A black silhouette of a person from the back, holding an acoustic guitar in their right hand and a medical bag with a white cross on it in their left hand. The text 'THE GUITAR DOCTOR' is written in white, uppercase, sans-serif font across the person's back.

THE
GUITAR
DOCTOR

35 Quick Tips to Fix
Your Bad Habits,
Heal Your
Technique, and
Transform Your
Playing

DAN THORPE

The Guitar Doctor

35 Quick Tips to Fix Your Bad Habits, Heal Your Technique, and Transform Your Playing

Dan Thorpe

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More Resources

[Access and Download Your eBooks](#)—Don't forget you can also get my free eBook... *The Super Mini Songbook* teaching you three wonderful songs in ways you've likely not learnt before. That eBook makes for a great companion to this guide and will help you if you find typical strumming songs to be boring or hard—that book will give you loads of fun!

[Dan Thorpe's Backstage Area](#)—To get more help from Dan, you can check out his “Backstage” resources page where you will find a series of free, inexpensive, and premium lessons from Dan... All of which will take what you learn in this guide and help you make even bigger progress on the guitar!

[Join Me on Social Media](#)—Every day I share highly motivating tips, videos, and mini lessons that will help you get the most out of this eBook and your playing!

...And don't forget to check your [email inbox](#) for highly motivating, inspiring emails from me. All of my emails tie in nicely with this guide, so don't miss out on them!

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THE GUITAR DOCTOR IS IN TOWN!

Welcome. I'm Dan Thorpe, and my approach to teaching guitar is far from the ordinary.

I specialise in teaching adult guitarists, usually aged 40+ (with one remarkable 92-year-old student). Many of these students have suffered from issues such as painful playing and arthritis.

Like me, most of my students tend to love the “Golden” era of music—folk, fingerpicking, blues, and the timeless works of Eric Clapton, Paul Simon, Mark Knopfler, Jimi Hendrix, Tommy Emmanuel, B. B. King, Chet Atkins, and more... along with the occasional more modern song or two thrown in.

If your fingers are sore when you play, you've ever wished for a surgical procedure where you could get longer, thinner fingers, or you struggle to make your songs sound like actual songs... **you're in the right place.**

This guide will be like a health check-up, helping you avoid the chronic issues most guitarists struggle with. Firstly though, if you do find playing guitar to be physically tough, chances are...

It's Probably Not Your Fault!

Most guitar teachers are usually good at teaching songs and helping those who can already play, but they rarely ever teach basic technique.

That just leads to years of **bad habits, sore fingers, and painful playing.** The more painful your fingers are when you play, the more you may strain them, and that can mean an increase in the chances of osteoarthritis.

This is a serious deal and **something ALL guitarists need to watch out for**—no matter what your age or where you are on your journey.

Most teachers struggle to help with these issues and just because someone has played a few gigs and can show you how to play “Hotel California”, that does NOT make them qualified to teach guitar to beginners. I hate to be critical but most guitar advice on technique is so weak it’s almost like being given a spoonful of honey when...

... Your Arm Is Falling Off!

Let me ask, when was the last time anyone ever asked you about your technique? Probably never, if at all. Well, one of the areas I specialise in is “Core Fundamental Technique”.

It all started years ago with a new student called Mike. He came into my studio almost with tears in his eyes, such was his frustration with the guitar. That is until we stripped back his playing to the core and focused on rebuilding his technique with good habits. Within weeks, he was a transformed player. He joked I was like a “guitar doctor” fixing his musical ailments.

Hence, the “Guitar Doctor” was born.

Since then, I’ve refined my methods time and again. If you follow the advice in this book, you too can transform your technique—but you have to follow what I am going to tell you. 10,000s of other students around the world have tried my methods and just like them, you too can have...

Far More Joy from the Guitar Than Ever Before

Some of the things you will learn in this guide include...

