



Free Chord Book for Beginners

Learn the basic chords & changes on guitar!



Andy Crowley



FREE CHORD BOOK

Introduction

Hi, I'm Andy and welcome to my chord book for beginners!

Most chord books are packed full hundreds of chord diagrams, so many in fact it could take literally years to play each one of them! They offer no tips on how to make those chords sound good and most of the chords they cover would never occur in the songs you want to learn.

This book is different. It includes only the most essential chords so that in time you can memorize each one of them at your own pace. It includes photos of how I play them and my tips for great sounding chords. Finally, I included how to change between the most common chords. This is the hardest bit for most people, but essential to be able to play songs!

In this ebook I'll show you how to:

- 🔑 **Read chord boxes**
We learn how chords are written down so you can learn to play any chord you like!
- 🔑 **Play the most common open chords**
Open chords are any chords that include open strings. This book includes enough open chords to be able to play literally hundreds of songs!
- 🔑 **Tips on chord changes**
Changing between chords is the hard bit to begin with. I've got plenty of tips threaded throughout this level to help make this as EASY as possible!



If you like this, why not check out my beginners course workbook!

This 81 page book includes all the chords, strumming patterns and all the other essential guitar skills you need to be able to play most of the songs on my website and beyond!

[Click here for more information!](#)





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The E chord

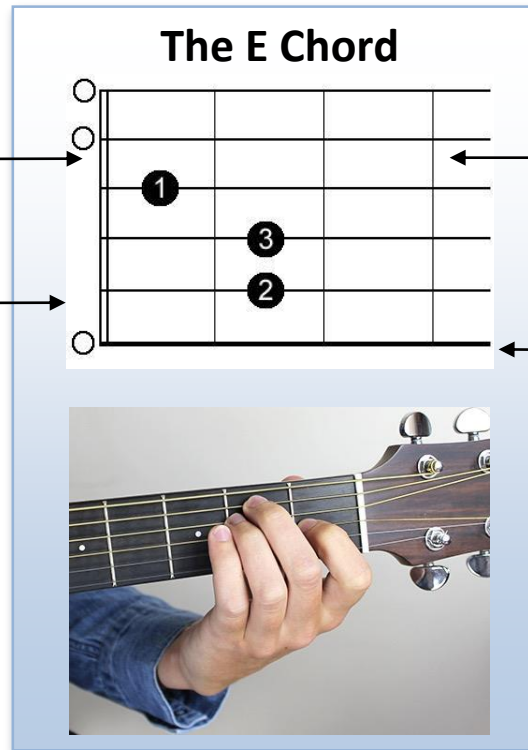
Chord Boxes

Chord boxes show us where to put our fingers for each chord. Here is the chord box for the E Chord (E major). The black dots show where to place your fingers. The numbers show which finger you should use (1 is index finger, 2 is middle finger etc). In this chord, we strum all 6 strings on the guitar.

This double line is the **nut** of the guitar. This is where the strings meet the **head**

O means the open string should be heard.

X tells us this string should not be played



The vertical lines are the guitars **frets**

The horizontal lines are the **strings**. This one is your thickest 'E' string

Finger placement/ buzzing etc

You must place your fingers at your side of the fret area instead of in the middle. This is the most common cause of 'fret buzz', an unwanted sound where the strings don't ring out and buzz.

Top tips to make your chords sound great!

- ✓ Press down with the tips of your fingers only
- ✓ Place your fingers at the near side of the fret
- ✓ **Use a pick!** Picks give a clearer sound. Use a thin one (.38mm) to begin with!
- ✓ Don't play any strings with an **X**
- ✓ Don't touch the underside of your guitar with the palm of your chord hand (see picture to the right)





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The A chord

The A Chord

O means the open string should be heard.

X tells us this string should not be played

Playing a chord from memory is essential; this is why we're just looking at 2 to begin with! Repeat this exercise as the start of your practice time to get these 2 chords memorized asap.

5 Steps to being able to play a chord from memory!

1. Use this diagram to place your fingers in the right place
2. Strum the chord
3. Look at your fingers and memorize the shape they are in
4. Lift off your hand totally
5. Now place your fingers

Remember the names of the open strings!

The names of the first 2 chords are the same as the thickest two open strings- E & A! Remember; **E**lephants **A**nd **D**onkeys **G**row **B**ig **E**ars to remember **E A D G B E** (thickest to thinnest!)

