

IF ONLY THEY HAD TOLD ME

THE LITTLE I KNOW ABOUT PLAYING GUITAR



TOM COLE

Thanks to

John, Paul, George, and Ringo; George and Ira Gershwin, Bob Dylan, Bob Wills, Brian Wilson, Buddy Holly, Carole King, Cindy Walker, Django Rinehart, Douglas B. Green, Fred Labour, Woody Crisman, Joey Miskulin, Duke Ellington, Fats Waller, Pete Huttlinger, Stephen Bennett, Fred Rogers, Fred Rose, Freddy Greene, Gene Autry, Gus Kahn, Hoagie Carmichael, Louis Armstrong, Dolly Parton, W.C. Handy, John Denver, Johnny Mercer, Keith Richards, Kris Khristofferson, Ray Davies, Merle Travis, Chet Atkins, Mick Jagger, Roy Rogers, Scott Joplin, Sonny Bono, Stephen Foster, Steve Allen, Tony Bennett, Irving Berlin, Bruce Connoles...

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Introduction

“And by the way, you could have told me up front that all that wicked witch needed was good spritzing. I’d have bucketed the old bag the first day I was here!” —Dorothy

Look at the Table of Contents. Any working musician will know exactly what each chapter is about. If you do not, these are the things that that you didn’t learn studying on your own or were not told in lessons and should have been—and this book is for you whether you are a beginner that knows some basic chords and can play a couple of songs or a old timer like me who has been hacking along for many years.

The concepts, though often basic and easy, will serve both kinds of players and will give you the advantage of very practical theory. This basic theory will allow you to play songs by ear and play in any key. It will give you the confidence to use substitutions¹ and play chords anywhere on the fingerboard. Perhaps more importantly, it will show you how songs are constructed, let you jazz them up with cool new chords and strategies, help you understand classic tunes, and more easily write your own modern classics.

The Glinda Treatment

If you aren’t familiar with what you see in the table of contents of this book, then perhaps you, like me, have had what I have come to refer to as “The Glinda Treatment.”

Glinda

You don't need to be helped any longer. You've always had the power to go back to Kansas.

¹ Using a substitution is playing the same chord with different fingering and, thus, a different “voice.”

Dorothy
I have?

Scarecrow
Then why didn't you tell her before?

Glinda
Because she wouldn't have believed me. She had to learn it for herself.

Dorothy
What 'wouldn't have believed you?' I believed in wizards and fairy godmothers for crying out loud, so I was obviously gullible enough to believe anything at all—especially if I thought it would get me out of the hell hole of Oz.

Glinda
You had to learn it for yourself.

Dorothy
Oh, *please!* What do you expect me to learn in an information vacuum? That all I've got to do is tap my heels together and say, 'There's no place like home?'

Glinda
Well, as a matter of fact...

Well, you get the idea. The Scarecrow asks a very good question: "Why didn't you tell her before?" And Glinda doesn't have a very good answer.

With the Glinda treatment, a player is left to learn things "on her own" and will play the same ham and egg chords in the same way forever and a day.

I'm not getting on guitar teacher's cases. I just see that most everyone I run into has the same blanks in their guitar knowledge. I'm not exactly sure why that is. Maybe they all learned on their own.

How to Use the Book

This book is for readers and doers. You read ideas and explanations and then you put them into use by doing the guitar part. Every time you are to pick up your guitar you will see a picture of a guitar like this:



Pick up your guitar and play these parts every time without exception (except right now)—even if some seem to be too easy and you find yourself saying, "Yeah, yeah." Picking up your guitar when you see the picture will let you hear what I'm talking about and I'm betting that even more experienced guitar players will sometimes find themselves saying, "Actually, that *does* have a nice sound." or "I'm glad I didn't skip playing that simple bit because I see now what he means to say there."

I hope I have made the book an easy read, so my advice is to read it all and do all of the exercises.

Assumptions

I assume a few things about the reader—first that he or she has had a standard education (which always includes at least some basic music instruction) and knows that # is the symbol for “sharp” and b is the symbol for “flat” etc. But I don’t assume too much more than that. If you’re a beginner and don’t know what I mean when, for example, I say a “seventh chord,” don’t worry. There will be an explanation later on; it’s just that I can’t explain everything at once. Simply play the chord the way it is shown in the chord diagram and proceed knowing that

I'll explain exactly what that means later in the book. If you don't know a chord or want other information, look in the appendix for what you need to proceed.

I also make the assumption that readers were born somewhere in the English speaking world. This is clear in the choices I made for the sample songs for practice. I assume that most everyone will know the melody and first words of "Let it Be," for example. Tunes like "Oh! Susanna" are also known worldwide, but some others may not be as universally familiar. A visit to Itunes will easily solve the problem for anyone who doesn't know a tune regardless of their cultural background.

What the Book Teaches

The title of the book gives a pretty good clue, but I should be more specific. The book is made to teach basic to higher level guitar playing with a very special eye to including the parts that are so often missing from the repertoire of skills of everyday guitar players. It is too easy to strum away in the same fashion for years and years as I did and never really improve very much. You can do that if you want; you'll still have fun, so there's nothing wrong with it, but since you're reading this, it would appear that you want to fill in some gaps and take your playing to a new level. So this may be for you.

Theory

Just a word about theory. I'm not one who thinks that if you can't do something practical with theory right here and now it isn't worth knowing. I say learn for the fun of learning. However, this is a practical book and so every bit of theory I include here has a practical application. When its practicality is obvious I may not bother to point it out. When it isn't, I hope I do. And there are things you may very well find practical in these pages that I haven't

even thought about. At any rate, what you learn of simple theory will, among other things, help you to move to the correct chord in mid performance, create new chord fingerings, make song arrangements with the chords that sound best to you, name notes on the fretboard, work out songs by ear, and compose your own.

Song Choice

The old standards that are used in the book have been chosen for lots of important reasons. First of all, of course, they are public domain and I don't have to pay anyone or get sued for not paying. Second, they're well-known so readers can play them at once. Third, because they are standards, they tend to be great examples. Red River Valley, for example, can be played simply but it also is aching to be embellished with minor sevenths, minor seventh flat fives, diminished chords, ninths, augmented chords, etc. and these embellishments sound great and can be a part of the reader's new repertoire that they can use in a million other songs.

Finally, your average hacker like me is accustomed to playing the 60s and 70s songbook, which though great, gets to sound a little old and tired when every single guitar player is playing from it. Even favorite songs like "Tequila Sunrise," "Heart of Gold," and "Brown-eyed Girl" leave the listener yawning after a time and though the player is having a great time he or she is also to my mind unknowingly becoming somewhat impoverished. I speak from experience. I was stuck in that cozy and comfortable Never Never Land for decades and it wasn't a good way to improve. It was just like the years I spent with a 12-string guitar. The sound was great, but it was only a physical sound. What else did it offer me? Was it easy to play? To tune? It has too many strings! The instrument is really only good for certain things while a



six-string guitar (or a ukulele) can tackle a much much wider range of musical possibilities and you learn more

But I digress with a rant. Suffice it to say that Red River Valley is like a Cesna 150; it's a great training vehicle.

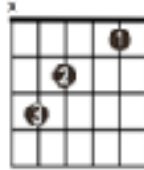
Strumming

All of the songs in this book and all of the examples can and should be played with no upstrokes. Just a steady downstroke: chunk, chunk, chunk. Down, down, down. Stay with me on this. You can start swirling and twirling later. The steady downstroke will bring out the rhythm and the hidden beauty of the simple chords. It will let people hear and enjoy the chord changes and progressions we'll learn about. All right, I'll let you add a little hitch every now. That will sound nice. Just a hitch. nothing more. Most everything down, down, down. Do this and it will sound great.

Frets, Strings, and Fingers

Just to be sure than no real beginner gets confused, your index finger is finger number 1 and your pinky is finger number four like so:

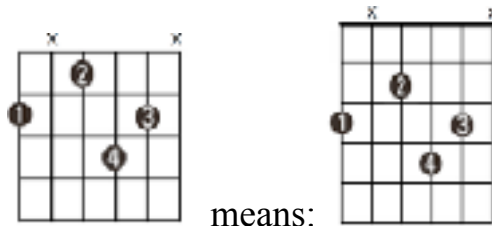
The numbers are put in chord diagrams as shown below so you will know which finger to use. An “x” indicates that you should not play that string. It should be dampened, muffled by lightly touching it with the nearest finger or perhaps your thumb. You must play any string without an “x.”



In the above chord, the dark line above represents the nut on the guitar so it is clear where you put your fingers. This chord is played on the first fret.

Other cord diagrams may not have the dark nut. Instead, I will indicate at which fret the chord is played. Second fret, for example will mean that the chord begins on the second fret. Thus:

Second Fret



Finally, the number of the smallest string is number 1 and the biggest number 6:



Well, that should be enough. Now go get your guitar and start Chapter One.

Chapter One 1, 4, 5 Songs

Even if you have had the Glinda treatment, you're likely aware of the old "This here song's just got three chords." or "Heck, all's you've got to know is three chords to play a song." addages. And you likely know that these three chords are labeled 1, 4, and 5. (It's also important to learn to call these chords the *tonic*, the *subdominant*, and the *dominant*.)

Many beginners are aware of what 1, 4, and 5 can do to make sounding out songs easy and for understanding how to play the same song in different keys. This is what practical theory is. Another glance at the Table of Contents will tell you that 1, 4, and 5 is just a single item—just the beginning—of such handy theory.

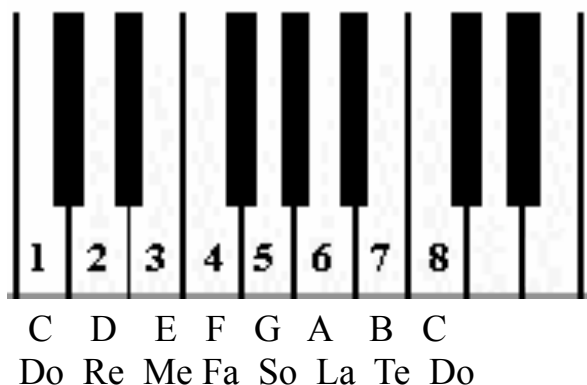
So, let's begin at the beginning and discuss 1, 4, 5. Those who find this too elementary are invited to skim this part of the book in order just to see my approach and then to go on to other parts to learn tricks and theory they may not have learned about before.

"Doe, a deer, a female deer..."

The song from *The Sound of Music* is a clever and well-known tune. It pretends to be a lesson in practical theory, but since the lyrics had to rhyme, it was hard for the composer to really communicate the usefulness of the major musical scale. We'll forgive the composer for that as we should, and since I don't have to rhyme anything, I'll expect no corresponding forgiveness if I don't communicate the idea clearly.

Using the “Doe a Deer Scale”² to Illustrate the Structures of Songs

As everyone knows, there are eight notes in the scale (or really seven as the first note and eighth note are the same). We can give the notes a “doe a deer” name, a letter name, or a number. This is clear when we illustrate by using a piano keyboard³ instead of a guitar fingerboard.



The scale above begins with the note C and so the scale is the scale in C. In the key of C, then, 1, 4, and 5 are C, F, and G.

Where’s your guitar? Go get it and play “Red River Valley,” the traditional western favorite.

No upstrokes remember. Just down, down, down with your pick or thumb or whatever.



² The correct name is the major scale or the Ionic scale, one of the dorian scales in music.

³ As you can see, the piano is “rigged” in the key of C. So if you begin with C, you can play the major scale without pressing any black keys.

C
 From this valley they say you are going.
 G
 We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile,
 C F
 For they say you are taking the sunshine
 C G C
 That has brightened our pathway a while.

