

GOOD GUITARIST'S GUIDE TO:  

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**STRUMMING**  
**& RHYTHM GUITAR**

# GOOD GUITARIST'S GUIDE TO: STRUMMING & RHYTHM GUITAR

## A note from James...

A professional marketer told me I was crazy for giving away this eBook for free. They said I should cut it down and just give people a sample. I disagree; that's not what GoodGuitarist is about.

**I want you to be able to play songs confidently.** If this book helps make that happen, *even if you don't ever give me one cent*, I will already have accomplished my goal. I am so proud of every one of my students (and now that you've downloaded this eBook that means you, too!)

It's an honor to be your guide through the early phases of guitar and I just want to take a moment to sincerely say, "**THANK YOU!**"

## If you wish to provide further support...

If you've enjoyed this ebook and my lessons, consider joining the **GoodGuitarist All-Access Pass**.

You'll get:

- All my premium step-by-step courses
- TABs, play-alongs, and bonus lessons
- Access to a private community for support and feedback

It's everything you need to stay motivated and keep improving—all in one place.

[Learn more at goodguitarist.com/premium-courses](http://goodguitarist.com/premium-courses)

## Contacting me...

Whether you become a member or not, I really want you to get better at guitar, so please enjoy this eBook and if you need any help just ask!  
[hello@goodguitarist.com](mailto:hello@goodguitarist.com)

## About the eBook itself...

This eBook is for those who wish to learn how to strum songs on a guitar. It is not your conventional method book - it is meant to show you everything a book *can* show you.

Music exists in the air as sound and printed materials cannot fully demonstrate this. Rather than bother your eyes with walls of text, we have decided to explain certain concepts visually and aurally, taking advantage of the digital age while still retaining the useful aspects of printed material. We feel that this cross-media educational method is the future of music education.

Also, I have a ton of free videos that go along with this eBook. [You can follow along with them here!](#)



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Want to master the basics? Take my Complete Beginner's Course and learn to strum along with your favorite songs! [Click here](#) for more info...

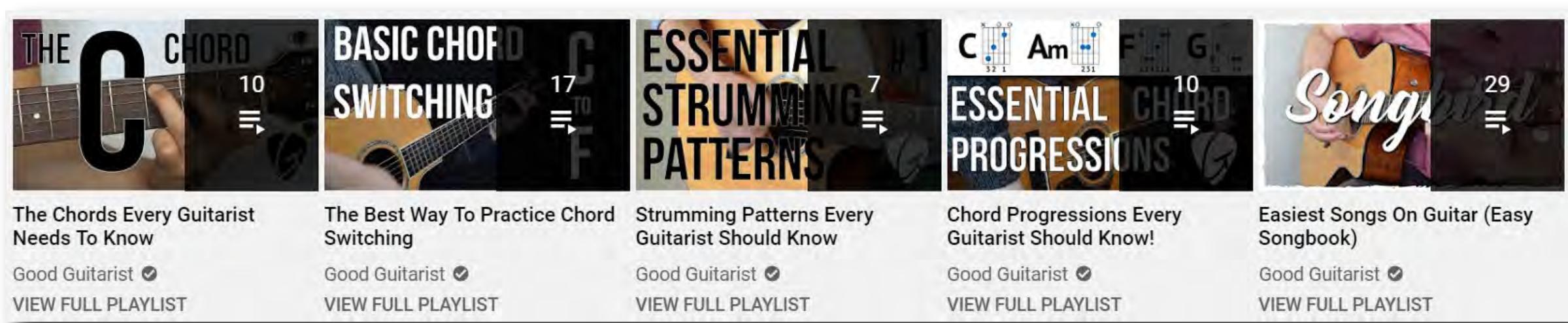
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# THE FASTEST WAY TO MASTER THE BASICS

To me, mastery is being able to play something with musicality, effortlessly and to the best of your ability - *consistently*.

Many people will claim to be masters, but that implies they have nothing left to learn. No one can truly master the instrument, we can only seek to develop mastery and be the best we each can be.

## THESE YOUTUBE TUTORIALS COVER EVERYTHING IN THIS EBOOK



From seven to seventy- three. Doctors, truck drivers, teachers... it doesn't matter who you are, what kind of learner, how big or small your hands are.

Only one thing will determine your success: **practicing and playing** guitar as much as possible. But I don't want you to put practicing on the pedestal!

## PRACTICING GUITAR IS A VERY EASY HABIT TO DEVELOP

STEP 1) Ask yourself, realistically, "how much time can I practice?"

STEP 2) Write this goal down (example: 30 minutes, 6 days a week)

STEP 3) Practice *right now*, even if it's just for 10 minutes

STEP 4) Schedule tomorrow's practice (just tomorrow, look forward to it!)

STEP 5) Keep scheduling your next 1 or 2 sessions around your life

**TIP - A LOT OF THIS EBOOK IS CLICKABLE - LOOK FOR THE  LOGO**

# THE MOST COMMON CHORD SHAPES

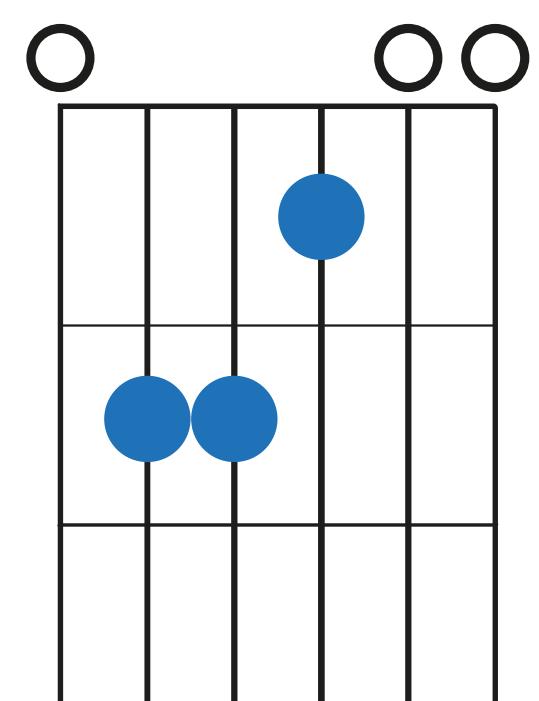
Learning these 12 chord shapes will give you the most reward for your efforts - allowing you to strum through hundreds of thousands of songs! It's best to learn a few at a time and practice switching between them (there's more on that later). Also, don't be afraid to **zoom in and see exactly where the fingers are placed!**

This is a traditional chord diagram  
(See pages 8 - 10 for more info)

Here is the name of the chord -  
this one is called "E Major"

E

This is what the chord diagram  
looks like on a guitar



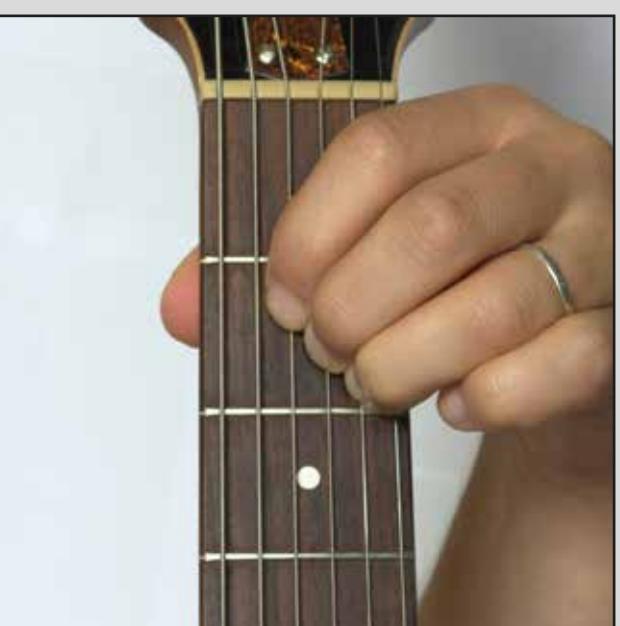
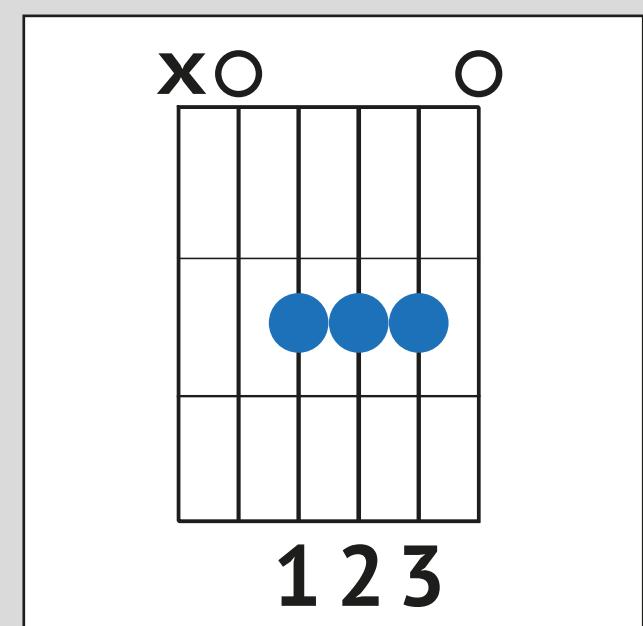
This is what the chord looks  
like from your perspective

This is what it looks  
like from the front

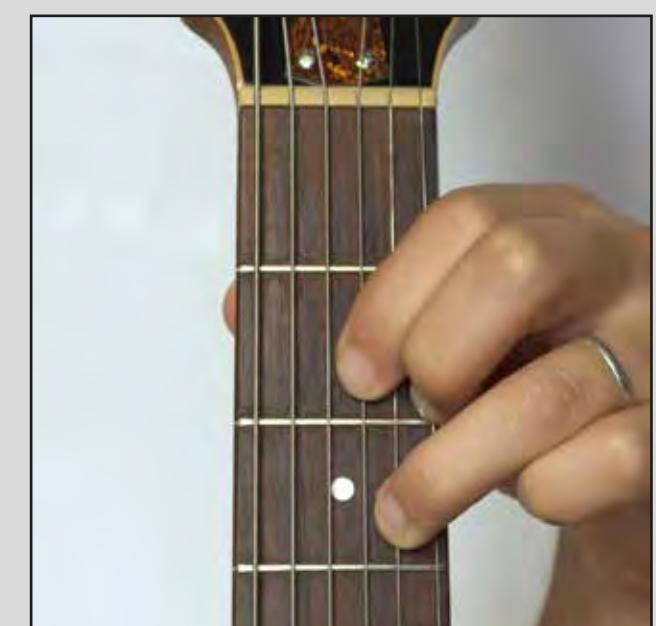
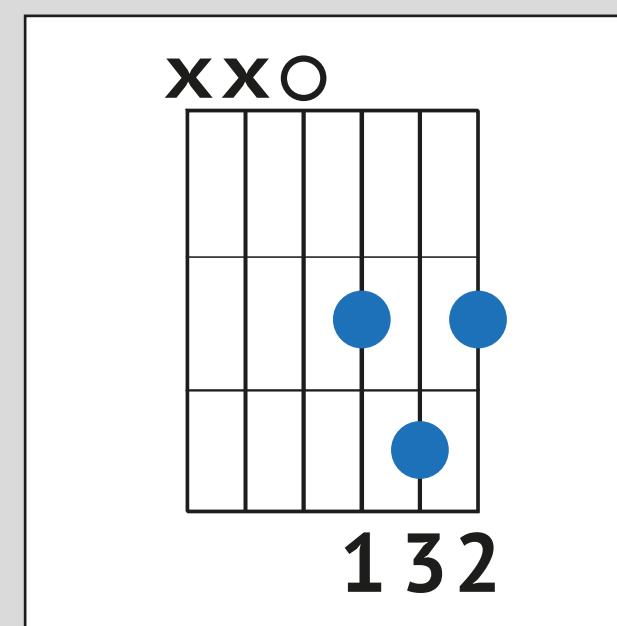


Listen to and see these chords in action! Click on ANY chord shape for more info...

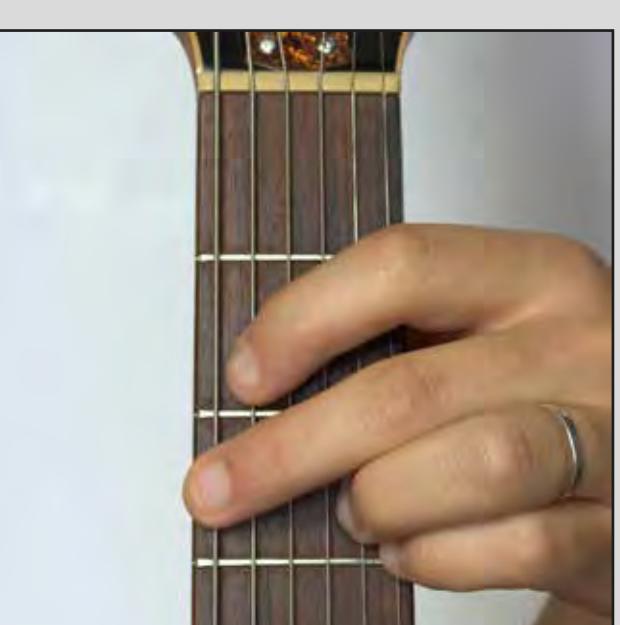
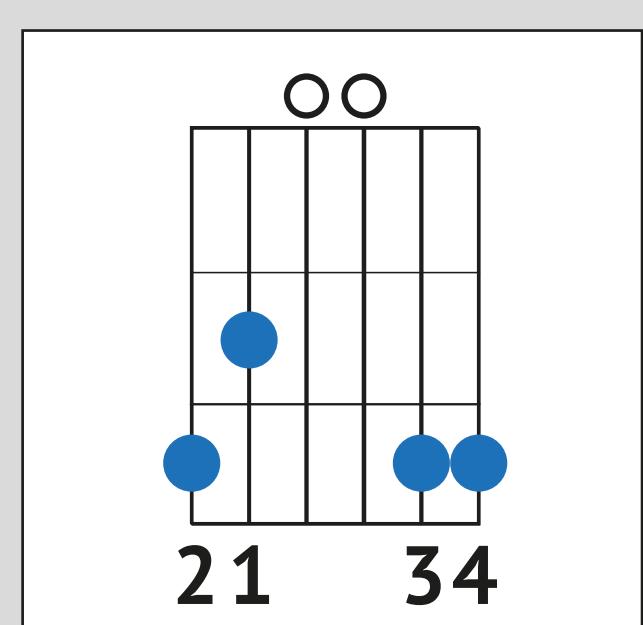
# A



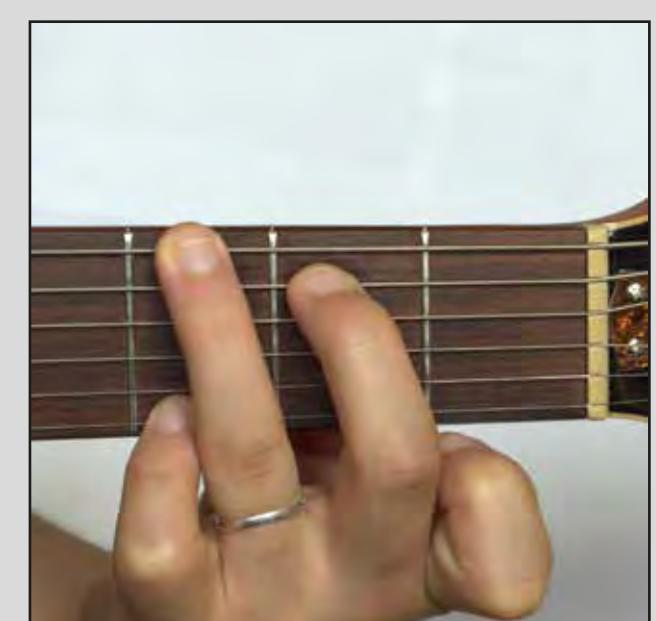
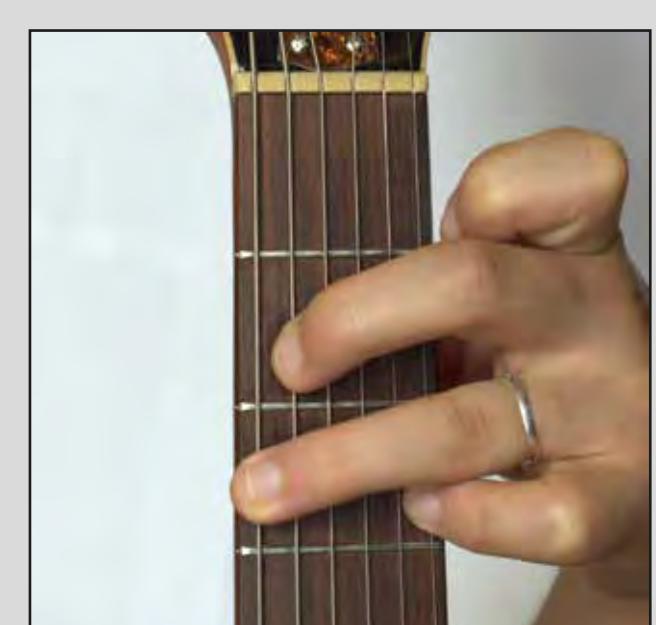
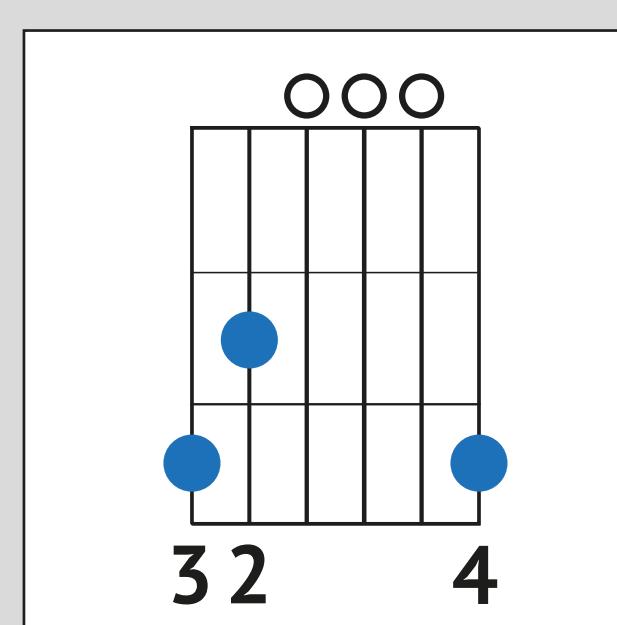
# D



# G



**G** (played a bit differently)



This “voicing” for G is an excellent choice for songs that switch regularly between G and C

# C

Diagram showing the finger positions for the C major chord on a guitar neck. The first string is muted (x), the second string is open (o), and the third string is muted (x). Fingers 3, 2, and 1 are shown on the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st strings respectively. Below the diagram are two photographs of a person's hand on a guitar neck, demonstrating the chord.

# Am

Diagram showing the finger positions for the A minor chord on a guitar neck. The first string is muted (x), the second string is open (o), and the third string is muted (x). Fingers 2, 3, and 1 are shown on the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st strings respectively. Below the diagram are two photographs of a person's hand on a guitar neck, demonstrating the chord.

# Em

Diagram showing the finger positions for the E minor chord on a guitar neck. The first string is muted (x), the second string is open (o), and the third string is muted (x). Fingers 1 and 2 are shown on the 3rd and 2nd strings respectively. Below the diagram are two photographs of a person's hand on a guitar neck, demonstrating the chord.

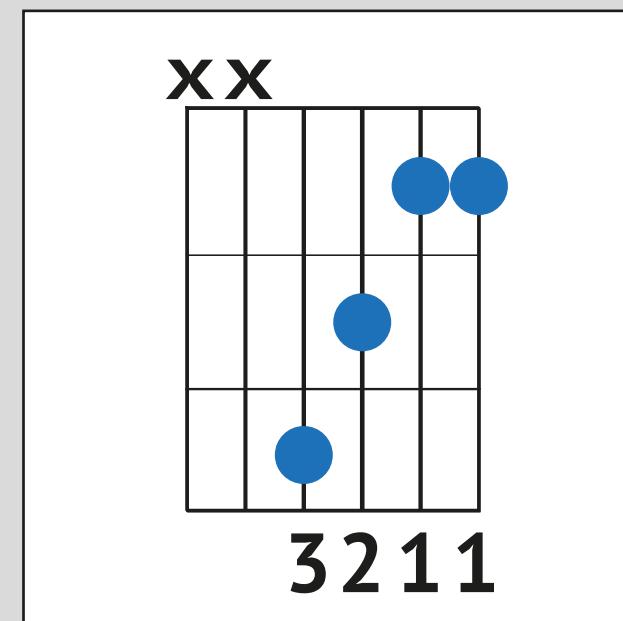
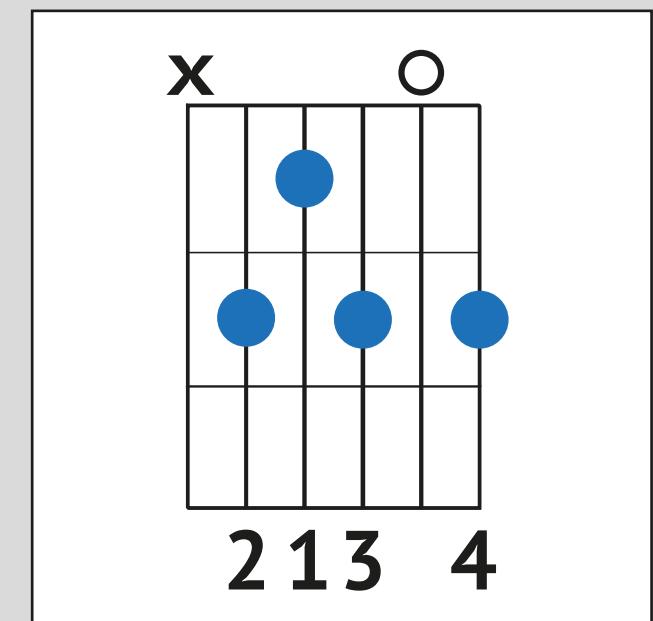
# Dm

Diagram showing the finger positions for the D minor chord on a guitar neck. The first string is muted (x), the second string is muted (x), and the third string is muted (x). Fingers 2, 3, and 1 are shown on the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st strings respectively. Below the diagram are two photographs of a person's hand on a guitar neck, demonstrating the chord.