The A Chord

Ears

Big

Grow

Donkeys

And

Elephants

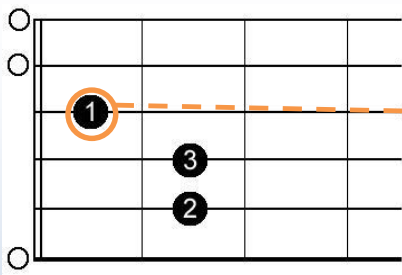


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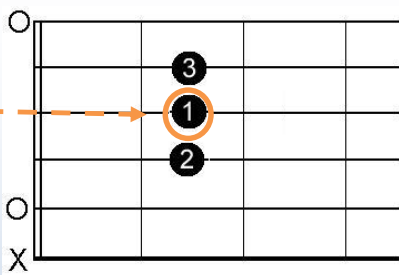
Changing Between E & A Chords

This is the hard bit! To help, I suggest keeping your first finger down and shuffling it between the first and second frets. This is called an **anchor finger** as it stays in contact with the guitar and should make your changes smoother.

E Chord



A chord



Anchor Finger exercise

1. Play the E chord
2. Keep your index finger down, and lift off the other 2
3. Slide your index finger to the second fret
4. Play the A chord by placing your 2nd finger above and the 3rd finger below at the same fret

This 'anchor finger' idea will also help you to play the next chord (which is a D) as the first finger will not have to move at all to play it!

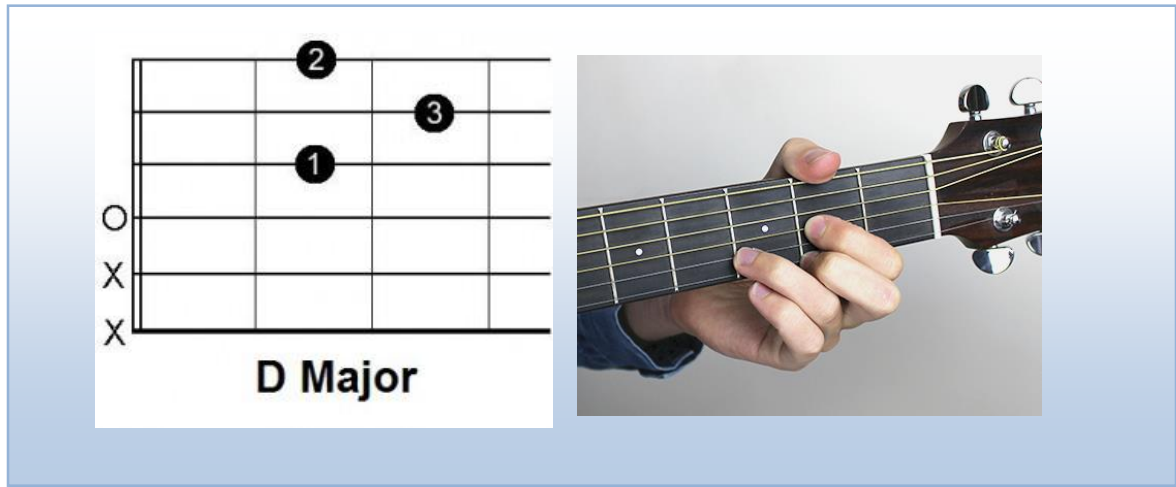
10 Steps to great chord changes!

1. Play the E chord either from memory or by using the diagram
2. Strum the E chord
3. Keep your 1st finger down but lift the other two off
4. Slide your 1st finger to the second fret
5. Place your 2nd finger above and 3rd finger below to play the A chord
6. Strum the A chord
7. Keep your 1st finger down but lift the other two off
8. Slide your 1st finger back to the first fret
9. Play the E chord
10. Repeat repeat repeat for a few minutes as often as possible for as long as it takes!

The D chord

The D chord

This is the new chord for this level. The first finger is in the same position as in the A chord which is a nice way to first learn the chord. **Do not to play the thickest 2 strings** as shown by the 'X's in the chord box below- or it will sound bad!



Changing between chords E, A and D

Same principal should be used as in Level 1 for the E & A change. Keep your first finger down and just lift off fingers 2 & 3 to change chord!

E, A and D changes with anchor finger!

Keep your first finger down when changing between all 3 chords you now know. During playing- your first finger should never lift off!

Any chord change you struggle with should be practiced for a minute each practice session.



