

A GUIDE TO:

**MOVEABLE
CHORD
SHAPES**

PART 1

INTRODUCTION	3
CHROMATIC SCALE	4
MAJOR SCALE	5
POWER CHORDS	6
OCTAVES	7
MAJOR TRIADS	
- DGB MAJOR TRIADS	8
- GBE MAJOR TRIADS	9
MINOR TRIADS	
- DGB MINOR TRIADS	10
- GBE MINOR TRIADS	11
MEMORIZING THE FRETBOARD	12-13
EXERCISES	14
APPENDIX: CHORD THEORY	15

I can remember staring blankly at his fingers. I knew the song. I knew what the chord progression was. But what were his fingers doing???

As a beginning/intermediate guitarist everyone starts with the basics. For chords, this means open chords, the F and B form of barre chords, and power chords on the E and A string. We learn how to use them and gain comfort and security in knowing when and where to play them. But today these are only a few of the tools in my chord arsenal. And it's certainly not what I saw that guitarist play all those years ago.

I'm sure that you have had a similar experience. After gaining a respectable amount of knowledge on the guitar, you watch a guitarist and are dumbfounded by the chord shapes that he uses. They sound great. They look clean. Why didn't I learn these?

At this point, I've been a guitarist for half of my life. It has only been in the last few years with a lot of trial and error and reliance on my music training that I have started to use these chord shapes. Can you find these chords elsewhere? I'm sure that you can. I certainly didn't invent these chord shapes. But, I haven't found a resource yet that put them together in a clear easy to use format.

As a guitar instructor, it is important for me to have new concepts grouped together logically and practically. When I introduce a concept to a student it needs to come across as well articulated and practical. In other words, he has to understand the concept and understand how, when, and why to use it.

What this guide is not:

- **An all-inclusive guide to everything guitar.**
- **Meant for beginners. You should have a decent grasp on chords.**
- **An instructional on how to play like a certain artist or genre.**
- **Packed with musical examples and playalongs.**

What this guide is:

- **Meant for intermediate/advanced guitarists.**
- **A resource for understanding chord shapes and inversions.**
- **A tool to help you in any musical style that you choose.**
- **Meant to be understood and explored beyond the written examples.**

This is meant as a resource to help guitarists to understand where and how to play different chord shapes and voicings up and down the neck of the guitar. Think of this guide as sampling of what chords and shapes are available on the guitar. It's like an artist filling his palette with a multitude of colors so that he has options when it comes time to paint.

For simplicity, all examples will be written in the key of G. All chord forms will be written as G chords. Once you have mastered the chord shapes in the key of G, move them up or down the neck to try them in different keys.

To fully understand chord shapes (as opposed to just memorizing patterns) you have to know a little music theory.

CHROMATIC SCALE

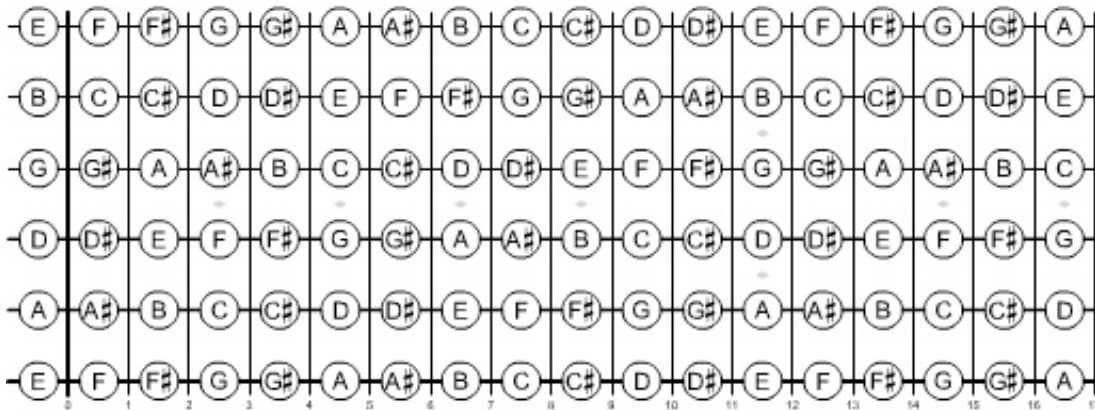
Chromatic Scale: A twelve note scale comprised of half steps that encompasses every note that you'll ever play.

