Guitar Chord Reference

A Comprehensive Visual Guide Standard Tuning: E – A – D – G – B – e

Theory (A – G) · Open chords · Barre chords · 7ths · Sus · Power · Add9 · Aug · Dim · 9ths · Slash chords · Blues

This guide is a self-contained reference for guitarists at any level, from the first open chord to complex jazz voicings. It is organised in three parts.

The **theory chapter** (pages 3–11) explains how chord symbols work: what the letters and suffixes mean, and how every chord type is built from a scale. Each of the seven natural roots (A through G) gets its own table, with close-position staff notation in the treble-8 clef standard to guitar.

The **chord diagram sections** (pages 12–20) provide fingering diagrams and staff notation for eighty voicings in standard tuning: open major and minor chords, dominant and major seventh chords, suspended and power chords, open-string drone chords, the movable barre shapes and the fretboard notes that place them, add9, augmented, diminished, extended and slash chords, and the diatonic chords of C major, with the Roman numerals that transpose any progression to a new key and the 12-bar blues.

The **practical sections** (pages 20–23) bridge theory and playing: a primer on strumming patterns and rhythm notation, four graded songs (beginner to intermediate) with chord grids and picking patterns, and a set of technique tips for cleaner fretting, smoother chord changes and better barre chords.

All diagrams assume **standard tuning** (low to high: E – A – D – G – B – e). Staff notation uses the **treble-8 clef** (sounds one octave below written), which is the international standard for guitar.

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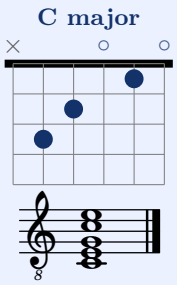
How to Read Chord Diagrams

Each diagram shows the guitar neck as seen from the front. Strings are **vertical** (low E at left, high e at right); frets are **horizontal**.

- **Thick top bar** = the nut (open-position chords)
- **Number at left** = starting fret (chords played higher up the neck)
- **Filled circles** = press here with your fingertip
- **Thick round bar** = barre (one finger across multiple strings)
- ○ above string = play it *open* (unfretted)
- × above string = mute / do not play

The **staff notation** below each diagram uses the *treble-8* clef — standard for guitar. Notes are written an octave higher than they sound; the "8" below the clef is a reminder to read them down one octave. Finger numbers: **1**=index **2**=middle **3**=ring **4**=pinky.

Example: C major (x32010)
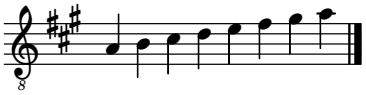


Chord Theory: Chord Families A through G
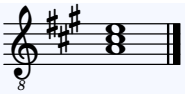
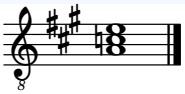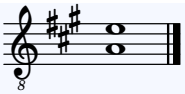
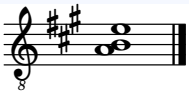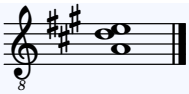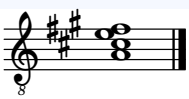
A chord symbol has two parts: a **root** (the letter name) and a **quality descriptor** that specifies the interval structure. The tables below show every chord type for each of the seven natural roots **A, B, C, D, E, F, G**. Formulas use *scale-degree numbers* with accidentals (♭ = lower by 1 semitone, ♯ = raise by 1 semitone). The **Staff** column shows the chord in close position using the treble-8 clef; guitar diagrams on later pages show practical voicings on the fretboard.
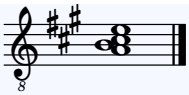
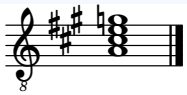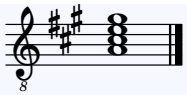
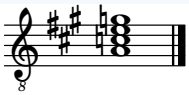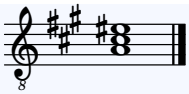
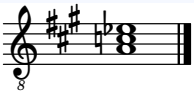
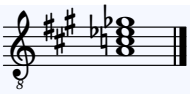
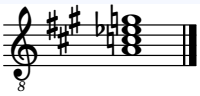
The A Family

Key signature: three sharps: F♯, C♯, G♯.
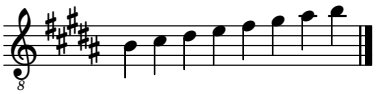


1 A **2** B **3** C♯ **4** D **5** E **6** F♯ **7** G♯ **8** A

Symbol	Full name	Formula	Staff	Colour / use
A	A major	1 – 3 – 5		Bright, stable.
Am	A minor	1 – ♭3 – 5		Dark. Lower the 3rd: C♯ → C.
A5	A power chord	1 – 5		Raw, neutral. No 3rd.
Asus2	A sus. 2nd	1 – 2 – 5		Open. Replace 3rd with 2nd (B).
Asus4	A sus. 4th	1 – 4 – 5		Tense. Replace 3rd with 4th (D).
A6	A major sixth	1 – 3 – 5 – 6		Sweet, vintage. Add 6th (F♯).
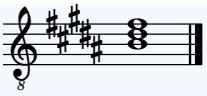
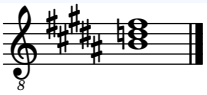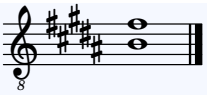
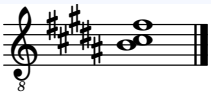
Symbol	Full name	Formula	Staff	Colour / use
Aadd9	A add nine	1 – 3 – 5 – 9		Colourful. Add 2nd/9th (B), no 7th.
A7	A dominant 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – ♭7		Bluesy. Lower 7th: G♯ → G.
Amaj7	A major 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – 7		Dreamy, jazzy. Keep natural 7th (G♯).
Am7	A minor 7th	1 – ♭3 – 5 – ♭7		Mellow, soulful. Lower 3rd and 7th.
Aaug	A augmented	1 – 3 – ♯5		Eerie. Raise the 5th by 1 semitone.
Adim	A diminished	1 – ♭3 – ♭5		Very tense. Lower 3rd and 5th.
Adim7	A dim. 7th	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – ♭♭7		Max. tense. All minor 3rds.
Am7♭5	A half-dim.	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – ♭7		Tense, jazzy (also: Aø).
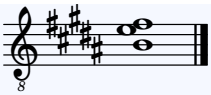
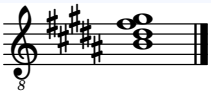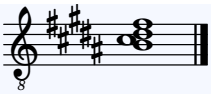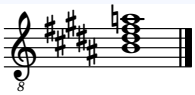
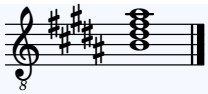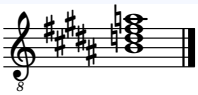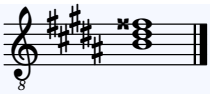
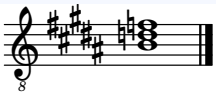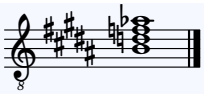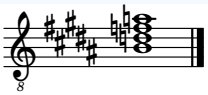
The B Family

Key signature: five sharps: F♯, C♯, G♯, D♯, A♯.
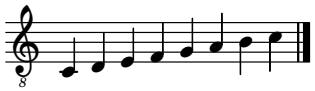


