



**YOU CAN LEARN GUITAR!**

**BEGINNER GUITAR  
CHEAT SHEET**

*-Written by David Taub*

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-Written by David Taub, co-creator, Next Level Guitar Inc.®

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# **NEXT LEVEL GUITAR®**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Hello good people! David Taub here and I would like to take a moment to thank you for your interest in my instructional products. I am so excited to get you started on your guitar journey. Whether you have been playing for a little while or are just starting from scratch, I am totally confident that my lessons will help you achieve your guitar goals and get you playing the guitar and having fun.

I think you will find that my teaching methods are of the best available on the market today. I have successfully taught thousands and thousands of students both privately and online all over the world. I teach all levels, from students who have never touched a guitar, on through advanced players - so I recognize the entire spectrum.

Teaching a wide array of students allows me to see on a daily basis the common challenges that all students face when learning the instrument. This gives me unique insights on creating exercises and lesson plans to help students overcome these challenges and get them playing the guitar in the fastest and most efficient manner.

So I know what works and what doesn't, what students gravitate toward, what empowers students, and how to get students quickly moving forward on the instrument by achieving clear cut goals and objectives - all while having FUN!

Like with anything new and different, dive into these materials with an open mind. Know that if you practice these techniques, work hard, and keep honing your skills and refining your art, these methods will bring results and you will be playing guitar like you always dreamed of.

Guitar can be a challenging instrument for sure, but if you follow my structured curriculum, keep a positive attitude, and practice the right things, then you will succeed. The guitar will be something that will bring you joy for the rest of your life. The guitar is infectious and once you start reaping the rewards you won't want to stop. In fact you will probably be playing guitar for the rest of your life.

Enjoy these materials and please let me know if you have any questions. I always welcome your insights and feedback as I am constantly tweaking my instructional products to make them the best they can be. You can email me at [thenextlevelguitar@yahoo.com](mailto:thenextlevelguitar@yahoo.com)

I wish you the best in all your musical endeavors.  
Enjoy the journey, and as always.....ROCK ON!  
David Taub  
[www.nextlevelguitar.com](http://www.nextlevelguitar.com)

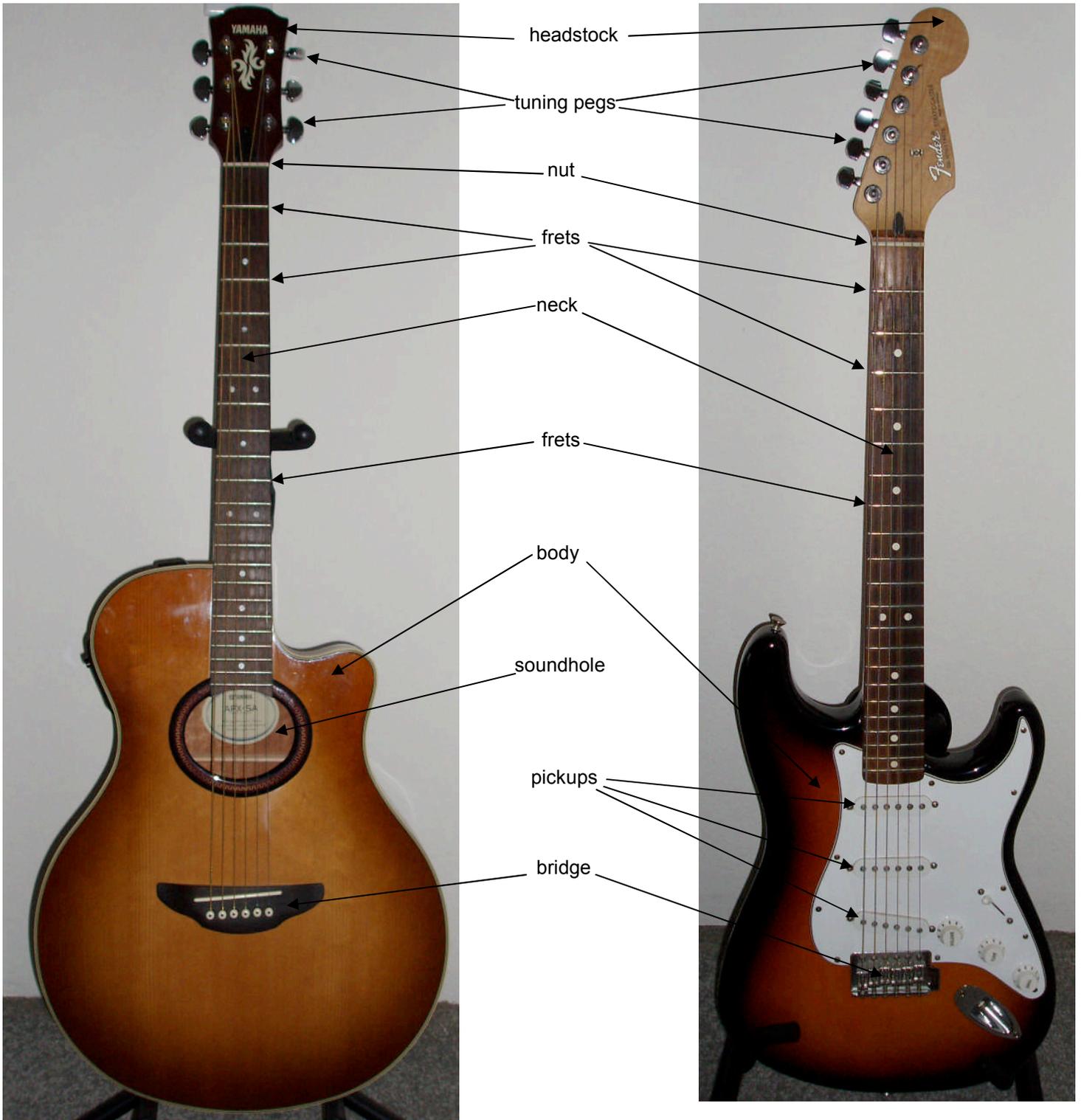
.....And please check out my full on video instructional website at [www.nextlevelguitar.com](http://www.nextlevelguitar.com)

## **TEN ESSENTIAL POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

1. **Patience** – Learning an instrument requires patience. Many of the techniques take time to master. Even fingering chords can be quite challenging. This is normal so do not get discouraged. It takes time to get your fingers, tendons, and muscles used to bending in the ways necessary to play guitar. Take your time, be patient and it will come.
2. **Attitude** – A positive attitude goes a long way. You can do this, so try and stay positive and remember that your guitar playing is an evolution.
3. **Proper technique** – Utilizing the proper techniques and learning the proper fundamentals is essential for beginner guitar. Any bad habits that you start off with will be very hard to untangle later as well as they will impede your progress down the road. So strive to follow the technique guidelines closely at first and then later down the road you can develop them into your own personal style – first learn the rules, then go ahead and break them 😊.
4. **Fingernail length** - Keep the fingernails on your fret hand short. If your nails are too long they will interfere with the fretting of notes on the fingerboard. If you press straight down with one finger on a solid surface, like a tabletop, and you feel the nail hitting the table before your fingertip, your nails are too long and will need to be cut.
5. **Cleanliness** - Wash and thoroughly dry your hands before picking up the guitar. It will keep oily residues and dirt off the fingerboard and your hands will be clean and not slide around on the neck. Wipe the neck down with a soft cloth after playing as this keeps the neck clean and prolongs string life.
6. **On Discomfort** - Fingertip soreness and wrist discomfort is normal for the beginning guitarist. As you play more your fingertip calluses will build up stronger and the discomfort will get less and less. But if you feel major pain in the wrist or arm - STOP. Big pain is your bodies' way of telling you something may be wrong. Give it a little rest and go back to it later and check to ensure you are utilizing the proper techniques.
7. **Slow down** - Playing slow and in time is ALWAYS better than playing fast and sloppy. Always master a concept at slow speeds before trying to play it faster. Speed comes with time.
8. **Notes on the neck** – Not at first but eventually you want to try to memorize the notes on the neck and the notes that make up a given chord or a scale. You just don't want to solely rely on just fingerings or shapes. It will make you a better guitarist in the long run and you will be able to speak "the language" of music when conversing with other musicians, writing songs, playing with your friends, or in a band situation.
9. **Develop your ear** – I say these words often, I feel developing your ear is one of the most important things you can do as a guitarist or musician.
10. **Music theory** - A little theory is a good thing. Not in the beginning but eventually putting time into learning some music theory has great value. It will move your playing forward faster and allow you to communicate the language of music to other musicians.
11. **Fun** – Give yourself plenty of "fun time" on the guitar doing what you love to do best – learn a song, write a new tune, do fun stuff. Don't spend all your time just studying and working new concepts. HAVE FUN AND STAY POSITIVE – practice does not have to be drudgery!

**PARTS OF THE GUITAR – ACOUSTIC & ELECTRIC:**

In order to communicate effectively in guitar lingo you will need to learn some guitar terminology. The illustrations below display some of the common parts of an acoustic guitar and an electric guitar.



**ACOUSTIC GUITAR**

**ELECTRIC GUITAR**

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **Which guitar do I choose Acoustic or Electric?**

You have a choice when you start to learn to play guitar. Do you want to learn to play on the acoustic guitar or on the electric guitar? The principles, concepts, and techniques that you will learn when first starting to play guitar are the same no matter which one you choose.

However, there are some basic differences between the two that I feel are very much worth mentioning. Your decision partially lies in which one sounds best to your ears and which one do you envision yourself playing.

