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Free Choice Piece

ACOUSTIC GUITAR

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Acoustic Guitar

Please read through the following section if you are thinking of performing any songs not published in the Rockscool Acoustic Guitar grade books.

For all grades:

The appropriate grade book must be brought to the exam.

Candidates are allowed to perform only a certain number of free choice pieces in their exam. For a grade exam two out of three pieces may be free choice pieces, for Performance Certificate three out of five may be free choice pieces.

Candidates will need to bring a copy of the sheet music for the examiner and a backing track for all Free Choice Pieces including pieces from previous Rockscool Syllabi.

All Free choice pieces must be performed to a backing track (without the examined part). The backing tracks may be provided on CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB. Please note that the audio cannot be streamed from a device and must be a downloaded audio file for accessible playback on the exam day.

Selecting Free choice pieces:

The following checklist has been devised to help you assess whether or not the repertoire you have chosen meets the criteria established for Performance Pieces in the grade you are taking.

* Indicates that noted point should be included in the piece.

Other points are discretionary, depending on other elements of the piece chosen. If not all requirements are included in the notation, candidates are welcome to add these to the score for assessment.

If after reading this guide you still require help to determine if your chosen piece is suitable for the grade, please forward a copy of the sheet music to **freechoicepieces@rslawards.com**

Note! Please allow **four weeks** for a decision regarding the suitability of the submitted piece.



ACOUSTIC GUITAR DEBUT

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 45sec-3min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate ability to move between chords and single notes*
The piece should demonstrate use of pick or first two fingers of the picking hand
The piece should demonstrate basic damping techniques

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece should demonstrate basic legato/staccato

RHYTHM SKILLS

The piece should demonstrate use of whole, half, quarter and 8th notes
Plus whole, half and quarter note rests

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

Pieces should contain a prevalence of open and first positions with some movement up to the 3rd fret



ACOUSTIC GUITAR GRADE 1

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 1-3min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate use of pick or first two fingers of the picking hand*

The piece must demonstrate basic damping techniques*

The piece must demonstrate ability to move between chords and single notes*

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate basic legato/staccato*

RHYTHM SKILLS

The pieces should contain a mixture of:

Whole, half, quarter and 8th notes

Dotted quarter notes and associated rests

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

Pieces should contain a prevalence of open and first positions with some movement up to 3rd fret



ACOUSTIC GUITAR GRADE 2

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 1-3min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate use of pick or first two fingers of the picking hand*

The piece must demonstrate basic damping techniques*

The piece must demonstrate ability to move between chords and single notes*

The piece must demonstrate use of double stops*

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate basic legato/staccato*

The piece should demonstrate use of a range of dynamics (p, mf, f)

Other techniques to include:

Hammer-ons

Pull-offs

RHYTHM SKILLS

The pieces should contain a mixture of:

Whole, half, quarter and 8th notes

Dotted quarter notes and associated rests

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

Pieces should contain a preponderance of open and first positions with some movement up to 3rd fret



ACOUSTIC GUITAR GRADE 3

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 1.30-4min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate use of pick or first two fingers of the picking hand*

The piece must demonstrate picking hand damping techniques*

The piece must demonstrate ability to move between chords and single notes*

Other techniques to include:

Alternative picking

Use of double stops on adjacent strings

Use of syncopated 8th and 16th notes

Barre chords

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate basic legato/staccato*

The piece must demonstrate use of a range of dynamics (p, mf, f)*

Other techniques to include:

Hammer-ons

Pull-offs

RHYTHM SKILLS

The piece should contain a mixture of:

Whole, half, quarter, 8th and 16th note, dotted quavers and associated rests

Simple use of syncopation

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

The initial emphasis will be on open and first positions, with movement up to 5th position

SOLO SECTION

The piece should include solo passages of at least 8 bars.

Use of blues and pentatonic scales in solos



ACOUSTIC GUITAR GRADE 4

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 2-4min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate use of pick and fingers of the picking hand*

The piece must demonstrate picking hand damping techniques*

The piece must demonstrate ability to move between chords and single notes*

The piece should demonstrate fretting hand damping techniques

The piece should demonstrate alternative picking

The piece should demonstrate use of double stops on adjacent strings

The piece should demonstrate barre chords

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate legato and staccato as required*

The piece must demonstrate use of a range of dynamics (p, mf, f)*

Other techniques to include:

Slides

Accented notes

Trills

Hammer-ons

Pull-offs

RHYTHM SKILLS

Songs should contain a mixture of:

Whole, half, quarter, 8th and 16th notes

Dotted half, quarter and 8th notes and associated rests

Simple use of syncopation

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

First position up to 5th position

SOLO SECTION

The piece should include solo passages of at least 12 bars.