1 B **2** C♯ **3** D♯ **4** E **5** F♯ **6** G♯ **7** A♯ **8** B

Symbol	Full name	Formula	Staff	Colour / use
B	B major	1 – 3 – 5		Bright, stable.
Bm	B minor	1 – ♭3 – 5		Dark. Lower the 3rd: D♯ → D.
B5	B power chord	1 – 5		Raw, neutral. No 3rd.
Bsus2	B sus. 2nd	1 – 2 – 5		Open. Replace 3rd with 2nd (C♯).
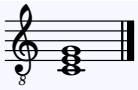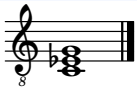
Symbol	Full name	Formula	Staff	Colour / use
Bsus4	B sus. 4th	1 – 4 – 5		Tense. Replace 3rd with 4th (E).
B6	B major sixth	1 – 3 – 5 – 6		Sweet, vintage. Add 6th (G♯).
Badd9	B add nine	1 – 3 – 5 – 9		Colourful. Add 2nd/9th (C♯), no 7th.
B7	B dominant 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – ♭7		Bluesy. Lower 7th: A♯ → A.
Bmaj7	B major 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – 7		Dreamy, jazzy. Keep natural 7th (A♯).
Bm7	B minor 7th	1 – ♭3 – 5 – ♭7		Mellow, soulful. Lower 3rd and 7th.
Baug	B augmented	1 – 3 – ♯5		Eerie. Raise the 5th by 1 semitone.
Bdim	B diminished	1 – ♭3 – ♭5		Very tense. Lower 3rd and 5th.
Bdim7	B dim. 7th	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – 𝄫7		Max. tense. All minor 3rds.
Bm7♭5	B half-dim.	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – ♭7		Tense, jazzy (also: Bø).
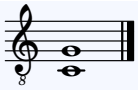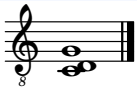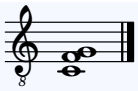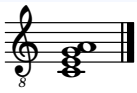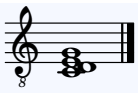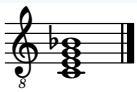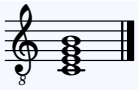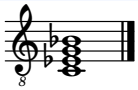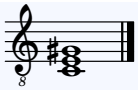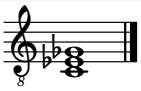
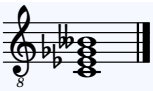
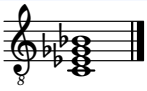
The C Family

Key signature: no sharps or flats.
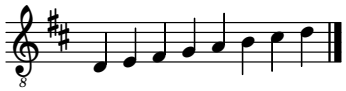


1 C **2** D **3** E **4** F **5** G **6** A **7** B **8** C

Symbol	Full name	Formula	Staff	Colour / use
C	C major	1 – 3 – 5		Bright, stable.
Cm	C minor	1 – ♭3 – 5		Dark. Lower the 3rd: E → E♭.
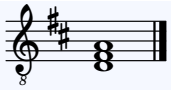
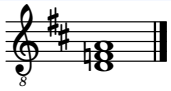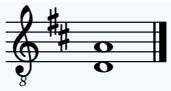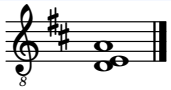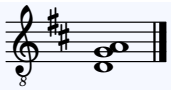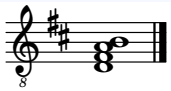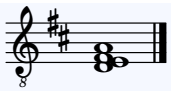
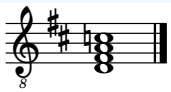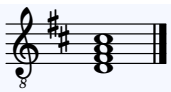
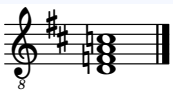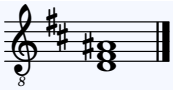
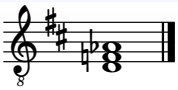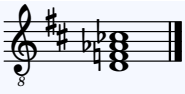
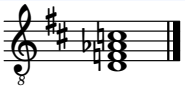
Symbol	Full name	Formula	Staff	Colour / use
C5	C power chord	1 – 5		Raw, neutral. No 3rd.
Csus2	C sus. 2nd	1 – 2 – 5		Open. Replace 3rd with 2nd (D).
Csus4	C sus. 4th	1 – 4 – 5		Tense. Replace 3rd with 4th (F).
C6	C major sixth	1 – 3 – 5 – 6		Sweet, vintage. Add 6th (A).
Cadd9	C add nine	1 – 3 – 5 – 9		Colourful. Add 2nd/9th (D), no 7th.
C7	C dominant 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – ♭7		Bluesy. Lower 7th: B → B♭.
Cmaj7	C major 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – 7		Dreamy, jazzy. Keep natural 7th (B).
Cm7	C minor 7th	1 – ♭3 – 5 – ♭7		Mellow, soulful. Lower 3rd and 7th.
Caug	C augmented	1 – 3 – ♯5		Eerie. Raise the 5th by 1 semitone.
Cdim	C diminished	1 – ♭3 – ♭5		Very tense. Lower 3rd and 5th.
Cdim7	C dim. 7th	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – ♭♭7		Max. tense. All minor 3rds.
Cm7♭5	C half-dim.	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – ♭7		Tense, jazzy (also: Cø).

The D Family

Key signature: two sharps: F♯, C♯.
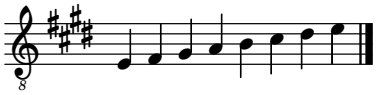


1 D **2** E **3** F♯ **4** G **5** A **6** B **7** C♯ **8** D
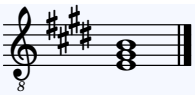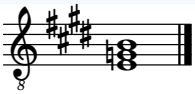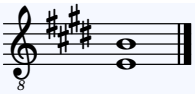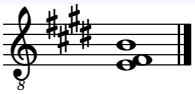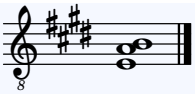
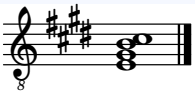
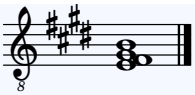
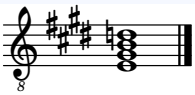
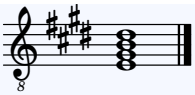
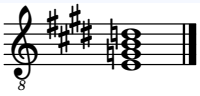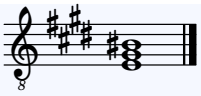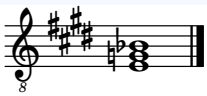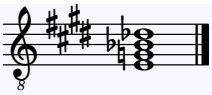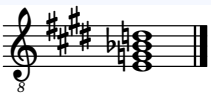
Symbol	Full name	Formula	Staff	Colour / use
D	D major	1 – 3 – 5		Bright, stable.
Dm	D minor	1 – ♭3 – 5		Dark. Lower the 3rd: F♯ → F.
D5	D power chord	1 – 5		Raw, neutral. No 3rd.
Dsus2	D sus. 2nd	1 – 2 – 5		Open. Replace 3rd with 2nd (E).
Dsus4	D sus. 4th	1 – 4 – 5		Tense. Replace 3rd with 4th (G).
D6	D major sixth	1 – 3 – 5 – 6		Sweet, vintage. Add 6th (B).
Dadd9	D add nine	1 – 3 – 5 – 9		Colourful. Add 2nd/9th (E), no 7th.
D7	D dominant 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – ♭7		Bluesy. Lower 7th: C♯ → C.
Dmaj7	D major 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – 7		Dreamy, jazzy. Keep natural 7th (C♯).
Dm7	D minor 7th	1 – ♭3 – 5 – ♭7		Mellow, soulful. Lower 3rd and 7th.
Daug	D augmented	1 – 3 – ♯5		Eerie. Raise the 5th by 1 semitone.
Ddim	D diminished	1 – ♭3 – ♭5		Very tense. Lower 3rd and 5th.
Ddim7	D dim. 7th	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – ♭♭7		Max. tense. All minor 3rds.
Dm7♭5	D half-dim.	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – ♭7		Tense, jazzy (also: Dø).

