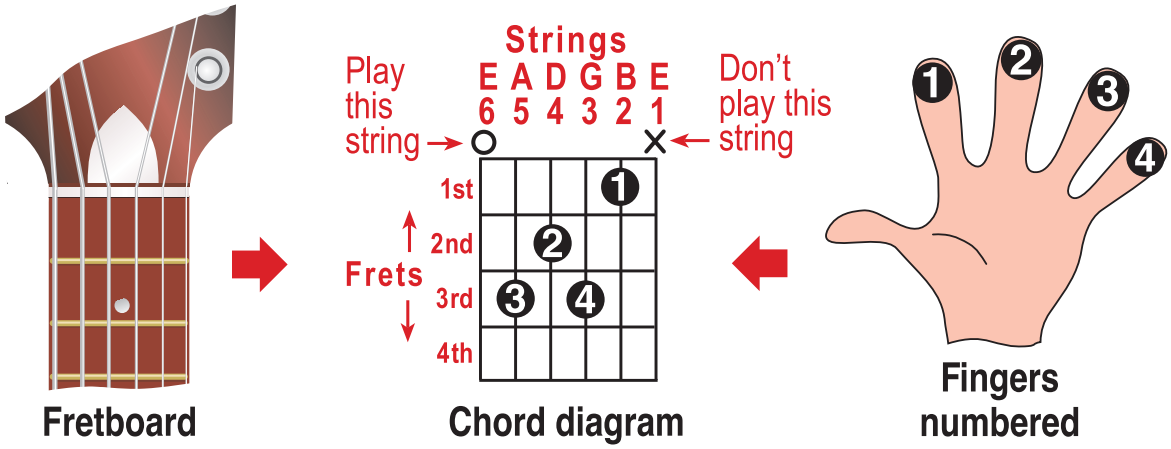
First, a quick 1-2-3 review!

1. How to read chord diagrams



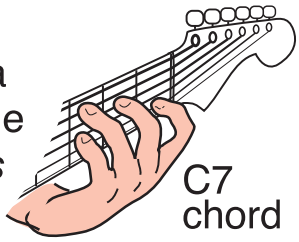
2. Positions vs chords

A chord *position*

A chord position is simply the *shape* your hand makes to play a chord. It can be moved *anywhere* on the fretboard.

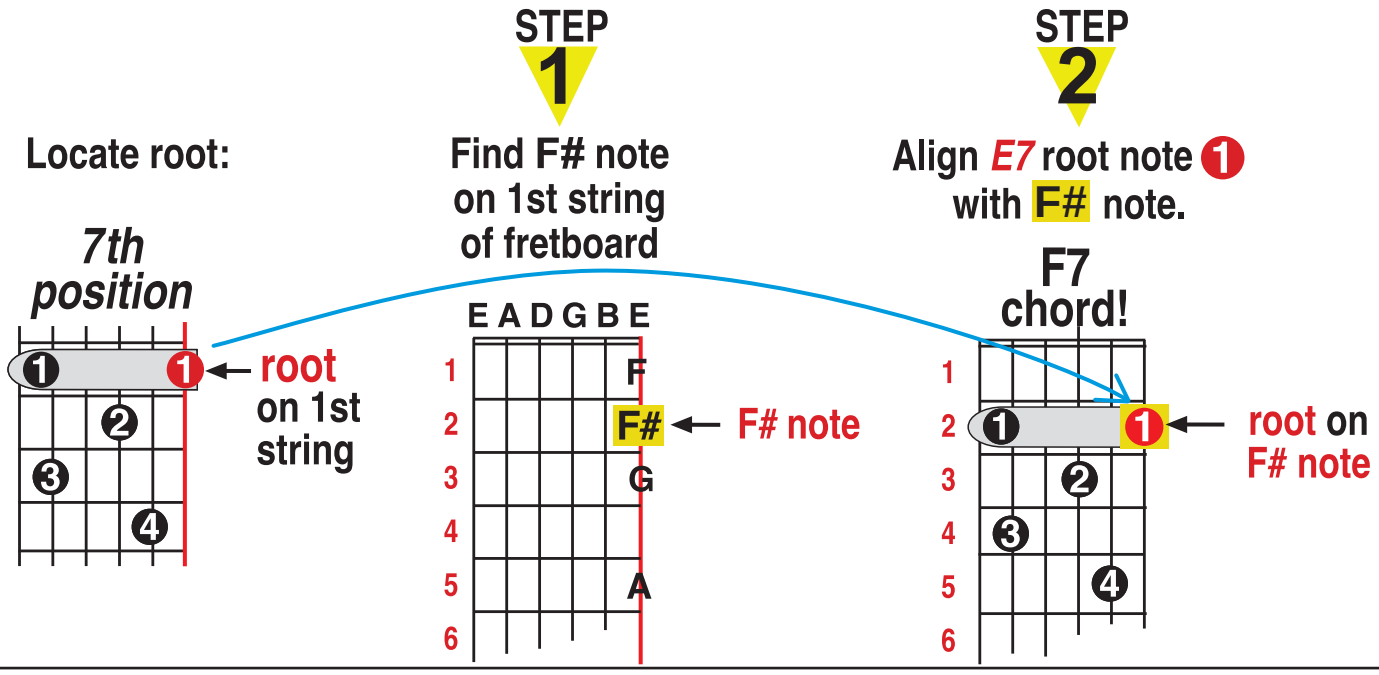
A chord

When you do play a chord position on the fretboard, the *notes* played determine what *chord* is being played.