How to end the “Death Grip”, how to sit with the guitar, how to control your fingers (rather than letting them control you), and so much more. Read on for your prescription to fix some of the most glaring issues beginners face and let’s improve your “Core Fundamental Technique”.

Remember, this is the gateway to playing with ease, elegance, and, most importantly, enjoyment. Music and the guitar when played beautifully are like medicine for the soul.

All of these tips work alongside each other, but pick ONE tip to apply today!

“Blues Breaker”

Here is a fun piece of music I like to teach to all beginners.

Below you will see a little blues riff you can learn that I call the “Blues Breaker”. You’ve probably heard it many times before in many different songs. We will use this riff as a practice piece so you have something to apply the tips from this guide to. You can, of course, use any piece of music to apply the tips to, but this is a good one to begin with.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the "Blues Breaker" riff. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a guitar TAB staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system shows a sequence of notes: G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), B3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), and G3 (quarter). The second system shows a sequence of notes: G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), B3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), and G3 (quarter). The TAB staff for both systems shows the following fret numbers: 0, 4, 2, 4, 5, 4, 2, 4. The notation includes repeat signs at the beginning and end of each system.

Listen to how it should sound on the download page [HERE](#).

Okay, now then, let’s begin with the 35 tips from the “Medical School of Rock”.

#1—End the Curse of the “Death Grip”

Most guitarists play using way too much pressure... especially with the fretting hand.

This leads to sore fingers, sluggish transitions, and slow chord changes. Doing this will affect everything you play negatively. Playing with too much pressure can even increase the chances of getting osteoarthritis due to repeated minor strains. (If it doesn't affect your fingers now, it will later on).

Pressing too hard is bad, but it's also a hard habit to get out of.

Do your utmost to NEVER play using the “Death Grip” ever again.

It's like a heart attack waiting to happen, but instead of your heart giving out, it'll be your fingers!

#2—Use “Minimum Pressure Required”

One simple way to end the “Death Grip” is to ensure you use “Minimum Pressure Required”. This is where you fret each note with only enough pressure to make the note ring clear. To do this:

- **Choose any string and fret to play**—e.g. fret 5 of the high E string.
- **Get your finger close to the fret wire**—adjust the amount of pressure you use until you find...
- **The “sweet spot”**—this is the point where you use just enough pressure, but the note rings clear.

Pick one note and one finger and try this for a few minutes right now.

Those are doctor's orders!

#3—Pay Attention to the Non-Playing Fingers

Watch your fretting hand... A mistake many make is that they let their fingers “fly” out and away from the fretboard like a trapeze artist.

Look at the image here of what not to do.

- **See how far the index finger is moving away from the strings**—if this is the first time you’ve ever thought about this, you are not alone.
- **Relax the non-playing fingers**—keep them close to the fretboard, and you’ll be able to use them more easily when needed.



Apply this tip to the Blues Breaker riff from earlier on.

#4—Don’t Press Too Hard With the Thumb

If your fretting hand’s thumb aches, pay close attention to this tip:

- **Your thumb is a stabiliser**—The fretting hand’s thumb is only really there to help stabilise the hand and give the fingers something to push off.
- **Don’t let it ache**—If the muscle that connects the thumb to your hand aches, you are pressing too hard. Play any simple piece of music right now and check to see if your thumb aches!

This little test is kind of like the guitar-playing equivalent of going to the doctor’s, opening your mouth, and saying “aaahhhh”. Like the other tips in this book, this one is essential to follow if you struggle with soreness or arthritis in your hands and fingers.

Remember, you’re NOT trying to break a walnut with your fretting hand!

#5—Ignore the Callus Myth!

One piece of silly advice I still hear all the time is when one guitarist says to another:

“Don’t worry, your fingers will toughen up, you’ll get calluses soon”.

That’s silly advice. Remember the foolish Dr Nick from The Simpsons? He gives out terrible advice like that which nearly kills his patients! **The fact is, you don’t need calluses.** You only need calluses if you use too much pressure (or are playing a badly set-up guitar).

