
London College of Music Examinations

Rock Guitar

Handbook Grade 3

From 2019

Rock Guitar: Grade 3

This handbook is part of a progressive series of handbooks, primarily intended for candidates considering taking London College of Music examinations in rock guitar. The series provides a solid foundation of musical education for any rock guitar student, whether intending to take an exam or not. Candidates must always refer to the current Rock Guitar Syllabus: from 2019.

Syllabus validity

This handbook is valid for examinations from Summer 2019.

Entering for an exam

Exam entries can be made online at lcme.uwl.ac.uk/enter

Audio recordings

Audio recordings of the pieces and backing tracks are available from lcme.uwl.ac.uk

Cover design

Each LCME Rock Guitar handbook has a unique cover design. Designers MuirMcNeil used the instrument name to create a multi-layered typographic 'seed' composition, using interlocking fonts from their TwoPlus type system. This composition was then zoomed, cropped and modified by a colour palette specific to the instrument, generating a one-off cover design for each book. The seed composition is scaled in calibrated increments, the early grades zooming deep into the artwork, the higher grades revealing more of the typographic basis of the composition. As a result, bold, abstract, geometric cover designs develop progressively in their detail and complexity through the series.

Rock Guitar: Grade 3

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Introduction

Tuning

For exam purposes instruments should be tuned to concert pitch (A=440Hz). The use of an electronic tuner or other tuning aid is permitted. The examiner will offer an E or A note to tune to on request.

Notation

Fretboxes

Fretboxes are used to illustrate the chords required at this level. The vertical lines represent the strings (with the line furthest to the right representing the high E string); horizontal lines represent the frets. 0 above a string line indicates that an open (unfretted) string should be played. The numbers on the lines show the recommended fingering.

Tab

As well as traditional musical notation the pieces within this book are also notated using tablature. The horizontal lines represent the strings (with the top line being the high E string). The numbers on the string lines refer to the frets — 0 on a line means play that string open (unfretted). Tablature does not include rhythm notation, so you should look at the traditional notation and listen to the recordings to guide you.

Fingering and picking options

Throughout the exam, it is your choice whether to use a plectrum, fingers or a combination of both; a thumbpick can be used if desired. The fingerings given in this book are likely to be effective for a wide range of players, however any alternative fingerings that produce an effective musical result are acceptable.

Component 1: 60 marks

Prepared Performances

Requirements

Performance of two pieces, chosen from the list below:

All Right Now — Free
Paranoid — Black Sabbath
Pinball Wizard — The Who

Information

Obtaining the notation and audio

The notation and audio tracks for the pieces above are included in the book *Graded Guitar Songs: 9 Rock Classics for Beginning Level Guitarists* (Hal Leonard). These songs have been arranged to be suitable for this grade.

Backing tracks

The pieces at this level are to be performed along to set backing tracks; these backing tracks are on a CD which is included with *Graded Guitar Songs: 9 Rock Classics for Beginning Level Guitarists*. You do not need to bring these to the exam, as the examiner will provide the necessary backing tracks. Also included with the CD are recordings of the tracks performed in full for demonstration purposes.

Performance style

Performances should be accurate reproductions of the specially arranged versions of the pieces as notated and recorded in the book *Graded Guitar Songs — 9 Rock Classics for Beginning Level Guitarists*. Alternative fingerings and playing positions can be adopted if preferred, provided the overall musical result is not altered. Prior to the performance commencing, you will be allowed a brief soundcheck to choose your sound and volume level. A clean or a distorted sound can be used, and you can bring distortion or other effects units to the exam providing you can set them up promptly and unaided.

Performing from memory

You are encouraged to perform the pieces from memory, although this is not a requirement. If notation is used it should not detract in any way from the confidence and presentation of the performance.

Guidance

Performances should be fully accurate and very confidently presented. Timing, clarity and technical control should be totally secure throughout and some expressive qualities (such as varying the dynamics of the performance) should be displayed.