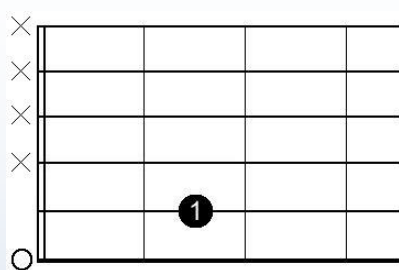
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Easy Rock Power Chords

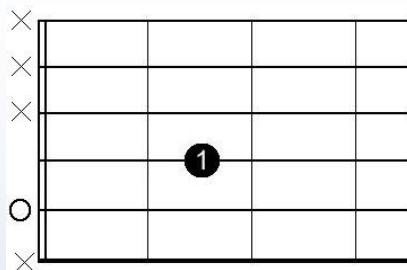
So far we have learned the E, A and D major chords. A lot of Rock and Blues music tends to play the Power chord version of these chords to sound heavier and darker.

The upshot of this is the open power chords can be played with 1 finger, so they are really easy to play!! So let's take a look:

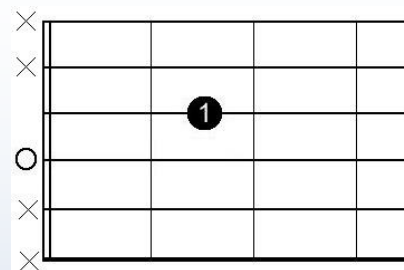
Open 'Power chords' E5, A5 and D5



E5 (aka E Power Chord)



A5 (aka A Power Chord)



D5 (aka D Power Chord)



Remember: Only play 2 strings for each chord; the string you have your finger on and the thicker string right physically above it.

Notice that the root note (The lowest note of the chord) is the same compared to the standard major chord. But when played, these chords sound darker.

Check out Common People by Pulp and Jonny Be Goode at this level for examples of this!

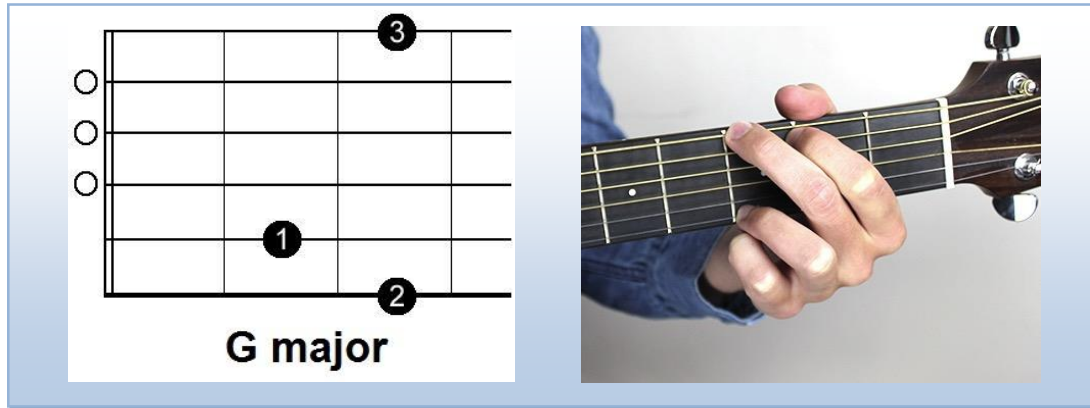


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G major chord

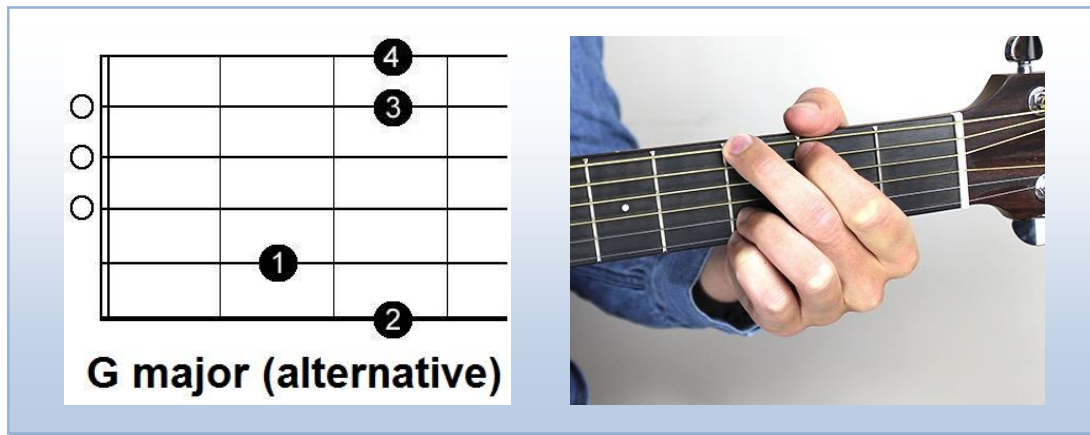
G major Chord

This is the standard way of playing a G chord using just fingers 1, 2 and 3.



