

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO CLASSICAL GUITAR LESSONS FOR CHILDREN

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Children and Classical Guitar Lessons

Master teacher [Tom Poore](#) provides an overview for parents considering classical guitar lessons for their child:

Always remember that, for young children, the main goal is to have them enjoy the lessons and home sessions. Young children quickly lose interest in anything they don't enjoy. And bear in mind that children usually don't know what goes into learning an instrument, so they may have unrealistic expectations. Also, remember that children learn in their own way and time. What looks like goofing off to an adult is often just how children learn. So be patient.

Remember that how you approach guitar lessons will go a long way to making them successful. If your child's guitar lessons seem important to you, then they'll be important to your child. So, you need to commit to regular lessons and regular practice sessions at home. These home sessions needn't be long—in the beginning, about ten or fifteen minutes a day is just fine for most young children. An ideal attitude is to see lessons and home practice as a special time with your child, a chance to help your child grow in accomplishment and self-confidence. If you can bring an attitude of support and enthusiasm for the guitar, then your child is more likely to respond well.

Teaching classical guitar to children requires a different approach than teaching adults. It requires more emphasis on engagement, fun, and adapting to shorter attention spans.

How old does my child need to be to start classical guitar lessons?

Is my child ready for classical guitar lessons?

"Is my child ready for classical guitar lessons?" This is the most common question from parents of young children (4-7 years). Master teacher [Tom Poore](#) explains that it varies enormously from child to child. But you might consider the following questions to be a rough guide in making your decision:

- Does my child interact well with other adults?
- Can my child focus on a task for more than a few minutes at a time?
- Does my child react well to new things?

Poore goes on to explain, "If your child is under eight, be aware that you or some other trusted adult must work with your child both during lessons and at home. Young children can't be expected to handle music lessons and home practice time on their own. So early on, an adult will need to sit in during lessons, quietly taking notes, and will also need to supervise your child's practice sessions at home."

Kale Good of the [Good Music Academy](#) says that "most teachers start classical guitar lessons for children at age 5. Some well-trained and experienced teachers will teach children as young as 3. Regardless of what age your child begins at, it is essential to remember that children develop at different rates. Students who appear to be slow learners often rocket through later material. This is more and more important to remember the younger your child starts."

How long and how often should my child practice classical guitar?

The length of a practice session depends greatly on your child's age and experience. A general rule of thumb is that practice should be 2-4x your child's age. However, one of the most important things about practice is that *quality is better than quantity*.

Practice must be *at least five days a week* to make steady progress. Skipping days is very detrimental.

Classical Guitars for Children: Sizes

Beware of overly cheap guitars. It might seem a good idea to buy an inexpensive guitar for a child to see if they will stick with it before purchasing a better guitar. However, cheap guitars are little more than toys and will ruin your child's interest in playing the guitar.

Finding a guitar that is the right size and scale length for a child is challenging but essential. The child is growing and may be on the line between two guitar-size brackets. They will require a new guitar for each growth stage. Do not buy a guitar that is too large for the child, thinking, “They will grow into it.” Yes, they will, but in the meantime, they will become discouraged because the guitar will be too difficult to play. They also may injure their hand playing a guitar that is too large for them.

