
London College of Music Examinations

Rock Guitar

Handbook Grade 5

From 2019

Rock Guitar: Grade 5

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 5

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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.

Prepared Performances

Requirements

Performance of two pieces, at least one of which chosen from the list below:

- The Boys Are Back in Town — Thin Lizzy
- Sweet Child O' Mine: Guns N' Roses
- Under the Bridge — Red Hot Chili Peppers
- Always With Me, Always With You — Joe Satriani

Information

Obtaining the notation and audio

The notation and audio tracks for the pieces above are included in the book *Graded Rock Guitar Songs: 8 Rock Classics for Intermediate Guitarists* (Hal Leonard). These songs have been arranged to be suitable for this grade. On the recordings, the vocal melody line has been played fairly low in the mix on guitar; the purpose of including the melody line is simply to provide a guide during the performance as to where in the song you are.

Own choice pieces

One piece (maximum duration 5 minutes) can be of your own choice, including own compositions, provided it forms a balanced programme of music which demonstrates a variety of techniques and musical influences drawn from the rock genre. The technical standard must be at least of a similar standard to the pieces on the performance list. If the standard of the piece is significantly below that of those listed for the grade this may be reflected in the marking. In selecting a suitable piece you should refer to the main guitar parts (excluding any guitar solos) of the listed pieces in order to assess the standard expected. Where a piece originally contains an improvised guitar solo, this can be reproduced or replaced with an alternative solo that is stylistically appropriate. If an own composition is performed, the compositional element of the piece will not be assessed.

Backing tracks

The pieces above are to be performed along to set backing tracks; these backing tracks are on a CD which is included with *Graded Rock Guitar Songs: 8 Rock*

Classics for Intermediate 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. Any own choice piece backing tracks must be brought to the exam. Audio must normally be in CD format; if you wish to play backing tracks in other formats you must bring a self-contained playback unit, including suitable amplification and speakers, and be able to set this up promptly and unaided.

Performance style

Performances should be accurate reproductions of the specially arranged versions of the pieces as notated and recorded in the book Graded Rock Guitar Songs: 8 Rock Classics for Intermediate Guitarists. Alternative fingerings and playing positions can be adopted if preferred, provided the overall musical result is not altered. Own choice pieces must be rock-oriented in performance style and arrangement, for example, the performance of a traditional classical guitar piece or a jazz standard would not be appropriate for this exam. 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.

Alternate tunings

If you wish to use an alternative tuning for an own-choice piece you should be able to change to this tuning promptly and accurately, or preferably have another instrument already tuned for this purpose.

Guidance

Performances should be fully accurate and very confidently presented. Timing, clarity and technical control should be totally secure throughout and some expressive qualities should be displayed.

In performance

The Boys Are Back in Town

The arrangement of this track is in the key of A major, instead of the key of A \flat major used in the original Thin Lizzy recording. The riff that occurs in the introduction includes palm-muting on some of the single notes; ensure that this technique is applied only to the appropriate notes and not to all of the single notes.

In the verse, the chord changes occur fairly quickly and care needs to be taken to ensure that all the chords ring out clearly for their full rhythmic value. Notice how the chord changes, in both the verse and chorus, occur slightly ahead of the beat. The chord change from Bm7 to Bm7/E is quite subtle, so make sure the low open E string is only sounded on the second of these chords.

In the chorus, make sure the power chords are allowed to ring out for their

full value. The chorus ends with some repeated lead riffs featuring a distinctive triplet rhythm. The backing track includes the harmony guitar part for the lead riffs, so make sure your timing is accurate here to match the rhythm of the harmony guitar.

The bridge section starts with a triplet pattern played across the Dsus4 and D chords. This triplet rhythm adds a sense of excitement and movement, but can be tricky to play at speed, so be prepared to practise these two bars separately.

The coda moves through the chorus power chords to a short instrumental section, before finishing with the main harmony riff section repeated four times.

Sweet Child O' Mine

The arrangement of this track is in the key of D major, instead of the key of D \flat major used in the original Guns N' Roses recording. The introduction is played with continuous quavers, so take care to ensure that the rhythm is even throughout. Try to prevent the notes overlapping into each other, as otherwise the clarity of each individual note can become muddy, especially if using distortion.

