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Everything You  
Need to Know About

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**Music  
Lessons!**

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**A Guide for Student Musicians and Parents.**

St. Joseph Arts Academy - *2nd Edition* (May 2019)

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“Everything You Need to Know About Music Lessons”

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# Welcome to the St. Joseph Arts Academy

## Everything You Need to Know About Music Lessons

So you are thinking about starting music lessons. Music is a wonderful part of the human experience and brings a lot of benefits to our lives. Learning to play music or providing lessons for a loved one is one of the greatest gifts you can give or receive.

If you are new to music education or have never played an instrument, you may have some questions. This booklet should help in answering some of the most common questions or concerns for those just starting out. If you have any additional questions, don't hesitate to write or us a call. We are happy to provide any information you need in making the best decisions about getting going with your music lessons.

Wishing you the very best on starting or continuing along the path of the advancing musician.

Jason Riley  
Director - SJAA  
[jason@stjosephartsacademy.com](mailto:jason@stjosephartsacademy.com)

## Academy Mission

Our mission at the St. Joseph Arts Academy is to provide the highest quality musical instruction and performance opportunities to beginning and advancing students in the Midland empire. We use our patience, enthusiasm and loyalty to encourage, inform and entertain others to happily share their skill and talents in love and gratitude to make the world a better place.

OUR MOTTO...

*Music Accomplished!*

## Where Can I Take Music Lessons?

Most communities offer a variety of options for music lessons. Depending on the size of your city, lessons are likely offered through college and university music departments, continuing education programs, local music stores, music conservatories and music schools as well as diverse and varied instruction from private teachers in homes, school or church settings.

**The SJAA is THE hometown music school in our area.**

Besides offering instruction through Missouri Western State University, Benedictine College and the Allied Arts Council, select students take lessons in their home or at the SJAA studios. We are conveniently located at 2027 N. 36 Street, St. Joseph MO 64506, just off the Belt highway with easy access to shopping and dining.

## When Can I Take Music Lessons?

Many music teachers maintain very busy but limited teaching schedules. Most are available during “after-school” hours between about 3 and 8pm during the week. Some are often available on Saturdays too.

At the SJAA, lessons and classes will soon be offered 7 days a week. We know our students and their families have complex and busy schedules also so we strive to be available for them as they need. This will eventually include studio hours from 9am-9pm during the week, 9am-5pm on Saturdays and even 1-6pm on Sundays.

**Scheduling your lessons at the SJAA is easy and convenient.**

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## Who Takes Music Lessons?

Music lessons are available to anyone with the desire to learn. You are never too young or too old to begin or make new progress with a musical instrument.

**Students** - Music students can range in age from infant to retirees and seniors. The youngest students often work along with parents in music courses designed for pre-K, like KinderMusik. Actual lessons on most instruments can begin by the age of 5. While the elementary, middle and high school years are a common time to study music in school or privately, college-age students and professional adults of any age can also advance in their musicianship through very serious approaches or more as hobbyists.

While some students may want to pursue the highest levels of musicianship, we do not expect that every music student should want to become professional musicians. Our purpose is to help all students achieve their potential, reap the many benefits of music study and reach their personal, musical goals.

**Teachers** - Like students, music teachers come with a wide variety of personalities, abilities and experiences. Music teachers in our community range from accomplished students with just a little experience to accredited educators and college professors with doctoral degrees.

Being a great musician doesn't automatically make someone a great teacher. In our opinion, the best teachers have an expertise on their instruments, many years of teaching or performing experience and positive mental attitudes. They are patient, encouraging AND they have a desire to teach and share music in the lives of others.

Our teachers at the SJAA are good, high-quality individuals, first. Next, we seek out teachers with college music degrees or 20 years or more of performance experience.

We work hard to provide all our teachers with the resources they need to be successful with their students and that includes **on-going continuing education and teacher training**. Our teachers have the best available approaches and methods for teaching and getting results for our students.

**Parents** - Parents, grandparents, other family members, friends and guardians play very important roles in the success of music students. Besides transportation to lessons and making payments, these care-givers on the home-front monitor practice, give encouragement when things get tough and show support in concerts and recitals.

Parents and adult mentors validate the importance of music lessons for their students, helping students view their study and instrument as a priority and something extremely valuable to them, the family and the whole community.