This chart is from playableguitar.com

Nylon String Guitar Sizes Guide Chart					
General Rough Guidelines	Kids age 3-5 Useful travel guitars with some limitations due to scale size	Kids age 6-8 Useful travel guitars with some limitations due to scale size	Kids age 8-10 Adults with small size hands and bodies Useful travel guitars	Kids age 10-12 Adults and kids with smaller size hands and bodies	Kids age 11-12 Upwards and adults
GUITAR SIZES	1/4	1/2	3/4	7/8	4/4 "Full Size"
Player Height *Approx	90cm – 110cm *2ft 11in – 3ft 7in	110cm – 130cm 3ft 7in – 4ft 3in	130cm – 140cm 4ft 3in – 4t 7in	140cm – 153cm 4ft 7in – 5ft	Above 153cm Above *5ft
Scale length	440mm - 486mm 17in - 19 1/8in	521mm - 578mm 20 1/2in - 23 3/4in	572mm - 591mm 22 1/2in - 23 1/4in	610mm - 619mm 24in - 24 3/8in	630mm - 664mm 24 3/4in - 26in
Overall Length	733mm - 800mm 28 7/8in - 31 1/2in	838mm - 860mm 33in – 33 7/8in	895mm – 922mm 35 1/4in – 36 1/4in	933mm – 940mm 36 3/4in – 37in	965mm – 1016mm 38in – 40in
Hand Length	100mm -122mm 4in – 5in	122mm – 144mm 5in – 5 11/16in	144mm 156mm 5 11/16in - 6in	156mm – 169mm 6in – 6 5/8in	Above 170mm Above 6 5/8in
Hand Span	N/A	N/A	N/A	Below 170mm Below 7 1/2in	Above 170mm Above 7 1/2in

Most guitar sizing charts for kids are age-based recommendations such as the one above. However, age isn't always the best determinant of what size guitar will fit your child. **Your child's size** best determines what size guitar fits your child!

[See this webpage from the Good Music Academy](#) to calculate the proper size guitar for your child.

What are Suzuki Classical Guitar Lessons for Children?

By [Kenji Haba](#) | Mar 16, 2024

[The Suzuki Method](#), developed by Shinichi Suzuki, is a renowned approach to music education that emphasizes learning music in a similar manner to language acquisition. When it comes to guitar lessons, the Suzuki Method offers a unique and effective way for children to learn to play the guitar. As a parent interested in exploring the Suzuki Method for your child's guitar education, there are several key aspects to consider.

Understanding the Suzuki Method for Classical Guitar Lessons for Children

[The Suzuki Method for Guitar](#) is based on the idea that every child can learn to play music. This approach is built on the belief that musical ability can be developed in all children, much like language skills. In Suzuki guitar lessons, children are exposed to music at an early age, creating an environment that fosters musical learning. The method focuses on ear training, listening, and repetition, allowing children to develop their musical abilities naturally.

Parental Involvement in Suzuki Classical Guitar Lessons for Children

One of the hallmarks of the Suzuki Method is the active involvement of parents in their child's music education. Parents play a crucial role as "home teachers," providing support, guidance, and encouragement as their child learns to play the guitar. This involvement creates a strong bond between the parent, child, and teacher, fostering a positive learning environment.

Starting Suzuki Classical Guitar Lessons at a Young Age

The Suzuki Method is best suited for children who start their musical education at a young age. By introducing children to music early, the Suzuki Method capitalizes on the natural ability of young children to absorb information and develop skills. Through consistent practice and exposure to music, children can progress rapidly in their musical abilities.

Repertoire and Learning by Ear

In [Suzuki guitar lessons](#), students learn to play by ear before they learn to read music. The repertoire consists of carefully selected pieces that gradually increase in difficulty, allowing students to build their skills progressively. Students develop a strong foundation in technique and musicality by learning through imitation and repetition.

Benefits of Suzuki Classical Guitar Lessons for Children

The Suzuki Method offers numerous benefits for children learning to play the guitar. It cultivates a love for music, develops listening skills, fosters discipline and perseverance, and nurtures confidence and self-

expression. Additionally, the Suzuki Method creates a supportive community of students, parents, and teachers, providing a rich and fulfilling musical experience for children and their families.

Finding a Qualified Suzuki Classical Guitar Teacher for a Child

When considering Suzuki guitar lessons for your child, finding a qualified Suzuki guitar teacher is essential. A certified Suzuki teacher has the training and expertise to effectively implement the Suzuki Method, ensuring your child receives the best possible musical education.

