

# I Want To Be Your Guitar Teacher....

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Hello and welcome to Dempster Guitar Studio.

My name is Stephen Dempster.

First of all let me say, CONGRATUATIONS. You have taken the first big step toward wanting to begin or improve your guitar playing. I also would like to invite you to visit my website

YOU want results and success at playing the guitar.

([www.dempsterguitarstudio.com](http://www.dempsterguitarstudio.com)) later on but for now you have definitely come to the right spot to help you find your guitar teacher.

What I want to share with you today are some insights that, quite honestly, will help me convince you that I'm the teacher you want to work with. So like any other business, I want YOUR BUSINESS but first you need to feel confident that what I have to offer will be of massive benefit to you. So let's dig in....

## *Set Your Goals:*

There is really only one main reason why anyone would seek out a guitar teacher- You have a problem and you need a solution. YOU want results and success at playing the guitar

But the type of results and, therefore, success at playing the guitar, does mean different things to different people at different times while they are learning.

I'd like you to think about 3 very general categories of students that I have observed over the years. Each one of the categories could be broken down even further but for now these will work for us. Think about which one best fits your current situation. I want to explore some of these

possibilities with you to help you determine what success on the guitar means to you and how I can help you achieve the results you want. Ok! Here we go!

1. Perhaps your current idea of success is to simply start learning the guitar having never played one before at all. This is a very exciting time for students because there is new and exciting information, new skills, songs to learn and hopefully an audience to play for- your family, your

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friends, a pet or even just a microphone. I put a lot of value on the starting student's experience to make sure it is fun and educational and that you see results in a timely fashion. You will want to be guided in the most professional way in order to help you feel confident and competent at playing the guitar. This is an important goal which I take very seriously and feel very responsible for. If you are a starting student, you will need a patient, understanding teacher who is willing to walk with you during this wonderful beginning phase. Together, your teacher and you should celebrate any and all results that you have successfully achieved.

2. Maybe you have already been playing for a while (perhaps you are self-taught or have studied with another teacher) and for some reason you have reached a point where nothing seems to be getting better, or you feel a lack of motivation to continue. Perhaps you are "stuck" just playing the same old riffs and tunes that you are already very good at. A common example of this is when students have gotten very good at playing a particular strumming pattern that they learned for a particular tune in the past. The pattern is good for THAT TUNE, but students soon realize that they tend to always use the SAME pattern on any new song and discover that the old pattern- or shall I say habit-just doesn't seem to apply to the new song. I call this "hardening of the categories". You need a teacher who can present you with new strumming options and help you understand what I call the *bones of strumming* or rather the mechanics of strumming. You will need not only a teacher but a personal trainer to work with you and develop these strumming skills.

Another common “stuck” is students who feel trapped in using the standard pentatonic scales when they improvise and jam with others. Again, basically they are defaulting to what they know (which is good) but they are looking for more growth, more interesting sounds, more options that put a smile on their face again that quietly says “Now this is what I needed-this is very cool”. If you feel stuck after having played for awhile, you will need a teacher who can train you and motivate you to explore new musical territory to help you get out of the slump.

One of the biggest “stucks” is a student realizing that while he/she can play fairly confidently, their actual knowledge of the guitar fretboard is very limited- this is quite common. My article “Mental maps” is a good example of a concept that could be just what you need to get to the next level of guitar nirvana. Basically, your teacher will need to provide you with new guitar concepts that excite and rejuvenate your guitar playing and that fit nicely within what you already know how to do well.

3. If you consider yourself quite advanced on the guitar, then your needs are much more specific. Usually, your technical ability is fine and what you are looking for is to greatly expand your understanding of music in general. Often, these students will come to me for some coaching to prepare them for university or college music programs. These players I consider

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“mature” in the sense that they are usually so hungry to learn about the BIG PICTURE of music that they soak up any and all new musical information easily and eagerly. These players simply need less teaching and more coaching – perhaps even a musical mentor. It would be very important for your teacher to be aware of that distinction (between teacher and mentor) in order to help you succeed further.

So what does all this mean?

Well, it's about setting your goals as you start off with your teacher. As a starting student you might have a specific goal but often you don't really have enough information about studying guitar that sparks a specific goal- It's really enough that you just want to get started. As your training and experience grows on the guitar, your goals will naturally evolve, change, and modify. My point here is that when starting to study with a teacher, knowing what your goals are (however defined) will help to keep the lessons on track so that you see results quickly and therefore feel successful and feel good playing the guitar. After all, this is why you are here- isn't it?

Basically, without some sort of map, your sails will get set randomly and you will be sailing all over the place and not really ending up anywhere that you intended. Sometimes this can be a nice surprise but more often it just leads to lots of starting and stopping with no real progress.

Working with me as your teacher, together we will determine what goals are important to you, create a map of how to get there and enjoy the benefits of having accomplished it.

### *Finding the Right Teacher:*

Now I want to talk to you about some ideas that will help you find the right teacher for you- and of course I'm trying to convince you that I should be that teacher. You might be surprised by what I have to say as it might seem counterintuitive but at least I will have you thinking about this topic in a way that best serves your goals and success.

I want to start off with a little story that totally changed my perspective on teaching guitar and teaching in general.

