

# Rock'n'Roll Survival Guide

First Aid for the Rock'n'Roll Circus

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# **Rock'n'Roll Survival Guide**

## **So You wanna be a Rock'n'Roll star?**

You pick up a guitar, learn some chords, jump on the stage.

It could be this easy! But I'm afraid it's not :-)

## **Learn about your Motivation and set your Goals**

Why do I want to learn an instrument? Why do I want to become a musician?

Impress ladies, make families happy at festivities, earn money with music, teach an instrument yourself or just become a rock star?

Becoming aware of this motivation is the decisive factor for your learning progress, since learning without a goal rarely leads to success.

A clearly formulated goal can also focus on the correct choice of means to achieve the goal.

Example: Everyone wants to get from A to B, but it depends on whether A and B are LA and New York, or your city and the neighboring village.

In the first case, I need either a train connection, a car and a GPS, or a plane ticket.

In the second case, a hiking map and good shoes may be sufficient.

In other words: the goals or the distance of the goal from one's own point of view determine the choice of means.

You can of course also walk from LA to New York, it just takes longer.

Ok, long story short: When I'm short on time, I shouldn't rely solely on my intuition when studying, especially when I have ambitious goals.

People such as teachers, coaches, managers and bookers can accompany and support you on your way to success.

## **Know basic etiquette**

Make it clear from the start that if you want to make it happen, you can forget the rock star pose for now.

Then when you're headlining at Wacken or Rock im Park, you can start thinking about ravaging hotel rooms. And even then, it's likely that this will come off your fee. Think carefully about it.

But what never goes out of style are simple things like "please" and "thank you".

This is also great to practice in the rehearsal room. The biggest stars in the world are humble and nice people that even your grandma would find sympathetic.

Ultimately, it's about business and that is performance for money, i.e. there is always an opposing side (Organizers, club owners, fans, etc.) with whom you should be good.

The best way to do this is to be polite. In the last few years we have played with a number of bands that have engaged us as openers for gigs in Coburg. As local support, it was our job to provide part of the backline and distribute flyers and posters and massively promote the whole gig.

Almost as much effort as if we had organized the gig on our own. When a couple of young snobbugs arrive with their school band on the day of the performance, neither greet nor dignify a glance, pull off their mediocre show and feel free to Say goodbye again . . . We're not talking about gage now. Well, what can you say?

The moral of the story ':

Would you recommend this band or hire it as local support, if you would play in e.g. Fulda?

As a club owner, would you hire the band on your own initiative? So, try "please" and "thank you" the next time simply without obligation.

If that's not for you, you can exchange it in the shop and get your money back.

## **Know basic Psychology**

Practice creates masters! But how do we manage to take our daily dose of practice? I have students who dutifully pack their guitar in the case and then hide it in the closet or under the bed. And then ask yourself why they didn't come back to practice that week. Quite simply: out of sight, out of mind.

### **Generate attention for our goals**

You can remedy this by setting up your guitar on a guitar stand in the living room / study. It looks like a fruit bowl on the table, you just grab it when you walk past.

### **Avoid distractions**

Telephone, cell phone, internet, especially Facebook with its many games keep you from reaching your goal - learning to play an instrument - get closer by eating up your time. Do as Peter Lustig recommends: Just switch off :-)

### **Plan fixed times**

Humans are creatures of habits. Playing the guitar must become as natural as brushing your teeth. Make it a ritual to strum five minutes right after you get up or five minutes before you go to bed. That brings more than the resolution to spend two hours with the instrument once a week. Hopefully you don't brush your teeth just once a week, do you?

### **Talisman principle**

Beginners in particular feel unsettled by the endless variety of the material to be learned, there are so many decisions to be made: Which chords do I have to learn? Guitar pick or fingerstyle?

Which songs and riffs should I know by heart? Above all: what should I learn and when? Since learning is not a linear process, every learner has different motivations and every brain also works differently (prior knowledge, divergent / convergent, intro / extroverted), most of these questions can only be answered with gut feeling

One technique that helps against the feeling of being lost is the talisman principle.

**What is it exactly?** The musical talisman is what the rosary is to the good Catholic: something that I keep coming back to, that I have mastered inside out and that helps me through difficult hours. For me it was the A minor pentatonic in the fifth position for years. There are several things now, mostly self-written riffs and solos. I start every study / practice / creative session with one of these talismans. It's like a hiking trail that I've walked 100 times and from which I break new ground. My safe home

port, so to speak. He is always at the beginning of a journey and I return to him every time a storm of uncertainty approaches.

**Choose wisely** It is important to choose a talisman in such a way that it does justice to your own level of development, i.e. you have mastered it well. It should be tightened from time to time so that awareness of the level of learning achieved develops. When I am creative, I build myself new fragments that resemble my talisman and can use other creative techniques such as the head-tail method (to come!) To assemble them into more complex structures. When learning new pieces, I first look for the parts that resemble my talisman (e.g. in a solo the part that uses the minor pentatonic scale) and perfect the parts independently of the rest. You can compare that to translating a text. I don't start at the first word and look up the meaning, but first look for words that I already know. This will reduce your uncertainty and increase your motivation to tackle the learning project.

**Conclusion** There is already something in every new piece that you can already do. Look out for it!

## **Electronic helpers**

Apps can also help you learn habits. One of my favorite apps is Coach.me

It lets you set goals such as “play guitar six days a week”.

Then you can be reminded of it daily and then, when you have practiced, tick off.

So you can keep track of whether you have achieved your weekly goals.

## **Learn to write songs**

You will be a much more in-demand musician if you can write songs. And of course regarding royalties you will get more out of it, if you were part of the songwriting process.

### **How to write good songs?**

The simple answer: practice, practice, practice!

The same as practising an instrument, you have to dedicated time to songwriting.

## **Learn how to communicate**

The early bird catches the worm!

Everyone is always available today, cell phone, email, Facebook, Instant Messenger, Skype, etc.

But does it mean that we communicate faster and better?

In my experience not a whit.

Many people check their emails several times a day, but only reply after a week.

It is often enough to inform the sender of a message when you will take care of your request. If I can formulate an answer within 3-5 minutes, I should do that and send it off.

## **Be quick or be dead!**

In a business environment, people want quick, binding feedback, that is precisely why the phone is not dead.

Use it as often as possible. Appointments with venues in particular should be done quickly, use an online calendar within the band to do this, to see if everyone has time. If you don't enter your oh-so-important private appointments and have therefore agreed to gigs, who then can't be played, throws him out of the band.

With another employer, colleagues usually cannot afford to mess around with appointments.

## **Talk is cheap!**

How easy is it to make a promise, like: I'll help you move, I'll fix your car, etc. Just because you could do something doesn't mean you really want to do it.

Do you sometimes say things to look good?

Be honest with yourself. Do you really want to keep what you have promised?

You will be measured by whether you keep your promises.

So if in doubt, it is better to say no beforehand, then the disappointment is not so great afterwards.