

# Practice Tips for Guitarists

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## *Tunes*

1. Learn to sing the melody. Learn at least some (one “A” section and the bridge) of the lyrics. Better to learn all of the lyrics.
2. Be sure you can play at least a simple (4 to the bar) rhythm guitar part. Practice singing the melody while you do this. Don’t go on until this is easy.
3. Play the melody. Pay attention to which scale degrees the melody notes are.
4. Embellish the melody rhythmically. Make sure it swings.
5. Add some simple melodic embellishments (chromatic approaches, passing tones). If you’re doing things that don’t sound good, then you’re doing too much. Keep it simple.
6. Determine what scales sound good over each chord in the tune (there are several methods which can work for this). Be sure that you can play all of the scales you need in at least one position (i.e. all scales in the same position) on the guitar.
7. Play each chord (or have someone else play them) and hear how the scale fits the chord.
8. Play choruses of eighth notes, very slowly, over the changes. Don’t use any rests or repeated notes. Use some sort of play along (you can make your own), especially if you can not hear the changes in your imagination. This will help you to “smooth out” the problem spots. Gradually speed up the tempo.
9. Choose a different position and repeat steps 5-7. Connect adjacent positions together until eventually, you can navigate easily around the neck, playing inside the changes.

Additional suggestions to make your playing more interesting and musical and/or to improve your overall musicianship:

- Limit yourself to only chord tones for a while.
- Target the third (or fifth, or whatever) of each chord.
- Take a simple melodic pattern and play it over the tune, changing notes as needed.
- In contrast to #7 above, play choruses with a lot of space (rests and long notes).
- Play the melody in all keys. If you were really hearing those scale degrees (see #3), this won’t be that difficult. You might be surprised at how few accidentals most standard tunes have in the melody.
- Analyze the changes to the tune to help you hear where the tune is going (for example, the bridge goes to the key of IV). Then improvise on the tune in different keys.