

*Teach Yourself*  
**VISUALLY™**

# Guitar

The Fast and Easy Way to Learn

Second  
Edition

- Step-by-step instructions
- Hundreds of color photos

Charles Kim

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# Teach Yourself VISUALLY™ Guitar, 2nd Edition

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**VISUALLY™**

## **Guitar**

*Second Edition*

by Charles Kim



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### **Teach Yourself VISUALLY™ Guitar, 2nd Edition**

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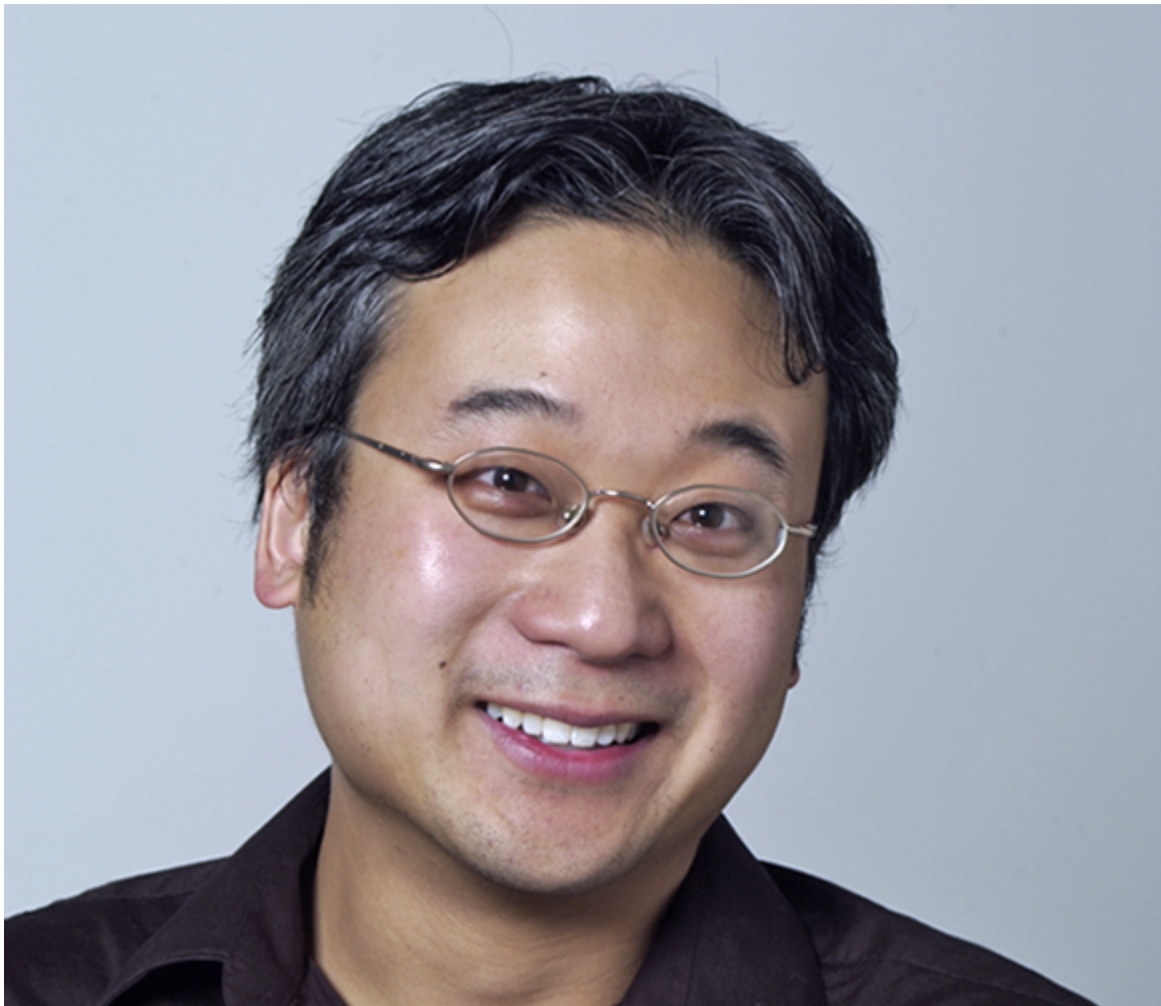
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## **About the Author**

