Speed Drills for Chord Progressions

Do each of the following chord progressions with one strum one each chord. Make sure you are getting all the chords to sound out cleanly. Use all of the tricks that were mentioned earlier in the book, like leaving fingers in place or sliding a finger when possible.

G C D7	**G D7 C**	**(Have you forgotten any of these chords? If you have, use the handy chord chart on the next page to help you finish memorizing these fourteen most common chords).**
D G A7	**D A7 G**	
Em Am B7	**Em B7 Am**	
A D E7	**A E7 D**	
E A B7	**E B7 A**	
C F G7	**C G7 F**	
Am Dm E7	**Am E7 Dm**	

Goals for clean speed:
Play three chords in 3 seconds = **Good**
Play three chords in 2 seconds = **Cooking**
Play three chords in 1 second or less = **Burning**

The On and Off Chord Lift Exercise:

Now let's try an exercise that will teach you how to think of a chord as one unit instead of many individual notes or components. For example, hold an "**A**" chord. Now, very slowly lift your left hand fingers as one solid unit until you are about half an inch above the fretboard. After a moment put the fingers back on the fretboard as one unit. Try this several times with each of the fourteen common chords. Gradually start lifting further than a half inch away from the fretboard as your confidence level and feel improve. The fourteen chords are listed below.

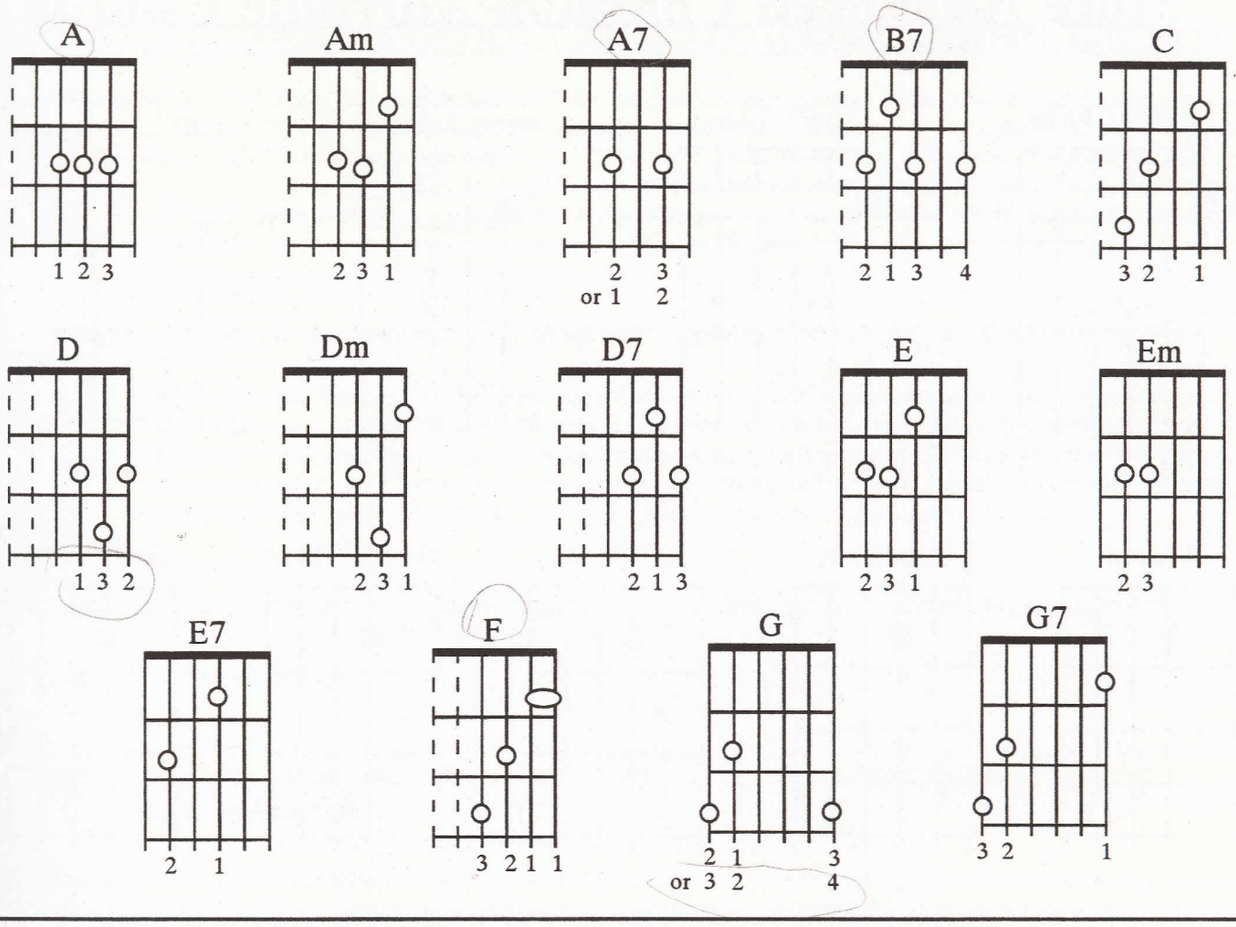
A, Am, A7, B7, C, D, Dm, D7, E, Em, E7, F, G, G7

Now play the following fourteen common chords with one strum on each chord. Start increasing the speed gradually. Make sure to play cleanly with a smooth and steady beat. Practice hard until you have met your desired playing level listed below.

