

HOW TO SING AND PLAY THE GUITAR

(at the same time)

INTRODUCTION

In this guide I am going to walk you through some of the most effective strategies for singing and playing the guitar at the same time.

When I first started playing the guitar, I just assumed that singing would come naturally. I guess for some people it does. But for a lot of us (most of us) it takes quite a bit of effort.

There is just so much happening at once: play the right chord, strum the right pattern, sing the right lyrics.... and it all needs to sound good!

So, after teaching for many years and running into many students who struggled with this, I've whittled it down to **ten strategies** that will help. I'll share **five** of the quickest and easiest to implement in this guide.

It will take some time. It will take some patience.

But it can be done.

Even if you have no sense of rhythm, no experience, and are just starting out.... you can do this.

As always, send me a personal once you've implemented the strategies you're about to learn. I want to hear how they worked for you and to tell your story to the rest of our community.

- Jake

**#1
PICK
ONE SONG**

I know you want to learn every song in the world, but that's a quick way to fail.

You'll end up getting overwhelmed and - best case scenario - you *kind of* learn a few songs... but none of them really well. So here's what you do:

Pick *one* song and learn the *hell* out of it.

That's it.

Find a song that you enjoy singing and that you know really well. It's also helpful to pick a song that lends itself to guitar. Rock, pop, blues, folk are usually good genres to start with. Rap and hip-hop can be tough.

I know, I know. This sounds kind of obvious once you think about it. But guess what?

You aren't going to listen to me.

Most people don't. Sometimes I don't even take my own advice when it comes to this.

For example:

When I'm ready to learn a new song I get super excited. I go online and find the chords in the song. I start to play it. Maybe I get the first verse and chorus down. At this point I'm pretty happy with myself. "*After all,*" I say to myself, "*the rest of the song is pretty much the same... I've totally got this down.*"

And then I move to the next song..... without really getting this song down.

Fast forward a few weeks and someone asks me to play this song.

You know how it goes?

Yeah. Awful.

Same thing used to happen with my students. They start to learn a new song, get distracted, and end up spinning their wheels and wasting time.

We don't do that anymore.

You're not going to do that anymore.

Pick one song. Learn the hell out of it. Then move on.

That's how it works.

Bonus tip: When choosing a song to learn, if the singer *also* plays guitar, you're on the right track.

#2

MEMORIZE

THE CHORDS

This strategy is an easy one (and hopefully one that you've been working on already).

Once you've chosen your song, it's time to learn the chords. And I don't mean just learn them... I mean **memorize** them.

Practice each chord by itself. If you're using a chord diagram/ chart to learn new chords, that's great - but don't let it be a crutch for you. As soon as you can, stop using the chord diagrams and rely on your memory.

After enough repetition, you will start to develop muscle memory in your fingers. At this point you won't have to think about where your fingers go.

Practice the chords without looking at your hands.

You should be able to literally play these chords with your eyes closed.

Bonus tip: There are so many resources that you can use to find the chords to your song.

Here are some of my favorites:

ultimateguitar.com / [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) / [Songsterr](https://www.songsterr.com) / [Chordify](https://www.chordify.com)

#3

STOP

COUNTING

Here's where it starts to get tricky.

When we're first learning to play the guitar, we often count the number of strums or beats per chord.

For example:

Let's say a song has the following chord progression:

G / D / Em / C

Let's say each chord gets four beats (or strums). If we're learning to play rhythm guitar, it's easy to count to 4 every time we change chords. It helps us know when to switch.

This method is easy and straightforward. It keeps us in time, focused, and lets us know when the chord change is coming.

There is a problem with this method though:

You can't count and sing at the same time.

Try this: Count backwards from 500 in your head. At the same time, say the alphabet over and over.

It's incredibly difficult, if not impossible. Our brains can't handle doing both of these things at the same time. For the same reason, **it's impossible to count your strums while singing at the same time.**

So if we can't count the number of strums per chord, what do we do?

The answer:

Strum with the lyrics of the song

This is where it starts to get difficult. Instead of counting strums, we need to listen to the lyrics of the song.

At certain words in your song, there will be a chord change. Use these words as an indicator or a prompt for you to make the chord change.

It's going to be tough at first.

When I'm teaching or learning a new song, it helps to have the chords written directly above the lyrics of the song. (*Most of the time, these are easily found online at the resources listed in tip #2*).

Sometimes I will highlight or circle the lyric and the chord on the page where the chord change occurs. For example:

Take me to **G** **Mardi** Gras
Just to see the **D** **lovel**ight in your **Bm** **eyes**

This gives me a nice visual cue so I know when the chord change is coming.

Bonus tip: Start with just one strum per chord. Don't worry about fancy strumming patterns yet. Just strum once per chord to get used to the changes.

#4

**DON'T STOP
STRUMMING**

Once you're comfortable with strumming each chord once (see *tip #3*), it's time to add additional strums.

But remember: We're not counting our beats/strums. So what do we do?

Answer:

Don't Stop Strumming... Ever.

This may be the most difficult piece of the puzzle. But it's also the key to playing and singing at the same time (and actually sounding good).

Here's what you do:

1. Find the first chord of your song.
2. Start strumming a steady beat (NO COUNTING).
3. When it's time to change to the next chord, keep strumming. Do not stop. Even if you fumble with the chord. Do not stop strumming.

To be clear:

There should be no gap, break, or hesitation between strums.

I don't care if you completely miss a chord change.

I don't care if you play the wrong chord.

All I care about is a constant and steady strum.

Constant strumming is difficult.

It goes against our natural tendencies.

But it's what **every singer must do**.

Here's why constant strumming is so important:

1. It subconsciously forces your hand to make the chord changes faster. In other words, if you stop strumming, you're giving yourself as much time as you need to change chords, which will not help you change chords faster.
2. It actually sounds better. You're going to mess up. Everyone does. But the difference between a good guitar player and a bad one: The good one will keep going even **as they're making the mistake**. A bad player will stop.

Added bonus: It will help you keep the correct tempo. Think of your strumming arm as a metronome, or a drummer. It should consistently move to the beat of the song regardless of what is happening with your other hand.

Bonus tip: Start with just down strum, nothing fancy yet.

READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

All of these tips will help you on your way to becoming a better guitar player and ultimately make it easier to play and sing.

It's hard work... I know. But it's absolutely worth it to be able to pick up a guitar and **easily and effortlessly play and sing your favorite songs.**

Practicing these tips will take time and work but the payoff is so much fun and so satisfying.

However, if you want to speed up the process and:

- **Learn *all* of the techniques and skill-sets that I teach to my private students**
- **Watch video demonstrations of everything you just read**
- **Get bonus strategies about how to implement *strumming patterns, flourishes, and riffs* (which will make you sound even better)**

Join us for our next Strumming and Singing guitar course.

Give me one month and I will get you strumming and singing along with your favorite songs.

We'll be opening the doors to the **Strumming & Singing** course soon. If you want us to notify you when it opens, join the waiting list below.

READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP TO BECOMING A BETTER GUITAR PLAYER?



I'll be opening the doors to the **Strumming & Singing** course soon. If you want me to notify you when it opens, join the waiting list below.

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