***We wouldn't be able to have the success we've had with our students without these wonderful, loving and encouraging parents and extended family supporting our young musicians every step of the way.***

**Director** - SJAA director, Jason Riley is a professional musician and teacher. With degrees in classical guitar performance and commercial music, he has toured and performed with national and international artists throughout the U.S and Europe.

Jason has a number of albums to his credit and has produced and played on countless others as a sideman.

As an instructor, he has operated his own private guitar studio for nearly 30 years and has taught for Benedictine College, Missouri Western State University and has been a featured clinician in many guitar festivals and camps.

Besides guitar, Jason has taught private and group classes in multiple styles for bass, banjo, mandolin, ukulele and harmonica.

Jason's wife, Jolie is also a wonderful musician and educator with the St. Joseph School District. The SJAA is the natural extension of their aspiration to offer something truly special and needed to young artists and musicians in our area.

## What We Teach

We teach aspiring and advancing musicians how to play musical instruments (or use their voice) in traditional, creative and technically appropriate ways. Our studio was founded as a master private teacher studio with an emphasis on guitar. As an example, our guitar students have always learned the most important elements required to be successful with the instrument. Including but not limited to...

*Music Reading*

*Scales*

*Chords*

*Technical Exercises*

*Traditional Repertoire*

*History and Interpretation*

*Musicality*

*Theory and Fretboard Logic*

*Ear-training*

*Performance Skills and Etiquette*

Lessons for all instruments include the same basic foundation while concentrating on the idiomatic approaches that arise with any individual instrument.

Students can take lessons on the most popular “Western” instruments that you find in the school band, orchestra, jazz bands, church praise teams, string bands and choirs. Again, including but not limited to...

*Piano*

*Guitar (acoustic & electric)*

*Violin*

*Viola*

*Cello*

*Bass (electric)*

*Drums/Percussion (coming soon)*

*Banjo*

*Ukulele*

*Mandolin*

*Voice & Singing*

*Harmonica*

Great teachers for more rare instruments might be more difficult to find in our area. We strive to connect interested students with the most qualified teachers even if it means referring them to teachers outside of our community.

**Students also learn in a variety of musical styles.** Duke Ellington famously said “There are only two kinds of music, good music and the other kind”. It is part of our mission to share and foster an appreciation of all kinds of music. Learners are inspired to play by the music they love. Often that is the music they are most familiar with, songs they hear on the radio, in movies or in church.

Students should play the music they love and be introduced to new music at the same time. We focus on standard repertoire in classical, jazz, rock, blues, country and popular music. This also includes many sub-genres such as baroque, swing, heavy metal, delta blues, bluegrass or hip-hop. Students and teachers may also agree to specialize or focus on specific styles for any number of reasons that might include preparing for a show, a concert or an audition.

There are also a number of teaching methods that would be in use. One of the great benefits of one-on-one learning is the ability to tailor methods to an individual’s learning style. We are all unique and we all learn differently.

A great teacher is one that can identify best approaches and practices along with their student. They guide and encourage and help them implement best music learning strategies based on the strengths of the individual.

Methods would include music reading and rote learning (learning through demonstration). Some students are strong visual learners while others have a strong auditory sense or prefer to read things from the page and implement. For others, group learning is best.

While not all teachers or studios offer this, at the St. Joseph Arts Academy we have a reward system in place for accomplishment. We give the students the incentive to achieve, to move up and to grow in their musicianship in a number of ways. Certificates, medals, pins, special commemorative items, even gift cards are used as rewards for completing books, receiving honors or performing in recitals and concerts.

## How long does it take to learn a musical instrument?

We encourage all of our students to be life-long learners. Learning or playing a musical instrument could offer greater and greater rewards over many lifetimes. Having said that... most students will learn the basics in about one year with proficiency coming with in just 4 or 5 years. It really depends on the individual and even more on the amount of time and perfect practice they can invest in their instrument. The student who practices 10 minutes a day for 5 years will learn quite a lot but some students will devote 2 hours a day or more. Obviously, it's about the time dedicated to practice over years.

A bachelors degree in music takes about 4-5 years to complete. Most of those students have already played or studied for many years before even beginning the college program. Serious or professional level players go on to many more years of dedicated practice and performance.