The E Family

Key signature: four sharps: F♯, C♯, G♯, D♯.
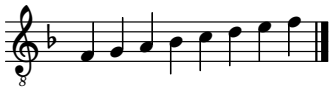


1 E **2** F♯ **3** G♯ **4** A **5** B **6** C♯ **7** D♯ **8** E

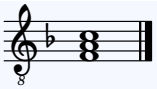
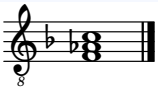
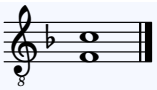
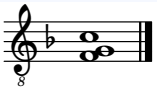
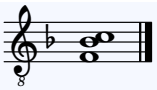
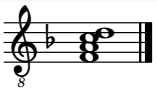
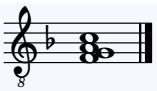
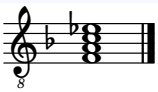
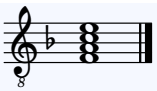
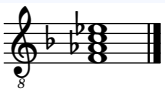
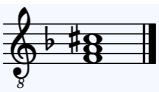
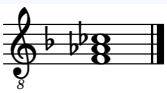
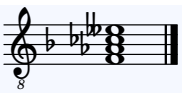
Symbol	Full name	Formula	Staff	Colour / use
E	E major	1 – 3 – 5		Bright, stable.
Em	E minor	1 – ♭3 – 5		Dark. Lower the 3rd: G♯ → G.
E5	E power chord	1 – 5		Raw, neutral. No 3rd.
Esus2	E sus. 2nd	1 – 2 – 5		Open. Replace 3rd with 2nd (F♯).
Esus4	E sus. 4th	1 – 4 – 5		Tense. Replace 3rd with 4th (A).
E6	E major sixth	1 – 3 – 5 – 6		Sweet, vintage. Add 6th (C♯).
Eadd9	E add nine	1 – 3 – 5 – 9		Colourful. Add 2nd/9th (F♯), no 7th.
E7	E dominant 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – ♭7		Bluesy. Lower 7th: D♯ → D.
Emaj7	E major 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – 7		Dreamy, jazzy. Keep natural 7th (D♯).
Em7	E minor 7th	1 – ♭3 – 5 – ♭7		Mellow, soulful. Lower 3rd and 7th.
Eaug	E augmented	1 – 3 – ♯5		Eerie. Raise the 5th by 1 semitone.
Edim	E diminished	1 – ♭3 – ♭5		Very tense. Lower 3rd and 5th.
Edim7	E dim. 7th	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – ♭♭7		Max. tense. All minor 3rds.
Em7♭5	E half-dim.	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – ♭7		Tense, jazzy (also: Eø).
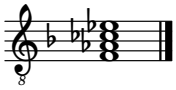
The F Family

Key signature: one flat: B♭.
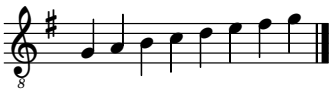


1 F **2** G **3** A **4** B♭ **5** C **6** D **7** E **8** F

Symbol	Full name	Formula	Staff	Colour / use
F	F major	1 – 3 – 5		Bright, stable.
Fm	F minor	1 – ♭3 – 5		Dark. Lower the 3rd: A → A♭.
F5	F power chord	1 – 5		Raw, neutral. No 3rd.
Fsus2	F sus. 2nd	1 – 2 – 5		Open. Replace 3rd with 2nd (G).
Fsus4	F sus. 4th	1 – 4 – 5		Tense. Replace 3rd with 4th (B♭).
F6	F major sixth	1 – 3 – 5 – 6		Sweet, vintage. Add 6th (D).
Fadd9	F add nine	1 – 3 – 5 – 9		Colourful. Add 2nd/9th (G), no 7th.
F7	F dominant 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – ♭7		Bluesy. Lower 7th: E → E♭.
Fmaj7	F major 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – 7		Dreamy, jazzy. Keep natural 7th (E).
Fm7	F minor 7th	1 – ♭3 – 5 – ♭7		Mellow, soulful. Lower 3rd and 7th.
Faug	F augmented	1 – 3 – ♯5		Eerie. Raise the 5th by 1 semitone.
Fdim	F diminished	1 – ♭3 – ♭5		Very tense. Lower 3rd and 5th.
Fdim7	F dim. 7th	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – ♭♭7		Max. tense. All minor 3rds.

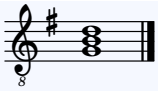
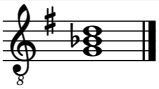
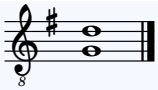
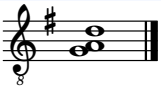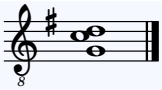
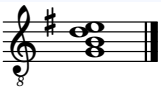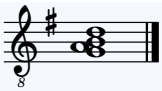
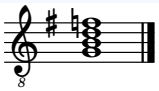
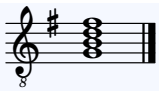
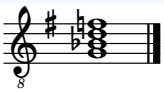
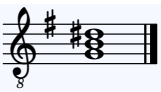
Symbol	Full name	Formula	Staff	Colour / use
Fm7♭5	F half-dim.	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – ♭7		Tense, jazzy (also: Fø).
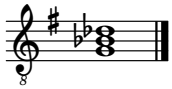
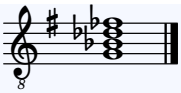
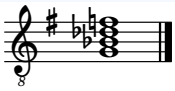
The G Family

Key signature: one sharp: F♯.

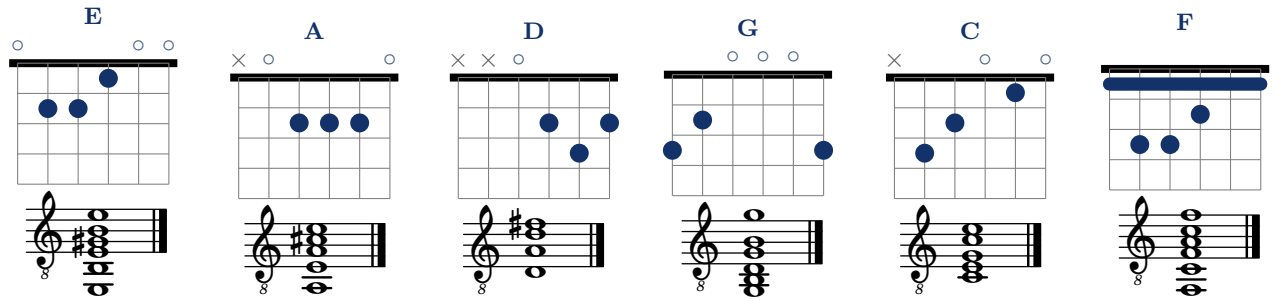


1 G **2** A **3** B **4** C **5** D **6** E **7** F♯ **8** G

Symbol	Full name	Formula	Staff	Colour / use
G	G major	1 – 3 – 5		Bright, stable.
Gm	G minor	1 – ♭3 – 5		Dark. Lower the 3rd: B → B♭.
G5	G power chord	1 – 5		Raw, neutral. No 3rd.
Gsus2	G sus. 2nd	1 – 2 – 5		Open. Replace 3rd with 2nd (A).
Gsus4	G sus. 4th	1 – 4 – 5		Tense. Replace 3rd with 4th (C).
G6	G major sixth	1 – 3 – 5 – 6		Sweet, vintage. Add 6th (E).
Gadd9	G add nine	1 – 3 – 5 – 9		Colourful. Add 2nd/9th (A), no 7th.
G7	G dominant 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – ♭7		Bluesy. Lower 7th: F♯ → F.
Gmaj7	G major 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – 7		Dreamy, jazzy. Keep natural 7th (F♯).
Gm7	G minor 7th	1 – ♭3 – 5 – ♭7		Mellow, soulful. Lower 3rd and 7th.
Gaug	G augmented	1 – 3 – ♯5		Eerie. Raise the 5th by 1 semitone.

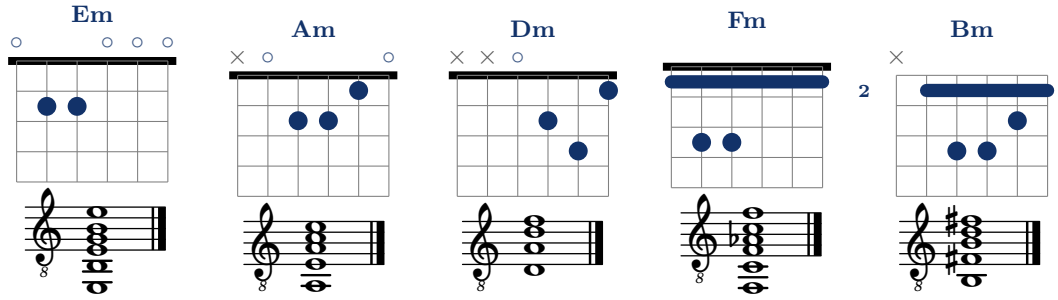
Symbol	Full name	Formula	Staff	Colour / use
Gdim	G diminished	1 – ♭3 – ♭5		Very tense. Lower 3rd and 5th.
Gdim7	G dim. 7th	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – ♭♭7		Max. tense. All minor 3rds.
Gm7♭5	G half-dim.	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – ♭7		Tense, jazzy (also: Gø).

