

The Specialists in Guitar Education

# RGT<sup>®</sup>

Registry of Guitar Tutors

# Exam Information Booklet

Valid from 2011 until further notice

# ROCK GUITAR PLAYING



UNIVERSITY OF  
WEST LONDON

LONDON COLLEGE OF MUSIC EXAMINATIONS

Exams are run in partnership with

**London College of Music Exams**

Qualifications are certificated by the University of West London



**“RGT offers quality exams you can have confidence in.”**

RGT rock guitar grade exams are accredited by:



## About Registry of Guitar Tutors (RGT)

RGT was established in the UK in 1992 and is now the world's premier organisation of guitar educators. To find a registered guitar tutor in your area visit [www.RGT.org](http://www.RGT.org)

RGT exams are operated in partnership with London College of Music Exams, which was founded in 1887 and is one of the world's most respected music examination boards.

RGT organises guitar exams, from beginner to professional Diploma level, in numerous countries around the world.

RGT offers exams in rock guitar, electric guitar, acoustic guitar, bass guitar, jazz guitar and popular music theory.

To view more information about any RGT exams visit [www.RGT.org](http://www.RGT.org)

RGT qualifications are awarded and certificated by the University of West London and, from Grade One onwards, are accredited by Ofqual and have been placed on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. They are included as performance measures within the School Achievement and Attainment Tables, and are approved as 'additional and specialist learning' in the 14-19 Diploma Catalogue.

From Grade Six onwards, RGT exams attract UCAS points which can be used towards university entrance.

For more information about RGT visit [www.RGT.org](http://www.RGT.org)

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# Introduction to Rock Guitar Grade Exams

These exams focus on the musical skills specifically needed by rock guitarists.

There are 10 levels of rock guitar exam, starting with Initial Stage and then Preliminary Grade for beginner and novice players, followed by 8 levels of grade exam.

## Brief summary of each exam

### Initial Stage

**Prepared Performances:** you choose and perform two specially composed rock pieces from the RGT handbook.

### Preliminary Grade

**Prepared Performances:** you choose and perform three specially composed rock pieces from the RGT handbook.

**Aural Assessment:** you repeat the rhythm of an unseen riff and identify which of two notes is the highest.

### Grades 1 to 5

**Prepared Performances:** you choose and perform two specially arranged classic rock pieces from the lists provided in the RGT grade handbooks (see the lists overleaf). At Grades 4 & 5 you can substitute a free choice piece for one of the listed pieces.

**Improvisation:** you improvise a lead guitar solo and then a rhythm guitar part to a backing track.

**Aural Assessment:** you repeat the rhythm of an unseen riff, then the notes of the riff; you identify some chord types or (at Grades 4 & 5) play along to an unseen chord progression.

### Grades 6 to 8

**Prepared Performances:** you perform three rock pieces. The pieces can be chosen from the lists provided in the RGT grade handbooks (see overleaf) or one or more pieces can be a free choice piece.

**Improvisation:** you improvise a lead guitar solo and then a rhythm guitar part to a backing track.

**Aural Assessment:** you repeat the rhythm of an unseen riff, then the notes of the riff; you play along to an unseen chord progression.

***It is stressed that the information in this booklet is only intended to provide an outline guide to the contents of the exams. It is essential that candidates study the RGT grade handbooks in order to become aware of all the exam requirements and content prior to entering an exam.***

# Summary of exam components

## Component 1: Prepared Performances

### *Initial Stage and Preliminary Grade*

The RGT handbooks for these exam levels each contain six guitar instrumental pieces that have been specifically written for these exams. For Initial Stage, candidates should choose and perform two of these pieces over the backing tracks that are supplied with the handbook; three pieces should be performed for Preliminary Grade.

The scales and chords used in the pieces for these two exam levels are listed below and therefore acquiring a practical knowledge of them will be essential in helping to learn and perform these pieces.

At these levels, all scales and chords used in the pieces are in 'open-position' (i.e. fingerings will be on the first few frets of the fretboard and will include one or more open strings).

#### **Initial Stage**

- A natural minor scale – 1 octave.
- E pentatonic minor scale – 1 octave.
- Minor chords – Am, Em.
- Fifth (power) chords – A5, E5.
- Major chords – D, G (4-string version).