Yes, of course, this is the most bare bones of arrangements. Even beginners will be aching for one of the chords to be a seventh here in the song:



C C7 F
they say you are taking the sunshine

and more advanced hackers will immediately want to throw in a D7th chord after the word smile like this:



G D7 G
 We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile

Patience. We will come back to this song and include these very easy additions (as well as adding a diminished, a ninth, a minor seventh flat 5, and more) but we have to wait in order to show these additions in the context of our theory. Knowing that you can use a D7th to make this song way prettier is nice, but it has too narrow an application. In fact, it has no application at all out of the confines of this single song and, indeed, this song only in the key of C.

Let's proceed by getting rid of the letters. We need to get in the habit of thinking in terms of numbers instead of

chords. We'll do this by playing the lyrics and chords to "Red River Valley" without letter chords.

Play the following several times in the key of C (1=C, 4=F, and 5=G) until your eyes are used to numbers instead letters.



1 5 1
From this valley they say you are going.
5
We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile,
1 4
For they say you are taking the sunshine
1 5 1
That has brightened our pathway a while.

The advantage of using numbers instead of chords is that the above musical notation is really written in *every* key. Thus, the next step is to play this song in different keys.

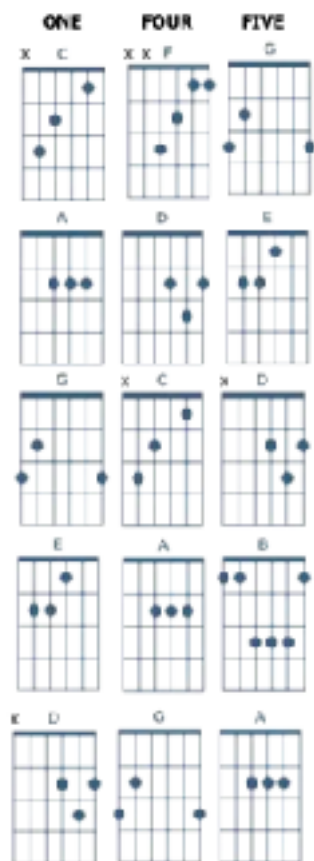
A basic player should be able to play the above by ear in what I call the five "caged keys"⁴ for guitar, C, A, G, E, and D, which spells "caged." And he or she should be able to do it without a hitch.

The 1, 4, 5 (tonic, subdominant, dominant) chords for all of the "caged keys" for guitar are on page 18. However, unless you're a real beginner, do not peek. Instead, noodle around for the correct chords! In this way, they will become second nature to you. Noodling is good!

⁴ C, A, G, E and D as "caged chords" are very basic guitar chords. They have open strings so they can only be played in only one place on the fingerboard. We will learn about the CAGED system for guitar later in the book.



Now play the song in all five of these keys to test your true level of proficiency. Yes, right now. All five one after the other! Here are the chords for all five.



What are you reading this for? You didn't do them all just now. Come back when you're done!

Are you really done? All right, now that you've finished, be honest with yourself about it. If you can't play "Red River Valley" in all five keys without a hitch the first time while looking at the numbers, or if you have to peak at the chart on page 18, then you're right where you should be in this book. I also invite you to be honest with *me* about this part of the book. If this is child's play to you, then *skim* the rest of this basic chapter, but don't *skip* it or you may lose the thread that will make the upcoming more advanced material clearer.

Write the correct numbers over the following familiar tune⁵ and play it in all five keys.



You are sunshine.....
..... happy when.....gray
..... know dearI love you

Please..... my away

Did you play in all five keys?

Now “noodle” to play the following tunes in all five keys. If you don’t know a tune, skip it or go buy it on iTunes. If you need the lyrics, go Google them. But most readers will know all of these already.

You may not envision yourself playing all of these at gigs, but they are all familiar, good (and some great) songs and are all “three-chord” songs. Use only the tonic, subdominant, and dominant for now. A basic arrangement of these songs has only three chords, but we can jazz them up by adding other chords and even substitutions later on.

Anyway, do these by ear or better yet write or print out the lyrics and put the chord number over the appropriate words.



⁵ This song is not in the public domain, so I will not include all of its lyrics in order to respect intellectual copyright and avoid lawsuit.

Some Well-Known Three-chord Songs

(In their simplest form; most musicians will embellish with extra chords.)

Bobby McGee by Kris Kristopherson	Margaritaville by Jimmy Buffet
Oh! Susanna by Stephen Foster	Old Folks at Home (Swanee River) by Stephen Foster
Blowing in the Wind by Bob Dylan	On Top of Old Smoky Traditional
Bye-bye Love by the Everly Brothers	Ring of Fire by June Carter
Silent Night Traditional	Swing Low Sweet Chariot Traditional



Two Great Two-chord Songs

Clementine Traditional Waltz	Tom Dooley Traditional
--	----------------------------------

Chapter One Summary

A. The basic structure of most songs is 1, 4, and 5, also called the tonic, the subdominant, and the dominant. Number one (the tonic) is the key that the song is in.

B. The word “caged” contains the letters of five common guitar keys and five common chords.

Chapter Two—1 Seventh Goes to 4

Duh!

You've read the title of this chapter, so I'll say it before half of the rest of you do: "Well, *duh!*"

I know, I know. The tonic (No.1) chord as a seventh yearns, longs, pines, indeed *demands* to go to the subdominant (No. 4). The human brain is born with the ability to sense this.



For those five or six of you who may not get it yet, just play the following in, say, G which as written below would be G, G7th, and C. Play it.



1 1^{7th} 4

For they say you are taking the sunshine....

While this is elementary, it still is not apparent to everyone; a co-worker of mine was once telling me how much she was amazed at the "persuasiveness" and power of a chord she heard at the end of a line in the Hank Williams song "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry:"



1

You hear that lonesome whip-poor-will. He sounds too

1^{7th} 4 1

blue to fly. The midnight train is whining low ...

The persuasiveness she described was simply the tonic seventh screaming to go to the subdominant. I didn't tell her how this was so commonplace that it couldn't even be considered a clever trick. But she was

right otherwise; the tonic seventh chord played at the start of the word “fly” not only moves the song to the subdominate (No. 4) chord; it also seems to add to the plaintiveness of the lyrics. I remember Douglas B. Green (Ranger Doug) once saying about a different song something like, “The chord there seems to complement the lyrics somehow.”

I think he was right in saying the chord did that, and to me it’s true in the Hank Williams song as well. But that’s the magic of composition and art and I can’t teach that (even if I were very good at doing it) but we all can marvel at it and enjoy it.

In the meantime, we’ll continue to listen for the tonic seventh chord leading to the subdominate, and we won’t have to listen long; it’s absolutely everywhere.



Play the two examples in all the CAGED keys now. Here are the sevenths:



Chapter Two Summary

1^{7th} (the tonic chord as a seventh) almost always leads to chord No. 4.

Chapter Three—2 Often Goes to 5

Some Four-Chord Songs

When I was researching material for this book, I checked out the many, many three-chord songbooks for examples of tunes that might be useful. I used the “Look Inside!” feature at amazon.com to get a peak at the table of contents for these books. To my surprise, I found that a number of the songs were not what I would term three-chord songs at all.

In this book (so far) my 3-chord arrangement of “Red River Valley” and your arrangement of “You Are My Sunshine” are simple, but most definitely correct as is. Indeed, I can well imagine a singer preferring such uncomplicated arrangements to sing over without the distraction of lot of other chords.

Songs like “My Bonnie” or “Jingle Bells,” on the other hand, don’t strike me as correct at all as three-chord songs. They need the number 2 chord. Without it, they will never sound right.

Fortunately, the 2 chord is a lead pipe cinch to find. All you have to do is say the alphabet starting with the letter of the “caged” key you’re in. (That is also the letter of the tonic chord or number 1 chord.)

If your tonic is C, then number 2 will be D because D is the next letter in the alphabet.

Play it in the key of C and see how 2 goes to 5 and is agreeable to the ear:



C

We will miss your bright eyes

G D G

and sweet smile

It's as easy as saying your ABC's. If your tonic is D, er... now, let's see, what letter follows D in the alphabet?an E!



D

We will miss your bright eyes

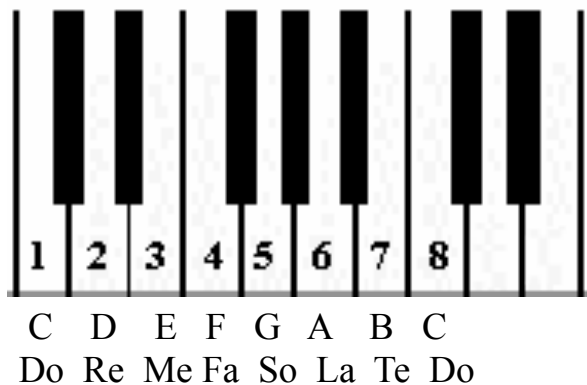
A E A

and sweet smile

It's perfect, isn't it? Yes.

No. I held out on you. I lied.

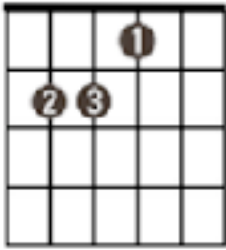
Sorry; in all of the “caged” keys this works except for E. You see, in the scale, there's only a half step between E and F (and between B and C). The piano keyboard shows this. Look! There's no black key between E and F or between B and C.⁶ It's just the way the universe is arranged.



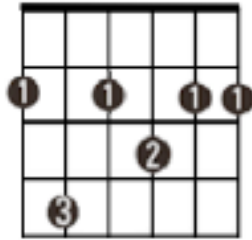
So those two are just slightly different; number two for B is C# and number two for E is F#. E is one of the “caged” chords, so we might try it in that key. Here are the chords you'll need. I'm making the 2 and 5 chords

⁶ This is why you can't say E sharp; E sharp is F! You can't say B sharp; B sharp is C! Of course, there's no such thing as C flat or F flat either. C flat is B and F flat is E. Just look at the keyboard.

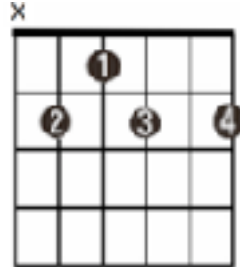
sevenths because they sound nice that way and this B seventh chord is so common.



1 (E)



2 (F \sharp ^{7th})



5 (B⁷)



E

We will miss your bright eyes

B⁷ F \sharp ^{7th} B⁷

and sweet smile

Here are the seven notes in the scale:

A B C D E F G

When you reach G when saying this seven-letter alphabet, you have to start with A again. Thus, the number two chord in the key of G will be A because there isn't an H! Try it:



G

We will miss your bright eyes

D A D

and sweet smile

Remember 1^{7th} likes to go to 4 (Chapter Two) and 2 likes to go to 5. Now, let's play "Red River Valley" with

a tonic seventh chord going to number 4 and chord 2 going to five. ⁷ Both are in bold.



1

From this valley they say you are going.

5 2 5

We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile,

1

1^{7th}

4

For they say you are taking the sunshine

1

5

1

That has brightened our pathway a while.

The song has been jazzed up in two ways here. Play it now in as many keys as you can.

Remember that there is no one absolutely correct arrangement of a song -- especially a traditional public domain song like this. You might prefer to play, for example, the first line this way:



1

5

1

From this valley they say you are going.

Or the last line like this:

5

1

That has brightened our pathway a while.

And you will likely feel that all the 5 and 2 chords in the song sound better as sevenths. That can be a part of your preferred arrangement as well.

⁷ The 2 chord here sounds even better as a seventh chord.

Well, I said that “Jingle Bells” and “My Bonnie.” Don’t work for me as three-chord tunes because they need chord No. 2 going to chord No. 5. Here is “Jingle Bells.” Pick a key and play it. I’ve added the seventh notation to all the 2 and 5 chords this time.

You won’t need to play the No. 2 chord until you get all the way to the one-horse open sleigh, but you’ll see when you get there that you need chord No. 2 there and you need it badly. A three-chord song my eye!



1

Dashing through the snow

4

In a one-horse open sleigh

5⁷

O'er the fields we go

1

Laughing all the way

1

Bells on bobtails ring

4

Making spirits bright

5⁷

What fun it is to ride and sing

1

A sleighing song tonight!