3. Using the root to make a chord

E.g. Let's use the root in a *7th position* to make an F#7 chord:



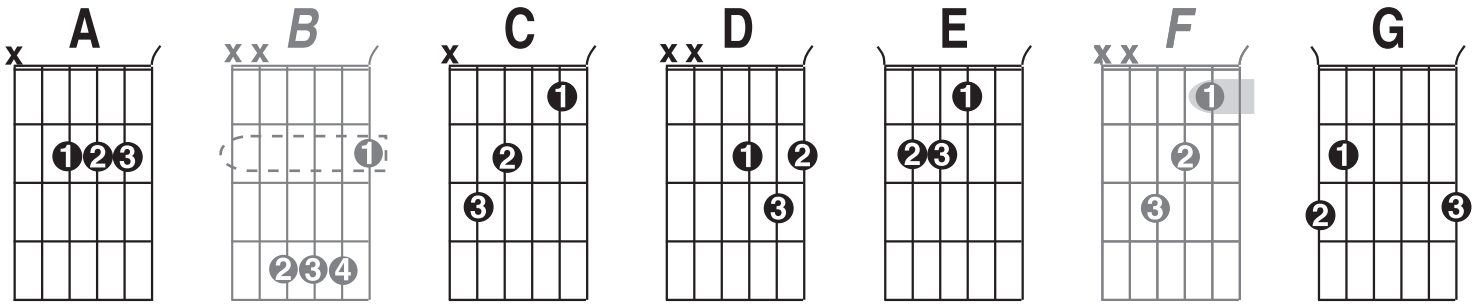
Refer to the main website for more complete information on root notes.

Open chords

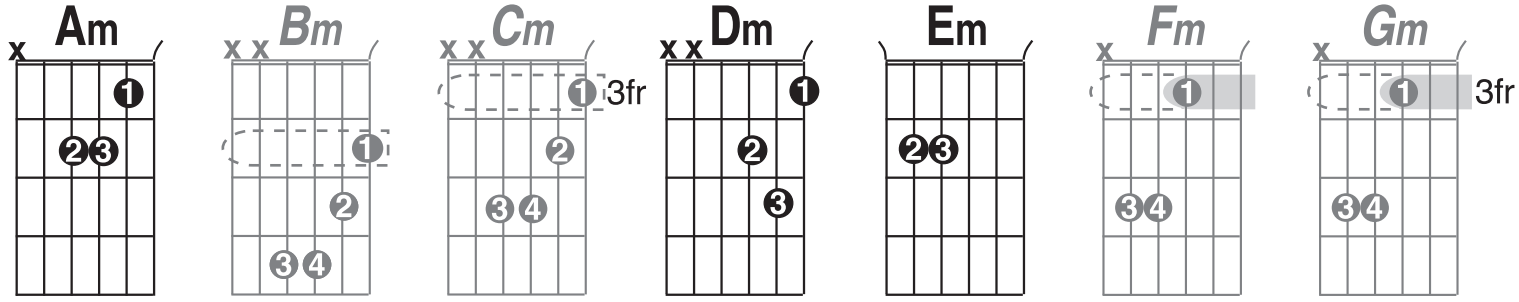
Open chords, unlike closed chords, must be played in only one location on the fretboard, since one or more open strings are part of the chord.

Note: Where no open chord exists for a particular note, a *closed chord* will be inserted (in grey) to maintain an alphabetical order.

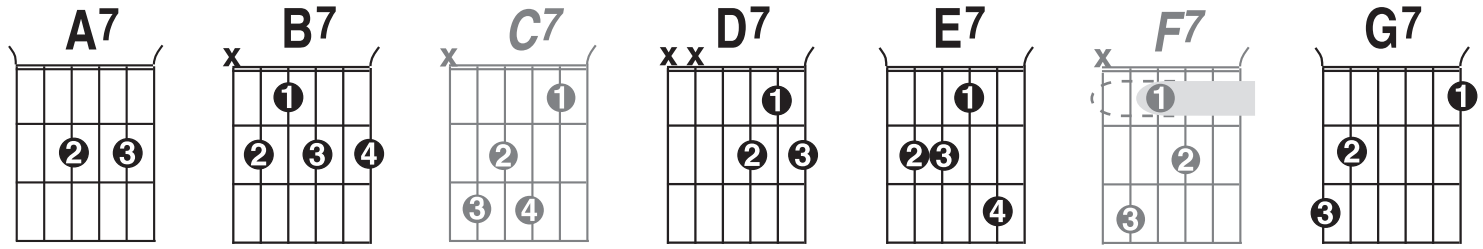
Major Open Chords:



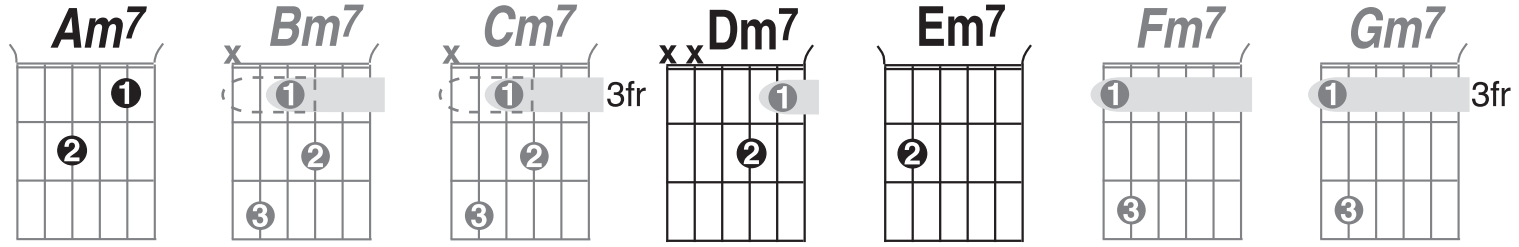
Minor Open Chords:



Seventh Open Chords:



Minor seventh Open Chords:

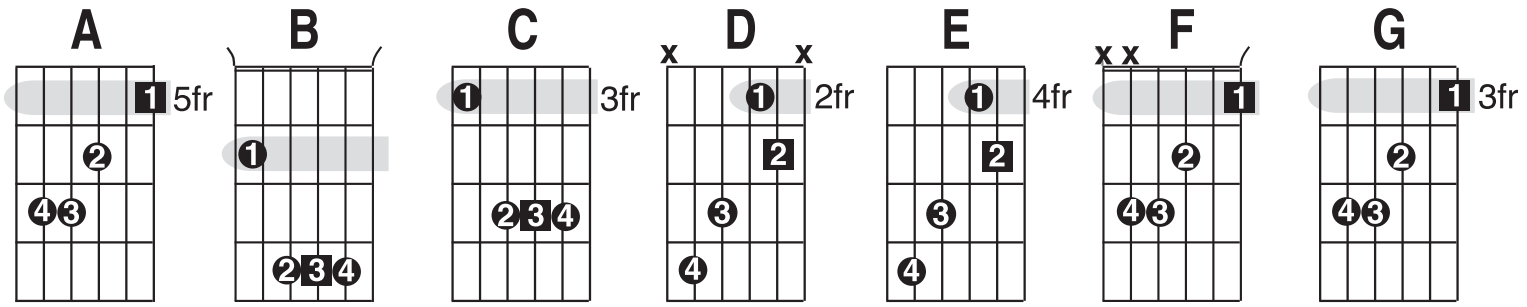


Key: x = Don't play (applies to open chords only) | 1 = Barre (1st finger) | = Optional barre | 3fr... = Fret #

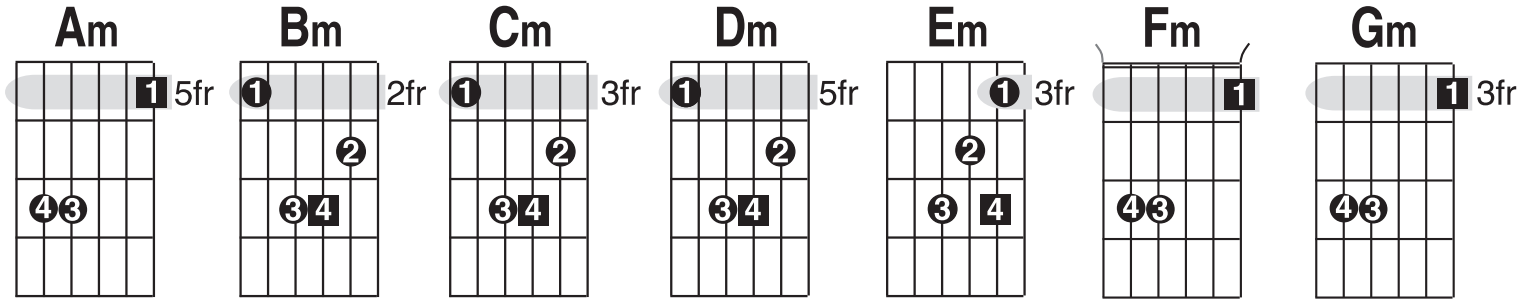
Closed chords

Closed chords, unlike open chords, can be played anywhere along the fretboard, since they do not contain any open strings.

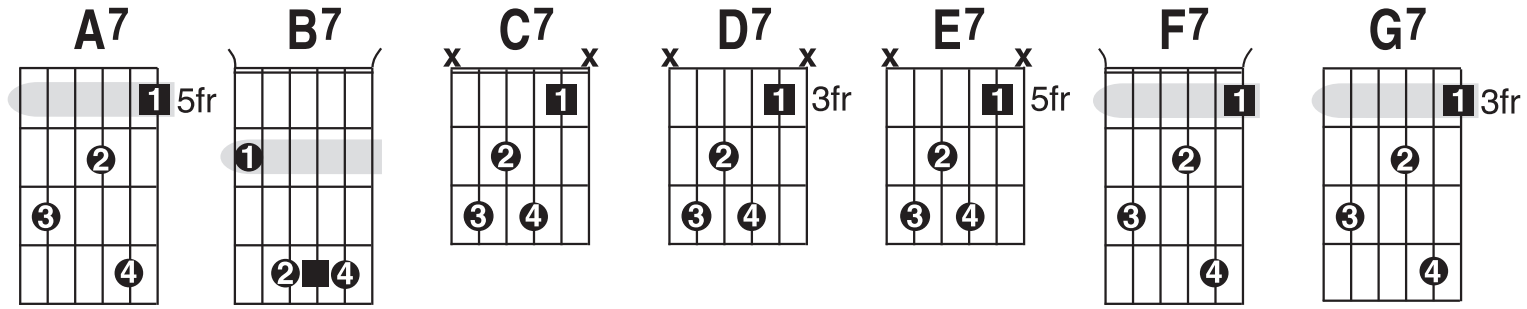
Major Closed Chords:



