



# Education Resources

— GUITAR FOUNDATION OF AMERICA —

## STARTING A GUITAR CLASSROOM

### Initial Equipment and Basic Curriculum Guide

#### Introduction

This document is intended a resource for those planning to create a classroom guitar class/program. Along with helping the teacher, this document is intended to be shared with school administrators to guide the planning and funding of a new guitar program. Outlined below are the necessities and options to consider when creating a program. Overall, the average total cost for an initial guitar classroom setup of 30 guitars and related materials is roughly \$8,000.

#### Setup

Most guitar classrooms provide an instrument for each student to use at school. The student, in turn, must provide their own guitar at home for practicing. This is similar to other school music students who play larger instruments (cello, double bass, etc.). The reason for this setup is two-fold. First, if students bring their own guitars, the school must provide a secure storage space (i.e. large lockers), costing considerably more for the initial setup as well as classroom space. Second, providing a classroom set of guitars alleviates issues with the consistency of instruments for performances; all of the instruments will be the same type and of similar quality, tone, and appearance.

Cost: A classroom with chairs (not desks or tables) and space for instruments.

#### Guitars

The standard instrument for classroom guitar programs is a nylon string guitar (“classical guitar”). This is the most musically versatile type of guitar, working well for teaching both classical and popular styles of playing. Steel-string acoustic guitars (also known as “dreadnoughts” or “folk” guitars) limit the ability to teach classical repertoire and can be challenging to play for absolute beginners. Electric guitars do not work well in a classroom setting due to the need to amplify. Both steel-string and electric guitars can be supplement instruments in the classroom (especially when teaching specific styles) but they are not recommended as the primary instrument of instruction.

It is important to provide classroom instruments that will be accommodating to the student. For high school programs, all of the instruments should be full size. For middle school programs, it is recommended that one-third of the instruments should be “¾ size” (580mm), another one-third should be “⅝ size” (630mm), and another one-third should be “full size” (650mm).

Cost: ~\$200 and up, per instrument with case



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## Footstools

In order to establish solid technique which allows the students to achieve the best technical control with the most ergonomic use of the body, students will need to use a guitar footstool to get the instrument in proper position when playing classical repertoire. Programs should provide these in the classroom, but can also require that students bring their own.

Cost: ~\$10 to \$20 per footstool; no cost if students provide their own

## Music Stands

Music stands are an absolute essential item for a music classroom. Manhasset and Wenger are the industry standard for sturdy, full-steel types of music stands. If your school already has music programs in place, this may not need to be an initial expense if there are enough to share. Many successful guitar programs opt to purchase/use a shorter type of music stand (sometimes referred to as a guitar/cello stand) that is more conducive to guitar instruction and performance. These types of music stands allow for better projection in performances by not blocking the sound. Equally they help instruction in the classroom by not blocking the teacher's view of student hands.

Another option for programs is to require students to provide their own music stand (foldable version costing \$10-\$15 that they bring to class daily). The down-side to these foldable music stands is that they are not able to hold heavy books/binders and do not tend to last long compared to the sturdy type. Depending on classroom factors and teaching approach, the number of stands may need to match the number of students in the class. Some programs utilize a stand-partner approach, requiring only one stand per two students.

Cost: ~\$40 to \$90 per stand; no cost if students provide their own (not recommended)

## Strings

Guitar strings will need to be replaced regularly, depending on the amount of time the instruments are used. Full-time guitar programs where instruments are used for several hours each day replace strings twice to three times (or more) per school year. Purchasing in bulk or directly from the manufacturer can reduce cost.

Cost: ~\$8 to \$15 per set; less in bulk

## Other Guitar Classroom Needs

**Electronic Chromatic Tuners** – Even though the smartphones of today have all but outmoded standalone tuners, it is still important to have some available to students for a variety of reasons.

**Sound System** – A guitar classroom should have a means to listen to music examples as well as a metronome.

**General Guitar Accessories** – Items such as capos, slides, picks, etc., that students can use.

**Teacher Toolkit** – It is a good idea to have some tools handy such as needle-nose pliers, a string winder, various screwdrivers, wire cutters, nail clippers (for nylon strings) for general maintenance.



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## Suggested First Semester Curriculum Outline

School districts may have different needs in terms of alignment with state standards and goals of the individual program, school, and/or school district. The following is a simple template curriculum, open to editing, that outlines fundamental goals of a successful first semester curriculum for guitar in a secondary classroom setting.

- Students will demonstrate mastery of a healthy seating position with a properly sized instrument, chair, and a footstool or other guitar support.
- Students will demonstrate mastery of basic left and right hand positions.
- Students will demonstrate mastery of basic right hand finger technique; independently use P, M, I, as well as alternating I and M fingers.
- Students will demonstrate reading in first position from standard notation.
- Students will demonstrate mastery of basic block, ascending, and descending arpeggios.
- Students will demonstrate mastery of first position scales.
- Students will demonstrate mastery of basic chord forms in first position.
- Students will demonstrate mastery of appropriately leveled ensemble music in an end of semester performance in two and three part group ensembles.
- Students will demonstrate an awareness of the history of the guitar, types of guitars, and parts of guitars.
- Students will demonstrate proper care and handling of the guitar.

## Instructional Materials

The GFA has created an annotated list of materials that are suitable for adoption. Each option has a description of the strongest features of the text. All texts on this list bring something to the table, and teachers/administrators should evaluate which is the best match for your students. Please refer to this list on the GFA website in the Education menu.

For further guidance in setting up a guitar classroom, contact [education@guitarfoundation.org](mailto:education@guitarfoundation.org)



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