

CUT CAPO TRY THIS: BY: MITCH BOHANNON

Teaching Children: Training Up The Next Generation of Worship Leaders/Musicians (Part 1)

How many of you have tried to teach your son or daughter to play guitar? After two lessons, you probably couldn't decide which one of you was more frustrated... Their fingers *just won't listen!* For several years I was a middle school P.E. coach. I've had much experience with frustrating situations...but that's for a different magazine! One of my major goals as a coach was to give the students opportunities for success. It's so fulfilling to see a child pleased with their own progress. If a student had difficulty making a free-throw, instead of having them get more and more discouraged, I put them closer to the basket. Eventually, they could move back. The motion is the same, just the position is different.

The same goes with teaching the guitar. It is very rare that you'd find a child (7-9 years old) that can easily form a 3-finger chord shape. On top of that, having them hold that chord and strum without dropping the pick or *raking* across the strings like they are using a claw-hammer. I've found that the cut capo is a great place to start... the motion is the same, just the position is different. The bonus here is that the finger positions are partial shapes of standard, open chords – AND, they get to strum ALL the strings! There's no need to tell them to only strum four or five of the strings.

To get them started, you can find an appropriately sized guitar, tune it up and position the cut capo for them. Teach them to sit comfortably and hold the pick (I teach a three-finger grip on the pick – they seem to drop it less).

Our daughter, Sara, started as a nine-year-old and our son, Sam, is beginning at age seven. Sara has had a couple years of piano lessons and understands notes and rhythm's pretty well. Sam is beginning the guitar as a first instrument. I started them first with simply strumming the open Esus chord (cut capo with no fingers) and then eased into one finger versions of the E, B, and A chords. **[INSERT 3-CHORD DIAGRAM]** This keeps their middle finger **only** in the 2nd fret (above the capo) and will prepare them for the full shapes. Sara and Sam both took to these chords very quickly. Sara, being older and having already had some music training, was able to strum in tempo immediately and we played a modified version of "Here I Am to Worship." I had her playing a single strum only on each chord change. Try this:

E B A E B A
Light of the world / You stepped down into darkness / Opened my eyes / let me see /

E B A E B A E
Beauty that made this heart adore You / Hope of a life spent with You / Here I am to worship /

 B E A E
Here I am to bow down / Here I am to say that You're my God / You're altogether lovely /

 B E A
Altogether worthy / Altogether wonderful to me

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This is a wonderfully simple song played this way! Strum through it with these one-finger cut capo chords and then play and sing this with your student. How wonderful it will be to train our children to be Worship Musicians! So if you're a father, a mother, a brother, or a sister... let's commit to teaching the younger generation to play for Him!

Mitch Bohannon is the Worship Pastor at FBC, Dayton, TX. He helped develop the Short Cut Capo for Kyser. Mitch and his wife, Noelle have 3 of the greatest kids in the world!

**DIAGRAM

