

~ Practicing – Part 6 ~

Have you ever struggled with learning to play something on guitar? Have you practiced something over and over only to end up frustrated by your lack of progress?

I think that just about every guitar player (including myself in the past) has been in this situation at one point or another.

If you also answered yes, then the following several innovative practice strategies will help you overcome such challenges.

On the surface, the strategies I'm about to describe may seem counterintuitive, but they do work, and work very well if you apply them.

As you expand your arsenal of "problem solving" tools, your practicing will become much more effective, which will in turn enable you to spend more time enjoying your playing!

Purposely insert mistakes

Yes, you read correctly...I want you to practice MAKING MISTAKES while playing! You may be wondering how this can possibly help you play better and more accurately.

The answer is that by purposely playing with **specific** mistakes, you learn to hear and detect them much easier and you are forcing yourself to listen to your playing much more closely.

What is a "specific" mistake? Here is one scenario. Let's say that you are trying to make your sweep picking cleaner. This means you must somehow make sure that every note within the arpeggios you are practicing is heard clearly.

One way you can ensure that this actually happens, is by purposely making specific notes of the arpeggio sloppy, followed by immediately playing them cleanly again.

Let's imagine that you are practicing to clean up the hammer ons and pull offs that occur at the bottom and at the top of the arpeggio respectively.

What you can do is first play through the arpeggios purposely making these hammer ons and pull offs EXTRA sloppy, in order to train your ears to identify the sound you DO NOT want to hear. Next, apply other practice

approaches that you know to actually make this part your arpeggio playing cleaner.

At this point, you are training your hands to achieve the sound that you DO want to hear.

But by practicing the two extremes (playing sloppily/with mistakes AND cleanly), you develop much greater control over your technique and teach yourself to play consistently well because of it.

Here is an audio example of how the practicing process described above might sound. You can hear an arpeggio where the hammer ons and pull offs are done sloppily on purpose:

[Hear it](#)

and here is the same arpeggio played correctly

[Hear it](#)

Note: obviously, you shouldn't practice in this way for hours every day. You can use these ideas for 10-15% of your technique related practice time.

As mentioned above, these ideas are meant to enhance your arsenal of "practicing problem solving tools" that you can use when struggling with improving your playing in a certain area.

Increase the difficulty

When faced with a challenging phrase or passage on guitar, find ways to make whatever problem you are working on EVEN MORE challenging.

For example, when playing something that is difficult for your fretting hand (such as a lick that requires wide stretches), combine that with using all upstrokes with your pick and/or slide the lick down the neck to play with even wider stretches.

By purposely making the playing more difficult for yourself (while practicing), when you go back to your normal playing, the original challenge will feel much easier to overcome (or may disappear completely).

Another idea is to play all of your 3 note per string scales using fingers 2 3 and 4 (do not use the index finger). This will dramatically improve your

coordination and stamina in these weaker fingers and will make regular playing much faster and more effortless.

These ideas are not meant to be the only solutions to all guitar playing problems, but they will help you when used in combination with the tools strategies and tactics that you already know.

By making each minute of your practicing maximally effective in improving your guitar skills, you will get to the point of needing very little overall practice time to overcome problems in your playing.

And the less time you need to spend practicing in order to improve as a player, the more time you will have left each day to enjoy making music!

This lesson does NOT go into the [Practice Generator](#). Study it away from the guitar and use the ideas in it to make faster progress with everything you practice.