



Essential Insights For The Bass Guitarist

by John Falstrom

1. Practicing should be measured into hours, not minutes.
2. You should practice standing up as often as possible (the angles, vision, and balance of the bass guitar are different than from when you are playing sitting down).
3. Squeezing a racquetball is tremendous for hand and finger strength---Every bassist should always have a few "close at hand".
4. Playing along with a drum machine is definitely one of the best ways of practicing. First of all, it sounds great. It motivates you to "keep on playing along with the beat". A drum machine is excellent for so many reasons that you only have to experience it to see what I mean.
5. Tapping your foot with the beat is an absolute must when playing. Your foot allows you to "feel" the beat at all times. Make sure you're aware of your foot tapping. This is how you acquire an incredible groove (sense of time).
6. I believe you should always play your bass in "standard tuning". If you absolutely have to play notes lower than your low E string, I would get a 5 string bass for these situations. Tuning down means the notes on the bass change (I like seeing the notes as they really are. Tuning down also changes your string height (the strings get closer to the neck---if your "action" is set up perfect--which it always should be---you will notice a lot of notes not even sounding anymore---this is due to the neck straightening out because of less tension from the strings).
7. Every bassist should eventually find the "right" strings that are perfect for you. As you go along your bass playing career, try different strings until you find the right ones that you feel are "your sound and feel". Believe me, all bass strings are slightly different from the next, and there is a big difference in them.
8. Soaking your bass strings in a bucket of soapy water for about 20 hours re-stores them to an almost brand new status. Take your old, worn-out bass strings off your bass, wind them up like they appear when you get them new---Fill up a bucket of soapy water (any laundry detergent soap works best) about half way up, and let your strings soak in this for right around 20 hours---Take out the strings and rinse them off---Let them dry---When you put the strings back on your bass, they are re-stored to an almost brand new condition. I've been doing this for over 30 years i.e. it works.
9. I highly recommend polishing your bass guitar at least once a week. This keeps your bass playing and looking brand new for as long as you own it--Say no more.
10. Your practice room should be set up to where it is inspiring to play your bass guitar. I would have: a good amplifier, a metronome (a drum machine would be much better), a music stand, a tuner, as many bass books as possible, DVDs on bass playing, a good stereo (to hear the bass), a great music selection (Cd's, etc.)---I would also have my bass guitar on a guitar stand at all times (this allows you to see your bass at all times---I can't tell you how much I learned just by studying the fretboard while my bass was on its guitar stand).

John Falstrom, Author of EADG 4

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