E F F# G G# A A# B C C# D D#

I begin with E because the outer two strings on the guitar are E strings, but the chromatic scale can begin on any note. There are 12 notes in the chromatic scale. Upon reaching the 12th note, you return to the first note forming an endless sequence of notes.

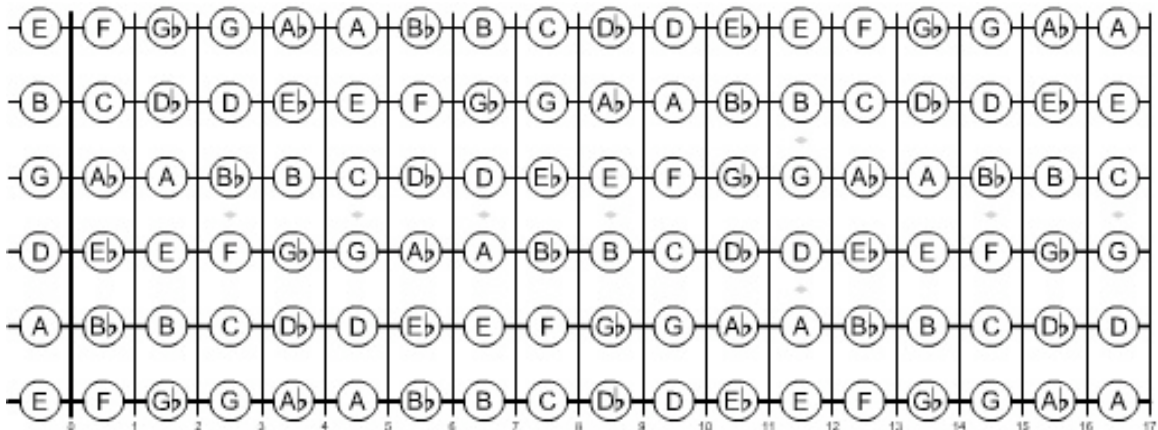
The musical alphabet consists of seven letters: A B C D E F and G. All of the white keys on a piano are one of these notes. There are also sharps (#) and flats (b) within the chromatic scale. These would be the black keys on a piano. There is no B# and no E# and there is no Cb or Fb.

Here is the chromatic scale on the guitar fretboard:



The above examples were written with sharps, but they could also be written with flats. F# and Gb are the same note with two different names. These are called enharmonics. Here is the chromatic Scale with flats:

E F Gb G Ab A Bb B C Db D Eb



THE MAJOR SCALE

Major Scale: A seven note sequence of notes that serve as the building blocks for pretty much everything.

The major scale is a seven-note sequence that follows an unchanging pattern. To understand the major scale we have to go back to the chromatic scale. Since all of the examples in this book are in the key of G, I'll use a chromatic scale starting on G to form the G major scale.

G G# A A# B C C# D D# E F F#

The chromatic scale is built entirely on half-steps. A half-step is the distance from one note to the note immediately preceding or proceeding it in the chromatic scale. On the guitar, a half-step is one fret. A whole-step is two half steps, or two frets on the guitar. The major scale is made up of whole steps and half steps.

The major scale formula is:
whole-whole-half-whole-whole-whole-half
or
wwhwwwh
or
“wuh-wuh-huh-wuh-wuh-wuh-huh”

I like to put an “uh” after each letter to make it easier to say and remember. Let's take that formula to the chromatic scale and make a major scale:

..whole.. ..whole.. ..half.. ..whole.. ..whole.. ..whole.. ..half..
G G# A A# B C C# D D# E F F# G

So, a G Major Scale is: G A B C D E F# G.