Goals for clean speed:

1. Play in 14 seconds = **Good**
2. Play in 10 seconds = **Cooking**
3. Play in 7 seconds or less = **Burning**

The Fourteen Most Common Chords

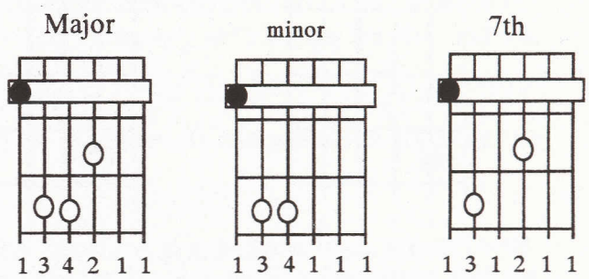


The Six Most Common Bar Forms

The best feature of the bar chord is that it is movable. This gives many more choices on how and where a chord is played. For example, if a song is calling for a B7 chord you could play it in the standard open position, or one could bar the second fret with a A7 form, or one could bar the seventh fret and use the E7th form. This gives three ways in which a B7 can be played. Just choose the best B7 for the situation.

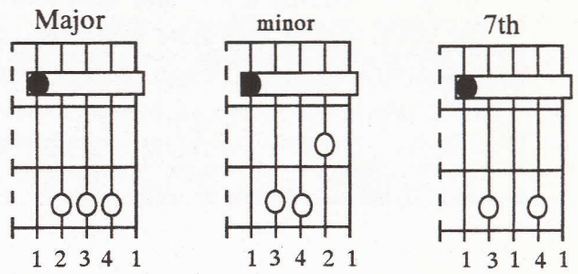
The "E" Family Bars

The darkened in root note gives the chord it's alphabetical name. Notice that the sixth string is always used as the root note of "E" forms. Use the correct major, minor, or (7^{th}) extension to complete the chord that you are building. Note that if you remove the bar that you are left with the relative fingerings of an E, Em, and the E7 chords .



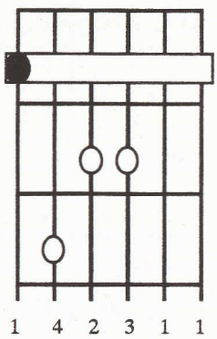
The "A" Family Bars

Notice that the fifth string is always used as the root note for the "A" forms. Use the correct extension to complete the chord that you are building. Note that if you remove the bar that you are left with the relative fingerings of the A, Am, and the A7 chords.

