

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

# Economy-Proof Lessons

**G**uitar lessons are not recession-proof. To me, the phrase “recession-proof” means “got lucky — so far.” What you do this month to generate guitar lesson sign-ups will affect what’s going to happen two to three months from now. That’s a scary thought if you’re not promoting sign-ups.

Don’t wait for the phone to ring for that next new student. Start by reviewing with your sales staff the basics of pitching guitar lesson sign-ups to in-store customers. Most guitar lesson sign-ups happen when a customer asks, “Do you have lessons?” Teach your staff to initiate the, “Do you know we have an awesome guitar lesson program at our store?” approach.

## BE THE CONVERSATION STARTER

Introduce guitar lessons into every customer interaction. Here are some opportunities:

**The guitar-tuning customer.** Ask the client, “How long have you been playing?” A well-trained staff member will talk about a guitar tuner purchase, but he or she should also say, “We’ve got some great guitar teachers who can teach you how to tune your guitar and get you playing the stuff you’re interested in.”

**The guitar repair customer.** After the customer comes in to pick up the repair, ask, “Are you familiar with our guitar lessons?”

**The just-looking-at-the-guitars customer.** You know the drill. You ask, “How long have you been playing?” The customer knows the next question. “What kind of guitars do you have?” It’s the guitar-selling routine.

Introduce your lesson program like this: “Cool, you’re looking for a guitar to learn on. Are you

familiar with our guitar lesson program?” Bundle the guitar purchase with the lessons. It separates you from the “other dudes” and will increase both your guitar sales and guitar lesson enrollment.

**The mom with the *Guitar Hero*-playing kid.** When Mom says, “He plays *Guitar Hero* all the time,” your staffer can say, “That’s awesome. Our guitar teachers can play those songs on the guitar and teach you son how to play them.”

**The kid quitting school band who likes the guitar.** This is really overlooked. Perhaps a kid hated playing the clarinet but might love to play the guitar and may not know that your store offers lessons. When Mom or

Dad returns the rental, say, “It’s too bad the clarinet didn’t work out. Do you know that we teach guitar here? What they learned on the clarinet will help him with guitar.”

**The parents in your lesson waiting area.** They’re already at your store. Why not tempt them to take guitar lessons while they’re waiting? Grab a guitar, and ask a teacher with a no-show to demonstrate to the parent how easy it is.

## PLAY THE PROMOTION GAME

**A**re your employees looking for guitar lessons by telling everyone about your exciting guitar program, or are they asking, “Ready to check out?”

Let’s face it: Your foot traffic count this year is probably lower than last year and lower than two years ago. You need to be harvesting new students better than ever before.

You are not going to get 100-percent immediate sign-ups, but as the California Lottery says, “You can’t win if you don’t play.” If you and your staff aren’t active in keeping your guitar lessons in an active promotion game, you can’t win. Stay in this promotional mode, and the benefits will recession-proof your business long after this recession is over! **MI**

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Guitar lessons are not recession-proof unless they’re promoted at every possible opportunity