Open-Position Major Chords



E 022100 **A** x02220 **D** xx0232 **G** 320003 **C** x32010 **F** 133211 (barre at fret 1)

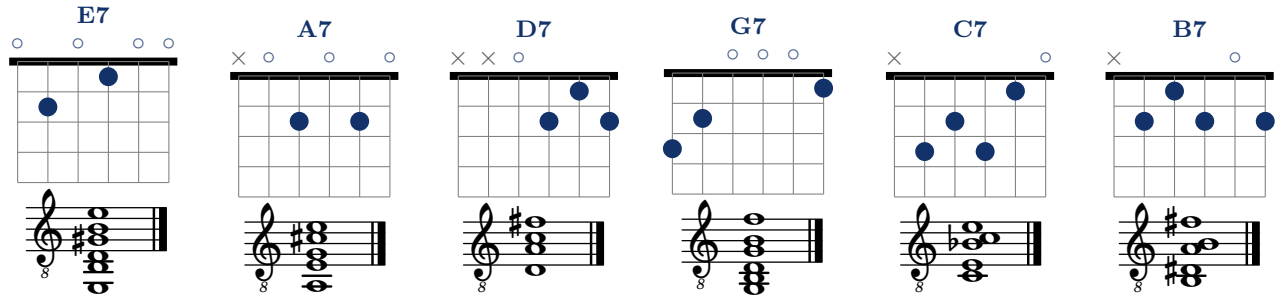
Open-Position Minor Chords



Em 022000 **Am** x02210 **Dm** xx0231 **Fm** 133111 (barre at 1) **Bm** x24432 (barre at 2)

Dominant 7th Chords

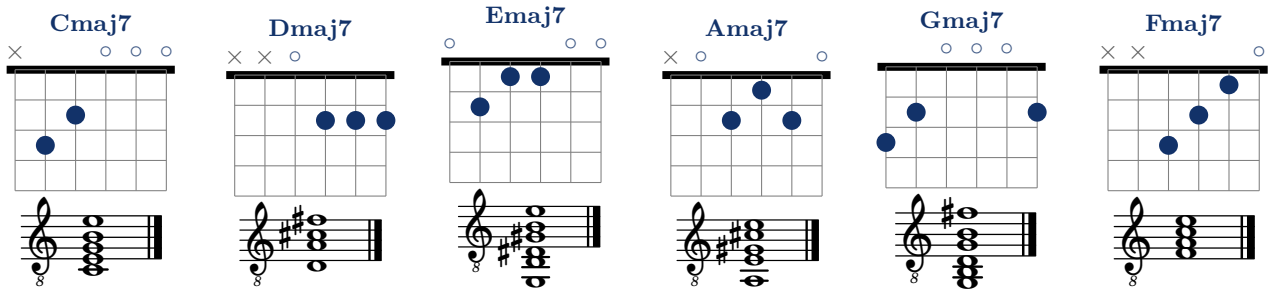
1 – 3 – 5 – ♭7: bluesy and tense, naturally resolving to the tonic.



E7 020100 **A7** x02020 **D7** xx0212 **G7** 320001 **C7** x32310 **B7** x21202

Major 7th Chords (maj7)

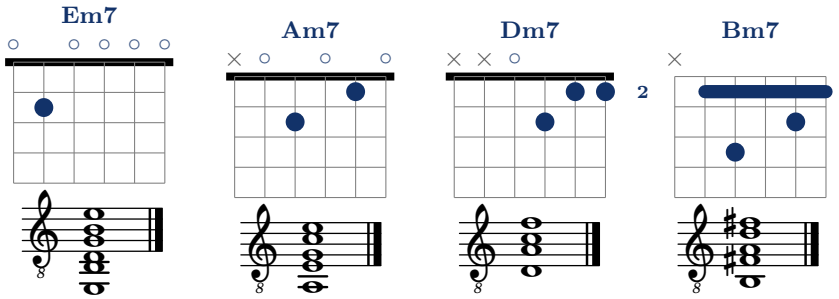
1 – 3 – 5 – 7: smooth, dreamy and jazzy.



Cmaj7 x32000 **Dmaj7** xx0222 **Emaj7** 021100 **Amaj7** x02120 **Gmaj7** 320002 **Fmaj7** xx3210

Minor 7th Chords (m7)

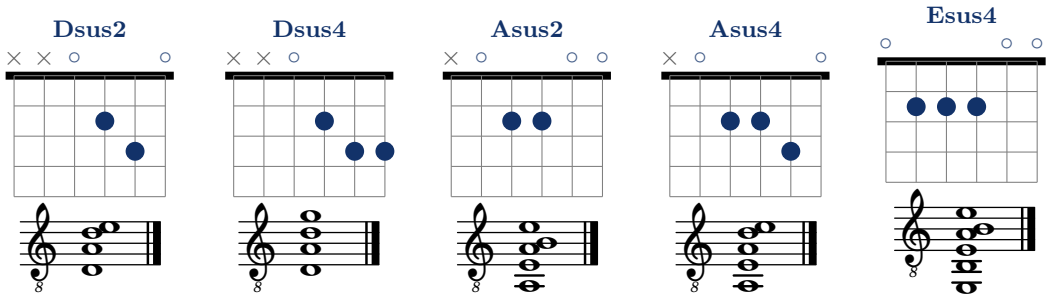
1 – ♭3 – 5 – ♭7: cornerstone of jazz, soul and R&B.



Em7 020000 **Am7** x02010 **Dm7** xx0211 **Bm7** x24232 (barre at 2, variant shown)

Suspended Chords (sus2, sus4)

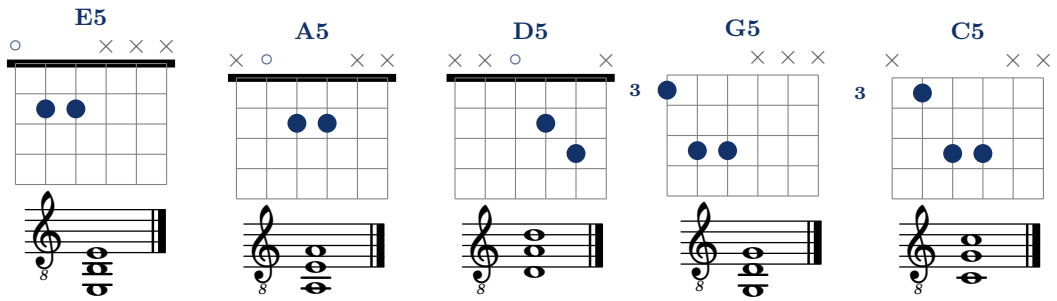
The 3rd is replaced by a 2nd or 4th: harmony is open and unresolved.



Dsus2 xx0230 **Dsus4** xx0233 **Asus2** x02200 **Asus4** x02230 **Esus4** 022200

Power Chords (5th Chords)

1 – 5 only, no 3rd: neither major nor minor. Essential in rock and metal.