There are a few other ways to play the G chord. The one pictured below is the most common and most useful. It doesn't have another name as it has all the same notes as a normal G- but it is usually nicknamed a 'Big G'. As it is also used in Wonderwall by Oasis, I usually call it an Oasis or 'Noel Gallagher G'.

Alternative 'Oasis style' G major Chord



I nickname this an 'Oasis G' as it is used in Wonderwall, which is one of the most requested songs! It is used in all pop/ rock genres by virtually all guitarists. The advantages of this G are shown in the next lesson.

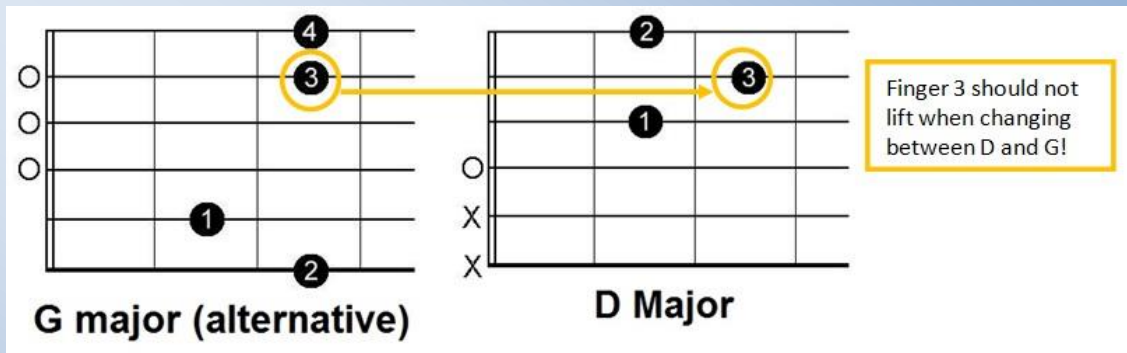


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G chord – Common changes

G to D change

You can just lift your fingers off and go for a standard G to a D chord. However, many players and songs use the '**Big G**' here because it sounds nicer and the change is easier. THIS is the reason the only new chord at this stage is a G- so you can master this change! If you do, everything afterwards will be easier. **If you don't you'll likely have to keep revisiting this over and over.** Preserver now- you'll need it to do some of the best songs at this stage including 'Free Falling' by Tom Petty/ John Mayer and 'Highway To Hell' by AC/DC!



G chord



G to D anchor finger



D chord

G to A and A to D chord changes

No anchor finger for the G to D change, so you just have to lift your fingers to change. The A to D change was covered in the previous level, so this should be OK by now!

TOP TIP! Try and memorise the shape your hands make for each chord!

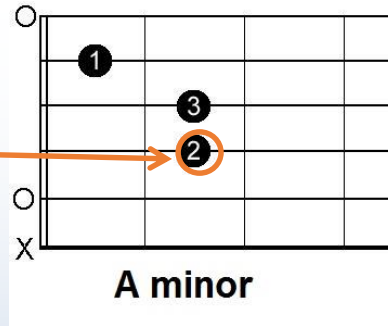
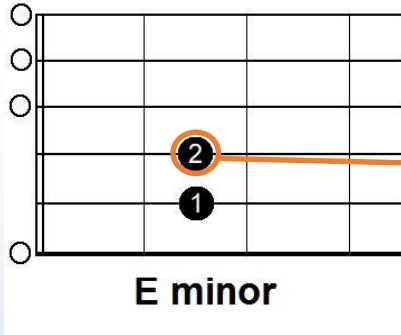


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Open Minor Chords

Minor chords can be easier than the major chords we've learned. However, they sound very much 'sad' and are therefore less common than 'happy' major chords. This is a fundamental principal in music and goes a long way to the emotional response we have to songs!

E minor can also be written as 'Em' for short. The same applies to other chords



Notice **A minor** is almost the same as E major, except that one finger is missing.