Many of you will be drawn more to one than the other. You may want to have that electric guitar plugged in through an amplifier and eventually add distortion and rock out. Or, you may love and are more drawn toward the beautiful sounds produced by a ringing, full-bodied acoustic guitar.

Both instruments are truly wonderful and most guitar players eventually end up owning one of each, if not more. I have twelve guitars at this time and love them all – they are all unique and have their own voices.

The biggest thing to keep in mind when making this decision is the electric guitar is a little easier to learn on than an acoustic. On an electric guitar, the strings are of a lighter gauge, the action is lower, its easier to press down on the strings, and the body is thinner and easier to get your arm around. So overall the electric will be easier to play and learn on in the beginning.

But learning first on an acoustic is fine, its just a little more challenging. Either way you want to find the guitar that is the right fit for your hands and body and one that does not fight you. You want a guitar that is set up well and is easy to play. You will have enough to worry about at first just getting over the physics of the instrument.

Whatever guitar you go with make sure it's the right fit for your body and hands. There are many different model guitars on the market today. Some have wide necks and some thin, some have large bodies and some smaller. So finding the right sized guitar that fits your hands and body best, is absolutely essential. The wrong sized guitar that is poorly set up and hard to play will increase your frustration level exponentially. Keep the variables to a minimum and get the right sized guitar.

I suggest going with what you love. If you are drawn more toward the acoustic, and love that acoustic sound – then go with that. You will probably end up having at least one of each down the line, and then you will have the best of both worlds.

## UTILIZING THE PICK:

There are basically two ways to attack the strings of the guitar. One way is with your fingers alone, which is called finger picking or fingerstyle guitar. Another way is utilizing a plectrum or what is more commonly termed a pick.

I want to get you playing the guitar in the fastest manner possible so lets start by utilizing the pick. Fingerstyle is indeed awesome, but the beginning techniques are very challenging and take a lot of time to develop. I suggest starting off by using a pick and if you like that fingerstyle sound then that is something you can study down the road after you have had some guitar time under your belt.

Guitar picks come in various shapes, sizes, thickness, and materials. Various thickness picks will actually sound different as they hit the strings. As you get more familiar with the pick, you will want to experiment. Try different materials and sizes to find what feels the best in your hands, **AND** sounds best to your ears.

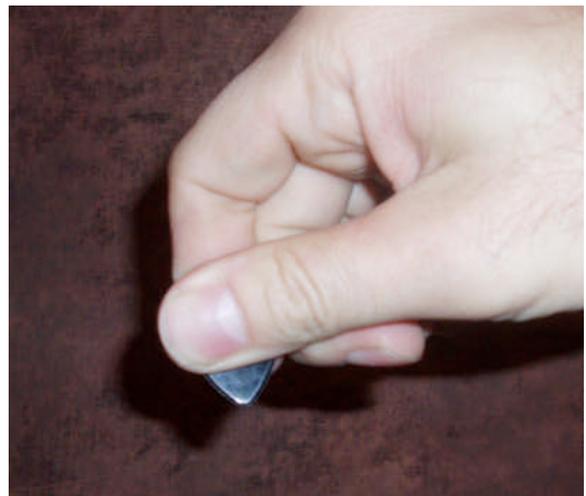
I have found that beginning students gravitate more toward picks made from nylon that have raised letters or ridges built into them. You don't want the pick moving or sliding in your hand so you will find the raised ridges or letters act like grips.

Often beginners find the pick slipping in their hand as they strum, so a pick with grips on it comes in very handy. They also make picks with holes in them, this way part of your finger fits into that hole. This aids in gripping the pick so it does not twist or slide in your hand.

Illustrated below are the two most common ways to hold the pick. Try them both and see which feels best in your hand.



As per above picture: Open your hand and have your palm face up. Next, place the pick with the pointy tip facing straight up flat on your pointer finger. Less than half of the pick should be off the pointer finger. Then come over the top of the pick with your thumb and grip the pick firmly but not with excessive pressure between both fingers. With this method the tip of the thumb is upward in the same line as the pointy tip of the pick.



As per the above picture: Turn the pick sideways so the pointy tip is pointed toward your left. Point your pointer finger toward the left in a straight-line horizontal with the pick. The tip of your finger should be pointing at the pointy tip of the pick. Place the pick on top of your pointer finger, less than half of the pick should be hanging off your finger. Then come over the top of the pick with your thumb sandwiching the pick between your pointer finger and thumb.

## NAMES OF THE OPEN STRINGS: What's that about dynamite?

Let's learn the names of the six open strings from lowest to highest.

At first you want to be playing in what is called "Standard Tuning" or "A440 tuning". In this tuning the open strings from low to high ring out to the notes E, A, D, G, B, and E. There is a low E string and a high E string.

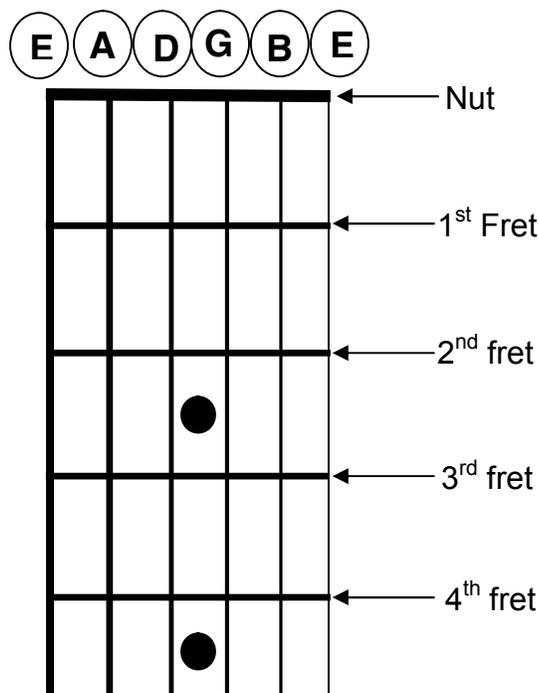
The low E string is also called the 6<sup>th</sup> string, the A is also called the 5<sup>th</sup> string, the D is the 4<sup>th</sup> string, G is the 3<sup>rd</sup> string, B is the 2<sup>nd</sup> string, and the high E is the 1<sup>st</sup> string.

It's very important to know the names of the open strings. I have an easy little saying that will help you remember, in fact I don't think you will ever forget them if you commit this phrase to memory.

To remember the names of the six open strings just remember this statement "**Eddie Ate Dynamite, Good Bye Eddie**" – E A D G B E – there you have it – the names of the six open strings.

E A D G B E

E      A      D                      G      B      E



Guitar Neck

## **THREE GOALS AND YOU WILL BE PLAYING SONGS:**

It is important as you move through this structured guitar plan that we set a few guitar goals along the way. We all know that songs are very important to musicians. In fact many of us may have picked up the guitar with the goal of being able to eventually play songs. Well, I am going to get you to the point where you can play songs by first tackling three critical guitar goals.

## **THREE GOALS TO BE ABLE TO PLAY SONGS:**

- 1. Learn some open position chords**
- 2. Learn how to strum with rhythm**
- 3. Learn how to change chords**

If you can do the above three things, then you will be playing songs – that fast. What are songs played on an instrument? Basically a series or string of notes or chords played with a certain rhythm. You can break them down into a series of chord changes or chord progressions.

So if you learn some chords, learn how to strum, and then learn how to change chords, you will be playing songs. It's quite amazing how fast I can get you playing musically sounding examples.

So let's get started with the first goal and learn some chords. I am going to explain how to read chord charts and then teach you your first three chords. This will get you started on your first chord progression.

Remember that with just a handful of chords you will be able to play thousands and thousands of songs. Some of the best songs ever written are made up of only three or four chords. It's truly amazing how much you will be able to accomplish by just learning the chords listed in this book. You will amaze yourself!

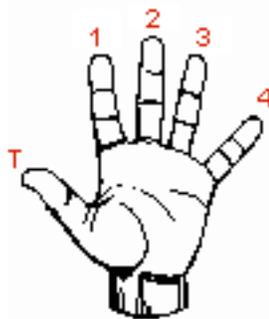
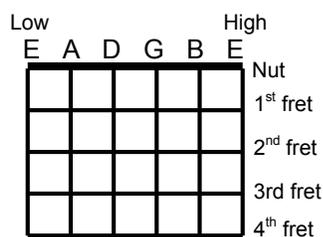
Along with learning a few chords and practicing them, you also want to start learning how to strum with rhythm and learn some strum patterns. So we can work on the first two goals at the same time. Then when you have the first two chords sounding good we can work on changing them.

## READING CHORD CHARTS:

All my written illustrations are consistent in that the strings are always shown vertical and the frets horizontal. You will have to be able to read the chord charts in order to study the chords that we will be learning.

The chords are drawn in a standard way that you probably have seen before. In the grid illustration below you can see all six strings are shown vertically from the Low E to the High E. The grid looks like the actual neck of the guitar. The frets run horizontal and are numbered in order starting with the 1<sup>st</sup> fret, 2<sup>nd</sup> fret, 3<sup>rd</sup> fret, and so on. Notice the thick horizontal line at the top of the grid. This is called the nut and is not considered a fret.

At first you will be spending a lot of time within the first five frets working on open position chords, or chords played with at least one open string. These open position chords are the first chords that just about every guitar player learns when they first start to learn guitar. These open position chords are also referred to as “cowboy chords”, “six bangers”, or “the basic open chords”.