#### **Preliminary Grade**

- A pentatonic minor scale – 1 octave.
- E blues scale – 1 octave.
- G major scale – 1 octave.
- Minor chords – Am, Em.
- Fifth (power) chords – A5, D5, E5.
- Major chords – G, C, D.

### *Grades 1, 2 & 3*

Each of these RGT handbooks contains a list of, and performance advice for, three well-known classic rock pieces; candidates should choose TWO of these pieces to perform over a backing track. The pieces have all been specifically arranged and recorded by RGT for these rock guitar grades.

The classic rock pieces for these grades are:

#### **Grade 1**

- Sunshine Of Your Love – Cream
- Smoke On The Water – Deep Purple
- Smells Like Teen Spirit – Nirvana

#### **Grade 2**

- Day Tripper – The Beatles
- Wonderful Tonight – Eric Clapton
- Should I Stay Or Should I Go – The Clash

### Grade 3

- All Right Now – Free
- Paranoid – Black Sabbath
- Pinball Wizard – The Who

\*For copyright ownership reasons, the notation and audio tracks for these pieces cannot be included in the RGT grade handbooks. However, all the performance pieces that are listed for Grades One, Two and Three are in the book/CD *Graded Guitar Songs – 9 Rock Classics for Beginning Level Guitarists*, which is available from [www.BooksForGuitar.com](http://www.BooksForGuitar.com) or can be ordered from your local music store.

### Grades 4 & 5

Each of these RGT handbooks contains a list of, and performance advice for, four well-known classic rock pieces; candidates should choose TWO of these pieces to perform over a backing track. The pieces have all been specifically arranged and recorded by RGT for these rock guitar grades.

If preferred, candidates can substitute a free choice piece for one of the listed pieces, providing it is of at least a similar standard and does not exceed five minutes duration.

The classic rock pieces listed for these grades are:

#### Grade 4

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

#### Grade 5

- 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

\*For copyright ownership reasons, the notation and audio tracks for these pieces cannot be included in the RGT grade handbooks. However, all the performance pieces that are listed for Grades Four and Five are in the book/CD *Graded Rock Guitar Songs – 8 Rock Classics for Intermediate Guitarists*, which is available from [www.BooksForGuitar.com](http://www.BooksForGuitar.com) or can be ordered from your local music store.

### Grades 6, 7 & 8

Candidates should choose and perform a short set of THREE rock pieces. The grade handbooks specify the minimum and maximum duration of the set. A variety of rock styles and techniques should be included.

The pieces can be selected from the lists overleaf; alternatively, any or all of the pieces can be 'free choice' if preferred, providing these are of a similar standard. In selecting suitable 'free choice' pieces, candidates should refer to the main guitar parts (excluding any guitar solos) of the songs listed in order to assess the standard expected: guitar solos often exceed the technical standard expected for a grade exam and therefore it is not intended that they should be used as a measure of the standard of playing expected for the exam. Candidates can substitute their own lead solos in place of those of the original artists if they wish to.

The pieces listed for grades 6, 7 & 8 are:

### Grade 6

- Albatross – Fleetwood Mac
- Parisienne Walkways – Gary Moore
- Crazy Train – Ozzy Osbourne
- You Really Got Me – Van Halen
- Toxicity – System of a Down
- Justin – Korn

### Grade 7

- Stairway To Heaven – Led Zeppelin
- Samba Pa Ti – Santana
- The Trooper – Iron Maiden
- Private Investigations – Dire Straits
- Seek And Destroy – Metallica

### Grade 8

- Savoy – Jeff Beck
- Satch Boogie – Joe Satriani
- The Spirit of Radio – Rush
- Bat Country – Avenged Sevenfold
- Frank – Steve Vai

\*For copyright reasons, the pieces listed above cannot be included in the RGT grade handbooks. However, the RGT grade handbooks list recommended publications that include the notation and backing tracks for the above pieces. These publications are all available from [www.BooksForGuitar.com](http://www.BooksForGuitar.com) or can be ordered from your local music store.

## Component 2: Improvisation (from Grade 1 onwards)

The candidate will be shown a previously unseen 8-bar chord progression. This will be played through several times, depending on the grade (see RGT grade handbooks for details). After listening to the first verse, the candidate should improvise a lead guitar solo for two or three verses (depending upon the grade) and then improvise a rhythm guitar part during the remaining verses.