Em chord

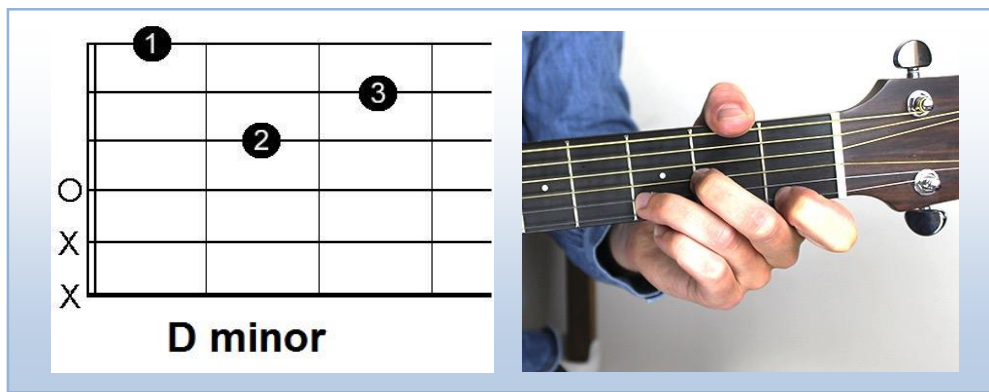


Em to Am Anchor finger



Am chord

Don't play the strings with an X and make sure all other strings ring out by picking them one at a time!

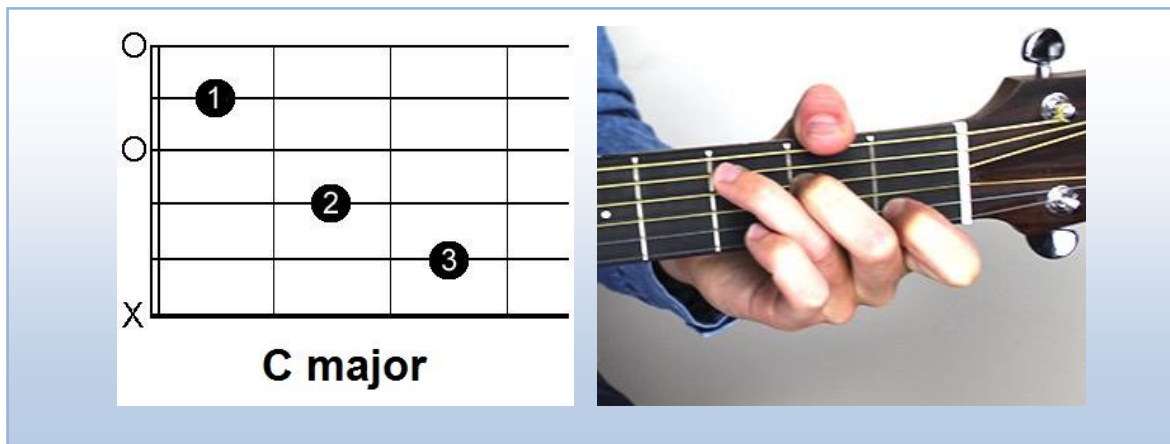


Most people find D minor MUCH tougher, especially when changing between chords. This is fine as it is rarely used until higher level songs. It's still an essential chord and needs practicing, but don't worry if it takes you longer to use it in songs.

The C Chord

The C chord

This chord is the biggest stretch we've done so far and is a totally new shape. It is however so common that you need to take the time to learn and be able to play it.



Thumb position

Many pro guitarists use their thumb to mute the thickest string on chords that show an 'X' on this string, especially C, A and Am. This is really useful especially with higher level strumming patterns. Without the thumb muting – we'd have to miss out this string with the pick, which gets harder as strumming becomes higher level. Using the thumb means we don't have to miss this string and is a much easier way to get the same result.

However, to play 'barre chords' (harder chords that I cover in my improver/ intermediate level course) we need to develop the thumb muscle or the harder chord grips won't ring out. This muscle is not strengthened by having the thumb on top of the neck, so we still need to play some chords with the thumb behind the neck as opposed to on top.

Both of these thumb positions are useful in different situations (i.e. songs) so it's best to be comfortable with either. If you struggle, try both and stick to the one that works for you for each chord you learn.