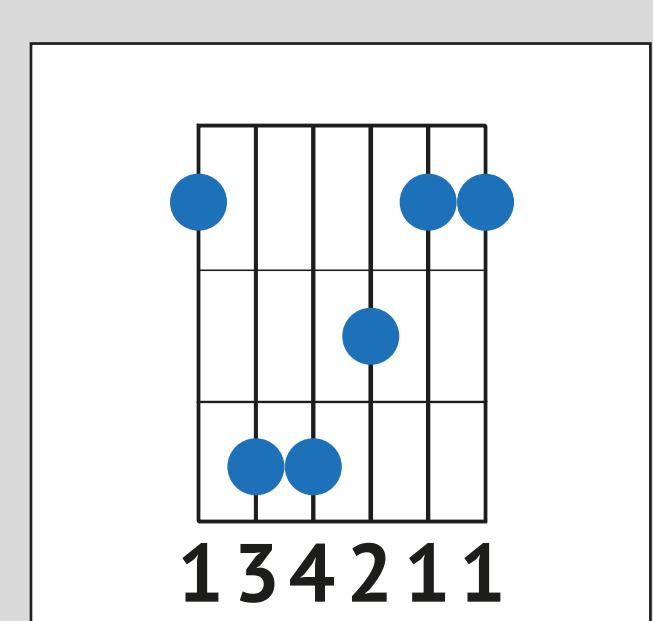
The “m” stands for “minor” - on paper we write “Em” but when speaking we say “E minor”

# B7

## “little” F



## F barre\*



Both these F chords have a barre in them, but the “little F” is far easier to play since it only barres 2 strings.



It's worth it, learning the “F barre” chord, as it has a deeper, richer sound.

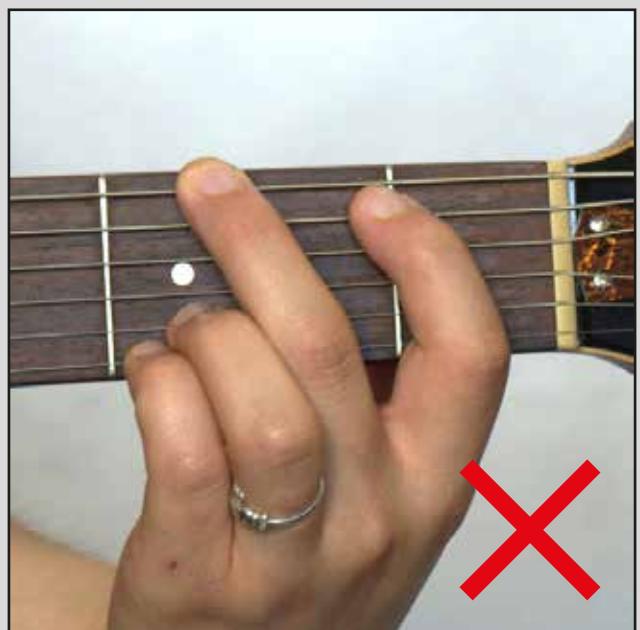
Don't worry if you can't get it yet - it can be tough. Your grip strength will improve as you practice switching between chords - try your best!

For more help with this, try **“Barre Chords Made Easy”**

\*A barre chord involves pressing multiple strings with one finger

# GET TO GRIPS WITH THESE CHORD SHAPES

Sometimes a little finesse can save you from a lot of struggle. Many beginning guitarists experience trouble with getting chord shapes to sound good, and almost every time it's one of the following 4 problems.



## Finger Placement

The further your fingers are from the fret, the more pressure it takes to hold the string down. Make sure you press down as close to the fret as possible, while avoiding contact with the fret.



## Finger Pressure

Sometimes it's as simple as *not pressing hard enough*. Press down firmly and evenly, making sure you are providing extra pressure only to the fingers that need it. Don't hurt yourself - if it's still not working take a break. Consistent daily practice will build strength and as you develop callouses, you will find it much easier to apply pressure to the strings.



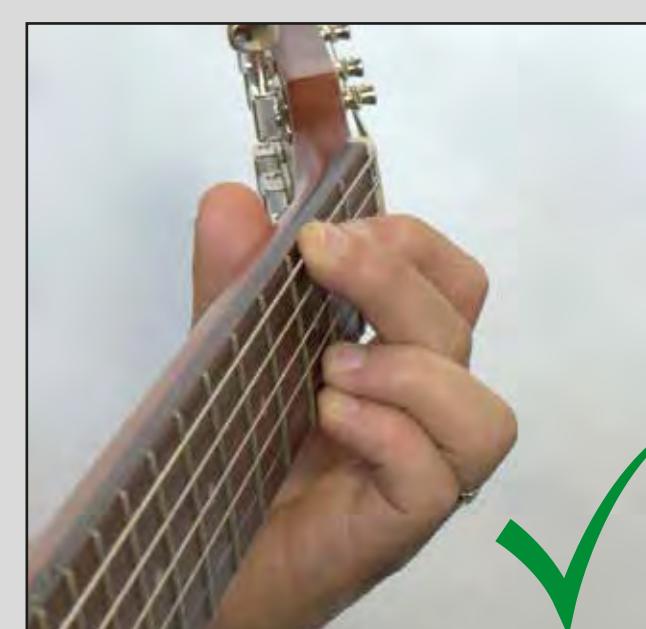
## Thumb Placement

Your thumb should be pushing back against your fingers to give them the support they need. If your thumb is off to the side, extra strain is put on your wrist.



## Arched Fingers

Arching your fingers helps to carry tension away from your fingers and wrist, up to larger muscles in your arm and shoulder. It also keeps your fingers pointy so they don't accidentally touch adjacent strings.



I cover these 4 tips in THIS video tutorial...

# CHORD SWITCHING

Learning a chord shape is only half the battle! Now we need to practice switching from chord to chord. This is the best way to memorize a chord shape and you'd be amazed at how many songs you can play, switching between just 2 or 3 chords!

## CHORD CLARITY: FIX THOSE FRUSTRATED FINGERS!



### Make the chord shape

Keep your fingers arched and make sure you're applying enough pressure with your fingertips.



### Strum the strings

Hear any buzzing?  
Tips: Press harder, curve your fingers, and keep trying!



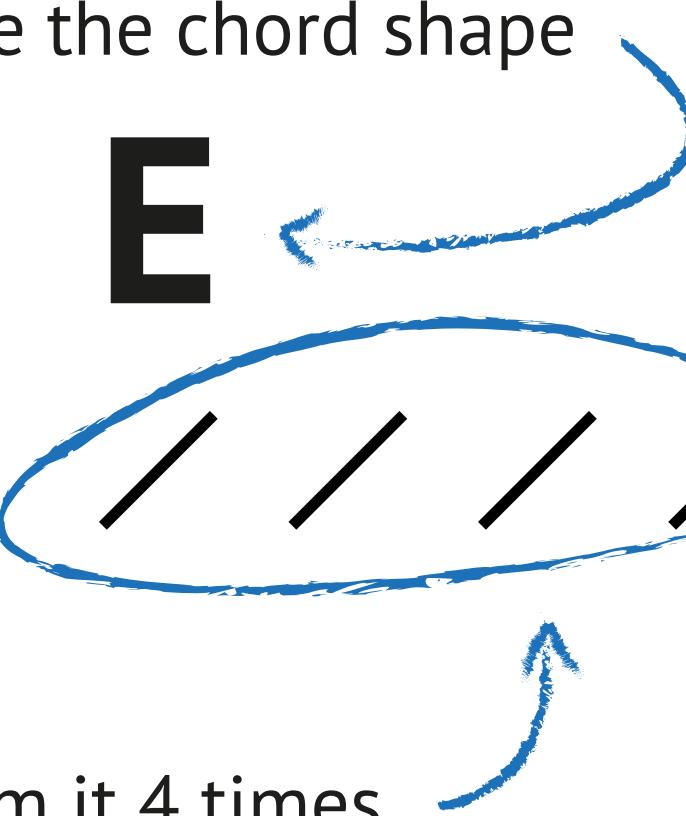
### Pick each string individually

Start at the low E and if any strings aren't cooperating, you'll find the culprit soon enough!

**Practice makes perfect! - let go of the chord shape, relax your hand a bit, and repeat until the chord shape becomes second nature.**

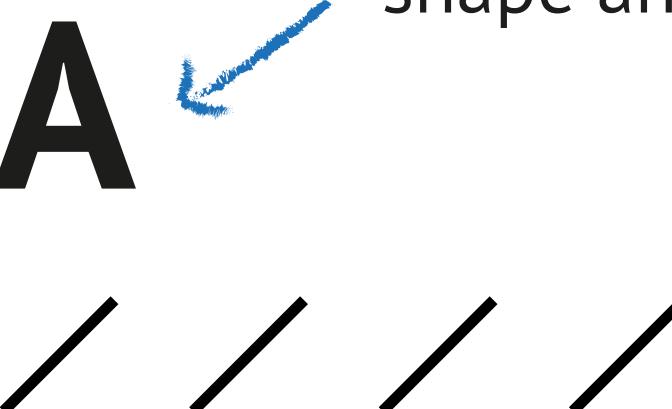
## How to practice chord switching:

Step 1: Make the chord shape



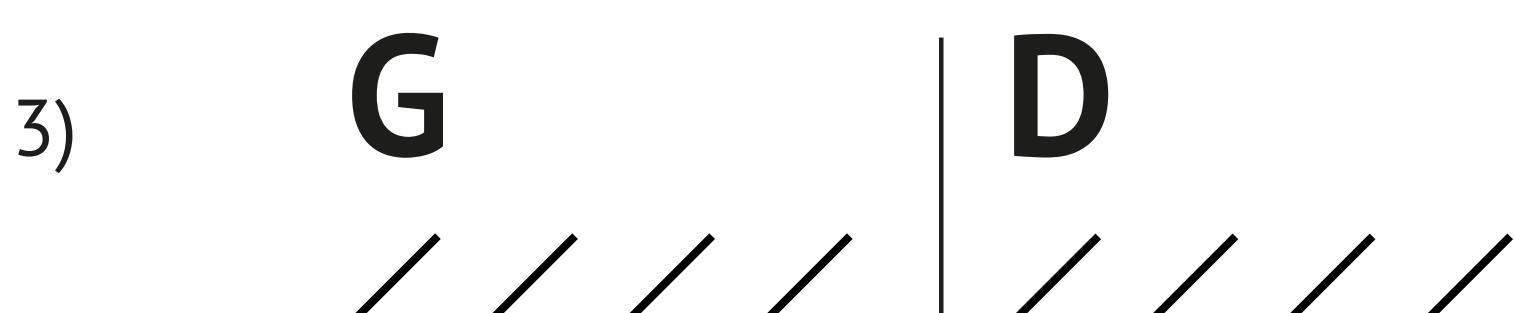
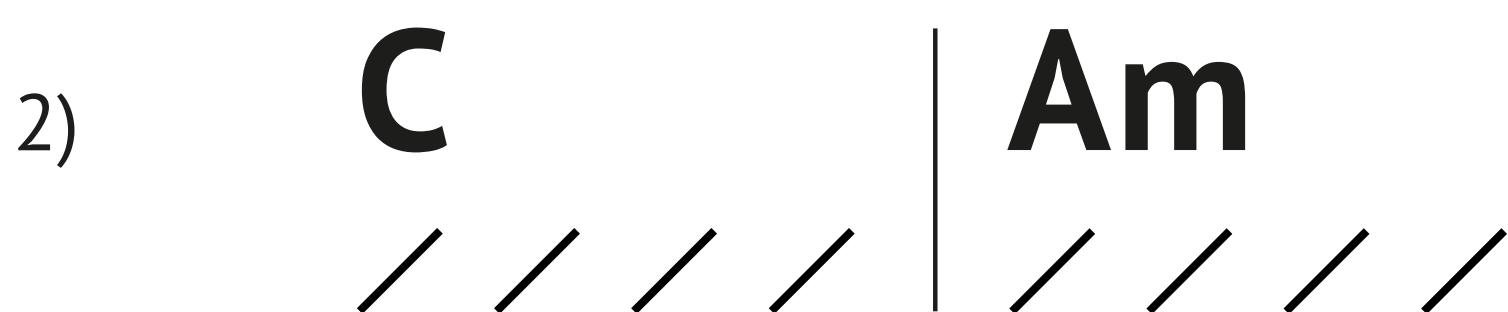
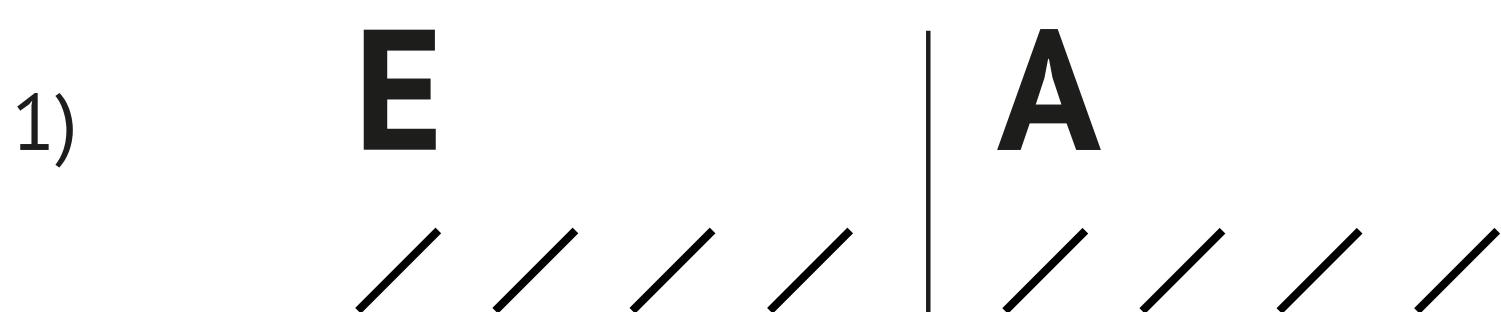
Step 2: Strum it 4 times

Step 3: Switch to the next chord shape and strum it 4 times



Step 4: Repeat, over and over again, until you can make a clean transition.

## Practice switching between the following chords:



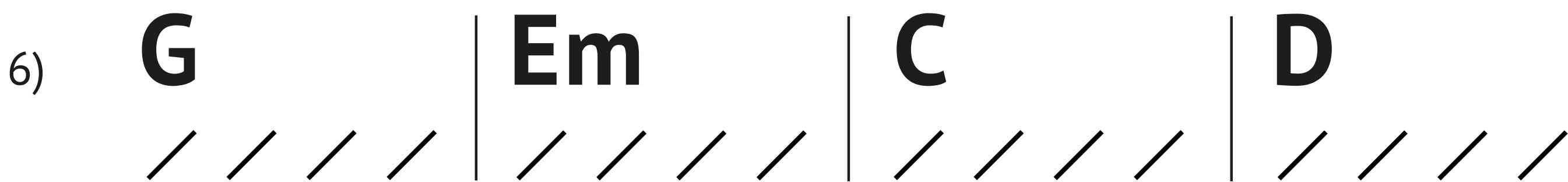
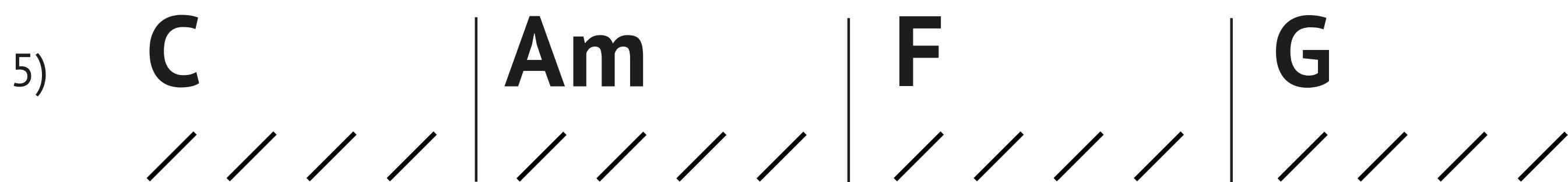
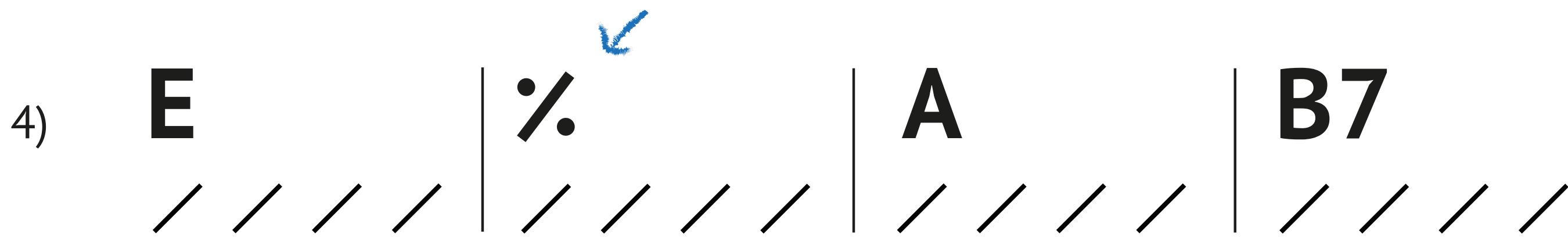
**PUT THESE CHORD SHAPES TO USE!**

The best way to really learn this stuff is by putting it to use! Learning 2 or 3 chord songs is great for getting started.

**My complete beginner's course will guide you through this entire process. Click here for more info!**

\* If you're really feeling keen, try these exercises with all the chords from pages 1-4 \*

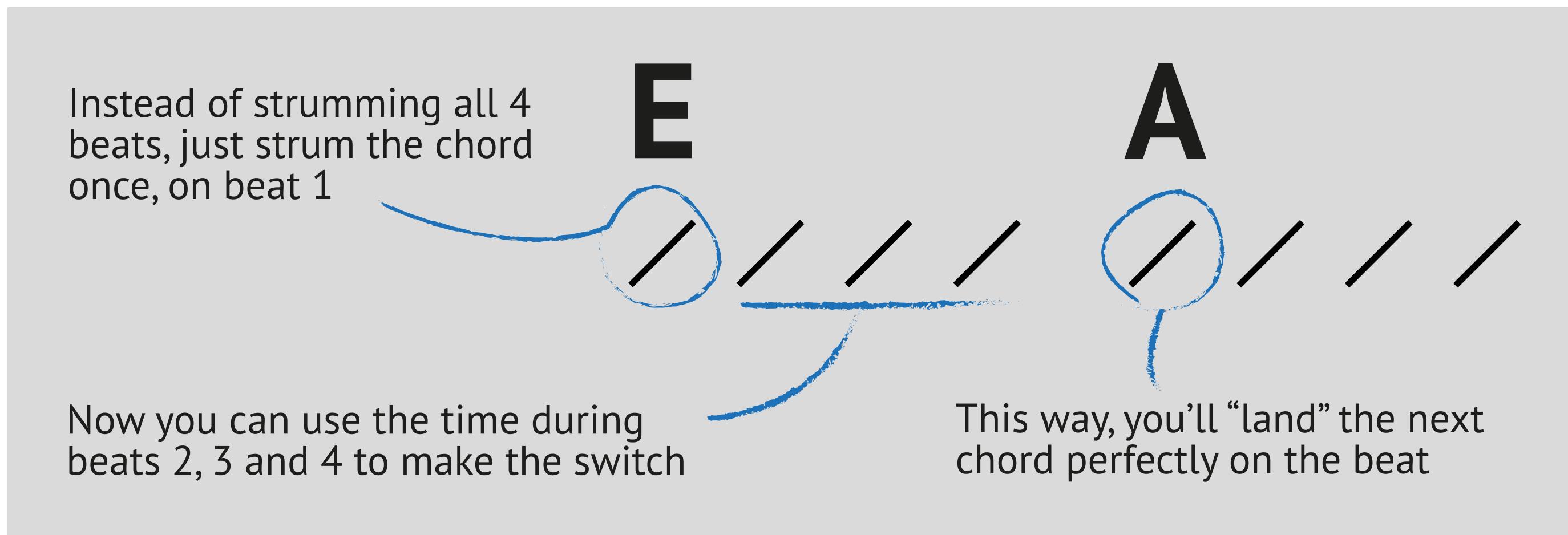
This symbol means, "stay on the same chord." Here, we keep playing E.



My Complete Beginner's Course focuses on teaching you to **play longer chord progressions just like this**. Click here for more info or to sign up!

## Troubleshooting

If you find yourself having trouble switching chords while maintaining a steady rhythm, try the following exercise:



As you get better at this, you can **increase the challenge** by strumming the first 2 beats, and switching during the next 2. Then you can try strumming the first 3 beats and switching during the last beat.

