

# Playing Guitar

The guitar is a wonderfully expressive and versatile musical instrument. If you learn the guitar **basics**— about a dozen chords, some music theory, and some simple (and not so simple) rhythm patterns— you can use these skills to accompany your singing, to play along with other instruments (music ensembles), or play the guitar unaccompanied.

The strings on a guitar are numbered 1 through 6, with the highest pitched string (closest to your feet) numbered 1 and the lowest pitched string (closest to your head) numbered 6. The strings are tuned, 6-5-4-3-2-1: EADGBE.

1	-----	<b>E (high)</b>
2	-----	<b>B</b>
3	-----	<b>G</b>
4	-----	<b>D</b>
5	-----	<b>A</b>
6	-----	<b>E (low)</b>

by pressing your fingers in various combinations on the strings you play **chords**, three or more strings played at the same time.

When singing, you can accompany yourself by strumming chords, one after the other, in a **chord progression**. Here is a typical chord progression of major and minor chords:

|G Em| C D| G Em |C D|

Obviously, a guitarist must be able to change from one chord to the other smoothly and quickly, and these skills will take up most of your energy and attention when you begin learning guitar. As you move from one chord to the next in a song, the three questions you must answer are: which *finger* goes on which *string* and which *fret*? As you play a series of chords you will learn the pattern, at first slowly and awkwardly, but then, as you play the sequence **slowly and correctly** you will create a muscle memory of these movements, and eventually you will play from memory. There are techniques for speeding up this process that your guitar instructor will demonstrate.

The basic set of chords are called "open chords" because they are all chords that contain "open" strings, strings that are not shortened by pushing on the frets. The open chords include A, C, D, E, G, Em, Am, Dm.

Because there are an infinite number of chord progressions, it is helpful to learn more than one fingering for some of these chords, allowing smoother transition from one chord to the next. For example, when you play a G major chord followed by a C major chord, the transition is made easier if you play the G major chord using fingers 2-3-4 rather than 1-2-3. This will be demonstrated by your guitar instructor.

Bar chords are moveable chords played by using your index finger to "bar" across the guitar neck, effectively shortening the length of many strings at once. When you can play bar chords in four basic shapes (E, Em, A, Am) and play these shapes in various locations up and down the neck, you are on the way to playing countless "rock" songs. They are easy to play because you use the same shape in various places on the guitar neck to play chords. Each of the shapes (the Es and the As) have an "indicator" string that tells you the name of the chord. More on this later.