Each note in the major scale is given a number which will be used to build chords:

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

Specifically, we will focus on four notes of the scale when we discuss chords:

1 3 5 8
G B D G
root third fifth octave

BUILDING CHORDS

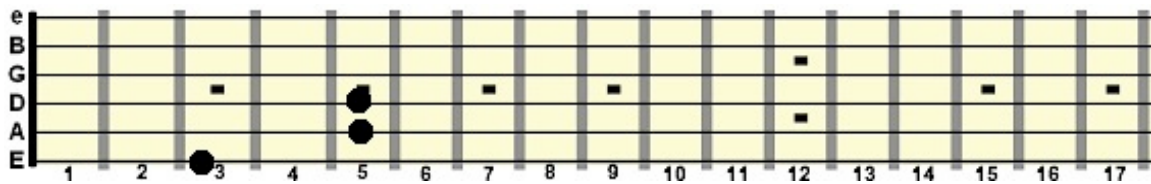
1 5 8 1 8 1 3 5 1 b3 5
Power Chord Octave Major Chord Minor Chord

POWER CHORDS

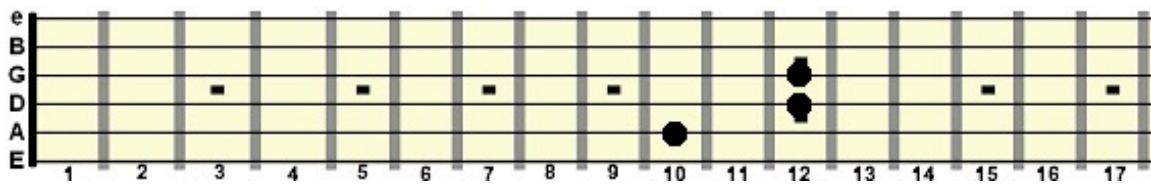
Power Chord: A moveable chord consisting of the Root, Fifth, and Octave of any given key.

Power chords are the foundation of rock music as we know it. By omitting the third, it removes the harmonic distinction of major/minor and gives the chord a full, powerful sound. A power chord can be substituted for any major or minor chord.

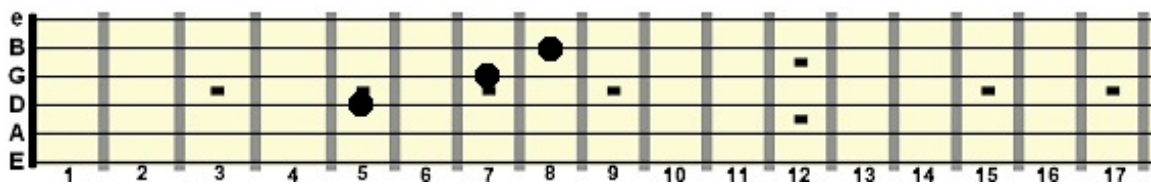
E String Power Chord



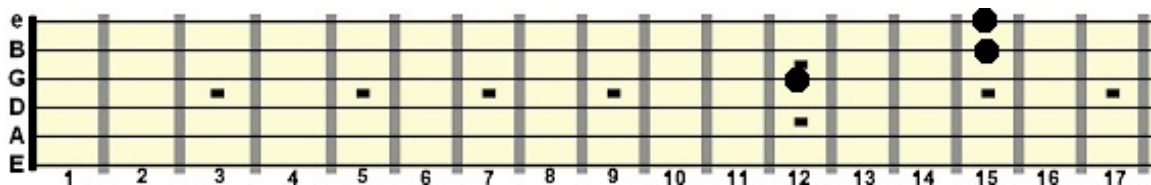
A String Power Chord



D String Power Chord



G String Power Chord



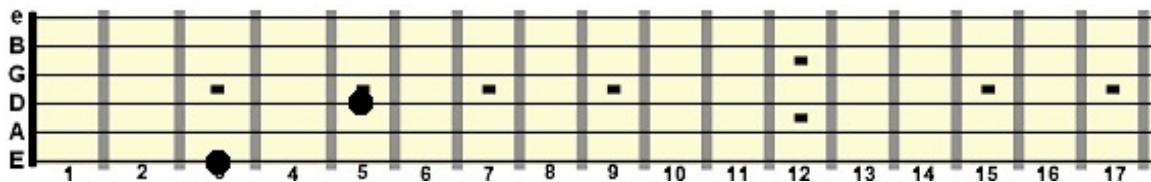
OCTAVES

Octave: Two notes that share the same letter name and are 8 notes apart; the first and last notes of a power chord.