## A FEW WORDS OF ADVICE...

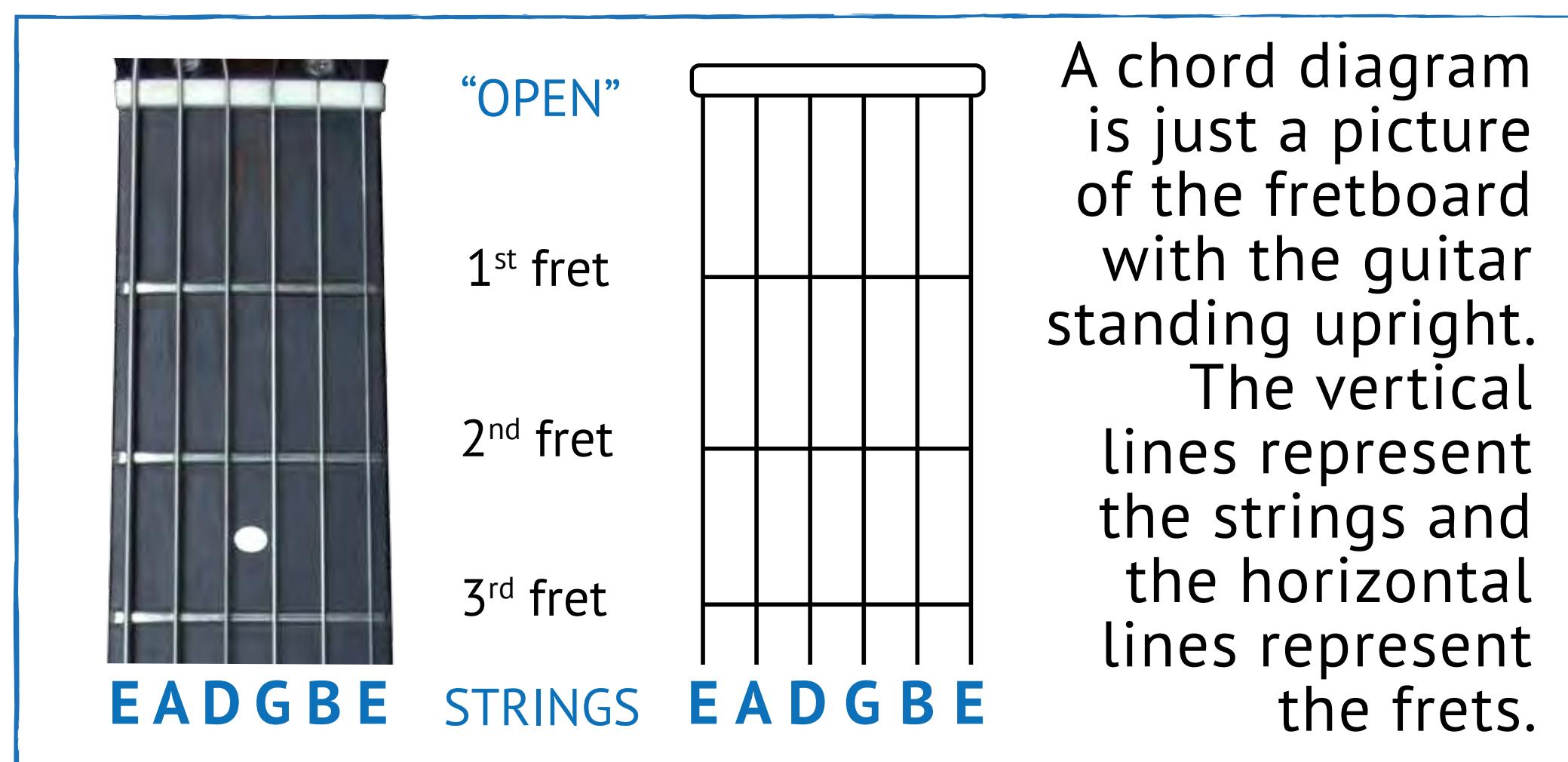
You may not realize it yet, but in learning the 12 chords we've selected, you've unlocked the power to play thousands of songs. There may still be a long way to go, however, being able to switch between chords cleanly and efficiently, while maintaining a steady rhythm, is the very foundation of rhythm guitar.

Here are some tips to help you memorize these chords and improve your rhythm guitar playing:

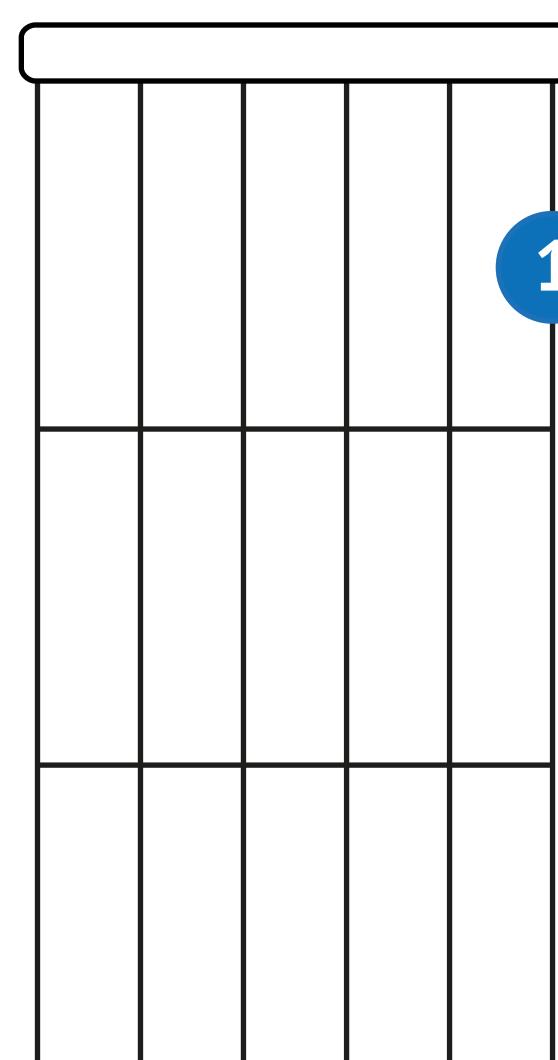
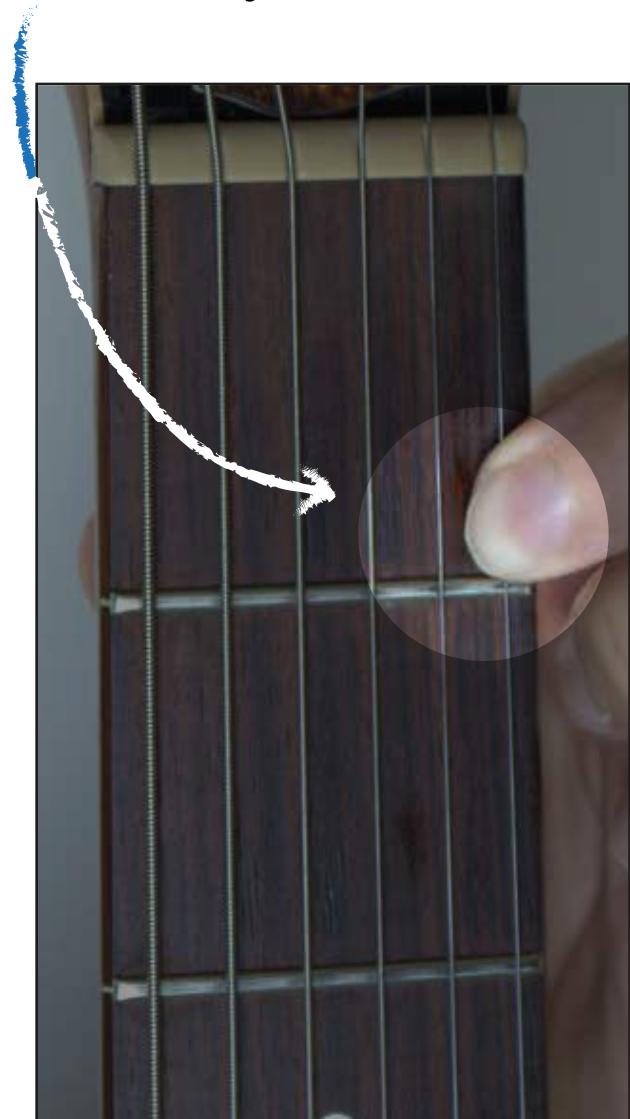
- Learn as many songs as you can
- Test the chords out (using the method on page 6) to make sure they are sounding their best
- Strive to memorize the chords by name. Over time, you will accumulate a “chord vocabulary” and eventually, as you learn new songs, you’ll find you already know most, if not all, of the chords in that song!

There is no substitute for hard work, but if you spend your practice time effectively, and focus on the right things, you can reach your goals a lot quicker than you may have thought possible.

# READING A CHORD DIAGRAM



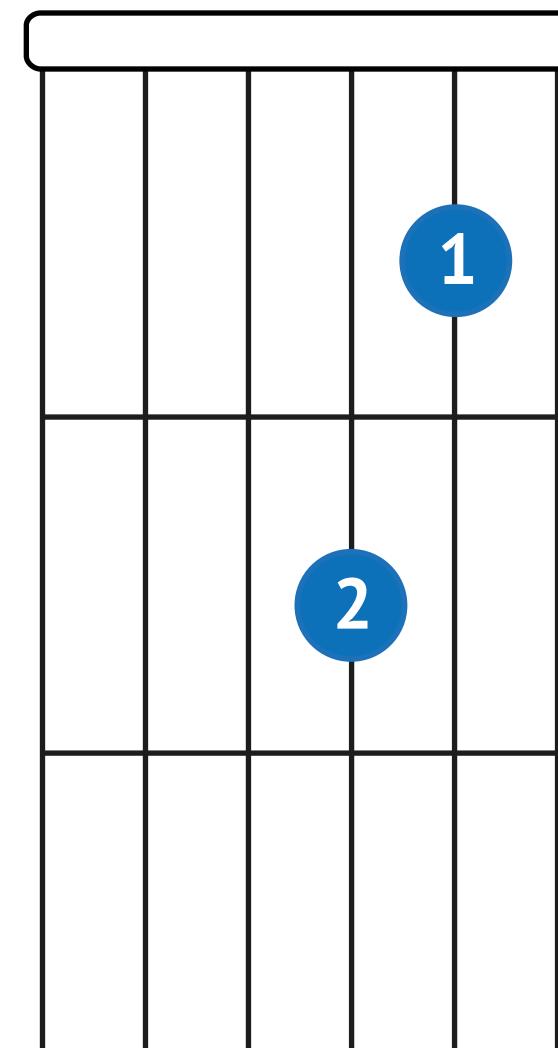
We draw circles to show you where to place your fingers



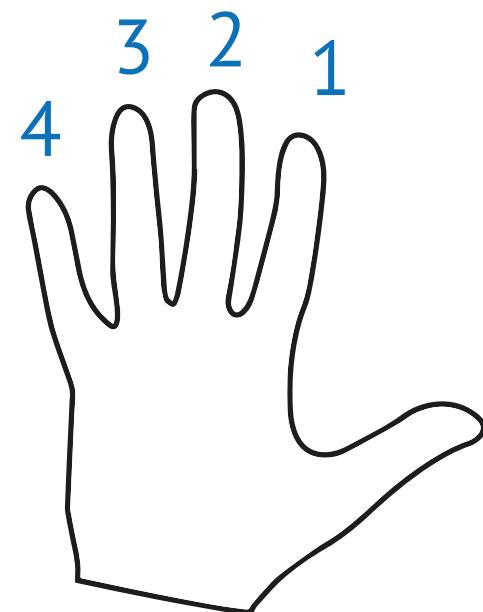
More fingers?



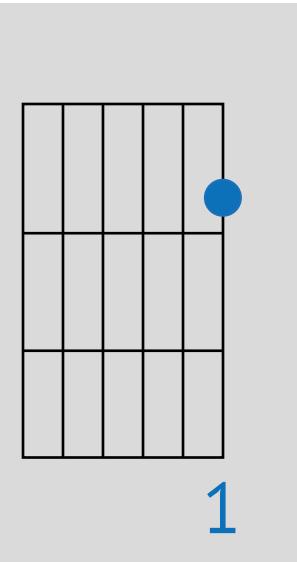
More circles!



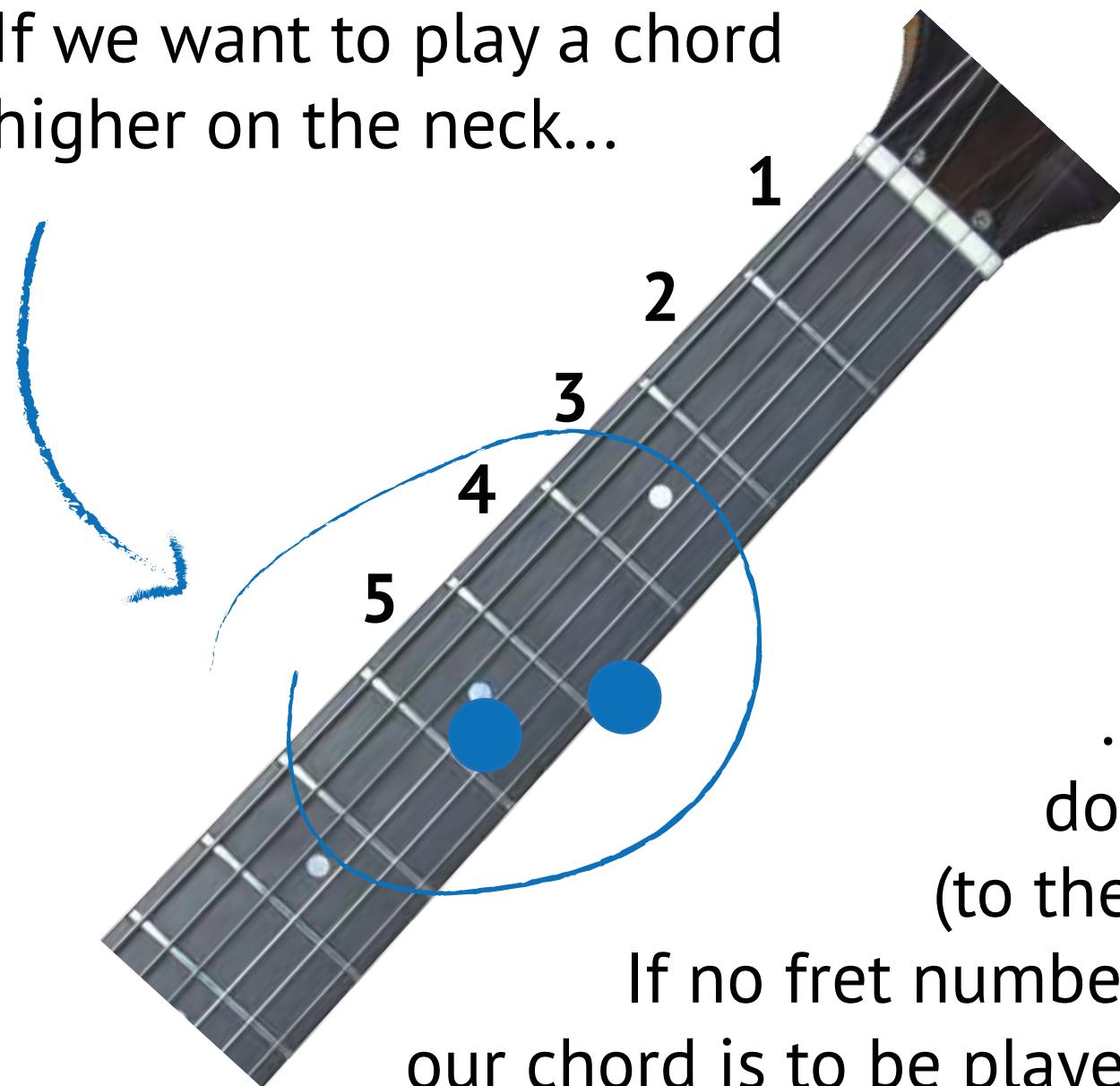
The number in the circle shows which finger to use



If the diagram is really small, we write the finger number *under* the diagram

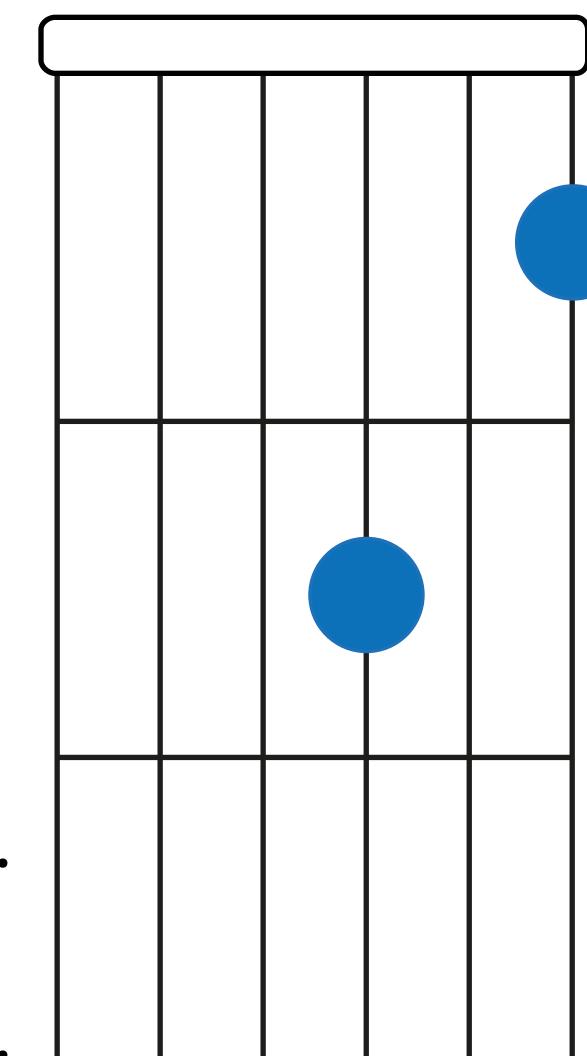


If we want to play a chord higher on the neck...



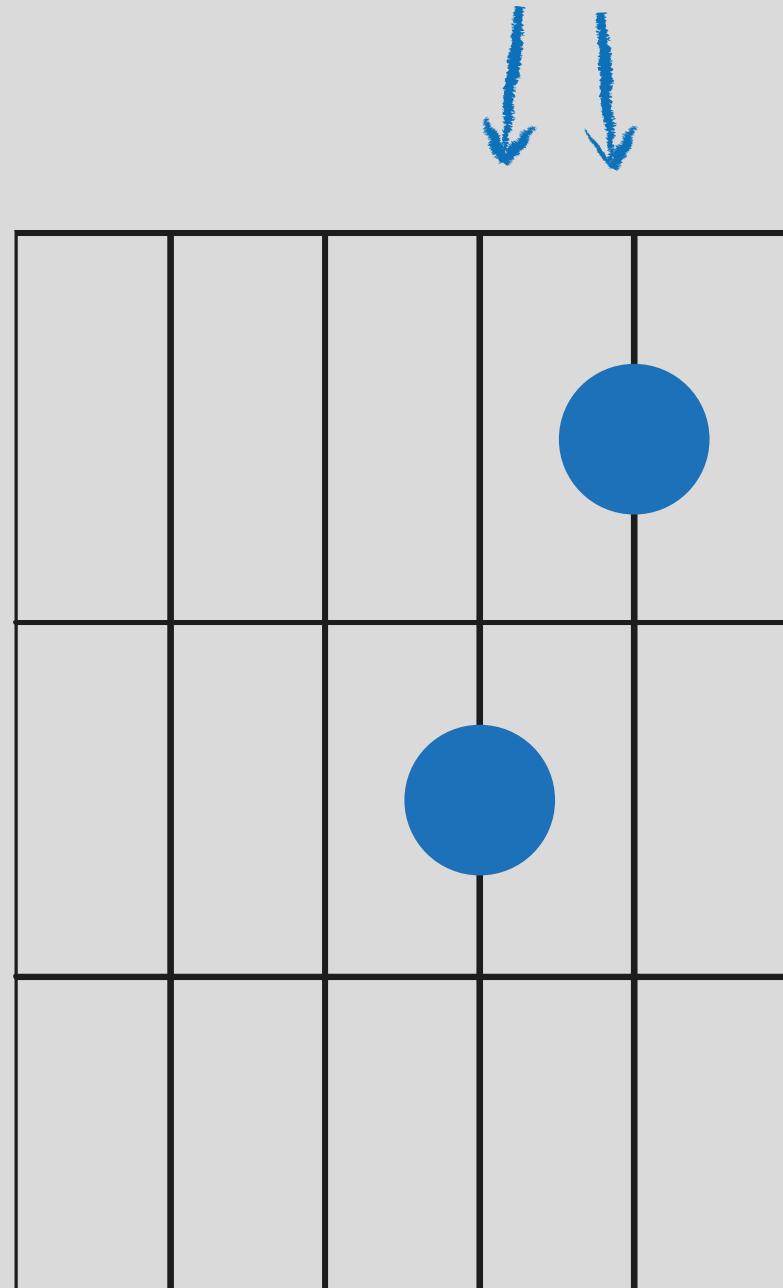
...all we need to do is write down the fret number beside (to the left of) the chord diagram.

If no fret number is mentioned, we assume our chord is to be played starting at fret number 1.