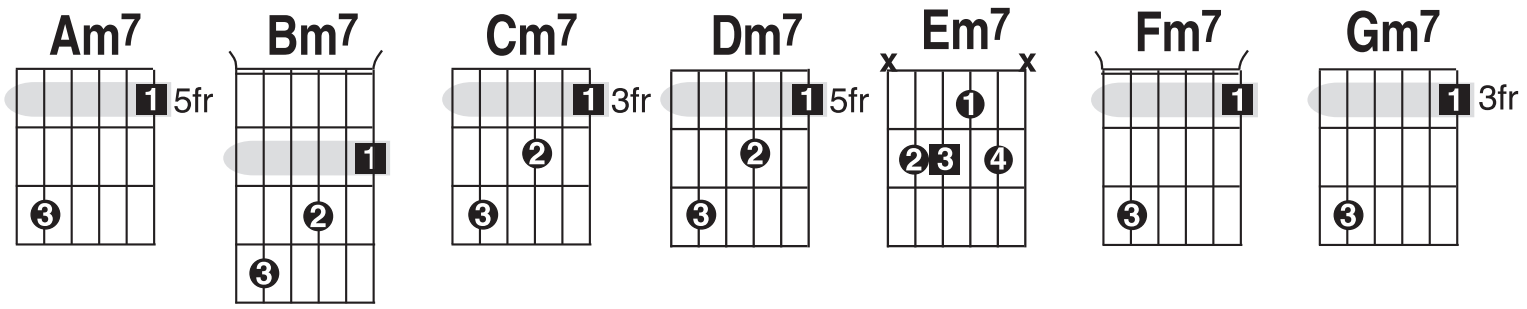
Minor Closed Chords:



Seventh Closed Chords:



Minor seventh Closed Chords:



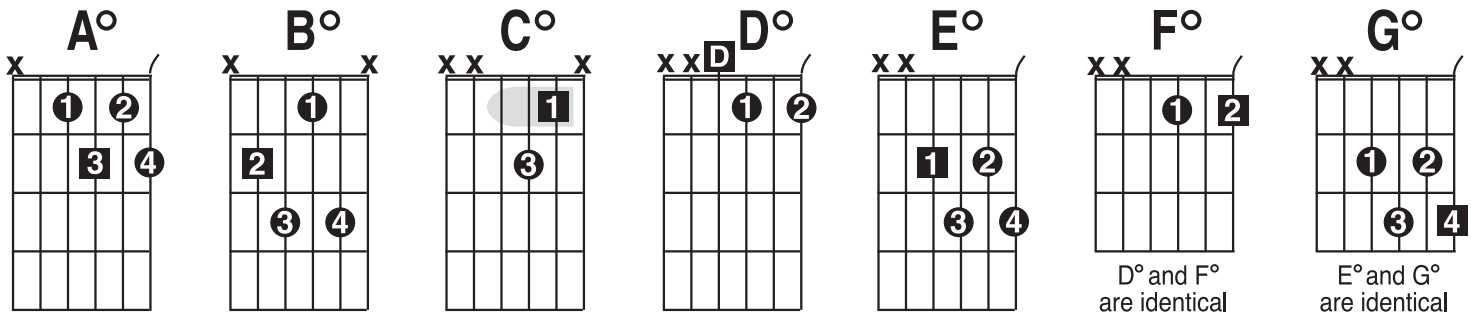
Key: x = Don't play (open chords only) 1 = Barre (1st finger) 3 = Root / Finger = Optional barre 3fr = Fret #

Some advanced chords

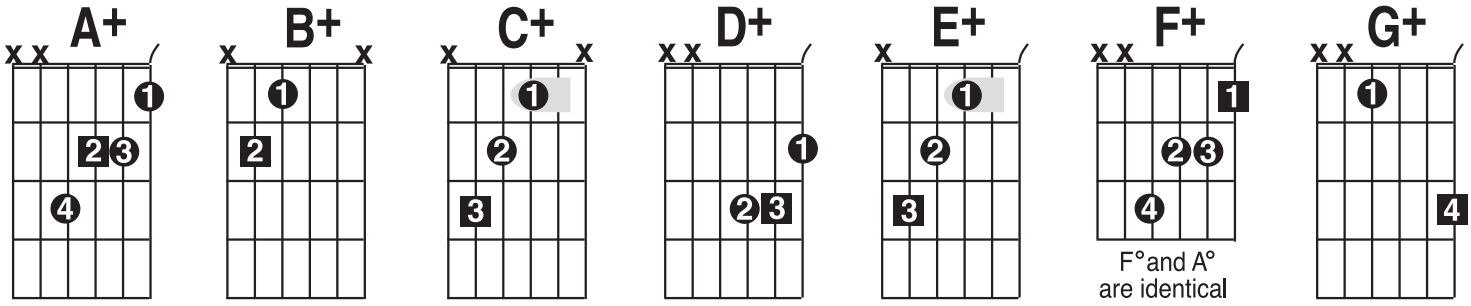
These groups of chords are used like salt on meat to season a song.

There are numerous variations of these chords. Below are the easiest.