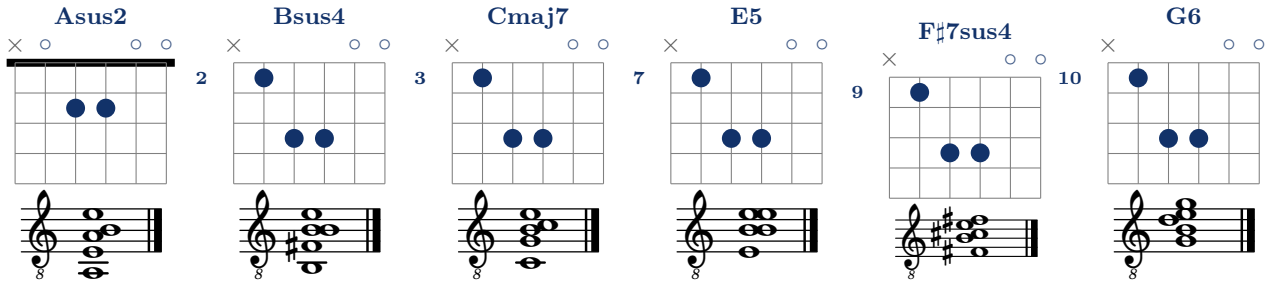


E5 022xxx **A5** x022xx **D5** xx023x **G5** 355xxx (root on string 6) **C5** x355xx (root on string 5)

G5 and C5 are movable: the index finger holds the root, the ring and little fingers the 5th and the octave, two frets higher on the next two strings. Slide the shape to change the root (see "Finding the Root"). Leaving out the octave gives the two-string version, root and 5th only, lighter and quicker to move.

Open-String Drone Chords

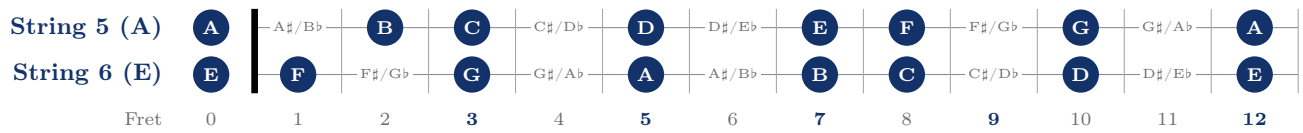
Play the octave shape of C5 on strings 5, 4 and 3, and let strings 2 and 1 ring open: the open B and E sound above every chord, turning a plain power chord into a richer colour. Sliding that one shape to the notes of the G major scale gives a family of chords for G major and E minor, whose scale holds both open notes.



Asus2 x02200 **Bsus4** x24400 **Cmaj7** x35500 **E5** x79900 **F♯7sus4** x9 11 11 0 0 **G6** x 10 12 12 0 0 Each chord's name comes from the root on string 5 and from what the two open strings add to it.

Finding the Root: Notes on Strings 6 and 5

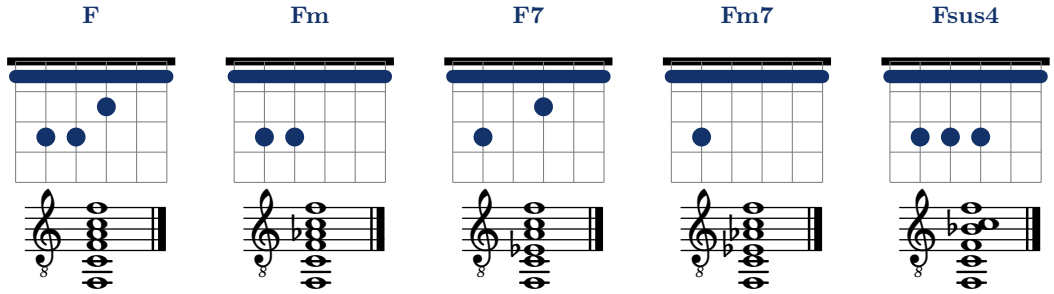
A movable shape names no chord until its root is placed. The barre shapes that follow carry their root on string 6 or on string 5, under the index finger: find the root on that string, and the fret it falls on is where the shape goes.



Each fret is a semitone. Between two natural notes lies one fret, the sharp of the lower note or the flat of the upper, except from E to F and from B to C, which are a semitone apart. Bold fret numbers carry a position marker on most guitars. At fret 12 the names start over, an octave higher. String 1, the high e, has the same notes as string 6; the same note on string 6 is always five frets higher than on string 5.

Barre Chords — E Shape (Root on String 6)

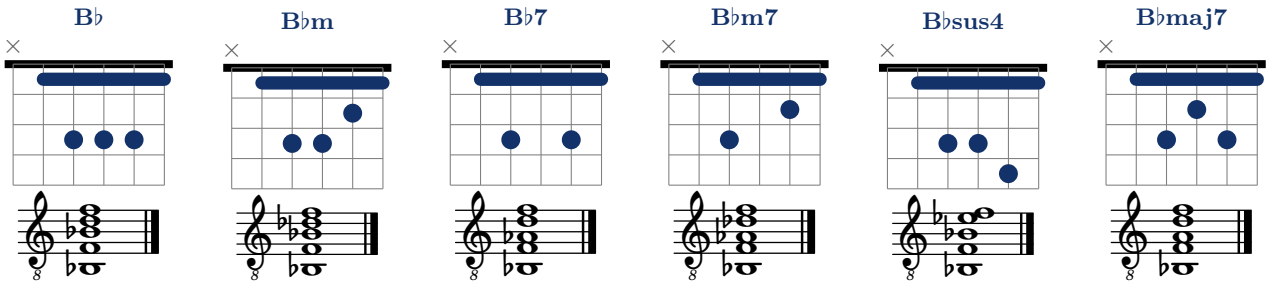
The open E, Em, E7, Em7 and Esus4 shapes moved up the neck: the index finger barres all six strings and takes the place of the nut, and the other fingers play the open shape one fret higher. The root lies on string 6, under the barre.



F 133211 **Fm** 133111 **F7** 131211 **Fm7** 131111 **Fsus4** 133311 Slide the five together: barre at fret 3 for G, Gm, G7, Gm7, Gsus4; at fret 5 for A, Am, A7…

Barre Chords — A Shape (Root on String 5)

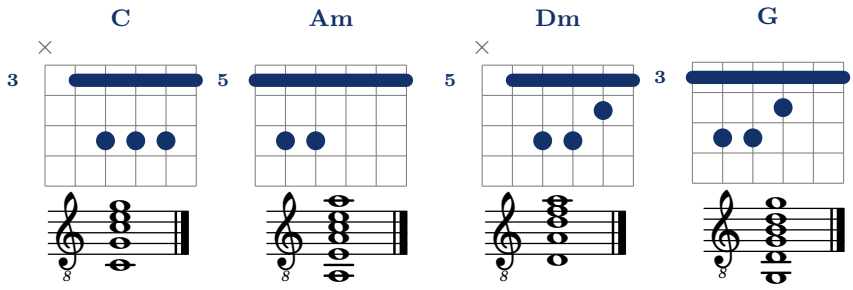
The open A, Am, A7, Am7, Asus4 and Amaj7 shapes moved up the neck: the index finger barres strings 5 to 1 and the low E string stays silent. The root lies on string 5, under the barre. In the major shape many players flatten the ring finger across strings 4 to 2 instead of using three fingers.



B♭ x13331 **B♭m** x13321 **B♭7** x13131 **B♭m7** x13121 **B♭sus4** x13341 **B♭maj7** x13231 Barre at fret 3 for C, Cm, C7…; at fret 5 for D, Dm, D7…

Combining the Two Barre Shapes

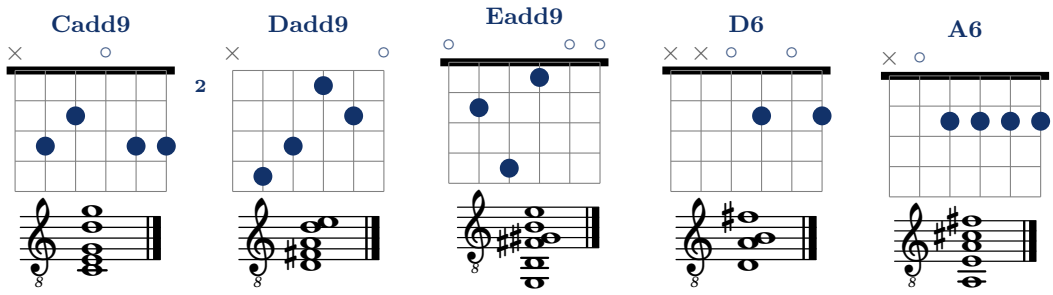
Every root can be played on string 6 or on string 5. Choosing, for each chord, the shape whose root is nearest keeps the hand in one region of the neck instead of jumping along it: here I – vi – ii – V in C stays between frets 3 and 7, the barre moving only between frets 3 and 5.