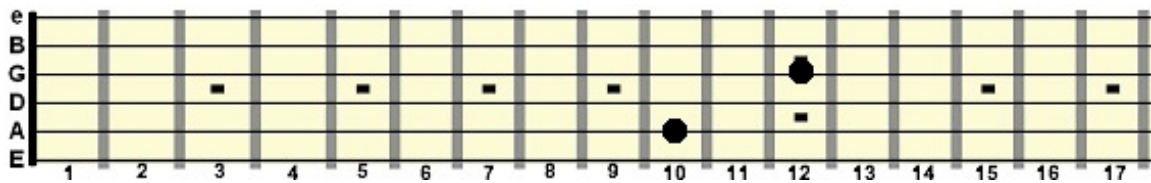
An octave is the interval of eight notes. In any given major key the first note and last note of an eight note scale will be an octave apart. To simplify, an octave means to play the same note...only higher or lower. So, a G and a higher or lower G.

In the basic power chord shapes, an octave is the first and last notes. You will notice that the octave shapes below are identical to their corresponding power chord shapes. The only distinction is that they are missing the middle note.

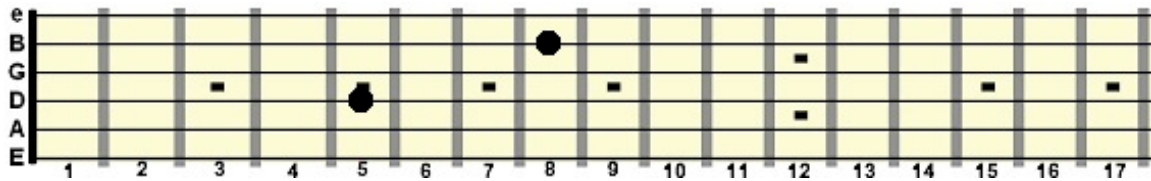
E String Octave



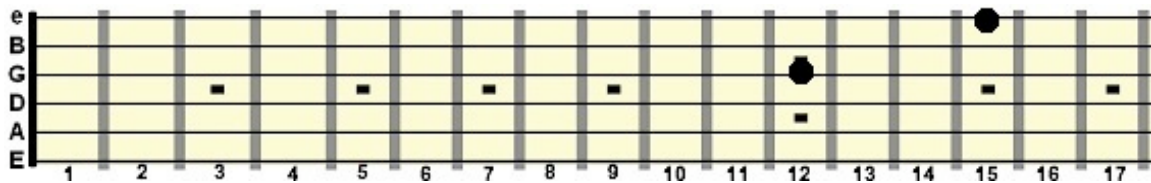
A String Octave



D String Octave



G String Octave



MAJOR TRIADS

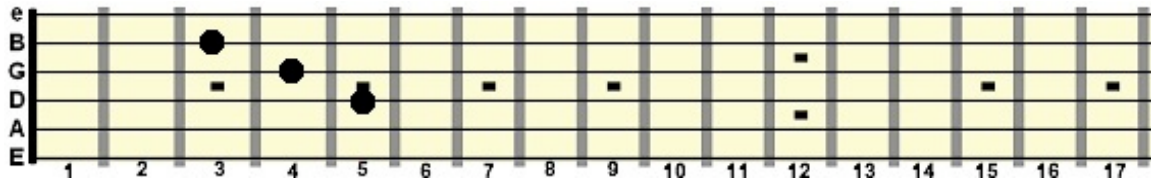
MAJOR TRIAD – A moveable chord consisting of the root, third, and fifth note of any given key.

A major triad consists of three distinct notes: The root, the third, and the fifth. These notes can be in any order and are still considered a triad. The placement of notes on the E and A strings makes playing triads difficult and the low frequencies of these strings give the triads a muddy sound. For that reason we will focus on DGB string triads and GBE string triads.

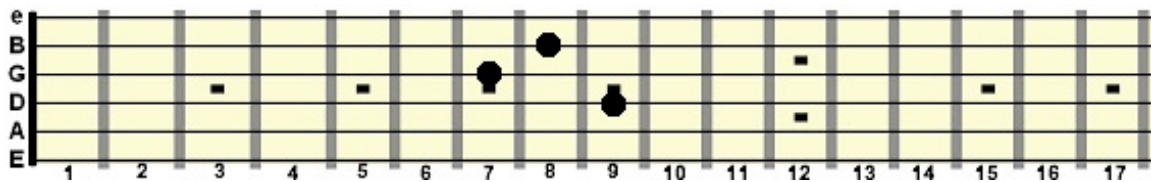
Each triad can be formed in three positions on each string. We can start on the root of the triad (first position), start on the third of the triad (second position), or start on the fifth of the triad (third position).

