

Adventures in Classroom Guitar Instruction

A discussion of Matt's experiments in methods of classroom guitar instruction at the middle school level. It will also feature links to related sites on the use of guitar in music education and guitar pedagogy.



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Review written by Matt Jones from Oxford, MS

Bill Swick's Beginning Guitar Class Review

I haven't posted anything for a very long time, mainly because they now block blogging at school. My last post (about a year ago!!) dealt with my continuing frustration over the impossibility of trying to teach guitar in an inclusion classroom. I was about ready to give up and just go back to pure theory, history, etc.



At the beginning of this year I tried a new guitar method from Bill Swick out in Las Vegas. This method has proven to be a lifesaver for me. It's the most "graded" method I've used. This allows you to individualize the lessons without having to write something easier for slower students or find something more advanced for students that are ahead.

I'm particularly impressed with how well my Special Education kids are doing. I have kids reading music who I never thought would be able to at this level. Last year I had the majority of the lower performing students doing one-string TAB because I just didn't have time to write a whole separate curriculum for them.

One great feature is that the book is reproducible. I sent him a purchase order from my school and he emailed me the pdf. I really wouldn't have guessed how much I love having the materials in pdf. About once a week I assign a new piece for them to pass off for a grade based on their progress and ability.

Since it's reproducible I'm free to mark everything in the student's book. I date when it was assigned and make notes for things they should be working on. This is the only way to work if you've got kids working on different levels. You can't go around saying, "What are you working on?"

Coincidentally I have my more advanced students in the same class as my inclusion kids. Some are on p. 20 while others are on p. 70.

I will say that this method isn't a stand-alone method for self-instruction. For self-instruction you would probably want to use this as a supplement and get another method that covers things like What a Whole Note Is, How to Tune the Guitar, or What a Fret Is. This book assumes you have a teacher in front of you to show you technique and teach you basic music theory.

Bill Swick's

Beginning Guitar Class

Supplementary Materials

Quarter One

Notes on the First 3 Strings in First Position



40 Songs, 19 String Exercises, 4 Duets & 11 Trios
All on the First 3 Strings

I got 2 quarters which is 102 pages for my school for \$99.00. You can separately purchase the first or second quarter for \$45 and \$54 respectively . Having used it for a couple of months, this is a great bargain for a substantial reproducible guitar curriculum.

My biggest problem with it being reproducible is kid's taking a page home and forgetting to bring it back the next day. Every day in class isn't enough?

But this is a great problem. They're excited about playing the guitar and can't get enough.

This is the best method I've seen for classroom use. After reviewing a bunch of other methods, some of which I've used throughout 12 years of guitar lessons, I'm going to give this one my official endorsement (for whatever *that's* worth). It's what I'm using now and I'm no longer searching.

Check out Bill's site, classroomguitar.com for more info or [order the books here](#). I've linked to his site before but he's got some new video clips of 1st and 2nd year students improvising using his Swickster fingerboard sticker system. Check it out!

If you've never seen the [GAMA video](#) from Discover Guitar it feature's Bill's guitar program in Las Vegas and is awesome!!!

 **DISCOVER GUITAR**