

**BY
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**TARGET 3 KEY AREAS
TO QUICKLY
IMPROVE & PROGRESS**

GREG'S BASS SHED

Are You Happy With Your Playing Ability?

Target 3 Key Areas To Quickly Improve And Progress.

It is human nature to stagnate and stop progressing when learning a skill.

- We can plateau at times, which can be frustrating, and cause despondency.
- We Like to practise the same basslines that we know, and find easy to play.
- Limited time to practise, means we rarely tackle new techniques or new material.
- We would like to improve, but don't know where to start.
- We don't have any structure to our practicing.

Do any of the above sound familiar to you? I am going to guess that most of them do.

How can we overcome these barriers, and really start progressing quickly on the bass guitar?

1. The first step is to **assess where we are** with our playing.
2. The second step is **pick key areas**, in which we want to progress in.
3. The third step is to **plan how to implement these key areas**, and set up a practise schedule.



Fundamental progress has to do with the reinterpretation of basic ideas.

Alfred North Whitehead

I am now going to provide you with a framework for these three steps.

Step One

Answer the following questions to see where you feel you are with your bass playing.

1. Am I happy with my technique?
2. Can I read music?
3. Do I understand keys?
4. Do I understand scales and arpeggios?
5. Can I learn a bassline 'by ear,' from a recording?
6. Do I know the whole neck of the instrument?
7. Can I read a chord chart?
8. Do I understand rhythm?

Step Two

Look at your answers from Step One, and pick the three areas that you are the most dissatisfied with.

These are going to be your **Three Key Areas** to improve.

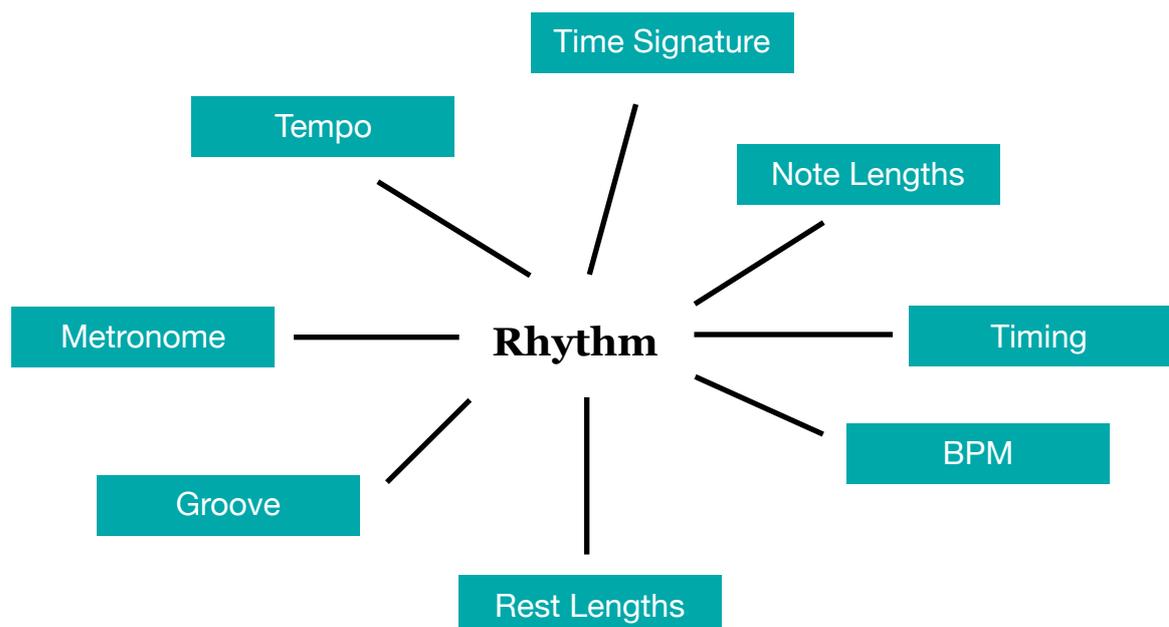
Step Three

Now you have your three key areas, we need to plan a structured way for you to move forward, and progress, with these.

I will start by showing you how to study and understand a key area.

First, I always find it good to ‘brainstorm,’ and to think about all the topics of a particular area. Once I have these, then I can start to map out the order in which to learn.

let’s pick **Rhythm** to start with. I associate these topics with rhythm:



We now have some topics that are involved in rhythm, so we need to research them.

- Firstly, we need to make sure that we actually know the **meaning** of these topics.
- Then we need to **explore** topics further to learn all we can about them.
- Finally, we need to **apply** the topics in a practical way (e.g. by analysing and playing basslines).

I will outline these three points above, still using rhythm.

Meaning

Term	Meaning
BPM	Beats per minute.
Groove	A repeated rhythmic pattern, or a sense of rhythmic 'feel'.
Metronome	A device to mark time by a regular click.
Note Lengths	How long we let a note ring for.
Rest Lengths	How long the gap between notes are.
Tempo	Speed of a piece of music.
Time Signature	Informs you how many beats there are in each measure, and what type of beat they are.
Timing	The ability to 'keep time' accurately.

You can see from the table that lots of the terms are similar in meaning.