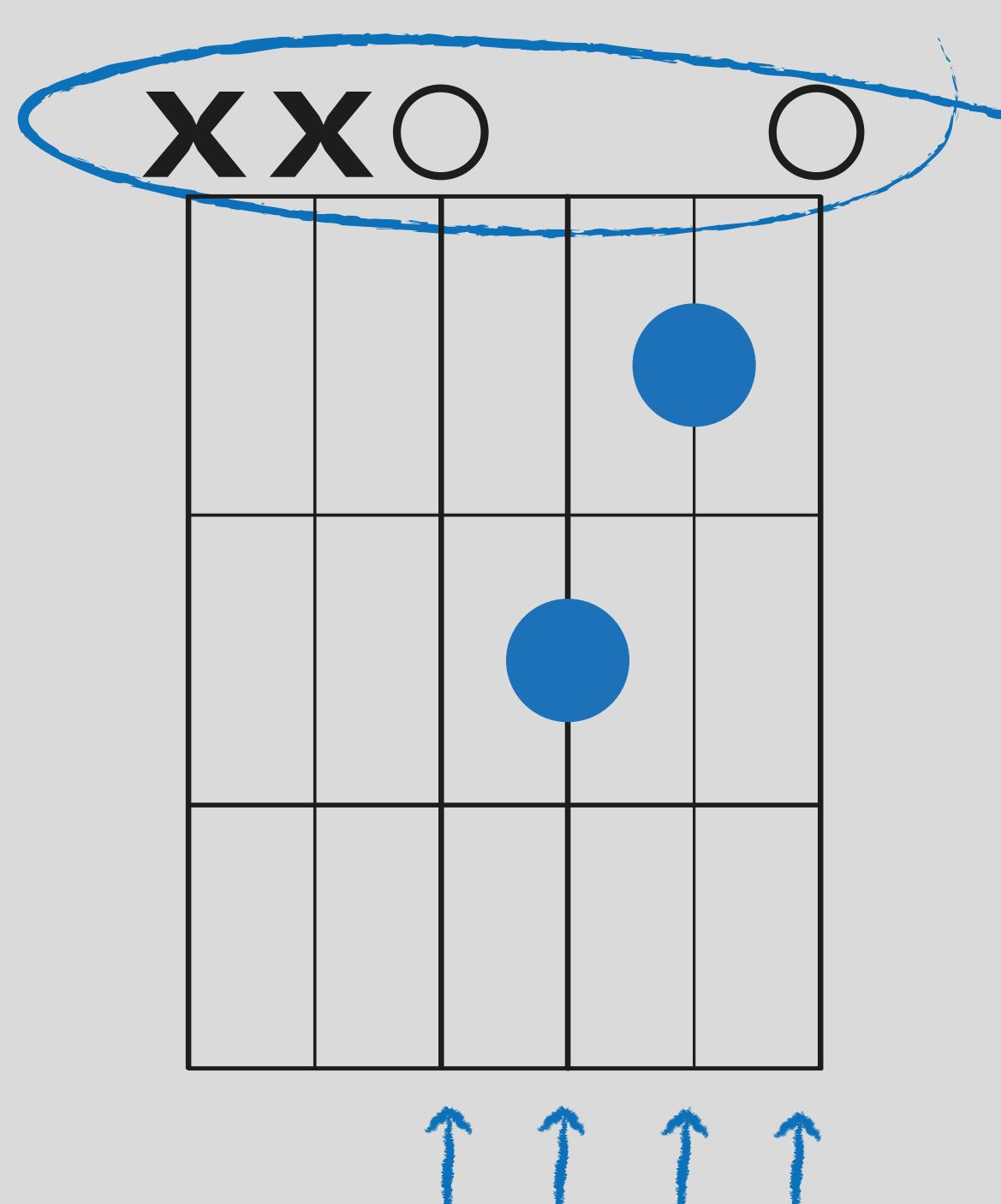


## WE KNOW WHERE TO PLACE OUR FINGERS, BUT WHICH STRINGS SHOULD WE STRUM?

Of course we strum the strings with circles on them



We label the remaining strings "X" or "O"  
X = ignore the string, O = strum it!



In this example, we'd play these 4 strings and leave the other 2 alone

# LET'S REVIEW!

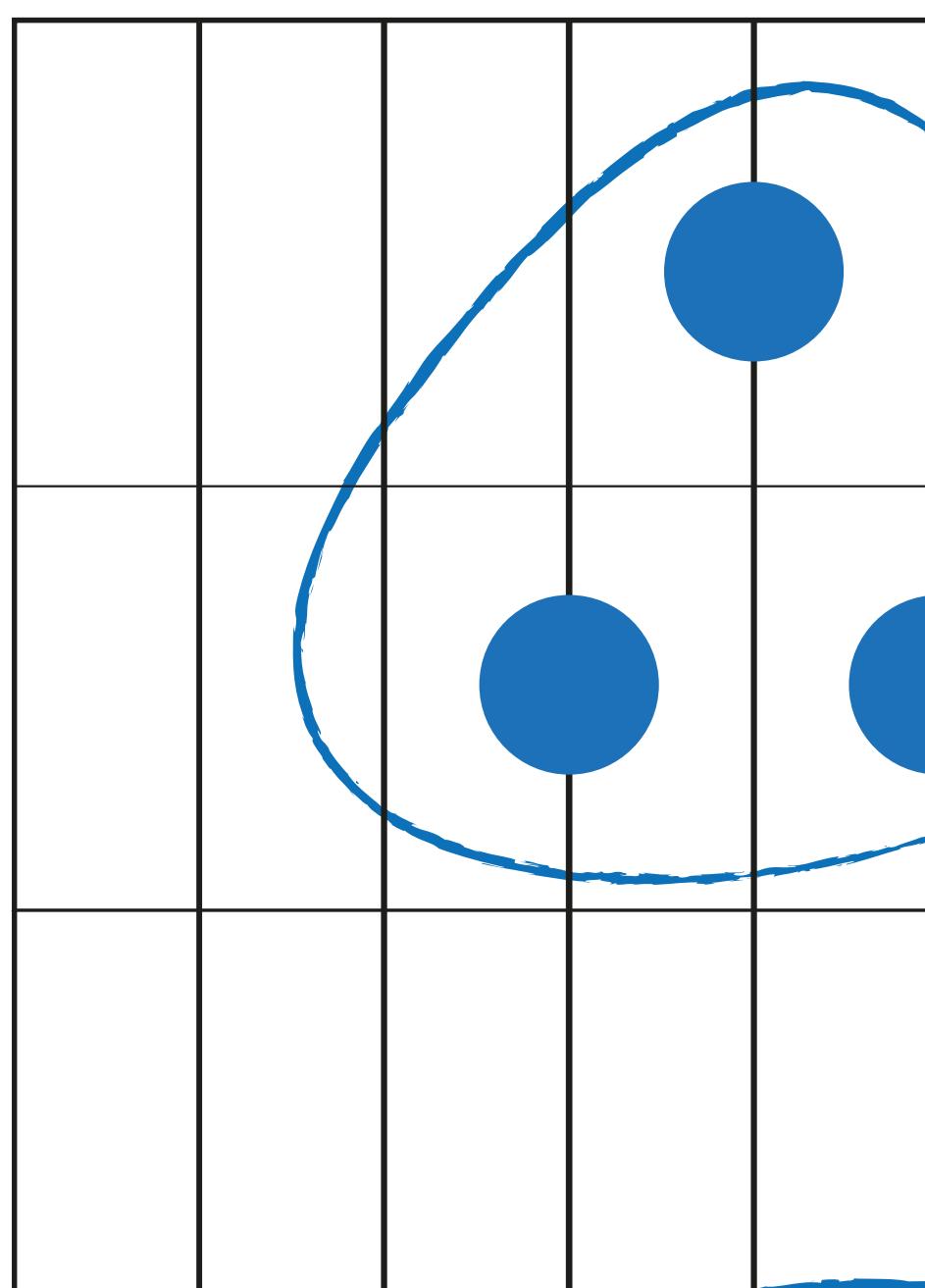
This is the name  
of the chord



## D7

These X's and O's tell us  
which strings to play

XXO



If we're playing a chord  
further up the neck, we  
put a fret number  
**beside** the diagram

*(Normally, we don't need a  
number if our chord starts  
at the first fret, but there's  
one here just for example  
purposes :)*

These dots show us  
where to press down  
on the fretboard

2 1 3

Finger numbers go **under** the diagram  
if they don't fit in the circles

# USING A CAPO



A capo is a device used to hold down all the strings of the guitar at a particular fret. It allows the guitarist to play chords they already know but at a **higher** part of the neck - changing the key. This is useful if a song is too low or too high to sing along with.



When a song says “Capo 2” or “Capo 7” it means you need to place a capo behind that fret.

Simply count the metal frets, starting from the head of the guitar, and place the capo **before** the specified fret (the same place you’d put your finger if you wanted to play that fret).



## PLACEMENT MAKES PERFECT



Take the time to ensure your capo is securely placed *just* beside the desired fret. If you place it too far from the fret, you may experience “buzzy” open strings. If you place it overtop the fret, it may cause the strings to sound dead or muffled.

# STRUMMING AND RHYTHM

The idea is simple, you hold down chords with one hand, and then hit the strings in a rhythmic way using your other hand. To make these repeated rhythms, we use a combination of two motions:

Downstrokes



AND

Upstrokes



Explanations often fall short of capturing the idea of strumming a rhythm, so let's jump right in and learn by example.

We'll begin with the simplest strumming pattern of them all... four downstrokes, on beats 1, 2, 3 and 4.



a) Count:

“1

2

3

4”

b) Say:

“down

down

down

down”

c) Play!

Note: If these strumming patterns are giving you trouble, I have a huge secret to share with you: there's a difference between *rhythm* and *coordination*. I go over this extensively in Learn Guitar Once-And-For-All. **You can sign up here if you want to "fix" your rhythm :)**

### **PATTERN #1**

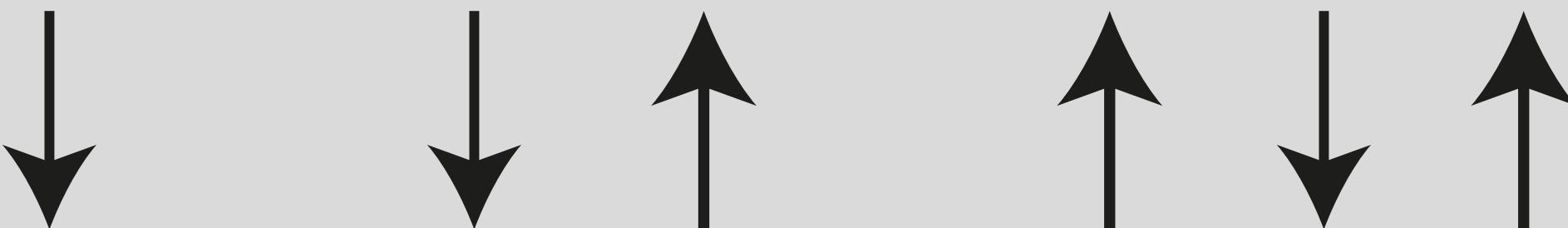
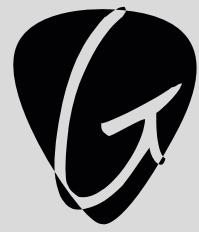
Here come the upstrokes! We're going to add just one, and we'll place it between beats 3 and 4.



- a) Count: “1                  2                  3                  and                  4”
- b) Say:        “down                  down                  down      up      down”
- c) Play!

### **PATTERN #2**

This pattern is missing a downstroke on beat 3. It is very important that you still “feel” the beat happen.

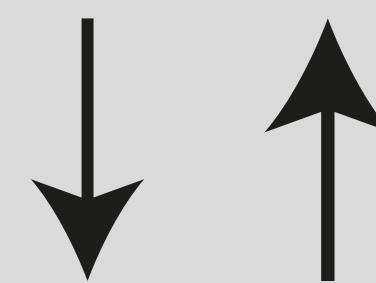
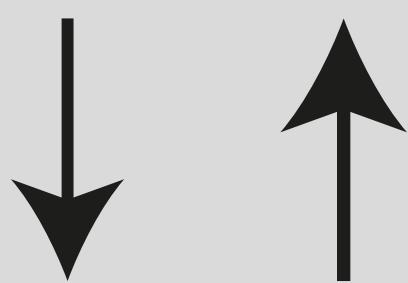


- a) Count: “1                  2                  and                  and          4                  and”
- b) Say:        “down                  down      up                  up      down      up”
- c) Play!

Upstrokes are played on the *off-beat*. “1, 2, 3, 4” are the *on-beats*. It can be difficult to feel an *off-beat* if it has no *on-beat* before it (like in Pattern #3, where we play an upstroke after beat 3, but we are not playing anything on beat 3). **Here's a trick that'll help with those off-beats:** simply whisper “miss” during the missing beat, and still make the downstroke motion with your strumming hand - just avoid making contact with the strings.

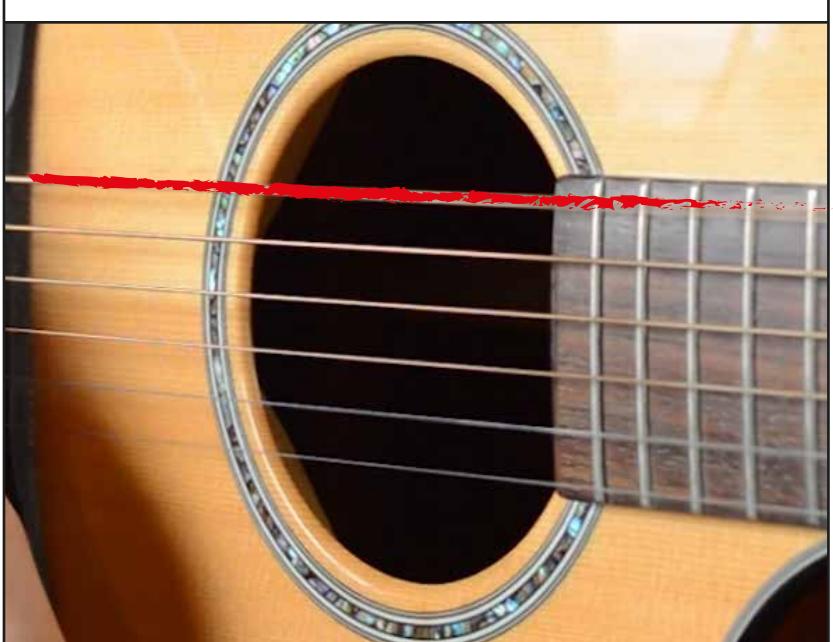
## **PATTERN #3**

This final pattern involves a “root” strum. Instead of strumming all the strings, hit the lowest note of the chord when you see “R”.



- a) Count:    “1                          2      and      3                          4      and”
- b) Say:       “root                      down      up      root                      down      up”
- c) Play!

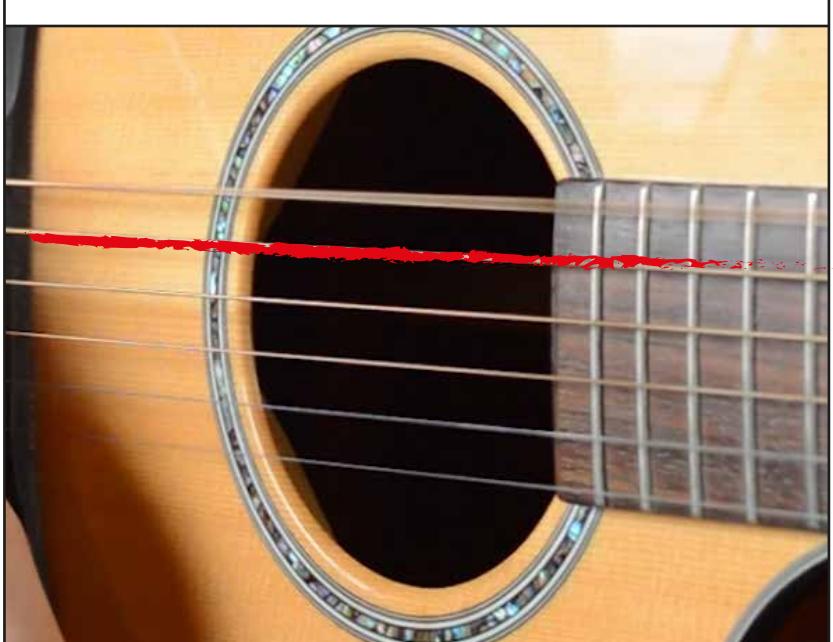
*This is the root...*



*...for these chords:*

**E Em G F<sub>barre</sub>**

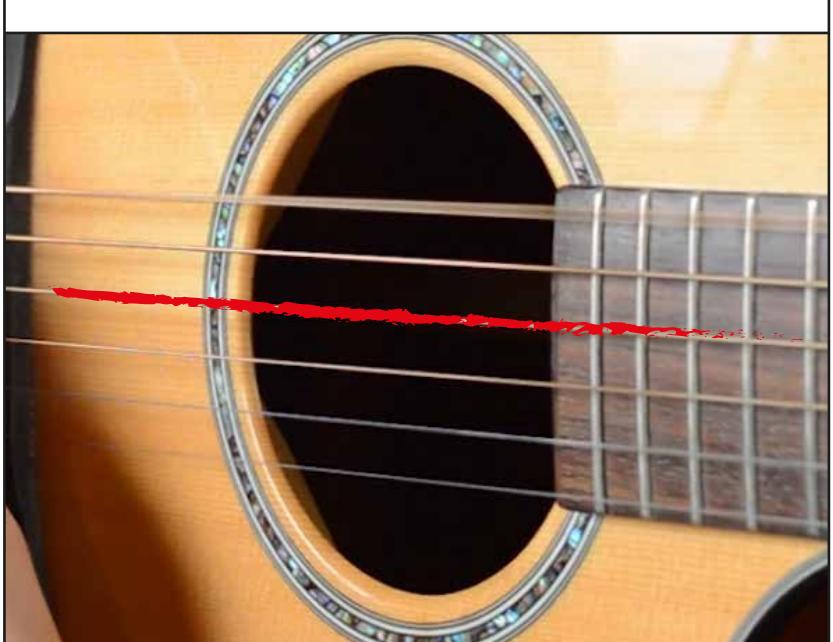
*This is the root...*



*...for these chords:*

**A Am C B7**

*This is the root...*



*...for these chords:*

**D Dm “little”F**

# CONTINUOUS ARM MOTION



Your arm is constantly moving up and down, like a motor. It does this in order to keep the rhythm, and to line up the strumming pattern with the beat - downstrokes line up with numbers, upstrokes line up with "and."

While the arm is moving down and up, maintaining a steady beat, the guitarist chooses when to make contact with the strings.

This approach is essential when learning to produce a proper "groove."

The arm is always moving down, then up - over and over again. No matter which pattern we use, the downstrokes always line up with on-beats, and the upstrokes always line up with off-beats.



Pattern 1	↓		↓		↓		↓
Pattern 2	↓		↓		↓	↑	↓
Pattern 3	↓		↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Pattern 4	R ↓		↓	↑	R ↓	↓	↑

If strumming isn't your thing, fingerstyle is a valid alternative. If you'd like an easy way to get into that, try "**Fingerpicking Mastery**" - included in my All-Access Pass!

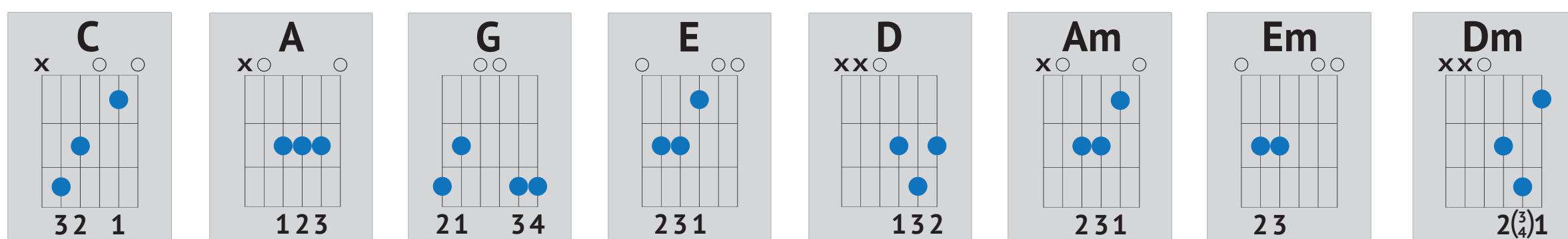
# BEST WAY TO LEARN THE BASIC SHAPES



[CLICK HERE FOR A VIDEO TUTORIAL THAT DEMONSTRATES A NEAT WAY TO QUICKLY LEARN THE 8 MOST IMPORTANT CHORDS ON GUITAR](#)

Don't bore yourself by trying to memorize the basic shapes all at once! The best way to actually learn them (not just memorize them) is to practice them in context - that means learning easy songs with as few switches as possible!

## THE SHAPES



## TWO-CHORD SONGS

One of the biggest mistakes I see in newer players, is focusing too much on getting “perfect” chord shapes. With a 2-chord song, there’s only 1 possible switch you need to make. This lets you focus on other things, like keeping a steady beat when strumming.