***One of the greatest benefits to learning an instrument is that it can be a lifelong adventure.***

Athletes only play football for a few years and those school years are limited. Musicians can enjoy music and their instrument their whole life through.

Now that really is the gift that keeps on giving!

## How much does it cost?

Lesson fees have a wide range based on where you are in the country. In the larger urban centers like New York or LA, people pay more for everything (including music lessons) than we do in the Midwest. Fees are also subject to demand.

Some teachers are highly revered or in high demand. They may only accept students based on audition or they may be a specialist teaching a rare instrument or style. These expert teachers can command higher fees.

At the time of this writing, a 30 minute music lesson in the US runs from about \$15-60. At the SJAA, we charge \$23 for a 30 minute private session but we also offer hour sessions, ensembles and specialized classes. Students who are really enjoying their instrument and the culture often take a private lesson and participate in an ensemble as well.

## How or When do I pay?

Lessons at the SJAA are month to month. While some other private studio teachers may even allow week to week payments, monthly payments are the industry standard.

Monthly fees for a 30 minute private music lesson once per week are just \$92. For your convenience, we use an auto-pay system that can be applied to your credit card or to your bank account. At the moment, we are also accepting cash and checks. Fees are collected at the first lesson of every month and guarantees your time slot for that month. We do require a 30 day notice if you need to stop for any reason (summer vacation, take a break, etc.) or discontinue all together.

## How do I enroll?

It's easy to enroll!

Simply call the Academy (816-974-7656)

...request info at <http://stjosephartsacademy.com/request-info/>

...or drop us an email to [info@stjosephartsacademy.com](mailto:info@stjosephartsacademy.com) and we'll get you registered.

We'll get your basic information and get you scheduled with a great teacher on your chosen instrument.

***The registration fee is just \$25 (mention that you've read this "Everything You Need To Know About Music Lessons" and we'll register you for FREE!).***

Sign up for lessons & receive a \$25 registration for free!

**FREE Registration  
with This Guide**

**\$25.00**

Music Accomplished!

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## Why do people take music lessons?

**Benefits** - There are number of reasons people choose to study music or learn a musical instrument. Many are called just because of their love of music or they have an undeniable desire to learn to play. It's a kind of personal development that "improves" or aids a human being in so many ways.

Studies have shown that music students are better at math and reading, they have better listening and communication skills as well as spatial awareness like hand/eye coordination.

Let's not forget important skills like patience, discipline, persistence and practice.

Many parents want their children in music for just these benefits. Some wish they had been able to study when they were young and maybe didn't have the opportunity. They want to give something to their children that they didn't have.

There is also a sense of community through being involved in music. We all want to belong, to be accepted and to be part of a gang. Joining a school band, the local orchestra, forming your own jazz quartet or singing in a choir connects you to others through the special activity of music.

Every performer knows about the relationship between what's happening on the stage and what's happening inside the audience who are listening. We are sharing of ourselves, our hearts and minds. We are conjuring feelings and emotions and in the ring of live performance.

We are all there together in the moment.

We also see a lot of "non-traditional" students, older folks or retirees just starting in music lessons or maybe returning. These people tend to be looking for something productive to do with their newly found "extra time" or they seek the mental challenges that music brings to keep their brains strong and healthy in their later years.

Sometimes it's just a bucket list item, something they've always wanted to do.

Grandma's and Grandpa's do a lot of transport, encouraging, practicing and even paying for music lessons for the young musicians in their life.

Amateur and professional musicians who play at very high levels continue to take lessons too. You are never finished in music. You can always go further, learn more, take it to the next level. These students are more after coaching similar to the high achievers in any sport or business.

It's helpful to have another expert analyze your skills and give you a fresh perspective on something that might be holding you back or just help you stay motivated to be the best that you can be.

## Recitals/Adjudications

Performance opportunities and testing are an important part of the music learning experience. At the collegiate and conservatory level, students give mandatory performances regularly and are tested in a formal adjudication at the end of every semester. Many private teachers do not offer these opportunities at all.

At the SJAA, we offer recital opportunities nearly every month during the school year and have invitations to perform at community festivals and other events during the summer.

