



MOTIVATION & INSPIRATION #1

BUILDING REPERTOIRE

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Dec 3rd 2023

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Building repertoire

About this handout

This handout accompanies the JustinGuitar Club that was hosted by Lieven on the 3rd of December 2023. It serves as a refresher for the topics that were discussed in this session

Recap: Motivation & Inspiration #1: Building repertoire (3 Dec 2023)

Storytelling

Remember that every song you bring is a story and your repertoire, if brought like a set, is a big story arc too. Make sure to imagine yourself as the storyteller, the one who actually been through certain experiences and feelings and is bringing it. Every story has a beginning, a middle where a kind of evolution takes place and an end. Find the storytelling elements in a song and make sure you respect their dynamics and effect, without the need to copy it 100%

Layering repertoire

Tip: Check These lessons by Justin again:

<https://www.justinguitar.com/guitar-lessons/3-types-of-songs-you-should-practice-pc-001>

<https://www.justinguitar.com/guitar-lessons/developing-repertoire-bg-1406>

Starting out with a repertoire can be simple; 3 songs on “campfire” level

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A pyramid of songs

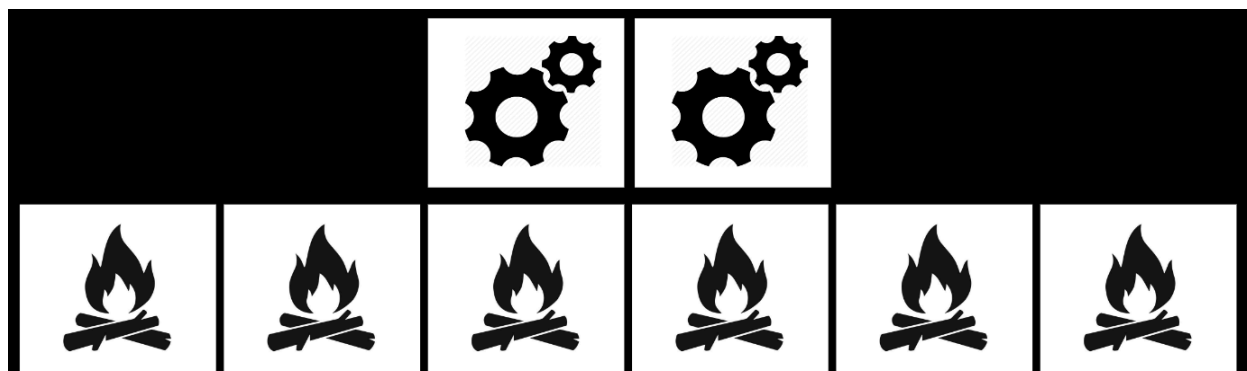
Start out with about 3 songs where you learn the basic chord structure. These will be your base layer. Make yourself acquainted with these songs, know how to play a basic verse and chorus and develop a smooth rhythm. You need to be familiar with the concept of a “song”. Sounds silly but with that i mean; know what is each block and what chords is it made of?

When you get a basic grasp of those 3, expand to 5 base campfire songs and perhaps add one “developer” song; a song that has a bigger challenge than the campfire songs on your base layer



It could be that you promote a campfire song to a higher level by playing a less simplified version of the song. In the next chapter about layering a song, you’ll see what that means. Meanwhile, you keep playing (and having fun!) with your campfire songs.

Your set could evolve to something like this:



That's already a repertoire set that features enough variation and challenges! Your developer songs keep on improving while you develop more and more "autopilot" for the campfire songs.

Perhaps you promote one of your campfire songs to Developer status when you try to sing over it?

Mind though; starting to sing before having a solid rhythm with an arm that moves constantly in a steady fashion, will almost certainly result in a choppy rhythm. Rhythm is king!