In performance

All Right Now

The arrangement of this piece is in the original key of A major. The 4-bar riff that features in the intro and verse sections starts with an open position A major chord. In order to change smoothly and fluently onto the D/A chord that follows, it is recommended that you play the A major chord using the first finger of your fretting hand; this keeps your second and third fingers free to fret the remaining notes needed for the D/A chord. (The chord symbol D/A indicates that this is a 'slash' chord, in which you should play an inversion of D major with A as the bass note.)

In the third bar, as well as the subtle chord change that occurs, there is an added challenge of reproducing the rhythm accurately. Care needs to be taken to ensure that only the B, G and D strings are sounded when strumming this pattern. The rhythm itself is also quite tricky, so listen to the recorded track carefully to ensure that you are familiar with how this section should sound.

The chorus uses mainly power chords played on the D and G strings. In some places, rests (silences) often occur between chords, so where rests are marked in the notation make sure you either bring your picking hand against the strings to stop them from ringing out or release the pressure with the fretting hand to create the same result. In some bars, power chords are required to ring out across more than a whole bar; count the timing on these sustained power chords carefully to ensure that all the notes ring out for the correct period of time.

The instrumental section in this arrangement is an abridged and slightly simplified version of the guitar solo that features on the original version of the track, although it does include a number of the main elements and phrases from the original solo. Consider carefully which finger to use for the slide up from fret 3 to fret 10 in bars 27 and 28 as you will need to be ready for the faster phrase that follows it. These faster, hammer-on phrases in bars 29 and 31 will need careful practice to ensure the rhythm is smooth and even — listen to the recorded track for confirmation of how the rhythm should sound here. Towards the end of the instrumental there are a few whole tone bends from fret 12 of the B string; take care with all of these to ensure that the string is being bent up to the correct pitch each time.

Paranoid

The arrangement of this piece is in the original key of E minor. The 8-bar introduction to this track features a series of hammer-ons. The notation and

recorded track will need to be followed carefully here to ensure that the rhythm is performed accurately. The first three hammer-ons are played as quickly as possible, whereas the hammer-ons in bar 2 have an even quaver rhythm. There is also an added challenge in the first bar where the rhythm is syncopated (some notes are played across the beat). Listen to the recorded track carefully to ensure you are familiar with how this should sound.

Power chords then dominate the track with a fast, even rhythm being required to provide energy and momentum to the music. The abbreviation 'P.M.' in the notation indicates the use of 'palm muting'. Bring the side or edge of your picking hand gently against the bass strings at the bridge. You should still be able to strum the bass strings, although the strumming movement will be restricted a little. This will give you the classic chugging rhythm of this track, particularly when deployed with a distorted guitar sound. Follow the notation and practise carefully to ensure that you start and stop this palm-muting technique in the correct places.

Although the bridge section only contains two different power chords (each one ringing out for two bars) take care to count the beats in this section carefully. Each chord should ring out for eight beats in total so count these off and then confidently strike the next chord.

Pinball Wizard

This arrangement moves through the same keys as the original recording: commencing in B minor, then predominantly B major for the remainder of the track until a modulation to a D major key centre for the ending.

The 3-note chords that feature in the intro should each be allowed to ring out for the full four beats each, before switching to the next one. The rhythm then becomes more complex in the final three bars of the intro, so listen to the recorded track and follow the notation carefully here.

The rhythm part that is notated for the second intro and the verse is performed on an acoustic guitar on the original artist's recording, although this recorded track features an electric guitar. Keep your strumming as light and smooth as possible here to ensure the even flow of the semiquavers that are notated — don't grip the pick too tightly as this may cause the rhythm to falter. The first and seventh chords in each bar feature an accent mark (>) above the notation. On these accented beats try to slightly emphasise the chord by strumming it a little harder — but don't overdo it or you'll lose the flow of the rhythm. The biggest challenge in this section is the stamina required to maintain the rhythm across all of the chord changes. Practise it slowly at first and focus on one chord at a time before trying to play the entire verse all the way through.

