**Wake up nerve pathways to muscles before picking up your guitar**

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Your body’s nerve networks control your muscle movement. They are not always on full alert and ready to swing into action. If you wait to notify them until you need them to perform at their best, your first efforts may

not get their full cooperation. That is why we warm-up before many human activities. Playing guitar is one of them.

Here are some ways to alert your nerve pathways and destination muscles that they are going to be called upon soon, to let them know that it is time “fall in and stand tall.”

**Big muscles first:** This is working from your core muscles outward toward your fingers.

1. **Shoulder roll:** Standing normally, roll shoulders up and back, like you are trying pull your shoulder blades together. Do slowly 3 to 5 times. (Do not roll forward.)
2. **Air chin-up:** Standing normally, extend your arms up above your shoulders. Pull them down to neck level, as though you were doing a chin-up. Do slowly, 3 to 5 times. Feel your shoulder blades come together.
3. **Head tilts:** Tilting head away from outstretched arm.

Fingers up, tilt head toward opposite shoulder: hold, then release: do twice

Fingers droop down, tilt twice

Repeat with other arm.

**Finger exercises**

1. Open hand, fingers **together**, palm perpendicular to floor, elbow at side

A. Straight up, claw, table, half-fist, close thumb: repeat backwards: do twice.

B. Other hand

2. Open hand, fingers **spread**, palm perpendicular to floor, elbow at side

Dip pinky, dip ring, dip middle, dip index, repeat backwards: do twice.

Drop pinky and hold down, drop ring, drop middle, drop index.

Repeat backwards: do twice.

(Exercises 3 and 4 below are more involved and are included as long-term practices, not necessarily for your quick regular warm-up)

3. Finger ID

A. Cross one wrist over the other and lace fingers.

B. Rotate hands down as you pull toward chest.

C. Have someone point at a finger without touching.

D. Move that finger.

4. Spider walk

A. Your hand is a spider; your 4 fingers are its legs.

B. Put the spider on a flat surface.

C. Have it take a step forward, using index and pinky legs, keeping others in place.

D. Keeping the front legs in place, have it take another step using

middle and ring legs.

E. Make it continue to walk in that manner. Then make it walk backwards.

F. Try the process pairing the index and ring legs, and then the middle and pinky legs.