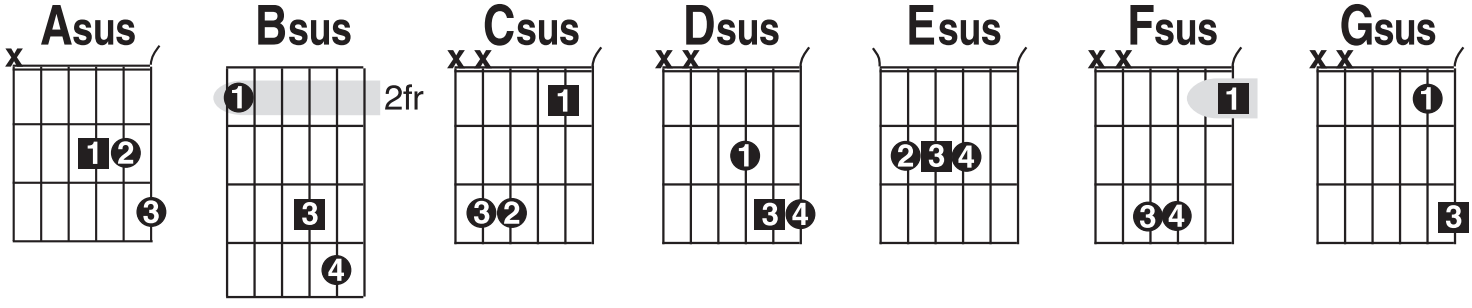
Diminished Chords:



Augmented Chords:



Suspended Chords:

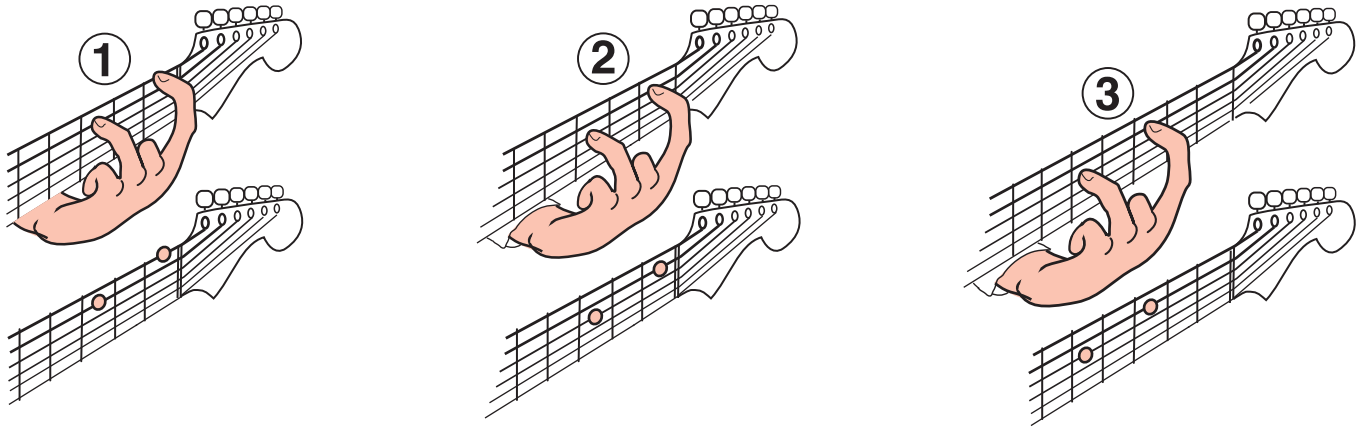


Key: x = Don't play | 1 = Barre (1st finger) | 3 = Root / Finger | 3fr... = Fret #

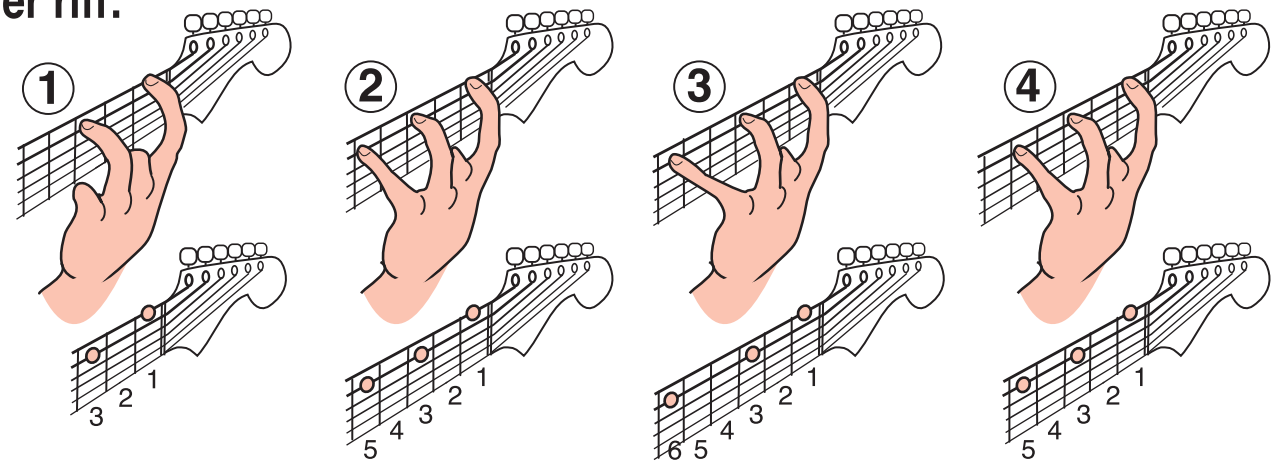
Power chords!

Technically, power chords are not true chords (they consist of only two notes, not three. But who cares! These puppies can bite—and they're easy to play. Countless rock hits consist almost entirely of power chords. Once you play them, you'll see why. And only 2 fingers needed!