5⁷

1

Oh, Jingle bells, jingle bells,

Jingle all the way.

4

1

Oh! what fun it is to ride

2⁷ (Tada!)

5⁷

In a one-horse open sleigh.

Now try “My Bonnie,” which was as you may know the first song recorded by the Beatles and it played a pivotal role in the story of their success. You’ll note that two goes to five *three times* in this song.



1 4 1
My Bonnie lies over the ocean
1 2⁷ 5⁷
My Bonnie lies over the sea
1 4 1
My Bonnie lies over the ocean
2⁷ 5⁷ 1 5⁷
Oh, bring back my Bonnie to me
1 4
Bring back, bring back
5⁷ 1
Oh bring back my bonnie to me to me
1 4 2⁷
Bring back, bring back
5⁷ 1
Oh bring back my bonnie to me

Chapter Three Summary

- A. The number two chord often leads to the number 5 chord in a song.
- B. The number two chord in the keys of C, A, G, and D can be found by simply saying the alphabet. That is, in the key of C, for example, the number two chord is the next letter in the alphabet, D.

- C. On the piano, there is no black key between E and F or between B and C. Therefore, the number 2 chord in the key of E is not F but F sharp. In the key of B, it is C sharp.
- D. Because there is no black key between E and F or between C and B, there is no such thing as E sharp, B Sharp, C flat, or F flat. They are respectively: F, C, B, and E.
- E. If we say the letters of the scale beginning with A, after we reach G, we repeat A because there is no note called H: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A....
- F. In songs, the number 2 and number 5 chords often sound best as sevenths.

Chapter Four — Fretboard Notes/ Moveable Chords

Picture in your mind a nice archtop guitar and someone like Freddy Green playing it. Have you got that picture in your mind? Ah, there's one thing you don't see in your vision, isn't there? You know what it is: a capo! Jazz and swing guitarists use moveable chords, so they don't often have a use for one. This gives them lots of musical advantages. For one thing, they can easily play in any key—including the ones that have no corresponding letter in the word “caged.”

I have a vivid memory of John Lennon jokingly saying something like, “We play in C and A and G and keys like that but not in Bb or Eb. No, no, those won't do at all! We don't like those keys.” I also remember Fred Labour from the western/jazz band Riders in the Sky saying, “The keys we most often play in are Eb and Bb.”

Why didn't Lennon like Bb and Eb? Well, there's no comfortable, cozy shape for them with easy and familiar 4 and 5 chord shapes to go with them.

Don't get me wrong. Lennon certainly knew everything about guitar playing that you'll see in this book and the fact is, he did write and play songs in Bb and every other key. He was joking, but I'm not when I say that for too many guitar players the “caged” keys are limiting, indeed stultifying. Again, don't misunderstand. You'd be absolutely nowhere without those keys and chords. But if you limit yourself to them, they impede progress to a higher level. That is, they are kind of a trap that can hinder a basic player from getting a broader knowledge of the instrument — and of music itself.

When you rely upon open strings in a “caged” chord, there is but one place on the fingerboard to play that

chord without a capo. When a chord must have open strings to be played, it is *unique* and has no application outside of the key it appears in whether it's the tonic, the subdominant or the dominant chord in the song.

Instead of breaking free from the chains of the “caged” keys, many players first attempt improve their playing by adding cool suspended fourths and the like to the “caged” chords. There's nothing wrong with this. Indeed, a decent guitar player couldn't do without them when playing, say, a nice folk tune. Look at any picture of James Taylor holding a guitar. There will very likely be a capo stuck to the neck. Taylor is Mr. Caged Key and the guitar sounds great.

The theme of this book is filling in the stuff that so many amateur guitarists (like me) have missing in their musical toolbox.

Oh, I mentioned that Fred Labour said that his band played most often in Eb and Bb, but I didn't say why I thought that was true. Well, it certainly isn't because Riders in the Sky can't play in any key they please. Most likely it's because the keys Eb and Bb correspond to the keys of so many songs in the “American Songbook.” Or perhaps it's because those keys are right for the singers' voices or the particular instrument of a guest musician. The jazz standards “Sweet Cherokee” and “Slow Boat to China” for example, are almost always played in Bb and this pleases any horn players who might like to jump in.

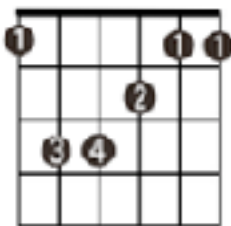
I said, “The ‘caged’ keys are limiting, indeed they can be in some senses stultifying. Curiously, the very “caged” *chords*, when altered a bit, first come to the rescue here because they are the basis for making moveable chords that need not be played in only one place on the fingerboard.

Let's start with E. Its moveable counterpart one fret up is the barre chord F.



E E E

In the E chord above, the name of the chord is E, and the names of the notes on the first, fourth and sixth strings is E too. Notice the fourth finger (your pinky) is on the fourth string. You may play it differently, but to slide it up, the fingering should be as it is above.



F F F

In the F barre chord above, the name of the chord is F, and the names of the notes on the first, fourth and sixth strings is F too. To form the chord, you need to put your third finger on the fifth string, your pinky on the fourth and your second finger on the third. Then you “bar” it with your index finger.

You “bar” the F chord, of course, because if you only slide the E chord up one fret, the open strings E, B, and E will make the chord sound like something out of a drug addict’s nightmare. Your index finger acts as a capo.

The F chord can be slid up the neck to form twelve chords.

What's that? Yeah, yeah. I know you know! I was fourteen when my guitar teacher said, "Today, we're going to learn twelve chords!"

I feigned surprise and awe. I knew even at that age what he meant. Ah, but he didn't show me what follows this.

Like what? Well, just for one thing, by looking at the barre chord you can press down on any fret on the first, fourth, and sixth string and name the note. That means right now we can easily name fully half of the notes on the fingerboard if we know the name of the chord. If we know the name of the barre chord, we know the name of those three strings no matter where the chord is played on the fingerboard.

I had a guitar teacher once who said, "How can you say you're a guitar player if you don't know all the notes on the fingerboard? Just sit down for a minute each day and touch strings and name the notes."

I did, and it was actually rather fun.



Let's follow his advice for half of the strings on the guitar. Play the F barre chord. Your index finger is pressing both the sixth string (the biggest string for you real beginners) and the first string, the (littlest). The note is F for both. Your pinky is pressing the fourth string and it is an F too.

It's worthwhile to mention here that there are three F notes (root notes) in the chord, which may be really more than you need and this gives the chord a different voice from the voice of an F chord formed in some other way that has only one or two F's in it.



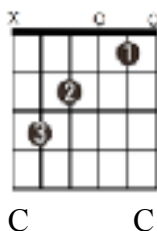
Anyway, now slide the F barre chord up one fret so the sixth, fourth, and first strings all become F# (or Gb). What's the name of the chord? Answer: F#, and the 1st, 4th, and 5th strings will be F sharps too! Keep sliding the barre chord up one fret at a time as you name the chord and the notes for those three strings: G, G# (Ab), A, Bb, B, C, C# (Db), D, D# (Eb), E. You're done when you get to the twelfth fret and the three notes you identify are E.



The next step is to just use one finger to press anywhere on the 1st, 4th, or 6th string. Don't play the chord. Just imagine that the note you're pressing is a part of a ghostly mental barre chord that you envision there on the fingerboard. In a short time, you will know by sight exactly half of the notes on the fingerboard.

Do this for a couple of minutes every day.

Now let's do two more strings, the fifth and the second. Play a vanilla C chord:

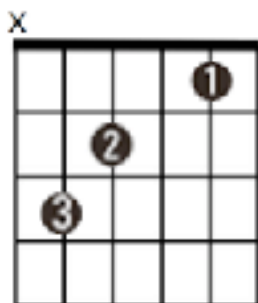


The name of the chord is C, and the names of the notes on the fifth and second strings is C too.

There are two C notes (two root notes) in the chord. Your third finger is pressing down on the fifth string and your index finger is pressing down on the second string. Both are C notes.

Once again, it is worthwhile to note something about the voice of the chord. The sixth string, an E note, is not played and yet the note E is part of a C chord -- just look at the third string. You've already learned that it's an E when it's pressed at the second fret. And the open first string is an E too. But that sixth string E doesn't sound good in the chord. It's mathematically correct, but isn't pleasing to the ear and messes up the voice of the chord. I guess it's just too low to sound good with the others. Thus, it is dampened and not played as indicated by the X.

You can't slide this up because of the open third and first strings. What can we do? Well, there *is* a way to bar it with your first finger, but we'll save that for later. For now, let's just make the chord a seventh with our pinky.



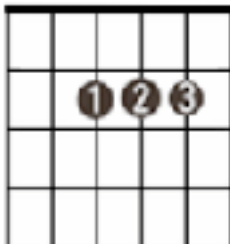
This chord is totally moveable as long as you dampen the first string as well. Play it and dampen⁸ both the first and sixth strings. Take a pencil and put an X in that circle up there. It's a four-string C7th.

Now move it up one fret to form a C#7th (Db7th) chord. The name of the chord is the name of the notes for the two strings in question (minus the 7th part): C#. Move it up again and those notes are both D's.

⁸ Muffle the first and sixth strings by letting the nearest finger touch it lightly to keep it from sounding.

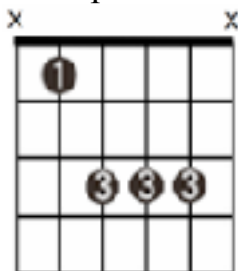
Keep sliding up until you have named all twelve notes on the fingerboard.

There's only one string left. The third string. Let's use a "caged" A chord to find every note for the third string.



(A) A

The third string is an A note (So is the fifth string, but we already did that string.) This chord isn't moveable. Fear not; we can make it so by playing it this way⁹ in the form of Bb one fret up:



(Bb) Bb

The name of the chord is Bb, and the name of the third (and fifth) string in this chord is Bb too.



Dampen the sixth and first strings so they make no sound. Now, the chord is completely moveable and you can name all the notes for the third string the same way you did the other strings by moving the chord up the fretboard. Start by moving the chord up one fret to

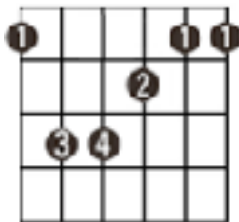
⁹ There are many ways to play all of these chords. I find that this is the easiest way to make the moveable A-shaped one.

Bb (A#). The chord will be Bb and the third string will be a Bb as well. Now do all the rest.

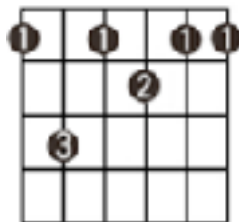
Every day, take a minute or two to play these moveable chords and name the notes on the fretboard.

Since we have got three moveable chords, let's use them to refresh our memories about song structure. Try this exercise.

Using only barre chords, play "Red River Valley" in the key of C first. Remember only barre chords! You will be moving all over the fingerboard for this. You've learned that the first string and sixth string sound as a C note when you press them at the eighth fret, so you will begin with a barre C chord on the eighth fret. Find out noodling by ear where chords 4, 5, and 2 are and play the song. If you need a seventh, just lift up your pinky:



Major Chord



Seventh Chord



1 5⁷ 1

From this valley they say you are going.

1 5⁷ 2⁷ 5

We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile,

1 1⁷ 4

For they say you are taking the sunshine

1 5⁷ 1

That has brightened our pathway a while.

Now do it in D.

Now try “My Bonnie” in all of those keys with only barre chords. When you do, you’ll notice the time change from the 4/4 time of “Red River Valley” to 3/4. You’ll feel it in your right hand (if you’re right-handed) as you strum *one*, two, three, *one*, two, three.... “My Bonnie” is a waltz.



l *4* *l*

l *27* *57*

l *4* *l*

27 57 1 57

14

57 1

1 4 27

57

Now do it in D.

