



10 Tips For Perfect Nails

What's the one thing every guitarist, no matter their level, is always working on?

Nails, of course! This PDF contains 10 essential nail tips from Chris Garwood, co-founder of [tonebase](https://tonebase.co), guitarist of over 20 years and graduate of USC Thornton and Yale School of Music!

Read more of Chris's thoughts over on our blog at tonebase.co/blog. We've also included a few links to lessons on tonebase that expand on the material in this PDF – be sure to check them out as well!

1. Find a nail shape that works for YOU, not others

Examining hundreds of other guitarists's nails (as fun as it is to do) will not help you figure out what to do with your own. The fact is, **your shape shouldn't be determined by what David Russell or anybody else's nails LOOK like.** The perfect shape should be found by how it FEELS when you play.

Ask yourself, "Is there too much or too little resistance? Is my nail too long and difficult to get through the string? Is it too pointy and giving me bad tone?"

These are all much more valuable questions than "What do David Russell's nails look like?" And frankly, he's been asked this way too many times, so if you really have to know, **just look at this picture!**





2. Try different nail products until you find the one that works

I can't tell you how many "strengthening" products I went through before I finally found one that worked.



For me, it was a random CVS brand. For you, it might be something totally different – Sally Hansen, OPI, Nutra Nail, etc. You'll know it's the right one because it will work. When I started using it, I immediately noticed a difference and haven't badly broken a nail since (knock on wood...)

However, everyone's body is different so **try a lot of different brands and find the one that works for you.** Then, you'll be set for life.

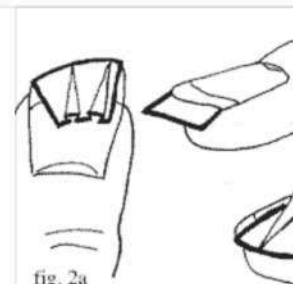
3. If you practice a lot, protect your nails with tape

The tape trick was a godsend for me when I was preparing for my senior recital and practicing around eight hours a day. If you haven't read [David Russell's blog](#) on this, I highly recommend giving it a look. It's tricky to do at first and requires some skill, but when your nails are grinding down to nothing from the ridiculous scales in Concerto de Aranjuez, you'll be happy you learned how to do it.

SAVING THE NAILS

The Official David Russell Website, Classical Guitarist.

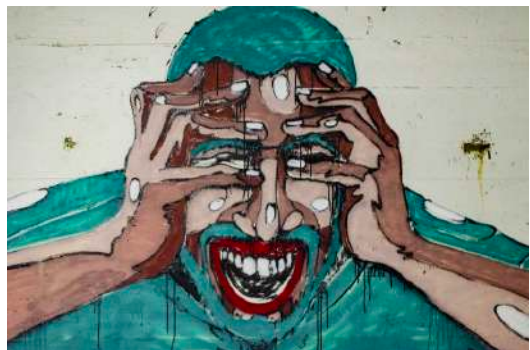
davidrussellguitar.com





4. Don't get TOO obsessed with your nails

I know this one seems counterintuitive to this post, but it's actually the most important. I used to shape and buff my nails EVERY day before beginning my practice sessions. It got to the point where **I couldn't start playing until every finger felt perfect.**



Apart from wasting a ton of time, this routine made me dependent on having perfectly shaped nails to play well. Of course, like many aspects of performing, **it's rare that your nails ever feel perfect when you're out on stage.** They are always a little too short or not quite the right shape.

For me, this meant I was always concentrating on how bad my nails felt which made me feel like I was playing badly as well.

5. Watch Bill Kanengiser's video on nails

If you haven't seen it yet, Bill's "giant nail" video is absolute genius and breaks down EXACTLY what is going on when your nail plucks a string. Check it out:





6. Bring a nail buffer EVERYWHERE



I can't tell you how many times I've chipped a nail and **been saved by the old, disgusting piece of sandpaper** I've had stashed in my wallet for the past ten years.

It's been a lifesaver countless times, and every time I think about throwing it out, three days later I'm using it again and so thankful I still have it. Sandpaper is the easiest to have on hand, but it's worth also keeping some extra buffers in your backpack, purse, or anything you carry around on a regular basis. Trust me.

7. Start doing everyday things with your LEFT hand

In the past, **my biggest broken nail culprit came from everyday occurrences.** I'd reach into a bag with my right hand and, like some cruel magic trick, come out with a torn nail. Another regular break would happen when I would reach for a door handle and smash my finger into the door instead. Call me clumsy, but these activities aren't an issue for me anymore because I do them with my left hand!