My fingers are as soft as butter. Why? That’s because I play with such a light touch. I do not need big crusty, sore calluses on my fingers, and neither do you.

#6—Try Out Ten Different Guitars

Think of your guitar as an extension of you. **It has to suit you and your arms, hands, and fingers.** Don’t settle for any old hand-me-down guitar and don’t waste much time researching guitars on the internet.

If you are not perfectly happy with your guitar, **go to a shop and try out five guitars** (ideally ten) and you’ll find one that suits you. We are all unique with different-sized hands and fingers. Tell them the guitar doctor sent you!

#7—Choose the Seat You Sit on Carefully

The first thing to think about after buying your guitar is **how you sit with it.** Many people sit on the sofa or computer chairs (or bizarrely, I even taught someone once who used a camping chair!).

If that is the case, I’m sorry, **my diagnosis is bad!** Kidding, instead there’s a simple remedy that can improve your guitar “health” almost instantly...

Sit upright on a comfortable padded chair which doesn’t have armrests! It’s simple, but believe me, this makes a difference!

#8—Use a Capo to Improve Buzzing Chords

If your chords buzz, it could be your guitar is not set up properly... but it may be that your fingers just don't stretch enough yet to play the chords smoothly.

If that is the case, try this:

- **Place a capo on a fret such as fret 7**—and play the chord shape (let's say Am).
- **Less stretching means better chords**—the further up the fretboard you go (e.g. from fret 0 to fret 7) the closer the frets are, meaning less of a stretch.

The capo can be like an essential first aid kit for your guitar-playing well-being. Use it where needed!

#9—Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

Playing in front of a mirror can be powerful. Not only will you admire how cool you look with the guitar in hand... but it's useful in many ways.

Seeing your hands in the mirror means you'll be less likely to feel the urge to lean over your guitar to see the fretboard... And you'll get to check on your technique (almost like you're your own guitar teacher!).

If you have your own practice room or practice space, I urge you to put up a decent-sized mirror! It might be a pain to do, but it's worth it.

#10—Embrace the Classical Position

The classical position is one of the most powerful cures for many guitar-playing ailments.

If you've played for a while in a non-classical position, the classical position can take some getting used to (but it is well worth it).

The classical position can **reduce wrist strain**, improve tone, prevent neck strain (of your actual neck, not the guitar's neck), and give you more fluidity when playing.

Take a look at the photo below. In this position, it's key to keep the headstock of the guitar at least shoulder-level high. Just be aware, you'll need a footstool or leg support to get this position to work.



#11—Breathe Deeply as You Play

Relaxation is key. I'm not about to go all “zen” on you, but trust me, it matters. I've seen many frustrated students enter my teaching studio. One played with so much tension it looked like he was turning the colour of an Oompa Loompa!

- **Relaxes the body AND the mind**—this allows you to move your fingers with more freedom and accuracy.
- **A breathing tip**—Let your belly expand as you breathe deeply while playing. Inhale calmness, exhale tension.

Play any piece of music such as the “Blues Breaker” riff from earlier on in this guide and apply this tip to it.

#12—Warm Up!

For me, there's nothing worse than my cold, stiff fingers touching cold strings! Just like it's essential to warm up before you exercise, you should warm up before you play guitar.

I don't mean do star jumps (although that could be fun!), but physically warm up your hands and fingers before picking up the guitar—it's especially important on a cold day and especially important if arthritis is a concern for you.

Rub the fingers, get them warm, and gently stretch them.

It will get you in the mood to practise and get the fingers ready for their playing workout!

#13—Fretting Hand “Bunch”

I rarely ever see mention of this, but it's essential to properly separate your fretting hand fingers.

Try to separate the fingers from each other at the point where the fingers meet the hand.

If you don't, your fingers may look like they are “collapsing” into each other. That is no good if you want to develop finger independence.