If you've done both songs in all those keys using only barre chords, you've been jumping all over the

fingerboard. It's a good exercise, but it obviously isn't the best way to play the songs, so let's add the two other moveable "caged" chords in this chapter and use them for chords 4, 5, and 2 in the songs.

A common and simple way to play 1, 4, and 5 (here in the key of G) is like this with only two of the chords, the E shape and the A shape. Play 1, 4, 5, 4 again and again. Strum two times for each chord. Remember, 1, 4, 5, 4 and repeat.



3rd Fret

x

1

3rd Fret

x x

4

5th Fret

x x x

5

This is a pattern that needs to be second nature to you, so it will appear in the book to practice again. The songs above, however, really need seventh chords, so let's be slightly more ambitious and play the songs in in the key of G like this:



RED RIVER VALLEY

3rd Fret

x

1

3rd Fret

x x

5⁷

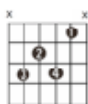
3rd Fret

x

1

*From this valley they say you are going. We will miss
your bright eyes*

3rd Fret 5th Fret 3rd Fret



5⁷



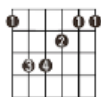
2⁷



5⁷

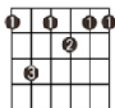
and sweet smile...

3rd Fret



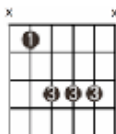
1

3rd Fret



1⁷

3rd Fret



4

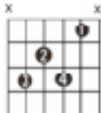
For they say you are taking the sunshine

3rd Fret



1

3rd Fret



5⁷

3rd Fretboard



1

That has brightened our pathway a while.

As you played this, I hope you could hear how powerful and pretty the 2 to 5 parts are. You should hear this even more clearly when you play “My Bonnie” while using these moveable chords.

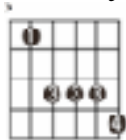


Now play “Red River Valley” in the key of Bb. All you need to do is play the same pattern but with the number 1 barre chord on the sixth fret. Try it in A and C afterwards.

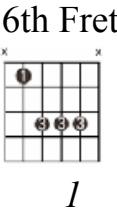
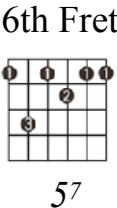
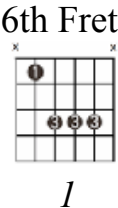
You’ll find that although some players eschew the key of Bb, it’s not one bit different from the other keys. You can play in Bb with ease using these moveable chords.

E♭ is no different. However, if you try to play in that key in this way it could be a hassle because you may run out of space on the fingerboard. Not to worry. There's a simple technique to fix that using the same moveable chords. We just start with the moveable A shape as the No. 1 chord (the tonic) at the sixth fret.

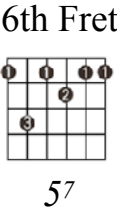
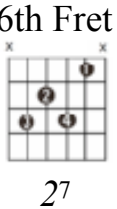
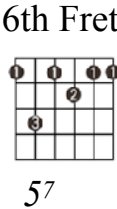
Oh, you'll need the seventh chord for the moveable A shaped chord which you form by adding the pinky:



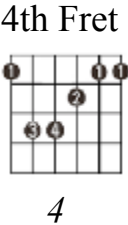
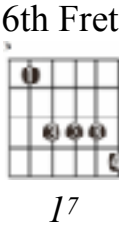
RED RIVER VALLEY



From this valley they say you are going. We will miss your bright eyes



and sweet smile...

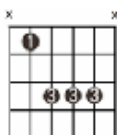


For they say you are taking the sunshine

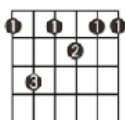
6th Fret

6th Fret

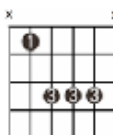
6th Fret



1



5⁷



1

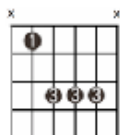
That has brightened our pathway a while.



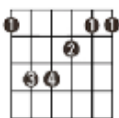
Play 1, 4, 5, 4 again and again with the tonic in an A shape. Strum two times for each chord. Down, down, down strokes. Remember, 1, 4, 5, 4 and repeat. Start in the key of C with the tonic on the third fret. Then try other keys.

(Fret Number Corresponds to the position of the first note played on the left.)

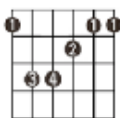
3th Fret



1st Fret

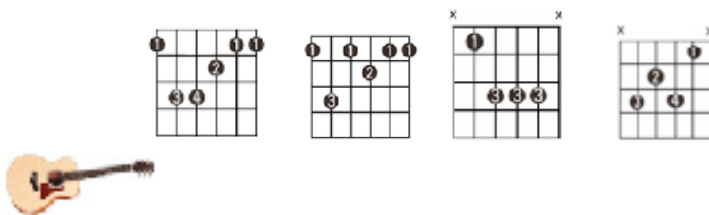


3th Fret



The best exercise I can think of to end the chapter with is to have you play “My Bonnie” using the moveable chords without my having written them all down to help you. Use the bar chord for your tonic (number 1 chord) and noodle for the rest of them. Use the four moveable chords below and play it in Bb and other keys like B. If your tonic is a barre chord, you will need to use the A-shaped moveable chord more often in “My Bonnie” because you don’t need a seventh chord as often. It’s the third one shown below.

E shape E shape A shape C shape



Now play it with a moveable A-shaped chord as the tonic.

Chapter Four Summary

- A. The “caged” keys (C, A, G, E and D) and the common chords that go with them are essential, but if when players limit themselves to them, they cannot play comfortably in other keys. They can’t easily broaden their knowledge of the instrument and they miss out on a wide variety of easy techniques for playing.
- B. The three moveable “caged” chords in this chapter can be used to identify the note of any string at any fret on the fingerboard.
- C. Chords with the same name can have different voices.
- D. The “caged” chords can be made moveable. This makes it easy to play songs in any key.
- E. To use moveable chords in songs like Eb it is sometimes easier to play the tonic chord as a moveable A shape.

Chapter Five—1, 6 Minor, 4, 5/Cadences

You’ve heard this pattern a million times: 1, 6 minor, 4, 5. It’s one of the simplest and most familiar of them all. Ah, but which chord is number six? For the scale of C we can just count up six notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B C and see that the sixth note is A.

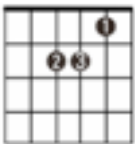
Thus, the pattern is: C, Am, F, G. Here are the chords for C and all of the other “caged” keys.

1	6	4	5
C	AM	F	G
A	F#M	D	E
G	EM	C	D
E	C#M	A	B
D	BM	G	A

Dolly Parton’s “I Will Always Love You” is a great example of 1, 6 minor, 4, 5. She took this simplest of patterns and made it work.



Sing the title of her song as the lyrics as you strum 1, 6 minor, 4, 5 again and again. Play in C. Oh, if you’re a beginner, the simple A minor chord for quick reference:



Now, play the song and end it by playing 4, 1 (F, C).

C F C
..... yoooo oooo oooo

That's the way Dolly wrote it. And the 1 to 4 pattern is called an amen cadence because in churches people used to sing the word "amen" that way. Perhaps they still do. Try it:

F C
..... ahh men

The amen cadence is prettier for ending a song in my opinion than the full cadence. A full cadence is simply 5, 1.



Play the chords G C! Put some *oomph* on the C chord to see how it sounds.

I once was on a ghastly 36-hour bus ride from Mexico City to Santa Ana. It was a nightmarish journey filled with blaring canned polkas and corridos each ending with a stiff, smug little 5-1 cadence. Perhaps that's why I so much prefer the amen or 4-1 cadence.

Let's have fun with the amen cadence by playing "Silent Night." It already has amen cadences, but we can jazz it up by adding some.



First without added amen cadences:

1
Silent night, holy night
5⁷ 1
All is calm, all is bright
4 1
'Round yon virgen mother and child

4 1
Holy infant so tender and mild
 5⁷ 1
Sleep in heavenly peace
 1 5⁷ 1
Sleep in heavenly peace

Note: You might agree with me that the No. 5 chord sounds best here as a seventh.



Now play it with the added cadences (in bold):

1
Silent night, holy night
 5⁷ **4** **1**
All is calm, all is bright
 4 1
'Round yon virgen mother and child
 4 1
Holy infant so tender and mild
 5⁷ **4** **1**
Sleep in heavenly peace
 1 5⁷ 1
Sleep in heavenly peace

You may feel my arrangement above rather overdoes it with the amen cadences. I rather like it. It's just a matter of taste.



Now play Dolly's song in all of the caged keys. Don't forget the amen cadence at the end of each. If you need the chords, look in the back of the book and when you play the song in A, E, and D please note that the 6 minor

chord is totally moveable! You can play those minors anywhere on the fingerboard.

Other songs with the 1, 6, 4, 5 pattern are “This Boy” “Why Do Fools Fall in Love?,” “Big Girls Don’t Cry,” “I Started the Joke,” “Won’t You Stay a Little Bit Longer?,” “Whenever I Want You All I Have to Do Is Dream,” and many others.

A pattern similar to the one you used to play the Dolly Parton song is not 1, 6m, 4, 5 but 1, 5, 6m, 4. A good example of the pattern is “Let it Be” by the Beatles.



To get the idea of how this pattern sounds, strum two times for each chord as you sing. For the last word, “be,” skip the minor and play a pretty amen cadence like this:

F C

..... be eee

Here’s the pattern in the key of C. Strum each chord twice to get the feel of the pattern.

C, G, Am, F, C, G, F, C.

Most songs have what I call loosely a “part A” and a “part B.” “Let it Be” has something in the way of a “part B” or chorus. Am, G, F, C.



You can now play the 1, 5, 6m, 4 pattern with a bridge or chorus in the style of “Let it Be.” You strum each twice as before.

Part A beginning and ending:

C, G, Am, F, C, G, F, C

PartB/Chorus:

Am, G, F, C

Part A ending:

C, G, F, C



Now try it in all of the other “caged” keys. The following is my way of writing the music in every key.

Part A beginning and ending:

1, 5, 6m, 4, 1, 5, 4, 1

Chorus:

6m, 5, 4, 1

Part A ending:

1, 5, 4, 1

Chapter Five Summary

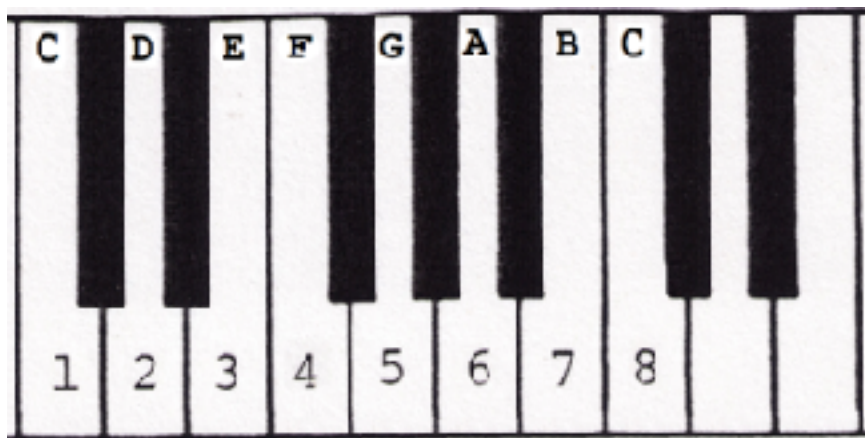
- A. 1, 6minor, 4, 5 is a common pattern in songs.
- B. Two cadences are the amen cadence 4, 1 and the full cadence 5, 1. They can be anywhere in a song but are often used to end songs.
- C. The chords F# minor, B minor, and C minor used in this chapter are moveable chords.
- D. 1, 5 6m, 4, 1 is also a common pattern in songs.

Chapter Six — Chord Theory for the Compleat Idiot

If you want to play chords, it makes sense to know what they are. In about five minutes, I aim to show beginners and others enough about chord structure to get them off and running with it immediately.

