

AREA 1.

PHYSICAL ABILITY * INTELLECTUAL KNOWLEDGE * TONE/SOUND

This refers to acquiring skills in the craft of music making that constitute your range of technical and conceptual options.

1/ Focus in closely on familiar and simple tasks and be clear with yourself as to whether you are achieving the sound you are intending. It may be that you are not getting a clean sound from a note in a passage because your plectrum is not square onto the string. You may be activating another string unintentionally with your right hand. Shine the spotlight onto any extraneous or unintended sounds. You are listening for accuracy and inaccuracy and what causes both. Often this is simple negligence, lack of attention to detail. Playing a piece very slowly will reveal much about whether you *know* the piece and possible technical flaws.

2/ Conversely, by going to the opposite extreme, throwing caution to the wind and attempting tasks that are at the limit of or beyond your current ability. You might try a three octave arpeggio that uses varying articulation; pick, hammer, slur, etc. all at breakneck speed and you can't even play it slowly! Just jump in. *Pretend* it's not a problem and you've been doing it forever! We're not concerned that the resulting sound is inaccurate but that it is approximated.

3/ When you've learned some new material it can take a long time before it feels and sounds *natural*. To help this process of *naturalization* try connecting the new ideas to something familiar. To memorize a new scale or mode pattern we ask; is there another pattern from another scale (you already know) so similar in structure that you need only make a small adjustment to form the new pattern? So instead of having to *think* that you're learning a whole new pattern, you simply make a small adjustment to an old one. For example; I know the Ionian mode pattern (1st mode of the Major scale) very well, but not the Harmonic Minor and it's modes. Until I see, that by sharpening the fifth note of the Ionian mode, I create the 3rd mode of the Harmonic Minor. I then view the remaining Major and Harmonic Minor modes as sharing this relationship. The intervals/fingering patterns are so similar.

Another example; You know this chord inversion that uses a *5432 stringset* (particular group of strings) very well. Learn the next inversions below and above the original. Practice moving from the original to the inversion above, back to the original then the inversion below. Now when you see the original chord an association will be triggered in the brain of visual pattern and finger movement.

Practice using new material in familiar contexts; Let's say you learned a whole tone scale but you're not sure what to do with it. Play a blues and when you change to the IV chord play a whole tone passage (from the root of the IV chord) then resume your familiar playing. With repetition this will sound begin to sound acceptable.

4/ Your tone or sound is created by choice of equipment and by finger articulation. When we examine guitarists finger techniques we encounter a wide range of left and right hand approaches. Alternate picking, sweep picking, finger style, pick/fingers combo, tapping, hammer on, pull off, slurring etc. even the way a plectrum is held varies enormously. Many top players have *unorthodox* techniques that may be questionable in terms of efficiency, but the ultimate measuring stick of technique is the sound of the music produced. Your guiding light must be the sound of the music. As individuals vary, so do techniques. The question is does your technique aid or hinder your experience of music making? Technique can be defined as the manner in which we do something, as that evolves so does technique. If you want to make a sound that you've heard someone else make or only heard in your head, there is a way to make that happen. Your commitment to discovering how to produce a sound will be the thing that develops a *good* (or appropriate, or your own) technique. Don't be afraid to spend a lot of time working on developing a particular aspect of technique that is difficult to perfect. Stay involved in the process and enjoy the exploration, none of your efforts are wasted. Even if what you were originally aiming to achieve has altered or vanished, you have grown, become more accomplished, more able to articulate.