**Charles Kim** (Chicago, IL) plays guitar, electric and upright bass, pedal steel, banjo, violin, alto saxophone, piano, keyboards, and drums. He teaches guitar, bass, songwriting, recording, and music theory at Chicago's renowned Old Town



School of Folk Music. A multifaceted musician, producer, and composer featured on numerous albums, Kim is also a composer and sound designer for film, TV, dance, and theatre companies. His scores have been commissioned and featured by the Royal Academy of Art, Showtime, and the History Channel.



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This book is dedicated to my mother, Hai Ja Kim, who was my first music teacher.

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- Sweetwater

# Chapter 1: Learning to Play

You've chosen to start off on a musical adventure: playing the guitar. Let's take a look at some of the facets of the instrument and the different musical options it offers. I'll also show you how to create a practice plan and pursue your guitar playing into the future.

[Hit the Ground Running](#)

[Continue Your Guitar Education](#)

[Some Final Advice Before You Start](#)

## Hit the Ground Running

Compared to other instruments, the guitar is a relatively easy instrument to learn. You can play it from the first day, using a few simple chords. You'll be playing in just a few pages!



## **Start Playing Today**

Violin and trumpet students have to practice diligently for years to play a major scale with a warm tone in tune. While the guitar will eventually make its intricacies known to you, you can learn the first three chords (see Chapter 6) and a simple strumming pattern (see Chapter 9) on your first day. The frets, which divide the string length, do the job of keeping you in tune, and you'll play simple rhythms until you develop more coordination. Although you'll eventually want to reach higher levels of proficiency, you can start creating music right away!

## **Set Goals for Yourself**

The trick to teaching yourself anything is to practice on a steady schedule and to set realistic goals. Give yourself time to learn, and don't get discouraged if things don't come to you immediately.

People often become their own worst enemies when learning a musical instrument because they set unrealistic goals. Remember that mastering an instrument is a learning process that is both mental and physical. You understand what you have to do, but training your hands takes time. Allow your body to develop muscle strength and memory, which are slower to develop in an adult. You will eventually develop those skills, so don't lose patience!

## **Practice the Right Way**

Develop a reasonable but steady practice regimen. Try to practice every day, if only for 15 or 20 minutes. If you can't practice every day, try not to put your guitar away for several days in a row. Make sure you're playing at least every other day. Leave the guitar next to the TV or somewhere else where you'll see it often, and let your hands get used to the instrument in your spare time.

Starting and stopping your guitar playing will only make the process more discouraging. You will probably progress more quickly than you realize or give yourself credit for. Be prepared to work through the rough spots. Your efforts eventually will be rewarded!

Keep the learning experience fun by playing songs you love. Doing so will take the "work" element out of practicing, and you'll master the skills you need before you know it!

## **Continue Your Guitar Education**

Now that you've started your musical journey with the guitar, you'll want to find ways to pursue your playing. Here are some options to consider as you use this book as a reference.



## **Work with a Private Teacher**

After you've worked on some of the basics, you might seek the guidance of a private instructor. You can work with a teacher on individual playing issues and specialize in different types of music.

Nothing can replace the inspiration and clarity that come from working with a professional musician. Use this book as a resource while your teacher helps you focus on specific issues. He or she can design a special program of songs and exercises to take your playing to the next level of proficiency.

## **Learn from Other Guitarists**

Part of the beauty of music is the interaction and sharing you experience when playing with others. Learn from your friends as you use your guitar as an outlet for musical communication. Continue the learning experience by playing with other musicians who are slightly more experienced than you are. You'll gain guidance and inspiration, as well as ideas about what to pursue in your independent studies or with your instructor.