DGB MAJOR TRIADS

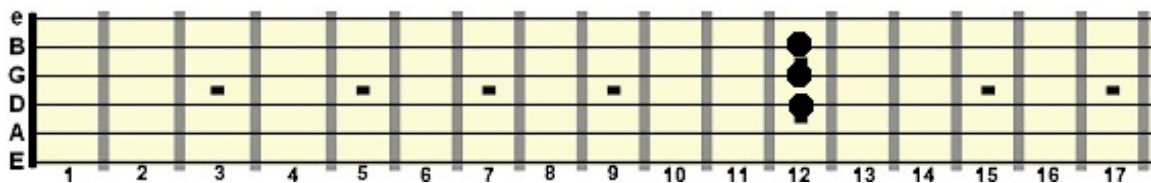
DGB Major Triad – First Position



DGB Major Triad – Second Position

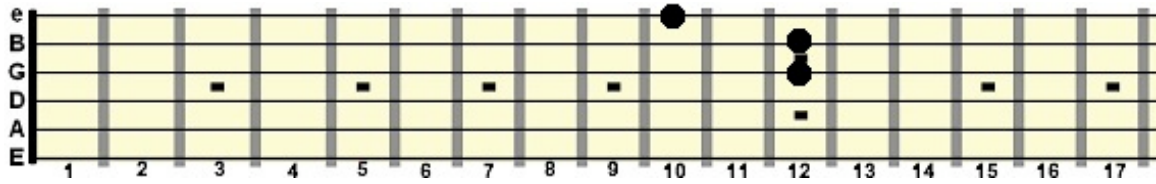


DGB Major Triad – Third Position

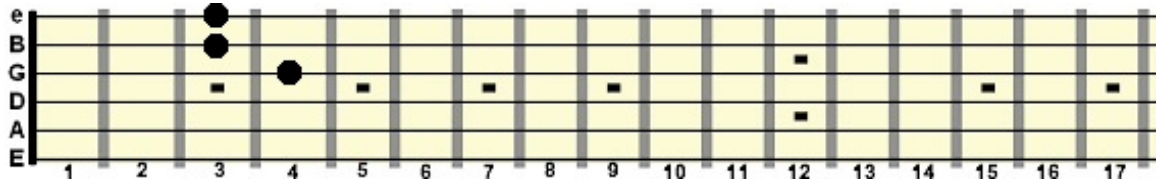


GBE MAJOR TRIADS

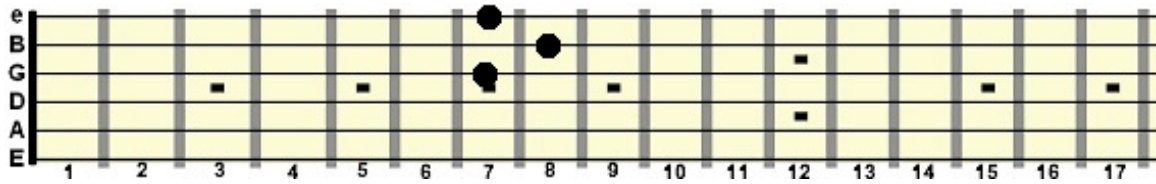
GBE Major Triad – First Position



GBE Major Triad – Second Position



GBE Major Triad – Third Position



MINOR TRIADS

MINOR TRIAD – A moveable chord consisting of the root, flat third, and fifth note of any given key.