[CLICK HERE for a playlist including tutorials for all songs discussed](#)

- Songbird (Oasis) G Em
- Born In The U.S.A. (Bruce Springsteen) A E
- Achy Breaky Heart (Billy Ray Cyrus) A E
- What I Got (Sublime) G D
- Lively Up Yourself (Bob Marley) G D
- Jambalaya (Hank Williams) G C
- Everyday People (Sly and The Family Stone) G C
- Eleanor Rigby (The Beatles) Em C
- Tennessee Whiskey (Chris Stapleton) G Am

# TROUBLESHOOTING

Sometimes it can be tough to simply “jump in” and start learning songs. If you’d like to hone your skills a little, here’s what I recommend:

## STEP 1) PRACTICE EACH CHORD SHAPE BY ITSELF

Thumbnails on this page are clickable, and will load tutorial videos on YouTube



[CLICK HERE](#) for a playlist including every single chord discussed here

## STEP 2) LEARN THE SWITCH - “CHORD SWITCHING GAME” SPEEDS UP THE PROCESS



[CLICK HERE](#) for a playlist of the most common switches, back and forth between two shapes: A to E // G to D // etc.



# GOING BEYOND 2-CHORD SONGS

[CLICK HERE FOR A VIDEO TUTORIAL THAT OUTLINES THIS ENTIRE PROCESS, COMPLETE WITH SOME REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES](#)

- 1) **Pick an easy song** that you'd like to learn, that uses just 3 chords and a simple strumming pattern.
- 2) **Practice the chord switches individually** - with 2 chords, there's only 1 switch... with 3 chords there are 3 switches you need to practice! You may want to learn a few 2-chord songs before trying this.
- 3) **Look up the chord order** for the song you chose in step 1. Practice it with downstrokes only. Then try adding the strumming pattern.

---

## OVERWHELMED? LET ME WALK YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS...

---

### 1) Pick an easy song

Here are some tunes that use 3 (and eventually 4) chords ([PLAYLIST HERE](#))

**Knockin' On Heaven's Door – Bob Dylan (G, C, D)**

**Leaving On A Jet Plane – John Denver (G, C, D)**

**Brown Eyed Girl – Van Morrison (G, C, D, Em)**

**We're Going To Be Friends – White Stripes (G, C, D, A)**

**Twist And Shout - The Beatles (D, G, A)**

**The Joker - Steve Miller Band (G, C, D)**

**Sunday Morning - Maroon 5 (Dm, C, G)**

**What's Up - 4 Non Blondes (G, Am, C)**

**Humble and Kind - Tim McGraw (Em, G, C)**

**You Are My Sunshine (A, D, E)**

**Happy Birthday (G, C, D -or- A, D, E)**

For this example, I'm going to choose "**Leaving On A Jet Plane**" by John Denver, which requires the following chord shapes: **G, C and D**.

## 2) Practice the chord switches individually

We've chosen a song that requires the G, C and D chords:



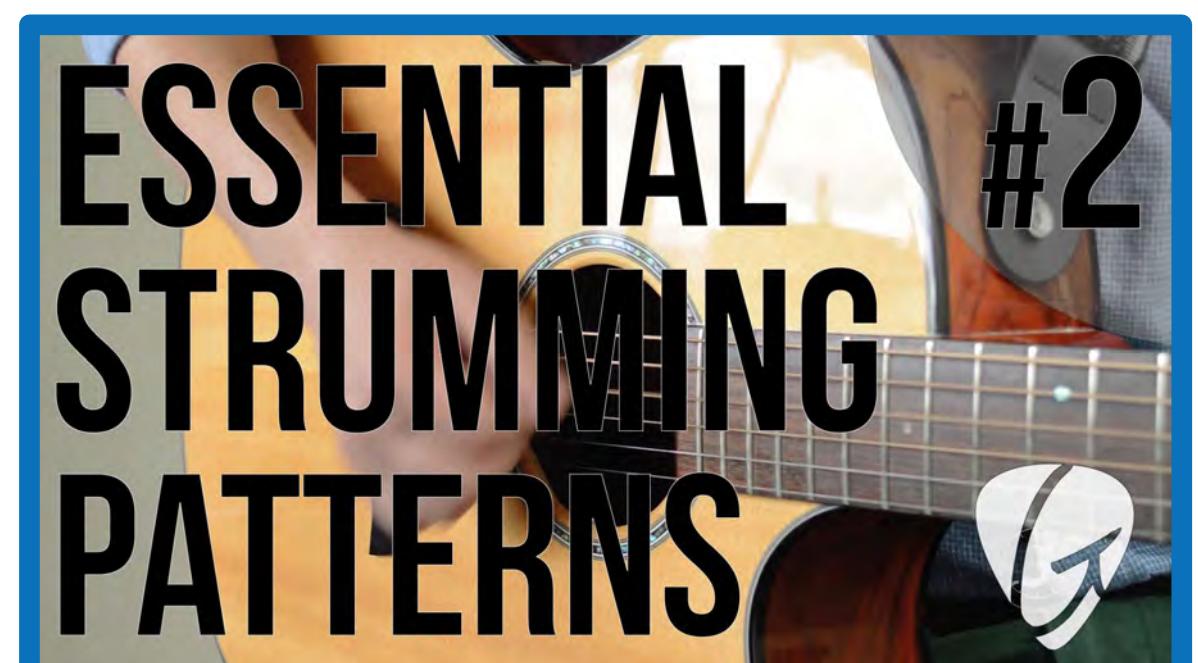
This gives us 3 possible switches:

- 1) G to D (use the 2-chord song “What I Got” to practice this)
- 2) G to C (use the 2-chord song “Jambalaya” to practice this switch)
- 3) D to C (the song “Dreams” by Fleetwood Mac fits the bill)



## 2b) Take a little break from all those chords!

We should also get started on a strumming pattern (In the tutorial for "Leaving On A Jet Plane" we use this one.) The final exercise in this tutorial might be a bit tricky since you haven't worked out your switches yet. Just try your best!



### 3) Look up the chord order

The next thing I do with my 1-on-1 students is to work out the chord order (also called “form”). Rather than jump right in and try to switch chords, count out the beats and strum all at the same time, let’s just keep it simple and focus on chord switches + counting.

This is EXACTLY how my tutorials go, so you don’t have to do too much thinking here... just load up the tutorial and follow along. At this point, since you’ve practiced the shapes and strumming, it shouldn’t be too hard to figure out!



If you need this process broken down further, check out my premium beginner's course. It's a foolproof method, guaranteed to get you strumming along with a song within just a week or two.



# STAY TUNED AND STRAP IN!

Aside from a capo, here are two other pieces of gear that we recommend...

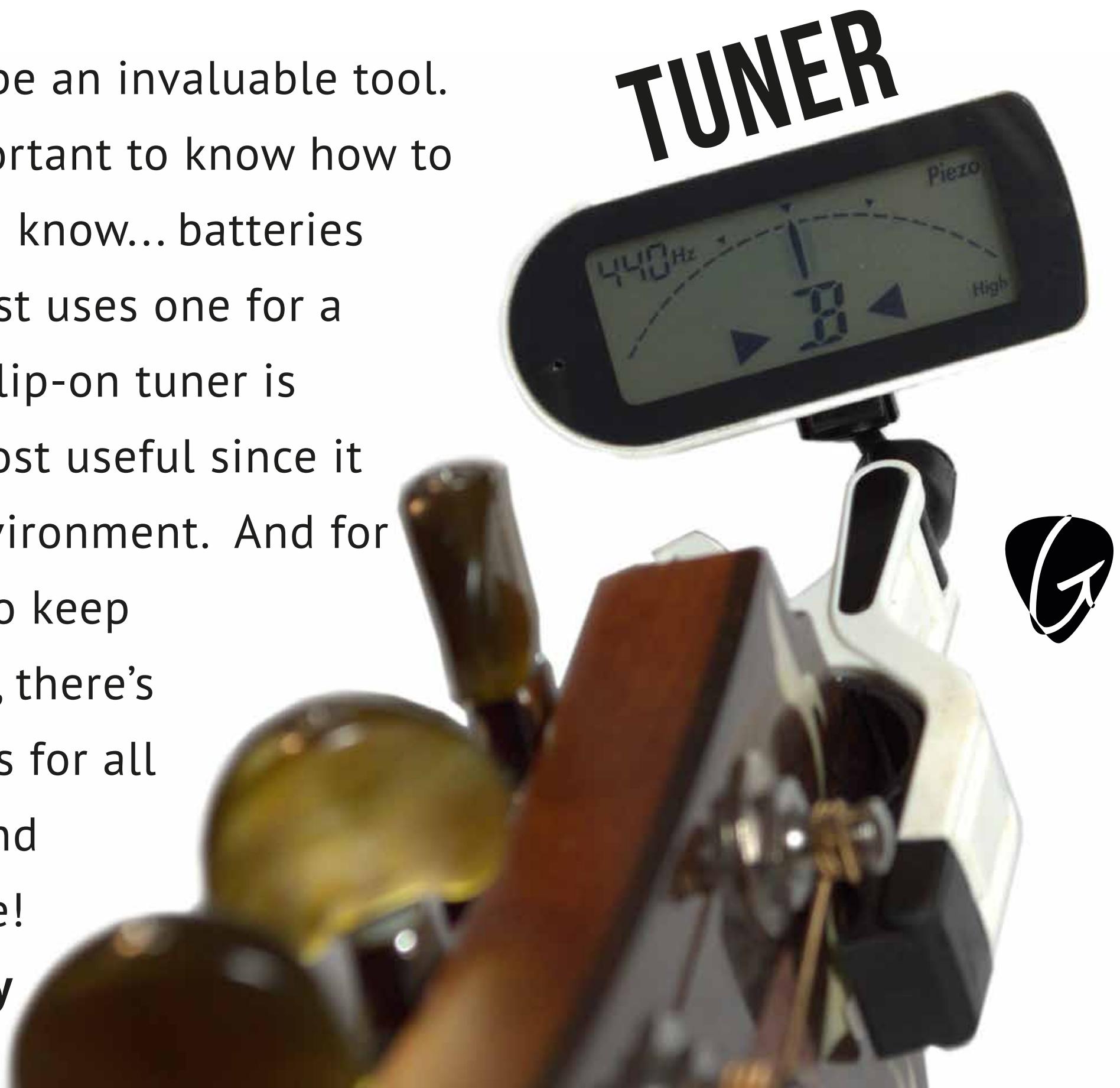


## STRAP

If you want to play guitar standing up, a strap is absolutely necessary. It can also be helpful for keeping the guitar in a comfortable position even when sitting down. Adjust the length of your strap to ensure your guitar does not hang too high or too low. If it's low, your wrist has to bend too much, putting strain on your tendons and possibly causing problems like carpal tunnel syndrome. If it's too high, your strumming arm will not be able to rest comfortably on the top of the guitar.

An electronic tuner can be an invaluable tool. While it is still very important to know how to tune by ear (because you know... batteries die) almost every guitarist uses one for a reason. A good quality clip-on tuner is the most popular and most useful since it works even in a loud environment. And for those of you who want to keep their piggy banks in tact, there's a plethora of tuning apps for all kinds of smart phones and devices available for free!

**You should tune up every time you play guitar!**



# APPENDIX A

Here are 5 more common chord progressions for your practicing pleasure!

7)   **A**                   |   **D**                   |   **E**                   |   **A**  
/ / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / /

8)   **D**                   |   **G**                   |   **D**                   |   **A**  
/ / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / /

9)   **Em**                  |   **C**                  |   **Am**                  |   **B7**  
/ / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / /

10)   **C**                  |   **E**                  |   **Am**                  |   **F**  
/ / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / /

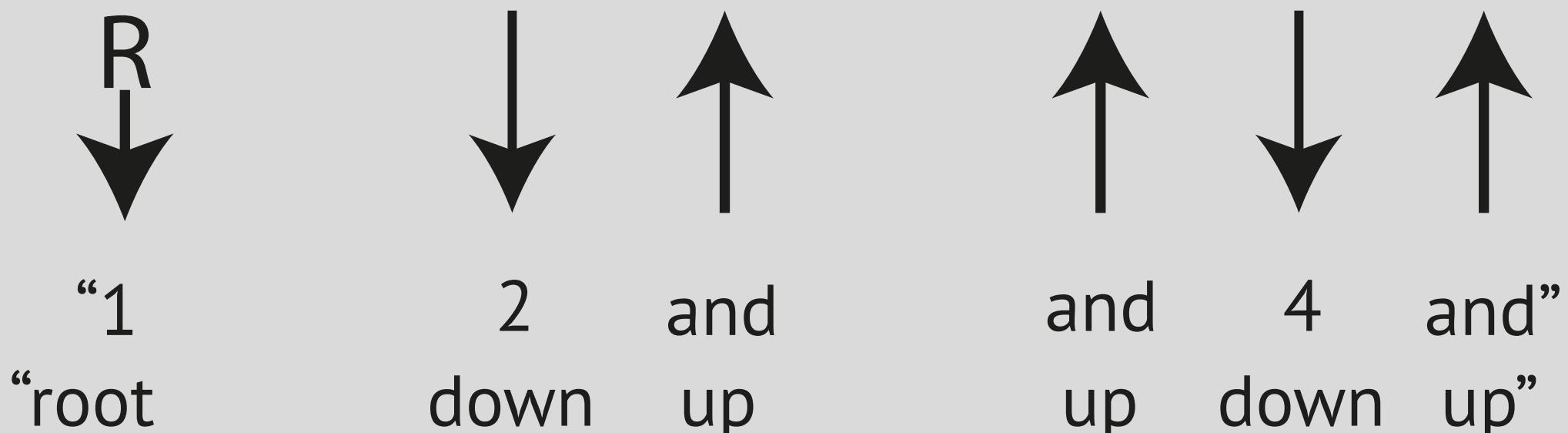
11)   **D**                  |   **B7**                  |   **Em**                  |   **A**  
/ / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / /

# APPENDIX B

Here are 3 more strumming patterns. Don't forget to keep your arm moving in a continuous up and down motion!

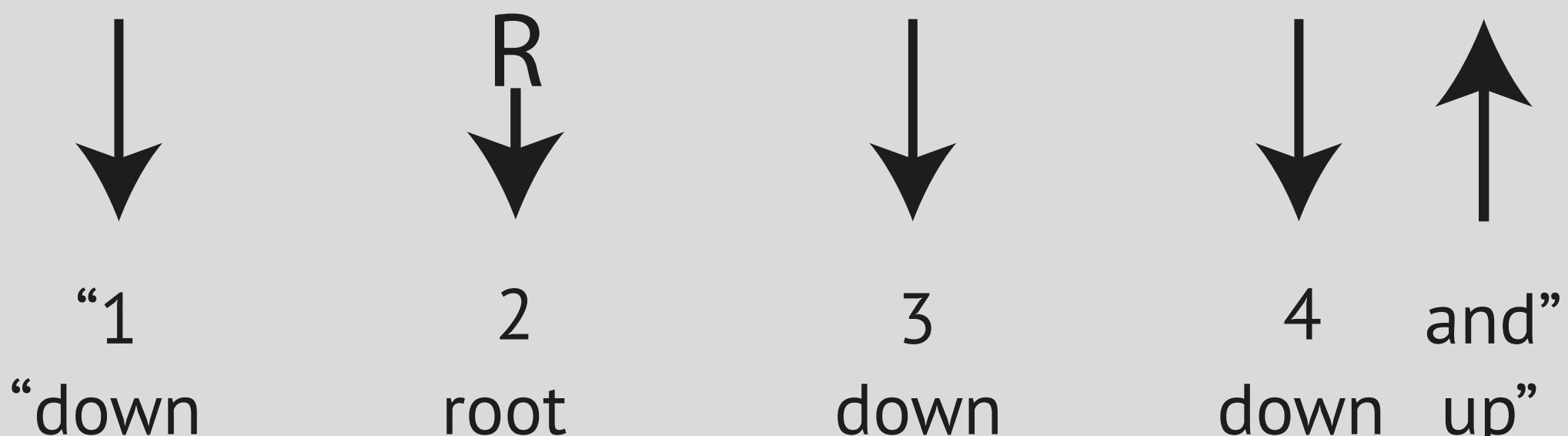
## **PATTERN #4**

This is a variation of pattern 3, where we replace the first downstroke with a root note.



## **PATTERN #5**

This pattern is good for making a half-time feel. Try to play the last "down-up" a bit quieter, for maximum effect.



## **PATTERN #6**

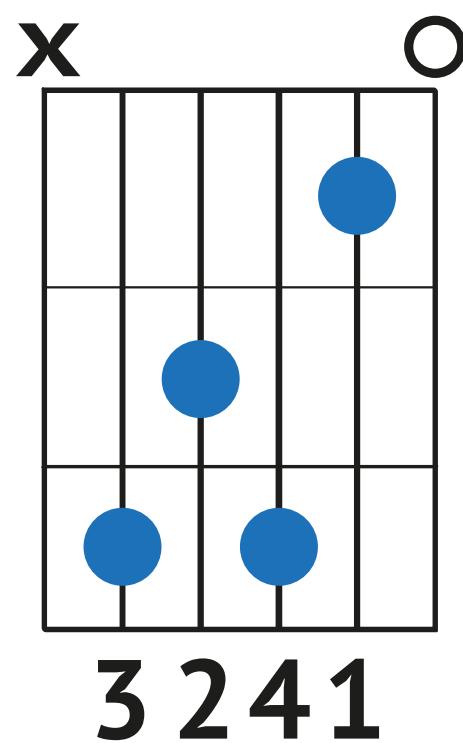
This pattern is heavily syncopated, as it is comprised mostly of upstrokes.



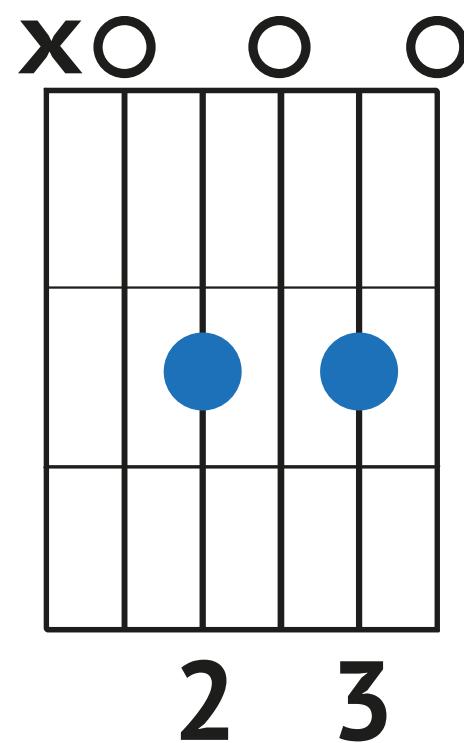
# APPENDIX C

Here are 12 more chords that you will find very useful as you learn more songs.