Recommended video's on getting SOLID strumming:

<https://www.justinguitar.com/guitar-lessons/guitar-strumming-tips-b1-502>

Strumming mechanics:

<https://www.justinguitar.com/guitar-lessons/strumming-mechanics-b1-204>

The Layered song

I've noticed many beginner are approaching songs too "one dimensional",

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too much in a sequence of notes, trying to learn the EXACT notes that are being played from the beginning. Many learn it it “bar by bar”...and end up knowing about 20 intros of songs but they can not accompany a single complete song if they were asked.

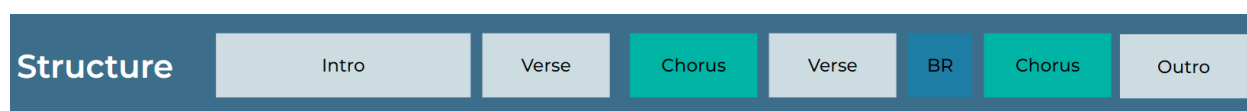
I was like that. Here's what I learned

Building blocks

When I learn a song; I work my way up from the bottom, in layers

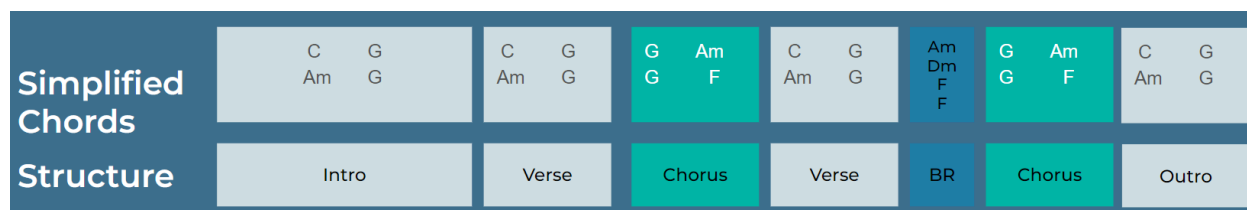
first I see that I get the main structure... What are the main building blocks?

An intro? a Verse? a chorus? a bridge?



Then I make up the chords for each of these sections and learn to play it through, just jamming the main chords in the first easy strumming pattern I play on auto pilot and see if it fits the vibe of the song.

I notice which chords are common in the song, which only occur in choruses or bridges and make them the part that makes them stand out. Yet I simplify and use simple major and minor chords here. Just that. Using major and minor chords in the right places is enough to be the “meat and potatoes” of your song.



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Sure, these blocks are placed in a certain order and they make up the song

A chorus or verse less wouldn't harm the song but the basic structure is the basics. It will still sound like the song, as long as your main blocks are built correctly.

Forget single notes for now; RHYTHM IS KING!

Focus on the rhythm, the flow, make sure your chords follow each other nicely when playing it though. When quick chord changes occur, you can even omit a hard change, knowing you can implement it later when the rest is going on autopilot.

If you get which chords go in which block; you can rearrange the main structure as you please. note that I don't play the lead lines yet; I just work through the chords. If I don't feel like learning the solo; I can improvise my own picking over the chords. I KNOW the chords for the solo so I will never be lost...

You can play a whole song and don't even have to memorize any leads yet. A song won't fail if you let out a solo and improvise something. It WILL fail if you stumble upon things you can not do yet. The level below is always the failsafe. Feel comfortable to drop to it when necessary; people won't even notice...

Simplify <-> embellish

Then I work myself up some more and try to figure out (or create my own) picking patterns and lead lines. If I forget or decide to play them in a certain fashion; I can always drop down a level for that block... as I know the chords. don't be afraid to simplify strumming patterns. As long as the main rhythm is right, don't focus on copy'ing strumming patterns or picking patterns too much. Keep the flow steady and as long as that works, you make it as complex or basic as you want

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When you're able to do this, You can play your song through and you make it sound quite "real" already.

Simplify where needed. A solo can be replaced with just the chord progression that is played under the solo. Play the more complex chords of more exotic flavours of the chords

Embellish where there is room. If you want to spice up a basic chord progression, add Sus variations, try changing between regular and 7 or 9 chords ... You are still playing rhythm but you create a melody within rhythm. Still not doing a solo and yet the listener has the room to listen to your embellishments.