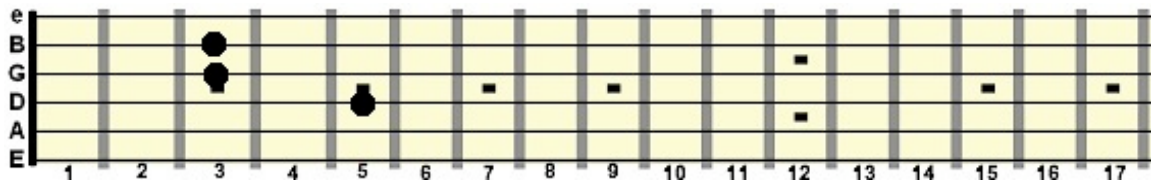
A minor triad consists of three distinct notes: The root, the flat third, and the fifth. These notes can be in any order and are still considered a triad. The only difference between a major triad and a minor triad is the middle note (third=major, flat third=minor). To get the “flat third” simply play the third of the triad one fret lower.

The placement of notes on the E and A strings makes playing triads difficult and the low frequencies of these strings give the triads a muddy sound. For that reason we will focus on DGB string triads and GBE string triads.

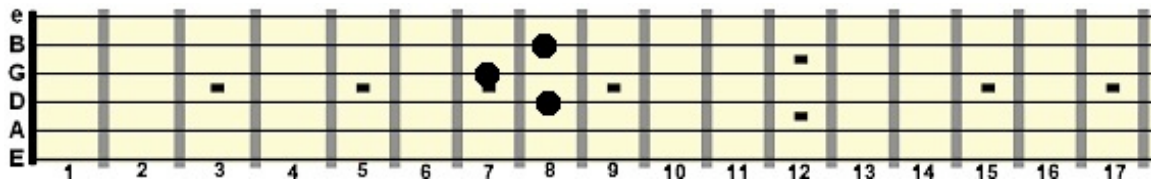
Each triad can be formed in three positions on each string. We can start on the root of the triad (first position), start on the flat third of the triad (second position), or start on the fifth of the triad (third position).