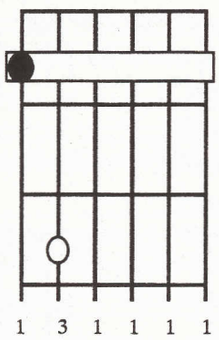


More Advanced Common Movable Chords

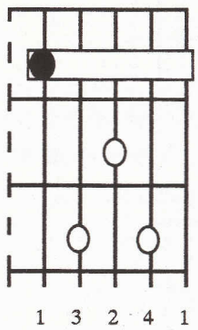
Emaj7 form



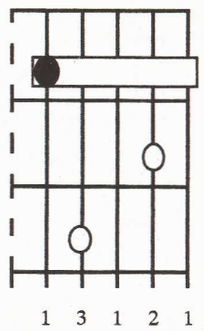
Em7 form



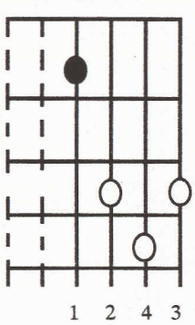
Amaj7 form



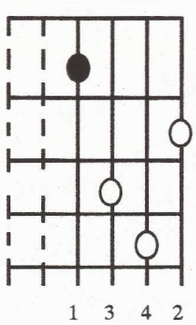
Am7 form



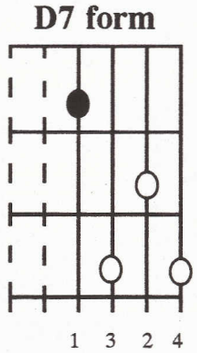
D form



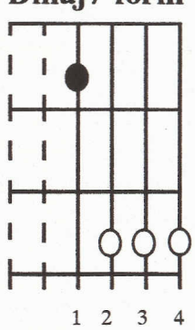
Dm form



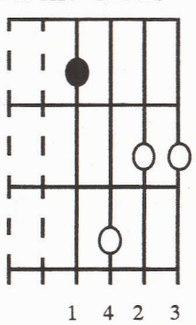
D7 form



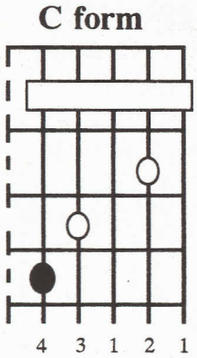
Dmaj7 form



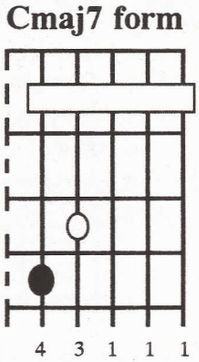
Dm7 form



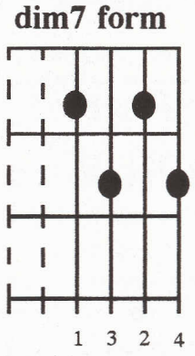
C form



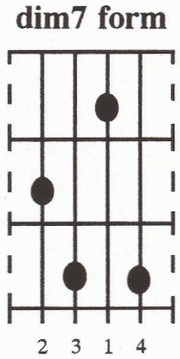
Cmaj7 form



dim7 form



dim7 form



All of the chords above are movable chords that can be played anywhere on the fret board. The darkened in root note gives the chord it's actual alphabetical name. Note that with both of the diminished 7th chord forms that every note in the chord is a root note. Chord forms, (such as the C form), are named after the relative shape of the original chord in the open position. If the C form chord is barred in the 4th fret for an example, the actual root note is an "E" on the 5th string, 7th fret. In this position the chord is E major otherwise known as E.

A Brief Explanation Of How Chords Are Grouped Together Into Keys

At this point you should feel quite comfortable with the fourteen common chords. Each group of chords that you have played so far has had three chords per group. For example, (when playing in the key of "G"), the G, C, and D7 chords constitute the primary chords used in the key of G. These three chords sound very pleasing to the ear when they are combined in a song. The majority of popular songs that you hear on the radio have three to six chords that are used in the song. If you see six chords or more in a song it could be because the song is using relative chords, or has a key change in the middle of the piece, or that it is a jazzy type song with many embellishments. *(See theory section of book for details.)*

To figure out what three primary chords sound well together in a major key use the following steps:

1. For major keys write out the major scale that you would like to use. *(See the theory section in the book.)*
2. Once you have written out the scale and figured out if there were any sharps or flats in the key, all you do is take the 1st, 4th, and 5th notes out of the scale and treat these notes as chords. In major keys the 1st is always played as a major chord, the 4th is also played as a major chord, and the 5th is played as a dominant 7th chord, (otherwise known as the 5_{7th} chord). *(See theory section for further explanation on 7th chords.)*

An example of the above two steps on figuring out the three primary chords for a major key:

Step 1: The key of G major.

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

Step 2: By taking the 1st, 4th, and 5th notes from the scale you can figure the names of the chords for this or any major key.

1 = G chord (it is understood that "G" is a major chord)

4 = C chord (C major)

5_{7th} = D7th chord (it is understood that D7th is a dominant seventh type chord)

In other words if you are playing a 1, 4, 5_{7th} chord progression in the key of G, the chords will be G, C, and the D7. In the key of "A" the 1, 4, 5_{7th} chord progression is A, D, E7. Notice that all the three chord combinations that you have applied to songs and have been timed on for speed are 1, 4, 5_{7th} chord progressions. Even the minor keys use a similar 1m, 4m, 5_{7th} type chord progression. This means in the key of "Am" that the 1m = Am, the 4m = Dm, and the 5_{7th} = E7. In the key of "Em" the 1m, 4m, and 5_{7th} chords would be Em, Am, and B7.

Try to visualize this 1, 4, 5_{7th} correlation of how chords fit together. It can make it a lot easier to remember which chords sound well together.

Important Note: This is a great time to start studying the theory behind how to make scales, triads, seventh chords, and chord progressions. See the theory section of this book to learn more details and to get fuller descriptions of all the above. If you hear someone mention music theory do not be mislead thinking that theory is hard to understand and is boring, it simply is not true! If the above talk about major scales and 1, 4, 5_{7th} chords does not make any sense yet do not worry. Theory is kind of like a puzzle at first. You have to know and understand several aspects of it before you see the big picture where everything fits together. Theory explains how music fits together using very basic patterns and math. After learning a few basic techniques in theory you can transpose a song that is too hard to play or sing in its original key but is very easy to play or sing in a different key. With minimal knowledge of theory you can listen to a tape or CD and figure out the song's chord structure. Having this ability is very helpful when sheet music is not available for a song that you are interested in. If you are interested in composition, theory can help you compose a beautiful piece of music even when your imagination and creativity are not working so well.