We offer a formal adjudication every April along with our local music teachers association. Students CHOOSE whether they want to participate in recitals and testing. They are not mandatory.

Not every student wants to perform but most do and many want to play every chance they get. We encourage them to play at least one time in the fall and then another time in the spring or summer but quite a few get on stage at every opportunity.

***Parents and families love RECITALS and they make for some great memories.***

Practicing performing in recitals and in adjudication helps students deal with anxiety or nervousness, it gives them something very specific to buckle down and prepare for as well as provides valuable feedback. Feedback that might be from a judge about a specific passage or movement as well as feedback from teachers, parents and loved ones who just say “Way to go!” or “so proud of your accomplishment”.

## Books/Materials

Each instrument and level will require its own books, materials or other items specific to that instrument. Most teachers use their own specific or even proprietary methods with their students. They will have the books or other materials available for sale in many cases. Other times, they'll have a list of the necessary materials that you could get at the local music store or online.

As an example, besides their instrument, guitar students require a tuner, picks, guitar strap, footstool, notebook or binder and maybe even more specialized equipment like capos, amplifiers, pedals and cables for electric guitar. **A music stand is an important piece of equipment.**

Most students will go through a series of books every year to an additional cost of about \$10-50 depending on how fast they get through the material. Collecting and keeping a variety of music books is a great way to build your own music library for review or reference down the road.

***At our studio, we have an amazing library of music books and musical magazine subscriptions for the use and constant advancement of our teachers and our students.***

## How to Practice

Success in music is based on practice. The saying “practice makes perfect” is not necessarily the best advice in music. We like to say “perfect practice makes perfect”. In reality, it’s all about focused, perfect practice, over time. You can’t cram for music the way you might pull an all-nighter for a test. Studies show that’s a bad idea too.

Every teacher knows the value of practice or what happens with a lack of it. At our school, we adhere to the adage of the famous violin teacher, Shinichi Suzuki who said ***you only need to practice “the days you sleep and the days you eat”.***

Time spent in daily practice is also based on your level and your age. Younger children shouldn’t be expected to practice as long as an adult professional. The practice session is really basically the same for both though. Doing the best you can for the time that you have allotted. 7 days a week is the best you can do but 6 is still great. 5 is very good in fact. For best results, keeping it at 5 or more days is a good idea.

Very young children just beginning might do just 10 minutes a day, a 16 year old with some experience might be doing 45 minutes with music majors and professionals doing many hours a day.

There are a number of examples of virtuoso players who practiced and studied 6-10 hours a day over many years! Again, our approach is that a student should practice most everyday, doing their best with the time they have and to keep that routine going over years to become proficient.

For more info, we’ve got another article specifically dedicated to practicing and practice techniques...

<http://www.stjosephartsacademy.com/how-to-practice>

[www.stjosephartsacademy.com](http://www.stjosephartsacademy.com)

## Expectations

Learning music is not a casual enterprise.

It demands a serious commitment of time, energy and money to be successful.

We expect that music learners should love their lessons and have a great experience. Learners should expect great advancements followed by plateaus. This is the nature of the climb. We make a lot of progress and things can flatten out until we reach the next hill to climb, summit and plateau again.

Learners should expect to do the work. To practice. Everyday mostly. They should expect to feel uncomfortable or “out of their comfort zone” as this is where we grow. We stretch. We become better than we were before.

We expect a commitment. From teachers and learners working together towards specific and tangible goals.

We expect everyone involved to be seriously invested in the process of learning.

We expect to create reliable employment for teachers.

We expect that you will learn, advance, grow and achieve your musical goals. You can do it.

We know how and can be your guide along that path. Let's climb together.

## Make-ups

Many studio teachers offer a “NO MAKE-UP” policy. If you miss a lesson you are simply out for that week. I even know of a very famous teacher who would decline a student if they missed ONE lesson. If you had to miss a time slot with him, it was up to YOU to send someone else in order to hold your spot. I've worked with conservatory department heads that insisted you dismiss or flunk students who missed more than one “unexcused” lesson.

This all may seem very harsh. But it's a great example of how seriously professional musicians take their work. It is very unlikely that these folks ever missed lessons or took advantage of the time of their coaches or esteemed teachers.

Make up policies are diverse as teachers are diverse. Some are very flexible with available times others have extremely full schedules which simply don't allow for make-ups.