All it takes is instilling a mental note in your head to do dangerous nail activities with the hand full of nails you can afford to lose: your left! I've even taken this as far as learning to rebound a basketball and bowl exclusively with my left hand.



8. Don't file your nails too short

This seems obvious, but it's a mistake we've all made...

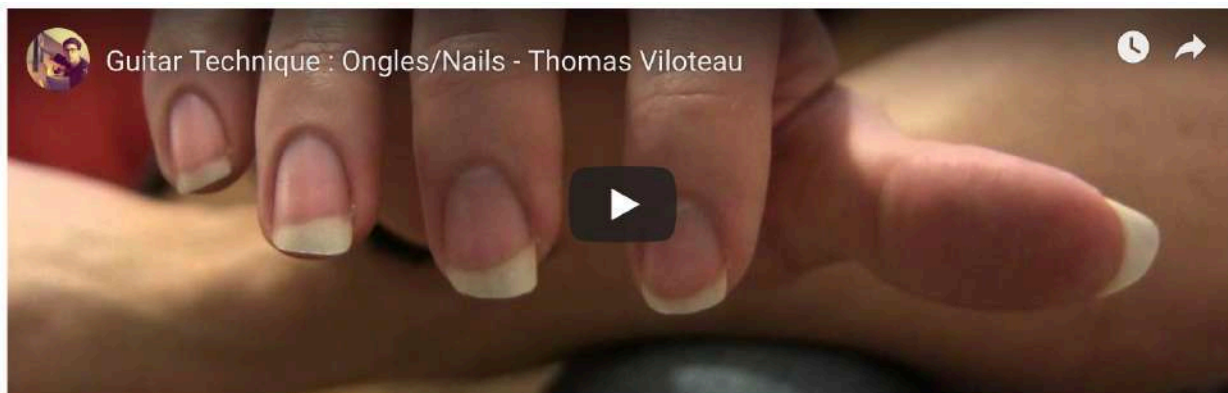


You're hanging out backstage, feeling good, and doing your nails before a concert. You decide you want to play really fast tonight, so you take a little more off than usual. **Suddenly, you're on stage and it's like there's nothing there!**

I always try to leave an extra millimeter of nail to help me feel more secure and give my nails a little more "grip" to the string.

9. Watch Thomas Viloteau's video on finding your unique nail shape

Thomas is the perfect example of why you shouldn't simply copy another guitarist's shape. **His nails are completely unique to HIS playing style** and would never work for anyone else. In this video, Thomas demonstrates how he found his own shape and how you can do the same.





10. Watch Aniello Desiderio's lesson covering "Sound Production"

In one of the most popular lessons on tonebase, Aniello Desiderio discusses sound production and the development of your own "voice" on the guitar.

This is followed by a general overview of effective nail shapes and how to use sandpaper for polishing. Watch the preview below and **start a free-trial of tonebase Premium to watch the full lesson!**



I hope you found these useful and learned a thing or two. If I missed anything or if you have a tip of your own, share it with us at team@tonebase.co. The best submissions will be featured in our newsletter which is read by 1000's of guitarists each week!

Chris Garwood,
Co-Founder | tonebase

LEARN FROM THE BEST CLASSICAL GUITARISTS AT [TONEBASE.CO](https://tonebase.co)



P.S: Don't miss a follow up to this PDF on our blog here:

Fingernail Basics for Classical Guitarists-Length, Shape, and Tools

One of the most defining characteristics of classical guitarists is our fingernails. Finding the ideal shape and length for your own nails is a

M <https://medium.com/tonebase/fingernail-basics-for-classical-guitarist...>



tonebase gives you instant access to knowledge from the world's greatest guitarists, performers and educators: <https://tonebase.co>

About Chris Garwood, Co-Founder @ tonebase

Christopher Garwood began his classical guitar studies at the age of 5 under the tutelage of Alan Johnston at the MacPhail Center for Music in Minnesota.

Highlights in Chris's early career include first place finishes in competitions such as the Pacific Guitar Festival, Thursday Musical, and Schubert Club Scholarship Competitions, as well as participation in the Guitar Foundation of America International Youth Competition. Chris has a Bachelor of Music from the University of Southern California where he studied with William Kanengiser as a Trustee Scholarship recipient, a full merit scholarship. Chris studied with Benjamin Verdery at the Yale School of Music in New Haven, CT, and graduated with a Masters of Musical Arts degree in May, 2017.