Also play with friends who are beginning guitarists like you. Realize that some of your friends might learn certain things faster than you; don't worry about it or compare yourself

negatively to them. Every guitarist finds certain tasks easier than others. Your friend may find it easy to play barre chords, but find it difficult to play finger-style guitar as well as you do. Everyone's development differs from skill to skill.

### **TIP**

Make sure you're clear on what your teacher expects from you in terms of both short-term and long-term development. That way, you will know how to realistically gauge your progress and spare yourself unnecessary frustration.

## **Some Final Advice Before You Start**

Remember to set realistic goals for yourself. Don't set your standards so high that if you don't meet them, you get discouraged and give up. Muscle strength and muscle memory don't develop overnight, but with consistent practice you will develop them eventually.

### **Practice, Practice, Practice!**

Practice is most effective when it is regular and consistent. Practicing for half an hour a day is better than cramming in a four-hour session once a week. Muscles and reflexes need a regimen to stay sharp. If you know you won't be able to practice every day, then try to play every other day. If you're taking lessons, try to practice a little right after you meet with your instructor. Doing so provides a great

chance to ingrain what you have learned while it is fresh in your mind.



## **Work on Different Skills**

As you continue to learn new skills, including different fretting techniques, lead guitar, and different rhythmic approaches, you may find that certain ones are harder to master than others. Don't let work in one area stop you from working on skills in other areas. For example, don't feel that you have to master barre chords before you experiment with lead guitar. You may find that you have a knack for vibrato and string bending, but your index finger muscles may need to develop some strength before you can perform these skills competently.

Finally, don't forget to have fun! Don't let technical goals obscure the reason you picked up the guitar in the first place.



# Chapter 2: Parts of the Guitar

All guitars have similar essential features. Before you start playing, let's take a look at the different parts of the electric and the acoustic guitar.

[Parts of the Acoustic Guitar](#)

[Parts of the Electric Guitar](#)

[Headstock and Tuning Pegs](#)

[Neck](#)

[Body](#)