For rhythm purposes, before playing a piece of music, we note the time signature and metronome marking to give us the correct tempo. We then hopefully play the correct note lengths, while keeping time, with a solid groove. Groove is a multifaceted word, and here I mean, where we are playing, in relation to the beat (e.g. are we playing with a 'lazy feel', behind the beat, or are we pushing the bassline forward?).

As you can see, this is quite a task! I cannot stress how important it is, that you have a very good understanding of note and rest lengths. This will give you a solid rhythmic foundation, before then moving onto subtler elements, such as groove.

Further Exploring

This can be done with a teacher, by searching online and on YouTube, or using specific books.

I will now list parts of my Rhythm Chapter from my **Bass Beginner's Guide**, to illustrate how resources can help you.

You can also view my [YouTube Video](#) which has a section on rhythm, from 3:54 onwards.

There are two systems to naming note lengths, the British and US systems. Although the US system is also used more commonly now in the UK.

US Note Names	UK Note Names
Whole Note	Semibreve
Half Note	Minim
Quarter Note	Crotchet
Eighth Note	Quaver
Sixteenth Note	Semiquaver
Thirty-second Note	Demisemiquaver

The following examples show the different note and rest lengths.

NOTE LENGTHS



WHOLE NOTE HALF NOTE QUARTER NOTE EIGHTH NOTE SIXTEENTH NOTE THIRTY-SECOND NOTE

REST LENGTHS



WHOLE NOTE REST HALF NOTE REST QUARTER NOTE REST EIGHTH NOTE REST SIXTEENTH NOTE REST THIRTY-SECOND NOTE REST

A couple of things to note:

Dotted Notes - If you see a dot after a note or rest, you add on half the value of that note or rest. So a dotted quarter note is worth one and a half beats.

DOTTED NOTES



1 1/2 Beats

3/4 of a Beat

Beams - We join notes together with beams, generally into whole beats. For example, a sixteenth note, eighth note, sixteenth note equals one beat, and we write it as follows.



Some frequently used **time signatures** that you are likely to see in popular music are listed below. The top number tells you how many beats in each measure, and the bottom number tells you what type of beat it is.

Time Signature	Beats In each measure	Type Of Note
4/4	4	Quarter
3/4	3	Quarter
2/4	2	Quarter
6/8	6	Eighth
12/8	8	Eighth
2/2	2	Half

Practical Use

So how do we now apply these topics to our bass playing?

Well, for rhythm, I suggest that you listen to different styles of music, to see what the common rhythmic patterns are. Then try to clap some of those rhythms, or even notate them yourself.

When looking at a bassline for the first time, it is very useful to first separate the rhythm from the notes. Ensure you are comfortable with the rhythm before playing the notes.

I do a lot of sight-reading as part of my bass freelance work, and I find common rhythmic patterns everywhere. Once you recognise a pattern or groove, which eventually happens subconsciously, then you can quickly look at the whole set of notes, and know instantly what is required, rhythmically.

Here are some common rhythmic patterns. Try to clap or tap them, slowly at first, and then build up speed.

RHYTHMIC PATTERNS

RHYTHM 1



RHYTHM 2



RHYTHM 3



How To Practice.

Use the rhythm example above, to plan out your three key areas.

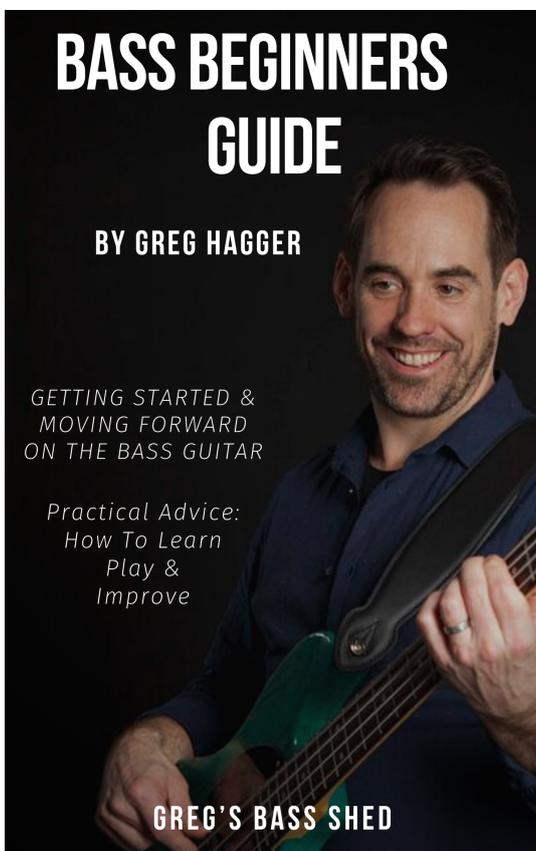
Once you have researched them, use the first table on the next page, to plan when you are going to practise these key areas. Create some clear, well defined monthly goals, to help with this.

It is good sometimes to play just beyond your current abilities, and take yourself out of your comfort zone.

You can record your practise sessions on the second table. Keeping a record helps you to keep track of your progress and develop purposeful practise habits.

Both these tables can be downloaded, in full size, from the Resources Page of my website.

[Download Tables](#)



All the key areas from the questions you answered on Page 2, are in my **Bass Beginner's eBook**.

Details about that are on my website.

[Bass Beginner's eBook](#)

