

# Getting the Most out of Online Lessons

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After teaching one-on-one lessons in a studio for 15 years, the pandemic has led to moving lessons online. Online lessons are certainly different from in person, but not inferior. Each method has advantages and disadvantages. Arguably, the three top advantages of online learning include:

No commuting, learn in the comfort of your own home or office (or even your car)\*\*

Lessons can easily be recorded for future review

Because the student is basically alone during the lesson, self-discipline is improved

Most of my students were leery of switching to online at first. Now, after almost two years, none want to go back to in person.

With that said, how can we get the best out of online lessons?

## 1. Best internet connection possible

Do what you can to get the best connection. Most connections involve Wi-Fi these days. This means the farther you are from the equipment (router), the weaker the signal may become. If the signal is weak, a signal booster of some kind may be helpful. Please consult with folks that know more than I about wireless technology. The better the signal is, the more pleasant the lesson experience will be. There are several sites online that offer free speed tests to check your internet speed such a <https://www.speakeasy.net/speedtest/>

Also, consider how many functions your local network supports. In home security cameras, internet-based lighting, even thermostats can now be controlled from your smartphone through your home network. All these devices require bandwidth. The more bandwidth is used for other activities, the less can be used for lessons.

## Use the biggest screen possible

Much of the material covered in lessons is visual so the bigger the screen is, the easier it is for the student to benefit. I have a few students who actually take lessons using a smart phone. The size of the screen does get in the way occasionally, leading to taking longer to demonstrate some concepts. If you use a phone or tablet, using a simple stand to position it and keep it stable can be a welcome addition. These currently range anywhere from \$8 to \$25 on Amazon.

## Add good sound components to your device

A good set of external speakers can go a long way towards improving the lesson experience. Likewise, a single high-quality USB headphone set with a built-in headset mic is a good option, allowing sound that is usually far better than the built-in computer options. If you use a phone or tablet a separate Bluetooth speaker can be used for better sound. I use a JBL “Flip 5” which runs around \$100 and is more than adequate for lessons. It is a pleasure to listen to. Another plus to using external speakers and mics is that you can place them in optimal locations without having to sit right in front of the computer to access the onboard mic and speaker. There are several options on the market so do your research and ask questions. The better the sound, the better the lesson experience.

## A comfortable, quiet place for lessons

For online lessons this cannot be stressed enough. It is hard to have a good learning experience when being interrupted with distractions. The student should have a space where the door can be closed to eliminate, or at least significantly cut down, on distractions. This will allow the student to focus on the information they are processing and get the most out of the time invested. Ideally, the lesson space will be the same as the students’ practice space which should have the following things, that have nothing to do with the internet, available.

An armless chair. Some student will sit on a stool, a bed, sofa, etc.  
Good lighting  
A music stand  
A tuner and metronome  
Capo (optional)  
Pencil and paper readily available

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Using a USB microphone and bluetooth speaker as described above is helpful as the student can move both to the optimal position rather than having to sit directly in front of the device they are using for lessons.

### Prepare for lessons

Always tune the guitar prior to lessons

If questions arise during the week, have them written down to get them answered during the lesson

Test your internet connection prior to the lesson to eliminate delays in getting lesson started

I allow five minutes before my first lesson to test everything before lessons

If you are using a phone or tablet, make sure they are charged sufficiently prior to lesson

When using a computer, utilizing an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) is recommended so lessons are unaffected by power outages or brown outs.

In closing, any and all questions and/or feedback arising from this article are welcome. Enjoy your lessons!

\*\* Yes. I have given lessons to students in cars. One was even moving with the parent driving!