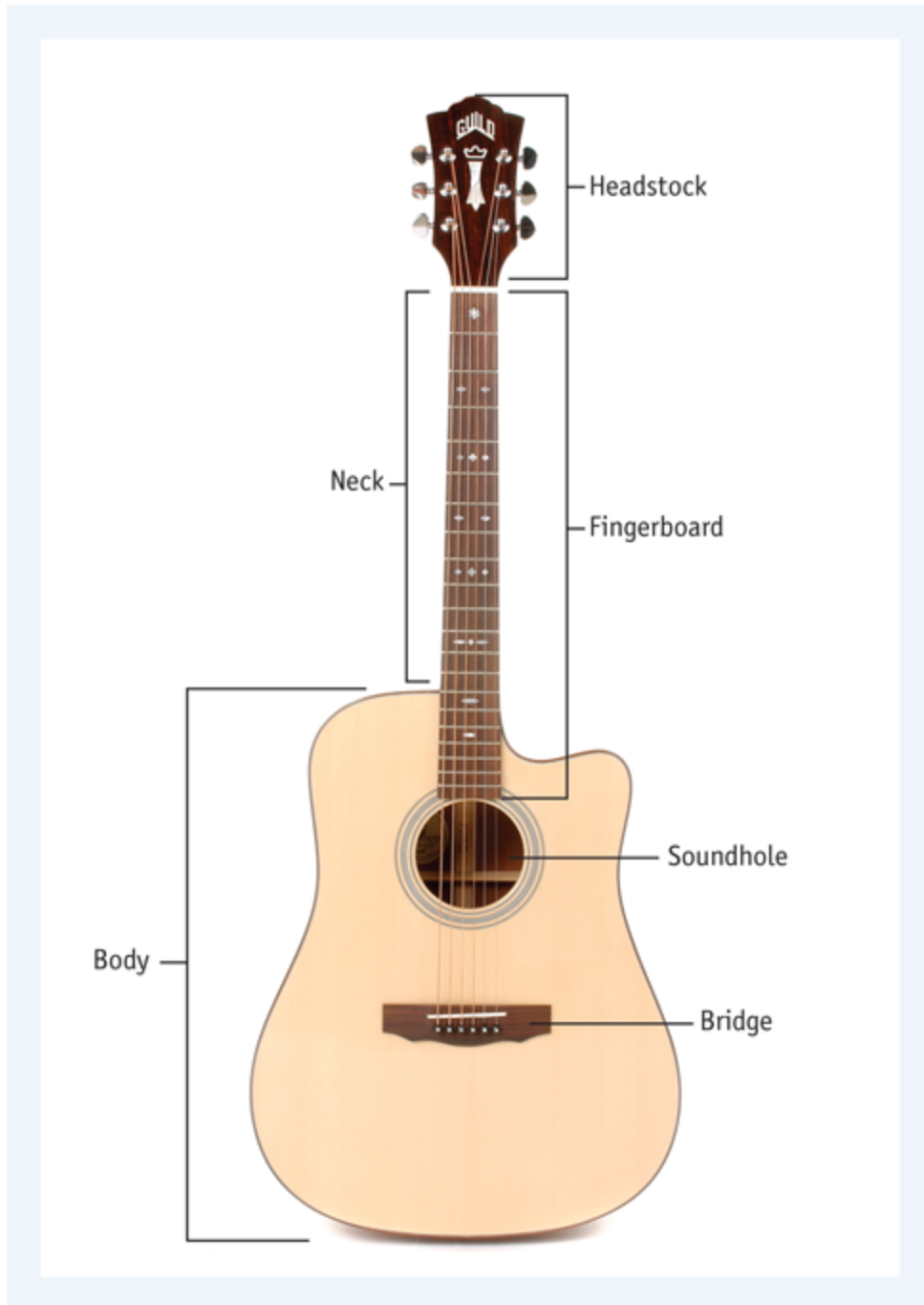
[Bridge](#)

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## Parts of the Acoustic Guitar

