

Sandra Joan's BEST Guitar Curriculum, Beginner Level

Product review by Jennifer Loucks, The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine, LLC, March, 2009
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Do you have a child who wants guitar lessons but can't take them? *Sandra Joan's Best Guitar Curriculum* may be the closest thing to a guitar teacher in a book!

This beginning guitar course is a 500+ page book and 3 audio CDs. It contains 20 lessons, which the author says will take about a month each to complete. Each lesson details exactly what the student should do and how many times to practice each new skill. Lessons contain review (fill-in-the-blanks), new material, and seven days' worth of practice assignments. New material has information to read, boxes to check off, and CD tracks to listen to.

The practice material is what is most beneficial to students. It is written in the form of checklists with very specific instructions. Each day may have different skills to practice. To give you an idea of how detailed the checklists are, when you are halfway through the book, each day's practice list is about a page long! This way, students know exactly what to do, and do not spend their time mindlessly playing songs they already know, or making the same mistakes over and over.

Lessons are equally detailed. Students are often instructed not to move on until they can play a certain pattern or song with no mistakes. When students know what to do, they are less frustrated, and parents are more confident that students are actually progressing.

Did I mention I have taught piano lessons for 15 years? One of the most difficult skills to teach a student is how to practice, because the teacher is not listening to them practice daily. Without solid, effective practice, weekly lessons can be all for naught. A student who uses this guitar curriculum will have the tools for effective practice. In fact, he'll have no excuse not to practice well. I like the great amount of repetition built into the lessons and the practice too. This no-frills, black-and-white book is very easy to implement; students can pick it up and go. (I'd say it's written for junior high and up to use independently.) They can go at their own pace and know exactly where they left off (keep a pencil nearby for checking the boxes). It's meant to be used in order, from page 1 to page 521; there's no way to skip to "the good parts" and thus miss fundamentals. If your child uses this the way it's intended, he will have a very solid guitar foundation. At \$140, the price may seem high, but compared to 20 months of lessons it's a steal. I enthusiastically recommend this course!

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