

Basic Guitar Chords for Beginners

This useful beginner guitar chord chart will help you find all of the most popular chords on the guitar. We have also included a useful section on how to read chord boxes, how chords are formed and some suggested strumming patterns.

Key

- ① Finger number & placement on string
- X Do not play this string
- Open string - play string with no fingers
- ①—①① Place finger flat across (*barre*) the strings

Major Chords

Major Chords diagram showing fretboard diagrams for A, B \flat , B, C, C \sharp /D \flat , D, E \flat , E, F, F \sharp /G \flat , G, and A \flat . Each diagram shows the fretboard with finger numbers (1-4) and string indicators (x for muted, o for open). A barre is shown for A \flat on the 4th fret.

Minor Chords

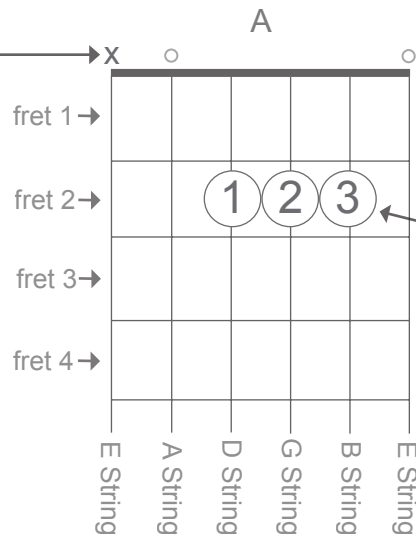
Minor Chords diagram showing fretboard diagrams for A m , B $\flat m$, B m , C m , C $\sharp m$ /D $\flat m$, D m , E $\flat m$, E m , F m , F $\sharp m$ /G $\flat m$, G m , and A $\flat m$. Each diagram shows the fretboard with finger numbers (1-4) and string indicators (x for muted, o for open). A barre is shown for A $\flat m$ on the 4th fret.

Seventh Chords

Seventh Chords diagram showing fretboard diagrams for A 7 , B $\flat 7$, B 7 , C 7 , C $\sharp 7$ /D $\flat 7$, D 7 , E $\flat 7$, E 7 , F 7 , F $\sharp 7$ /G $\flat 7$, G 7 , and A $\flat 7$. Each diagram shows the fretboard with finger numbers (1-4) and string indicators (x for muted, o for open). Barres are shown for B $\flat 7$, C $\sharp 7$ /D $\flat 7$, and A $\flat 7$.

How to Read Guitar Chord Boxes

'X' means do not play this string

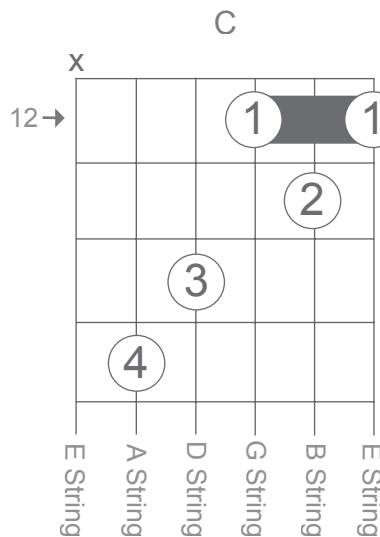


A circle indicates an open string (play with no fingers on this string)

This is the top of the fretboard which is called the 'nut' (it is usually made out of white plastic or bone)

These circled numbers tell you which fingers to use and which fret/string to put your finger on.

If you see a number to the side of the top fret this indicates the fret. Our example starts on 'fret 12'.



This grey line between the circles indicates a 'barre' - place your finger across the strings specified and apply pressure to hold down all the strings (our example is holding down the top 3 strings with your 1st finger).

A barre can also be indicated by a curved line as in the example to the right:



Guitar Chords Explained: How Chords are Formed

A chord is made up of 2 or more notes played simultaneously. The most common chords are triads, or based upon triads (a triad is a set of 3 notes built in thirds). For example a C major triad is built on the root C and then we add the third and the fifth notes on the top (see example on right). Here we have a major third (4 semitones (4 half steps)) and a perfect fifth (7 semitones (7 half steps)) above the root note. This gives us a major triad/chord. If you want to fill out this chord you can duplicate any of these notes (although it is less common to duplicate the major third as this is frowned upon in Western harmony).