The range of chords that may appear in the backing tracks for each grade is detailed overleaf. As the chord progression will be previously unseen by the candidate, the candidate will need to be fully familiar with all the chords for each grade in order to be properly prepared for the chord progressions that will occur in the exam.

The RGT rock guitar grade handbooks each provide several examples of the *type* of chord progression that will occur at the grade. In addition, audio recordings of these sample chord progressions can be downloaded from [www.DownloadsForGuitar.com](http://www.DownloadsForGuitar.com)

In order to improvise a lead guitar solo accurately and effectively, candidates will need to learn a range of appropriate scales upon which to base their improvisation. At each grade, each chord progression will consist of chords grouped together into appropriate keys; provided overleaf, for each grade, are the recommended scales that could be used to improvise over each progression type. Although other scale options and improvisation approaches exist, it is highly recommended that candidates acquire a thorough knowledge of the scales listed for each grade as these will provide a core foundation for rock improvisation.

The RGT rock guitar handbooks provide notation, tab and fretboxes (with suggested fingerings) for all the chords and scales listed.

The use of specialist techniques for both rhythm and lead playing, such as palm-muting, string bends etc. is expected as the grades progress. The grade handbooks provide further details.

## Grade 1

Open position chords are expected at this grade, except where marked \*.

- Major chords – G, C, D
- Minor chords – Am, Em
- Dominant 7th chords – D7
- Fifth (power) chords – A5, B5\*, C5\*, D5, E5, F5\*, G5\*

Improvisation using the following two-octave scales is expected at this grade.

- G pentatonic major (open position)
- E blues (open position)
- A pentatonic minor (fretted)

## Grade 2

Open position chords are expected at this grade, except for the partial-barré chords marked \*.

- Major chords – A, C, D, E, F\*, G
- Minor chords – Am, Dm, Em, F#m\*
- Dominant 7th chords – A7, D7, E7

Improvisation using the following two-octave fretted scales is expected at this grade.

- A pentatonic major
- A blues
- A natural minor

## Grade 3

Major and minor barré chords and fifth (power) chords with root notes of:

- G, A, B, C, D, E

Improvisation using the following two-octave fretted scales is expected at this grade.

- G major
- A blues
- B pentatonic minor
- C pentatonic major
- D natural minor

## Grade 4

Major and minor barré chords and fifth (power) chords at *any* pitch.

At this grade, candidates are expected to be able to use the following two-octave fretted scales in *any* key for improvisation:

- Pentatonic minor, natural minor, major, pentatonic major, blues.

## Grade 5

Chords at *any* pitch:

- All chords from the previous grade, plus:
- Dominant 7 chords
- Sus4 chords
- Flat fifth (power) chords, sharp fifth (power) chords.

All scales from the previous grade (i.e. pentatonic minor, natural minor, major, pentatonic major and blues in any key). In addition, some movement across the fingerboard would be expected by this level – so being able to improvise using the scales listed above in two different fingerboard positions is recommended at this grade.

## Grade 6

Chords at *any* pitch:

- All chords listed for previous grades, plus:
- Minor 7 chords
- Major 7 chords
- Diminished 7 chords
- Dominant 7sus4 chords

All scales from the previous grades (i.e. pentatonic minor, natural minor, major, pentatonic major and blues in any key). At this grade, candidates are expected to demonstrate fluent movement across the fretboard when improvising, equivalent to at least three different fretboard scale positions. In addition, some practical demonstration of the use of arpeggios (or 'chord tones') is expected.

## Grade 7

- All chords from the previous grades, plus:
- Commonly used 'slash' (i.e. 'non-root' bass) chords

All scales from the previous grades (i.e. pentatonic minor, natural minor, major, pentatonic major and blues in any key). At this grade, candidates are expected to demonstrate fluent movement across the fretboard when improvising, equivalent to at least four different fretboard positions of these scales. In addition, candidates may choose to use other scale options over parts of the chord progressions – such as the Dorian modal scale, the Mixolydian modal scale or the harmonic minor scale. Practical demonstration of the use of arpeggios (or 'chord tones') is expected.

## Grade 8

- All chords from the previous grades, plus:
- All minor 7<sup>b</sup>5, dominant 9, minor 9 and dominant 7<sup>#</sup>9 chords.

