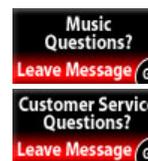




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Mel Bay's Classic Guitar Grading System

Beginning Level (1)

Rhythm and Tempo

- RHYTHMS: mainly repeated note values: ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ; ♪♪♪ ; ♪♪♪♪
- other rhythms, such as: ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪♪ ; ♪ ♪♪ ; ♪♪♪ [level 2] ; ♪♪ [1+] ; only if repeated through most of the piece
- mixed rhythms OK [1+] when the melody is likely to be well-known (folk songs, traditional pieces, etc.)
- within this, any of the basic TIME SIGNATURES is OK: 2/4 ; 3/4 ; 4/4 ; 6/8
- slow-moderate TEMPOS (including "Allegretto" [1+]) for repeated-note (♪♪♪ or ♪♪♪) pieces
- slow TEMPOS for pieces using mixed rhythms

Keys and Chords

- KEY SIGNATURES: through 4 sharps/1 flat) but restricted to the following keys: Cma; a-mi, G-maj; e-mi; D-ma; d-mi; A-maj; E-maj
- CHORDS: built around basic open position shapes for C, G, D, E, B7, a-mi, d-mi, e-mi
- slow and regular rate of HARMONIC CHANGE (occasional increased harmonic activity OK if not for long spans [1+])

Notes and Positions

- mainly open position
- second position OK on the treble strings [1+]
- other positions without barres OK if either: a) kept for all or most of a piece; or b) reached by an "easy" shift (guide finger or open string) and maintained for a while [1+]
- SCALES: of short duration in the open position or (for pieces in D-major) the second position on the treble strings [1+]
- chord/arpeggio/melody TEXTURES should be built around the basic chord shapes listed above

Right-Hand Technique

- SCALE/MELODIC passages: i-m alternation with only occasional use of the a finger (*a-m/ m-a* alternation to be kept to a minimum)
- ARPEGGIO textures: any combination of the right-hand fingers OK except patterns that incorporate *m-a-m* or *a-m-a* sequences (e.g., *p-i-m-a-m-a*)
- simultaneous use of p with one of the other fingers in arpeggio texture OK [1+]
- BLOCK CHORDS using mainly *pim*, *pam* or *pima* (*pia* [1+])

Left-hand Technique

- Left-hand dispositions built around the basic open-position chord shapes given above and around a "parallel position" on the treble strings for simple, scale/melody playing [1+].
- SLURS [1+]: simple ascending slurs from an open string or from a strong finger (1 or 2); simple descending slurs to an open string or a strong finger. In general, avoid compound slurs, descending 4-3 and 4-2 slurs, and slurs combined with position shifts.
- POSITION SHIFTS should be easy - i.e., prepared by an open string or a guide finger; the new position should be kept for a while; only one or two shifts per piece.
- BARRES: 2 and three-string barres of short duration OK if prepared by an open string or a slow tempo.
- any SPECIAL TECHNIQUES/effects (e.g. tambora, natural harmonics) should be presented as the main feature or as a recurring feature of a piece.

Musical Texture, Style, Length and Forms

- each piece (or main section of a piece) should focus on one main technical/musical idea or pattern with (possibly) a supporting secondary idea/technique [1+]
- TEXTURE: mainly arpeggio or melody with single bass-note accompaniment (rather than two moving voices); appropriate distribution of open bass-notes and fixed (held) fingers beneath a moving melody should be taken into account
- DYNAMICS: simple block changes of loud and soft; short diminuendos and crescendos.
- ARTICULATION: legato should be the main goal; thumb staccato (damping) OK (especially if the main focus of the piece).

- LENGTH: one page or less; maximum two pages (only with uniform texture throughout - e.g., an arpeggio study)
- STYLES: easily understood "common practice" etude repertoire, dances, folk-songs - contemporary pieces using "atmospheric" harmonies should be descriptively titled.

Intermediate Level (2)

Rhythm and Tempo

- faster TEMPOS (than Beginning Level) for pieces using mixed rhythms
- greater variety of RHYTHMS, including triplets and some syncopation
- less usual TIME SIGNATURES

Keys and Chords

- KEY SIGNATURES for pieces: through 4 sharps/3 flats) now also including the following keys: b-minor; F-major; #f-mi; g-mi; Bb-ma [level 2], Eb-ma [2+]
- CHORDS: built around all basic open position shapes as well as major and minor barre chords
- faster rate of HARMONIC CHANGE (including one change per beat in chord studies)

Notes and Positions

- no restriction on POSITIONS (flat keys with barre and lacking open bass strings [2+])
- SCALES: of moderate duration (ca. one octave, 4 -beats) in any position, open or closed
- chord/arpeggio/melody TEXTURES should be built around partial barres and full barres (if extended, level 2]), as well all open-position chord shapes
- scordatura

Right-Hand Technique

- scale/melodic passages: *i-m* alternation with full use of the a finger
- arpeggio textures: any combination of the right-hand fingers OK including *p-i-m-a-m-a*
- three-finger tremolo *p-i-m*
- simple rasgueado
- artificial harmonics
- pizzicato
- frequent damping with thumb and fingers

Left-hand Technique

- left-hand dispositions include all basic open-position chord shapes, partial and full barres, and "parallel" positions across all six strings for scale/melody playing.
- SLURS: ascending and descending and compound slurs involving any combination of fingers; slurs combined with position shifts; grace-notes, trills, mordents and turns [2+]
- POSITION SHIFTS of all types, including momentary shifts of position and increased frequency of shifts [2+]
- BARRES: partial, full and hinge barres; longer duration full barres [2+]
- modest extensions

Musical Texture, Style, Length and Forms

- technical studies should still emphasize one main technical/musical idea or pattern (with the possibility of a supporting secondary idea/technique); repertoire pieces may combine diverse ideas/techniques within a single musical section.
- TEXTURES: arpeggio, melody with various accompaniment patterns; scale textures; slur textures; two-voice contrapuntal textures [2+]; increased use of fixed (held) fingers.
- DYNAMICS: block changes of degrees of loud and soft; diminuendos and crescendos of various lengths; varied accentuation of melody or bass.
- ARTICULATION: legato; staccato with thumb or fingers
- LENGTH: 1-4 pages with uniform or varied texture.
- FORMS/STYLES: "common practice" etude repertoire; dance forms, suite, theme and variations; simple multi-movement sonata/sonatina [2+]; fantasia [2+]; nationalistic pieces; contemporary character pieces (with descriptive titles).

Advanced Level (3)

Rhythm and Tempo

- all time signatures, rhythmic groupings, or syncopations
- full range of tempos

Notes and Positions

- all positions
- scales of long duration (fastest [2+])

Right-Hand Technique

- full tremolo
- advanced rasgueado
- cross-string ornaments

Left-Hand Technique

- full extensions
- long duration barres
- extended slurring

Musical Texture, Style, Length and Forms

- anything goes(!); abstract contemporary pieces



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