1- Thumb muting the thickest string can make higher level strumming easier

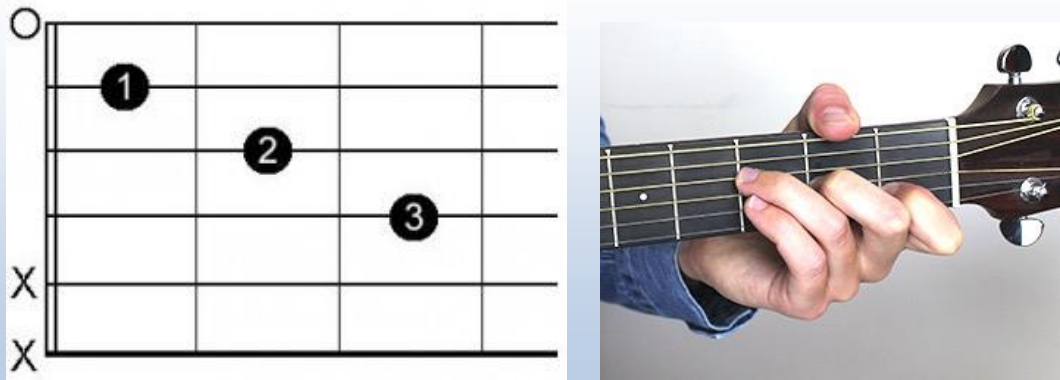


2- Thumb position to develop grip strength in preparation for barre chords

F Chord

We're learning the F major 7 (Fmaj7 for short) now as an easier alternative to the big bad F barre chord, or other harder ways to play an F. Sometimes the Fmaj7 will be specifically written and should be played. This is easy as it's really similar to a C chord, which is why I call it an 'F like a C' chord!)

The Fmaj7 chord



The diagram shows a guitar fretboard with the Fmaj7 chord fingering: index finger on the 1st fret of the 2nd string, middle finger on the 2nd fret of the 3rd string, and ring finger on the 3rd fret of the 4th string. The 5th and 6th strings are muted, indicated by 'X' marks. The photo shows a hand playing this chord on a guitar.

This Fmaj7 doesn't work all the time, which is why we'll have to learn the real F chord after this beginner's course. It can take a few weeks for some people and that's totally fine- it's tough!

F Barre Chord

This is it, the dreaded F chord! Most beginner struggle with this one for a reason- it's an improver/ intermediate level chord and very much a step up from basic open chords!

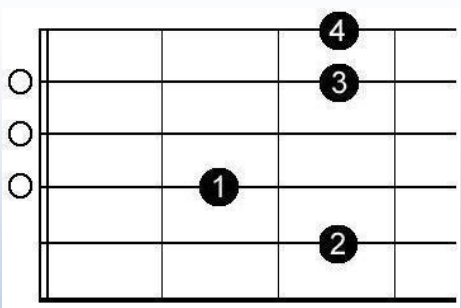


The diagram shows a guitar fretboard with the F barre chord fingering: a barre across the 1st fret of all strings, index finger on the 2nd fret of the 2nd string, middle finger on the 2nd fret of the 3rd string, ring finger on the 3rd fret of the 4th string, and pinky on the 3rd fret of the 5th string. The photo shows a hand playing this chord on a guitar.


Oasis style chords

The Cadd9 chord is a variation of a C chord used in songs typically in the key of G.

The Cadd9 chord

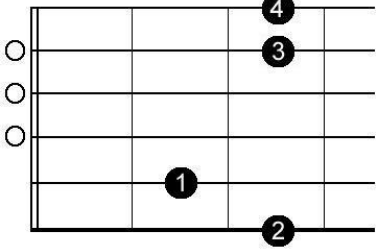


C major add9

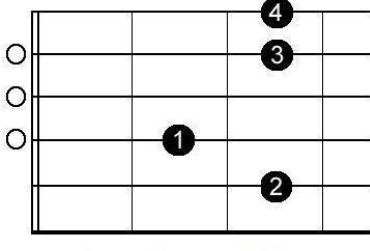


'Oasis style' chords

The G to C change is one of the most common to occur in popular songs. Keeping the 3rd and 4th fingers down using technique makes for a much easier change and prevents gaps between chords because the thinnest four strings continue to ring out even while changing.