The fret hand fingers are numbered in a standard way so you can easily know what finger to place on what string. The pointer finger is “1”, the middle finger is “2”, the ring finger is “3”, and the pinky is “4”. The thumb is often referred to as “T”. Look for these numbers at the bottom of the grid as they tell which finger to use to fret a given note.

**\*\*CHORD = A chord is defined as two or more notes played at the same time.**

## **FRET HAND TECHNIQUES – BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION:**

Fret hand technique is absolutely critical for optimum guitar playing. The proper technique will give you a rock solid foundation that we can build on as you move up that guitar staircase.

At first when fretting notes, you will experience some mild discomfort in your wrist and also on the tips of your fingers. This only lasts until you build up some calluses on your fingertips. All this is normal and I assure you the discomfort in the wrist and fingertips will subside more and more each day and eventually disappear completely.

Your wrist and finger tendons will grow stronger and will get used to the positions as well as your fingertips will soon get very tough. When you see the skin on your fingertips start to rip you should be like “YEAH!” – because that is what you want – you want the skin to rip and then when it comes back it will be tougher and stronger. So consider the ripped skin like a merit badge!

**KEY POINT: Remember as we go through the chord fingerings for your first batch of chords, do not get discouraged, it may take weeks to get the fingerings memorized and for the chords to sound clean and ring true. Stay positive – and remember that your playing is an evolution!**

You also need to keep the fingernails on the four fingers on your fret hand short. A good test is to press down on a flat surface with your fingertip, like a tabletop, and if you can feel the nail before you feel the tip of your finger, then the nail is too long and must be cut.

You don't want your fingernail to hit the fretboard before your fingertip. If your nails are too long it will cause interference when fingering notes and chords and will prohibit them from ringing true. So keep them short.

As we go through the proper technique remember, if you feel big pain in the wrist or arm – STOP – take a break, and check that you are utilizing proper technique. Pain is your body's way of telling you something may be wrong. Give it a little rest, take a break and go back to it later. Remember, Rome was not built in a day.

**Key Practice Technique** – make sure when you are learning your chords that you use this solid fret hand technique. Ensure your fingers remain clustered together and do not take them apart. Always remain on your fingertips with your fingers cupped and your thumb in the proper position on the back of the neck. This technique is crucial!

## Remember to execute these techniques when fingering chords:

1. **FINGERS** - Keep your fingers cupped and fret the notes on your fingertips, don't lay your fingers flat, stay on the tips of your fingers and press down hard on the required string.
2. **WRIST** - Keep your wrist down. Having your wrist up too far throws the shoulder into the wrong position. Your arm and shoulder should be in a very natural and comfortable flowing position.
3. **THUMB** - For now, keep your thumb anchored on the back of the neck about even with your 2<sup>nd</sup> finger or between your 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> fingers. Do not grip the guitar neck like a baseball bat or have your thumb way over to one side.
4. **CLOSENESS** - Keep ALL your fret fingers close to the fretboard at all times. Don't let your fret hand fly out of position far away from the fretboard. Think of it like your fingers are magnetically attracted to the strings and you can't slip a credit card between the strings and your fingertips.
5. **FRETTING** - Fret each note right behind the designated fret, not in between frets, right behind the fret. You have to press quite hard in the beginning to get the note to ring true. If you have to fret multiple notes on the same fret then the fingers have to slide back a tad to make room – but for the most part be right behind the fret.
6. **DO NOT BEND** - Make sure you are not bending any strings as you finger each note or the chord will ring out of tune. Look down the strings making sure they are all straight and not bent.
7. **NO TOUCHING** - Make sure your fingers are not touching any of the other strings other than the strings they are required to fret for the given chord. If part of one finger is hitting an errant string it will keep that string from ringing true. Be sure that the palm of your fret hand does not touch the high E string. If it does, try lowering the wrist and cupping the fingers more.
8. **CLUSTER** - Keep your fret hand in a tight cluster and do not pull it apart. Pinky finger should be hitching a ride on the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger with all fingers in a tight cluster close to the fretboard at all times like in the photo illustrations – use those photos as a template for technique on all the chords you work on.

## LEARNING YOUR FIRST CHORD – E minor:

Like I mentioned earlier, you will be able to play thousands of songs by learning just a handful of open chords. The first set of 12 open position chords form the foundation for thousands and thousands of popular songs.

Now that you are familiar with reading chord charts from the previous lesson let's illustrate your first chord. We will be learning to play an E minor, (Em), chord. The small "m" next to a chord letter name means minor. If no other letters or numbers appear next to a chord letter then major is implied.

The chord chart below on the right has two black dots on the vertical string lines. The black dots illustrate where you put your fingers and on which strings. The numbers at the bottom of the chord chart refer to which finger of your fret hand you will be utilizing to play the chord. The "0" means that you play that string open and an "X" means that you don't play that string at all.

Looking at the below illustration you will fret the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret of the A string with your first finger and the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret of the D string with your second finger. You will also play the Low E string, G string, B string, and high E string all open.

**Em**

Use your first finger to fret the note at the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret on the A string

2<sup>nd</sup> fret

Use your second finger to fret the note at the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret on the D string

0 1 2 0 0 0

**Em**

0 1 2 0 0 0

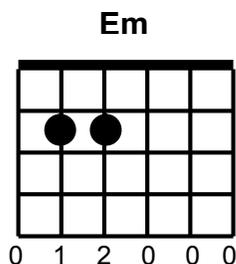
The low E string, G string, B string, and high E string are all played open as illustrated by the "0" below each string.

\*\*Notice the proper fret hand techniques are being employed to play the Em chord - fingers are cupped and on the fingertips, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> fingers are attached tight to the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger as well as they are in tight close to the fretboard, the whole hand is clustered together in a tight economical cluster, wrist is down, and the fingers and hand are not interfering by inadvertently touching other strings. Try it just like this....



Voice the Em chord illustrated below and strum the chord using the pick coming down through all six strings striking the strings one at a time and listening that each of the six notes ring out true. You shouldn't hear any popping or muted string noises. Remember to utilize all the technique principles outlined above and if the chord is not ringing true check that your fingers or palm are not inadvertently touching any other strings.

Play the notes of the chord one at a time and check that all are ringing true. Then strum through the chord letting the pick do the work. Listen to the sound of the chord and commit the Em chord to memory.



Use the same learning template taught above for learning all your new chords. When first learning a new chord remember to always play the notes individually and let them ring out to ensure there are no dead strings, muted strings, strings being bent, or any other extraneous string noises or pops that contaminate the true sound of the given chord.

Then after you hear all the notes ring true individually try strumming the entire chord all at once and again make sure all the notes ring true when strummed.

Now you should be able to play an Em chord and have it sounding pretty good. Memorize the fingering and know that it is an Em chord. Remember our first goal is to learn a batch of the basic open position chords. Some of the coming chords will be easier and some will be harder. It all just takes patience and practice, so stick with it and you will be rocking out in no time!

**Key Practice Exercise** – a good practice exercise to do when you first learn a new chord is to practice fingering the chord, strum it, and then lift all your fingers off fret board slightly, but keeping them in the same cluster shape of the chord hovering slightly over the frets, then placing back on the fret board in the same chord position. Check that the chord still rings true with another strum and also check that your fingers have not moved out of position. Practice off and on, off and on. This gets you used to coming off chords and getting back on them quickly and accurately. Do this when learning all new chords and commit the chord names and shapes to memory.

## LEARNING YOUR SECOND CHORD – Asus2:

The next chord we will learn is Asus2 or A suspended 2<sup>nd</sup>. Use the same fret hand technique that you learned in the previous lessons for all the chords you will be learning going forward. This new chord utilizes the same fingering and shape as the Em chord, everything moves down one string each and you don't play the low E string.

To play the Asus2 chord you would fret the first note with your first finger on the second fret of the D string, and then fret with your second finger the note at the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret of the G string. You will play the A string, B string, and high E strings open and you will not be playing the Low E string. Basically just play the Em chord and drop the fingers down one string each and you have the Asus2 chord.

**Asus2**

The Low E string is not played as illustrated by the "X" below the string

Use your second finger to fret the note at the second fret of the G string

Use your first finger to fret the note at the second fret of the D string

The A string, B string, and the high E strings are played open as illustrated by the "0" below each string

**Asus2**

X 0 1 2 0 0

**Em**

0 1 2 0 0 0

Notice the proper technique employed when playing the Asus2 chord. Fingers cupped, on the fingertips and all fingers as close to the fretboard as possible. Third and fourth fingers hitching a ride attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger. All the open strings can ring true without interference. Notice this chord is the same fingering as the Em chord, just the fingering is dropped down one string.



**Key Practice Exercise:** Try changing from the Em chord straight down to the Asus2 chord. Strum the Em chord once, then drop the fingers straight down one string each to the Asus2 chord and strum that chord once. Then back up to the Em chord. Practice back and forth, back and forth. Practice getting the transition smooth and getting all the notes of each chord to ring true.

## LEARNING YOUR THIRD CHORD – Am9

Now we are going to learn to play an Aminor9 chord or Am9 (remember small m = minor).

Examine the illustrations below and notice that you use the same fingering or chord voicing to play Am9 as you did for Asus2. Just slide the Asus2 chord shape down 3 frets to the fifth fret. On both chords you still don't play the low E string. Follow the illustrations below to play the Am9 chord. It is such a dark and pretty sounding chord – love this one!