See this image here and notice how, uh oh... the pinkie is collapsing into the ring finger! Relax the fingers, shake off tension and avoid this issue!



#14—Ignore the Heavy String Gauge B.S.

Many people preach that you should play “heavy” gauge strings, as they give you a better tone.

I’ve never bought into that. I’ve found for both myself and my students that playing lighter strings often allows for playing with better technique and more comfort...

... And that **helps us play to a higher standard**. That is far more useful than a tiny tonal advantage heavier strings can give you. If you can’t be relaxed when you play because you hate the feel of the strings, your playing will suffer for it!

Before you ask... For acoustics, my favourite string gauge is .11 (currently using D’Addario ‘Silk and Steel’ strings)... And on the electric, I like .12 (using Rotosound strings). The key is to use a string gauge that can help you unlock as much of your playing potential as possible!

#15—The Tortoise and the Hare

This is obvious advice, but for some, it takes a LOT of focus to follow. **You must slow down when you practise.** Every time you play something, you are building up muscle memory so you are best off practising with accuracy!

The key to that is slowing everything down to a tortoise pace.

Lots of repetition, steady practice with good technique, and focus. Those are the secrets to playing smoothly and precisely! We all know the story of the tortoise and the hare.

Remember who won. Keep it slow and steady.

#16—“X-Ray Scanning”

To help you relax more when you play, try this:

- **X-ray**—Imagine you have a machine that is scanning your body up and down for tension.
- **Stop!**—Take a random moment to stop playing, like right in the middle of a song, and scan your body for tension.
- **Check for tension**—Pay attention to the shoulders, belly, neck, and even your feet. Tension in these places translates to trouble in your arms and fingers.

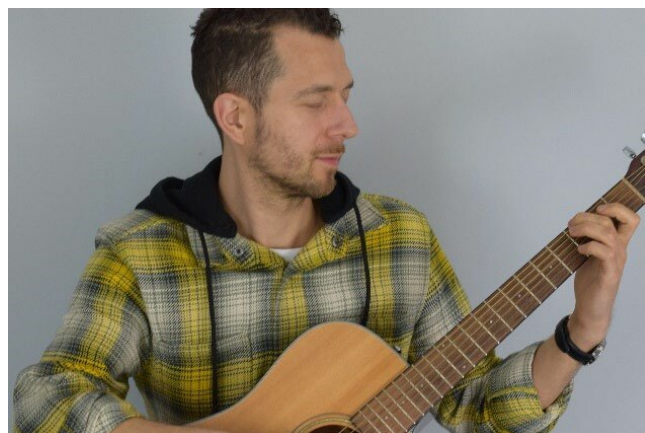
If a part of your body is tense, give it a gentle wiggle and relax. Don't underestimate the importance of this for your playing and your overall enjoyment!

#17—Avoid “Uncle Fester” Shoulders

Ever seen *The Addams Family*? Well, Uncle Fester certainly has a unique look about him. I'm not sure if he has no neck or his shoulders are so hunched up it appears he has no neck.

... But either way, lots of guitarists play like this with their shoulders raised with **massive amounts of tension**. It seems like a day at the chiropractor's is in order for some! What's the remedy to fix this? Wiggle your shoulders to relax them. Shake off tension.

See the images below. On the left is me playing with super hunched-up Uncle Fester-like shoulders! On the right, I'm far more relaxed. Which is better, do you think?



#18—Strap Up!

Like most guitarists, you probably mostly play sitting down.... And when you sit with the guitar, **I recommend you use a strap.**

Get used to playing in a position that feels comfortable (see Tip #10) and when you do, add in a strap. A strap will help secure the guitar in a more solid position.

There is nothing worse than the guitar bouncing around when you play like you're on a tractor ride!

Keep a close eye on this—if the guitar is moving around, secure it!

#19—The “No Thumb” Test!

Here's a fun test...