Here goes:

When we've talked about 1, 4, 5 and other patterns, the numbers we have referred to represent *chords*. In the key of C as you know No. 1 refers to a C chord, No. 4 refers to an F chord, and No. 5 refers to a G chord. And, of course, the numbers represent the notes in the scale of C as shown below.



Just as the 1, 4, 5 arrangement is a basic song structure, 1, 3, 5 is the basic chord structure.

Repeat after me; One, *four*, five is about chords in a song. One, *three*, five is about notes in a chord.

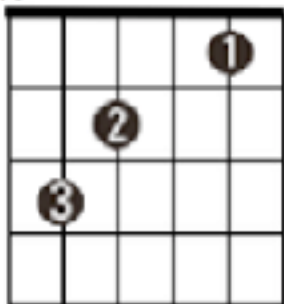
Look at the piano keyboard below. It shows how to play a C major chord. You press 1, 3, and 5 on the keyboard to make the same C you make on the guitar. What are the three notes? C, E (not F), and G. This is called a major triad.



Now pick up your guitar and play a C chord. (A major, not a seventh, or minor, or whatever. Just a plain C.)



X



(E) C E G B E

Look at your fingers. There are only three different notes: C, E, and G.

Try a D chord. It's the same; only three: D, F#, and A.

Try a G chord, "caged" one or a barre. It's the same; only three: C, B, and D.

Don't worry; now isn't the time to memorize all the notes in all the chords. All you need to know now is that a chord is made up of the first, third, and fifth note in the scale: 1, 3, 5. That's it.

Say it: 1, 3, 5. (Not 1, 4, 5! That's *chords* in a *song* not *notes* in a *chord*!)

EASY RECIPE FOR CHORDS!

If you alter or add to the 1, 3, 5 triad, you get the other chords. Here's the recipe for the basic ones, and they are so logical that you likely won't have any trouble remembering them.

To make a sixth chord, add the sixth note to 1, 3, 5.



C Sixth

To make a minor chord, flat the third.



C Minor

To make the seventh chord (the one we've played so often already) add the *flatted* seventh note to 1, 3, 5.



C Seventh

To make a pretty major seventh chord, add seventh note to 1, 3, 5.



C Major Seventh

To make a minor seventh chord, flat the third note in 1, 3, 5 and add the flatted seventh note in the scale.



C Minor Seventh

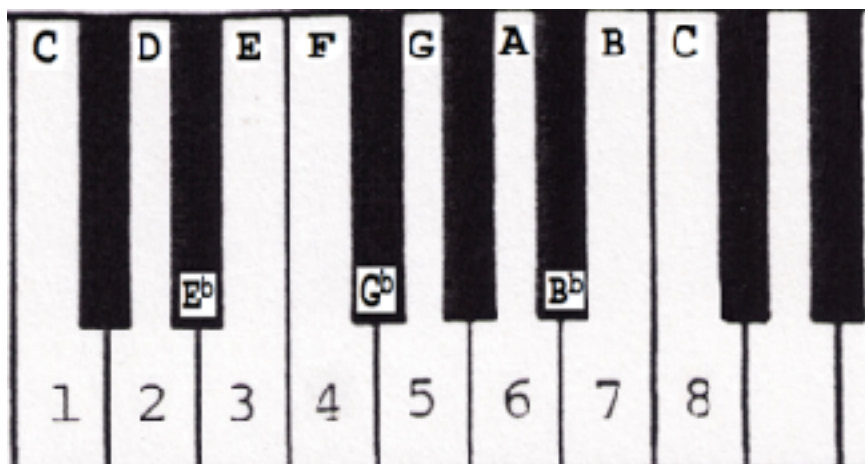
To make a diminished chord, flat the third note and the fifth note in the scale.



C Diminished

Okay, here's about a three-minute homework assignment and we'll be done with this for now.

Take the notes from this keyboard and write them in the spaces to represent the chords you see. Write LETTERS in the spaces.



1. C major: _____, _____, and _____
2. C minor: _____, _____, and _____
3. C sixth: _____, _____, _____, and _____
4. C major seventh: _____, _____, _____, and _____
5. C seventh: _____, _____, _____, and _____
6. C minor seventh _____, _____, _____, and _____
7. C diminished: _____, _____, and _____

Just a couple more things to say. First, remember how the No. 1 chord in a song was called the tonic? Well, the No. 1 *note* in a chord is call the “root.” Thus,

The root of a C major chord is C.
The root of an Eb minor seventh chord is Eb.
The root of a Bb minor seventh flat five chord¹⁰ is Bb.
Etc.

Finally, I said that everything in this book about theory would be practical. The material in this chapter will become more practical as you learn more songs and practice more. For now, I hope it's clear that you now will be aware of what is happening when, for instance, you play a barre chord and lift your pinky to make a seventh. You'll know in that case that you have added the flatted seventh to the chord and you can see exactly which fret and string that is. Similarly, when you play a barre chord and lift your middle (second) finger to make a minor, you know you have flatted the third note and you can see exactly which fret and string that is.

In the next chapter, we'll talk about suspended fourths and what you've read here will make it a cinch to understand them.

Finally, knowing the contents of this chapter is useful in that you can talk knowledgeably with other musicians about chords. Oh, and these can be lively conversations indeed. ROAL¹¹

¹⁰ Yes, the Bb minor seventh flat five chord has all the notes of a minor seventh plus the flatted fifth note in the scale—and yes, we'll find some pretty good use for minor seventh flat fives a little later.

¹¹ (Roars of Appreciative Laughter)

Chapter Six Summary

- A. 1, 4, 5 refers to chords in a song.
- B. 1, 3, 5 refers to the notes in the scale that make a major chord.
- C. A major chord has the same three notes.
- D. You alter or add to the 1, 3, 5 triad to make different chords.
- E. To make a minor chord you flat the third note in the 1, 3, 5 triad.
- F. To make a sixth you add the sixth note
- G. To make a seventh, you add the flatted seventh to the triad
- H. To make a major seventh, you add the seventh to the triad.
- I. To make a minor seventh chord, you flat the 3 note and add the flatted seventh note.
- J. The No. 1 note in a chord is called the “root.”

Chapter Seven —Suspended Fourths

My brother plays jazz piano and says that some jazz players refer to suspended fourths¹² as “nothing chords” because they don’t mean much in lots of jazz pieces. But they are certainly not nothing if you want to play pretty songs with open-stringed caged chords either strumming or finger picking.

The fourth in this case refers to a note not a chord.¹³ You now know that the fourth note in the scale of C is F. That’s why chord number 4 in a 1, 4, 5 song in the key of C is an F chord.

A C suspended fourth chord then is just a regular C chord in which you add an F note. When you do, you raise the 3rd note on the string (an E) to an F and so the chord contains no E as it used to.

As you know from Chapter Six, a major chord contains the first, third, and fifth note in the scale. In a suspended fourth chord the third note is raised so it is no longer the third note in the scale but the fourth: thus it’s a suspended fourth.

In a C major chord, then, the note E (the third note in the scale of C: C, D, E!) on the fourth string is raised to an F as illustrated below:



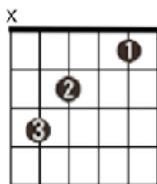
C Major

¹² Also, called “susses” rhyming, of course, with “busses.”

¹³In a later chapter, we’ll cover the notes contained in individual chords and put that knowledge into practical use.

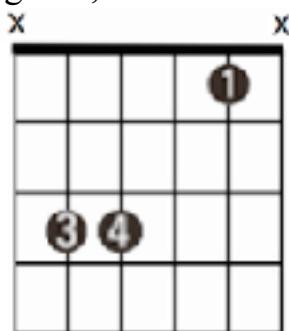


C Suspended Fourth



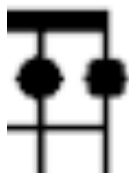
So on a guitar,

becomes



On a guitar it's harder to see what's happening than it is on a piano but it's exactly the same thing.

Again, there is no E or 3rd note in the suspended chord. There's an X above the first and sixth strings in the second of the diagrams above because as you know those are both E's. Why not make that first string an F? Just press two strings with your index finger like this:



That way, you'll have two F notes in the chord. It's got kind of a wicked sound that's also pretty.

Since there's an F note in the chord Csus4th, the chord works like an F. Therefore, it can work as chord number

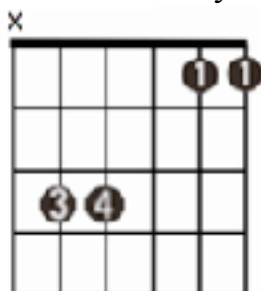
4 in a 1, 4, 5 song. And it can work as an amen cadence if you play instead of an F chord a Csus4th chord.

Csus4th C
..... ahh men

Cool, eh? Well, let's play "Silent Night" with no plain 4 chord at *all* but all suspended fourths in the key of C. If you thought I overdid it last time with the amen cadences added to this song, what do you think of this?



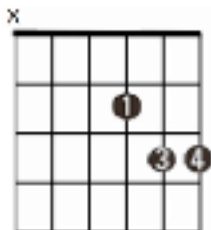
Play, sing. And be sure to use the chord with *two* No. 4 (F) notes in it. It's not a very hard stretch, so play it cleanly and it will sound rich and yummy!



C
Silent night, holy night
G⁷ **Csus4th** C
All is calm, all is bright
Csus4th C
'Round yon virgen mother and child
Csus4th C
Holy infant so tender and mild
G⁷ **Csus4th** C
Sleep in heavenly peace
C G⁷ **Csus4th** C
Sleep in heavenly peace

You may very well choose to use a suspended fourth just occasionally in a song like this rather than beating the listener over the head. Less is often more when you play guitar although here I think it's pretty either way.

I find that the voice¹⁴ of this C sus works in this song because it has two F notes in it. The voices of some of the other susses in the back of the book don't seem to work quite as well to me. In the key of D, for example, the No. 4 chord is a G. But there's only one G note in the suspended fourth on the left below. See? It's the fourth finger, the pinky, on the third fret of the first string.



What's the No. 5 chord in the key of D? You'll need it to play "Silent Night" in the key of D.



1

Silent night, holy night

5⁷ 1sus4th 1

All is calm, all is bright

1sus4th 1

'Round yon virgen mother and child

1sus4th 1

Holy infant so tender and mild

5⁷ 1sus4th 1

Sleep in heavenly peace

1 5^{7th} 1

Sleep in heavenly peace

¹⁴ As noted in Chapter four, when you play a chord with different fingering, it will sound different; it will have a different voice.

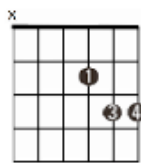
It works (barely), but playing in the key of C with the two-F C suspended fourth seems much prettier to me. Voices matter.



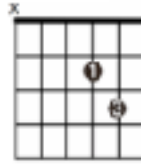
Try this pattern. At least ten million popular tunes have been written around it by plucking the notes in the chords to create interesting musical phrases and they have been often created in the key of D as shown here.



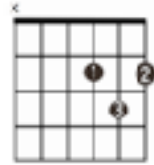
D



Dsus4th



Dsus2nd¹⁵



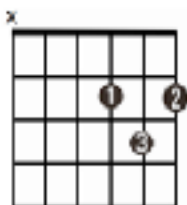
D

You'll recognize bits of dozens of songs in this pattern. Guitarists like Buddy Holly and George Harrison diddled with this D fingering to come up with great songs like "Words of Love" and "Here Comes the Sun."

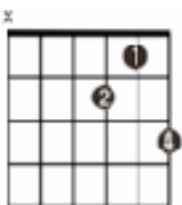
If you make the suspended fourth chord a seventh, something amazing happens soundwise in my opinion. You get the most wicked sound and I'm always looking for places to use it.

Let's change a simple D7th chord (which should be in any beginner's bag) to a D7th suspended fourth by just putting down your pinky on the third fret of the first string:

¹⁵ Yes, the second note in the scale of D is added to the chord by lowering the third note in the chord. The chord consists of notes No. 1, 2, and 5. Again, there's no note no. 3.