Typical power chord sequence:

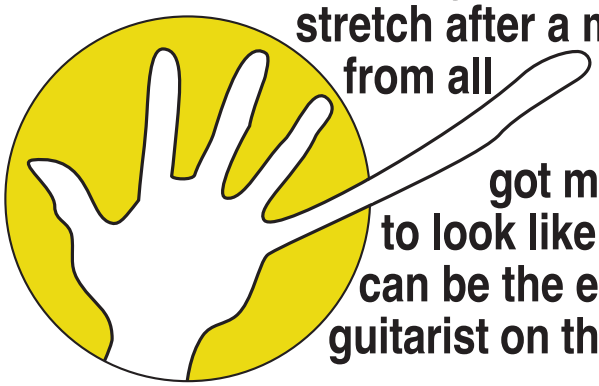


4th finger riff:



Stretching Exercise:

I found that if you insert your 4th finger into a bowling ball and use crazy glue to hold it in place, you can get a nice stretch after a month or two from all that weight. That's how I got my pinky finger to look like this! You too can be the envy of every guitarist on the block! (Ha.)



It only feels impossible!

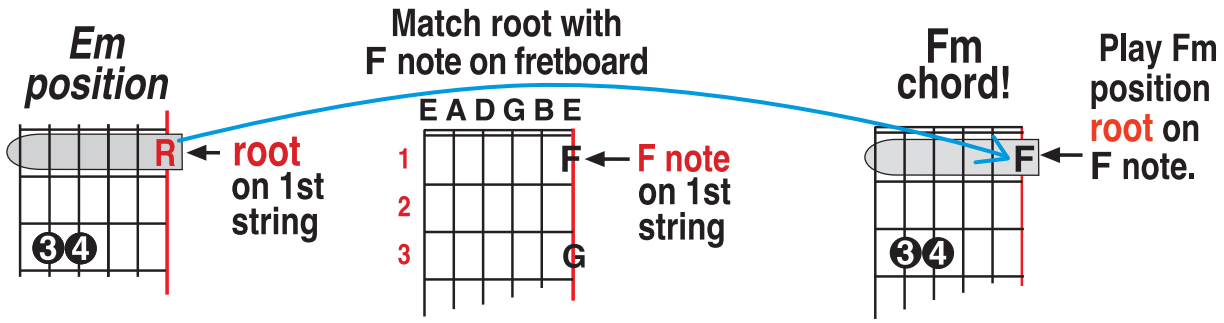
A perfect example of this "riff" technique can be heard in the Beatle's cover of the classic "Roll Over Beethoven".
I remember the first time I tried this. I swore it was physically impossible: "nobody's 4th finger can stretch that far!" Start practicing this riff on the higher frets, which are closer together, and work your way down later.

Closed positions' roots

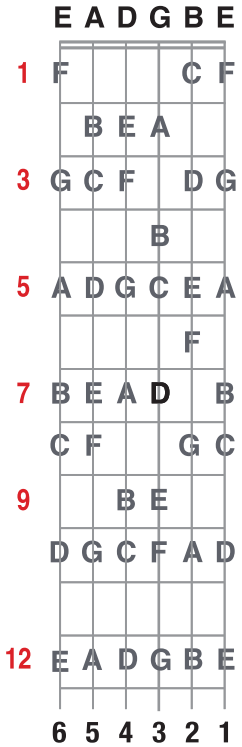
Below are the major, minor, 7th, and minor 7th fingering *positions* for each of the 3 families of chord positions: *E*, *A*, *D*. The root note(s) within each fingering position is identified (by an R or a red number).

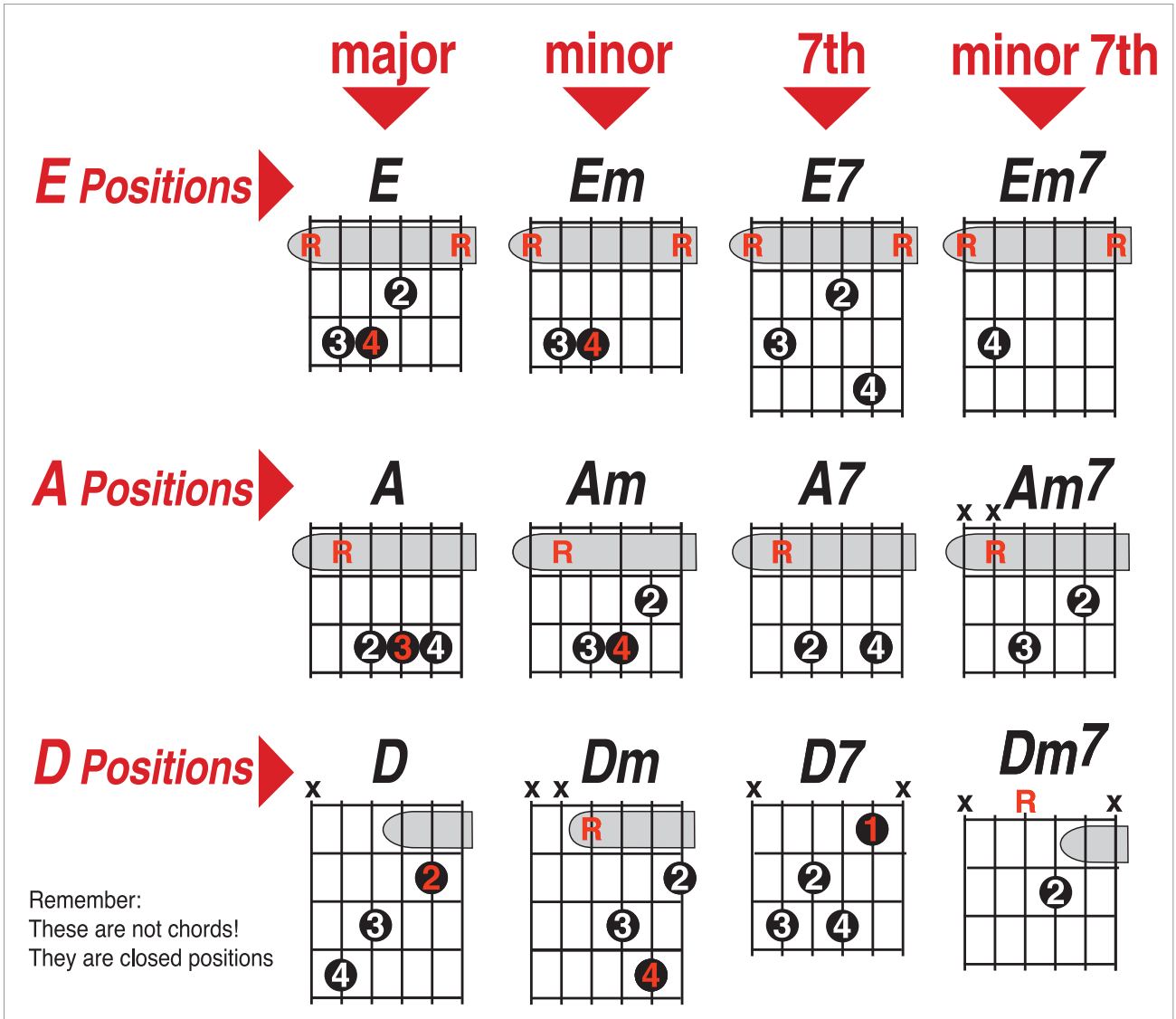
Now you can find nearly any chord you want by using this page. All you do is place one of the chord positions (below) so that its *root* note is directly over the note on your fretboard, that you want for your chord.