C x35553 (A shape) **Am** 577555 (E shape) **Dm** x57765 (A shape) **G** 355433 (E shape) With the seventh-chord shapes in the same places, the progression becomes C – Am7 – Dm7 – G7.

Added-Tone Chords (add9, add6)

Triad + extra colour note (9th or 6th), without a 7th.

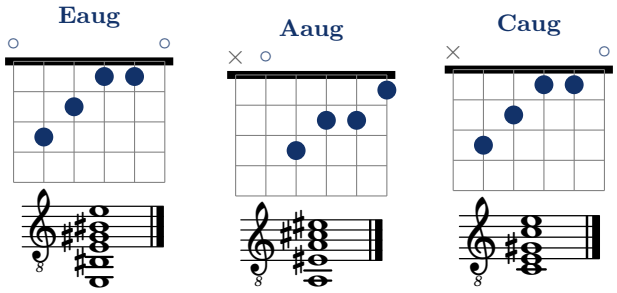


Cadd9 x32033 **Dadd9** x54230 **Eadd9** 024100 **D6** xx0202 **A6** x02222

In a major key, an add9 can replace the I, IV or V chord: the added note, a whole step above the root, then belongs to the key as well. Playing Cadd9 for C, or Gadd9 for G, brightens a progression without changing it.

Augmented Chords (aug)

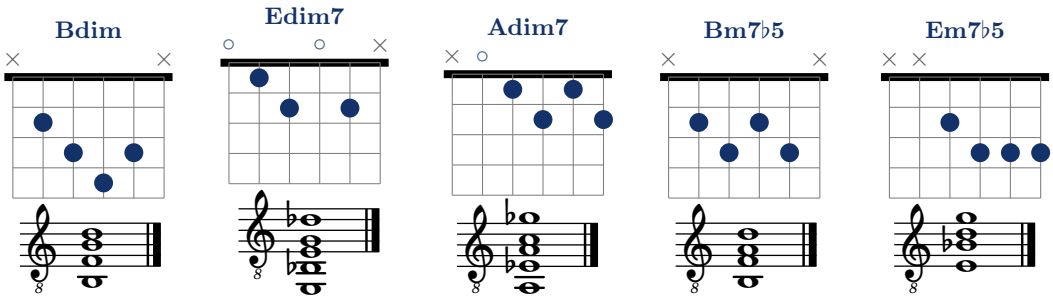
1 – 3 – ♯5: eerie and tense. Symmetrical — repeats every 4 semitones.



Eaug 032110 **Aaug** x03221 **Caug** x32110 Eaug = G♯aug = Caug (same pitch-class set).

Diminished Chords (dim, dim7, m7♭5)

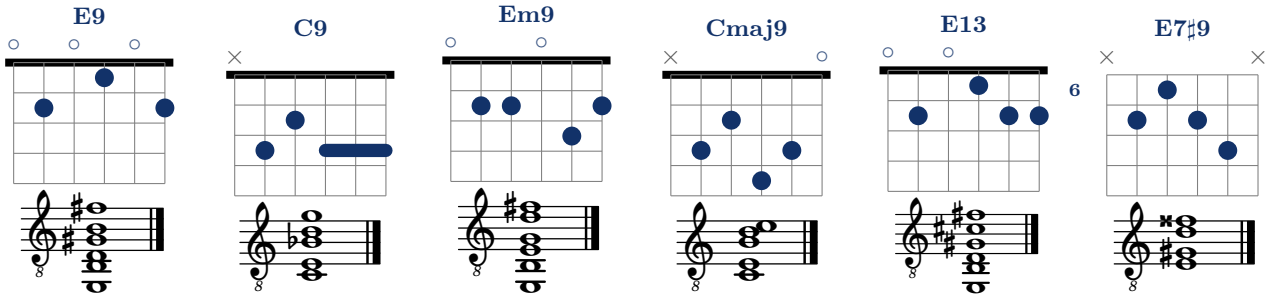
Stacked minor 3rds. A dim7 repeats every 3 semitones. The half-diminished chord m7♭5, also written ø, keeps the diminished triad but takes a minor 7th instead: it is the vii chord of a major key, Bm7♭5 in C, and the ii chord of a minor key.



Bdim x2343x **Edim7** 01202x **Adim7** x01212 **Bm7♭5** x2323x **Em7♭5** xx2333 Shift a dim7 up 3 frets to get the same chord on a new root.

Extended and Altered Chords (9, 13, 7♯9)

Extensions carry the stack of thirds past the 7th: the 9th is the 2nd an octave up, the 11th the 4th, the 13th the 6th. A 9, 11 or 13 chord contains the 7th; without it, the chord is an add chord or a 6. Six strings and four fingers rarely allow every note of the larger chords. A 13th chord leaves out the 11th, which clashes with the major 3rd; beyond that, the 5th goes first, then the 9th. The 3rd and the 7th stay, since they decide the quality, and so does the highest extension, which names the chord.

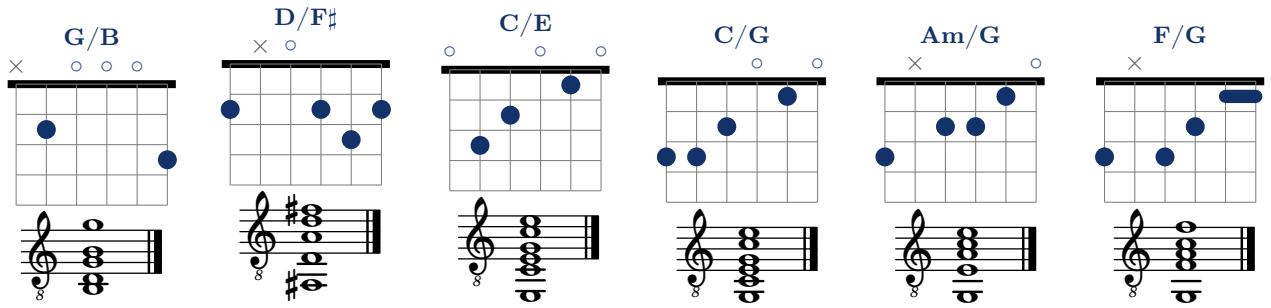


E9 020102 **C9** x32333 **Em9** 022032 **Cmaj9** x32430 **E13** 020122 **E7♯9** x7678x C9 is movable, root on string 5. E7♯9, a staple of rock and funk, sets its sharp 9th, F double sharp (sounding as G), against the major 3rd G♯.

Within a major key, extended chords also serve as substitutes, since their added notes stay in the key: a dominant 7th can become a 9 or a 13; a minor chord an m7, or an m9 on ii and vi but not on iii, whose 9th lies outside the key; a major chord on I or IV a maj7 or a maj9.

Slash Chords: Inversions and Other Bass Notes

A slash names the bass: G/B is a G chord whose lowest note is B. When the bass is a chord tone, the chord is *inverted*: 3rd in the bass in the first inversion (G/B, D/F♯, C/E), 5th in the second (C/G). When it is not, the bass adds a note of its own: F/G, an F triad over G, sounds as a gentle G dominant with a suspended 4th, and still leads to C. Strings below the bass must stay silent.



G/B x20003 **D/F♯** 2x0232 (thumb over the neck on string 6) **C/E** 032010 **C/G** 332010 **Am/G** 3x2210 **F/G** 3x3211

Slash chords let the bass walk by step while the harmony changes above it. In C, the bass descends C – B – A – G – F – E, then rises to G and resolves on C:

C	G/B	Am	Am/G	F	C/E	F/G	C

In G, G – D/F♯ – Em walks the bass G – F♯ – E the same way.

