

Rockschool | Electric Guitar Syllabus | Free Choice Piece Guidance

For general information about Free Choice Pieces please see:

<https://www.rslawards.com/free-choice-pieces/>

The following guidelines outline features that would normally be found within a free choice selection for electric guitar to meet the grade level.

These features are indicative and would not all necessarily occur to the same degree within any particular piece. Standards can be measured by making a balanced judgement regarding various musical elements based on these guidelines. If in any doubt, please consult the pieces in the grade book for a guide, or email freechoicepieceenquiries@rslawards.com with a copy of the sheet music to check the suitability of a free choice piece. ***Please allow four weeks for a decision regarding the suitability of the submitted piece.***

FREE CHOICE PIECE GUIDELINES | Debut

Duration	45 secs – 3 mins
Expressive techniques	The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate basic control of legato/staccato
Rhythm skills	Whole, half, quarter, eighth notes; whole, half and quarter note rests
Physical techniques	The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate <ul style="list-style-type: none">• movement between chords and single notes• use of pick or first two fingers of the picking hand• basic damping techniques
Instrument compass	Pieces should contain a prevalence of open and first positions with some movement up to the third fret

FREE CHOICE PIECE GUIDELINES | Grade 1

Duration	1 – 3 mins
Expressive techniques	The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate basic control of legato/staccato
Rhythm skills	The piece should include a mixture of whole, half, quarter and eighth notes, dotted quarter notes and associated rests
Physical techniques	The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate <ul style="list-style-type: none">• movement between chords and single notes• use of pick or first two fingers of the picking hand• basic damping techniques
Instrument compass	Pieces should contain a prevalence of open and first positions with some movement up to the third fret

FREE CHOICE PIECE GUIDELINES | Grade 2

Duration	1 – 3 mins
Expressive techniques	<p>The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• basic control of legato/staccato• a range of dynamics: p, mf, f <p>Other techniques may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• hammer-ons• pull-offs
Rhythm skills	<p>The piece should include a mixture of whole, half, quarter, and eighth notes, as well as dotted quarter notes and associated rests</p>
Physical techniques	<p>The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• use of pick or first two fingers of picking hand• basic damping techniques• ability to move between chords and single notes• use of double stops
Instrument compass	<p>Pieces should contain a prevalence of open and first positions with some movement up to the third fret</p>

FREE CHOICE PIECE GUIDELINES | Grade 3

Duration	1 min 30 secs – 4 mins
Expressive techniques	<p>The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • control of legato/staccato • a range of dynamics (p, mf, f) <p>Other techniques might include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hammer-ons • pull-offs • use of controlled bends
Rhythm skills	<p>The piece should include a mixture of whole, half, quarter, eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as dotted eighth notes and associated rests</p> <p>Some use of syncopation</p>
Physical techniques	<p>The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of pick or first two fingers of picking hand • picking hand damping techniques • ability to move between chords and single notes <p>Other techniques may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alternative picking • use of double stops on adjacent strings • barre chords
Instrument compass	Emphasis on open and first positions, with some movement up to 5th position
Solo section	<p>The piece should include solo passages of at least 8 bars</p> <p>Use of blues and pentatonic scales</p>

FREE CHOICE PIECE GUIDELINES | Grade 4

Duration	2 – 4 mins
Expressive techniques	<p>The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • control of legato/staccato • a range of dynamics (p, mf, f) <p>Other techniques might include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • slides • accented notes • trills • hammer-ons • pull-offs • use of controlled bends
Rhythm skills	<p>The piece should include a mixture of whole, half, quarter, eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as dotted half, quarter and eighth notes and associated rests</p> <p>Some use of syncopation</p>
Physical techniques	<p>The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of pick and fingers of the picking hand • ability to move between chords and single notes • picking hand damping techniques • fretting hand damping techniques • alternative picking • use of double stops on adjacent strings • barre chords
Instrument compass	First to fifth positions
Solo section	<p>The piece should include solo passages of at least 12 bars</p> <p>Use of blues and pentatonic scales</p>