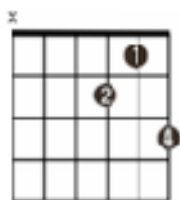
D7th



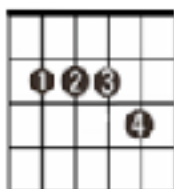
D7th Suspended Fourth



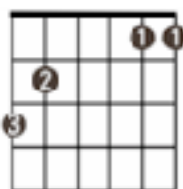
Play these not as a pattern or progression but just as examples of the sound of a suspended fourth with the seventh added:



Dsus4th7th



Esus4th7th



Gsus4th7th

Now let's see where such a chord might work in a song. In the following song, the suspended Dsus4th7th chord is your good friend the No. 5 chord shown in the key of G. 1=G, 4=C, 5=D (D is in this arrangement at times as a Dsus4th7th.)

You'll see the No. 2 chord, A7th, go unerringly to the No. 5 chord here as we practiced several times earlier. Near the end, I add the minor No. 6 chord, E minor. Here it is:



HOME ON THE RANGE¹⁶

Part A:

¹⁶ This song is probably the most well-known song of all among Americans. It has more lyrics than most people realize — and what's more, it has a little-known Part C, which is to my mind a melodic joy to listen to. You might want to download the version done by Riders in the Sky to hear it.

G G⁷ C
Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam¹⁷

G A⁷ Dsus4th7th D7th
And the deer and the antelope play

G G⁷ C
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word

G D⁷ G
And the skies are not cloudy all day

Part B:

Dsus4th7th D⁷ G
Home home on the range

Em A⁷ Dsus4th7th D⁷
Where the deer and the antelope play

G G⁷ C
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word

G D⁷ G
And the skies are not cloudy all day

Chapter Seven Summary

- A. A C suspended fourth chord, like all other “susses,” contains the fourth note in the scale (in the case of C, an F note).
- B. There is no third note in a suspended fourth chord because to add the fourth note, you raise the third note to the 4th note.

¹⁷ Yes, you can put a C minor here on the word “roam” and elsewhere on the word, “word.” I just don’t want the arrangement here to be too cluttered.

- C. The suspended fourth chord can act as the No. 4 chord in a song. If the chord has two No. 4 notes in it, it works even better as the No. 4 chord.
- D. Creative phrases have been made by plucking different notes in the pattern: D Dsus4th
Dsus2nd D
- E. Making the suspended fourth chord a seventh chord gives it a rich sound.

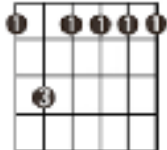
Chapter Eight—2 Minor 7th Goes to 5

In Chapter Three, you played the No. 2 chord to lead you to the No. 5 (dominant) chord in songs. The 2 minor seventh chord does the same thing.

Here are two A minor sevenths for practice when playing in the key of G. The first is the E-shaped moveable barre chord.

No. 2 Minor Seventh Chord for the Key of G (A Minor Seventh)

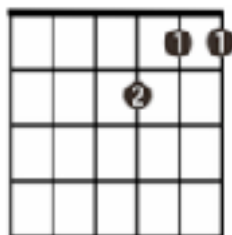
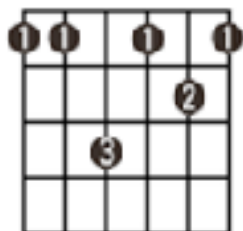
Fifth Fret



Here are two D minor sevenths for practice when playing in the key of C. The first is a moveable chord.

No. 2 Minor Seventh Chord for the Key of C (D Minor Seventh)

Fifth Fret



Play in the Key of G and then the Key of C.



1 4 1

Swing low, sweet chariot

1 5

Coming for to carry me home

1 4 1

Swing low, sweet chariot

1 2m⁷ 5 1

Coming for to carry me home

Often in songs the No. 2 chord is followed by the No. 2 minor seventh chord to go to chord No. 5.



1 4 1

My Bonnie lies over the ocean

1 2 2m⁷ 5⁷

My Bonnie lies over the sea

Unlike what we just played in the previous chapter, this arrangement of “Home on the Range” we use the 2m⁷ instead of the suspended fourth with the seventh.

1 5⁷ 1

Home home on the range

6m 2⁷ 2m⁷ 5⁷

Where the deer and the antelope play

Let's do another because when you have a lot of songs with a pattern you can best begin to make it work for you. Stephen Foster's “Old Folks at Home” which was a suggested practice song in an earlier chapter is one of the

prettiest songs yet penned and whenever I hear any version of it, I am so completely slain that nursemaids must be called to usher me to the couch where typically brandy must be administered to revive me. (It's just behind the same composer's "My Old Kentucky Home" to my mind anyway.) Here it is with the No. 2 chord as a minor leading to the dominant (No. 5) chord.



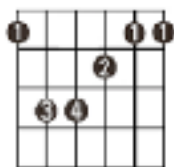
$1 \quad 5^7 \quad \quad \quad 1 \quad 4$
Way down upon the Swanee River
 $1 \quad \quad 2m^7 \quad 5^7$
Far far away
 $1 \quad 5^7 \quad \quad \quad 1 \quad 4$
That's where my heart is yearning ever
 $1 \quad \quad \quad 2m^7 \quad 5^7 \quad 1$
That's where the old folks stay
 $5^7 \quad \quad \quad 1 \quad \quad 1^7$
All the world is dark and dreary
 $4 \quad \quad \quad 1 \quad 5^7$
Everywhere I go
 $1 \quad 5^7 \quad \quad \quad 1 \quad \quad 4$
Oh, Lordy how my heart grows weary
 $1 \quad \quad \quad 2m^7 \quad 5^7 \quad 1$
Far from the old folks at home



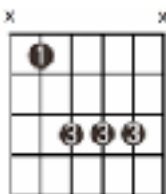
Play this in the key of G and practice the barred minor seventh for your No. 2 chord. (Play a barre A chord on the fifth fret and lift your pinky and second finger.)



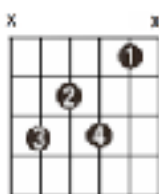
Now play the song in Bb using the moveable chords we practiced in Chapter Four. Here they are again. You can't be without them.



E-shape



A-shape



C-shape

To play this in Bb, start with the tonic (No. 1 chord) at the sixth fret. You'll need the E-shaped moveable chord which is nothing more than your most excellent friend the barre chord, and you'll need the moveable A and C shaped chords. For your 2m7 chord, play the barre chord on the eighth fret and lift up your pinky and middle finger to form the C minor seventh you need.



Now, do it in the key of F. In the key of F#. In the key of Ab.

Chapter Eight Summary

- A. Like the No. 2^{7th} chord in a song, the No. 2m⁷ chord often leads to the No. 5 chord
- B. The barre minor seventh chord is a good moveable chord.
- C. Often in songs the No. 2^{7th} chord is followed by the No. 2m⁷ chord which leads to the the No. 5 chord.

Chapter Nine—3 Goes to 6 Minor

This is the place where so many people get stuck when trying to figure out a song by ear. Things go well through the A part of the song but when they get to the bridge (which I like to call the B part) they often run into 3 goes to 6 minor and don't have that as a part of their ear and their chord pattern repertoire.

Let's use Auld Lang Syne as an example. (The 3 goes to 6 minor part doesn't actually begin the bridge in this song.)



1 5⁷
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,

1 4
And never brought to mind

1 5⁷ 3⁷
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,

6m 4 5⁷ 1
And auld lang syne

1 5⁷
For auld lang syne, my dear,

1 4
For auld lang syne.

1 5⁷ 3⁷
We'll take a cup o' kindness yet,

6m 4 5⁷ 1
For auld lang syne.

Hey, let's do that last bit with 2m7 instead of 4:



1 5⁷ 3⁷
We'll take a cup o' kindness yet,
6m 2m⁷ 5⁷ 1
For auld lang syne.

A good example of the No. 3 chord being part and parcel of the B part (or chorus) is in Foster's "My Old Kentucky" home. It has to be one of my favorite songs and it has nothing to do with the fact that I was born in Kentucky. It's just a gorgeous song. Go Itune Louis Armstrong's version and don't miss out on Lawrence Welk's version which *kills*. No champagne bubbles at all.

Just before the running of the Kentucky Derby the band begins to play the song and 100,000 people start singing along. When they reach the B part: "Weep no more my lady..." there isn't a dry eye in the stadium.

The No. 3 chord doesn't really go to 6 minor the way I've heard it played, but I'll put it in as it works and you may even prefer it. And the song deserves the 2m7 to 5⁷ pattern.



1 1⁷ 4 1
The sun shines bright in my old Kentucky home,
1 6m 2m⁷ 5⁷
'Tis summer, the people are gay,
1 1⁷ 4 1
The corn top's ripe and the meadow's in the bloom,
1 2m⁷ 5⁷ 1
While the birds make music all the day.
1 1⁷ 4 1
The young folks roll on the little cabin floor,

1 $6m$ $2m^7$ 5^7
All merry, all happy and bright:
 1 1^7 4 1 $6m$
By 'n' by hard times come a knocking at the door,
 2^7 $2m^7$ 5^7 1
Then my old Kentucky home, good night!

CHORUS

1 4 1 3^7
Weep no more, my lady,
 $(6m \text{ or } 4)$ 4 1 5^7
Oh! weep no more today!
 1 1^7 4 1 $6m$
We will sing one song for my old Kentucky Home,
 2^7 $2m^7$ 5^7 1
For my old Kentucky home far away.

My hope is that you are getting the feel for the progressions that are so common in songs, progressions like the little $2m^7$ to 5^7 and 2^7 to $2m^7$ to 5^7 ones and the 3^7 to $6m$ one.



All right. Try to figure out how to play “Love Me Tender.” Can you do it? Noodle around and try to play it.

Did you get it?

Lots of people get stuck even at the beginning because they don’t think to go from 2^7 to 5^7 as we have practiced. Strum four times for each chord to play this common pattern. Again, four strums (down) for each. Play it fast if you like and it will sound like a polka!



1 2^7 5^7 1

The second part of that song does something that a lot of songs do. It goes 1, 3⁷, 6m, and then 1⁷. The Beatles song “This boy” does the same but the pattern starts with the subdominant No. 4 chord and then goes to 3⁷, 6m 1⁷. Now play the common pattern used in such songs. Strum two times for each chord to play this common pattern in the style of “Love me Tender” and a million others:



Remember, two times each...down

1 3⁷ 6m 1⁷

Strum four times for each chord to play this common pattern in the style of “This Boy” and a million others:



1⁷ 4 3⁷ 6m 1⁷

With the two patterns above, you should be able to figure out songs like “Love Me Tender” and “This Boy”¹⁸ and many others.

So, for figuring out songs without the chords written out for you, keep these patterns in mind. Say to yourself:

“Maybe it goes from 2 to 5, ... ugh! Nah... — let’s test to see if it’s 3⁷, 6m, 1⁷. Ah, that’s it.”

We’ve done other patterns that you’ll always want to test to see if they fit the song you’re trying to figure out. For instance, at the beginning of the book we started with the 1, 4, 5 song progression and showed how 1⁷ went to

¹⁸ The first part of “This Boy” is just Dolly’s 1, 6m, 4, 5 except the No.1 chord is played as a major seventh: 1maj7, 6m, 4, 5. Try it. Get the major seventh from the back of the book if you need to.

4. And don't forget 1, 6m 4, 5 as in the Dolly Parton song.

Try to play "As Tears Go By" by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones. Did you get stuck at the beginning with "This is the evening of the day...?" It's just like "Love Me Tender." It starts with our friend the 2-goes-to-5 pattern: 1, 2^{7th}, 2m^{7th}, 5^{7th} The rest is easy to figure out. You might just play the No. 4 chord instead of the 2m⁷ chord there. They are really similar and can be substitutes for each other.

