



**COMMON PROBLEMS FOR  
BEGINNER GUITARISTS  
AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM**

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## **Introduction**

Thanks very much for downloading this free book I hope you find it useful and it helps you conquer some of the problems that you are having with your playing.

Keep your eye on mysite <http://www.focusonguitar.com/> for plenty of free tips, hints and help.

I will be updating my video lessons as often as possible at my [youtube channel](#)

Also check the [resources](#) chapter for my latest books.

Keep on rockin' and always remember you'll only fail if you give up!

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# Common Beginner Problems And How To Solve Them

## *Changing Chords Quickly Enough*

### *Changing Chords Quickly*

The number one problem that newcomers to the guitar face is changing chords quickly. It may surprise you to know that in most cases this has nothing to do with their fingers or in fact anything physical at all. The drawback is that the beginner hasn't developed the ability to think ahead. The mind is a massive part of learning, this may seem obvious, but it is rarely thought about consciously. If you can start to visualise what is coming next and which fingers you will have to move, then your chord changes will get faster, very quickly.

*Here is a visualisation exercise.*

Choose two chords that you know well. Fret the first chord, then move as quickly as possible to the second chord, but pay very close attention to your fingers as you do so. You may well notice that your fingers lift quite a distance from the fretboard, and perhaps hover in mid-air while you make your mind up where to put them. Another thing that may happen is that your fingers will move singly, each finger will follow another until they are all in position.

#### **Now for the visualisation.**

Fret the first chord again, but before actually moving your fingers to the second chord, visualise yourself moving your fingers and fretting the chord correctly. If you have never tried visualising before, or think that you won't be able to do it, firstly imagine what the front door of your house looks like, or something similarly familiar, a pet for instance. You should have no problem with that. That is all visualisation is, imagining in your mind. Once you are used to picturing the chord in your mind, then move your fingers. You should hopefully find that your change is smoother and faster.

Practice this sequence, **FRET FIRST CHORD. VISUALISE MOVEMENT.**

**PERFORM MOVEMENT** for 5 minutes, but continue to pay close attention to what your fingers are doing. Done properly, this exercise will much improve your changes. The exercise above is so useful because it forces you to really concentrate on what is happening with your fingers. Lots of people that I have observed practising, spend a lot of their practice time doing what I call 'nothing worthwhile'. I have been guilty of this in the past as I am sure lots of you have. 5 or 10 minutes of concentrated practice is much better than 30 minutes of aimless doodling.

## ***Too Much Tension***

### *Being Too Tense*

*Too much body and hand tension* is another problem that is quite difficult to overcome for beginners. Concentrating hard and bodily relaxation are not easy to combine, but it something that is definitely worth the effort required to master. If you study the top players you will notice how relaxed and loose they look. It all seems so easy for them doesn't it? We can all learn from this. When learning how to play guitar, and in all practice sessions, you need to make sure you are as relaxed as possible. Unnecessary tension anywhere in the body when playing will slow down your progress, and also it just won't be as enjoyable. It can be quite surprising in which parts of the body you will discover tension when you start to look. I always store tension in my face, neck and shoulders. I have to make a conscious effort to release this every time I play. As you prepare yourself to play, spend a few seconds scanning your body for tense spots, and do this constantly as you practice. It will soon become a habit.

## ***Trying To Play Too Fast***

### *Trying to play too fast too soon.*

Trying to go too fast, too soon, causes serious problems. If you practice in a sloppy manner, you will just get good at playing sloppily. It can be very difficult to really slow down and take your time.

Just try to remember that you are programming your fingers and mind, just as a computer programmer programmes PCs. But just like a programmer if you put in garbage, you will get garbage out. Always try to think about the whole picture, your learning is a lifelong commitment. There is no point in the future when you suddenly become a guitar player. You are already a guitar player, one who is getting better, and finding things easier every day.