FREE CHOICE PIECE GUIDELINES | Grade 5

Duration	2 – 4 mins
Expressive techniques	<p>The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • control of legato, including fretting hand legato, and staccato • a range of dynamics (p, mf, f) <p>Other techniques might include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • slides • accented notes • trills • hammer-ons • pull-offs • use of controlled bends
Rhythm skills	<p>The piece should include a mixture of whole, half, quarter, eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as dotted half, quarter and eighth notes, quarter note triplets and associated rests, with some passages using sustained eighth and sixteenth note combinations</p> <p>Tied whole notes, Syncopated eighth and sixteenth notes</p>
Physical techniques	<p>The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of pick and fingers of the picking hand • ability to move between chords and single notes • picking hand damping techniques • fretting hand damping techniques • alternative picking • use of double stops on adjacent strings • barre chords
Instrument compass	Up to 10th position
Solo section	<p>The piece should include solo passages of at least 12 bars</p> <p>Use of blues and pentatonic scales</p>

FREE CHOICE PIECE GUIDELINES | Grade 6

Duration	2 min 30 secs – 5 mins
Expressive techniques	<p>The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • control of legato, including fretting hand legato, and staccato • a range of dynamics (p – f) <p>Other techniques might include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • slides • accented notes • trills • hammer-ons • pull-offs • use of controlled bends • natural and false harmonics
Rhythm skills	<p>The piece should include a mixture of whole, half, quarter, eighth and sixteenth notes; dotted half, quarter and eighth notes; quarter, eighth and sixteenth note triplets and associated rests; with some passages using sustained eighth and sixteenth note combinations</p> <p>Tied whole notes</p> <p>Syncopated and/or swung eighth and sixteenth notes</p> <p>Time signature variations including 3/4, 5/4, 6/4 and 7/8</p>
Physical techniques	<p>The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of pick and fingers of the picking hand • ability to move between chords and single notes • picking hand damping techniques • fretting hand damping techniques • alternative picking • use of double stops on non-adjacent strings • barre chords
Instrument compass	Up to 15th position
Solo section	<p>The piece should include solo passages of at least 16 bars</p> <p>Use of blues and pentatonic scales</p>

FREE CHOICE PIECE GUIDELINES | Grade 7

Duration	3 – 5 mins
Expressive techniques	<p>The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • control of legato, including fretting hand legato, and staccato • a range of dynamics (pp – ff) <p>Other techniques might include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • slides • accented notes • trills • hammer-ons • pull-offs • use of controlled bends • natural and false harmonics
Rhythm skills	<p>The piece should include a mixture of whole, half, quarter, eighth and sixteenth notes; dotted half, quarter and eighth notes; quarter, eighth and sixteenth note triplets and associated rests; with some passages using sustained eighth and sixteenth note combinations</p> <p>Tied whole notes</p> <p>Syncopated and/or swung eighth and sixteenth notes</p> <p>Time signature variations including 3/4, 5/4, 6/4 and 7/8</p>
Physical techniques	<p>The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of pick and fingers of the picking hand • ability to move between chords and single notes • picking hand damping techniques • fretting hand damping techniques • alternative picking • use of double stops on non-adjacent strings • barre chords
Instrument compass	Up to 15th position
Solo section	<p>The piece should include solo passages of at least 16 bars</p> <p>Use of blues and pentatonic scales</p>

FREE CHOICE PIECE GUIDELINES | Grade 8

Duration	3 – 5 mins
Expressive techniques	<p>The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • control of legato, including fretting hand legato, and staccato • a range of dynamics (pp – ff) <p>Other techniques might include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • slides • accented notes • trills • hammer-ons • pull-offs • use of controlled bends • natural and false harmonics
Rhythm skills	<p>The piece should include a mixture of whole, half, quarter, eighth and sixteenth notes; dotted half, quarter and eighth notes; quarter, eighth and sixteenth note triplets and associated rests; with some passages using sustained eighth and sixteenth note combinations</p> <p>Tied whole notes</p> <p>Syncopated and/or swung eighth and sixteenth notes</p> <p>Time signature variations including 3/4, 5/4, 6/4 and 7/8</p>
Physical techniques	<p>The piece should enable the candidate to demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of pick and fingers of the picking hand • ability to move between chords and single notes • picking hand damping techniques • fretting hand damping techniques • alternative picking • use of double stops on non-adjacent strings • barre chords • string tapping
Instrument compass	Any fret on the fingerboard
Solo section	<p>The piece should include solo passages of at least 16 bars</p> <p>Use of blues and pentatonic scales</p>