Any major chord will have the same structure as this one, so let's try starting on D this time. If D is our root note, then a major third above this would be F#, and a perfect fifth above the root would be A:



If you then wanted to turn a major chord into a 7th chord then all you have to do is add a minor 7th (10 semitones (10 half steps)) above the root. Here are the 7th chords of C and D:



Minor triads/chords are similar to major triads, but instead of having a major third, they have a minor third (3 semitones (3 half steps)) and a perfect fifth (7 semitones (7 half steps)) above the root. Here are the triads of c minor and d minor:



If you want to work out the primary chords (I, IV & V) in any key, here is a useful way to work it out. Let's take for example D Major. The key signature for D Major is 2 sharps (F# & C#), so all F's & C's will be sharp in this chart. Firstly you will need to write out the D major scale:

D E F# G A B C#

Then if we add the third and fifth notes above the tonic note (first note):

Fifth	A						
Third	F#						
Root	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#

Now fill in rest of the thirds by simply continuing up the scale from the F#:

Fifth	A						
Third	F#	G	A	B	C#	D	E
Root	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#

Now fill in rest of the fifths by continuing up the scale from the A:

Fifth	A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G
Third	F#	G	A	B	C#	D	E
Root	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#

Here you have all of your triads/chords for D major. Now you can pick out your primary chords:

Fifth	A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G
Third	F#	G	A	B	C#	D	E
Root	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#
	I			IV	V		

You can do this in any key, just remember to add all the sharps or flats from your key signature. Please see the 'How to Read Music for Guitarists' guide, key signatures section for a full list of major and minor key signatures.

Guitar Strumming Patterns - an Introduction

When you are playing chords you are sometimes given a strumming pattern to play, or sometimes you have to play what you feel is suitable for a particular song. There are a few ways of notating strumming patterns. A very basic way is to have diagonal slashes evenly spaced throughout a bar (or with some missing if they want you to hold the previous strum on for longer).

For example:

This is a down strum (stroke) symbol, so they want all four beats played on a down strum

These are the chords they want you to play

These slashes mean four even beats (crotchet beats)

As strumming patterns get more complicated you will more commonly see them written in notation with up and down strums (strokes) specified above the notes:

Down strum

Up strum

The rhythm is specified by the notation (if you do not understand these rhythms please see our 'How to Read Music for Guitarists' guide)

Note: Sometimes the up & down strums will be written as up & down arrows, or sometimes as letters 'U' & 'D'.

Guitar Chord Strumming Patterns: 4/4 Patterns

Here are some 4 bar strumming patterns you can use in 4/4 (4 crotchet beats in a bar):

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

1 2 3 4 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 2 3 4 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

1 2 + 3 4 + 1 2 + 3 4 + 1 2 + 3 4 + 1 2 + 3 4 +

1 2 + 3 4 1 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 2 + 3 4 1 2 + 3 + 4 +

1 + 2 3 4 + 1 + 2 3 4 + 1 + 2 3 4 + 1 + 2 3 4 +

1 2 + 3 + 4 1 2 + 3 + 4 1 2 + 3 + 4 1 2 + 3 + 4

Guitar Chord Strumming Patterns: 3/4 Patterns

Here are some 4 bar strumming patterns you can use in 3/4 (3 crotchet beats in a bar):

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

1 + 2 + 3 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 1 + 2 + 3 +

1 2 + 3 + 1 2 + 3 1 2 + 3 + 1 2 + 3

1 2 + 3 + 1 2 + 3 + 1 2 + 3 + 1 2 + 3 +

1 (2) + 3 + 1 (2) + 3 + 1 (2) + 3 + 1 (2) + 3 +

1 + 2 + 3 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 1 + 2 + 3 +

1 + 2 + 3 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 1 + 2 + 3 +