There will be more on this. Wait a bit and later in the book, you'll find that the song you may be trying to figure out is simply *screaming* for a diminished chord or even the sharped No. 5 chord. Without those chords many songs are simply played wrong just the way I told you I thought "My Bonnie" and "Jingle Bells" are wrong without No. 2 going to No. 5.

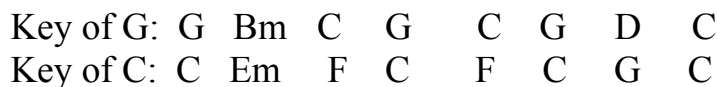
Let's use the No. 3 chord again. What if we put 3 minor instead of 6 minor in Dolly's pattern? Well, 1, 3m, 4, 5 is very common and quite useful. Here it is in the key of G so you can practice that moveable B minor chord. Strum two times for each chord and repeat it several times.



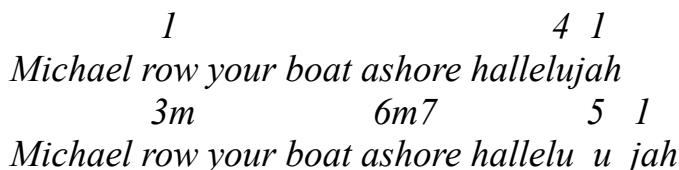
Key of G: G Bm C D

Perhaps just as common is the pattern 1, 3m, 4, 1. Strum the pattern and hum a melody with it. Any melody that fits. You're writing a song here and I think lots of pretty melodies will come naturally to you as you play this pattern. This, remember, is 1, 3m, 4, 1 and I put a couple of extra chords to make it more complete. Strum two times for each chord.

Play, compose, enjoy.



To get another feel for how No. 3 minor can sound, play this well-known ditty:



A. The number 3 chord in a song often leads to the number 6 minor chord.

- B. Often the number 3 to number 6 pattern is the beginning of a song's bridge.
- C. In many songs, the number 3 chord often goes to the number 6 chord and then back to the number one chord (the tonic) as a seventh.
- D. Knowing common patterns such as 3, 6, 1 or 2, 5 is helpful in sounding out songs.
- E. The 1, 3 minor, 4, 5 pattern is as common as the Dolly Parton pattern of 1, 6 minor, 4, 5.

Chapter Ten—Diminished Chords

In Chapter Six you learned that if you flat the third note in the major triad, the chord becomes a minor and if you flat both the third and the fifth you get a diminished chord.

Oh, I promised that the theory would all be practical. All right, how about this? There are two really important (and kind of surprising) things to know about diminished chords.

1. There are only three of them in the entire universe.
2. You can name the chord after any note it contains.

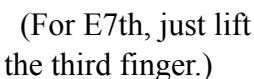
Is that practical? Well, I think it is.

First of all, since there are only three of them, it means that if you need to play a diminished chord, you can play the moveable diminished chord anywhere on the fretboard and you have a thirty percent chance of hitting the correct one. You can never be more than one fret away from the one you need.

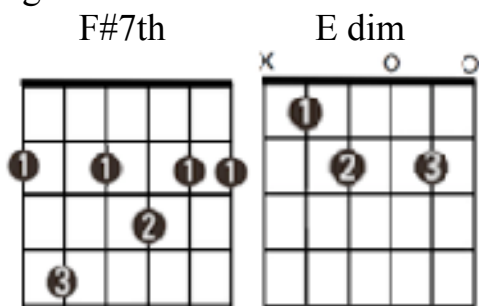
Secondly, the chords are easy to name because if you know a single note in the chord you can give it the name of that note. If you see a D in the chord, for example, you could call it D diminished.

Well, where can we use them? Let's do some quick examples to let you hear what they sound like in a few songs. First a bit of "Red River Valley" in the key of E.

Here is your 1, 4, 5 set of chords for the key of E (E, A, and B7th):



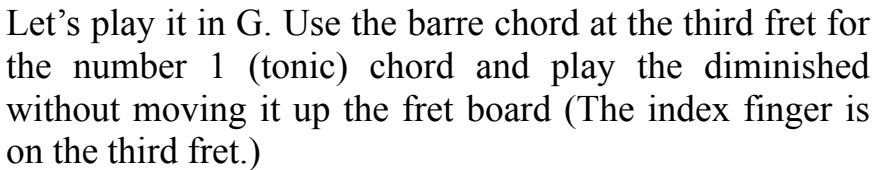
And here's your No. 2 chord, F#7th and the diminished chord you'll need. We'll call it E diminished because the second finger makes an E on the fourth string:



$\frac{1}{57^{th}}$ $\frac{1}{57^{th}}$
From this valley they say you are going.
 $\frac{1}{57^{th}}$ $\frac{27^{th}}$ $\frac{57^{th}}$
We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile.
 $\frac{1}{17^{th}}$ $\frac{4}{1}$ $\frac{1}{diminished}$
For they say you are taking the sunshine
 $\frac{57^{th}}$ $\frac{1}{1}$
That has brightened our pathway awhile.

You can hear the subtle sound it has in this song which adds to the sophistication of the arrangement. In

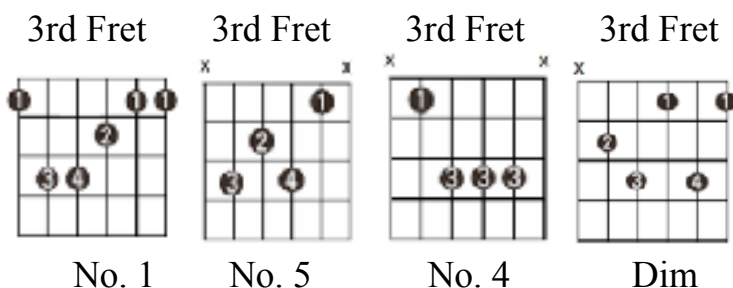
Okay, now let's get right to the moveable diminished chord. That way we can practice in G and lots of other keys.



There's really no substitute, no other chord that can take the place of that diminished there and it adds a more professional sound to the performance.



Here's another. Again. Play in G. Let's play it all on the third fret with all moveable chords. Your hand doesn't move up or down the fingerboard at all. (Lift your pinky to make the No. 1 into a seventh.)



1
For he's a jolly good fellow
5^{7th} 1
For he's a jolly good fellow
1 1^{7th} 4 1 dim
For he's a jolly good fellow
5^{7th} 1
Which nobody can deny

Try playing instead of the diminished the No. 2 chord A7th. They can sub for each other in this song.



Here's another. Again. Play in G. Barre chord tonic on the third fret and the diminished chord on the third fret as well.

1
She'll be coming around the mountain when she comes
1 5^{7th}
She'll be coming around the mountain when she comes
1 1^{7th}

She'll be coming around the mountain

4

1 dim

She'll be coming around the mountain

5^{7th}

1

She'll be coming around the mountain when she comes

Try playing instead of the diminished the No. 2 chord A7th. They can sub for each other in this song.



1

5^{7th}

Happy birthday to you

5^{7th}

1

Happy birthday to you

1

1^{7th}

4

1 dim

Happy birthday dear Johnny

1

5^{7th} 1

Happy birthday to you

Earlier in the book I said that “Home on the Range” had a third part that people don’t know. Even if you don’t know the melody to this part, it is worthwhile to practice the chord pattern. Besides, the melody is in the notes contained in the chords so you can hear it screaming to get out. No number 2 chord can substitute for the diminished chord here. I always play it in E, but you can use the moveable diminished and play in other keys (and in E as well). Here’s the chorus to get you started.



1

5^{7th}

1

Home home on the range

$6m$ 2^{7th} $2m^{7th}$ 5^{7th}
Where the deer and the antelope play
 1 1^{7th} 4
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word
 1 5^{7th} 1
And the skies are not cloudy all day



Here's the new part. Get ready to put in the diminished chord. If you're playing in E, use the unmoveable diminished we started the lesson with — or the moveable somewhere else on the fret board.

If you're in G, play the diminished on the third fret.

4 1 dim 1
Give me a land where the bright diamond sand
 1 $6m$ $2m^{7th}$ 5^{7th}
Flows leisurely down to the stream
 4 1 dim 1 $6m$
Where the graceful white swan goes gliding along
 2^{7th} $2m^{7th}$ 5^{7th}
Like a maid in a heavenly dream
 1 1^{7th} 4
I would not exchange my old home on the range
 1 $6m^{7th}$ $2m^{7th}$ 5^{7th}
Where the deer and the antelope play
 1 1^{7th} 4
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word
 1 5^{7th} 1
And the skies are not cloudy all day

Let's do another. One of the most beautiful songs of all is "Dixie." I can't imagine playing it without a diminished chord and when you try it here you'll never

want to play it another way. It's public domain so I can put it all here.



Note how the song as I have arranged it has both the 2^{7th} leading to the no. 5 chord and the 2^{m7th} going to the no. 5 chord as we have seen so often elsewhere.

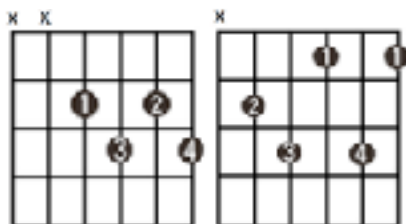
DIXIE

Oh, I wish I was in the land of cotton
1 4 1^{7th} 1^{dim}
Old times there are not forgotten
1 6^m 2^{m7th} 5^{7th} 1
Look away, look away, look away Dixieland.
1 4 2^{7th} 5^{7th}
I wish I was in Dixie away away
1 4 1 6^m 2^{m7th} 5^{7th}
In Dixieland I'll take my stand to live and die in Dixie
1 5^{7th} 1 5^{7th} 1
Away, away, away down south in Dixie.

Remember I said that there are only three diminished chords in the universe? It's true. Mathematically in a way I cannot explain but can pretend to understand. All the notes just blend into three equal versions of only three chords wherever you play them on the fret board.

So let's do a quick exercise.

Here's another nice moveable diminished chord. It's easy to play because it's just a vanilla D shape moved one string to the left on the fretboard with the pinky on the first string at the third fret.



Play either of them and then move the chord three frets up. Can you hear it? It's the same chord! Move it three frets farther up again. It's the same chord. It repeats itself every three frets (or I guess you can say every four frets if you count from your starting point.)

Have fun doing this with both moveable shapes.



Now, use the new moveable shape in "Red River Valley" again. Any key you choose.

1 5^{7th} 1

From this valley they say you are going.

1 5^{7th} 2^{7th} 5^{7th}

We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile.

1 1^{7th} 4 1 diminished

For they say you are taking the sunshine

5^{7th} 1

That has brightened our pathway awhile.



Now, use the other moveable diminished chord but in a different *place* on the fretboard to play the song. If you were in the key of G and played it on the third fret, you'll have to move it up or down three more frets to get the same chord.

Now let's really put the diminished chord to use by doing a jazz progression that you'll hear in everything from Cindy Walker's "Miss Molly" to Kay Kyser's "Three Little fishies" ("They swam and they swam all over the dam") to Gershwin's "I've Got Rhythm."



Let's play in Bb. Two strums down for each chord and repeat the progression again and again.

Swing Progression #1, Chord Shapes #1

Sixth Fret

Seventh Fret

Eight Fret

Sixth Fret



Let's play in Eb. You'll run out of neck right away if you start with a bar chord on the eleventh fret, so let's use different chord shapes. Two strums down for each chord and repeat the progression again and again.

Swing Progression #1, Chord Shapes #2

Sixth Fret

Sixth Fret

Eighth Fret

Sixth Fret

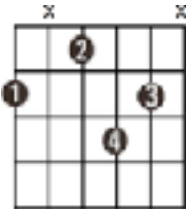
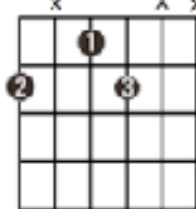
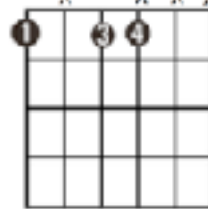

Let's get advanced. The first pattern above, the with the chord shapes #1 includes the barre chord which jazz players generally abandon in this pattern in favor of a four-note major sixth. Then they often use Freddy Green style 3-note chords for the the diminished, the minor seventh, and that C-shaped seventh.