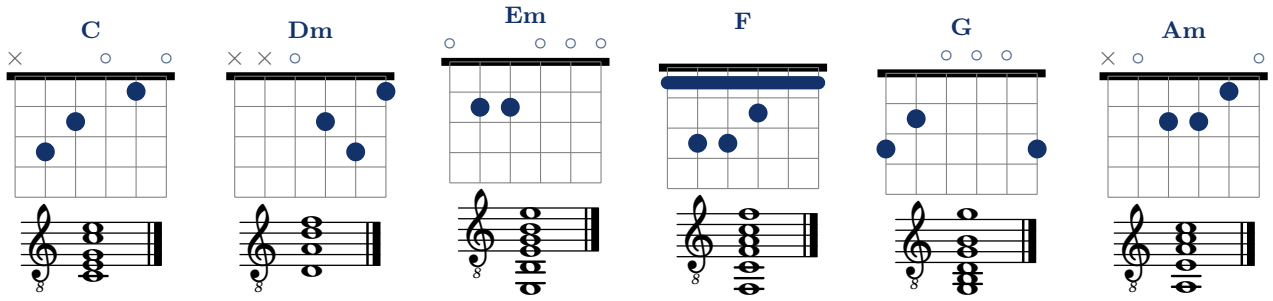
Diatonic Chords and Roman Numeral Notation

Tonal music uses three complementary notation systems for chords. Being able to move between them is an essential skill:

System	Description
Chord name (e.g. *G, Am, Dm*)	Gives the absolute pitch of the root and the chord quality (see the chord theory sections A–G). Useful for reading a chart or score.
Scale degrees (e.g. *1, ♭3, 5*)	Describes the *internal structure* of a chord regardless of key. Used in the formula tables of this guide.
Roman numerals (e.g. *I, IV, V, vi*)	Indicates the *position* of a chord within a given key: the numeral identifies the scale degree on which the chord is built. Upper case = major chord; lower case = minor chord; ° = diminished chord. Useful for transposing a progression to any key.

The seven diatonic chords of a major key

By stacking thirds on each degree of a major scale, we get seven chords whose qualities always follow the same pattern: **Maj – min – min – Maj – Maj – min – dim.** The table below shows all three notations for the key of **C major**:



	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii°
C major	C	Dm	Em	F	G	Am	Bdim
G major	G	Am	Bm	C	D	Em	F♯dim
D major	D	Em	F♯m	G	A	Bm	C♯dim
A major	A	Bm	C♯m	D	E	F♯m	G♯dim
E major	E	F♯m	G♯m	A	B	C♯m	D♯dim

How to use this table: identify the Roman numeral pattern of a progression, then read across the row for the desired key. Example: **I – V – vi – IV** in C = C – G – Am – F; in G = G – D – Em – C; in D = D – A – Bm – G.

Common progressions and their Roman numeral patterns

The progressions below appear in thousands of songs. The column *In C* gives the literal chord names; *Song* shows the actual key used in the recording.

Roman pattern	In C	Song (key)	Feel
I – IV – V	C – F – G	La Bamba (C)	Bright, driving
I – V – vi – IV	C – G – Am – F	Let It Be (C)	Epic, universal
vi – IV – I – V	Am – F – C – G	Zombie (Em)	Melancholic, rock
i – VII – VI – VII	Am – G – F – G	All Along the Watchtower (C♯m)	Dramatic
I – V – vi – iii – IV	C – G – Am – Em – F	Pachelbel's Canon	Timeless, classical
ii – V – I	Dm – G – C	Jazz standard (C)	Tension→release

The 12-bar blues

The basic 12-bar blues uses only I, IV and V, each as a dominant 7th, even the I and the IV, which the major key would make major or major 7th. That clash between the key and the chords' flat 7ths is part of the blues sound. In A, with three open chords:

A7 I7	**A7** I7	**A7** I7	**A7** I7
D7 IV7	**D7** IV7	**A7** I7	**A7** I7
E7 V7	**D7** IV7	**A7** I7	**E7** V7

The last bar, V7, turns the form around to its start; on the final pass, end on I7 instead. In E the same form uses E7, A7 and B7.

Chord Formula Quick Reference

Symbol suffix	Formula	Semitone gaps	Character
(none) = Major	1 – 3 – 5	+4, +3	Bright, stable
m = Minor	1 – ♭3 – 5	+3, +4	Dark, melancholic
7 = Dom. 7th	1 – 3 – 5 – ♭7	+4, +3, +3	Tense, bluesy
maj7	1 – 3 – 5 – 7	+4, +3, +4	Dreamy, jazzy
m7	1 – ♭3 – 5 – ♭7	+3, +4, +3	Mellow, soulful
sus2	1 – 2 – 5	+2, +5	Open, floating
sus4	1 – 4 – 5	+5, +2	Tense, anticipating
5 = Power	1 – 5	+7	Raw, neutral
aug	1 – 3 – ♯5	+4, +4	Eerie, tense
dim	1 – ♭3 – ♭5	+3, +3	Very tense
dim7	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – 𝄫7	+3,+3,+3	Maximally tense
m7♭5 = ø	1 – ♭3 – ♭5 – ♭7	+3, +3, +4	Tense, jazzy
7sus4	1 – 4 – 5 – ♭7	+5, +2, +3	Floating dominant
m6	1 – ♭3 – 5 – 6	+3, +4, +2	Bittersweet
add9	1 – 3 – 5 – 9	triad + 9th	Colourful, modern
6	1 – 3 – 5 – 6	triad + 6th	Sweet, vintage

Extensions, alterations and slash chords

Symbol suffix	Formula	Built as	Character
6/9	1 – 3 – 5 – 6 – 9	6 + 9th	Warm, open
9	1 – 3 – 5 – ♭7 – 9	7 + 9th	Funky, soulful
m9	1 – ♭3 – 5 – ♭7 – 9	m7 + 9th	Smooth, lush
maj9	1 – 3 – 5 – 7 – 9	maj7 + 9th	Airy
11	1 – 3 – 5 – ♭7 – 9 – 11	9 + 11th; 3rd often left out	Suspended, gospel
m11	1 – ♭3 – 5 – ♭7 – 9 – 11	m9 + 11th	Open, modal
13	1 – 3 – 5 – ♭7 – 9 – 13	9 + 13th; no 11th	Rich, bluesy
7♭9	1 – 3 – 5 – ♭7 – ♭9	7 + flat 9th	Dark, pulls to a minor I
7♯9	1 – 3 – 5 – ♭7 – ♯9	7 + sharp 9th	Gritty, rock and funk
7♯5 = aug7	1 – 3 – ♯5 – ♭7	aug + ♭7	Restless
X/Y	chord X, bass note Y	e.g. G/B, F/G	Smooth bass lines

Reading an unfamiliar chord symbol

A symbol reads from left to right: the root, the quality (m, maj, dim, aug, sus), the highest extension (7, 9, 11, 13), any alteration (♭9, ♯9, ♭5, ♯5), and the bass after a slash. Its notes come from the major scale of the root and the formula above: Cm7 is C – E♭ – G – B♭, and D7♯9 is D – F♯ – A – C – E♯. A chord too hard to finger can be simplified from the right: drop the alteration, then the extensions down to the 7th chord, and if need be down to the triad — G13, G9, G7, G; F♯m11, F♯m7, F♯m. The chord loses colour but keeps its place in the progression, as long as its 3rd stays. With a bassist playing the bass, the guitarist may also leave out the note after the slash.

Strumming and Rhythm Basics

Strumming is the act of sweeping the pick (or fingernails) across several strings at once to produce a chord. Two ingredients define a strumming pattern: the **time signature** (how beats are grouped) and the **stroke direction** (down or up) on each subdivision.