E.g. Let's use the root in a *Em position* to make an Fm chord:



Notes on Fretboard





Remember:
These are not chords!
They are closed positions

Key: x = Don't play (applies to open chords only) = Barre (1st finger) R = Root note

Refer to the main website for more complete information on root notes (guitarchordscracked.com)

Closed positions *made easier*

Here are "trimmed down" versions of the positions.

These shortcuts are not "cheating". They are all legitimate chord positions in their own right. They have been used to create famous guitar solos like the one at the beginning of Brown Eyed Girl (which uses the easiest versions of four positions shown here).

One benefit of practising these simpler fingering positions is that they ease you into mastering the more challenging, full-version positions.

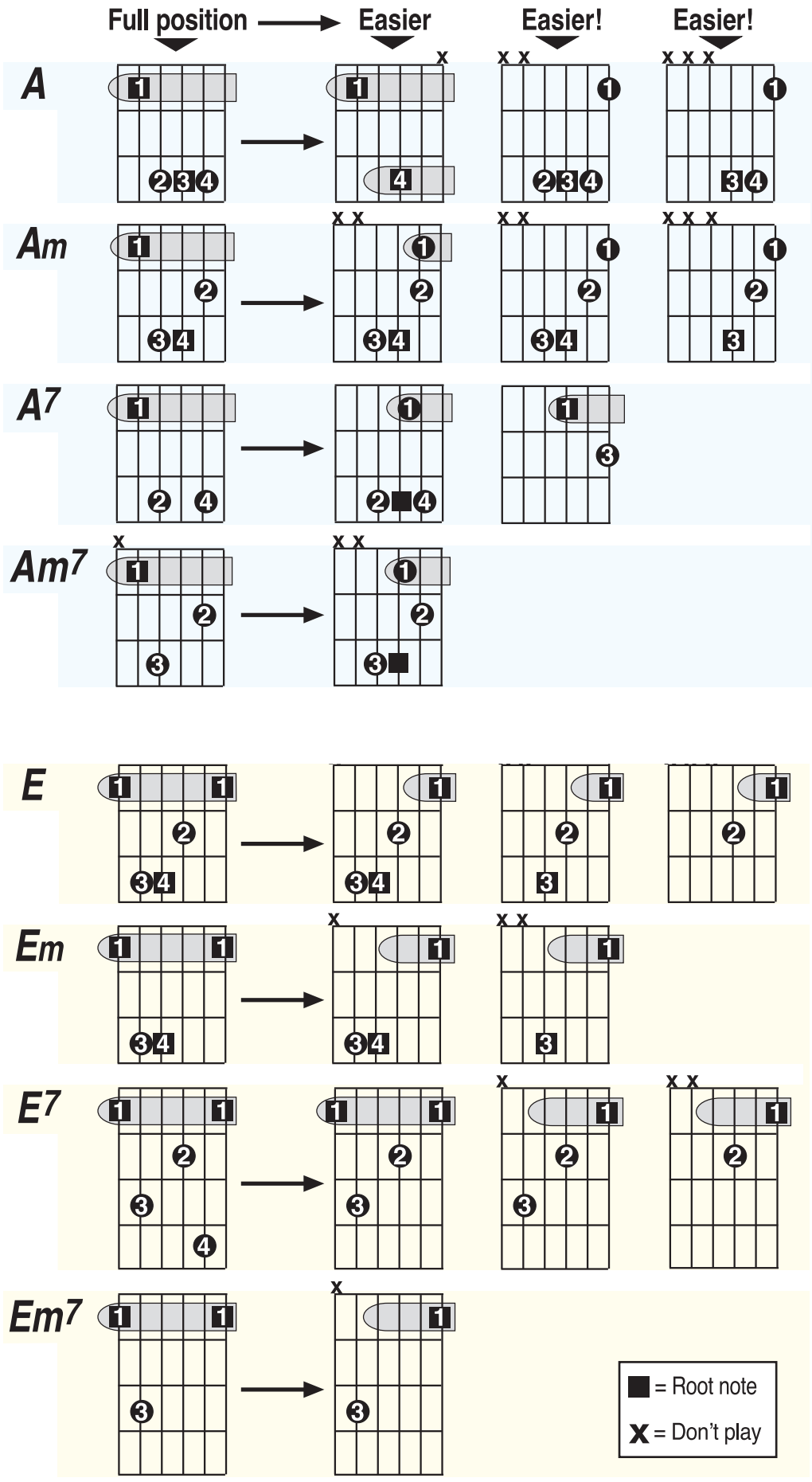
How to practice

Science has unlocked the physiology of practice. Only 15 minutes or so is all your brain needs to start building neuron pathways that make the task easy to perform. It is non productive to practice for long periods of time!

Root Notes

This chart shows **all** of the root notes in each position. (Remember: root notes indicate the note of the chord, depending on where it is played on the fretboard.

Example: If you play an E position on the 3rd fret, the root note is on G; so you are playing a G chord.

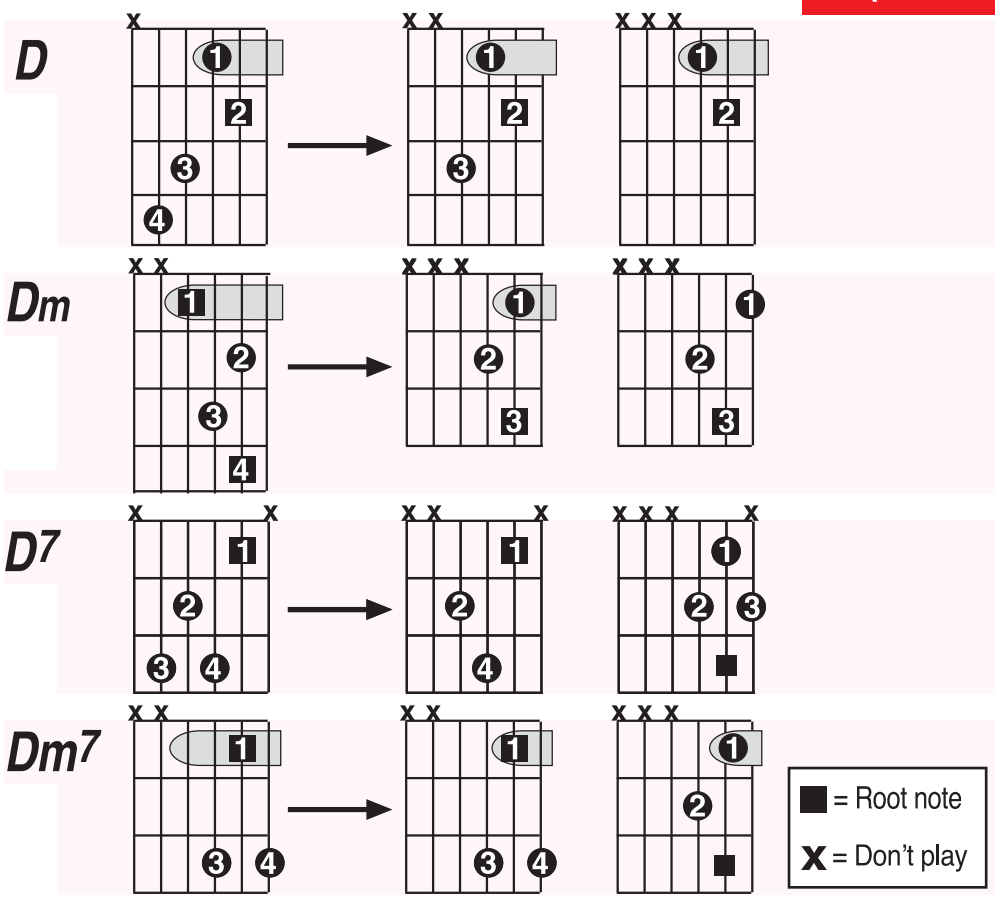


continued...

Consider yourself well on your way to cracking the mystery of chords.

