

# Beginning To Play....

Learning to play the guitar is just like learning to write. Do you remember when you first learned to write? What was the first thing you learned? I'll bet the first thing that you were taught was ***how to hold the pencil***. Holding the pencil properly made learning to write much easier and you were able to write more clearly.

Holding the guitar properly will give you a physical advantage that will help you control the instrument resulting in less effort and better playing. Just follow these instructions and you will form playing habits that will help you play better and sound better for a lifetime. These tips are a must!

- **Always wear a strap-** Wearing a strap will prevent your having to *hold* the guitar. Your only concern should be *playing* the guitar. Strap buttons located on the bottom of the guitar and on the heel of the guitar neck work best. This balances the guitar at the proper angle, and protects the guitar as well.
- **Keep the neck of the guitar above a level plane-** The neck should always be aimed slightly upward. This will enable you to see your fingers more clearly and keep your arm in a position of strength. The forearm actually is the strength of your playing. That's where the power to the fingertips comes from.
- **Keep your thumb on the back of the neck-** The thumb is probably the most important finger of all when you first begin to learn to play the guitar. It must be kept on the back of the neck in the middle to lower half. If you position it opposite the middle and index fingers you will get the greatest amount of strength and dexterity. It also opens the hand up so that you will be less likely to touch any strings that you shouldn't touch. **This is extremely important.**
- **Use the fingertips and press firmly-** Use the fingertips as close to the nails as is possible. Press firmly and close to the fret in front of the finger. Make sure the knuckles next to the fingertip stay arched and do not *crash* inward. Don't be surprised if, in the beginning, the longer you play the worse you sound. This is normal as the flesh on your fingertips becomes softer and softer as you play. Your fingertips will toughen with time. Be sure to trim your nails so that they don't get in the way.
- **Keep your left arm free-** Don't rest your arm on anything. It must be kept free from pressure or resistance.

**Good habits are formed early** so take advantage the suggestions above. These habits will make your playing experience much more enjoyable and productive.