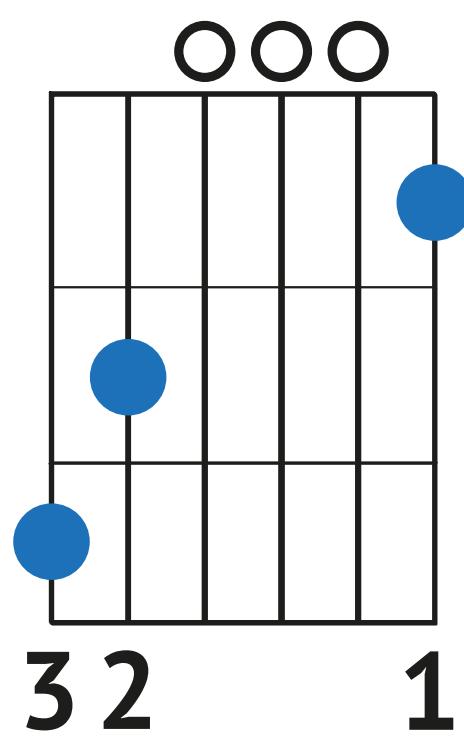
**C7**



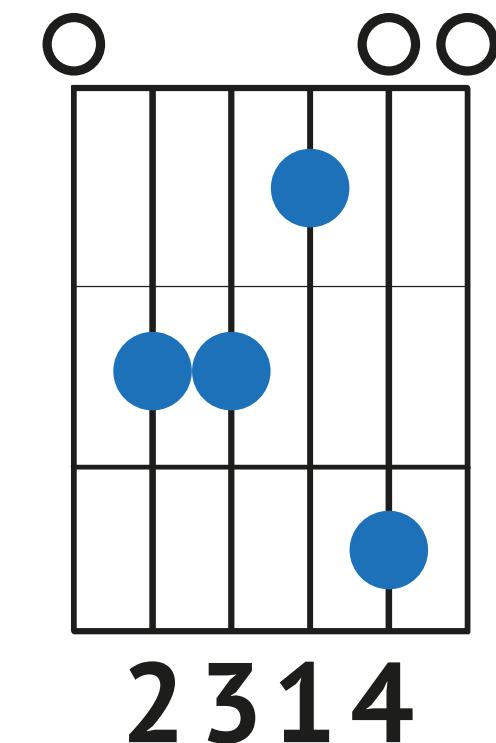
**A7**



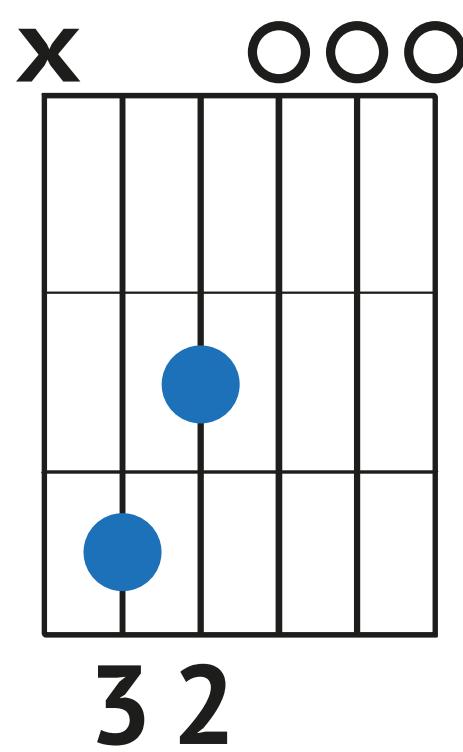
**G7**



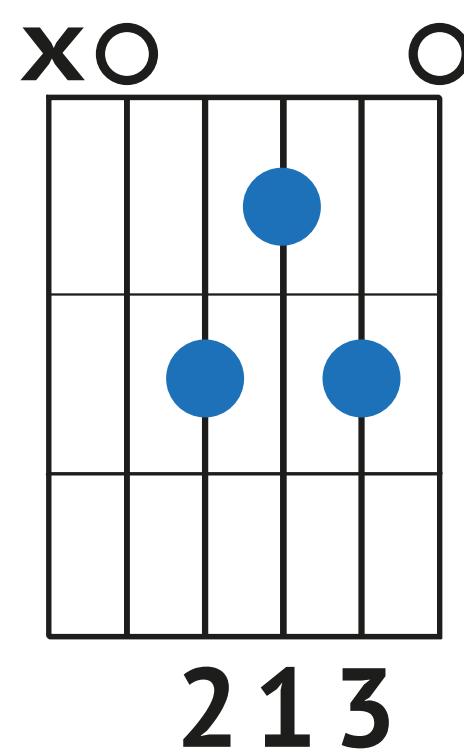
**E7**



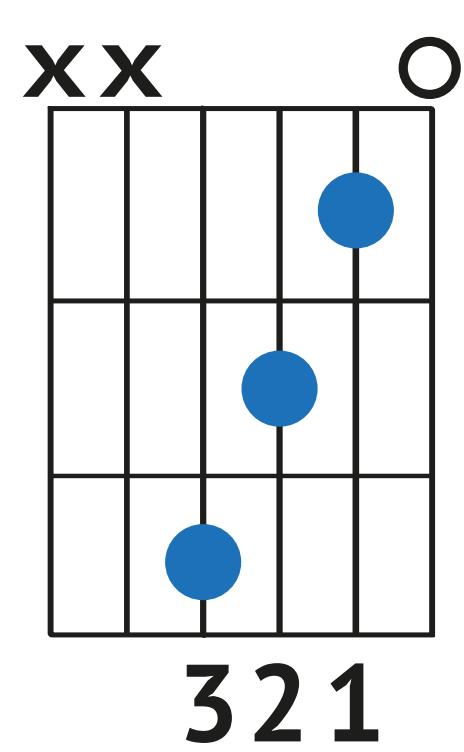
**Cma7**



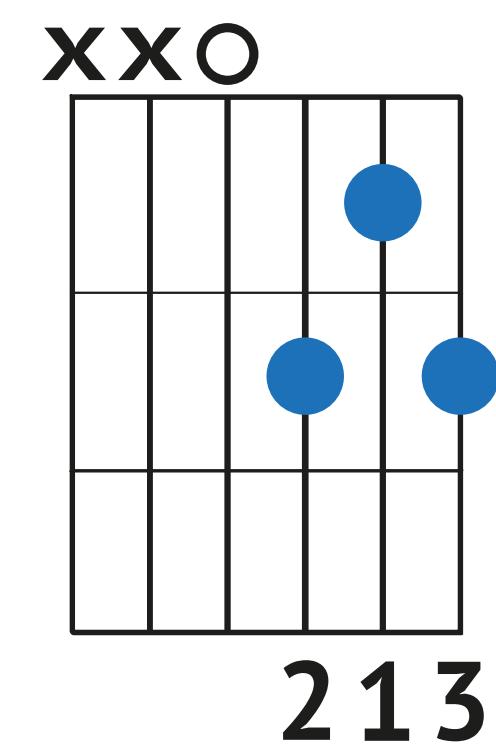
**Ama7**



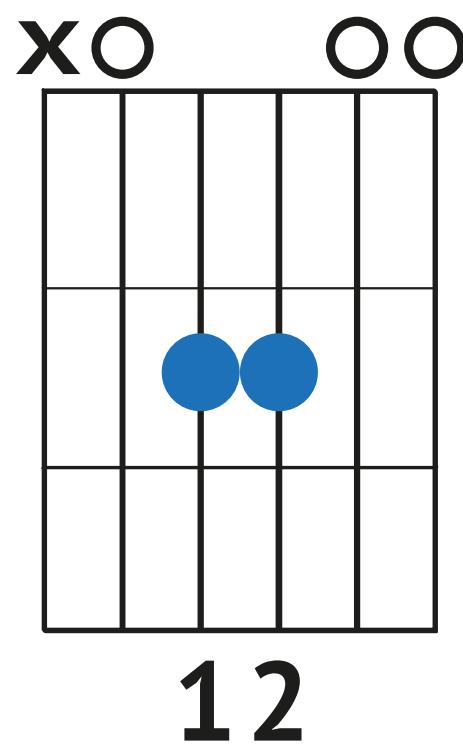
**Fma7**



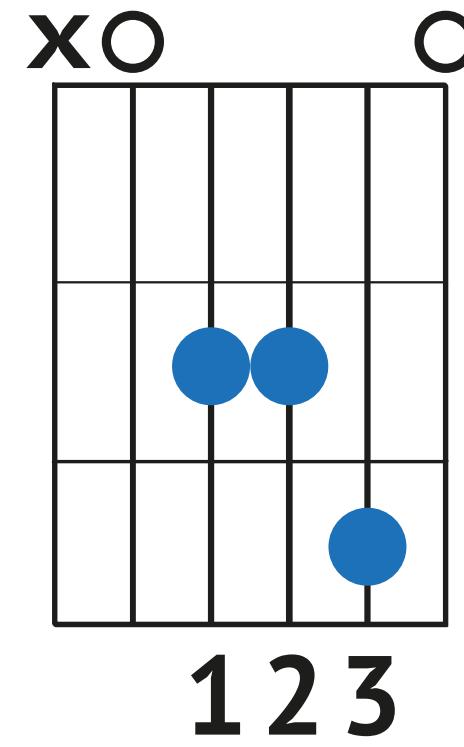
**D7**



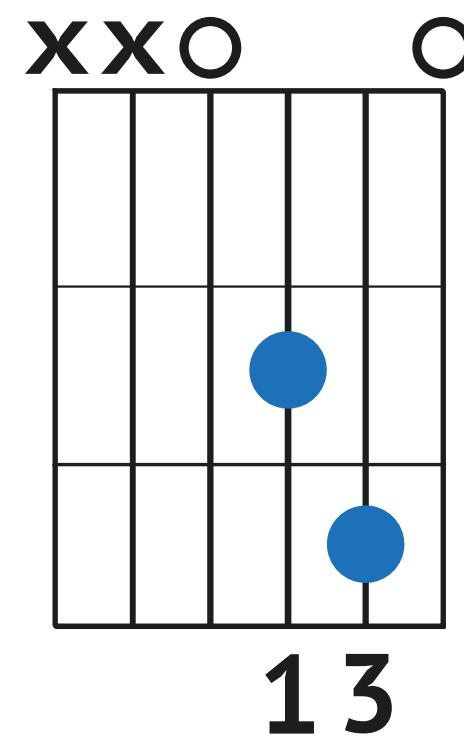
**Asus2**



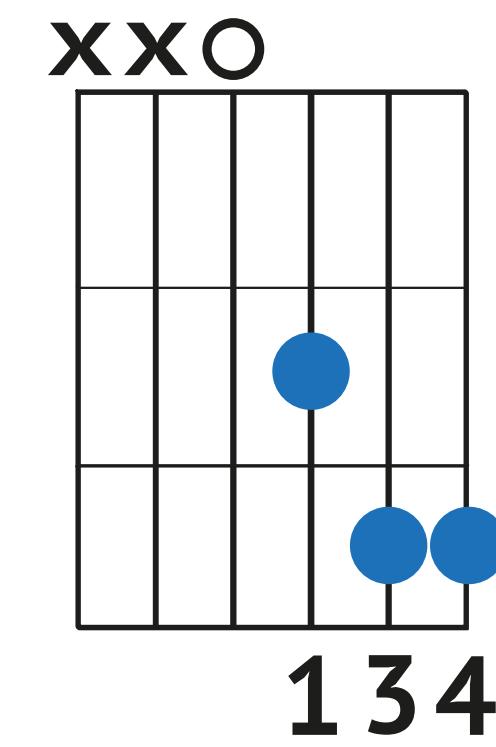
**Asus4**



**Dsus2**



**Dsus4**



# TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

## Chords

- |  |                                |                                   |                                  |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> E                     | <input type="checkbox"/> A     | <input type="checkbox"/> D        | <input type="checkbox"/> G       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> G alternate fingering | <input type="checkbox"/> C     | <input type="checkbox"/> Am       | <input type="checkbox"/> Em      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dm                    | <input type="checkbox"/> B7    | <input type="checkbox"/> little F | <input type="checkbox"/> F barre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C7                    | <input type="checkbox"/> A7    | <input type="checkbox"/> G7       | <input type="checkbox"/> E7      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cma7                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Ama7  | <input type="checkbox"/> Fma7     | <input type="checkbox"/> D7      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asus2                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Asus4 | <input type="checkbox"/> Dsus2    | <input type="checkbox"/> Dsus4   |

## ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS & SKILLS

- troubleshoot chords (p. 5-6)
- read a chord diagram (p. 9-11)
- know how to use a capo (p. 12)
- understand continuous arm motion (p. 16)

## Strumming Patterns

- |                                     |                                     |                                     |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pattern #1 | <input type="checkbox"/> Pattern #3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Pattern #5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pattern #2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Pattern #4 | <input type="checkbox"/> Pattern #6 |

# CHORD-SWITCHING WORKOUTS

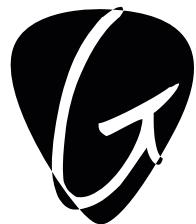
## Basic Chord Switching Play-alongs

- |                                   |                                   |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A to E   | <input type="checkbox"/> A to D   | <input type="checkbox"/> D to E   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> G to D   | <input type="checkbox"/> C to G   | <input type="checkbox"/> C to D   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C to Am  | <input type="checkbox"/> G to Em  | <input type="checkbox"/> F to Dm  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Am to Dm | <input type="checkbox"/> Am to Em | <input type="checkbox"/> Dm to Em |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A to B7  | <input type="checkbox"/> E to B7  | <input type="checkbox"/> C to F   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> F to G   | <input type="checkbox"/> G to A   |                                   |

## Chord Progression Play-alongs

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A - D - E - A    | <input type="checkbox"/> E - A - B7      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> G - Em - C - D   | <input type="checkbox"/> D - G - D - A   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Em - C - Am - B7 | <input type="checkbox"/> D - B7 - Em - A |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C - E - Am - F   | <input type="checkbox"/> Am - Dm - G - C |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C - Am - F - G   | <input type="checkbox"/> F - C - Dm - G  |

# CHOOSING THE RIGHT ACOUSTIC GUITAR



[\*\*CLICK HERE FOR A VIDEO TUTORIAL,  
GUIDING YOU THROUGH THIS ENTIRE PROCESS!\*\*](#)

This worksheet will prepare you to step into a guitar store and come out with the exact guitar that you were meant to have. And rather than discuss *what* I want to show you *how*.

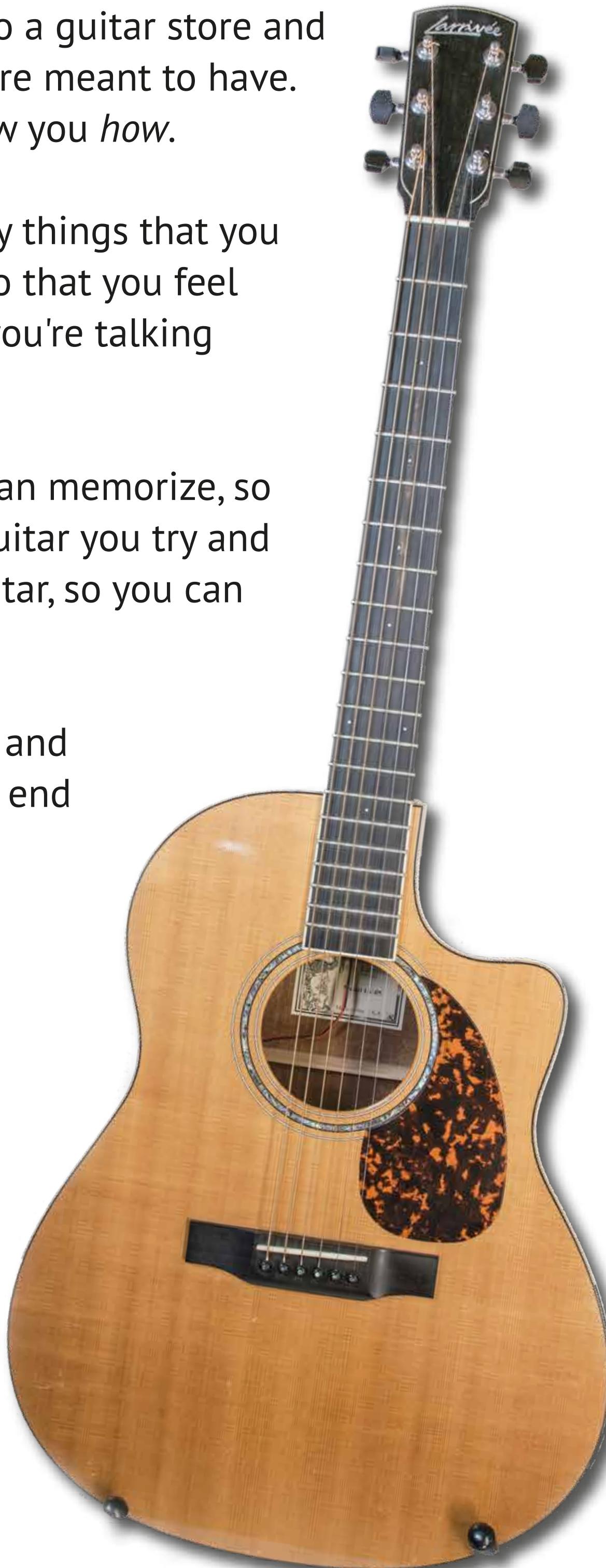
This worksheet will prepare you with 5 easy things that you can do when you go into the guitar store, so that you feel comfortable, and look like you know what you're talking about.

We will discuss a simple chord shape you can memorize, so you'll be able to meaningfully "feel" each guitar you try and learn how to test the "intonation" of the guitar, so you can see for yourself how well it stays in tune.

On top of that, we'll discuss the sound, feel and affordability of the guitar, to make sure you end up with the exact one that's right for you!

## MAKE SURE IT'S...

- ✓ Easy to play
- ✓ Stays in tune
- ✓ Sounds good
- ✓ Feels good
- ✓ Affordable



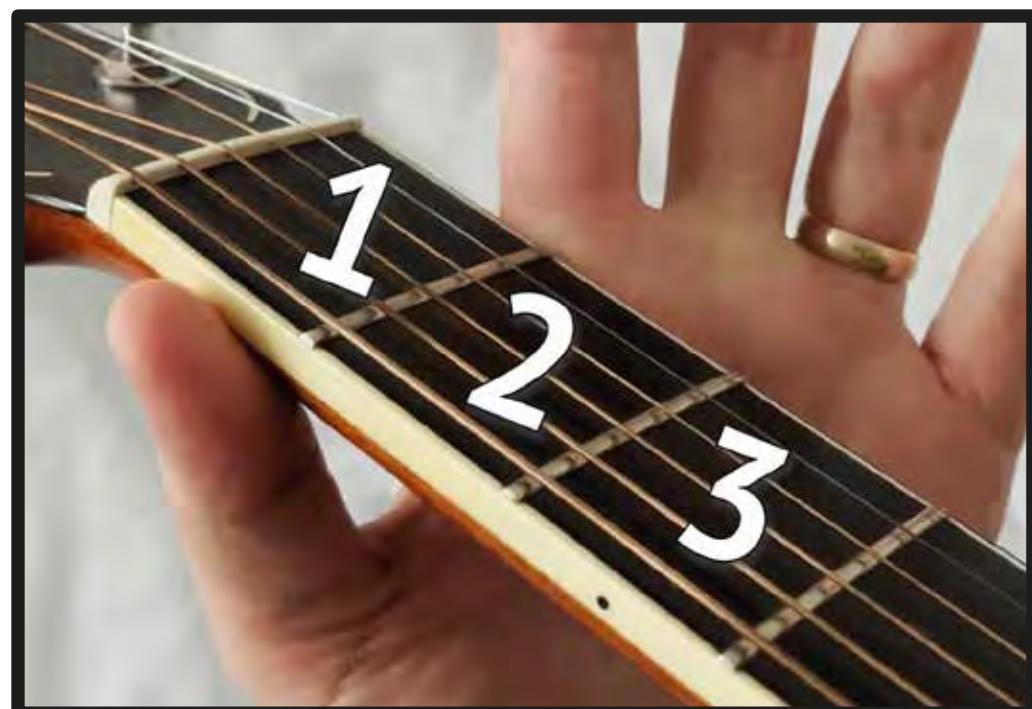
# 1 - ARE THE STRINGS EASY TO PRESS? DO THEY BUZZ?

If you've never played guitar before, it'll be hard to tell the difference between a guitar that is easy to play, and one that is not.

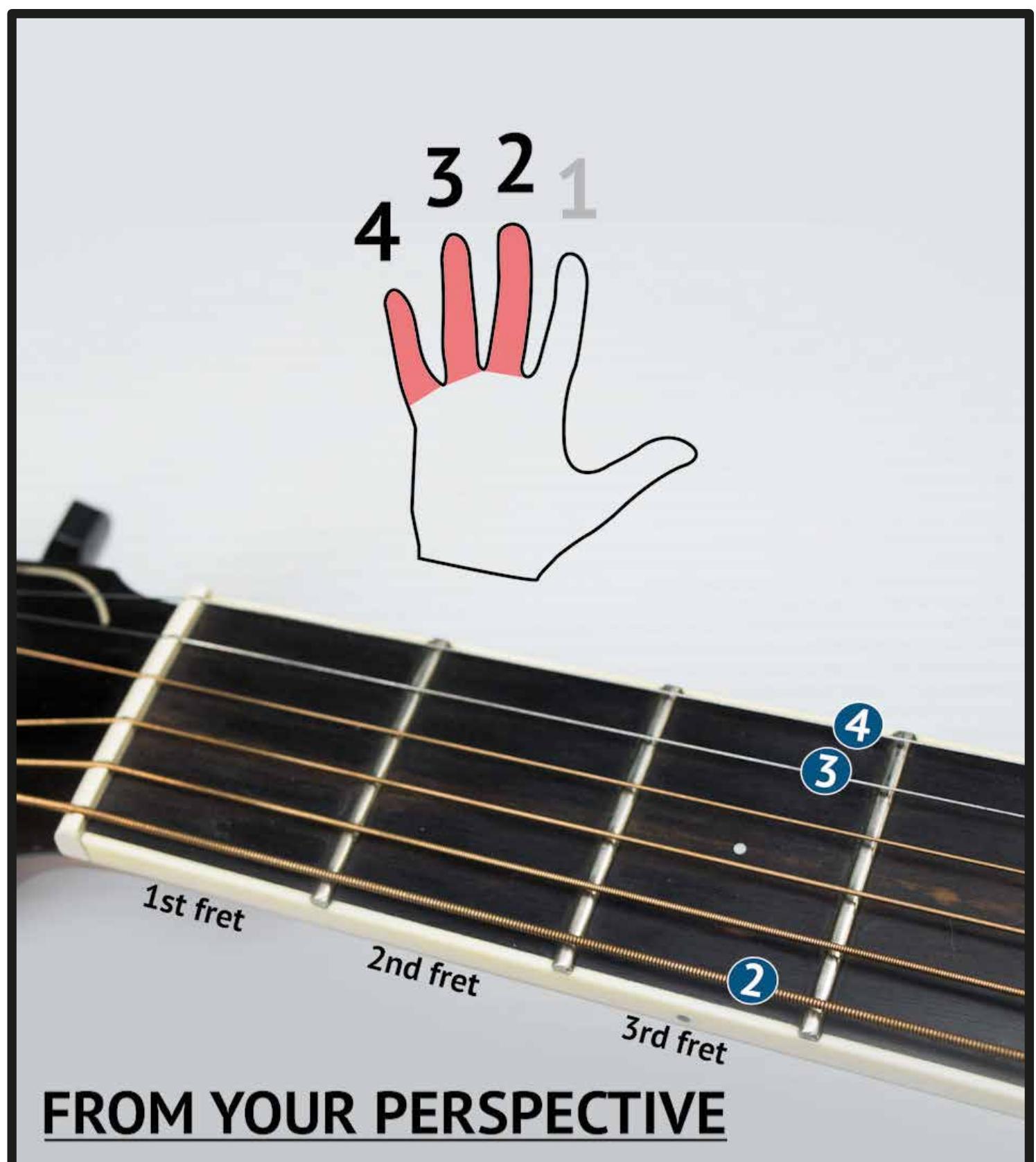
You *could* rely on the person at the store, or bring a guitar-playing friend... but you could also learn this easy shape, and not only be able to test it yourself, but get a jump-start on learning guitar while you're at it!

If you memorize this one thing, when you step into the guitar store you'll be able to put your fingers on the guitar in a way that matters!

## A) IDENTIFY THE 3rd FRET



## B) PLACE YOUR FINGERS IN THE CORRECT SPOTS



## C) IT SHOULD LOOK LIKE THIS



This shape will help you test the action of the guitar. Action is the term used to describe how far away the strings are from the fretboard. High action means the strings are far away from the fretboard, and will require more force to push them down. Low action means they are closer to the fretboard and easier to play (but may buzz if you pluck the string too hard!)