The move to open position for the start of the verse is fairly quick, so make sure you're ready for this at the end of the introduction. In the verses, allow the notes of each arpeggiated chord to ring on, as indicated in the notation and on the recorded track. The chorus features some damped power chords in several places. These are performed by resting the fingers of the fretting hand gently against the strings whilst strumming.

For the two solos, listen to the recorded track carefully whilst following the notation to ensure that you are familiar with how these should sound; in particular the second solo is an abridged version of the guitar solo featured in the original recording of the song. The pre-bend notes may take some practice to execute effectively: the note should be bent up to the desired pitch first and then picked, prior to allowing the note to descend to its normal fretted pitch. The double notes at the end of the second solo feature a challenging string bend that rings out for almost two bars.

Under the Bridge

When playing the introduction, listen very carefully to the 'click' on the backing track to ensure that your playing keeps reliably in time. You can play the introduction either fingerstyle (with thumb and fingers) or using a plectrum for the bass notes and fingers for the treble strings. The remainder of the piece can be played either using the fingers or a plectrum; choose whichever technique works best for you.

As the introduction is played at a slower tempo than the remainder of the song, the click that comes in for the start of the verse is slightly faster. Follow this click carefully on the backing track so you are ready to come in on time with the E chord that starts the verse. To reflect the style of the original recording, on some of the verse chords, the note on the top E string may be omitted, if preferred, to facilitate the chord changes. For instance, on the demonstration track the note on fret 7 of the top E string is deliberately not sounded when playing the E chords that occur.

The verse that comes in after the E major 7th chord features some variations, including short fills around the B chord and a chord hammer-on. To execute the

chord hammer-on effectively, ensure that your first finger is securely holding down all the strings at fret 4 and then hammer the tips of fingers 2, 3 and 4 onto the strings firmly and simultaneously to produce the complete C#m chord. It may take some practice to produce the chord clearly.

In the chorus, care is needed to ensure that only the E, B and G strings sound when playing the three-note B chord. The damped F#m chord that is played in places during the chorus section includes an important percussive element. Make sure that the transition between the damped and normal chords is fluent, with the distinction between the two clear.

The bridge and outro sections both feature a number of chords played in open position; make sure that these chords are not cut short as you change between them.

Always With Me, Always With You

The chords in the introduction are all played using palm muting; place the side of your picking hand lightly against the strings to produce a slightly damped sound.

For the main theme, follow the notation and listen to the recorded track carefully so that the slides and rhythm are all accurately reproduced. The rhythm is quite complex in places, so take your time to ensure you are familiar with how this should sound. Make sure that the longer notes are allowed to ring out for their full value, and feel free to add some vibrato to enhance these notes.

In the middle section, the chordal guitar part has been notated in this arrangement, rather than the lead guitar line from the original Joe Satriani recording. As with the introduction, palm muting is used throughout this section and some practice may be required to maintain this.

Theme 2, commencing after the middle section, is a repeat of the main theme of the piece but played one octave higher. After this, make sure you're ready to move quickly down the fretboard to replay the main theme in its original octave to end the piece.

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. Each chord progression will include one split bar, containing two chords lasting for two beats each.

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 that is 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

The following chords may occur in the chord progressions:

- Dominant 7 chords: at any pitch
- Sus4 chords: at any pitch
- Flat 5th (power) chords: at any pitch
- Sharp 5th (power) chords: at any pitch

In addition, any chords introduced at previous grades may also occur.

Altered 5th power chords

The flat 5th and sharp 5th chords above are altered power chords which contain the root note of the chord and either a flat fifth or a sharp fifth. They are notated in this chapter as C5dim, indicating that the fifth is flattened ('dim' is an abbreviation for diminished), and C5aug, indicating that the fifth is sharpened ('aug' is an abbreviation for augmented). The chords are given in this chapter as two-note power chords, but the octave above the root can also be included in all types of 5th chords.

Fingerboard positions

The chords that occur at this grade have been notated with a root note of C, but all of the chord shapes are transpositional, meaning the shapes can be moved up or down the fretboard to any pitch without the need to change fingering. In order to avoid large fretboard shifts, two shapes are provided for each chord type. When playing the chord progressions, you should carefully select which position to play each chord in so as to avoid large cumbersome shifts up or down the fretboard. This table lists the first finger fret position needed to produce chords at different pitches.