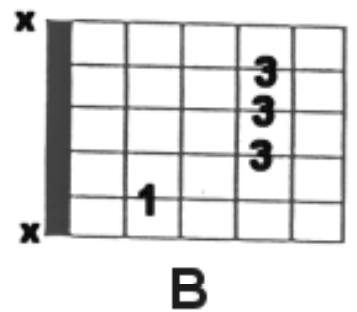
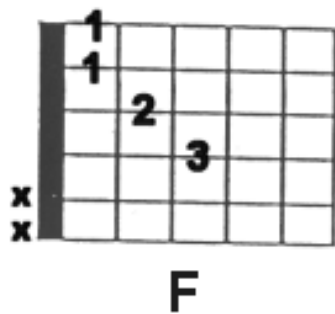
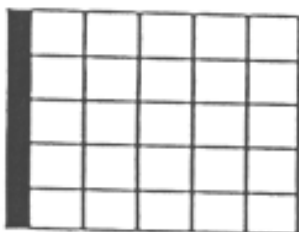
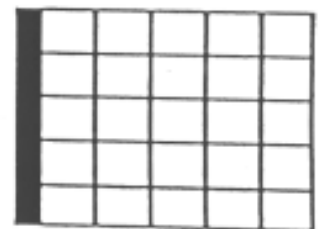
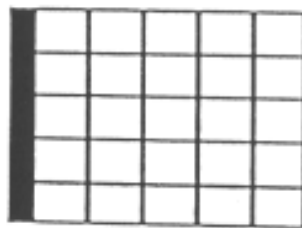
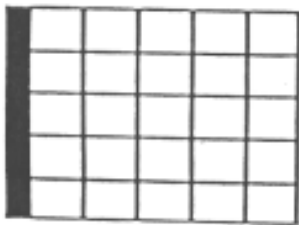
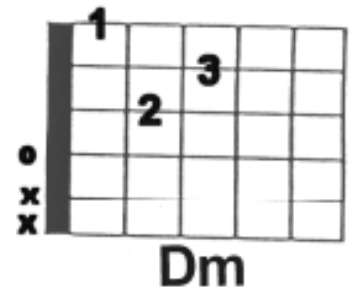
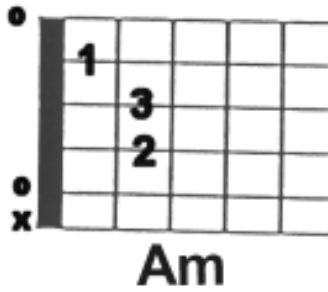
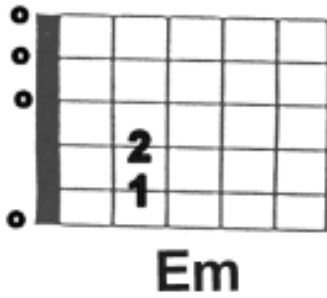
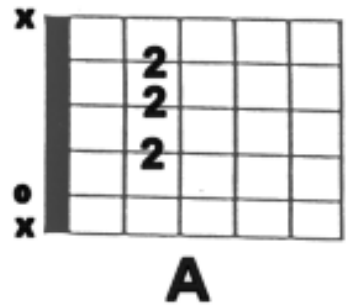
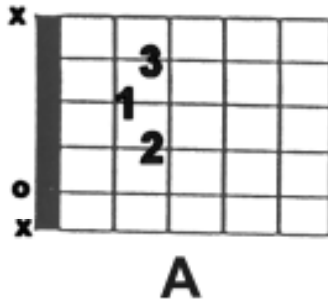
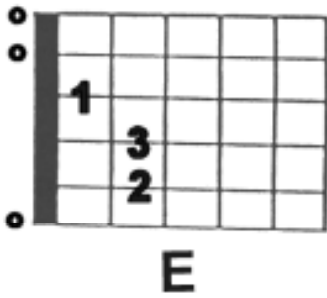
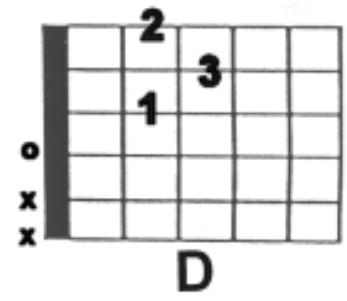
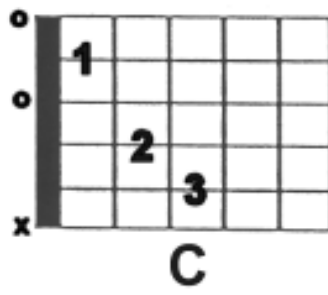
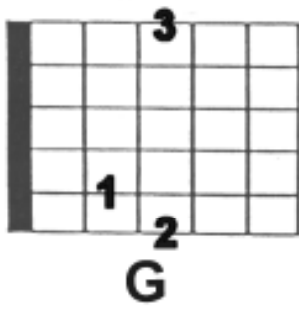
Rhythm is a vital part of guitar playing and brings a song "alive." Basically, you strum a guitar in patterns of downstrokes and upstrokes, and these patterns will often "define" how a song sounds when played. Certain songwriter/performers have signature rhythms, such as Johnny Cash or Tom Petty.

In addition to chords, scales are an important part of guitar playing. Learn the major scale pattern starting on various positions so that you can play a two-octave major scale.

The fingers on the left hand are numbered as follows: index (1), middle (2), ring (3), little (4). The thumb, rarely used to play a chord, is labeled T.

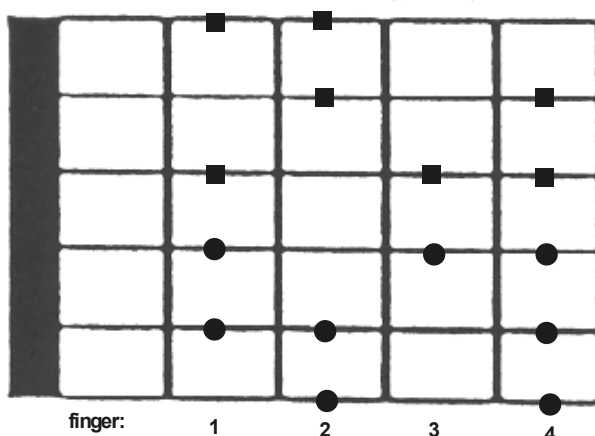
What follows is a chart of basic chords, fingerboard chart showing notes, diagrams for major scales, and the four bar chord shapes and how to use them to create many chords from just four chord shapes. **The way you learn how to play is to play. Play... play... play:** listen to as many songs as you can, and work on playing cleanly, transitioning smoothly from one chord to the next. If you learn the chords as shown, and master a few basic rhythm patterns, you'll be well on the way to playing guitar.

# Basic Guitar Chords



## MAJOR SCALES

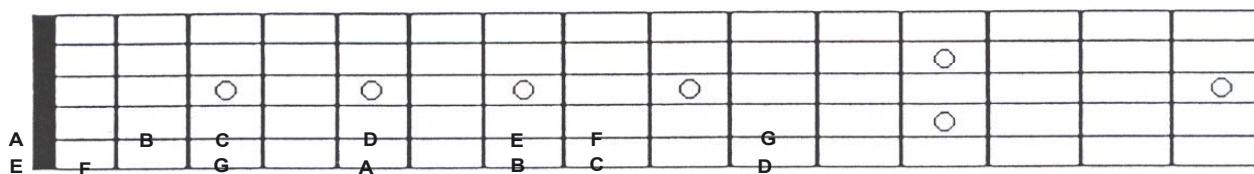
The major scale is the basic source of Western music. You should know how to play major scales to help you understand the concept of a song's key, to learn the concept of chord "families" within the key, to get you started playing solos, and to develop the mechanics of note production. Here is the major scale pattern, in this example, the G major scale, in two octaves. The second major scale is represented with square markers.