And if you can't get it exactly right, it's not a big deal. The important thing is to press the strings AS IF you were playing a chord shape. Don't focus too hard on the exact shape as much as the idea of pressing the fretboard with a few fingers at the same time.

Try this shape on a few guitars. Do it on some REALLY expensive ones, because they're probably going to feel great... and then you can see which of the cheaper ones gives you that same feeling!

This is a good test because if you can press it right away that means it's an easy guitar to play. You're not supposed to push it that hard.

## MAKE OR BREAK

- ✗ Strings too close to the fretboard will “buzz” when plucked softly.
- ✗ Strings too far from the fretboard will be hard to press down. A bit of fingertip pain is normal at first, but if the action is too high, it’ll never feel good and could lead to long-term fingertip, hand and wrist issues.
- ✗ Tuning issues are another “deal-breaker.” Make sure the guitar passes the “12th fret” test outlined in the tutorial.

## 2 - DOES THE GUITAR TUNE WELL? ANY TUNING ISSUES?

To test the intonation, you need a digital tuner, or to at least have a “guitar tuning” app on your phone. The clip-on digital tuners are by far the best, and I would buy one before you even buy a guitar!

Tuners are as essential as the guitar itself for new players and professionals alike. If you are not sure, you could always borrow one at the store.

### A) ASK THE PERSON AT THE STORE

*“Hey, can you tune this guitar please?”*

### B) ATTACH TUNER TO GUITAR



Simply clip it onto the headstock of the guitar, and make sure it's not touching any of the strings, but is securely gripping the wood.

If using a phone, place the microphone of your phone, facing the soundhole of the guitar (big hole in the middle of the body).

### C) IDENTIFY 12th FRET



The 12th fret usually has a special “inlay” - usually 2 dots instead of 1.

# D) TEST THE ‘OPEN’ STRING



“Open” means to pluck the string without pressing any frets. The entire string will vibrate and create a note. The thickest string is E, the next one is A, and so on...

E A D G B e  
THICK THIN

In the above image, I am plucking the “A” string (2nd thickest) and the tuner is showing the dial EXACTLY in the middle, and some “special” stuff pops up to clearly indicate that the string is perfectly in tune. Each tuner is a bit different, but it should look something like that.

## E) COMPARE THE OPEN STRING TO 12th FRET

If the open string is perfectly in tune, you will then lightly touch the 12th fret of that same string. If you push too hard it will disturb the pitch of the string, so be gentle, but use enough force to actually hold the note down.



In the above image, I am holding the 12th fret of the A string, and then plucking that same string. The tuner is showing the dial EXACTLY in the middle, just like with the open string. That means this guitar has excellent intonation.

## F) TRY THAT ON EACH STRING

If the dial is off center by more than 1 or 2 ticks, the intonation is poor. It CAN be adjusted but acoustic guitars require a bit of work to adjust, so you'd probably be better off finding one that's really close right away.

---

Those are the two most important tests: “is the guitar easy to play?” and “does it tune well and stay in tune when you go further up the neck?”

The remaining tests are not as “scientific” as those first two, but they are just as integral to the decision-making process.

## 3 - HOW DOES THE GUITAR SOUND?

Some guitars sound full, some sound thin, some sound too bassy... The best way to try it out is to get the person at the store to play it for you.

### ASK THE PERSON AT THE STORE

*"Hey, can you strum some chords on this guitar?"*

Stand about 2 meters (6 ft) in front of the performance. This is how your audience would hear it.

You'll also want to know what it sounds like from your perspective because you're going to be hearing it from that angle the most! Either hover over the performer (might be a bit awkward) or try plucking a few strings yourself!

## 4 - HOW DOES THE GUITAR FEEL?

When it comes to feeling the guitar, you should try sitting with a few guitars in your hands. Different things that are comfortable to different people so I can't say what's best.

Your best bet is to sit up straight, plant your feet firmly. Hold the guitar so it's positioned correctly, with the headstock angled upwards. Use the following images as a reference.



To stand with the guitar, you'll need a strap... another must-have item in my opinion. Regardless of sitting or standing, you'll hold it the same.



There are 3 things to note in the above image.

- 1) The guitar is sitting on my right leg (since I'm right-handed).
- 2) The headstock (where we attached the tuner) is angled upward a little bit.
- 3) My strumming arm (dominant arm) is resting on top of the body of the guitar.

## 5 - IS IT AFFORDABLE?

Affordability means different things to different people. Sometimes it's worth it to spend a bit more and get a better instrument.

With acoustic guitars, you aren't going to get a solid wood top until you spend a few hundred bucks. That's really the first major breakthrough in quality. The cheapest acoustics will have laminate tops, and once you hit a certain pricepoint, they'll start having solid tops which will produce a nicer tone and retain more resale value.

Aside from that, you are going to get what you pay for. Even cheap instruments are made to really high standards these days, and if they pass the first 2 tests, if the action is good and the intonation is good, it's a good guitar!

# THE EASIEST “4-CHORD COMBO” ON GUITAR



[\*\*CLICK HERE FOR A VIDEO TUTORIAL,  
GUIDING YOU THROUGH THIS ENTIRE PROCESS!\*\*](#)

Let's take most popular chord progression ever - that is used in 1000s of songs - and instead of doing it using the regular chords, simplify it even further.

This could be the very first thing that you do on guitar, and is one of the things that I do with one-on-one students, to get them playing a song that they actually know and enjoy, on their very first day of guitar.

## G    D    Em    C

### THE “CORE” SHAPE

We'll start by placing the 3rd and 4th finger - this is the core of the shape.

- 3rd finger (ring) goes on 3rd fret of the B string (2nd thinnest string)
- 4th finger (pinky) goes on 3rd fret of high E string (thinnest string)

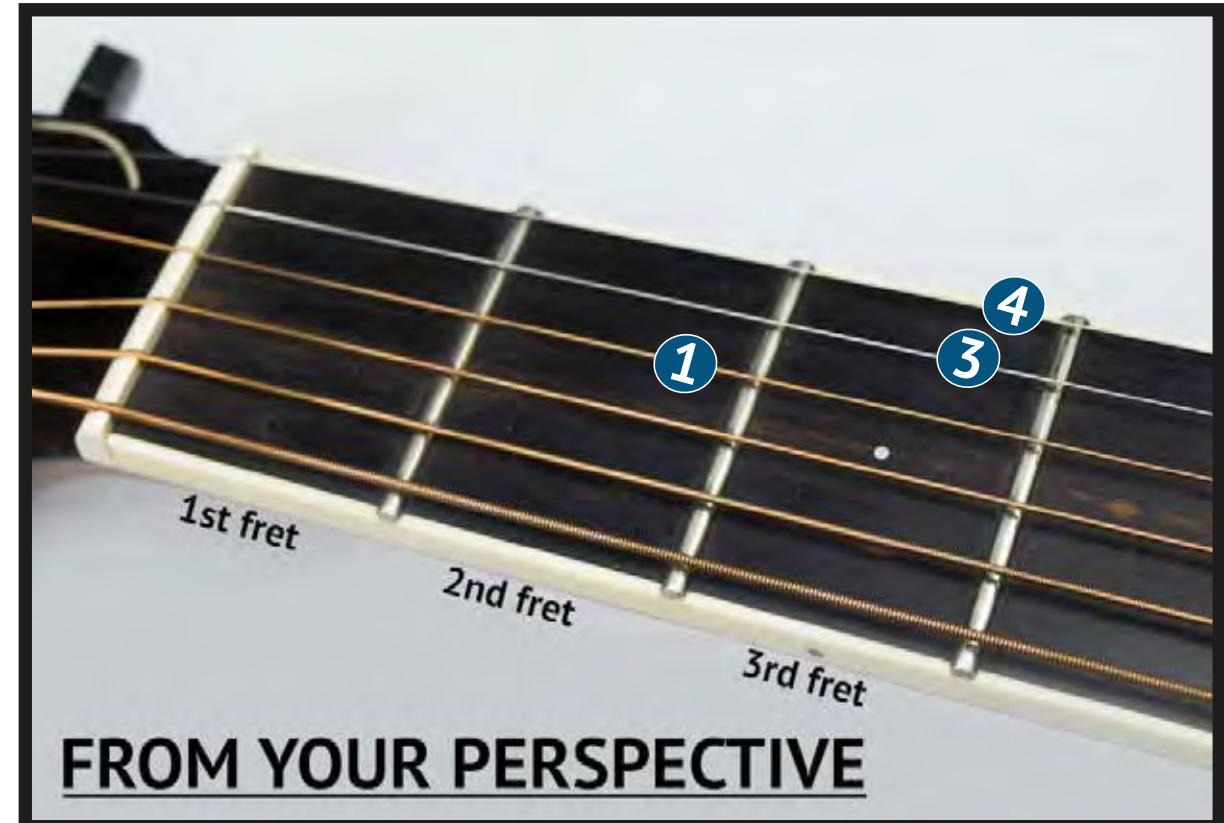


Get your fingers as close to the fret as possible, and test each note. The thinnest string isn't too important, but we definitely want the B string ringing clearly.

## THE “D” SHAPE

To make D, we simply need to add one finger to our “core” shape.

- 1st finger (index) goes on 2nd fret of the G string (3rd thinnest string)

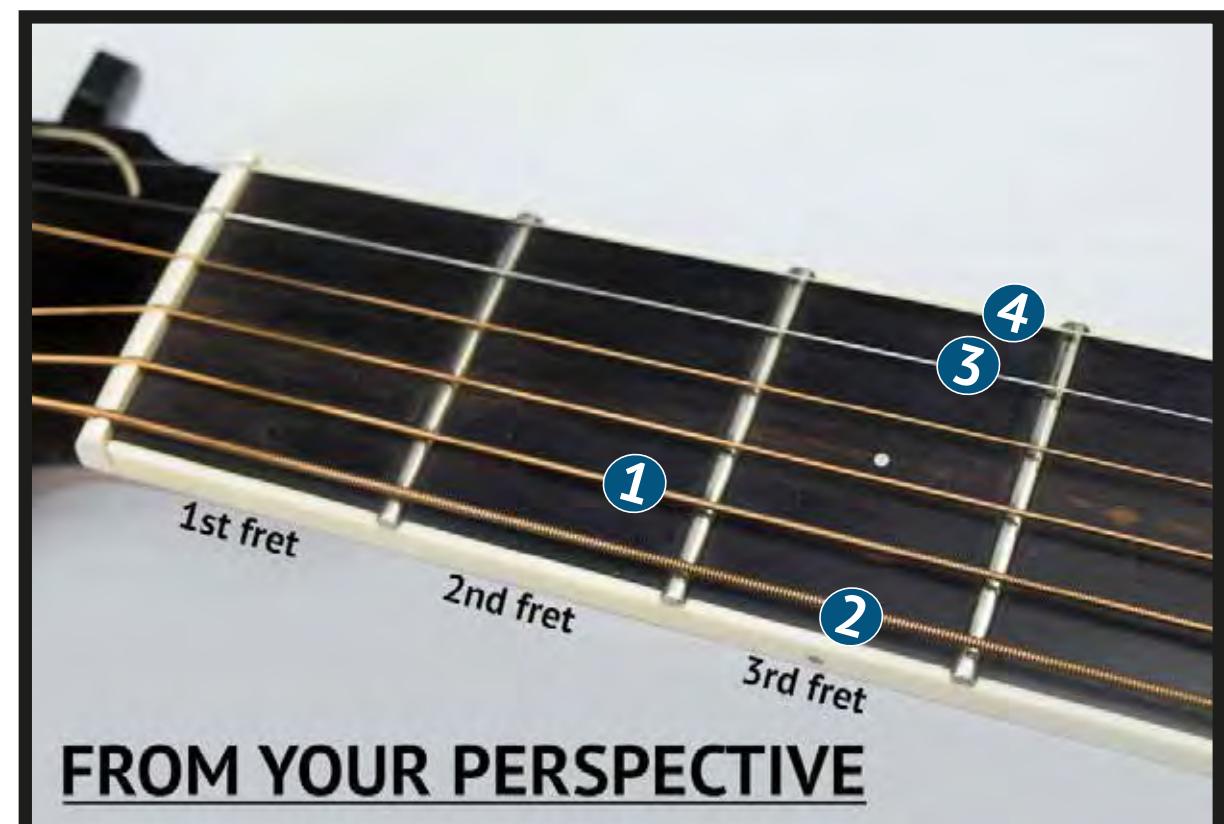


Now that we have a full shape, let's try some simple strumming. Don't get too picky about it - all you really have to do is avoid the thickest string. Keep going down, down, down over and over again, as if you are trying to shake a drop of water off the tip of your pick.

## THE “G” SHAPE

From our “core” shape:

- 2nd finger (middle) goes on 3rd fret of the E string (thickest string)



# SWITCHING FROM D TO G

## 3 STEPS FOR SWITCHING SUCCESS

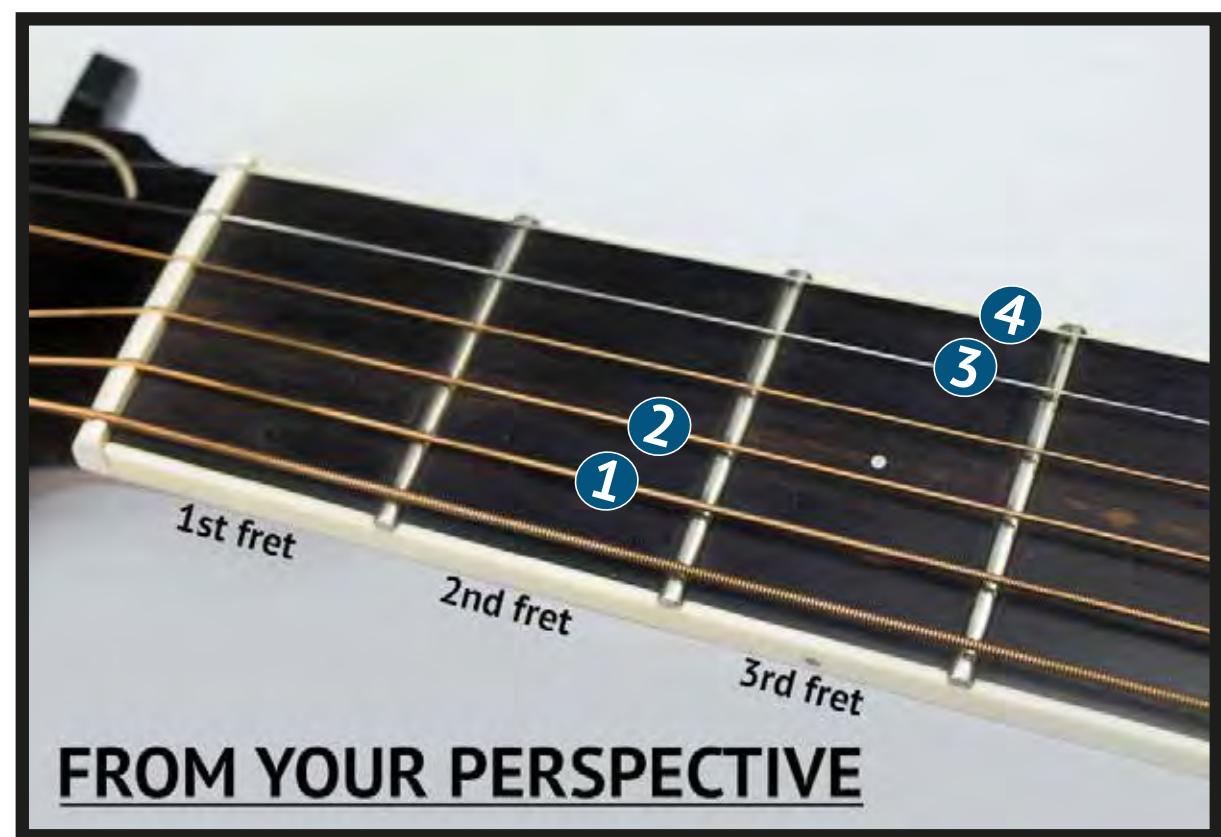
- ✓ 1) Silently switch back and forth, focusing on the fingering and placement
- ✓ 2) Next, test each string of the shape when you switch
- ✓ 3) Try playing 4 downstrokes per chord shape

With those 2 chords, we can already start to play some real songs. Two very simple ones come to mind: “What I Got” by Sublime, and “Lively Up Yourself” by Bob Marley.

## THE “EM” SHAPE

From our “core” shape:

- 1st finger (index) goes on 2nd fret of the A string (2nd thickest string)
- 2nd finger (middle) goes on 2nd fret of the D string (3rd thickest string)



With this shape, it's especially important that you curl your fingers. Be sure to consult page 5 of this eBook “Get To Grips With Your Chord Shapes” to make this shape as clean as possible.

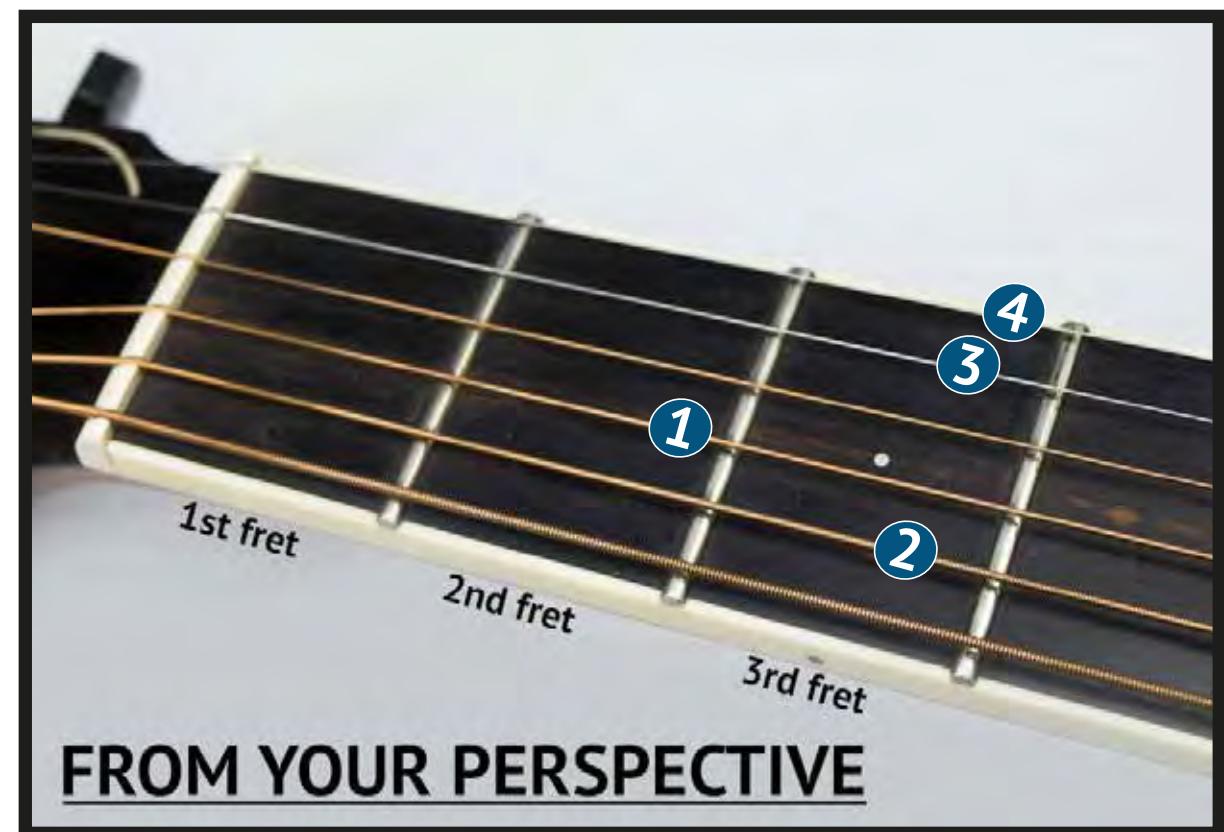
# SWITCHING FROM D TO E<sub>M</sub>

Employ the ‘3 Steps For Switching Success’

## THE “C” SHAPE

From our “core” shape:

- 2nd finger (middle) goes on 3rd fret of the A string (2nd thickest string)
- 1st finger (index) goes on 2nd fret of the D string (3rd thickest string)



## MUTING EXCESS STRINGS

For the C and D chords, it helps a lot if we can mute the thickest string. You COULD avoid hitting them when you strum, but then your strumming gets interrupted and you could possibly lose the feeling of the song.



The C chord can be muted by placing our middle finger a little higher, so that it lightly touches the underside of the thickest string.

For the D chord, we can loop our thumb over the top of the fretboard and use it to lightly touch the thickest string.

## TWO MORE SWITCHES

That's it for the shapes! All we need to do now, is practice switching from Em to C, and then from C to G.

## PUTTING THE PROGRESSION TOGETHER

If we look at our progression in order, we can use it to determine all the chords that are “beside each other” and that’ll inform us as to which switches need to be practiced.

Once you’re comfortable with the individual switches, we can play the entire progression in order, starting on G.

