
London College of Music Examinations

Rock Guitar

Handbook Grade 4

From 2019



Rock Guitar: Grade 4

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 4

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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:

- Layla — Derek and the Dominos
- All Along the Watchtower — The Jimi Hendrix Experience
- Sweet Home Alabama — Lynyrd Skynyrd
- Walk This Way — Aerosmith

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 of the songs above 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

Layla

There are several different guitar parts on the original recording of this track, so follow the notation carefully throughout to ensure that your performance is accurate to the exam arrangement. The opening semiquaver lick is played using hammer-ons and pull-offs and these need to be played smoothly and fluently to ensure that the rhythm is accurate and even. This lick is then played two octaves higher, starting at fret 10 on the B string. Listen to the recorded track carefully here to ensure the longer notes that follow the initial lick are all allowed to ring out for their full value.

The chords that feature in the verse are performed using a variety of different techniques. The first C#m chord should sound for its full length, whereas the remaining three C#m chords in the same bar should be cut

short to produce a clipped 'staccato' sound. The damped F#m7 chord can be performed by resting the fingers of the fretting hand gently against the strings whilst strumming, although this effect may occur naturally as you release the pressure of the fretting fingers to change to the next chord. The large fretboard movement from the open E chord at the end of the verse up to fret 10 to commence the chorus lick may take a little practice to perfect.

The chorus features a return of the main licks that appeared in the introduction and is repeated several times. Maintaining the accuracy of the rhythm and the string bends whilst repeating these licks may take some practice, so prepare slowly and carefully here to build up the stamina in your finger muscles.

All Along the Watchtower

The introduction starts with a chordal riff before switching to a short lead guitar solo. String bends dominate this solo, so care needs to be taken to ensure that the pitch of the string bends is accurate.

The verse features a simplified version of the chord-based fills that occur in the original version of the song. The fills are played using a combination of a hammer-on and pull-off and will need to be executed fluently and smoothly so that the rhythm of the chord sequence is not interrupted. The instrumental section that follows features the same chords as the verse but with a busier rhythm pattern. Take care to ensure that the damped semiquaver chords are played fluently.

The final verses use the same chord progression again, but with a variation on the playing style. The guitar solo in the outro includes a series of repeated, unison string bends that move up the guitar neck. The biggest challenge here is to ensure that the pitch of each string bend matches the pitch of the fretted note on the top E string.

Sweet Home Alabama

Listen carefully to the demonstration track to help capture the distinctive rhythm that is used in the introduction. The fills that occur after the G major chords in the introduction are tricky to execute at first, so practise these separately initially to ensure that the notes are played smoothly and fluently.

The chords in the verse have a clipped feel on the bass notes; bring your picking hand gently against the strings to cut the notes on the open strings short, or release the pressure slightly with your fretting hand if the note is not an open string.

The instrumental section that follows the verse contains a number of slides and hammer-ons that lend fluidity to the phrases but may require some careful practice to execute smoothly. Try to ensure that the rhythm of the notes is being played correctly when employing these techniques, and listen to the recorded track carefully to ensure that you are familiar with how this section should sound.

The chorus incorporates a series of short riffs that enhance the accompaniment chords — these are interspersed midway by a repetitive semiquaver phrase that uses flowing hammer-ons. Listen to and practise this section carefully, as accurate performance of the rhythm here can be a challenge.

Walk This Way

The introduction riff features semiquavers and may require some practice to play at the required tempo. Take care to observe the rests that occur in this introduction; bring your picking hand against the strings to silence them cleanly.

The verse riff contains a C5 power chord followed by a 4-note phrase that draws on the rhythmic feel of the original Aerosmith recording. There are a number of fingering options available here as you switch from the power chord to the four-note phrase, so try to adopt a fingering approach that allows this change to be performed fluently. When the introduction riff returns in the latter part of the verse make sure to damp the notes on the low E string where marked, by resting your fretting hand against the string whilst picking the notated rhythm. Also, notice the subtle variation in timing between the riff in the introduction and how it is played in the verse.

The chorus includes a repeated double-note lick with a slight string bend on the B string at fret 4. Take care here to ensure that only the B string is slightly bent up — try not to bend the 5th fret note on the top E string as well.

The coda incorporates a variation on the introduction riff, switching between starting on the low E and A strings. Practise this slowly at first and build up the speed and stamina gradually.

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

The following chords may occur in the chord progressions:

- Major barre chords: at any pitch
- Minor barre chords: at any pitch
- 5th (power) chords: at any pitch

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

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.

Barre on fret:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Root on E string:	F	F#/G♭	G	G#/A♭	A	A#/B♭	B	C	C#/D♭	D	D#/E♭	E
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	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

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 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 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, 'ghost-strums' and staccato are encouraged. 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.

Barre chords

In barre chords the first finger effectively replaces the nut and acts as a 'bar' across all the strings. In chords with the root note on the A string, although you can still place the first finger barre over all six strings, you should omit the sixth

string in your strum (as indicated by the symbol 'X' in the fretboxes).

To ensure that your barre chords ring clearly you should observe the following advice:

- The first finger should be straight and in-line with the fret, rather than at an angle to it.
- The first finger need not be completely flat: it can be tilted very slightly away from the fret toward its outer side.
- Position the first finger so that the creases at its joints do not coincide with the strings; if necessary, adjust the barre until you find the optimum position.
- Ensure that fretting fingers, other than the first finger, remain upright and press against the strings with their tips.
- Do not exert excessive pressure with either the first finger or the thumb.
- All fingers should be positioned as close to the fretwire as possible.

