Workshop: Learn Guitar from Scratch

Tune, Chords, Changes, Time, Song, Barre

Bonus material for uniquestoremarket.com's "How to Learn Guitar from Scratch" guide. A facilitator script for a live practice-coaching session: a coach, teacher or friend guides a beginner (or a small group) through the guide's six chapters, using the guide's own micro-starts and exercises with a guitar in hand.

Session objective

By the end of this session, each participant leaves with: (1) a tuned guitar and a clean fretted note, (2) Em, C and G checked string by string, (3) a logged one-minute change count, (4) a first metronome strum and a recorded clip, and (5) a written verse and chorus plus a plan for the next month.

Format and length

75–90 minutes. Works 1-on-1 or with up to 4 beginners, each with a guitar. Needs: a chair without arms for each person, a clip-on tuner or phone app, a metronome app, a phone to record on, and paper and a pen. Participants pick a three-chord song beforehand if they can; otherwise use the guide's example: verse Em–C–G–G, chorus C–G–Em–Em.

Agenda

1. Ch. 1 — tune, hold, one clean note (12 min)

Everyone tunes with the tuner; the strings are E-A-D-G-B-E from thickest to thinnest. Seated, guitar on the thigh, neck angled slightly up, hold it for two minutes (the micro-start). Then the worked example: ring finger on the third fret of the thickest string, fingertip just behind the fret wire, thumb on the back of the neck. Pick once. Buzz: slide a millimetre closer to the fret and press slightly harder. Thud: curl the finger until only the tip touches. Repeat on a few more strings.

2. Ch. 2 — Em, C and G, string by string (15 min)

Start with the micro-start: Em, two fingers on the second fret of the A and D strings, one slow strum. Then C: ring finger third fret of the A string, middle finger second fret of the D string, index first fret of the B string. Walk through the guide's diagnosis: pick each string, find a dead G string, curl the index so only its tip presses, move the wrist a centimetre forward, pick again. Then G. Everyone checks each chord string by string before strumming.

3. Ch. 3 — the one-minute change drill (15 min)

Teach the rule: all fingers leave the fretboard together and land together, as one shape. Practise Em to C silently first: form, lift, reform, no strumming. Then set a one-minute timer and count clean Em to C changes; each person writes their number down. Do silent practice for 3 minutes, then count again and compare. Explain that the guide logs this daily and that landing as one snap is what is being practised, not speed.

4. Ch. 4 — metronome and the strumming hand (15 min)

Metronome at 60 bpm: one downstroke on every click on Em for one minute. Then show the wrist (not the elbow) and the hand that keeps moving down-up, even on beats that miss the strings. Metronome at 70: down-down-up-up-down-up on Em for four bars, then C for four, then G. Record 30 seconds on a phone and listen back together to find where the tempo drifted, usually the bar just before a change.

5. Ch. 5 — a song, learned backwards (12 min)

Each person writes the chord sequence on paper for one verse and the chorus. Use the guide's example: verse Em–C–G–G, chorus C–G–Em–Em. Identify the hardest moment (the chorus's C to G landing on beat one) and loop those two bars at 60 bpm, aiming for twenty times. Then play verse plus chorus once, slowly, with the one absolute rule: mistakes are allowed, stopping is not.

6. Ch. 6 — meet the F barre and plan (8 min)

Do the micro-start: index flat across all six strings at the first fret, strum, and expect it to buzz — that is normal. Show the three adjustments: roll the index onto its bony outside edge, place it close to the fret, and pull the neck gently back with the arm instead of squeezing with the thumb. Mention the four-string fallback. Then each person writes their next month's plan: one new song a week, plus the daily change drill.

7. Close and take-home (5 min)

Each person reads out their one-minute count from step 3 and the first thing they will practise tomorrow. Remind them of the guide's point: the numbers, not the feeling, tell you whether you're improving, so write them down every day.

Facilitator notes

- Dead strings: the guide traces almost every one to a finger lying flat against a neighbour. Make participants pick each string individually and name the finger responsible before they strum anything.
- Do not let anyone place fingers one at a time on a change. The guide says it caps speed permanently; slow right down until all fingers land together.
- Rushing is the universal failure in Ch. 4. If the recording shows drift, drop the tempo ten bpm and rebuild five at a time rather than pushing through.
- Do not let a participant pick a song containing a chord they can't play yet; the guide calls that the most common way beginners stall at Ch. 5.
- Make no promises about outcomes. The guide says nobody gets a clean six-string F in five days; the aim here is practice habits and numbers, not a finished result.

Full guide: uniquestoremarket.com/learn-guitar-from-scratch