: Read some basic charts.

For many tunes, the chart is no more complex than the ones you saw when you were playing the changes, only with rhythm slashes added. Play through a few of these. You'll find a bunch of them in my chart library, included with the deluxe edition.

Phase Two: Know The Notes Separately.

**Step Four:** Know all the notes on the fretboard by their names. Provided you worked through this guide in order, you already did this in the Theory section.

Step Five: Know all the notes on the staff by their names.

If you still have to work your way through Every Good Boy

Does Fine in order to figure out a note name, spend some time
with flashcards. There's a deck included with the deluxe edition.

Step Six: Know the key signatures.

You'll also need to know the key signatures at glance, so rock a flashcard deck for that too. (Included in <u>the deluxe edition</u>.)

Step Seven: Read in position.

The trouble with most of the Mel Bay/Hal Leonard method books is that they teach you to read open position first... but the ability to read open position doesn't translate well into most keys. That's why professionals usually read "in position," by which I mean "with the CAGED shapes."

This has the added benefit of laying nicely under your fingers with few position shifts, which allows you to keep your eyes on the page. Revisit the CAGED shapes if you're not already familiar with them. (No need to get too crazy with them though—you'll have plenty of practice in phase three.)

Phase Three: Binge Read

**Step Eight:** Read through each of these books, as quickly as possible.

Preferably in no more than three sittings for each one. Why? It just plain works better than the drip drip drip method.

- → <u>Music Reading For Guitar</u> David Oakes
- → Modern Method William Leavitt
- → The Higher Frets On All Strings Emile Schole

Step Nine: Get real.

Pick a chart from my library and try to read it while playing along with the recording in real time. Repeat this with a new chart each day.

(Access to my chart library? Included with <u>Deluxe</u>.)

Congrats, you're a reader now. Don't let it get stale! Keep reading.

Uρ next: Repertoire ⇒

# SKILL SEVEN: Repertoire

I always joke that no matter how many songs I learn, I still need to learn 200 more. For some reason, no one outside of the jazz community talks about this.

But every badass professional I've ever met knows a *ton* of songs.

And they really really know them, so they're totally unfazed when someone calls *Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic* in some weird key, or asks the guitarist to pick up the horn lines of *You Are The Best Thing*, or calls *Down On The Corner* with a second line groove.

So what tunes should you learn?

Start with your most likely gigging scenario.

- → Are you playing solo acoustic in a fancy restaurant?
- → Playing in a high energy bar band?
- → Heading to a jazz jam session?
- → Hanging out with horn players?
- → Working a wedding?

Pick the one that best describes you, and start learning the repertoire. When you have enough to take a gig, go play it.

Know what you're going to find? That a bunch of *other* tunes get called. That people will request songs you don't know. That there's a song you know where most bands skip the studio ending in favor of one from some obscure live recording you've never heard of.

When that happens, take notes! I tape an old business card to my guitar (blank side up) and write down the requests people have.

#### Solos & Duos

Here are the 75 songs we play most often at our duo gig.

#### Bar Bands

The most popular party band in Chicago plays <u>these 85 songs</u> the most.

## Jobbing Bands

Wedding bands pretty much always have their repertoire online.

#### Jazzers

The University of Oregon has <u>a nice list of jazz tunes</u>, further divvied up by waltz/Latin/rhythm changes, etc.

Again, there are "push" systems (preempively learn someone else's list of tunes), and there are "pull" systems (learn songs for a gig or because you're getting requests for them).

Uρ next: Transcribing ⇒

# SKILL EIGHT: Transcribing

I've listed Transcribing last, but really it spans most of this list.

- → Transcribing begins with **theory**, when you see how a progression fits into nashville numbers and gets transposed.
- → It definitely involves **ear training** so you can hear clearly.
- → Once you're comfortable playing the changes, you should be listening to what *other* people have played over those changes (and begin incorporating that into your vocabulary).
- → If you're truly do the "scribing" part of transcribing, you're working on the flip side of reading—writing it down.
- → And of course, the best way to build your **repertoire** is to transcribe tunes by ear.

The reason I saved it for last is that it's easy to miss the most beneficial aspects.

Transcribing isn't just learning to play something by ear, it's also:

- → paying attention to the context: what chord is under this cool lick?
- → analyzing using intervals: how are the notes related to the chord?
- → writing it out: doing so helps cement it in your mind & strengthens your reading skills.
- → transposing: can you find it in all 12 keys?
- → transforming: adapting a few notes to reflect the intervals of a slightly different chord underneath.

→ playing the changes: you don't really know it until you can bust it out at tempo in any key.

## A few pointers:

Start with the most lyrical players in your favorite genre.

Eric Clapton, John Mayer & Warren Haynes. Wes Montgomery, & Joe Pass & Herb Ellis. Vince Gill, Brent Mason, & James Burton. You can work your way up to the crazy stuff a little later.

Get the tools & learn how to use them.

Everyone I know uses Transcribe. It's not super pretty, but it works great. It has some non-obvious tools under the hood that make it a real joy to use—<u>here's a video showing my favorite</u>
Transcribe tricks.

I use Sibelius to write things out, but it's damned expensive. There are cheaper stripped-down versions of both Sibelius and Finale. Some folks like GuitarPro 7 and I dig its guitar-centric sounds & workflow, but I understand it's not super stable. These Moleskines are great (& cheap) too.

#### Get yourself some speakers or over-ear headphones.

Even cheap ones are better than trying to infer the bass note from the tiny little speaker in your laptop or earbuds.

#### Keep a list of what you'll transcribe next.

Transcribing should be a regular part of your journey. It gets a helluva lot easier the more you do it. Stack the deck in your favor by keeping a list of solos, licks, & progressions that grabbed your attention.

Start small (but consistent).

"Transcribe a George Benson solo" is a massive undertaking. "Transcribe two bars today" is much more achievable, not to mention sustainable over time. Talent compounds.

# Some Parting Thoughts

A dozen years ago, when I was making the switch from bartender to professional musician, I would've loved to have had a detailed list like this.

It would've saved me years of frustration and wandering down dead-end paths.

So here they are, the biggest areas of focus that've allowed me to build a career in music. I hope you try them, and use them, and tinker with them, and improve them, and argue about them.

I'm not the final authority on this. I'm no guru. I'm a person just like you, who's trying to figure out how to get better and better.

I'd love to hear how this helped you, and how it could be better.

You can email me anytime at josh@fretboardanatomy.com

And if you did find this helpful, I'd love it if you told some other people. Email, Twitter, Facebook, in person, whatever.

Don't forget to <u>claim your upgrades</u>.

If you want a more comprehensive take on all this, delivered in bite-sized daily doses, <u>check out my courses</u>. If this guide is a roadmap, the courses are turn-by-turn GPS.

See you out there,

#### Josh