**Am9**

The Low E string is not played as illustrated by the "X" below the string

Use your second finger to fret the note at the fifth fret of the G string

Use your first finger to fret the note at the fifth fret of the D string

The A string, B string, and the high E strings are played open as illustrated by the "0" below each string

**Am9**

5<sup>th</sup> fret

X 0 1 2 0 0

**Asus2**

X 0 1 2 0 0



**Em**

0 1 2 0 0 0

Notice the Am9 chord has the same fingering as the Em and Asus2 chords – just slide the Asus2 chord up three frets to the fifth fret. Also notice the proper fret hand technique employed to play the chord.

**Key Practice Technique:** Keep following the same format as taught above as you go through this book and learn new chords. First play the notes of the chord one at a time and then strum all at once to ensure that the chord rings true. If you hear muted or dead notes check that none of your fingers are hitting other strings, make sure you are on your fingertips and your wrist is down. Practice coming on and off the chord as explained in the practice exercises above.

## **A FEW TIPS ON PRACTICING:**

Practice time does not have to be boring and viewed as a negative no-fun activity. I make practice time fun and exciting for my students so they see the progress they are making on the guitar while playing fun sounding musical examples. Practice should not be drudgery. Follow these suggestions and practice tips:

### **Make it easy for yourself to practice:**

Buy a guitar stand and keep your guitar out on the stand so it is accessible to you at **all** times in a room that you are in most. This way you will be much more likely to grab it and practice when you have a free five or ten minute pocket of time. Don't keep your guitar packed up in its case under your bed or packed away in the closet. You will be less likely to pull it out when you have free time.

### **Shorter practice blocks of time are better than long marathon sessions:**

Often people think that they can't learn an instrument because they don't have an hour or two chunk of time every day to commit to learning. Well you don't need that much time and in fact several smaller blocks of time throughout the day are much more productive than one long marathon session once every few days.

We all have those small pockets of ten or twenty minutes during the day where we waste time. So if you have a spare ten minutes pick up the guitar and practice, go through some chords, chord changes, or work on that strum pattern. You will be amazed how all those ten-minute small sessions really add up to big gains in your playing.

Remember that in the beginning of your guitar journey you have to wrap your hands around the guitar often. You won't get the hang of the instrument by playing once a week or every ten days. The more time you have your hands on the guitar in the beginning the faster you will see progress. A few ten or twenty minute blocks of time throughout the day works fantastic!

### **Fingertip and wrist discomfort**

One of the biggest challenges of the beginner guitarist is getting over the physics of the instrument. It takes some time to get your fingertip calluses built up and for your wrist and fret hand to get used to bending and playing chord shapes. So at first you will experience some fingertip and wrist discomfort. But know that it will get less and less with time and eventually disappear.

This is another reason why to limit your playing at first to ten to twenty minute blocks of time. If you play for too long at first then your fingertips will be so sore that you won't be able to play the next day. Remember that moderation is best at first as well as you will retain more with smaller practice blocks.

## **Learning the fundamentals and proper technique:**

It is vital to build a solid foundation when you start playing guitar. Techniques and principles get stacked on top of one another. Remember that learning guitar in the beginning is like a staircase and you have to learn step one before traversing step two, step two before step three, and so on. You don't want to build any bad habits early on as these bad habits are very challenging to undo later. A bad habit now may not seem like much but it can impede your progress later in your guitar journey.

## **Having structure and consistency is key:**

One of the keys to beginner guitar is consistency. Keep trying to put those guitars in your hands every day, even if it's only for ten minutes. Grab that guitar before going to work if you have a spare ten minutes, or when you get home from work, or before going to bed for a few minutes, or while you are waiting for dinner to cook. Keep putting it in your hands every day and you will see big gains.

Remember to consistently utilize your structured plan. Work on your practice regimens, chord changes, learn new chords, strum patterns, etc. Whatever you are currently learning hit it hard and consistently as per the plan and you will get better and better the more you practice.

## **Muscle memory:**

A lot of the early techniques you are learning have to deal with challenges regarding muscle memory. The goal is to get your fret hand and brain wired together to remember chord fingerings and positions, and how to change chords without thinking about it. Eventually you want to get your chord fingering and chord changing to be on autopilot. It takes time and practice to get that muscle memory built into your subconscious.

The way to get to the autopilot stage is consistently practicing the chords, chord changes, and fret hand movements back and forth, back and forth, ten minutes a day, one day at a time. Keep it up and soon you won't even have to think about it, the fret hand will work automatically.

## **Don't overwhelm yourself:**

I often see beginner guitar players take on way too much. They try and soak up and practice every piece of knowledge or lesson from books, the internet, private studies, this guy, that girl, etc. And in the end their playing suffers and they are at a standstill because they glaze over too many principles at once and don't put the needed time into each stage of learning. They eventually get frustrated and put the instrument down.

Don't overwhelm yourself by trying to take on too many new things at once. At first stick to the basics as per the lessons in this book – learn some chords, learn to strum, learn to change chords. That is plenty at first. Take these lessons and techniques in stages, slow and steady wins the race.

## **Use a practice log to chart your progress:**

Utilizing a practice log to chart your progress and keep notes is invaluable. You don't need anything fancy. In fact a simple three ring binder with filler paper works best.

Make notes of the chords you are learning, strum patterns, and chord changes that you are practicing and the ones you are struggling with. Write out the practice progressions and circle the changes within the progressions that you have to work on separately as they are the ones you are stumbling over and need to practice more.

Add filler paper to your binder and keep accurate records in your practice log of the items you are working on, what needs work, new chords, chord changes, strum patterns, rhythms, progressions, songs, original material, scales, etc. Date the entries and keep track of your progress as you move forward in your guitar journey. Just like setting goals in life, you want to set musical goals.....and then go out there and achieve them.

## **Give yourself plenty of fun time on the guitar:**

Don't regiment your entire guitar playing experience to just to study, study, study. Remember that this is a fun activity and you want to give yourself plenty of fun time on the guitar to just jam and enjoy the instrument.

Try to learn a new song, or puts some chords together that you like the sound of, or try to write a song. Do things that you enjoy on the instrument and have fun – that is why you picked up this amazing instrument in the first place.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON PRACTICING**

How much should I practice?

I get asked all the time, "David, how much time should I spend practicing". To be honest I don't have a canned answer for this question. I will tell you this, – there is positive correlation between the amount of time you practice and how fast you move up the staircase.

The more you practice, as long as you follow my structured methodology, the faster you will advance. But as far as how much actual time should you practice all depends on what you have going on in your life, how fast you want to move forward, and balance.

That is the great thing about learning guitar and utilizing my teaching methods – you can learn at your own pace, a pace that fits your lifestyle.

We are all very busy people. We have jobs, families, boyfriends, girlfriends, friends, hobbies, and social lives. So we all want that balance in our lives where we get to do all the things we love and are passionate about as well as taking on new projects, setting goals, and going out there and achieving them.

Ideally, if you can practice for two or three fifteen-minute sessions throughout the day you will see great progress. Even just two fifteen-minute sessions is fine. Once you get over the fingertip soreness, practicing forty-five minutes a day would be awesome. The more time you put into practicing the right things, the faster you will move forward.

So find the balance that suits your life. Again, you want to keep it realistic. In the beginning stages of learning guitar you will want to pick up the guitar and practice as often as possible. Early on you don't want to go a week or ten days without picking up the guitar, as you will forget the concepts that you previously learned and then you have to start all over again.

So practice as often as possible, especially in the beginning, while achieving balance in your life. And most importantly – HAVE FUN! One of the mantras in my life is, "if it's not fun.....why do it?"

## STRUMMING AND RHYTHM MECHANICS:

Now that you have learned some chords we can tackle the techniques of strumming and rhythm. While you work on the strumming examples below be sure to keep moving forward learning more open chords and getting them memorized, and getting the notes to ring true. More chords are illustrated in the coming pages, but at the same time let's work on your strumming and rhythms

Music is more than just notes and chords, it's also about rhythm and meter. In order to play something musical sounding we need to play it with rhythm. The easiest way to do that with guitar is strumming the guitar rhythmically with what is known as strum patterns.

Let's learn the proper techniques for strumming and go over basic strum mechanics, we will then learn rhythmic strum patterns.

### Proper strum mechanics:

1. Strumming is more arm than wrist. When strumming bend at the elbow and move the arm up and down working the pick through all the strings. Don't leave the arm semi-stationary and just bend the wrist to strum, that is not correct. Bend at the elbow and put your arm into the strum and be emotive. Hit those strings with emotion and with conviction! Like you are waving up and down vertically across the strings. Music is about emotion and passion and it will come across in your playing.
2. Keep a nice loose feel with the strumming hand when strumming. Don't lock the wrist or arm and don't strum in herky-jerky motions. It should be smooth, even and loose. If your strumming is locked it will come across very robotic and sterile sounding – loose is key.
3. Be sure and use a long movement when strumming. Do not strum just from the top of the low E string to the bottom of the high E string. Your strum should have a long swath. Strum from the top of the guitar body all the way down to the bottom of the guitar body – think long strum.
4. Don't think of it like your hand is moving up and down. Think of it more in terms that you are swinging your elbow – that is the motion that you want – and keep it long and loose.