First finger on fret number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Chords with root on E string	F	F#/G♭	G	G#/A♭	A	A#/B♭	B	C	C#/D♭	D	D#/E♭	E
Chords with root on A string	A#/B♭	B	C	C#/D♭	D	D#/E♭	E	F	F#/G♭	G	G#/A♭	A

Scales

In order to improvise a lead guitar solo accurately and effectively, you will need to learn a range of appropriate scales upon which to base your improvisation. For exam purposes the first chord in the progression will be the key chord and will indicate the scales that would generally be best to use for improvising a lead solo. Although other scale options and improvisation approaches are acceptable, the following scales will provide a core foundation for improvisation at the appropriate level of technical development:

- Natural minor
- Pentatonic minor
- Blues

- Major
- Pentatonic major

Scale shapes

The use of 2-octave fretted scales is expected at this grade. The core scales for this grade are shown at the end of this chapter with a keynote of C. As all of the shapes are transpositional they can be moved up or down the fretboard to any key without the need to change fingering. This table lists the fret on the E (6th) string that can be used to start each scale, depending upon the key required.

Fret	1/13	2/14	3/15	4/16	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Keynote	F	F#/G♭	G	G#/A♭	A	A#/B♭	B	C	C#/D♭	D	D#/E♭	E

Fingerboard positions

Two different fretboard fingerings are illustrated for each scale type. Use of more than one of the provided fretboard positions for a particular scale type is expected from candidates for the lead improvisation section. The two scale shapes provided represent one possible option for a second scale position. However, there are several other options for a second scale position, and any alternative scale position that is musically correct may be used if preferred.

Choice of scales

The examiner will not provide any advice regarding identifying the key or guidance on which scale to use. However, for the purposes of this exam grade, bear in mind the following:

- If the starting chord is minor, then a natural minor or pentatonic minor scale (with the same starting pitch) could be used.
- If the starting chord is major, then a major or pentatonic major scale (with the same starting pitch) could be used.
- If the progression starts with a dominant 7 chord, then a blues scale (with the same starting pitch) could be used.
- If the progression starts with a fifth chord, then a blues scale or pentatonic minor scale (with the same starting pitch) could be used.

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 well-defined 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 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

Effective and creative rhythmic variations are expected. Where it would enhance the performance, use of rhythmic techniques such as palm-muting, 'ghost-strums', staccato and accents are encouraged. When switching to rhythm playing, consider quickly adjusting the volume (and possibly effects) on your guitar, as the settings you have used for lead playing may overpower the accompaniment if used for rhythm playing.

Chords

C7
root on E string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for C7 (root on E string) at 8th fret.

Musical notation: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb), notes G4, Ab4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5.

Fretboard diagram (8 fr.):

1	1	1	1
	2		
3			

String positions (T, A, B):

T	8
A	8
B	10

C7
root on A string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for C7 (root on A string) at 3rd fret.

Musical notation: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb), notes G4, Ab4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5.

Fretboard diagram (3 fr.):

X	1	1	1
		3	4

String positions (T, A, B):

T	3
A	5
B	3

Csus4
root on E string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for Csus4 (root on E string) at 8th fret.

Musical notation: Treble clef, notes G4, Ab4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5.

Fretboard diagram (8 fr.):

1			1
	2	3	4

String positions (T, A, B):

T	8
A	10
B	10

Csus4
root on A string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for Csus4 (root on A string) at 3rd fret.

Musical notation: Treble clef, notes G4, Ab4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5.

Fretboard diagram (3 fr.):

X	1		1
		2	3
			4

String positions (T, A, B):

T	3
A	6
B	5

C5dim
root on E string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for C5dim (root on E string) at 8th fret.

Musical notation: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb), notes G4, Ab4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5.

Fretboard diagram (8 fr.):

X	X	X	X
2			

String positions (T, A, B):

T	
A	
B	9

C5dim
root on A string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for C5dim (root on A string) at 3rd fret.

Musical notation: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb), notes G4, Ab4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5.

Fretboard diagram (3 fr.):

X	1		X
		2	

String positions (T, A, B):

T	
A	4
B	3

C5aug
root on E string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for C5aug (root on E string) at 8th fret.

Musical notation: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), notes G4, Ab4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5.

