My Top 7 Dirt-Cheap Tools

These are the tools I use every single day in my quest to become a true Guitar Badass. For less than $50, you could buy every single one of them.

But tools are only tools. It's up to you to put them to good use.

1. Tempo Advance - Best metronome app ever. I'm constantly discovering new and cool ways to use it improve my playing. Best of all, it's $3! Even if they raised the price to fifty bucks, it'd still be worth it.

Click here, here, here, or here for ideas on using Tempo Advance.

2. Backtraxx - I use this app for playing click tracks live. I could use Tempo Advance for this (and I sometimes do). But I don't usually play a prearranged set, and the interface on it isn't ideal for scrolling through songs, trying to decide what to play next. I'm also toying with the idea of having a few full-band backing tracks in my back pocket for turning up the heat a few degrees at the end of the night. We'll see.

Click here to see how I use Backtraxx.

3. DAW - I use Logic and love it, but Garageband or Audacity will do the job fine, and they're *free*. I use the DAW to see (in waveforms) & hear how my feel is, for recording ideas, to slow down tricky bits for transcribing, and to make the click tracks that I load into Backtraxx.

Click here to see how I use Logic, Garageband, & Audacity.

4. Kitchen Timer - I use this every day for pomodoro sprints & breaking up practice time into chunks. I could use my phone for this, but having a dedicated device means I never get lured in to checking email/facebook/twitter, etc.

Click here to see how I use my kitchen timer.

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5. Streaks - I love this little iOS app for logging my consistency in practicing/working out/eating right/working on Fretboard Anatomy. If you're on Android, or allergic to spending $2 on this app, you can always use Don't Break the Chain, which is web-based and free.

Click here to read why I'm so into tracking my streaks.

6. Sleep Mask - Playing blind folded (or in a dark room) is a great way to break the crutch of looking at my hands—a must for sight reading & good stage presence. It also helps with technique, fretboard knowledge, & avoiding the dreaded guitar player posture.

Click here to read about practicing blindfolded and other ways to combat guitar posture & back pain.

7. In Ear Rig - On tour, we use Aviom personal mixers, transmit the signal wirelessly to Shure PSM 900s, and listen on custom-molded ear buds.

Awesome, but crazy expensive. When doing my solo show locally, I just run my own mix (with click) through the aux out of my mixer, down a cheap headphone extension, and into my earbuds.

95% of the benefits for 1% of the cost? You should get on that.

Use whatever earbuds you already have, get a headphone extension, and learn how to use the aux send/aux out on your mixer.

Click here or here to read about why (and how) I run a click through in-ears at my solo shows.

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