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Flamenco Guitar And Strings - Advice for Beginners

By Shawn Kohan

Do you need a special type of guitar?

The simple answer is No! For a beginner, any (nylon stringed) classical guitar will do the job.

1) Any guitar with steel strings on it is NOT suitable. There was a time when certain styles of Country and Western and jazz guitars were advertised as "Spanish guitars" for some unknown reason. (I think because they have roughly the same shape as a classical / flamenco guitar). If you look hard enough you may even find a few books of the 1920's , 30's, and 40's which have plectrum style music for these "Spanish guitars". The equation seems to be: Flamenco = Spanish music = let's play it on my grandpa's Spanish guitar. Now where did he put those plectrums? Or something like that.

2) Another common misconception is that the bass strings on a classical guitar are steel. On the outside they look the same as their steel brothers but that's where the similarity ends. Classical guitar bass strings have many fine strands of nylon woven together inside the copper winding. If you look closely you will see these strands poking out of the end of the string.

3) The action needs to be fairly low without producing excessive string buzz.

4) A solid wood top produces a better tone than a factory laminated wood guitar.

5) A tapping plate (golpador) needs to be attached on the top of the guitar. Genuine flamenco instruments already have these but any decent guitar repair shop or Luthier can stick one on for you. Right hand tapping techniques can certainly damage the guitar if this protection is not there.

6) Flamenco guitars are generally lighter in construction. I personally don't like heavy guitars. For me a guitar must feel comfortable and "user friendly". Heavy wood guitars like some classical guitars don't do it for me.

7) When I was learning I bought cheap guitars only. Mainly because I could not afford to pay \$500 or more for an expensive hand made guitar by a respected luthier. When my guitar needed replacing, I just visited the local second hand guitar shop and spend an hour trying out different classical style guitars. A guitar does not have to be expensive; it just needs to "speak to me". What I mean is that it needs to feel comfortable and have a strong tone.

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8) One consideration that I think is important is whether the strings maintain good tone even if they are fairly worn. This has more to do with the guitar than the strings themselves. That's why trying old guitars in a second hand shop is a good idea if you just want a cheap beginner's instrument.

Bass strings will naturally wear as a result of contact with the fret wires. Before this wear becomes excessive, loosen the string and pull it through the hole at the saddle about a centimeter or so. The idea is to shift the worn section so it appears over the spaces between the frets when you tighten it back up again.

Shawn Kohan writes article on many topics including [flamenco music](#) and [new age music](#)

The Magic of the Flamenco Guitar

By Shawn Kohan

Flamenco is a popular style of Spanish Guitar Music. Flamenco has its own three forms which are Cante, Baile, and Guitarra. Cante is the song, Baile is the dance, and Guitarra is the guitar part of flamenco. Flamenco is a very important part of Spanish Guitar Music. It usually consists of someone playing the guitar, while people are dancing, and other people also join in with hand clapping. Although it is mostly popular in Spain, flamenco was influenced by other cultures as well.

Flamenco Guitar The Flamenco Guitar is very similar to the classical guitar. That is no surprise however, because flamenco music and classical music are very similar. Both of the instruments are descendants from the lute. The normal flamenco guitar is made out of the Spanish woods cypress and spruce. Even though this guitar is similar to a normal classical guitar, it is also different. For example, the flamenco guitar weighs less and is smaller than a normal classical guitar. These features attribute to giving the flamenco guitar the sharp flamenco sound. Nearly all flamenco guitars come with a golpeador.

For example, there are several ways to strum the guitar for flamenco. Strumming is an easy way to scratch the body of the guitar, so a golpeador is needed. Also, besides strumming, the guitar still has many different styles of being played. For example, in flamenco, the musicians often use their hands and fingers and tap the body of their guitar to create sounds to blend in with the flamenco music. The hand and finger taps serve as another reason why a golpeador is needed.

History and Origin of Flamenco Flamenco appeared for the first time in literature in the mid 1770s. During the Golden Age of Spain, flamenco started to get more and more popular. Flamenco started becoming common in the country's music cafes. Also, around that time, the number of music cafes in Spain began to increase. As time progressed, flamenco began to get more and more serious. Other forms of flamenco started to generate, and many of them got deeper in meaning. During the early 1900s, flamenco singing started to get attention. Soon, full flamenco dances were taking place with the guitar, the singing, and the dancing. After 1915, many people started to have shows for flamenco, and musicians would play in front of a crowd at a theatre or another public place.

Flamenco Today Today, flamenco is different than how it started. The dancers are mainly female, and they are showcased more. In the past, flamenco was more artistic, and the music and dance was the main focus. Now, flamenco usually consists of three parts. When there is multiple people dancing and the music is playing, the audience often joins in clapping. Today, the audience is also involved in flamenco.

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