Occasionally, try to play a simple passage of music without the fretting hand's thumb touching the back of the guitar's neck.

Take the thumb off and let it float!

Obviously, this is just a test and you should play with your thumb touching in usual circumstances... but this is a good little test to highlight that the thumb doesn't need to be pressing much at all during normal playing.

You can try this test on any simple piece of music—the “Blues Breaker” riff from earlier on is a good example to apply this tip to.

Remember, the thumb is just there to give the finger something to push against. Don't overuse it!

#20—Be Aware of Your Wrist Position

So many guitarists bend their fretting hand's wrist waaaaay too much.

This can cause all sorts of issues for the tendons and joints. **Your fretting hand arm is like the spine of your guitar. Don't bend it too much!**

A very slight natural bend at the wrist is okay, but no more than that.

Remember, all the tips in this book work with each other.

For instance, you should try to keep your shoulders relaxed when playing. This allows your elbow to move forward, and this means you can straighten your wrist a little. It's not always easy to spot these issues in your playing. If that is the case, video recording yourself playing is super handy.

If you want more help from me, with direct feedback on fixing these issues, you might like to check out my academy [HERE](#).

The bottom line is this... Don't strain your wrist. You don't want an emergency room visit!

#21—Avoid “Head Jerking”

If you constantly look back and forth at both your fretting hand and picking hand when you play, your playing will suffer!

Watching people play guitar often reminds me of fans in the audience at Wimbledon quickly jerking their heads left and right to watch the play during a fascinating rally!

Avoid that and try this instead:

- **Choose a simple piece of music**—e.g. an easy riff, scale, or melody.
- **Fretting hand**—play it while only looking at the fretting hand.
- **Picking hand**—play it again while only looking at the picking hand.
- **Eyes closed**—finally, close your eyes and play it again.

Of course, this takes time to get good at, but a solid week of applying this tip to the “Blues Breaker” riff, as taught at the beginning of this guide, can go a long way to solving your musicality issues. Stick with it! Most people aren’t even aware they do this and if so, the next tip can help...

#22—Accurate Picking and the “Magnetic Hand”

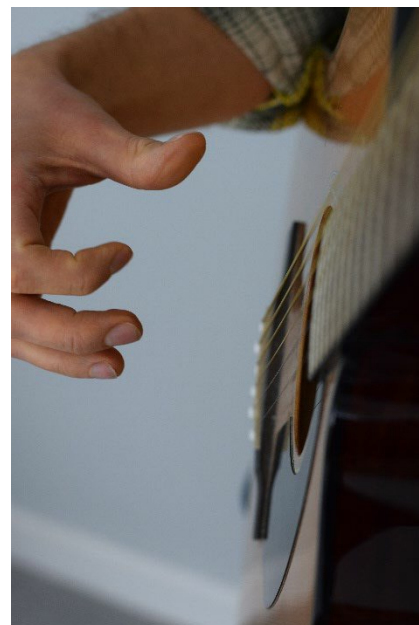
If you pluck the wrong strings a lot when picking, pay attention. A common issue is that you could be...

Letting your picking hand drift too far away from the strings. Avoid that.

After you pluck a note, keep the picking hand close to the strings.

Imagine there is a magnet both in your hands and in the strings. Because of the imaginary magnet, your hand cannot move more than one inch away.

See the two images below. The image to the right shows me purposely letting my hand drift too far from the strings. The image to the left shows my hand nice and close to the strings after plucking. Keep this tip in mind when playing anything!



#23—A “Pre” Chord Changing Tip

A lot of people ask me how to change chords quickly.

Well, I have a course dedicated to chord changes—the topic is that important. Before you think about chord changes though...

You really want to make sure you get in the habit of placing all your fingers on a chord at the same time.

Many people are never told this, but trying to improve chord changes without being able to land your fingers at the same time is like sticking on a plaster (or a “band-aid”) for a bleeding wound!