The riff that comes in at bar 20 is an instrumental break in the track, so try to strum the chords here with some energy, although not at the expense of the notated rhythm. Take care to follow the rests (silences) that occur here and ensure that the strings are as silent as possible during these chord changes.

The penultimate bar of the chorus contains a variation of the D chord that produces a Dsus4 chord by moving the note on fret 7 of the B string up to fret 8. In order to ensure this chord transition sounds as smooth as possible, try to keep the rest of the D chord in place as you move your little finger up one fret.

Component 2: 30 marks

Improvisation

Requirements

Lead and rhythm improvisations over a previously unseen chord progression

Information

In the exam

You will be shown an 8-bar chord progression in 4/4 time. This will be played five times without stopping (on a backing track). After the final playing, the backing track will end on the first chord of the progression played once.

Improvisation structure

- **Verse 1** (listening)
Listen and digest the chord progression, without playing
- **Verses 2 to 3** (lead playing)
A 4-beat count-in will be given and then during the next two verses you should improvise a lead guitar solo
- **Verses 4 to 5** (rhythm playing)
A 4-beat count-in will be given and then during the last two verses, you should improvise a rhythm guitar part

Preparation time

You will be given a short time to study the chord chart and will be allowed a brief soundcheck with the track, prior to the performance commencing, to choose your sound and volume level. A clean or a distorted sound can be used, and you can bring distortion or other effects units to the exam providing you can set them up promptly and unaided.

Backing track

The backing track will include drums, bass and rhythm guitar for the first three verses, but in the last two verses the recorded rhythm guitar part will be omitted so you can perform your own rhythm guitar part. The rhythm guitar part recorded on the backing track gives an indication of the standard that is expected. Your rhythm playing should be stylistically appropriate and with a feel

that is in keeping with the backing track.

Chords

At this grade, chords are expected to be fingered as barre chords or power chords — however, the occasional use of open position chords, where this enhances the musical performance, is acceptable. The following chords may occur in the chord progressions:

- Major barre chords: G A B C D E
- Minor barre chords: Gm Am Bm Cm Dm Em
- 5th (power) chords: G5 A5 B5 C5 D5 E5

Scales

To ensure accuracy it is essential to select the most appropriate scale to improvise with. At this grade the first chord in the progression will be the key chord — it will indicate the scale that would generally be best to use for improvising a lead solo. Although other scale options and improvisation approaches are acceptable, the scales listed below will provide a core foundation for improvisation at the appropriate level of technical development. At this grade, improvisation using 2-octave fretted scales is expected.

Scale	Use over progressions featuring these chords
G major	G Am Bm C D Em
A blues	A5 C5 D5 E5 G5
B pentatonic minor	Bm D Em G A
C pentatonic major	C Dm Em G Am
D natural minor	Dm Gm Am C

Sample tests

Included at the end of this chapter are examples of the style and standard of the tests that will be given at this grade. Above each chart is a suggestion of a scale that could be used for improvisation. These are given for guidance in this book; they will not appear in the examination. Audio recordings of these, with backing tracks in the style of those that will be used in the exam, can be downloaded from the LCME website.

Guidance

Performance advice

The examiner will be looking for accuracy and confidence in the execution, with a high level of clarity and fluency. There should be clear evidence of stylistic interpretation, inventiveness and creativity that is maintained throughout the track. Dynamic markings are not included, to enable you to display your own dynamic interpretation.

Lead playing techniques

The improvised solo should be accurate in terms of note selection and timing in relation to the accompaniment with some evidence of melodic phrasing and shaping. The use of specialist techniques such as string bending, vibrato, slides and slurs (hammer-ons and pull-offs) should be used to enhance the musical performance, and use of at least some of these techniques is expected to be demonstrated. Keep an awareness of where you are in the chord chart during the lead section, so that the 4-beat count-in to commence your rhythm playing doesn't take you by surprise — the examiner will not restart the backing track once it is underway.