At this grade, candidates are expected to be able to use the pentatonic minor, natural minor, major, pentatonic major and blues scales fluently across the entire fingerboard in any key for improvisation. In addition, the harmonic minor, Dorian and Mixolydian modal scales might be used in passages within some progressions. Fluent demonstration of the use of arpeggios (or 'chord tones') and, where musically appropriate, chromaticism is also expected.



## Component 3: Aural Assessment (From Preliminary Grade onwards)

### Preliminary Grade

Candidates will be given two tests that involve repeating the rhythm of an unseen riff and identifying which of two notes is the highest.

### Grades 1 - 8

Candidates' aural abilities will be assessed using aural tests based on rock-orientated music styles. The tests will increase in complexity as the grades develop.

#### Rhythm Test

A riff will be played three times. During the third playing the candidate is required to clap along with the exact rhythm of the riff. The rhythmic complexity and length will increase as the grades progress.

#### Pitch Test

The riff from the rhythm test is played two further times with a click track. A gap is left after each playing, so that the candidate can briefly practise the riff. Then, the candidate is required to play along with a click track, accurately reproducing the riff on guitar.

#### Chord recognition test

At Grades 1 to 3, this test involves recognising and identifying chord types and movement between chords.

From Grade 4 onwards, an unseen four-bar chord progression is played four times. During the fourth playing the candidate is required to play along, accurately reproducing the chords on guitar. The range of chords used increases as the grades progress.

*The RGT grade handbooks provide numerous examples of the aural tests; these sample aural tests can be downloaded from [www.DownloadsForGuitar.com](http://www.DownloadsForGuitar.com)*

## Marking Scheme

	Prepared Performances	Improvisation	Aural Assessment
Initial Stage	100%	-	-
Preliminary Grade	90%	-	10%
Grades 1 to 8	60%	30%	10%

65-74.5 = Pass; 75-84.5 = Merit; 85-100 = Distinction

Candidates are advised to download the full RGT Rock Guitar Examination Syllabus from [www.RGT.org](http://www.RGT.org), as this provides very detailed information about the assessment criteria for each section of the exams.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## How Do I Enter For A Grade Exam?

View the RGT website ([www.RGT.org](http://www.RGT.org)) or contact the RGT office (01424 222222) to obtain a current exam fee list, then either enter online using the unique entry code supplied in the penultimate page of your grade handbook or use the official entry form included at the back of the grade handbook. Photocopies of the entry form will NOT be accepted. If you have lessons, your tutor may be able to administer your exam entry on your behalf.

## How Do I Obtain A Grade Exam Entry Form

Entries are accepted only on official RGT entry forms – standard LCM entry forms are NOT valid for RGT exams. An entry form is supplied as part of each grade handbook. In order to ensure that, before entering the exam, all candidates are fully conversant with the exact requirements of these exams the acquisition of a grade handbook is the only method of obtaining an individual exam entry form. Handbooks can be ordered from any good music/book store or purchased online from [www.BooksForGuitar.com](http://www.BooksForGuitar.com)

A special group entry form is available for UK registered schools and colleges only.

## Do I Need To Bring An Amp To The Exam?

No, basic amplification will be provided. Candidates can bring their own amps and/or effects units providing they can set these up promptly and unaided.

## Can I Enter For Any Grade?

Yes. Candidates may enter for any exam without having taken any preceding exam. However, it is recommended that you work through all the grade handbooks to ensure that you develop your playing in a structured way.

## Can I Enter More Than One Exam In The Same Session?

Yes. For example, you could take Grade 2 followed by Grade 3 on the same day.

## Do I Need To Have Lessons With An RGT Tutor Before I Can Enter An Exam?

No, you can enter whether you have a tutor or not – however, tuition from an experienced tutor would undoubtedly prove helpful in preparing for an exam.

## Do I Have To Use The Fingering Given In The Grade Handbooks?

No. The handbooks give fingering for general guidance only. Alternative systematic and effective fingerings will also be acceptable.

## What Do I Get When I Pass?

If you obtain the 65% pass mark you will be awarded an official University of West London / London College of Music Examinations Certificate for the relevant grade. If you achieve 75% you will be awarded a Merit certificate. If you obtain 85% you will be awarded a Distinction certificate.