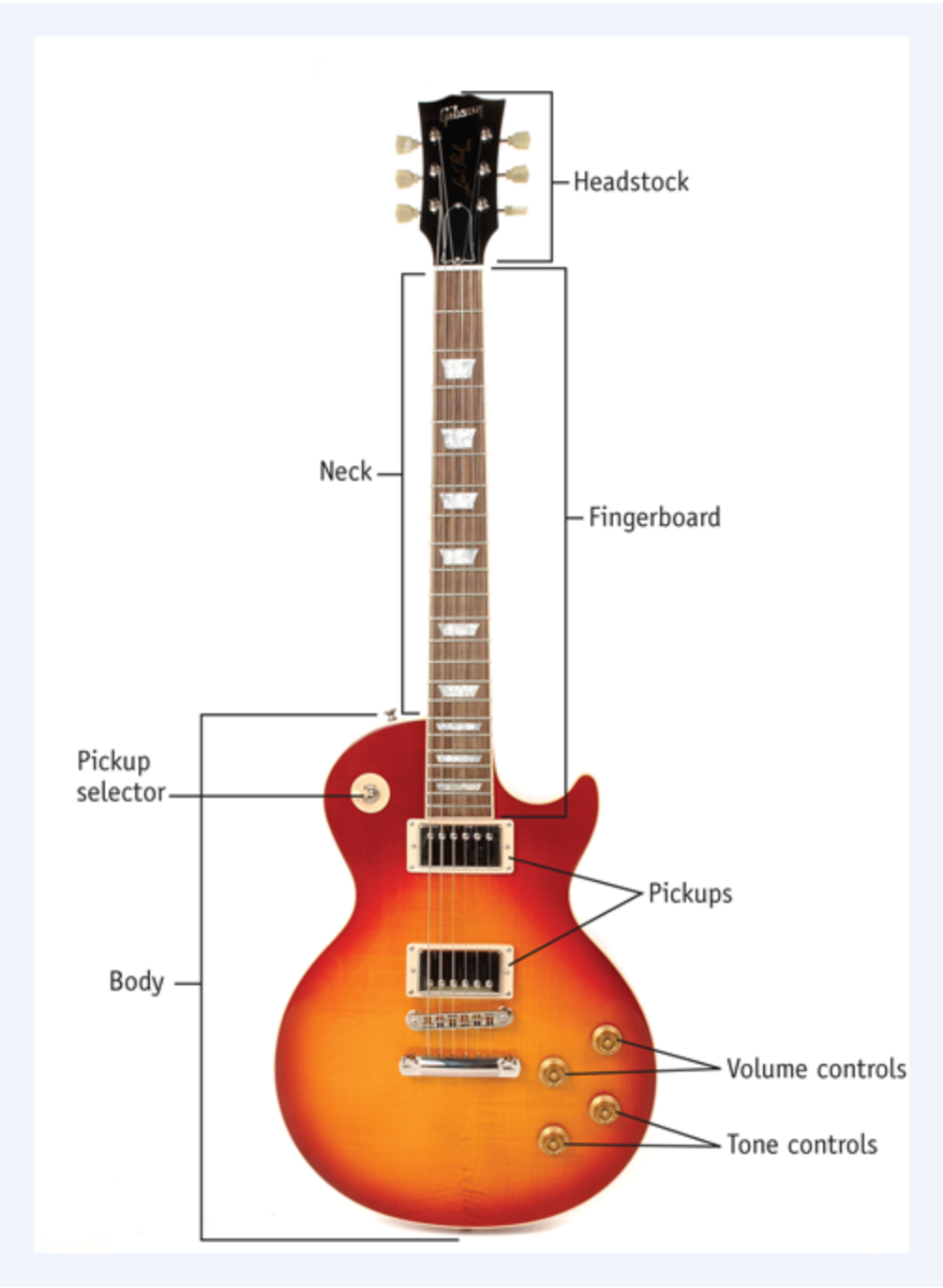
Let's get acquainted with the most common parts of the acoustic guitar.



## Parts of the Electric Guitar

Now let's look at the parts of the electric guitar. Some of them are similar to the acoustic guitar, while other

components—especially those involving electronics—are different.



# Headstock and Tuning Pegs

Now let's look at the parts of both acoustic and electric guitars in more detail, starting with the top of the instrument—the headstock—which contains the tuners.

## Headstock

The headstock is where the strings end at the tuning pegs.



## Tuning Pegs

The tuning pegs or tuners tighten or loosen the tension of the strings, thus raising or lowering the pitch. You adjust the tuning pegs to keep the guitar in tune. Most acoustic guitars, steel-string and nylon, and some electric guitars have three tuners on the top and three on the bottom of the headstock.



Some electric guitars have their tuners all along the top, six in a row, as shown here.



## Neck

The neck is where you place your fretting hand. If you are a right-handed player, your fretting hand is your left hand; if you're left-handed, it is your right hand. The fretting hand's fingers press on top of the strings, while the thumb provides support on the back of the neck.

### **Fingerboard**

The fingerboard is the playing surface of the neck, which is divided by the guitar's frets and stretches down to the body of the guitar.



## Markers

The markers enable you to find a specific fret quickly. Some are simple dots; other guitars have ornate inlays. Most manufacturers of steel-string and electric guitars place markers at the 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, 12th, and 15th frets.



## Side Markers

Many guitars have side markers in addition to fingerboard markers, as shown here. Classical and other nylon-string guitars usually have markers only on the side of the neck, and not on the fingerboard itself.