



Left-handedness and playing guitar:

At IMSS we strive to make every student's experience of learning music positive, productive and successful. We aim to cater for a range of learning styles and to use up to date, relevant and well-supported instructional strategies.

Over many years IMSS teachers have taught thousands of students both left and right handed. Many students have demonstrated that it's possible for both left and right-handed students to achieve a high level of performance on a standard guitar. There have been a number of guitarists who have become very successful playing guitars modified for a left-hander however, there are also a number of very successful guitarists who present as left-handed in their everyday life but play a standard guitar. At IMSS we teach all students on a standard guitar for the following reasons:

- 1) Playing the guitar requires a high degree of dexterity in both hands. In fact, many students feel that the movements made by the left hand are more complex and require more strength, at least in the beginning stages. As the student progresses each hand develops strength and dexterity meaning that playing the instrument becomes easier for both left and right-handed players.
- 2) It is expensive to buy a correctly made left-handed guitar. It is not sufficient to simply string the guitar in the opposite way. Adjustments need to be made to the bridge, head nut and internal structure of the guitar. In the case of an electric guitar, adjustments would also be needed to the electrical components of the instrument.
- 3) In guitar ensemble, students often get the opportunity to play Requinto and Contrabass guitars. These instruments are not modified for left-handed use therefore a student playing on a left-handed guitar would miss out on the opportunity to be extended by playing these instruments. In ensemble situations the left-handed guitarists would also need to sit on the outside of the group for physical reasons (the neck of the guitar facing a different way to all the other students), limiting their access to the full range of parts. This is one reason why orchestral string players always play in the standard position.

There are several staff members at IMSS who are left handed yet have learnt to play their instrument in the standard way so we know from experience that it is possible to have a successful and rewarding experience learning music as a 'leftie' playing a standard instrument.

Some recent studies also support the idea that left-handers show no disadvantage playing a standard instrument. Indeed in one study the left-handers showed better dexterity and reported that they were more comfortable playing their standard instruments than right-handers!

http://www.immm.hmtm-hannover.de/fileadmin/www.immm/Publikationen/Kopiez-Jabusch-etal_2012_NoDisadvantageHandedness.pdf

One wonderful aspect of playing guitar is being able to join in music-making at parties and social functions. A person who learns to play on an instrument modified for the left hand would be unable pick up a friend's guitar and play and would always need to have their own instrument on hand. This also makes trying and choosing top end instruments extremely difficult as shops do not usually carry high end instruments modified for left handers.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of your child's instrumental tuition further please speak to your child's instrumental teacher who can further assist you.