Rhythm playing techniques

Rhythmic security and fluency are expected. Where it would enhance the performance, use of rhythmic techniques such as palm-muting and 'ghost-strums' are encouraged, however the use of these techniques at this grade is not expected to be extensive. When switching to rhythm playing, consider quickly adjusting the volume on your guitar in a controlled manner, as the settings you have used for lead playing may overpower the accompaniment if used for rhythm playing. At this grade, the most straightforward methods of adjusting the volume are:

- Turn down the volume control on your guitar.
- Use the pick-up selector on your guitar to switch to a pick-up with a lower output, or (if your guitar has more than one volume control) to a pick-up that you have pre-adjusted to a lower volume setting.
- If you are using your own distortion/overdrive unit for lead playing, turn this off and use a quieter clean sound for rhythm playing.

Chords

G major

Musical staff showing the notes for G major: G, B, D. The staff has a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are positioned on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th strings.

3fr.

B major

Musical staff showing the notes for B major: B, D#, F#. The staff has a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notes are positioned on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th strings.

7fr.

D major

Musical staff showing the notes for D major: D, F#, A. The staff has a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are positioned on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th strings.

5fr.

G minor

Musical staff showing the notes for G minor: G, B, D. The staff has a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one flat (B flat). The notes are positioned on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th strings.

3fr.

B minor

Musical staff showing the notes for B minor: B, D#, F#. The staff has a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notes are positioned on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th strings.

7fr.

A major

Musical staff showing the notes for A major: A, C#, E. The staff has a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are positioned on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th strings.

5fr.

C major

Musical staff showing the notes for C major: C, E, G. The staff has a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are positioned on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th strings.

3fr.

E major

Musical staff showing the notes for E major: E, G, B. The staff has a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are positioned on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th strings.

7fr.

A minor

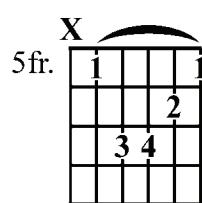
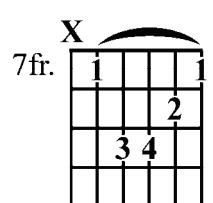
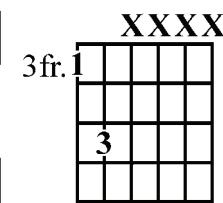
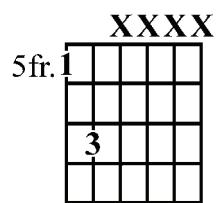
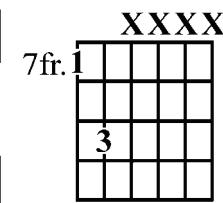
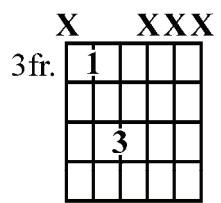
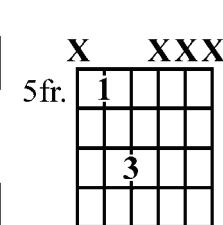
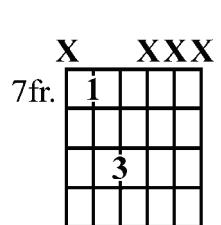
Musical staff showing the notes for A minor: A, C, E. The staff has a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one flat (B flat). The notes are positioned on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th strings.

5fr.

C minor

Musical staff showing the notes for C minor: C, E, G. The staff has a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one flat (B flat). The notes are positioned on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th strings.

3fr.

D minor
**E minor**
**G5**
**A5**
**B5**
**C5**
**D5**
**E5**


Scales

G major

2fr.

2fr.

1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2		2	2	
	3	3			
4	4	4	4	4	4

A blues

5fr.

5fr.

1	1	1	1	1	1
2					
3	3	3			
4		4	4		

B pentatonic minor

7fr.

7fr.

1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3	3	3				
4			4			

C pentatonic major

5fr.

5fr.

1	1	1	1	1	1
3	3	3			
4		4	4		

D natural minor

9fr.

9fr.