DGB MINOR TRIADS

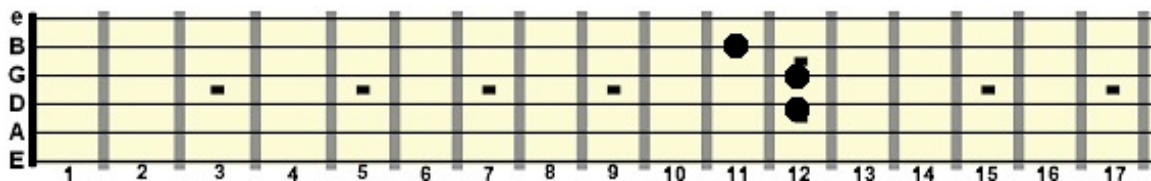
DGB Minor Triads – First Position



DGB Minor Triads – Second Position

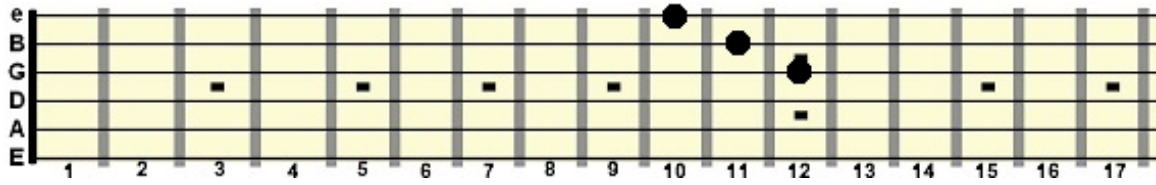


DGB Minor Triads – Third Position

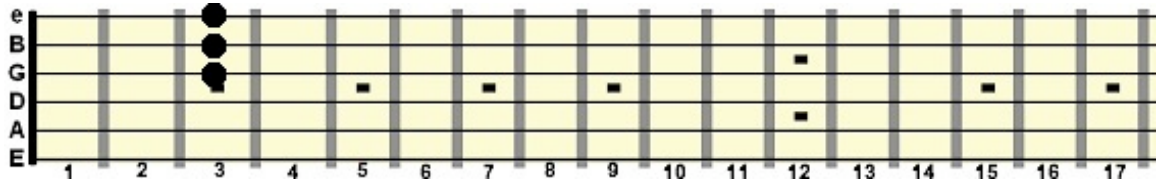


GBE MINOR TRIADS

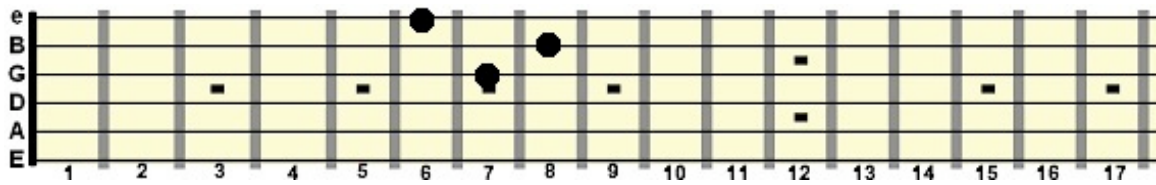
GBE Minor Triad – First Position



GBE Minor Triad – Second Position



GBE Minor Triad – Third Position



MEMORIZING THE FRETBOARD

By now you have played power chords, triads, and octaves using the G chord. But what if you need to play an A power chord? Or a D major triad? How can you find these chords?

You could be sure to always carry around the fretboard diagram found at the beginning of this guide. Or you could draw all of the notes on the back of the neck of your guitar. If you're really dedicated you could tattoo the fretboard diagram on your forearm...ok, there's got to be a better way. It's time to memorize the fretboard.

Here's the good news. By using octaves and the relationships between strings we only have to memorize 3 strings, not 6! Also, each string follows the exact same chromatic pattern that we learned earlier.

Step 1: Memorize the String Names

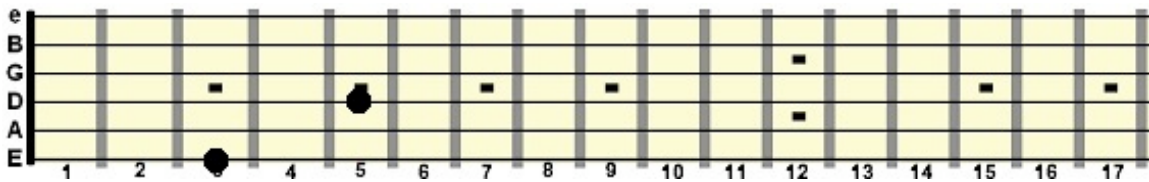
Hopefully you've already done this. From the largest string (6th string) to the smallest string (1st string) the string names are: E A D G B E. To learn the notes on the entire fretboard, you've got to at least know where to start on each string.

Step 2: Memorize the Chromatic Scale

As a guitarist, I normally start the Chromatic scale on E since both of the outer strings on the guitar are E. The scale works its way alphabetically until arriving again at E: E F G A B C D E. In between most notes are sharps and flats. You can notate these as F#/Gb or you can simply write them as sharps and remember that they can also be called by their flat names. Every note has a sharp except for E and B. Likewise, every note has a flat except for C and F. So, our chromatic scale is E F F# G G# A A# B C C# D D#...

Step 3: Memorize the E string up to the 12th fret

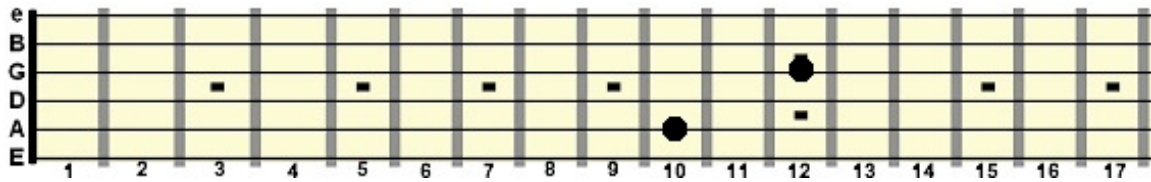
If you successfully completed step 2 then you have also completed step 3. That wasn't so hard, was it? The twelfth fret is the octave (E). Therefore the 13th fret (F) will be the same as the 1st fret (F), only an octave higher. The 14th fret will be the same as the 2nd fret, and so on. By memorizing the E string you have actually killed three birds with one stone (I can adapt that metaphor, right?). Both outer strings on the guitar are E strings. Bam! Two out of six strings down! But, we can also find any note on the D string by using octaves.