Chords

C major
root on E string

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

8fr.

Diagram shows notes: C (8), E (8), G (9), C (10), E (10), G (8).

String positions (T, A, B):

T	8
A	8
B	10
	10
	8

C major
root on A string

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

3fr.

Diagram shows notes: C (3), E (5), G (5), C (5), E (5), G (3).

String positions (T, A, B):

T	3
A	5
B	5
	5
	3

C minor
root on E string

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

8fr.

Diagram shows notes: C (8), E (8), G (9), C (10), E (10), G (8).

String positions (T, A, B):

T	8
A	8
B	10
	10
	8

C minor
root on A string

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

3fr.

Diagram shows notes: C (3), E (5), G (5), C (5), E (5), G (3).

String positions (T, A, B):

T	3
A	4
B	5
	5
	3

C5
root on E string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for C5 (root on E string) at 8th fret.

8fr.

Diagram shows notes: C (8), E (8), G (9), C (10), E (10), G (8).

String positions (T, A, B):

T	
A	
B	10
	8

C5
root on A string

Musical notation and fretboard diagram for C5 (root on A string) at 3rd fret.

3fr.

Diagram shows notes: C (3), E (5), G (5), C (5), E (5), G (3).

String positions (T, A, B):

T	
A	5
B	3

Scales

C natural minor

7fr.

T
A
B

8fr.

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

C pentatonic minor

8fr.

T
A
B

8fr.

1	1	1	1	1
	3	3	3	
4				4

C blues

8fr.

T
A
B

8fr.

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

C major

7fr.

T
A
B

7fr.

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

C pentatonic major

5fr.

T
A
B

5fr.

1	1	1	1	1
	3	3	3	
4				4

Sample tests

Example 1 (C pentatonic minor scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

4 4 Cm	Fm	B_b	Gm	
Cm	A_b	B_b	B_b	

Example 2 (F[#] natural minor scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

4 4 F[#]m	E	F[#]m	Bm	
F[#]m	D	Bm	C[#]m	

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

4 4 A_b	E_b	Fm	D_b	
A_b	B_bm	D_b	E_b	

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

4 4 B_b	Cm	Dm	Cm	
Gm	Dm	Cm	F	

Example 5 (C blues scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

4 4 C5	C5	B_b5	F5	
C5	E_b5	F5	G5	

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 the keynote 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 (A blues)

Example 1 (A blues) is a musical score in 4/4 time, key of A major (two sharps). It consists of two measures. The first measure contains a melodic line in the treble clef and a guitar tablature line. The tablature line is labeled 'T A B' and contains the numbers 7 7 7 5 5 5 7 7 7 6 5. The second measure contains a melodic line in the treble clef and a guitar tablature line. The tablature line is labeled 'T A B' and contains the numbers 7 7 7 5 5 5 7. The guitar tablature is written on a six-line staff, with the numbers indicating the frets to be played.

Example 2 (F natural minor)

Example 2 (F natural minor) is a musical score in 4/4 time, key of F natural minor (three flats). It consists of two measures. The first measure contains a melodic line in the treble clef and a guitar tablature line. The tablature line is labeled 'T A B' and contains the numbers 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 3 4. The second measure contains a melodic line in the treble clef and a guitar tablature line. The tablature line is labeled 'T A B' and contains the numbers 1 1 1 1 1 3. The guitar tablature is written on a six-line staff, with the numbers indicating the frets to be played.

Example 3 (A major)

Example 3 (A major) is a musical score in 4/4 time, key of A major (two sharps). It consists of two measures. The first measure contains a melodic line in the treble clef and a guitar tablature line. The tablature line is labeled 'T A B' and contains the numbers 7 6 4 6. The second measure contains a melodic line in the treble clef and a guitar tablature line. The tablature line is labeled 'T A B' and contains the numbers 4 4 4 4 4 6 7. The guitar tablature is written on a six-line staff, with the numbers indicating the frets to be played.

Example 4 (C pentatonic minor)

Example 4 (C pentatonic minor) is a musical score in 4/4 time, key of C pentatonic minor (three flats). It consists of two measures. The first measure contains a melodic line in the treble clef and a guitar tablature line. The tablature line is labeled 'T A B' and contains the numbers 10 10 10 10 8 10 8. The second measure contains a melodic line in the treble clef and a guitar tablature line. The tablature line is labeled 'T A B' and contains the numbers 10 10 10 10 8 10. The guitar tablature is written on a six-line staff, with the numbers indicating the frets to be played.

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.

The chord progression will consist of the following chords: G5 C5 D5 E5. There will be one bar of each chord. The progression will start on G5; the other chords may follow in any order.

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

Example 1

$\frac{4}{4}$ G5	C5	D5	E5	
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Example 2

$\frac{4}{4}$ G5	D5	C5	E5	
------------------------------------	-----------	-----------	-----------	--

Example 3

$\frac{4}{4}$ G5	E5	C5	D5	
------------------------------------	-----------	-----------	-----------	--

Example 4

$\frac{4}{4}$ G5	E5	D5	C5	
------------------------------------	-----------	-----------	-----------	--

Example 5

$\frac{4}{4}$ G5	C5	E5	D5	
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Example 6

$\frac{4}{4}$ G5	D5	E5	C5	
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