Fretboard diagram (8 fr.):

X	X	X	X
4			

String positions (T, A, B):

T	
A	
B	11

C5aug
root on A string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for C5aug (root on A string) at 3rd fret.

Musical notation: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), notes G4, Ab4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5.

Fretboard diagram (3 fr.):

X	1		X
		4	

String positions (T, A, B):

T	
A	6
B	3

Scales

C natural minor

7fr.

T
A
B

8 10 11 8 10 11 8 10 7 8 10 8 9 11 8

5fr.

T
A
B

8 5 6 8 5 6 8 5 7 8 6 8 9 6 8

7fr.

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

5fr.

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

C pentatonic minor

8fr.

T
A
B

8 11 8 10 8 10 8 11 8

5fr.

T
A
B

8 6 8 5 8 5 8 6 8 6 8

8fr.

1	1	1	1
3	3	3	
4			4

5fr.

	1	1	
2			2
4	4	4	4

C blues

8fr.

T
A
B

8 11 8 9 10 8 10 11 8 11 8

5fr.

T
A
B

8 6 8 9 5 8 5 8 6 7 8 6 8

8fr.

1	1	1	1
2			
3	3	3	
4		4	4

5fr.

	1	1	
1		2	2
		3	
3	3	4	4
4			

C major

7fr.

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

4fr.

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

C pentatonic major

7fr.

1	1	1	
2			2
		3	
4	4	4	4

5fr.

1	1	1	1
3	3	3	
4			4

Sample tests

Example 1 (D blues or D pentatonic minor scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

$\frac{4}{4}$ D5	D5dim	D5	F5
C5	B \flat	C5 / G5 /	A5

Example 2 (B natural minor or B pentatonic minor scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

$\frac{4}{4}$ Bm	D	Asus4	A / Asus4 /
Bm	Em	F \sharp m	F \sharp m

Example 3 (A major scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

$\frac{4}{4}$ A	Asus4	A	Asus4
F \sharp m	C \sharp m	D	Esus4 / E /

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

$\frac{4}{4}$ B	G \sharp m	B	G \sharp m
F \sharp sus4	F \sharp	D \sharp m / E /	F \sharp

Example 5 (B \flat blues scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

$\frac{4}{4}$ B \flat 7	D \flat 7	A \flat 7	F7
B \flat 7 / A \flat 7 /	D \flat 7	E \flat 7	F7

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 semiquavers.

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 taken from. The riff may be in any key and will start on either the keynote or 5th of the scale. The range of scales from which the riff will be derived is limited to major, pentatonic major, blues, natural minor and pentatonic minor.

Example 1 (B♭ major scale)

Example 1 (B♭ major scale)

Example 2 (D pentatonic major)

Example 2 (D pentatonic major)

Example 3 (C natural minor)

Example 3 (C natural minor)

Example 4 (F pentatonic minor)

Example 4 (F pentatonic minor)

Example 5 (C blues)

The image shows a musical score for a 4/4 time signature. The top staff is a treble clef with a melody. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature with fret numbers (10, 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 9) and strumming patterns indicated by vertical lines and brackets.

Chord recognition test

A 4-bar chord progression will be played four times, using a simple strumming rhythm. During the fourth playing you will play along, accurately reproducing the chords. During the first three playings you can practise, but you will only be assessed during the fourth playing. You do not need to play the chords in the same positions as on the recording, nor copy the exact rhythm of the strumming provided the overall timing is secure — the assessment will focus on the accurate reproduction of the chord pitches. You may also be asked to name any or all of the chords in the progression.

The examiner will state the key and the progression will start on the key chord. The chord progression will be in the key of either G or A major and the chord range will be limited to the I, IV, V, IIm and VIIm chords of these keys.

- G major: G C D Am Em
- A major: A D E Bm F#m

There will be one chord per bar and only one minor chord.

Below are examples of the type of chord progressions that will occur at this grade in the chord recognition tests.

Example 1

4/4 G | Em | C | D ||

Example 2

4/4 G | C | D | Em ||

Example 3

4/4 G | Am | C | D ||

Example 4

| $\frac{4}{4}$ A | E | F \sharp m | D ||

Example 5

| $\frac{4}{4}$ A | D | Bm | E ||

Example 6

| $\frac{4}{4}$ A | E | Bm | D ||