



10 Ways To Break Free Of Your Guitar Playing Rut!

A rut is a fixed, usually boring routine. As guitar players, we sometimes find ourselves in what can only be called a guitar-playing rut. This is when we get to the point that we feel that we're just going over the same thing time and time again. In other words: not growing as a musician.

When you're in a rut you tend to get discouraged. Some people get stuck in a rut and never recover. I've talked with some players who completely gave up the instrument because of a rut they were in.

Keep in mind that everyone (even the best players) will often find themselves in a rut from time to time. The good news is that there are things you can do that will help you break free from your rut.

Below are 10 tips that you use to break free from your rut and get back on the right track.

1.) Jam With Someone New

If you find yourself in a rut trying to play with other musicians. It doesn't matter what instrument that they play, be it guitar, drums, or trumpet.

Playing with other musicians can spark creativity and encourage you as a player. Don't be intimidated by other musicians, especially other guitar players (no matter if they're better than you). Your primary concern is to grow as a musician and sometimes playing with other musicians is the best way to go.

2.) Listen To A Different Genre Of Music

Most people listen to only 1 or 2 particular genres of music, but as a musician, you should be open to all types of music. If you're into metal music try listening to some blues or jazz. Or if you're into country music try listening to some rock music.

Whatever you do, don't get caught listening to only 1 type of music. It's one of the quickest ways to find yourself in a rut.

3.) Take Lessons

Some of you may feel that you are beyond lessons, but that's seldom the case. Randy Rhodes (of Ozzy Osbourne fame) often looked up instructors in the phone book in cities that the band toured in. He wasn't the type of player who you would think needed lessons but he felt that it helped him grow as a musician and avoid ruts. A good guitar instructor can turn you onto new things that can help you break free from a rut.

4.) Learn A New Scale, Chord, Arpeggio, Etc.

If you find yourself playing the same things all the time, then it's time to learn a new trick or two. The music world is full of scales, chords, arpeggios, etc. that you may not already know. Sometimes learning something new will help spark your inner creativity and break you out of a rut.

5.) Learn A New Style Of Music

Listening to different types of music isn't always enough. Try learning some classical guitar pieces, or buy a slide and play around with some slide guitar. Are you primarily a rock or blues guitar player? Try some country licks for a change.

Don't force yourself into learning a type of music that you dislike, but do try and keep an open mind. Sometimes new styles of music will grow on you especially if you start learning to play some of their parts. As you get a better understanding of how the music is played, you may get a deeper appreciation for that style of music.

6.) Listen To Other Types Of Instruments

A lot of times when I find myself in a rut I'll pop on a Miles Davis CD. I listen to the phrases he plays on his trumpet and try to find ways that I can emulate what he is doing on the guitar.

As guitar players, we tend to listen to mostly guitar-oriented music, but if you give it a try you'll find that listening to other instruments can inspire you to do new things on the guitar. Try listening to some saxophone playing. It can be tremendous fun to emulate a sax solo on the guitar.

7.) Assess Your Playing

I record my guitar playing on a regular basis so I can go back and listen to it at a later time. When I'm in a rut, I'll often go back and listen to some of these recordings. Sometimes I'll hear something that I played previously that catches my attention and inspires me to pursue it further. Other times I'll listen and compare it to my more recent playing to see if there has been any improvement.

8.) Challenge Yourself

Do you feel like your playing is stagnating? Give yourself a challenge! Challenge yourself to learn that new song, or challenge yourself to play faster. Don't worry if you don't succeed. But you certainly won't succeed if you don't try. It can turn a day that you find yourself in a rut into fun.

9.) Don't Listen To ANY Music

Forget music for a while. Turn off the radio and put away your CDs. Pretend music does not exist. It's harder than you may think, but it can be very effective. If you write your own songs it's an absolute requirement to drop all music every once in a while. It will help you get a fresh perspective on things.

10.) Give It A Rest

Sometimes there's nothing you can do but lay the guitar down for a day or two. Forget about the instrument during this time. Think about other things for a change. Perhaps go see a movie or read a book. Do whatever it takes to keep your mind from wandering back to your guitar. Once you feel a little refreshed pick that guitar back up and start anew.