### Meter and notes:

First let's discuss meter and then on to strum patterns. We will start with quarter notes. A **quarter note is one note per beat** and one full measure of quarter notes is:

**“ONE – TWO – THREE – FOUR”**

**Key Practice Exercise:** First try strumming quarter notes with four down strums or **d/d/d/d**. Play an Em chord and strum with four down strums. Then try changing to the Asus2 chord for four down strums. Then back to the Em chord. Then to the Am9, mix it up. Practice those quarter note strums.

Now we will add up strums to the mix and play straight eighth notes. **Eighth notes** are two notes per beat and the count is:

**“ONE – AND – TWO – AND – THREE - AND – FOUR – AND”**

Two notes per beat, there is a “one-and” before you get to the two so you are playing two notes per beat with eighth notes. Let’s utilize alternate strumming with this count, up then down then up then down. The down strums will be on all the numbers or beats and the up strums will come on all the “ANDS”. So playing straight eighth notes will be this:

**d/ u / d / u / d / u / d/ u**  
**1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &**

d= downstrum      u = upstrum

Try the eighth notes up and down as above on the chords that you know. As you can probably tell it does not sound very musical. Just practice the straight eighths to get a feel for strumming up and down and getting comfortable with the proper strum mechanics. We have to add rhythm with rests and then repeat the rests to make it sound musical. We will need to learn some strum patterns.

### Strum patterns:

Strum patterns are rhythmic sets of strums with rests that can be repeated to sound a rhythm. It’s that repeated series of rests that give music its rhythm, or life’s blood.

We need that rhythm to sound musical. As you could tell from the straight eighth note strumming that you tried above it does not sound very musical. It is sounds sterile, like an exercise.

Below are a few strum patterns to get you started that have an eighth note feel to them. Remember to break strum patterns down into smaller sections when first working them up. It will take a while to get the groove of a pattern, but stick with it and soon you will get it.

Here is a great beginner strum pattern that you can use for hundreds of songs. I have found that this pattern is one that beginner students can get going fairly quickly. You can try this pattern with one of the chords you know or just grab the strings to mute them and just scratch out the rhythm, no chord is needed as you can add chords in later. Keep it simple at first, the first pattern is:

**down/down/up/up/down/up (d/d/u/u/d/u)**

Let's break it down to make it easier to get it rolling – first play two down strums (noted in red):

**down/down up/up/down/up**

Then follow it up with two up strums:

**down/down/up/up/down/up**

Then for the last part of the strum pattern play straight eighth notes with a down up:

**down/down/up/up/down/up**

Then put all three parts together slow, with good strum mechanics:

**Down/ down up/up down/up**

**Key Practice Exercises:** Keep repeating the pattern – **d/d/u/u/d/u d/d/u/u/d/u d/d/u/u/d/u** and so on. You will probably get the pattern one or two times around and then lose it. But keep at it and then next try you may have it four times or so around before losing it. Keep going until you have it locked down. Then add chords to it and try it with one chord and then with changing chords. You can also try it with progressions or songs that you know. It's a fantastic pattern that is very musical and works with tons of songs. Keep practicing and you will get it!

I have written below how the strum pattern ups and down line up with the musical time. You may not necessarily want to think of the pattern in musical time as that may throw your strum off. This visual is to show you how the count looks on paper:

<b>d</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>u</b>	<b>u</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>u</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>&amp;</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>&amp;</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>&amp;</b>
			<b>&amp;</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>&amp;</b>

## ANOTHER COOL STRUM PATTERN:

Now let's follow the above template to learn another strum pattern. This fun pattern is almost straight eighth notes. The only difference is that we are going to yank out one down strum from the straight eighth note pattern. So we will have two up strums in a row and leave out that one down strum. That will give us that needed rest. Then we repeat the pattern and we have our rhythm. This pattern is:

**down/up/down/up/up/down/up (d/u/d/u/u/d/u)**

Again, let's break the pattern down to make it easier to get rolling. Play straight eighth notes at first with a down up down up, (as indicated in red).

**down/up/down/up up/down/up**

Then for the second and last part we do an up down up – like this:

**down/up/down/up up/down/up**

Then put all three together slow with our good strum mechanics:

**down/up/down/up/up/down/up**

**Key Practice Exercises:** Keep repeating the pattern – **d/u/d/u/u/d/u d/u/d/u/u/d/u d/u/d/u/u/d/u** and so on. Just like the first strum pattern above you will probably get the pattern one or two times around and then lose it. But keep at it and then next try you may have it four times around before losing it. Keep going until you have it locked down. Then add chords to it and try it with one chord and then with changing chords. Also try with any progressions or songs that you know. Practice both strum patterns and get them both locked down and sounding great with the chords that you know.

Keep trying to freewheel the pattern over and over like the other example. Again, for this pattern much like the last one, you may not necessarily want to think of the pattern in musical time as that may throw you off. But just so you can see the count on paper it would look like this:

d	u	d	u	u	d	u
1	&	2	&	3 &	4	&

## **ANOTHER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION ON PRACTICING**

### **At this point in my guitar journey, what exactly should I be practicing?**

Another common question I get all the time has to do with practice content or practice regimens. Questions like, is there a set practice regimen I should be following? Or, what exactly do I need to be practicing to ensure I am practicing the “right things”? Very good questions indeed.

At this point in your guitar journey you should be dividing your practice time up into sections. You need to hit the three goals we set at the same time. For whatever practice time you have over twenty minutes break it up into separate sections and spend time on the following:

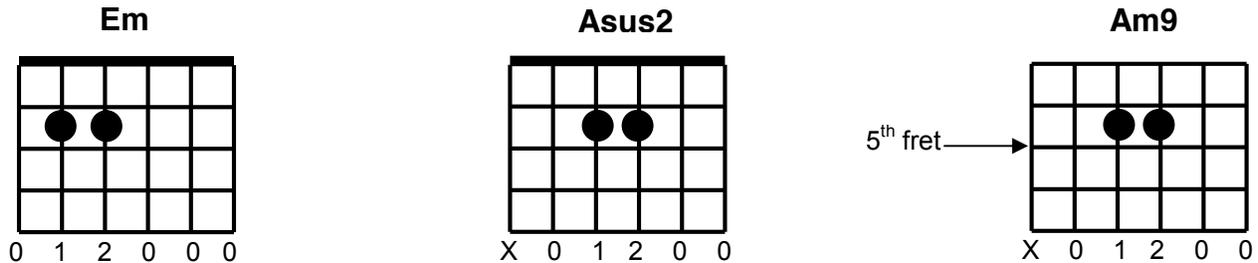
1. Learn the first batch of 12 open position chords as I have diagrammed out on the coming pages. Remember that you will eventually be able to play thousands of songs with these basic 12 chords. At first play the notes of the chord individually and then strum the whole chord and let the chord ring out to check it is ringing true with no open string noises, pops, strings bent, or fingers hitting other strings. Learn the chord fingerings and memorize the names. Your goal is eventually to learn all 12 chords, know their names and shapes, and have all of them sounding awesome. (Note: this will take time so it will be an ongoing evolution in your playing, try adding a new chord every few days).
2. Practice the proper fret hand technique as taught in the above lessons. It is absolutely crucial to be playing these chords properly. Remember to keep the wrist down, the fingers cupped and in a tight cluster, all fingers extremely close to the fretboard at all times, and your pinky hitching a ride attached to that third finger.
3. Work on your strumming and rhythm. Get the first two strum patterns down cold and practice them with the chords you know and eventually the chord changing exercises I list on the coming pages. Work on your strum mechanics and getting your up strums and down strums the same volume. Practice getting that arm loose and freewheeling. Let the force of your arm bring the pick through the strings and it will cut through the strings while you strum, like a knife cuts through warm butter.
4. Practice your chord changing and good changing mechanics as outlined in the lessons on the coming pages. Practice the harder changes that you are struggling with back and forth, back and forth. Hit chord changes every day for a few minutes. Write down the ones you struggle with in your log and practice them while watching TV, remember it's the muscle memory that you are working. Go through the chord changing exercises and proper chord changing techniques listed in the coming lessons. Knock changes out one at a time. Keep pushing yourself to complete harder and harder chord changes, that is how you will get better – by constantly pushing yourself on the instrument.

Practice string chord changes together into progressions and working them with different strum patterns. Once you know some chords and how to strum, then practice chord changing and soon you will be playing songs – that fast!

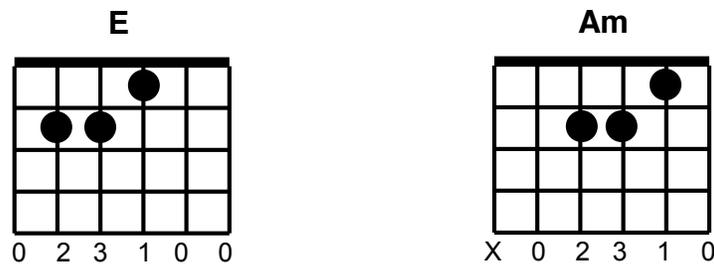
## OPEN POSITION CHORDS TO LEARN:

Start working on learning these open position chords. Learn them in the order shown on the next few pages. Each new one will prepare you for the coming chords. Remember that the small “m” next to the chord name denotes “minor”.

