

12 Tips For Your First Guitar Performance

1: Practice like you're performing and perform like you're practising.

You can't expect playing in front of other people to be the same as practice. Taking steps to practice your performance is the key to a well prepared and better gig for you and your audience. Set a date that you're going to perform on and make a minimum of 25% of your practice time be spent preparing for that performance.

2: Choose a song you love and find incredibly easy.

Something you've been playing for a long time that has stayed under your fingers for at least a year. Now is not the time for new or challenging songs. The easier the song is for you the more you can handle mistakes and the nerves of being on stage.

3: Mistakes are rarely noticed by the audience.

They only feel painful to you. The audience aren't musicians (well not many of them) that incorrect chord or muted string are not going to be noticed by them.

4: How NOT to handle mistakes on stage:

4a: Curse at yourself over the microphone for any little mistake.

4b: Pull a painful grimace on your face for every mistake. (Shake your head in disbelief etc...)

4c: Keep overly apologising for any little hiccup. The audience rarely care about your mistakes, they just want to hear you play.

4d: Keep stopping and starting again, even when you've nearly finished the song.

4e: Put yourself down over the mic and say you aren't any good.

4f: Give up and walk off stage. The audience will be disappointed and you will never know if you could have made it through.

5: Everyone who has ever performed for the first time is nervous.

Nerves are perfectly natural and as time goes on they will lessen. Nerves can make your legs and hands shake or tremble. Before you play that first song take a deep breath. This will oxygenate your blood and help calm your body.

6: Tell the audience this is your first time performing. (Even if it isn't!)

Once you tell an audience this they will rally around and support you. There'll be more sympathetic and it will take any expectations off your own shoulders. Keep telling them this (unless it's the same audience of course) each time you play. You'll be surprised how this helps those first few nervous shows.

7: Find the right place to perform for the first time.

This can be at a friends and family gathering or at an open mic/bar venue. Do your research. If it's an open mic go along and watch. Are the audience listening? Is the host accommodating and friendly? If it's at home then practice in the room/garden where you're going to play. Do everything you can to prepare for the venue and the change of setting from your practice space.

8: Practice plugged in!

Many new performers are taken aback when hearing their guitar plugged in and so loud for the first time. You can elevate this shock by practising plugged in. Get used to hearing your guitar louder.

9: Practice in position.

The best position to perform in as the one you would be in normally for practice. You should only perform standing up if you practice standing up. While sitting on a low chair isn't great for performing as the audience can't see you, try practising on a guitar stool. Get used to being a little higher from the ground than normal. Take along a foot stool if needed.

10: Learn how to recover from mistakes.

Perhaps the biggest learning curve for new performers is how to get over mistakes on stage. But also that mistakes will happen a lot in your first few gigs. You'll expect your performance to be like practice and this is a big mistake in itself! It won't feel like practice. And because of this you are likely to make more mistakes than normal. Just expect that to happen and you're already a lot closer to getting a good live performance than the beginners that expect it to be perfect.

11: Practice what you'll say on stage.

Don't just practice what you're going to play. Once you've chosen a couple of songs practice how you'll introduce each one. Why is the song special to you? Who played the song originally? Do you want the audience to sing along? Pretend like the audience are in front of you and say a few words (keep it brief) before each song.

12: When you finish a song remember to thank the audience.

This may sound obvious, but when you're nervous you might not want to even acknowledge you have an audience. A simple thank you on the microphone or a flat hands together thank you gesture is enough.

CONCLUSION:

I've honestly got so many more tips... but these are a good start to getting you on stage. The biggest take away is don't just get up there without practising like you're performing. And finally expect mistakes and learn how to recover from them. Your first performance is rarely enjoyable because of your nerves and expectations, but if you follow the tips above you'll hopefully come off stage feeling positive about your very first gig!