#24—Don’t Hold the Weight of the Neck

Avoid letting your fretting hand bear the weight of the guitar. This can severely hinder your movements. The “Neck Test” is a good way of checking this, and here’s how it works:

- **Get in your playing position**—let go of the neck of the guitar with the fretting hand.
- **If the neck of the guitar drops, you need to adjust something**—usually, it’s your posture that has to change or you may need to use a strap to help secure the guitar. (I recommend this anyway).

Remember, your guitar needs to be secure. If not, you will be eternally forced to hold the weight of the guitar with your fretting hand!

#25—Pinkie First Rule

If you find that you struggle to stretch and reach for notes higher up the fretboard (especially when playing scales or melodies), you are not alone.

Try this:

- **Avoid the “index first” mistake**—most people place their index finger on the fretboard first. This often gets the hand in a poor position, making reaching with the ring and pinkie fingers trickier.
- **“Pinkie first”**—instead, place your fretting hand’s pinkie finger on the fretboard first. This gets the palm of the hand facing the ceiling more, which is a better position for using all four fingers.

See the image on the left below. It shows the hand in a bad position, where the pinkie is too far from the strings. In the image on the right, the hand is in a better position, the pinkie is much closer to the strings and therefore is ready to be used.



P.S. Want to improve the pinkie itself faster? Use it more. It’s that simple. **Spend some time each day playing ONE thing using only the pinkie finger.** I.e. see if you can play a riff or scale using only this finger. Just like any muscle in the body, the more you use it, the better it will get!

#26—The “Bindex” Exercise

The “Bindex” exercise is a powerful dexterity builder. This is how it works:

- **Fret any chord while excluding the index finger**—e.g. if you play a chord such as Em or Am, you will use only your middle, ring, and pinkie fingers.
- **Keep your index finger relaxed**—don’t let tension in your hands build up.

This is a simple, potent, and uncomplicated way of improving dexterity that is far more effective than all those complex routines I see all over the internet.

You can make this exercise as tricky as you like by practising it with tougher chords such as C and D. By the way, this exercise also helps to lay a good foundation for mastering barre chords later on.



#27—“Swing” the Elbow

Do you keep your fretting hand’s elbow rigid when playing? If so, read on...

- A **“locked” elbow means trouble**—if your fretting hand’s elbow is locked in position, you’ll struggle to adjust your hand, and therefore the fingers.
- **Undue tension**—this can restrict you from getting into an optimal position and, in turn, this means potential strain and pain on the wrist and fingers.
- **The solution**—let the elbow move freely and keep it relaxed as you play. I call this “Swinging the elbow”.

Of course, this takes experimentation, but try it today.

Remember, you are not playing guitar with your arm in a cast! Let your arm and elbow move with more freedom!

#28—Simple Fingerpicking Fun!

Fingerpicking the open strings can be lots of fun.

Let's take this simple fingerpicking pattern (which I call the "Outwards" pattern).

Play this pattern over and over 10x in a row.

Make sure each pluck is bright, clear, and you get a strong tone. Once you do get a good tone, you can start to have fun by changing the note on the high E string to create some melodies as shown in the notation below.

Note: You can practise this pattern using a pick too. In fact, I urge you to get good at playing this, with both your fingers and a pick.

Practise this often with all the picking hand fingers to make it a good habit. Of course, there are a lot of other things that come into play when fingerpicking. For more help with that, you can check out my book, [*Fingerstyle 101*](#).

#29—“Reverse” Barre Chords

My diagnosis of why people struggle with barre chords is nearly always because of... BAD technique. Well, here’s an unusual and quick tip if you want to improve your barre chords:

- **Choose one barre chord shape**—place your non-barre fingers on the fretboard (for now, leave your barre finger OFF).
- **Ensure each note is clear**—then gradually add your barre finger to the chord (while not letting the other fingers move).

I call this “Reverse” barre chords and it’s the opposite of how most people practise barre chords, but it can be very effective.

