

The Fingertip “Challenge” for Beginner Guitar Players

If you have never played the guitar before, the first few weeks or so will be hard on your fingertips. It's recommended that beginners take it easy the first couple of weeks (or more). Your fingertips need time to heal, but there are some things you can do to help with the process. Keep in mind that once your fingertips have built up calluses and the pain is gone – playing the guitar will be much easier, and more enjoyable!

Important Notes

1. Your fingertips will be sore when you first start playing the guitar. The first weeks of playing guitar can be a painful process for your fingertips. Calluses will start to form in 1-2 weeks depending on how much you are practicing.
2. How long does it take to build calluses? It usually takes around 2-5 weeks for calluses to be fully developed – which will eventually relieve the initial fingertip pain.
3. **Never do these things:**
 - Never play the guitar when your fingers are wet (like after taking a bath, washing dishes, swimming in a pool, etc). This can temporarily soften the skin on your fingertips.
 - Never bite or pick at your fingertips to remove any dead skin. Let your calluses develop naturally.
 - Don't keep playing on a guitar with extremely high action. This is hard on the fingertips, and doesn't really help your playing abilities. Find a guitar with the correct action and playability.
 - Are you pressing down too hard on the strings? Sometimes beginners will press on the strings extra hard without needing to. This will create more fingertip pain and cause poor playing habits.
4. **Things you can do to help lessen the pain:**
 - Make sure you are using the correct size strings. Are you using size .11 on your electric? This size is way too large for beginner players. Start off with .09 strings for electric guitars. Try using .10 for Acoustics (or any size smaller that the music store suggests and has in stock).
 - Apple Cider Vinegar Trick – Beginners can try soaking their fingertips for a couple of minutes in Apple Cider Vinegar after they practice. This is a popular suggestion from many guitar instructors that can assist in this process (this dampens the pain during the callus building timeframe).
 - Finger Nails - Are your finger nails too long? Make sure you keep your nails trimmed.

Tool for Building Calluses

The “VARIGRIP” unit helps to strengthen fingers but can also help to build Calluses



VARIGRIP by Planet Waves



Used mainly to help strengthen fingers and finger dexterity.

At the other end, this unit has simulated guitar strings to help build calluses.



Press down on these simulated strings and you can see the marks on the fingers...

The VARIGRIP unit is a great tool to assist you to develop finger strength and calluses when your guitar is not available. Try it.

Calluses will take time to form. Again, the first few weeks will be hard on your fingertips, but eventually the pain will subside. Beginner players will need to fight through this first part of learning guitar and understand the benefits that will come with it. Once you build up calluses, playing gets easier, and the fun begins!