In this case, let's look at the above example. We know that the third fret on the E string is G (because we've already memorized the E string, right?). To find the octave from the E string to the D string, we go over two frets and down two strings. So, from our third fret G we go to frets over two frets to the fifth fret and then down two strings to the D string. This is our octave. So the fifth fret on the D string is also a G, like its octave friend on the third fret of the E string. You can find any octave relationship on the E and D string by starting on the E string and using this "two frets over, two strings down" method.

Step 4: Memorize the A String up to the 12th fret

This step will be identical to step three. Begin your chromatic scale on A and work your way through the fretboard to the 12th fret. You will also be able to learn the notes on the G string using octaves.



In this case, the 10th fret on the A string is a G. If we go down two frets to the twelfth fret and down two strings to the G string, we can see that the 12th fret on the G string is also a G.

Step 5: Memorize the B string up to the 12th fret.

This one stands on its own, but by now you should have a pretty good feel for how the chromatic scale works.

At this point you should have the fretboard memorized. It may still take you a second to figure out the note, but you shouldn't have to look it up on the diagram anymore. This may be something you can accomplish in an afternoon or it may be something that takes much longer. Don't rush this. Take your time and make sure that you have a really good grasp on the notes on the fretboard. Having all of these chord patterns learned and memorized is worthless if you have no idea what you're playing.

EXERCISES

It's time to see if you've really got a grasp on this material. Some of these exercises will be written, while others will require you to play through it on your guitar. These exercises are not meant to be a 'play it once and check it off' type of test. This is something that you should take your time with and return to frequently looking to gain speed and apprehension each time you play through the examples.

NAME THE NOTE:

Write the correct note name in the blank.

E string, 3 rd Fret	_____.	B string, 12 th Fret	_____.
G string, 8 th Fret	_____.	A string, 17 th Fret	_____.
D string, 11 rd Fret	_____.	G string, 14 th Fret	_____.
B string, 4 th Fret	_____.	E string, 15 th Fret	_____.
E string, 7 rd Fret	_____.	D string, 14 th Fret	_____.
A string, 9 th Fret	_____.	B string, 13 th Fret	_____.
G string, 2 nd Fret	_____.	E string, 16 th Fret	_____.

PLAY THE NOTE:

1. Play every "C" on the fretboard.
2. Play every "C#/Db" on the fretboard.
3. Play every "D" on the fretboard.
4. Play every "D#/Eb" on the fretboard.
5. Play every "E" on the fretboard.
6. Play every "F" on the fretboard.
7. etc...

CHORD SHAPES:

1. Play every "C" power chord.
2. Play every set of "C" octaves.
3. Play every "C" major triad.
4. Play every "C" minor triad.
5. Play all chord shapes in every key (C#, D, D#, E, F...).

POSITION PLAYING:

1. Pick a "G" on the E, A, D, or G string and play a G power chord.
2. Play the closest C and D power chords that you can find on adjacent strings.
3. Repeat with A, D, and E.
4. Repeat with C, F, and G.
5. Repeat with D, G, and A.
6. Repeat in every key, using all different chord shapes and types.

APPENDIX: CHORD THEORY

In the same way that scales are built on patterns there is a pattern of chord types within each major scale. Each major scale will have three major chords (not including the octave note in the scale), three minor chords, and a diminished chord. As this is meant to be an intro resource and not a theory textbook, we won't elaborate on the theory behind each chord but rest assured that every scale follows this same pattern regarding chords. The chords are notated with roman numerals and will often be referred to as "I chords", "IV chords", etc.

I	II	iii	IV	V	vi	vii	VIII
G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G
Major	minor	minor	Major	Major	minor	*diminished	Major

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU AS A GUITARIST

Most songs today and in recent history are written with 3-4 chords. The most commonly used chords are the I chord, the IV chord, the V chord, and the vi chord. Remember that every sharp can also be written as a flat (F# = Gb, etc). The chart below is a list of these four chords in every key. Use this chart to practice playing the chord shapes that you have already learned.

I	IV	V	VI
C	F	G	Am
C#	F#	G#	A#m
D	G	A	Bm
Eb	Ab	Bb	Cm
E	A	B	C#m
F	Bb	C	Dm
Gb	B	Db	Ebm
G	C	D	Em
Ab	Db	Eb	Fm
A	D	E	F#m
Bb	Eb	F	Gm
B	E	F#	G#m