Time signatures

Sig.	Meaning	Feel / typical use
4/4	4 beats per bar, quarter note = 1 beat	Most pop, rock, blues — the default
3/4	3 beats per bar	Waltz, ballads (e.g. “Piano Man” by Billy Joel)
6/8	6 eighth-note beats per bar, grouped 3+3	Compound feel; suits fingerpicking (e.g. “House of the Rising Sun”)

Stroke notation

Strumming patterns in this guide use the following symbols:

Symbol	Meaning
D	Downstroke — sweep from string 6 (low E) toward string 1 (high e)
U	Upstroke — sweep from string 1 toward string 6
-	Rest / lift — do not strike the strings on this subdivision
×	Choked strum — touch the strings with the palm or fretting hand to mute them just before or just as you strum

Counting subdivisions in 4/4

In 4/4 time, each beat can be divided into two eighth notes, counted **1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and**. Downstrokes fall on the numbered beats; upstrokes on the “ands”:

1	+	**2**	+	**3**	+	**4**	+
D	U	**D**	U	**D**	U	**D**	U

All-eighth pattern: the simplest full 4/4 strum.

Common patterns

The table below shows the most widely used patterns. Each cell is one eighth-note subdivision (“1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +”). **Bold** = on-beat stroke; regular = off-beat (“and”) stroke.

Pattern name	Subdivisions: **1** + **2** + **3** + **4** +								Used in
All down (4/4)	**D**		**D**		**D**		**D**		Folk, slow ballads
Basic 8ths	**D**	U	**D**	U	**D**	U	**D**	U	Pop, rock
Island	**D**	-	**D**	U	-	U	**D**	U	Horse With No Name, Wonderwall
Pop “4-chord”	**D**	U	**D**	U	-	U	**D**	U	Most pop

Reading tip: always tap your foot on beats 1, 2, 3, 4. Downstrokes align with foot taps; upstrokes happen as the foot rises. Start very slowly with a metronome and only increase tempo once the pattern is automatic.

Dynamics and accents

A flat sequence of D and U strokes sounds mechanical. Two techniques add life:

- **Accent beats 2 and 4.** In most Western popular music, the snare drum lands on beats 2 and 4 (the "backbeat"). Strumming those beats slightly harder locks you in with a drummer.
- **Vary string coverage.** Downstrokes can sweep all six strings for power, while upstrokes often catch only the top two or three — this lightens the texture and makes changes feel more natural.

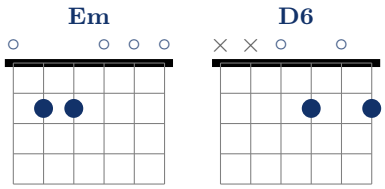
Songs to Play

The four songs below cover progressively harder ground. Each entry shows the chord diagrams, then a bar-by-bar progression grid, then the strumming or picking pattern and a focused playing tip. **D** = downstroke, **U** = upstroke, **-** = rest, × = choked strum.

1. Horse With No Name — America (1971)

Level: beginner

Only two chords, repeated throughout. **Em** and **D6** alternate every two bars. Key: E minor.



Progression (same for intro, verse and chorus):

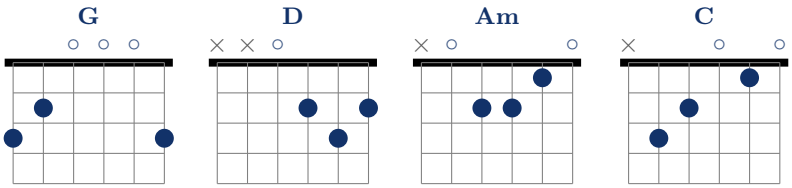
Em	**Em**	**D6**	**D6**

Strumming (4/4, ≈120 bpm): `D - D U - U D U`
Tip: Both chords use fret 2 only — Em on strings 5 and 4, D6 on strings 3 and 1 — and string 2 rings open in both. Leave strings 6 and 5 silent on D6. Keep the wrist relaxed.

2. Knockin' on Heaven's Door — Bob Dylan (1973)

Level: beginner

Two phrases in G major: **I – V – ii**, then **I – V – IV** (see "Diatonic Chords and Roman Numeral Notation": G – D – Am, then G – D – C). Four open chords; verse and chorus use the same sequence.



Verse & Chorus:

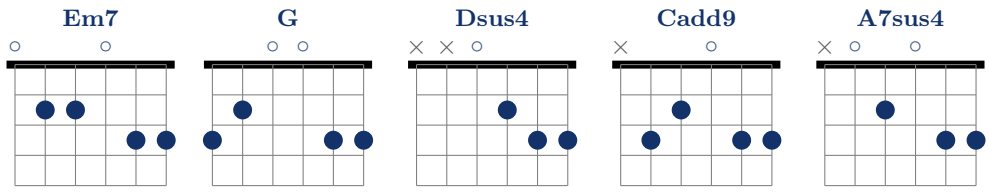
G	**D**	**Am**	**Am**
G	**D**	**C**	**C**

Strumming (4/4, ≈68 bpm): `D - D - D U D U`
Tip: From G to D, the ring finger slides from string 1 to string 2 and stays on fret 3: place it first, then let the other fingers follow.

3. Wonderwall — Oasis (1995)

Level: intermediate

Famous for the **Cadd9** chord ("the Oasis chord") that recurs throughout. Key: F♯ minor (capo fret 2 recommended to play the open shapes as on the recording).



Verse:

Em7	G	Dsus4	A7sus4

Chorus:

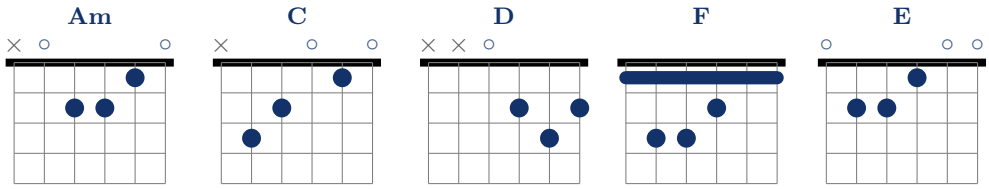
Cadd9	Em7	G	Em7

Strumming (4/4, ≈86 bpm): `D - D U - U D U`
Tip: These are the song's own shapes, not the standard open chords: fingers 3 and 4 stay on strings 2 and 1, both at fret 3, in all five chords; only fingers 1 and 2 change position.

4. House of the Rising Sun — The Animals (1964)

Level: intermediate

The iconic 6/8 fingerpicking piece. Progression **i** – **III** – **IV** – **VI** in A minor (Am – C – D – F; see "Diatonic Chords"). One chord per bar.



Progression:

Am	C	D	F	Am	C	E	E

Fingerpicking (6/8, ≈75 bpm): six notes per bar, starting on the string of the root — 5 for Am and C, 4 for D, 6 for F and E — and climbing toward string 1, e.g. `5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 - 2` on Am.
Tip: Leave the strings below the root silent: string 6 on Am and C, strings 6 and 5 on D. For the F barre chord, first place fingers 2–4 on strings 3–5, then roll the index finger into the barre once the other fingers are set.

Practice Tips

1. **Clean fretting.** Place the fingertip just *behind* the fret wire, pressing with the very tip.
2. **Thumb behind the neck.** Keep the thumb roughly opposite the middle finger so fretting fingers can arch cleanly.
3. **Muted strings.** Brush the string lightly with a neighbouring finger, or train the picking hand to avoid it.
4. **Barre chords.** Roll the index finger toward the headstock so the bony edge contacts the strings. Start at fret 5 where tension is lower, then work toward the nut.
5. **Anchor fingers.** When changing chords, keep fingers that stay on the same string/fret anchored while repositioning the rest.
6. **Slow practice.** Use a metronome. Master each transition cleanly at a slow tempo before increasing speed.
7. **Essential beginner progressions:** G – C – D | C – Am – F – G | Am – F – C – G | E – A – B7 – E.

All voicings in standard tuning (E A D G B e). TAB: 6 digits, low E first (0 = open, x = mute). Staff: treble-8 clef (guitar sounds one octave below written).