First Year Guitar Plan for Adults

Page 1: a realistic four quarter roadmap and a comfort setup checklist. Not medical advice.

This plan is a teacher estimate for an adult practising about 15 to 20 minutes on most days. Everyone moves at their own pace. If a quarter takes six months, that is fine: tick goals when they are true, not when the calendar says so.

1. Four quarter roadmap (estimate, not a promise)

Quarter	Main goals	Signs you are ready to move on	Done
Q1: months 1 to 3	Hold the guitar comfortably. Tune with an app. Learn E minor, A minor, C, G, D. Simple down strums.	Two chords change cleanly in a slow, steady beat. Fingertips are less sore.	
Q2: months 4 to 6	Add A, E and a simplified F or Fmaj7. Down up strumming. First full song at a slow tempo.	You can play one song start to finish, even slowly.	
Q3: months 7 to 9	Two or three more songs. Basic fingerpicking pattern. Play along with a slowed recording.	Changes happen without looking every time.	
Q4: months 10 to 12	A short set of four or five songs. Try playing for a friend or family. Pick your next focus.	You enjoy playing for its own sake and know what to learn next.	

2. Comfort setup checklist (take this to a guitar shop)

Ask about	Why it helps	Notes
Lighter strings (for example 10s on electric, 11s or 12s on acoustic, or nylon)	Less pressure needed to fret notes	
Low action (string height) professional setup	Easier to press, less hand fatigue	
Smaller body or short scale guitar	Easier reach for shoulders and arms	
Comfortable chair, footstool or strap	Better posture, less back and neck strain	
Capo	Lets you play songs in a comfortable singing key with easy shapes	
Electronic tuner or tuning app	Saves frustration and trains your ear	

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Page 2: a 15 minute session template and a joint comfort log.

3. The 15 minute session template

Minutes	What to do	Tip
0 to 2	Warm hands, gentle wrist and finger movement, tune up	Warm water or a warm room helps on cold mornings
2 to 6	Chord change drill: two chords, slow and relaxed	Aim for clean, not fast
6 to 12	Song practice: one section at a time	Slow the recording if needed
12 to 14	Something fun: play anything you like	Keep the joy in it
14 to 15	Write one line in the log below	Note what felt good and what hurt

4. Joint comfort log (0 = no discomfort, 10 = severe)

Rate hands and wrists before and after each session. If scores rise across a week, shorten sessions or take a rest day. Pain that is sharp, lasting or getting worse needs a GP or physiotherapist, not more practice.

Date	Minutes	Before (0 to 10)	After (0 to 10)	What I practised	Notes

Research note: small studies of older adults taking up an instrument (piano) reported some cognitive and wellbeing benefits, but samples were small, and in one study participants averaged about 21 minutes of practice a day, well under the 45 asked. Short, regular sessions are normal.