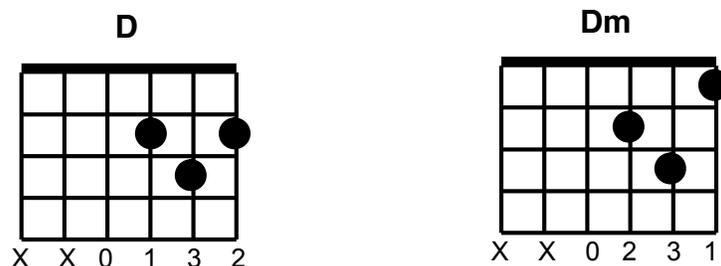
These were the first three chords that you learned in the above lessons:



The next two chords for you to learn will be Emajor and Aminor. Look at the chord charts below and notice that both chords share the exact same voicing. Just drop the Emajor down one string each and you have Aminor. Same principle as with the above chords Eminor and Asus2 – same chord shapes.

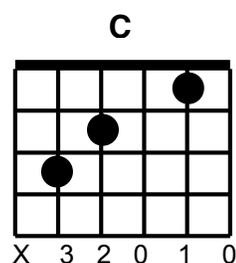
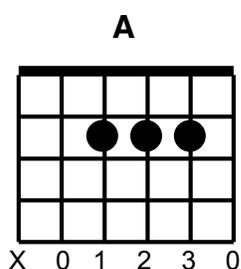


Notice that with the next two chords you **DO NOT** play the low E string as well as you **DO NOT** play the A string. These are two four note chords so for now try to avoid hitting the low E and A strings when playing these chords.

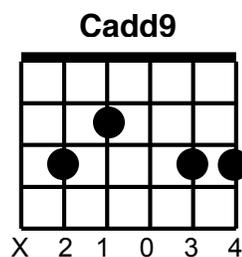
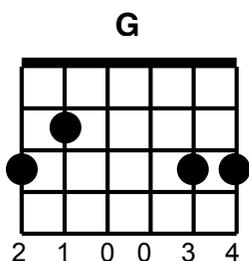


The next two chords will be a little trickier. Notice for the A major chord all three fingers get crammed into the second fret. Keep practicing the chord till you find the sweet spot on your guitar where you feel comfortable playing all three strings within the same fret.

The C major chord requires a bit of a stretch across three frets. Practice with the wrist down and getting a good stretch across the frets. The low E string is not played and needs to be muted so it does not ring out and muddy the chord. Let the very tip of your third finger “spill” over the A string and slightly touch the low E string thus muting it so it will not be heard when strumming the chord. Or you can also mute the low E string with your thumb by having it come slightly over the top of the neck and just touch the low E to deaden it. You can use this muting technique for any of the chords in which you don't play the low E string. This way you can strum all the strings and not have to worry about that low E string ringing out as it will be muted.



The next two chords will require utilizing all four fingers on your fret hand. Look at the chart below and notice that both chords share the same voicing. If you drop the G major chord down one string each you have the Cadd9 chord. It's a fun change to practice, as many songs have that G to Cadd9 chord movement.



## THE F MAJOR CHORD – YOU CAN DO IT!

The F major chord is one of the more challenging chords to learn and master when first starting on guitar. In fact it will probably be the hardest chord you have faced to date. This is due to the need to bar across two strings with your first finger while stretching to the third fret with your third finger. So it requires both some strength and a bit of a stretch.

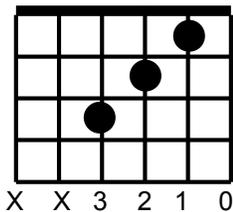
The F chord is in a lot of songs, so you will definitely want to add it to your ever growing chord catalog. This one will take some time to master so be patient. We will start with an easier chord to get you prepared to tackle the F major chord.

Remember to utilize the fingering listed below and play the notes of the chord individually to ensure all notes are ringing true. If you are hearing muted strings, other strings ringing, or any other noises check your technique and fret hand position to examine why the chord is not sounding proper.

Narrow it down string by string until you find the culprit and correct. Eventually once you learn bar chords you will utilize an F major bar chord in place of the smaller four-string F chord. However, there is still a lot of value in learning the four string F major chord and having it in your chord vocabulary.

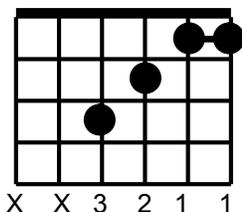
All students struggle with the F chord at first, but if you keep practicing and pecking away, it will come with time just like all the other open position chords that you have learned. We will start off with an F major seventh chord, (Fmaj7), as a pre-cursor in getting to the F major chord.

### Fmaj7



**F major seventh chord, Fmaj7** – Try this chord in preparation to play the F major chord. This Fmaj7 chord is a four-string chord. You do not play the low E string and the A string. The high E string is played open. Major 7th chords are very sweet and jazzy sounding, very pretty sounding chords. Use this chord for now and in place of the F chord until you get the below chord nailed down.

### F



**F major** – This F major chord has no open strings. Do not play the low E string and the A. Utilize your first finger as a bar and press firmly down on the high E and B strings. Sometimes it helps if you angle the bar a little. If you are not able to stretch far enough to reach the A and F notes with your 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> fingers then move the whole shape up to the 7<sup>th</sup> fret and practice it there where the frets are closer together. Then slowly move the shape back down the fretboard as you practice the chord each day and your fingers get used to the stretch. Don't get discouraged, this is one of the hardest chords to get at first. Stay positive and it will come with time. Keep chipping away at it every day.

**Key Note:** Do not get discouraged – it may take a little bit to get the fingerings down and for these chords to start sounding very clean – that is normal – it takes time for your finger tendons and wrist to get adjusted to these new positions. Keep positive and it will come with time.

## **CHORD CHART AND PRACTICE REVIEW:**

- ➡ Chord = any two or more notes played at the same time.
- ➡ Open position chords = chords played with at least one open string.
- ➡ Small “m” = minor.
- ➡ The black dots show where to put your fingers.
- ➡ On your fret hand, pointer finger is 1, middle finger is 2, ring finger is 3, and pinky finger is 4
- ➡ The numbers below the strings refer to the fingers to be utilized when forming each chord.
- ➡ A "0" below the indicated string means that that string is played open, (not fingered).
- ➡ An "X" below the indicated string means that string is not played. In most instances it will need to be muted.

**Key Practice Exercises for Chords:** The goal is to get all the open chords memorized and sounding great. You want to get each note of each chord to ring true. First play the notes of the chord individually, letting them ring out to ensure there are no overtones, muted strings, or strings being bent. Then strum the chord playing all notes together. Again check that the chord sounds clean. At first, practice fingering the chords and lifting all your fingers off the fretboard slightly, but keeping them in the same shape, then placing them back on the fret board in the same position. Check that the chord still rings true and your fingers have not moved out of position. Continue to work on and learn new chords every day to get the first dozen open chords down cold.

**Key Practice Exercises for Strumming and Rhythm:** The goal is to learn both strum patterns as taught in the above lessons. Practice them till you can roll through them without even thinking of up strums and down strums. Get them to where they are loose and sound rhythmically flowing, not sterile and mechanical sounding. Use the strum patterns to play the chords that you know and for changing chords as outlined in the lessons to follow.

## **CHORD CHANGING TECHNIQUES AND PRINCIPLES:**

Chord changing can be one of the most challenging aspects of beginner guitar. At first it seems almost impossible to go from one chord to another in time while strumming. I assure you we all go through these challenges when learning guitar and it just takes practice and patience.

If you regularly practice the chord changing techniques and principles in the coming lessons you will soon be tackling the most challenging of changes. I developed these techniques to take the frustration out of chord changing and to get you playing music fast.

You will find some chord changes to be easier than others. With practice, the easier changes will become automatic. You won't even have to be thinking about them consciously. You will soon be amazed that your fingers will just fall into place. This is the muscle memory taking effect that I spoke of earlier in this book.

As taught in previous lessons, a good practice device is to fret a chord and practice lifting your fingers off the fret board slightly while keeping the fret fingers in the same chord shape. Then place your fingers back on the fret board in the same chord position. Pick all the notes of the chord individually and then strum the chord, this will ensure that all notes ring clean and your fingers have not shifted.

Good fret hand technique, as taught in previous lessons, is vital in order to get proficient at chord changing. Many of the chord change practice exercises that I outline in the coming lessons, you will see over and over again in many popular songs. So getting these changes down now with good technique will ensure an easier road when beginning to play songs.

### **When changing chords you always want to utilize the following techniques.**

1. Practice the chord change mechanics by switching with only one strum per chord to get used to the finger movements and to check that all notes of both chords are ringing true. Go back and forth between the two chords till fluid. Practice back and forth, back and forth.
2. Try to move your fingers all at once, not one at a time.
3. Keep your fingers close to the fretboard at all times in a nice tight cluster. Don't have your fingers flying out of position. Keep the fingers in close and tight.
4. Look for shared fingers, clusters, and slides as explained below.
5. Keep that pinky finger attached to the side of the third finger.

**Key Practice:** Once you have the chord change mechanics down for a given change, try it while strumming. Start off very slow and count in time counting quarter notes "One – Two – Three – Four" – change – then repeat. When you have the change solid with quarter notes then practice the change with a strum pattern. Take your time, the speed of the change will come. At first practice chord changes two at a time. Then start putting those two-chord changes together to make three and four chord changes and BAM.....you will be playing songs!