			1					
1	1	1	2	1	1			
			2					
3	3	3	4					
4	4		4					

Sample tests

Example 1 (G major scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

4	G	G	Bm	Bm	
	Am	C	D	Em	

Example 2 (A blues scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

4	A5	A5	C5	G5	
	A5	C5	E5	E5	

Example 3 (B pentatonic minor scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

4	Bm	D	Em	Em	
	Bm	G	A	A	

Example 4 (C pentatonic major scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

4	C	C	Em	Am	
	C	C	Dm	G	

Example 5 (D natural minor scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

4	Dm	Gm	Dm	Am	
	Gm	Gm	C	C	

Component 3: 10 marks

Aural Assessment

Requirements

A series of aural tests, designed to assess your listening ability and musicianship

Rhythm test

A 2-bar riff will be played three times via a recording. During the third playing you will clap along with the exact rhythm of the riff.

The time signature will be 4/4 and note durations will not be shorter than quavers. Rests, ties and dotted notes may be included.

Some examples of the type of riffs that will occur at this grade are shown overleaf, with the rhythm to be clapped indicated below the tab.

Pitch test

The same riff will be played two further times, with a click track. A gap will be left after each playing so you can practise the riff. You will then be asked, after a 1-bar count-in, to play along with the click track, accurately reproducing the riff on the guitar.

The examiner will state which scale the riff is based on and it will start on the keynote of the scale. The range of scales from which the riff will be derived is limited to G major, C pentatonic major, A blues, D natural minor and B pentatonic minor.

Example 1 (G major)

Music score and tab for Example 1 (G major). The score is in G major (one sharp) with a 4/4 time signature. The tab shows a guitar neck with three strings (T, A, B) and six frets. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes. The tab includes numerical fret markings and rhythmic indicators below the strings.

Example 2 (A blues)

Music score and tab for Example 2 (A blues). The score is in A major (two sharps) with a 4/4 time signature. The tab shows a guitar neck with three strings (T, A, B) and six frets. The melody includes eighth and sixteenth note patterns. The tab includes numerical fret markings and rhythmic indicators below the strings.

Example 3 (B pentatonic minor)

Music score and tab for Example 3 (B pentatonic minor). The score is in B minor (one sharp) with a 4/4 time signature. The tab shows a guitar neck with three strings (T, A, B) and six frets. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes. The tab includes numerical fret markings and rhythmic indicators below the strings.

Example 4 (C pentatonic major)

Music score and tab for Example 4 (C pentatonic major). The score is in C major (no sharps or flats) with a 4/4 time signature. The tab shows a guitar neck with three strings (T, A, B) and six frets. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes. The tab includes numerical fret markings and rhythmic indicators below the strings.

Example 5 (D natural minor)

The diagram shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). Below the staff is a fretboard with two octaves of strings labeled A and B. Fret numbers are indicated above the strings: 12, 9, 10, 9, 12, 10, 10, 10, 12, 10. Below the strings are corresponding fingerings: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1.

Chord recognition test

The examiner will state the key and then a very short chord progression will be played two times. Without using the guitar, you will be required to identify the penultimate chord within the chord progression.

The progression will be either in the key of G major or D major. It will start and end on the key chord and contain just one other chord — this will be either the IV chord (subdominant) or V chord (dominant) of the key, so either C or D in the key of G major, or G or A in the key of D major; it is this chord that you will be asked to identify.

Below are examples of the type of chord progressions that will occur at this grade in the chord recognition tests. In examples 1 and 3 the movement from the penultimate (V) chord to the final (I) chord creates an ending known as a perfect cadence. In examples 2 and 4 the movement from the penultimate (IV) chord to the final (I) chord creates a more subtle ending known as a plagal cadence.

Example 1

Chord progression: | **G** | **D** | **G** |

Example 2

Chord progression: | **G** | **C** | **G** |

Example 3

Chord progression: | **D** | **A** | **D** |

Example 4

Chord progression: | **D** | **G** | **D** |

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