#30—Transforming the Deadly “Spider” Exercise

The “Spider” exercise (I call it the “Walking” exercise) is great BUT it is taught so badly! Most people will tell you to do this exercise in one big chunk! Do not do that. Instead, break it down into very small chunks like this:

- **Use one pair of fingers on one string at a time**—e.g. start by using just the index and middle fingers on one string (starting on the high E string can be easier than the low E string).
- **Keep in mind ALL the other advice in this guide when practising it**—e.g. breathe, use “Minimum Pressure”, don’t look back and forth at each hand, don’t press too hard with the thumb, etc.

Practised the right way, this exercise can be very powerful. Practised the wrong way, this exercise is deadly, and can cause terrible habits!

The image shows musical notation for the 'Spider' exercise. It consists of a treble clef staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation shows a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F#6, G6, A6, B6, C7. Below the staff is a guitar tablature with three lines labeled T, A, and B. The tablature shows fingerings for strings T, A, and B across three measures. The first measure shows fingerings 5-6-7-8 on strings T, A, and B. The second measure shows fingerings 5-6-7-8 on strings T, A, and B. The third measure shows fingerings 5-6-7-8 on strings T, A, and B.

#31—Anger Management

Have you ever seen the video of the “World’s Angriest Guitarist”? It’s hilarious (and a little sad too).

It features a gentleman who tries to play a song but gets so, so mad, that he smashes his guitar into bits. Anger means a lack of focus and that means it’s next to impossible to focus on technique.

See this image here. This is a gentleman who ended up in the *Acoustic Asylum* (which, by the way, is my tongue-in-cheek comic book influenced podcast where I share many tips about winning at the game of guitar.) You can check out and listen to the *Acoustic Asylum* [HERE](#).



#32—Get a Proper Setup!

Nut adjustments, string height, saddle corrections... All these things might sound confusing, but they are essential for a guitar with good playability.

Just as orthopaedic adjustments can help ensure your body moves smoothly, adjusting the nut and saddle on your guitar ensures the strings move freely, **minimising friction and maximising playability**. Put it this way, a badly set-up guitar will cause unnecessary frustration, which will negatively impact your playing.

Find a luthier to help you set up your guitar if you can, ask an experienced technician (guitar store assistants can be “hit or miss”) or you can, of course, learn this skill yourself!

#33—Hollywood, Baby!

Many people HATE the idea of recording themselves playing. It's annoying to hear the mistakes when you play back a video, but it's worth it. Regularly recording your playing will help you improve faster.

- **Get your smartphone**—put it on a simple tripod (which you can get from Amazon) or use a cheap spring-loaded capo, place your phone in it and film yourself playing.
- **Watch it back**—study the recordings and try to see if you're making any of the mistakes mentioned in this guide.



#34—Visualise

I'm a big fan of visualisation and I find it can even help with technique.

Here's how it worked for me as I started getting better at playing guitar:

I'd often lie in bed at night thinking of playing guitar. (I was a little obsessed). I'd run through the movements of the songs I was learning, visualising myself playing each note **effortlessly and smoothly**.

I believe this helped me massively—and it had the added benefit of helping me remember more of what I was learning, which in turn allowed me to focus more on accuracy and technique too.

Visualising alone won't do much, but added to regular focused practice, it can be a great additional tool for your playing. **I highly recommend it.**

#35—Be Kind to Yourself

If you make regular mistakes, don't beat yourself up.

That'll only increase your chances of frustration and hating the guitar, so don't let the guitar get you feeling blue.

You don't want to take your guitar to therapy!

I've met and spoken with so many people who are happy, confident, and joyous folk...

...But when it comes to learning the guitar, all sorts of demons come out!

I know the guitar can be a really tough instrument to learn... but remember, it's often not your fault.

Sure, you are responsible for your own actions, but most tuition is terrible... And as we've discussed in this guide...

Terrible tuition leads to terrible technique.