## When Do Exams Take Place?

In the UK exams are held three times a year. The entry deadlines are: 1st February (March/April exams); 1st May (June/July exams); 1st October (November/December exams).

## Do I Have To Live In The UK?

No. Exams take place in many countries across the world. Special arrangements apply to overseas exams, and candidates should contact the RGT head office (or the local RGT representative) prior to submitting an exam entry.

## Where Are Exams Held?

Exams are held in a wide variety of venues. These may include rooms in schools, colleges, teachers' houses, examiners' houses, rehearsal studios, guitar centres, arts centres and community halls.

## Will I Have To Travel Far?

Not normally. There are exam centres spread widely across the UK. You will be assigned to the centre operating nearest to your home address, usually within one hour's travelling distance. Whether a centre is operating in a particular session depends entirely upon the number of entrants from that area.

## When The Exam Is Finished Will The Examiner Tell Me If I've Passed?

No. After the exam the examiner will write a full report for you. The report will highlight your strengths and weaknesses, and list the marks awarded for each section. This will normally be sent to you within 4 weeks. If you have passed, the certificate will normally follow within 8 weeks. If you have been entered by your tutor, or if you have given the name of your tutor on your entry form, then all result documentation will be sent direct to your tutor unless otherwise requested.

*It is recommended that candidates read the full Examination Syllabus to view much more detailed information, including all the exam regulations. This can be downloaded free of charge from [www.RGT.org](http://www.RGT.org)*

# PERFORMANCE AWARDS

Candidates who prefer not to take a full grade exam can instead opt for a *Rock Guitar Performance Award*.

Performance Awards focus entirely on the performance of prepared pieces.

There are ten levels of Performance Award. The table below shows their titles, and the grade standard they are equivalent to.

Performance Award	Equivalent Grade	Performance Award	Equivalent Grade
Initial Level	Initial Stage	Level 4	Grade 4
Preliminary Level	Preliminary Grade	Level 5	Grade 5
Level 1	Grade 1	Level 6	Grade 6
Level 2	Grade 2	Level 7	Grade 7
Level 3	Grade 3	Level 8	Grade 8

Up to and including Performance Award Level 5, candidates will be assessed solely on the performance of THREE prepared pieces, FOUR pieces for Levels 6 to 8. There are no other components in Performance Awards.

At least one of the pieces must be chosen from those listed for the equivalent grades, but the other pieces can be free choices, providing they are of a similar standard. Candidates should be aware that if the standard of a free choice piece is significantly easier than that of those listed for the equivalent grade, this may be reflected in the marking. The programme should contain a variety of rock styles and techniques.

Performance Awards provide an ideal opportunity for developing rock musicians, who do not wish to take the more comprehensive grade exam, to have their playing professionally assessed and to receive independent feedback on their playing from an experienced examiner. As well as being qualifications in their own right, Performance Awards also offer candidates the opportunity to have their Prepared Performances assessed prior to entering for a full grade exam. Performance Awards are not Ofqual accredited, but are accredited by London College of Music Exams and successful candidates will receive a Performance Award certificate from the University of West London.

## TYPES OF PERFORMANCE AWARDS

There are three types of Performance Award:

**Live Performance Award:** Candidates attend an exam venue and perform their chosen set of pieces, as described above.

**Filmed Performance Award:** This follows exactly the same format as a Live Performance Award, except that candidates submit a video recording of their performance rather than attending an exam venue. The video may be submitted on DVD or uploaded via the RGT website. A slightly higher standard of performance will be expected than for a Live Performance Award.

**Recorded Performance Award:** This follows exactly the same format as a Live Performance Award, except that candidates submit an audio recording of their performance rather than attending an exam venue. The recording may be submitted on CD or uploaded via the RGT website. A significantly higher standard of performance will be expected than for a Live Performance Award.

## Performance Award Marking Scheme

Initial Level to Level 5: up to 30 marks each for the first two pieces performed, up to 40 marks for the last piece performed.

Levels 6 to 8: up to 25 marks for each piece performed.

65-74.5 = Pass; 75-84.5 = Merit; 85-100 = Distinction

Entry forms and more information about Performance Awards can be downloaded from [www.RGT.org](http://www.RGT.org)

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