The Suzuki Method for Guitar Lessons offers a holistic and effective approach to music education for children. By immersing children in a nurturing musical environment, actively involving parents in the learning process, and emphasizing listening and repetition, the Suzuki Method cultivates musical ability and a lifelong love for music. If you are considering Suzuki guitar lessons for your child, it's important to explore the method further and find a qualified Suzuki teacher to guide them on their musical journey.

Remember, the Suzuki Method is not just about learning to play the guitar; it's about instilling a love for music and nurturing the development of well-rounded individuals through music education.

The Disadvantages of the Suzuki Classical Guitar Method for Children

Bryce Leader, the developer of the ["Copy, Play & Learn"](#) system of guitar instruction for children, explains:

The Suzuki method guitar books are a series of brilliantly graded and sequential pieces, each building on the last. Once the student gains some momentum, progress can be swift. The method makes use of many pieces of the classical guitar repertoire.

The question arises: do you have to completely embrace the Suzuki teaching philosophy and methodology to benefit from the method books? According to Bryce Leader, you don't.

The Suzuki method is aimed at young children and has produced many fine young musicians. Typically, they come from families whose parents have high expectations and a strong work ethic.

The philosophy of the method is that children learn to acquire music skills the same way as they acquire language skills. A child learns to speak only after being immersed in the sounds and rhythms of the "mother tongue" and will talk only after having heard its words spoken perhaps hundreds of times. So, this leads to the next question: how do you create an environment where the child is immersed in the music that they are to learn?

The recordings accompanying the method books are to be continually played in the car and at home. At least one parent is to accompany the child to their lesson and learn alongside the child, or if not, take notes. The

parent must establish a practice routine and ensure the child plays the pieces per their teacher's directions. The parent becomes the "at-home tutor," and practicing becomes part of the family routine and as natural as any other family activity.

Some teachers find the Suzuki philosophy and methodology of instruction too involved for most average young children and their parents, especially children whose parents don't have the time or inclination to act as tutors.

But what about the child whose environment is not that favorable, whose parents can't attend lessons, or who would prefer to send their child to soccer on a Saturday morning than sit through another group lesson or ensemble rehearsal? Some teachers find the Suzuki philosophy and methodology of instruction too involved for most average young children and their parents, especially children whose parents don't have the time or inclination to act as tutors.

Can a young child learn to play an instrument whose parents don't want a Suzuki-flavored home? Absolutely. Many parents of young students are happy to have their child taught guitar but keep their involvement to a minimum. Although, as any music teacher will tell you, parental involvement and enthusiasm can have a considerable bearing on the child's progress.

FOR TEACHERS:

Here are some important items to consider when teaching a child the classical guitar:

1. Finding a quality guitar that is the right size and scale length for a child is challenging but essential. Smaller guitars or fractional sizes (1/4, 1/2, 3/4, 7/8) are a must.
 - Beware of overly cheap guitars. It might seem a good idea to buy an inexpensive guitar for a child to see if they will stick with it before purchasing a better guitar. However, cheap guitars are little more than toys and will ruin your child's interest in playing the guitar.
 - Adjust the guitar support or footstool to help them hold the guitar comfortably.
2. Create a Fun and Engaging Environment:

- Use colorful materials and visual aids to make learning more appealing.
- Incorporate games and activities that reinforce musical concepts.
- Adapt your teaching style to the child's age and developmental stage.

3. Use metaphors and storytelling:

- Make abstract concepts more concrete and understandable.
- Encourage children to participate, ask questions, and explore the instrument.
- Tell Stories: Explain musical concepts with stories or characters to make them more relatable and engaging.

4. Basic Introduction:

- Introduce the parts of the guitar in a simple, engaging way.
- Use stories or analogies to explain how the guitar works.

5. Focus on proper technique from the start:

- Emphasize correct posture and hand position.
- Right Hand: Start with simple plucking exercises using open strings. Use fun finger names (e.g., thumb as "Tommy Thumb").
- Left Hand: Teach basic finger placement with simple exercises. Use stickers or markers to help them remember finger positions.