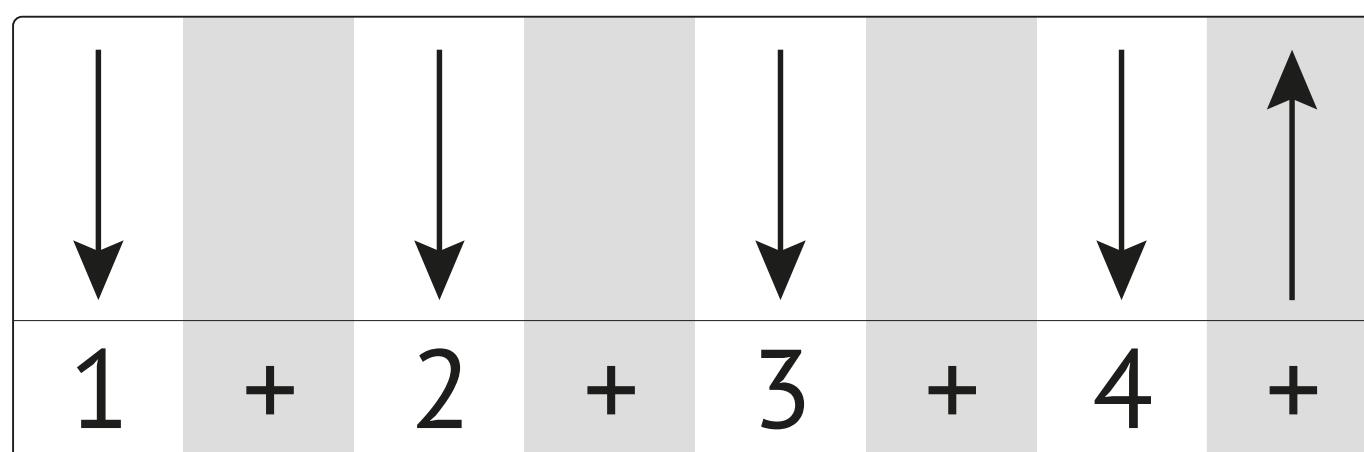


We can follow the “3 Steps For Switching Success”

- 1) Silently switch through the entire chord progression, focusing on the finger movements, getting everything in the right spot, adjusting your posture, hand, wrist, elbow and whatever else it takes to be comfortable.
- 2) As you switch to each chord, take a moment to test the strings by plucking each of them and hearing if it rings clearly. This takes a while as you learn to adjust your technique and build finger strength.
- 3) Try playing 4 downstrokes per chord shape. If the switching is difficult, go back to switching back and forth between the individual chords as we do on previous pages.

## ADD STRUMMING

Please refer to the strumming section of this eBook for your pattern of choice. In the tutorial video I use this simple pattern.



Don't forget to count aloud and even try saying the pattern rhythmically! Rhythm is one of the biggest roadblocks for new guitarists.

## TRY SOME TUNES!

There are many songs that use this progression. The important thing to note is how many times we play each chord. Usually we count “1 2 3 4” per shape, which we would call “1 measure.”

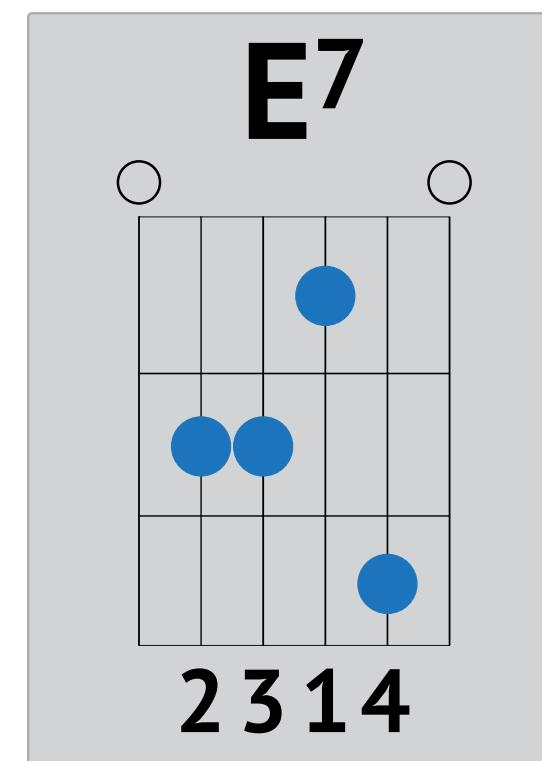
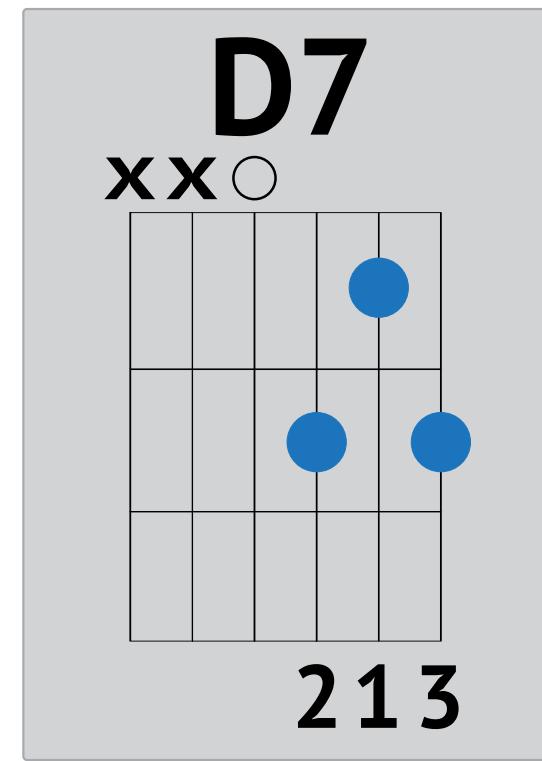
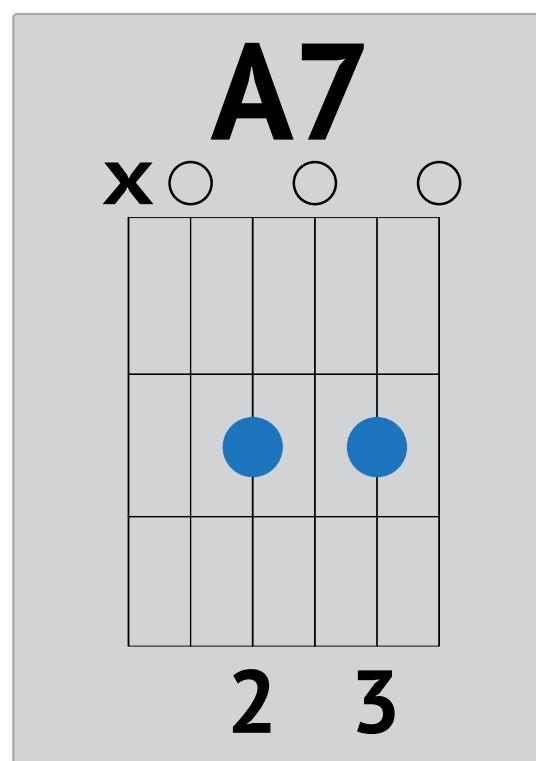
But for some of these tunes, we'd play “2 measures” before switching to the next shape, which means we count “1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4” per shape.

Here are a few you can try:

- Country Roads - John Denver (2 measures per shape)
- Let It Be - The Beatles (1 measure per shape)
- I'm Yours - Jason Mraz (2 measures per shape)
- Don't Stop Believing - Journey (1 measure per shape)
- Under The Bridge - Red Hot Chili Peppers (1 measure per shape)
- When I Come Around - Green Day (1 measure per shape)
- Save Tonight - Eagle Eye Cherry (1 measure per shape)
- Zombie - The Cranberries (2 measures per shape)
- Wagon Wheel - Darius Zucker (1 measure per shape)

# THE BLUES

## BLUES IN THE KEY OF A



The chart displays a blues progression in the key of A. It consists of three staves, each with four measures. The chords are indicated by large black letters above the staff, and blue diagonal slashes below the staff represent eighth-note patterns. The progression is: A7 - A7 - A7 - A7 (top staff); D7 - D7 - A7 - A7 (middle staff); E7 - D7 - A7 - A7 (bottom staff).

# MUSIC THEORY PRIMER

Music theory isn't difficult, per se, but it does take time to learn. It's like a bunch of really simple concepts, but you add them all up and they make something very interesting and complex.

I am not going to teach you everything you need to know in these next few pages, but I am going to show you the absolute most useful thing we can use music theory for... Finding all the chords within a key & the scale that goes with it all.

If you're interested in going further with this and want to learn WHY all this works, you're welcome to check out my course Music Theory 101.

- 1) **Pick a key.** There's nothing complicated here. Just pick a key. G, C, D are the easier ones. A, E and F aren't so bad. The rest have lots of sharps and flats.
- 2) **Write out the letters.** Starting on your key, and end on your key. Use each letter once. When the musical alphabet gets to G, you loop back around to the start (A).
- 3) **Assign sharps and flats.** This is best accomplished with the charts I'm providing here. You can figure this out on your own, but there are a couple steps involved, like I teach in my course.
- 4) **Number them.** The key is 1, and the rest is straight-forward.
- 5) **Find the chords using this shortcut:** 1, 4, 5 are major. 2, 3, 6 are minor. 7 is diminished.

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# OVERWHELMED? LET ME WALK YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS...

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## 1) Pick a key

I'm going to pick D.

## 2) Write out the letters

D E F G A B C D

## 3) Assign sharps and flats

D E F# G A B C# D

## 4) Number them

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

## 5) Assign chords

D	E <sub>m</sub>	F# <sub>m</sub>	G	A	B <sub>m</sub>	C# <sub>o</sub>	D
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1

## Conclusion...

In the key of D, we have access to:

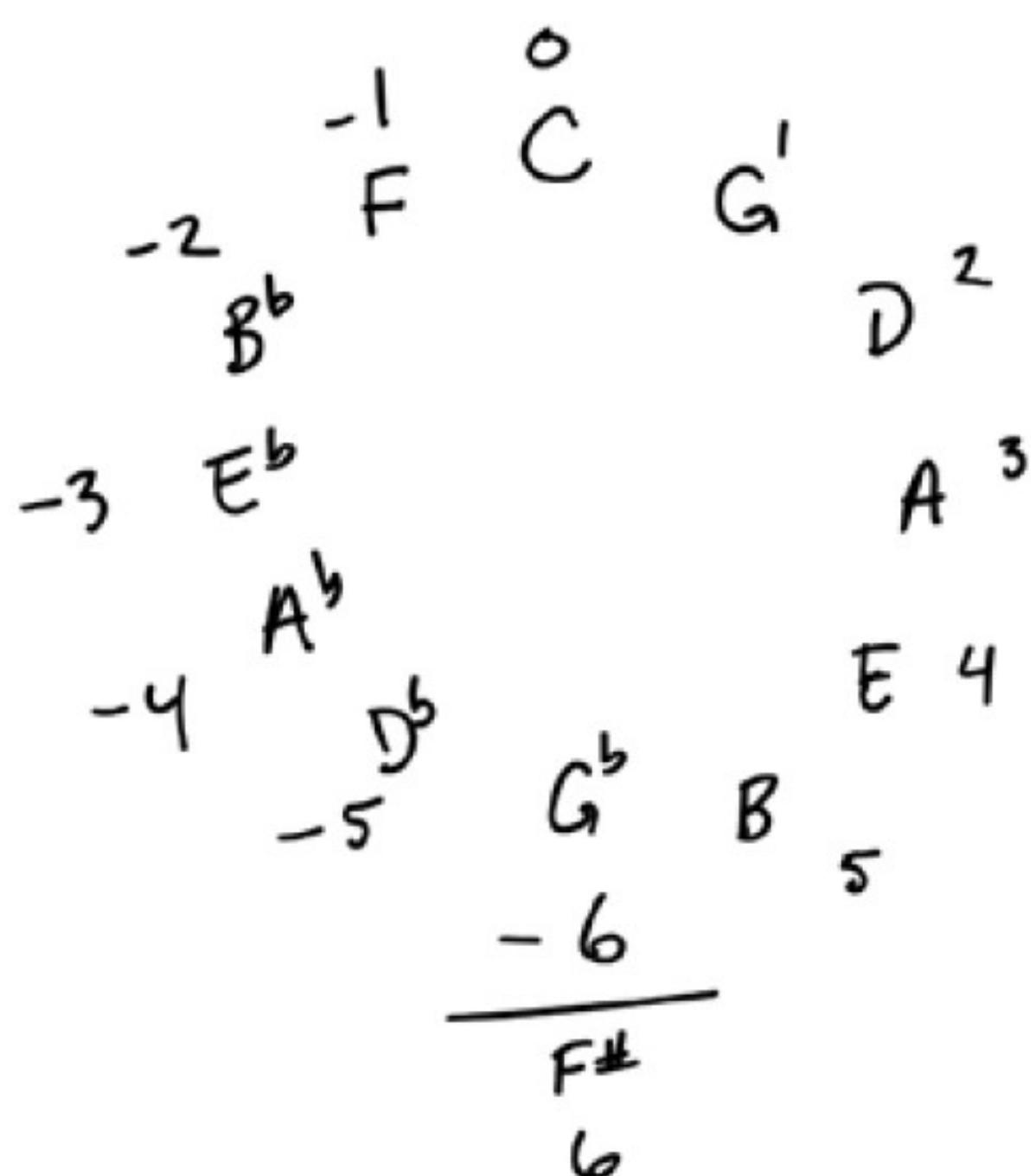
Scale: D major scale

Major chords: D G A

Minor chords: E<sub>m</sub>, F#<sub>m</sub>, B<sub>m</sub>

Other: C#diminished (don't worry about diminished chords!)

# THE CIRCLE OF 5THS



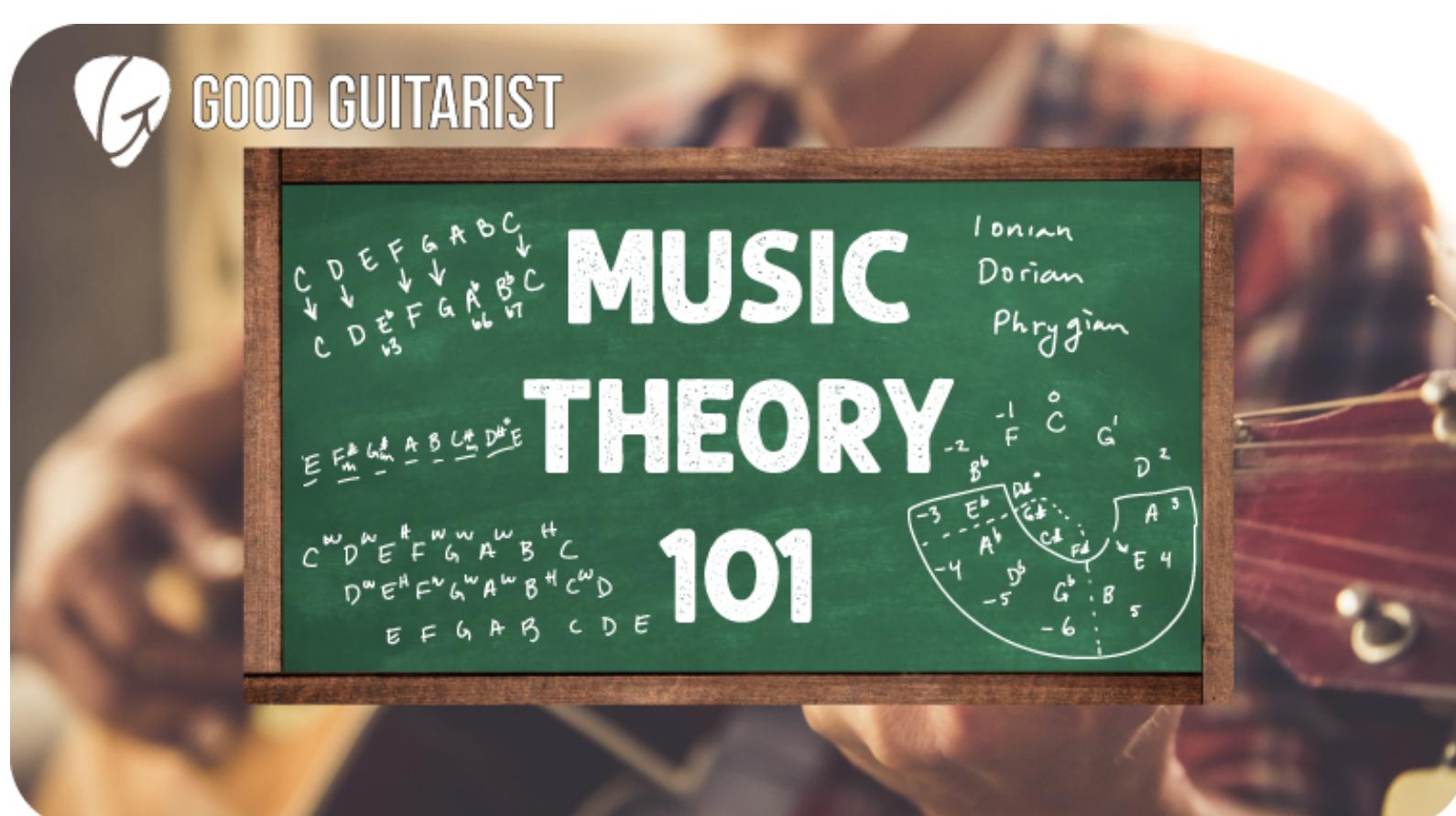
The 0 = no sharps or flats. The key of C has no sharps or flats.

+1 indicates 1 sharp. +2 indicates 2 sharps, and so on. So the key of A has 3 sharps.

-1 indicates 1 flat. -2 indicates 2 flats, and so on. So the key of F has 1 flat.

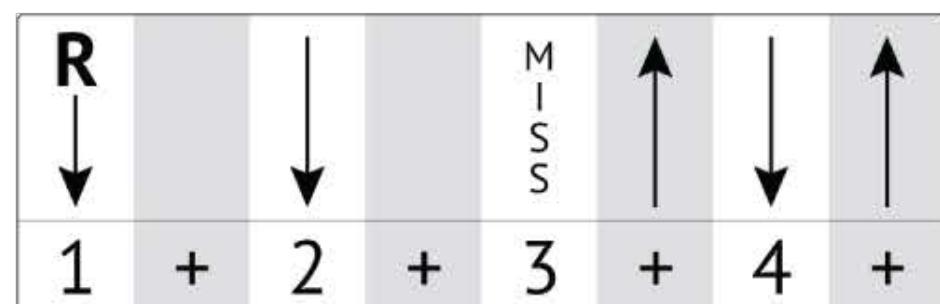
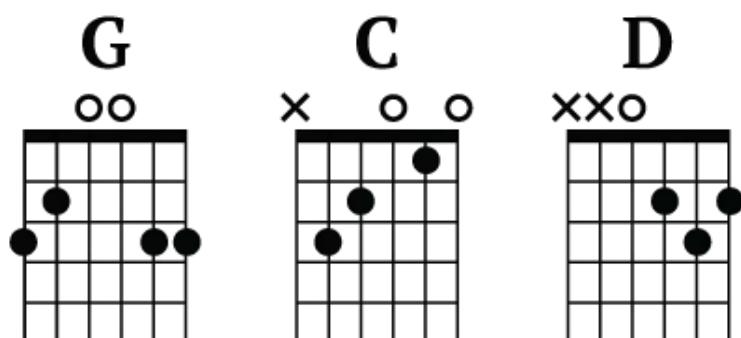
Use the following charts to help you determine which notes are flat and sharp.

If you need this process broken down further, check out my Music Theory 101 course (included in my All-Access Pass). I know this stuff seems overly technical when I write it out here, and that's why I made a course that teaches you all this in a hands-on way that just makes sense.



KEY	KEY SIGNATURE	ACCIDENTALS (SHARPS OR FLATS)
C (A minor)		NO SHARPS OR FLATS
G (E minor)		F#
D (B minor)		F# C#
A (F# minor)		F# C# G#
E (C# minor)		F# C# G# D#
B (G# minor)		F# C# G# D# A#
F# (D# minor)		F# C# G# D# A# E#
F (D minor)		Bb
Bb (G minor)		Bb Eb
Eb (C minor)		Bb Eb Ab
Ab (F minor)		Bb Eb Ab Db
Db (Bb minor)		Bb Eb Ab Db Gb
Gb (Eb minor)		Bb Eb Ab Db Gb Cb

# WILL THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN



♩ = 156

**G**

1 -      2 . .      3 -      4 . .      5 -

I was stan- ding by my win- dow On one

TAB: 0-2 | 0-0 | 0-2 | 0-0 | 2-2

**C**                                    **G**

6      7      8      9

cold and clou- dy day When I

TAB: 2-0 | 0-0 | 2-0 | 0-2

**G**

10      11      12      13

saw that hearse come- a rol- lin' For to

TAB: 0-0 | 0-0 | 0-3 | 3-0 | 0-0

**G**                                    **D**                                    **G**

14      15      16      17

ca- rry my mo- ther a- way Will the

TAB: 0-0 | 0-0 | 2-0 | 2-0 | 0-0 | 0-2

## WILL THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN - PAGE 2

**G**

18                    19                    20                    21

cir- cle              be un- bro- ken              By and

T A B	0    0	0    2	0    0	2    2
-------------	--------	--------	--------	--------

**C**                    **G**

22                    23                    24                    25

by, Lord, by and by              There's a

T A B	2    0	0	2	0	0    2
-------------	--------	---	---	---	--------

**G**

26                    27                    28                    29

bet- ter              home a- wai- ti- in'              In the

T A B	0    0	0    3	3	2    0	0    0
-------------	--------	--------	---	--------	--------

**G**                    **D**                    **G**

30                    31                    32                    33

sky, Lord, in the sky

T A B	0    0	2    2	0	
-------------	--------	--------	---	--