## ***Not Knowing Where The Notes Are***

### *Learning the position of the notes.*

Guitarists have traditionally been classed as poor music readers. Granted, it is possible to get a long way in your learning without bothering to memorise where the specific notes are on the neck too, but as with a lot of things in life, if you spend a little bit of time and effort in the beginning, the benefits will be tremendous. There are lots of systems that claim to make memorising easier, but again if you make your mind up to learn the notes, and reinforce your dedication often, then you can't fail to improve your knowledge. Practising your major scales

while purposely reminding yourself what note is under your finger is a simple method for learning. Don't forget there is no hurry to learn, playing guitar is a lifestyle choice. Just do it!

## ***Only Using 75%***

*Unwillingness to use all 4 fingers of the left hand.*

It just doesn't come naturally to most people to use the little finger to do anything other than stick it out while drinking tea! Again it is perfectly possible to manage to play adequately with 3 fingers in the beginning. Over time though, only using 75% of available resources will definitely hold back progress. A really great way to correct this situation is to practice using just fingers 2, 3 and 4, don't use the 1st finger. This will develop strength and agility in the pinky.

## ***Not Getting Anywhere Fast***

*Apparent Lack of Progress* is a very common complaint heard from beginners. This is usually due to unrealistic expectations.

Just do a quick Google, or search on ebay and you will find countless gurus who have the Holy Grail of guitar playing. They will claim to guide you to play like Clapton in 24 hours, with no effort, in exchange for a lot of your hard earned cash or credit card number. As you know this is bull, if there was a shortcut to learning believe me I would have found it by now!( Cliché Alert!) If it was that easy everybody would be doing it. Don't let this put you off though, its not easy, but it isn't too difficult either. A lot of determination, mental application and the right guidance will soon have you playing recognisably I am a great believer in the power of the mind and how it can help us overcome any barrier and speed up our learning. I also believe that mental exercises are very important and under used when it comes to learning to play the guitar. One thing that our minds are brilliant at is procrastinating, putting off, delaying, postponing, deferring, just hanging about for the perfect moment, call it what you like. Searching for the one last programme or book or CD that will make your playing just that little bit easier or just that little bit faster is all of the above. Just make the determination to get your head down, get your mind right and get on with learning. Learning to play an instrument is not something that is hard and will cost you time and effort. It will enhance your life, make you grow as a person and give you confidence. All you need is a positive mindset.

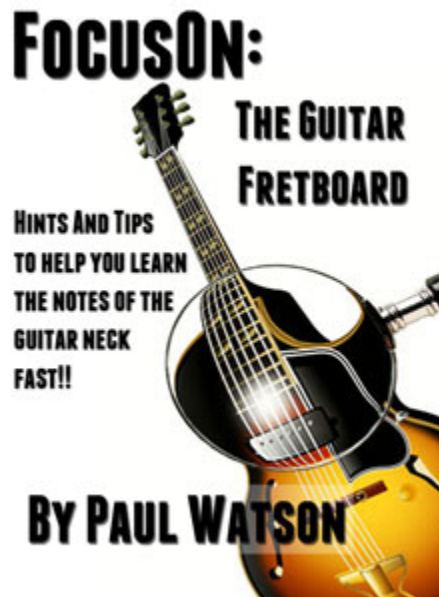
## Resources

My main focus with writing books and my website is to make your learning as easy and enjoyable as possible. There has never been a better time to learn to play an instrument, especially the guitar. The resources available are enormous. When I first started to learn to play, the internet hadn't been born and if you wanted to learn a song it was a painstaking process using vinyl records or cassette tape and the pause button.

I don't make false promises, or massive unrealistic claims though. It still takes work and dedication to become proficient as a player, but I hope I can make it a little easier for you.

After over 30 years as a player and teacher myself, I like to think that I have picked up some useful ways of practising and advancing.

If you want to find out how to find the notes on the guitar neck, quickly and easily in any area of the fretboard then please take a look at my book below. I hope you find it helpful.



[Learn The Fretboard](#)



Heres my latest book about using the CAGED method to form any chord in any area of the neck. You will learn to see the guitar fretboard as a whole and with practice will be able to form any chord you like, anywhere you like.



Thanks very much for reading and I wish you well with your playing.  
Best Wishes  
Paul