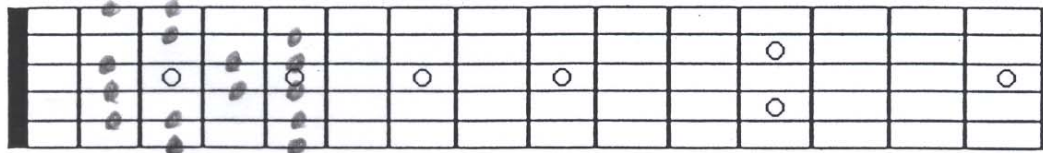
## BAR CHORDS

Bar chords are slideable chord shapes that are so named because the index finger creates a bar across the neck, effectively shortening the length of all the played strings. There are four basic bar chord shapes that allow you to play all twenty-four major and minor chords. These shapes are A major, A minor, E major and E minor.

The bar chords can be determined by learning the following note names on the E and the A string. By playing the "E" shape bar chord with the index finger in the various positions shown on the E string, the named note also names the chord. By playing the "A" shape with the index finger in the various positions shown on the A string the named note also names the chord.



G major scale



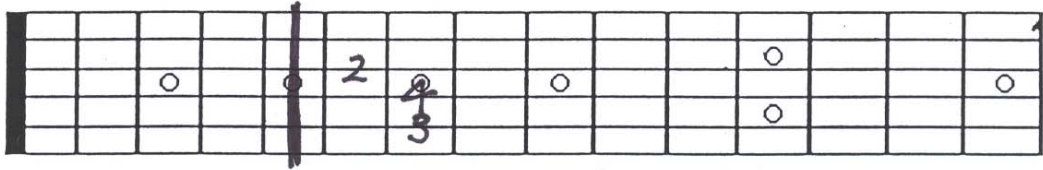
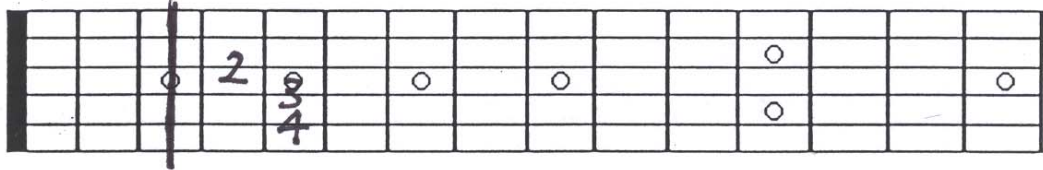
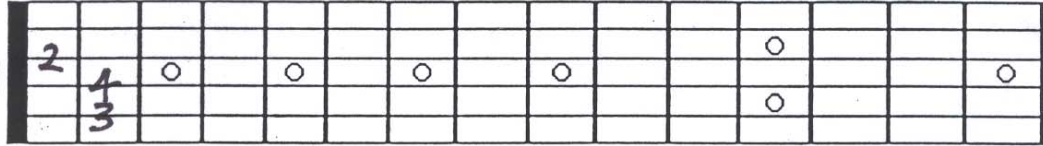
BAR CHORD SHAPES

E

makes

G

A



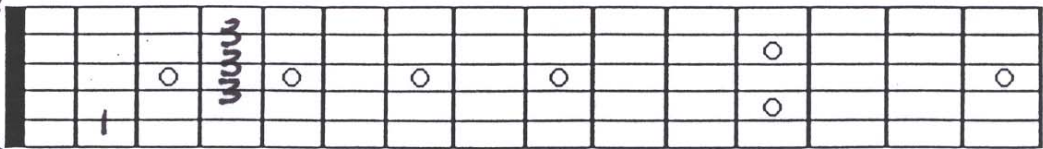
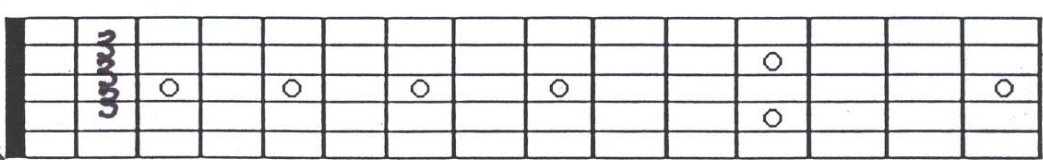
A

makes

B

D

F



MINOR BAR CHORD SHAPES

A<sub>m</sub>

x

E<sub>m</sub>

o

o

o