Understanding how the root note in a chord position allows you to find any chord that is a major, minor, seventh, minor seventh, augmented, diminished and suspended.

You are now able to find the chords you will need to play nearly any song.



Sore fingers!

Be prepared for sore fingers. Especially if you're playing an acoustic guitar. Fingertips are not accustomed to this abuse.

Two factors are the culprits:

1) Guitar's action
The greater the distance between your strings and the fretboard, the more your strain on your fingers to press the string(s) down.

Solution
If possible, lower the bridge. If you have an acoustic, this may not be an option; but most electric guitars include this feature. Excessive lowering will cause the strings to buzz.

2) String gauge
The heavier your string gauge, the tighter and more rigid they will be. Dropping the gauge by a factor of 1 makes a world of difference. On my Stratocaster I use '9s', while on my Rickenbacker, I use '10s'. What a difference! On the Strat I can bend the B and G strings with ease, while on the Rick, it takes much more effort. Here's the trade-off: heavier strings provide more power and sustain, while lighter strings allow for ease of bending and, generally, greater ease of playing (lead in particular).

Solution
Switch to a lighter guage of string. If this is all new to you, take your strings (or the guitar) to a music store and ask the staff for advice. A new set is usually in the $5 to $12 range.
(Eventually, the tips of your fingers get hard and the pain vanishes.)