## THE SHARED FINGERS CHORD CHANGING TECHNIQUE:

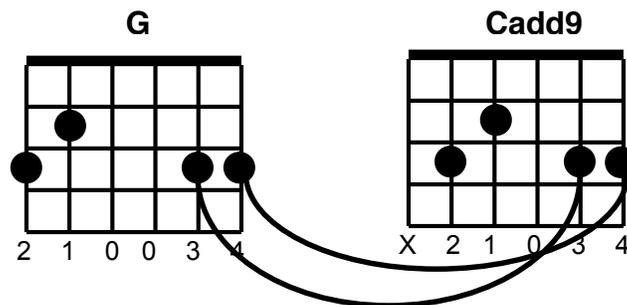
When changing chords you want to examine the fingerings for each chord to determine if there are any common fingered notes between each chord. If one or two fingers are to remain pressed on the same note, then leave them pressed down as you move to the next chord while moving your other fingers around the common ones.

Its critical that you don't take any fingers off the neck if you don't have to, especially if you are just going to put them right back in the same place with the next chord. Always analyze chord change fingerings in this fashion, this way there isn't any non-necessary finger movements.

**G to Cadd9 change** – In the illustration below the two chords share two of the same notes. You want to use that to your advantage when changing between them. When changing from a G to a Cadd9 chord leave your third and fourth fingers down on the B and high E strings. There is no reason to pick them up just to put them right back in the same place.

Just slide your first and second fingers straight down one string each. Slide your fingers right on the strings leaving them in the same cluster to perform this change fluidly. Don't lift them straight off the neck, rather slide them down the strings keeping them as close to the fretboard as possible.

Try the chord change mechanics first without even strumming, just a dry change between the two chords. Then try the change with a slow quarter note strum. When you are confident making the change with quarter notes, then try with a strum pattern.



## Key practice chord change exercises:

For all the chord changing techniques you will be learning, I will list specific chord change exercises to practice so you can master each change. The goal is to get fluid at each change. Be sure to chart your progress in your practice log and try to practice chord changing ten minutes every day.

You wont hit the change in time every time at first. You may only find that you can hit it 20% of the time. Just keep practicing and soon you will get it 45% of the time, then 70% of the time and so on until you have it cold.

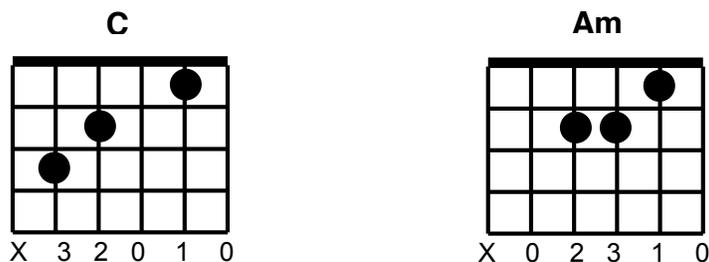
Once you have it cold you will be able to do that change in any piece of music you want. So you want to knock out as many of the coming two chord changes as possible. Get them all down cold in your back pocket and then playing songs will be easy as pie!

All the changes on the page below utilize the shared fingers principle. Be sure to practice them every day. Practice the dry change first and work on the solid chord change mechanics as taught in the previous lessons. Work the change back and forth, back and forth, till fluid and comfortable.

## **SHARED FINGERS CHORD CHANGE PRACTICE:**

Keep in mind that you won't get the changes every time right off the bat. Usually the process includes getting the mechanics of the change down, then with strumming, and working the fingers to move all at the same time together to make the change. Then you hit the change but not every time. With practice you will nail the change more and more consistently until you have it down cold.

**C to Am change** – In the illustration below, notice the first and second fingers are fretting notes that are shared between the two chords. Therefore you leave those two fingers down, as they don't have to be picked up when executing this change.



Switching from C to Am only requires the movement of the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger from the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret of the A string to the A note on the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret of the G-string. If needed, nudge your second finger over just a bit to make a little room for the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger within that second fret. Leave the first and second fingers in place from the C chord as you move to the Am chord. Practice this change back and forth until its fluid.

**Cadd9 to D change** – When completing this change leave your third finger down on the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret of the B string. That note is shared between both chords. Then at the same time move your first and 2<sup>nd</sup> fingers together picking them slightly off the fretboard to finger the D chord. Go back and forth between these two chords until fluid. Then while strumming, quarter and eighth notes.

**D to G change** – Utilize the *shared finger principle* when executing this change by leaving your 3<sup>rd</sup> finger on the D note, 3<sup>rd</sup> fret B strings. Then all together move your first and second fingers up to finger the G chord while moving your pinky onto the G note, 3<sup>rd</sup> fret high E string. Keep practicing this movement back and forth, back and forth, and it will become very fluid over time.

**G to Cadd9 to D** - Put the above changes back to back into a three-chord change and you will have the beginning of many popular songs! After the D chord go back to the G chord and keep rolling through the three changes.

**G to Em change** – When changing from G to Em utilize shared fingers by leaving your first finger on the B note, 2<sup>nd</sup> fret A string. Then take your second finger from the low E string and slide it under your first finger on the E note, 2<sup>nd</sup> fret D string. Lift off the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> fingers to complete the change.

**Em to C change** - Concentrate on the shared finger, leaving the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger on the E note on the D string 2<sup>nd</sup> fret, and pivot your 1st and 3rd fingers around that note to form the C chord. Move your 1st finger to the C note on the B string 1<sup>st</sup> fret, and your 3rd finger to the C note on the A string 3<sup>rd</sup> fret. Practice pivoting the first and third fingers together around that shared 2<sup>nd</sup> finger.

**Dm to G change** - Leave your third finger on the D note 3<sup>rd</sup> fret, B string when changing to the G chord. Move your first and second fingers at the same time up to the G chord position while leaving your third finger in the same place and then adding your pinky to the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret of the high E string.

## THE CLUSTER PRINCIPLE CHORD CHANGING TECHNIQUE:

The chord changing techniques you are learning throughout this section of the book are absolutely critical for your guitar success. Earlier we discussed the importance in analyzing chord changes for shared fingers. Now we will learn about clustering.

Clustering is where you can leave your fingers in the same grouping, or “cluster”, as you move through a chord change. There is no reason to open your hand up and come out of a tight fret finger grouping when it is not necessary.

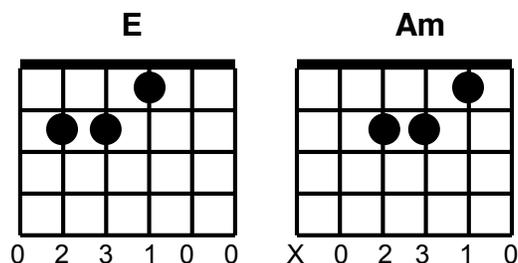
By keeping the fingers clustered together you don't waste time and efforts reshaping your fingers to voice the next chord. Keeping your fret hand in a tight cluster close to the fretboard at all times makes changing chords much easier and faster.

To illustrate the cluster principle let's examine changing chords from E to Am.

**E to Am change** – Changing from E to Am or Am to E is a fairly simple chord change to execute because the chord shapes are exactly the same and are played with the exact same fingerings. Check the illustration below and notice how the chord shapes are identical, just played on different strings.

To execute the change from E to Am, concentrate on leaving your fingers in the exact same **cluster** as you lift off the E chord and just slide the whole shape down one string. As you move the chord shape down on the strings, your fingers should not come apart at all. They need to remain in that tight grouping or cluster.

It's a quick lift off and put back maneuver. As always do not allow your fingers to come far off the fret board, just slide them right along the strings. Keep them close in and formed in the same shape and that pinky attached hitching a ride on that third finger. Practice the move back and forth, back and forth.



## CLUSTER PRINCIPLE CHORD CHANGE PRACTICE:

Follow the same protocol for practicing the below cluster chord changes as you did for the shared fingers practice chord changes. Remember to keep executing the changes with the proper fret hand technique and work the changes every day. Keep that fret hand in a tight cluster close to the fretboard at all times, **DO NOT** take that hand apart or away from the fretboard.

**Em to Am change** - To switch between the Em and Am chords first play the Em chord with your 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> fingers, not the usual 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> fingers. This will make it easier to execute the chord change.

From Em slide both the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> fingers down one string each while keeping those two fingers clustered together in a tight package. At the same time add your 1st finger on the C note on the B string 1<sup>st</sup> fret to complete the Am chord.

Then when going back from the Am to the Em just lift the 1st finger off the B string and again leave your 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> fingers in the same tight cluster, just move them up one string each. Remember to keep your fingers as close as possible to the fret board. Practice the mechanics of this change back and forth.

**A to Em change** – With the A chord you have your 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> fingers all on the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret. When changing from the A to Em leave your 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> fingers clustered and attached together. Just slide them up one string each keeping them in the same cluster to form the Em chord. Take your 3<sup>rd</sup> finger slightly off the fretboard and keep that pinky finger hitching a ride attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger. Remember to keep your fingers close to the fretboard, just move them off the strings slightly when you move from the A chord to the Em chord.

**Dm to E change** – to execute the change between Dm and E all three fingers will change positions during the change. The goal is to keep them clustered together as best as possible and keep that pinky finger attached hitching a ride on the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger. The first finger stays on the first fret, just move it up two strings to the G string. At the same time the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> fingers move up but stay one under the other and come down at the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret on the A and D strings. Remember to keep trying your best to move all fingers at once, not one at a time.

**C to D change** – This change will give you practice taking all three fingers slightly off the strings and coming down in another shape. There are no shared fingers in this change. The main point here is to keep your fingers as close to the fretboard as possible and move them all at the same time when moving between the chords. You also want to keep that pinky finger attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger hitching a ride. Keep practicing the movement in this change and it will get very fluid with time.