Use of blues and pentatonic scales in solos



ACOUSTIC GUITAR GRADE 5

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 2-4min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate use of pick and fingers of the picking hand*

The piece must demonstrate use picking hand damping techniques*

The piece must demonstrate use fretting hand damping techniques*

The piece must demonstrate use ability to move between chords and single notes*

The piece must demonstrate use alternative picking*

The piece should demonstrate use of double stops on adjacent strings

The piece should demonstrate use barre chords

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate legato and fretting hand legato*

The piece must demonstrate staccato as required*

The piece must demonstrate use of a range of dynamics (p, mf, f)*

Other techniques to include:

Slides

Accented notes

Trills

Hammer-ons

Pull-offs

RHYTHM SKILLS

The piece should contain a mixture of:

Whole, half, quarter, 8th and 16th notes

Dotted half, quarter and 8th notes and associated rests

Use of syncopated 8th and 16th note rhythms

Tied whole notes, quarter note triplets and associated rests

Use of syncopation

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

Up to 10th position

SOLO SECTION

The piece should include solo passages of at least 12 bars.

Use of blues and pentatonic scales in solos



ACOUSTIC GUITAR GRADE 6

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 2.30-5min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate use of pick and fingers of the picking hand*

The piece must demonstrate picking hand damping techniques*

The piece must demonstrate fretting hand damping techniques*

The piece must demonstrate ability to move between chords and single notes*

The piece must demonstrate alternative picking*

The piece must demonstrate use of double stops on non-adjacent strings*

The piece must demonstrate use of barre chords*

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate legato and fretting hand legato*

The piece must demonstrate staccato as required*

The piece must demonstrate accented notes*

The piece must demonstrate use of a range of dynamics (p-f)*

Other techniques to include:

Slides

Trills

Hammer-ons

Pull-offs

Natural and false harmonics

RHYTHM SKILLS

Songs should contain a mixture of:

Whole, half, quarter, 8th and 16th notes, dotted half, quarter and 8th notes and associated rests

Tied whole notes, quarter note triplets and associated rests

Use of syncopated 8th and 16th note rhythms

Use of syncopation and swung 16th notes and triplet 16th notes

4/4 time signatures; some time signature variations, including 3/4, 5/4, 6/4 and, 7/8 time

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

Up to 15th position

SOLO SECTION

The piece should include solo passages of at least 16 bars.

Use of blues and pentatonic scales in solos



ACOUSTIC GUITAR GRADE 7

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 3-5min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate use of pick and fingers of the picking hand*

The piece must demonstrate picking hand damping techniques*

The piece must demonstrate fretting hand damping techniques*

The piece must demonstrate ability to move between chords and single notes*

The piece must demonstrate alternative picking*

The piece must demonstrate use of double stops on non-adjacent strings*

The piece must demonstrate use of barre chords*

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate legato and fretting hand legato*

The piece must demonstrate staccato as required*

The piece must demonstrate accented notes*

The piece must demonstrate use of a range of dynamics (p-f)*

Other techniques to include:

Slides

Trills

Hammer-ons

Pull-offs

Natural and false harmonics

RHYTHM SKILLS

Songs should contain a mixture of:

Whole, half, quarter, 8th and 16th notes, dotted half, quarter and 8th notes and associated rests

Tied whole notes, quarter note triplets and associated rests

Use of syncopated 8th and 16th note rhythms

Use of syncopation and swung 16th notes and triplet 16th notes

4/4 time signatures; some time signature variations, including 3/4, 5/4, 6/4 and, 7/8 time

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

Up to 15th position

SOLO SECTION

The piece should include solo passages of at least 16 bars.

Use of blues and pentatonic scales in solos



ACOUSTIC GUITAR GRADE 8

Section A: Essential Elements

The piece must exist in a notated copy and a copy of the sheet music should be provided to the examiner on the day of the exam *

The piece must be performed to a backing track *

For this grade the backing track should be between 3-5min long *

A copy of the backing track (minus the examined part) should be brought to the exam on a CD, MP3 player, tablet or USB *

Section B: Performance Elements

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate use of pick and fingers of the picking hand*

The piece must demonstrate picking hand damping techniques*

The piece must demonstrate fretting hand damping techniques*

The piece must demonstrate alternative picking*

The piece must demonstrate ability to move between chords and single notes*

The piece must demonstrate use of double stops on non-adjacent strings*

The piece must demonstrate use of barre chords*

EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

The piece must demonstrate legato and fretting hand legato*

The piece must demonstrate staccato as required*

The piece must demonstrate accented notes*

The piece must demonstrate use of a range of dynamics (pp-ff)*

Other techniques to include:

Slides

Accented notes

Trills

Hammer-ons

Pull-offs

Use of controlled bends

Natural and false harmonics

RHYTHM SKILLS

The piece should contain a mixture of:

Whole, half, quarter, 8th and 16th notes, dotted half, quarter and 8th notes and associated rests

Tied whole notes, quarter note triplets and associated rests

Use of syncopation and swung 16th notes and triplet 16th notes

4/4 time signatures; at least one time signature variation, including 3/4, 5/4, 6/4 and 7/8 time

INSTRUMENT COMPASS

Complete mastery of the fingerboard

SOLO SECTION

The piece should include solo passages of at least 16 bars.

Use of blues and pentatonic scales in solos