I put the lyrics layer in between because much depends on the level of your current singing.

If you are rather new to singing, make sure your autopilot is SOLID; your rhythm is solid and you have actual vocal freedom to play and sing.

Remember, rhythm is king! Record yourself and make sure your rhythm makes sense

Chords +	C9 Am7	G7 G7	C9 Am7	G7 G7			C9 Am7	G7 G7
Lyrics			Lyrics ...	Lyrics!	Lyrics ...		Lyrics!	
Chords	C Am	G G	C Am	G G	C Am	Am Dm F F	G G	C Am
Structure	Intro	Verse	Chorus	Verse	BR	Chorus	Outro	
Measures								

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Play these songs a lot of course; and play a handful of different songs instead of just one

It's better to know 5 songs in a basic structure than 1 for 60% and then just stop playing in the middle of the solo. Play a lot; work on multiple songs, reprise what needs attention. The songs will be pretty basic in the beginning but after a while you will be adding layers to your first songs while you learn some extra, new songs on the basic level that day.

As days progress, you play a number of songs but every day you add some things to it. Like the "decorations" layer. You feel confident in the song, you can fall back to a lower level if necessary but if it goes well; add another level by adding those decorations; some nifty picking; some rhythm double-timing, some harmonics, etc.

my repertoire is the product of this layered method. Some songs have parts that go "high" in this layering but keep some verses or choruses very basic.

Still today, songs get expanded and layers are added.

Make it YOUR version; recognizeable enough but no carbon copy of the original. In session #2 (Dec. 17th 2023); we'll focus on this subject

Work up in layers: if you do several songs at once (but not too much, about 2 to 5) it doesn't really matter what phase you are in.

Because you learn the structure of one song, you're doing the solo's of another and already "applying eternal layers of finish" on a song you quite mastered, you never get bored.

A song can really "age" while being in your repertoire...even after several years, flavour can be added!

In the meantime, you HAVE been playing a worthy, complete song. It only gets BETTER. It would be a shame if you put so much time in it and never use it before you think it is perfect!

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I once started to learn “tears in heaven” note for note. It was before I knew this site and wondered how it was possible to do all these notes at once etc. I learned some chords thanks to J’s video’s and I figured out that a lot of the notes were arpeggiated notes in a chord. I learned a basic version years ago and about a few years ago; I started to fill it in more. It was only months later that I learned some extra fills and a less boring version of that bridge-kind-of-thing near the end of the song.

So I knew a good amount of the song but I took some time later to make it better because I couldn’t do it back then. But in the meantime, I had a song that was still “good enough”.

Check out this topic on the JustinGuitar Community!

A student saw my strong structure in the live session and mimicked it into a workable, empty and neat version!

<https://community.justinguitar.com/t/song-structure-template-pdf/265554/7>

Memorizing lyrics

Best advice here is: become the storyteller and imagine yourself telling the story to someone else.

It’s no disaster if you use some different words here and there; rhythm is king. Besides, it is an extra sign you are making the song your own already.

Learning lyrics while still fumbling over chords and rhythm will be quite impossible. That’s why I recommend the layered approach to a song, so you can come to a version that works for you as soon as possible and refine it while you play.

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There is nothing wrong with playing the song with a lyrics and chord sheet in front of you.

Moving on to a version with only the first words of a sentence can give you a new way to balance chord works and remembering lyrics. Once again; Rhythm is king. RECORD YOURSELF and be self critical of your rhythm (don't mind the vocal qualities for now ;))

Next course: 17th of December 2023: Making songs your own

About the teacher and the course

Hi, I'm Lieven De Vleeschouwer, JustinGuitar Official Guide, Approved Teacher & Moderator. I host a series that will help you set goals, gain control of your repertoire, express yourself with music, prepare you for learning songs and going live and I'll make you practise things you will use.

My sessions will be less about the technical mechanics of playing the instrument but more about making the music you play sound like your own, develop your own style, develop some practical and mental tools and to plot a course through everything there is to learn.

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