If you have to miss a lesson, ***advance notice is always the best option.*** Let your teacher know that you will be missing. This will allow them to make the space available for another student (maybe even you) that is looking for an alternative slot that week.

For many years, as a single teacher studio, our policy has been “48 Hours Notice” for a missed lesson. We may not be able to offer a make up but you would not be charged. Now with managing and paying multiple teachers, this has become impossible.

If your teacher has to miss a lesson for any reason, you will not be charged for that lesson. We credit your lesson to the next months payment.

We are in the process of implementing a more fluid system of make up lessons. Students and families will be able to schedule their make-ups in advance for Saturday group sessions throughout the year. You can schedule them any time. “In Advance” is encouraged as space is limited each week.

***We want to provide the easiest solution and the extra value in time spent with a great teacher for your music lesson investment.***

## Awards/Rewards

Learning music and playing an instrument has many intrinsic rewards in and of itself. At the SJAA, we like to honor and recognize our students’ specific milestones and achievements. We award and reward musical accomplishments with certificates, pins, wrist bands, trophies and even gifts. When ever a student finishes a specific level, certain books, performs in recital or is honored in any way, we want to recognize that achievement and share our pride in them.

Each month we select one student who has achieved something remarkable as “Student of the Month”. These students receive an additional gift as well as being announced on our website, Facebook page and in our newsletter.

Students and families who refer new students to our Academy receive additional rewards for their referrals. Free lessons, free books, iTunes, Amazon or East Hills Gift Certificates are all favorite choices of our students.

## Photo Day (Coming Soon)

Just like in sports and dance, our music academy offers students a photo day once per year. Students and parents have the opportunity to get a professional photo taken with their instruments or even an action shot! Young students especially grow very quickly and these photos are great keepsakes of the memories and milestones we make in our musical seasons.

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## How does it work?

### **Drop off, pick up, waiting room**

Most lessons begin on the hour and half hour. Students should arrive on time or just a few minutes early. Parents are always welcome to sit in on the lessons. Always or anytime! They are also welcome to drop students off to run errands and then pick them up after the lessons. We strive to have comfortable waiting area and clean restrooms for folks who prefer to sit and wait.

***As a workplace for music staff, students and teachers, we want to you to feel welcome and comfortable in our studios.***

## Community

It's a simple fact... ***Music brings people together.*** We are blessed in that our region has so many talented players, dedicated teachers, lovers of music and encouraging supporters.

We are a family.

Studying a musical instrument and participating with the SJAA make you part of an extended family. Our students have peers and mentors to encourage them and to keep them accountable. There is always someone you can lean on, gain inspiration from, ask questions of and just friends to hang out with.

We've got your back. That's what real community is all about. That's what it means to be a family.

## Resources

The St. Joseph Arts Academy is your local resource for all things musical. We are here to help the aspiring musicians in our community find the support they need and deserve. If you have any other questions or concerns about your music lessons, please don't hesitate to call or drop us an email. We are here to help.

The book "Help! My Kid is Taking Music Lessons" by Anthony Glise is another excellent resource for parents with children in music lessons. On Amazon: <http://a.co/9fLuU1N>

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## Conclusion

Learning a musical instrument is a serious endeavor. It definitely takes a commitment of time to be successful not to mention an investment with your dollars. Having the right teachers, mentors or coaches is a vital part of the process in learning that can actually save you time and frustration. These trained professionals can put you on a guided plan towards your musical goals and oversee your progress every step of the way.

It is our heartfelt belief that music study has important effects on the individual. Music brings people together and makes the world a better place to live.

***We want everyone to play!***

The skills a person learns through playing an instrument have positive effects in nearly every other aspect life. We are here to encourage and support YOU!

Thank you for the time to read “Everything You Need to Know About Music Lessons”! We hope it’s provided the information you truly needed (and maybe some you didn’t know you needed) to make the best decision about music lessons for yourself, your family or friends.

We hope you’ll join us! Please consider referring your friends or family members to the Academy. We greatly appreciate your referral.

Thank you for encouraging the musicians of all ages in your life. It’s never easy to learn to play an instrument. But, it brings such value to the individuals, our community and the world.

In support of YOUR music,

Jason Riley

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