As a young teacher many years ago, I was working at a local recreation centre instructing a beginning guitar course to about 18 adult students. It was a 12 week course and about 3 weeks into it one of the students came up to me after the class just to express his thanks on helping him begin to play. He was really quite excited about what he had accomplished so far

and was very kind to say that I was playing a part in his success. It was, I'll admit, a nice stroke of my ego but I responded to him in a more humble fashion by reminding him that while I have been giving him the information and technical training, it was him who was doing all the necessary training, practice, playing, whatever- which was true. And then he said something to me that rocked my understanding of teaching.

He said: "I really do appreciate what you are helping me to accomplish on the guitar- *but you don't impress me!*"

Before I had a chance to react he went on to explain saying that what he meant by this is regardless of my actual playing ability, as I would demonstrate during class for the students, he was less impressed by the playing than he was by my actual teaching. He deeply felt that I was really interested in helping HIM accomplish what HE wanted- and I was. And my intention was the same for every other student in that class.

Word of mouth and powerful student testimonials should be your main concern when choosing a teacher. Testimonials tell you directly how a teacher has helped his or her students experience positive results and success on the guitar. It also demonstrates how committed that teacher is to the whole process of learning. You will want a strong sense that the teacher you choose is definitely there for YOU.

This confirmed for me a belief I have always felt to this day:

*Good teachers are motivated to teach through the successful results of their student's accomplishments- period.*

So, like hiring a building contractor, you will want evidence of his or her work. Same is true for a guitar teacher. Word of mouth and powerful student testimonials should be your main concern when choosing a teacher. Testimonials tell you directly how a teacher has helped his or her students experience positive results and success on the guitar. It also demonstrates how committed that teacher is to the whole process of learning. You will want a strong sense that the teacher you choose is definitely there for YOU.

We live in an age of certification as evidence of our professional status. We certainly require this when dealing with doctors, engineers, school teachers and the like. We want and require evidence that these types of professions have satisfied at least the minimal standards needed to keep people safe and healthy. While you can acquire academic degrees in the arts, these certifications do not necessarily give you the skills and resources to TEACH the arts effectively. In fact, many successful music teachers will tell you that the bulk of their success was not founded on their certification but rather on their slowly built-up history of success with probably thousands of students. You simply cannot gain that breadth of experience through certification alone. I myself hold an undergraduate degree in science, a graduate degree in education and a specialist diploma in music education- but who cares! Right now what you want to know while you are reading this article is “Can this dude help me to play the guitar the way I have imagined it?” Of course my answer to you is a resounding YES because I’ve done it before and you will find plenty of evidence for that through my student testimonials. Maybe later on it might be of interest to you to know my credentials but they don’t demonstrate my ability to teach you, motivate you, coach you or mentor you toward successful results in playing guitar- My student’s success does that for me.

So make sure when you’re choosing your teacher that you have plenty of evidence that he/she can generate the results you want. This is best demonstrated through student testimonials.

On a side note, you might be tempted to choose the teacher that offers the lowest tuition fee. Simply put, tuition fees that you might consider high are usually so for good reason- and those teachers can prove it. Those teachers have a proven track record of success and so command higher tuition fees- as they should. If you want the greatest benefit from your lesson experience, you pay for it accordingly. If what you want are “cheap” lessons or you choose your teacher based solely on price, you will get what you are paying for-guaranteed.

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OK, the last point I want to make is this:

Good teaching is really a good relationship. By this I mean there must be a positive perceived value in the relationship between your teacher and you. Let’s be honest, you (the student) can tell when sitting with a potential teacher whether you like the teacher or not in just a few minutes. You can sense this just in the way the teacher asks questions, explores your goals and interests, makes you feel comfortable and

welcome and even in the physical setup of his or her studio- some studio spaces are simply not inspiring and make you NOT want to be there. All these impressions can happen very quickly and will therefore set the tone for any future sessions you may have with that teacher.

I always offer a free lesson to a potential student. It’s a strategy that many teachers use. During this lesson, you want to make sure that the teacher will be able to really help you achieve your goals. The teacher, on the other hand, wants to make sure that given your goals, he or she has something of value to offer you. In this sense the so called “First lesson free” is really a two way interview that ensures the teacher is the best match for you and that you are a high value student to the teacher- meaning that you are receptive to what the teacher has to offer. It’s a two way relationship that has to be nurtured like any other relationship. And it has its own life with a beginning, middle and an end. You want to make sure that the teacher in front of you is willing to guide you through the natural ups and downs of this relationship. Trust your instincts, ask many questions and then move forward.

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## *The Next Step:*

I want to be your guitar teacher.

You have looked at what your goals are –even just wanting to start guitar is a goal. You have read some ideas about finding the right teacher for you and now you have to do something about it- move forward and take action. The “NEXT STEP” button (remember it’s on the first page of the website) is your first step toward working with me but the bigger action step is to realize that you will absolutely succeed and benefit from studying with me as long as both of us do our jobs. My job is to give you the best information and technical training that satisfies your goals- and of course this will evolve and change as you become a more competent guitarist. Your job is to follow the plan that together you and I develop.

I want you to succeed and I want to be the teacher who helps you get there. If you are convinced you have found the right teacher for you then don’t waste anymore time. Take the next step and contact the studio today. Thanks so much for considering Dempster Guitar Studio. I look forward to working with you.

Best regards,

Stephen Dempster SC., MA, BSc

Dempster Guitar Studio