**Am to Dm change** – When executing this change utilize the cluster principle and keep your fingers in the same basic shape, just spread it out for the extra fret when dropping down to the Dm chord. Although the two chords do share one note, all three fingers need to change positions. Keep all fingers clustered together and just slide them in unison one fret distance to finger the D minor chord. Practice this motion until you have it solid and in time add in a strum pattern.

## **THE SLIDE PRINCIPLE CHORD CHANGE TECHNIQUE AND PRACTICE:**

There are times when you change chords that you will have to lift all your fingers off all the notes on the fretboard to form the next chord. There will be no shared notes and possibly no common clusters between certain changes. So we want to learn one more chord changing technique to make changing chords as frustration free as possible. Keep in mind no matter what the change is your fret hand must stay close to the fretboard and not come apart.

Even though some changes do not share notes there are instances where you can keep a finger or two down on the fretboard and just slide them into position for the next chord. Your finger won't come off the fretboard so to speak, it will just slide down a fret or two.

This slide provides you with a "guide" of sorts that leads you into the next chord. Usually you will find a slide change example where the next chord has a note on the same string but one or two frets over. Let's analyze some chord changes where the slide principle comes in handy.

**A to D change** – To execute this change leave your third finger on the B string 2<sup>nd</sup> fret and just slide it over from the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret to the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret when making the change. Don't take the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger off the fretboard, just slide it down a half step.

At the same time you are sliding, move the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> fingers down to the D chord keeping the fingers close to the fretboard and in a tight cluster.

Keep your other fingers close to the fretboard and clustered together coming off the A chord and lift them slightly off the strings to get to the D chord. Practice that slide maneuver back and forth.

**E to D change** – To execute this change you will use that first finger to slide into the next chord. Leave the 1<sup>st</sup> finger on the G# note, G-string 1<sup>st</sup> fret and as you start the change to the D slide the 1<sup>st</sup> finger up one fret, (a half step). At the same time you are sliding, slightly lift the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> fingers from and the A and D strings and fret the D and F# notes on the B and high E strings to form the D chord. Keep your hand together and clustered. Practice this motion and soon the slide will be a very fluid movement that will make chord changes faster and easier.

**A to D minor change** – This change will incorporate both shared fingers and the slide principle. These chords share the A note on the G string 2<sup>nd</sup> fret so leave your 2<sup>nd</sup> finger down on that A note. Slide your third finger from the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret of the B string to the third fret of the B string. The last part of the change is to be done at the same time you are sliding on the B string. Move your first finger from the E note, 2<sup>nd</sup> fret D string, to the F note, 1<sup>st</sup> fret, high E string. Remember, like with the other changes, you want to train your fingers to execute these moves together at the same time. It takes practice, but stay positive, keep working on it and it will come!

## TECHNIQUES REVIEW:

### Fret hand and chord changing techniques review

1. **SPEED** - Playing slow and clean is **ALWAYS** better than fast and sloppy.
2. **TECHNIQUE** - Remember to always play with proper fret hand technique
3. **ATTITUDE** - Stay positive and do not get discouraged. It will take a while to get chord fingerings memorized and to get chords sounding totally clean. Your playing is an evolution.
4. **CHORDS** - When learning new chords, play the chord one note at a time before strumming to ensure all notes of the chord ring true. Each note should sound clean with no dead strings, pops, or overtones from other strings.
5. **CHANGING CHORDS** - Focus on moving fingers only slightly off the fret board when changing chords. Keep your fret hand in a tight cluster and don't open it up or pull it away from the guitar neck.
6. **PINKY FINGER** - Keep you pinky finger attached to your third finger tucked tight and hitching a ride. Also the wrist should be down, fingers cupped, and stay on your fingertips.
7. **STRUMMING** – At first strum very slowly. Strum as slow as necessary to make the changes in time. Remember that the faster you strum then the faster you will have to make the changes to stay in time.
8. **ANALYZE** – Pull chord changes apart and analyze them for shared fingers, clusters, and slides.

Keep practicing two chord changes individually until they are very fluid and they will eventually become automatic. Then tie two chord changes together into three or more chord change progressions. Remember...Rome was not built in a day. Stay positive, take your time, keep practicing and it will come!

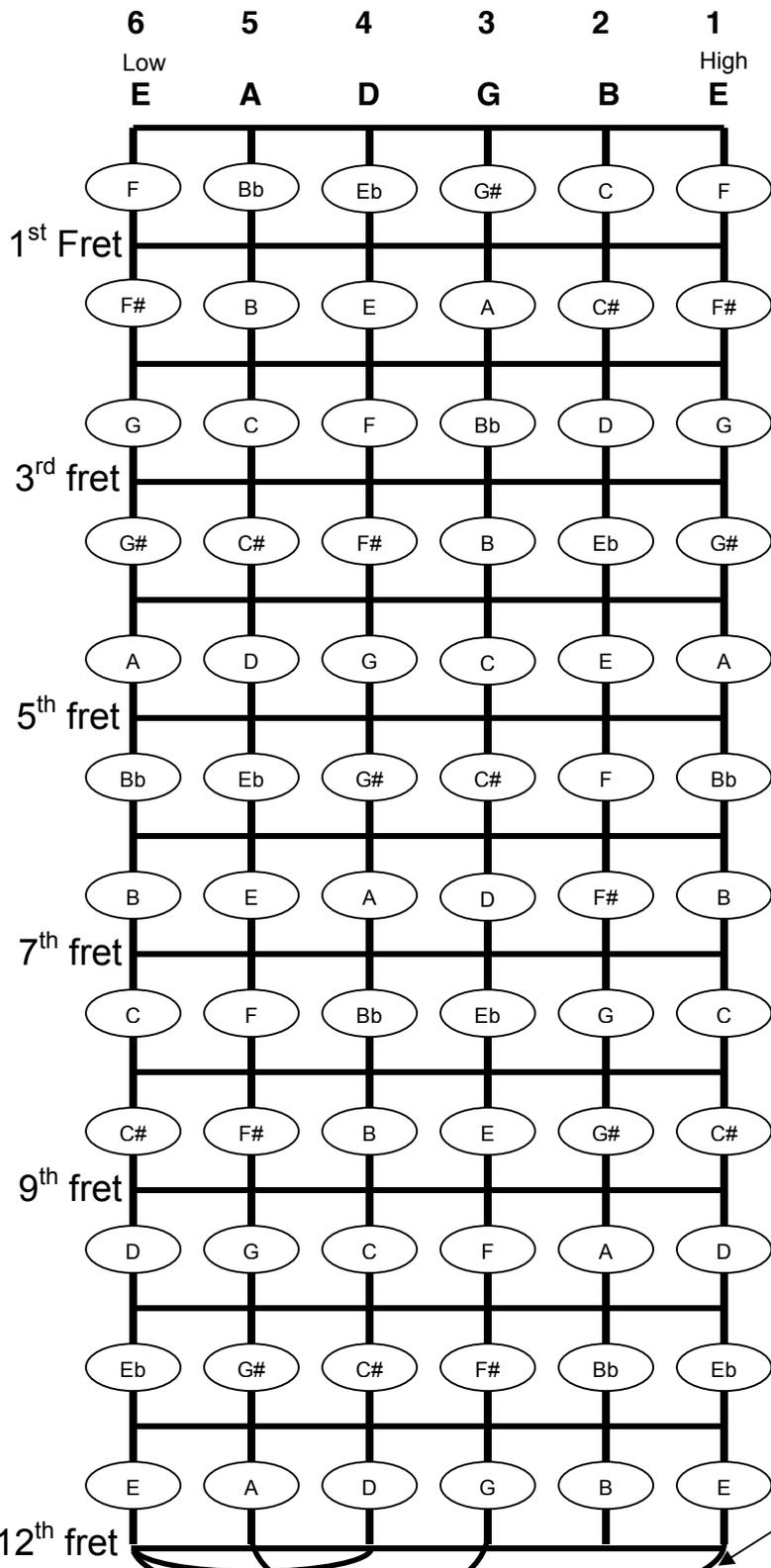
### FOUR-CHORD CHANGE PRACTICE EXAMPLE:

#### G – Em – C - D

When taking on multiple chord changes do not feel overwhelmed. Just think of the string as a connected bunch of two chord changes and analyze them two at a time. The G to Em change has a shared finger. The Em to C change also has a shared finger as we execute that change with the pivot maneuver. The hardest change in this progression will be the change from C to D, as you will have to move all three fingers off the C chord to change to the D chord. Then the D back to the G has a shared finger.

Break the changes down to two at a time and practice them individually. G to Em, then Em to C, then C to D, and finally D back to G. When you have all the change mechanics solid for each change then try to tie them together in time to play the four-chord change. Work through the finger movements first, then with quarter notes, and then with strum patterns. You will be on your way to learning an endless stream of songs and enjoying the guitar for the rest of your life- rock on!

# NOTES ON THE FRETBOARD:



Edie Ate Dynamite Good Bye Edie

# = SHARP  
b = FLAT

**E and D strings** are related – from any note on the E string go 2 strings down and 2 frets over, you have the same note an octave higher on the D string.

**Low E and High E strings** have same note names on each fret – just two octaves apart.

**A and G strings** are related – from any note on the A string go 2 strings down and 2 frets over, you have the same note an octave higher on the G string.

The twelve-note scale consists of:  
**A, Bb, B, C, C#, D, Eb, E, F, F#, G, G#**