6. Incorporate ear training:

- Use singing and listening games to develop a musical ear.
- Teach simple songs by ear before introducing notation.

7. Simple Songs and Melodies:

- Teach simple versions of songs the child knows and likes. Begin with easy, familiar tunes like “Mary Had a Little Lamb” or “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”
- Use songs that they can sing along to, which helps with rhythm and memory.
- Gradually introduce classical pieces as skills develop.

8. Incorporate Movement and Rhythm:

- Use clapping and tapping exercises to teach rhythm.
- Encourage them to move to the beat or use percussion instruments to develop a sense of timing.

9. Use simplified notation:

- Start with tablature or a color-coded system before introducing standard notation.
- Gradually introduce standard notation as the child progresses.

10. Short, Focused Lessons:

- Keep lessons short (15-30 minutes) to match their attention span.
- Break down lessons into small, manageable segments with frequent breaks.

11. Positive Reinforcement:

- Celebrate small achievements with stickers, certificates, or verbal praise.
- Encourage them to show their progress to family members.

12. Interactive Learning:

- Use apps or online games designed for music education to reinforce concepts.
- Encourage them to watch videos of child guitarists to inspire them.
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13. Encourage regular practice:

- Create a practice chart with stickers or other incentives.
- Involve parents in supporting daily practice routines.

14. Be patient and positive:

- Maintain a positive, encouraging attitude.
- Understand that progress may be slower than with adult students.

15. Parental Involvement:

- Encourage parents to show interest in the child's musical development.
- Involve parents in the learning process. Provide them with simple exercises to practice with their child at home.
- Encourage parents to create a supportive practice environment.

- Keep parents informed about progress and practice expectations.

16. Performance Opportunities:

- Organize small informal recitals or performances for stuffed animals, performances for immediate family, performances for household guests and extended family, studio recitals (aka teacher recitals), and performances outside of the home & studio to boost their confidence and motivation.
- Encourage participation in group classes or ensembles for social learning. Group classes with mixed ability levels can motivate the youngest kids. Attending other student recitals is also motivational. As your child ages, taking them to see professional guitarists can be a big motivator.

17. Adapt to Individual Needs:

- Be flexible and adapt your teaching style to suit the child's learning pace and interests.
- Use a variety of teaching methods to cater to different learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic).

Remember, every child learns differently, so be prepared to adapt your teaching style to suit individual needs and learning paces. The key is to keep lessons engaging, fun, and rewarding while building a solid classical guitar technique foundation.

Age Groups and Approaches to Learn the Classical Guitar

1. Preschoolers (3-5 years): Focus on exploration and play-based learning. Use simple, child-friendly instruments like ukuleles or ¼-size guitars.

2. Early Elementary (6-8 years): Introduce basic guitar concepts, such as holding the instrument, strumming, and playing simple melodies.
3. Older Elementary (9-11 years): Develop finger independence, introduce basic chords, and explore simple classical guitar repertoire.
4. Pre-Teen (12-13 years): Refine technique, introduce more complex chords, and explore classical guitar styles.

SUMMARY

1. Purchase a classical guitar that is the correct size for the child.
2. Start with a basic introduction to the guitar, using engaging methods like stories and analogies.
3. Emphasize proper technique from the beginning, focusing on correct posture and hand positions.
4. Incorporate ear training through singing and listening games.
5. Begin with simple, familiar songs before gradually introducing classical pieces.
6. Use movement and rhythm exercises to develop timing and musicality.
7. Learn by ear first, then introduce simplified notation systems before moving to standard notation.
8. Keep lessons short (15-30 minutes) and break them into manageable segments.
9. Use positive reinforcement to encourage progress.

10. Provide performance opportunities to boost confidence and motivation.
11. Consider group classes or ensembles for social learning.
12. The Suzuki teaching method is excellent but requires significant parental involvement.