

Posture and hand positioning

Although this is a fairly simple subject, beginners often times overlook the importance of posture and hand positioning. Incorrect posture or hand positioning can limit hand movement and cause back and/or hand fatigue. So, let's break it down into two subjects:

Posture- Whether you are in the sitting or standing position, posture is the foundation for accessing the notes on your fret board correctly and limiting strain. When standing, make sure that your guitar is high enough to allow your picking and fretting hands to access the entire guitar with ease. If you are unable to do this, there's a good chance that your guitar strap is set to low. Does it look cool to wear your guitar way down low? Of course it does! Does it look goofy to wear it super high? Yup! But there is a happy medium. Your goal should be to make good music and good posture is a cornerstone.

When sitting, make sure that you are sitting up and not slouching back. You can do this later when you learn proper technique but in the beginning it will seriously limit your hand movement. Classical guitar players will typically prop their left foot up on a footstool, and place the guitar on their left leg which allows the guitar to sit at about a 45° angle which feels very much like the same position that your guitar would be in if you were standing and your guitar strap was at the proper length. Folk and rock guitar players often times rest their guitar on their right leg. This puts the guitar at more of a 90° angle. This is the most common way to hold the guitar when sitting down and with a little time can be mastered. The guitar is not as stable in this position as it is in the classical position, but is more comfortable over longer periods of time. I use both positions but typically only use the classical position when playing classical guitar. For me personally, I use the rock/folk position about 99% of the time.

Hand positioning- This is also a cornerstone to playing. Improper technique for beginners can limit and frustrate them. The fretting hand thumb should be placed on the back of the neck and not hanging over the top of the neck. Later as your technique gets more refined you can "cheat" a bit by hanging your thumb on the back of the neck, but trust me when I say, "don't do it now." There's a tendency to do this because the arm can get heavy just hanging it out there playing for longer periods of time. Just be cool, don't hang your thumb at first.

As far as the picking hand, if you are using a pick, place the pick between the thumb and first finger with a relaxed feel. You will have more control over the pick and will limit hand fatigue. Unless you are purposely playing up strums or up picks for a specific reason or song, work on picking everything with down strokes. I see a lot of beginners picking up instead of picking down. This is a weaker sound and a habit that you don't want to get into.