So, I urge you to try these powerful tips today, and every single day you play.

Each tip will help with your technique, allowing you to play with more musicality and enjoyment, and in turn, that will make you a happier and more successful guitarist.

Do you see how everything works together?

So remember, try to laugh off mistakes, accept that they happen, and importantly, get to work on fixing them! Be like a doctor yourself and diagnose the root cause of your mistakes!

Above all, be kind to yourself when you practise!

For a 7-day prescription to put all 35 tips together, let's head to the next page.

THE GUITAR DOCTOR'S 7-DAY PRESCRIPTION!

Before we wrap it up, I want to give you a 7-day plan of how to put all this into action.

In this guide, we've covered 35 mini lessons which feature the things I've been reminding students of lately and will continue to do so forever! I've also given you a fun little riff to apply the tips to (the "Blues Breaker" riff).

If you find guitar playing tough in any way, and if you have played for months, years or even decades, then... Go through the tips and spend time fixing these issues.

Your playing will absolutely improve for it. Here's a simple plan for how to do this:

- **Day 1: Core Technique** (Tips 1-5): Focus on ending the "Death Grip", paying attention to your non-playing fingers, and your fretting hand's thumb.
- **Day 2: Alternative Remedies** (Tips 6-10) Explore key things rarely mentioned, such as the power of capos, the "Classical" position, the seat you sit on, and more.
- **Day 3: Relaxation!** (Tips 11-15) Dive into the world of warm-ups, the power of breathing, and why slowing down is key!
- **Day 4: Be Your Own Doctor!** (16-20) How subtle changes can yield big gains, e.g. the "No Thumb" test, your shoulder position, "X-ray scanning", and more.
- **Day 5: Key Fixes!** (Tips 21-25) Be aware of "head jerking", how to improve the pinkie, the "Magnetic Hand", and more.
- **Day 6: Fun Techniques** (Tips 26-30) Indulge in the brilliant "Bindex" exercise, finger-picking fun, "Reverse" barre chords, and more.
- **Day 7: Good Mental Health!** (Tips 31-35) Use visualisation, avoid frustration by playing a well set-up guitar, and be kind to yourself!

If you are in any doubt whatsoever, or you are lacking time, simply...

Pick One Tip to Apply Today and Keep Coming Back to This Guide

All 35 tips are useful, but some will be more useful for you than others (depending on what you are struggling with right now)...

... But I urge you to keep using this guide as a checklist to remind you of the things you should and shouldn't be doing on the guitar! The above plan provides a structured approach to cover all 35 tips in a week, with each day focusing on a specific aspect of guitar playing.

You might feel like there is a lot to improve, and if so, that is okay. I would like you to...

Treat today as a new start for your guitar playing!

All the knowledge you have acquired since you started playing will always be useful, but this guide is about unlocking your potential so you can use all that knowledge and play to a higher standard!

Once you build up good technique, you'll be flying!

There's more to improving on the guitar than just Technique BUT this is the starting point.

To be the best guitarist you can be, try to think about what I call the "5Gs" of guitar playing:

- **Technique (which we have covered in this guide)**
- **Repertoire**
- **Musicality**
- **Motivation**
- **Plan**

Focusing on the above five things is what I've found to be essential for my students over the years. There's a lot of fluff in the guitar world, but everything useful can be boiled down into one of the "5Gs".

If you want a clear and concise system for putting all this together, then you might like to check out the *Dan Thorpe Acoustic Academy*. It covers everything you need to know about becoming the best guitarist you can be and you can...

[Find Out More About the Dan Thorpe Acoustic Academy](#)

I hope you enjoyed this guide and thank you for reading.

Good luck and best of guitar-playing health to you!

For now, the doctor is out.

Dan Thorpe

P.S. If you enjoyed this guide, please share the link below with your guitar-playing friends or others who you think would benefit from it—**[Dan Thorpe's Free eBooks](#)**