G major (alternative)



C major add9



G chord (all fingers)



Anchor fingers



Cadd9

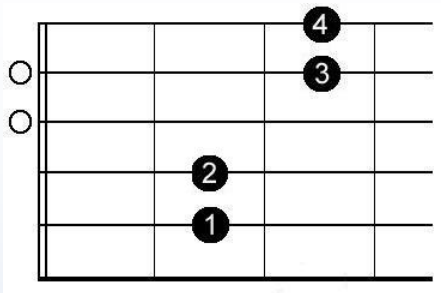
This technique is used in songs by Oasis, Neil Young, Ed Sheeran and countless others.

Oasis style chords continued

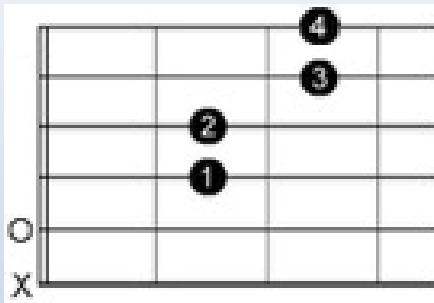
All of the following chords commonly occur in songs that also have a G and a Cadd9. When played, all of these chords go together well. In any order they just sound 'right'. This is the idea of being in a key, **in this case** key of G.

The group of chords on this and the previous page don't have a name, so I've called them 'Oasis chords' as they're all used in the famous song 'Wonderwall' by Oasis.

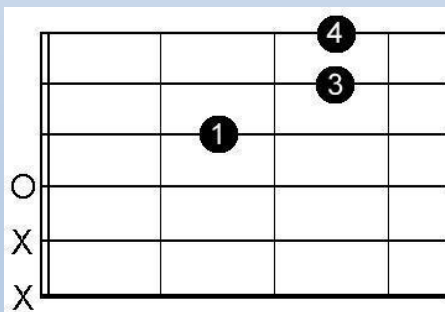
Em7 chord



A7sus4 chord



Dsus4 chord



Any of these chords could crop up in any order, so work on all these changes while keeping the 3rd and 4th fingers down. Chord progressions with these chords can be found at **Level 6 06!**

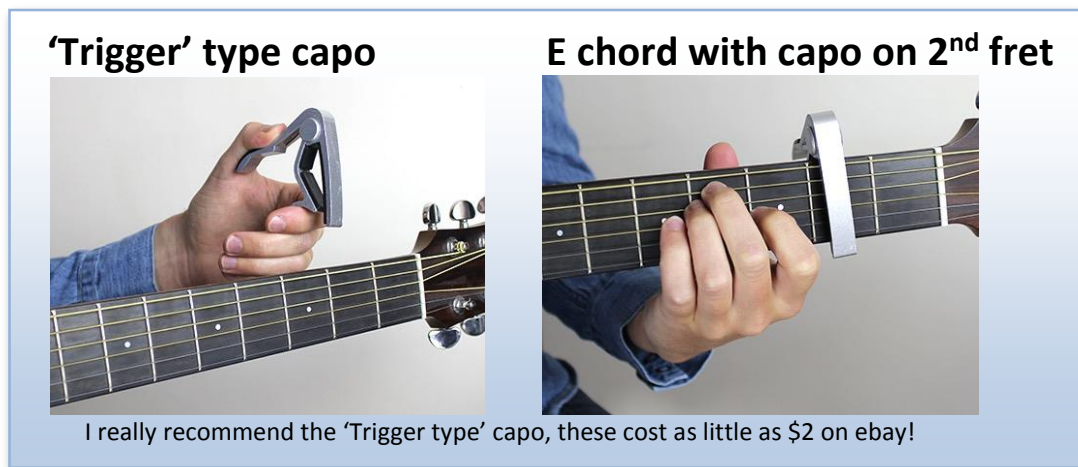


Want to play more chords easily? Get a capo

A 'capo' holds down the strings at a fret on your guitar. There are 3 reasons you should buy one;

1. You can play more songs

A capo allows us you to still play the chords you know, but they will now sound like new 'higher' chords, allowing us to play many more songs than we could without. Many songs also say e.g. 'capo 2nd fret', therefore you can't play that song right without one!



2. You can play higher up the neck easily

Pro guitarists use a capo creatively to get a certain sound, such as James blunt on 'You're Beautiful', where his guitar sounds a little like a Mandolin because of a high capo. Singers can move the capo higher or lower to suit their voice.

3. Your guitar is easier to play with a capo

In my beginner song lessons, I have used the capo as a way for you to play songs that would otherwise use chords that are very tricky like barre chords. A capo also lowers the action of your guitar, making it easier and better to play.



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