The three-note chords are so sparse that they have an extremely clean sound. As Ranger Doug says of them, "They're spooky and wonderful. Less is more."¹⁹



Let's play in Bb again. Two strums down for each chord and repeat the progression again and again.

Swing Progression #1, Chord Shapes #3

Sixth Fret	Seventh Fret	Eighth Fret	Eighth Fret
			
4-note Sixth	3-note diminished	3-note Minor Seventh	3-note Seventh

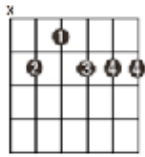
Yes, I know. The diminished chord and the seventh are the same. No, I didn't make a mistake. The diminished chord in a different place in the pattern subs as an F seventh even though the chord doesn't even have have the root. It's an F with no F note in it.

I usually play a ninth instead of the last seventh chord in the pattern. Here it is. You would be pretty bad off without this one in your bag. It's working here as the No.

¹⁹ This is, in my opinion, why the ukulele (the world's most underrated instrument) has such a clean, spooky, and wonderful sound.

5 chord and it will work most anywhere in that position in a song.

It's easy to play because it's just a little CAGED chord D seventh that is moved two strings to the left and all you have left to do is flatten your pinky over the second and first strings.



Let's play in Bb again. Two strums down for each chord and repeat the progression again and again.

Swing Progression #1, Chord Shapes #4

Fifth Fret	Sixth Fret	Seventh Fret	Seventh Fret
4-note Sixth	3-note	3-note Minor Seventh	Ninth

Chapter Eleven—Familiar shapes Another 7th

silent night
Oh, little town of Bethlehem
greensleeves

Em G D Bm
Alas, my love, you do me wrong,
Em B7
To cast me off discourteously.
Em G D B
For I have loved you well and long,
Em B7 Em
Delighting in your company.

Chorus:
G D
Greensleeves was all my joy
Em B7
Greensleeves was my delight,
G D
Greensleeves was my heart of gold,
Em B7 E
And who but my lady greensleeves.

old smoky
america the beautiful
D7 G Em Edim Am7 D7 C C/B Am7 D7 G Edim
D7

O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain,

D7 G Em Edim Am7 D7 Fdim D7 E7 A7 D7
For purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain!

G D7 D9 C D7 Am7 D9 Am7 D D7 G Gmaj7 G7
America! A - merica! God shed His grace on thee,

Fdim C Am7 G G/F# Em
And crown thy good with broth - er - hood

D7 C Am7 D D7 G Em7 D7
From sea to shining sea!

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

C Am Dm G C G C Am Dm C G C
God save our gracious Queen! Long live our noble Queen!
Dm C G C
God save the Queen!
C G C G C G Dm G C G
Send her victorious, happy and glorious,
C G C G C G C F Dm C G C
long to__ re-ign over us, Go-d save the Queen!

And NOW I'm going to do something different that will reinforce a lot of the above instruction. It occurred to me that I had already written two chapters that dealt with the Nashville number system and notes in chords. They appeared at the end of one of my eleven Spanish/English autobiographies and they were a little off topic in my book *Escrituras y locuras/Writings and Rantings*. Despite a bit of repetitiousness, they offer a different approach and good extra practice with the two topics.

I wrote all those memoirs in Spanish and then put what I'd written into Google Translate to get a horrible translation in English, but it was always easy to edit it to perfection with the advantage that I didn't have to be forced to TYPE everything again. I'm keeping the Spanish here just like in the book with English on the left and Spanish on the right because it's a waste to have both versions and throw one away. Besides, I like it and there may be some Spanish speakers who would like a break from my English, so here goes.....

Chapter Twelve—The Nashville Number System

I always like to say I invented it *myself*—the Nashville Number System, I mean. It isn't that much of a boast actually because what I little I know of the system (which isn't a lot) and what little I may have invented isn't very complicated. To me it is just a very handy and simple bit of theory and I'm eager to explain it here in the hopes it will be useful to anyone who's learning to play a musical instrument or anyone who wants to learn some very basic musical theory just for the love of knowledge.

With the Nashville Number System, you can not only more easily play in any key but you can write out song lyrics using *numbers* to represent each chord in the song and this "sheet music" will, in effect, be written in *every key at once*.

Before I continue, I wish to say that my sharing of this knowledge has not always received the gracious reception that I believed it deserved. A couple of years back, I attended a meeting of Spanish speakers and when I tried to explain the number system, one of the attendees, who jealously defended her official post as the guardian of all things musical, began banging her fist on the table rather angrily and ill-manneredly saying that it

Capítulo Doce—El sistema de números de Nashville

Siempre me gusta decir que lo inventé—me refiero al sistema de números de Nashville. No me jacto mucho en realidad al decirlo ya que nada de lo poco que sé sobre el sistema y nada de lo poco que podría haber inventado sería muy complicado. Para mí el sistema no es nada más que un poco de teoría muy útil y tengo ganas de explicarlo aquí esperando que sea útil para los que están aprendiendo a tocar un instrumento musical o para los que quieren aprender un poquito de teoría musical solamente por el amor al aprendizaje.

Con el sistema de números de Nashville, Ud. no solamente puede tocar en cualquier tono, sino que puede escribir la letra con unos números encima para representar cada acorde en una canción y esta "partitura" estará escrita en todos los tonos al mismo tiempo.

Antes de continuar, quisiera decir que el hecho de compartir mi sabiduría no todo el tiempo ha recibido la bienvenida gentil que creía que merecía. Hace un par de años, asistí a una reunión de hispanohablantes y al tratar de explicarlo, una de los que asistían, que guardaba celosamente su puesto oficial como defensor de todas las causas musicales, empezó

was *impossible!*

I tried to explain that I wasn't referring to real sheet music with written notes and a key signature and all that—but simply *chords* written above the words of a song. Still, she would have nothing of it and continued to bang the tabletop. Her expertise clearly didn't include any knowledge of the Nashville Number System. Nor was she inclined to acquire any.

I don't go to those meetings anymore.

Anyhow, to get to the point, here's how I "invented" it:

I remember playing guitar with people who would say, "All right, go to number 5," instead of "go to the *dominant* chord," and I knew exactly what they meant. And like everyone else, I have heard people say the words, "It's a three-chord song." Well, those words are a good place to start to explain some entry-level basics of song theory, which is about all the Nashville Number system (as far as I know) entails.

There are three basic chords in a song: numbers 1, 4, and 5. The number 1 chord in a song is called the *tonic*, the number 4 chord in a song is called the *subdominant*, and the number 5 chord in a song is called the *dominant*.

It's all based on singing not *do, re, mi, fa, so la, ti, do* (C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C) but singing numbers instead. C is 1, D is 2, E is 3, etc.

Basic musicians learn that the tonic chord in

a golpear un puño en la mesa con enojo al gritar ferozmente que era *¡imposible!*

Intenté explicar que no me refería a verdadera partitura con las notas musicales y la armadura etc. sino que solamente a *acordes* escritos encima de la letra de una canción. A ella no le importaba para nada y continuó golpeando la mesa. Al parecer, su propia sabiduría musical no incluía el conocimiento del Sistema de Nashville ni me parecía que tuviera ganas de adquirir ninguno en el futuro cercano.

Ya no asisto a estás reuniones.

De todos modos, para ir al grano, "Inventé" el sistema de esta manera:

Recuerdo haber tocado la guitarra con gente que diría: "Bueno, ve al número cinco," en lugar de "Ve al acorde dominante," y entendía exactamente lo que quería decir. También, como todo el mundo, he oído a gente decir las palabras, "Es una canción de tres acordes." Bueno, esas palabras son un buen lugar para empezar a explicar algunos conceptos básicos de teoría de canciones, que según lo que sé yo son todo lo que implica el sistema de números de Nashville.

Hay tres acordes principales en una canción: los números 1, 4, y 5. El acorde número uno en una canción se nombra por la nota tónica y por eso se llama la *tónica*, el acorde número cuatro

the key of C is C, (the first note in the scale of C) and thus it is the number 1 chord. F is the subdominant chord named after the fourth note in the scale. The dominant is the number five chord or G. So in the key of C, the numbers that match those three chords are arranged like this:

THE SCALE IN THE KEY OF C									
do	re	mi	fa	sol	la	ti			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7 ²⁰			
C	D	E	F	G	A	B			

Traditionally, one writes out *letters* to represent chords above lyrics, but you can see below that numbers work just fine as well.

Oh! Susana

Well, I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee
And I'm going to Louisiana my true love for to see
Oh, Susanna! Oh, don't you cry for me
I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee

Well, I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee
And I'm going to Louisiana my true love for to see
Oh, Susanna! Oh, don't you cry for me
I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee

²⁰ Note that there is no 8 needed as here it would be a C and C already has a number.

por esta razón se llama la *subdominante* y el acorde número cinco la *dominante*.

En lugar de cantar *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si, do* se cantan números. *Do* es el 1, *re* es el 2, *mi* es el 3, etc. Los principiantes aprenden que la tónica en el tono de *do* es *do* (la primera nota en la escala del tono de *do*) y por eso *do* es el acorde número uno. *Fa* es la subdominante y se llama el número cuatro ya que *fa* es la cuarta nota en la escala. La dominante, *sol*, es el acorde número cinco.

Así que en el tono de *do*, los números que coinciden con estos tres acordes se arreglan así:

LA ESCALA EN EL TONO DE DO

do re mi fa sol la si
1 2 3 4 5 6 7²¹

Según tradición en español, se escriben *do, re, mi*, etc. encima de la letra para representar acordes, pero como se puede ver de abajo, los números sirven bien también.

Oh! Susana

DO SOL DO
 Vengo de Alabama con mi banjo tan feliz desde
 SOL DO FA
 Luisiana mi amorcito está allí. Oh! Susana, no
 DO SOL DO
 No llores más por mí. Vengo de Alabama
 SOL DO
 con mi banjo para ti

²¹ Tenga en cuenta que no se necesita el número 8 aquí ya que sería *do*, y *do* ya tiene un número.

The number system has a clear advantage over letters because if you know the 1, 4, and 5 chords, you'll know how to play any three-chord song by numbers which never change in *any* key. Say, for example in the key of G:

THE SCALE IN THE KEY OF G

G A B C D E F#

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

GD

Well, I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee

GD G

And I'm going to Louisiana my true love for to see

CG D

Oh, Susanna! Oh, don't you cry for me

GD G

I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee

And with the same numbers again exactly as before:

15

Well, I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee

15 1

And I'm going to Louisiana my true love for to see

41 5

Oh, Susanna! Oh, don't you cry for me

15 1

I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee

One may say that that's easy enough for three-chord songs but other songs aren't that simple. Well...all right, there *are* more numbers to remember, but the system remains just as simple as ever. The following shows the five popular "CAGED" guitar keys with numbers.

¹ Vengo de Alabama con mi banjo tan ^{5 1} feliz desde
 Luisiana mi amorcito ^{5 1 4} está allí. Oh! Susana, no
¹ No llores más por mí. Vengo de Alabama
^{5 1} con mi banjo para ti

El sistema de números tiene una ventaja obvia sobre las letras porque si Ud. ya sabe la tónica, la subdominante, y la dominante sabrá tocar cualquier canción de tres acordes en cualquier tono que sea—en el tono de *sol* por ejemplo:

LA ESCALA EN EL TONO DE SOL

SOL	LA	SI	DO	RE	MI	FA#
G	A	B	C	D	E	F#
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

^{SOL} Vengo de Alabama con mi banjo tan ^{RE SOL} feliz desde
^{RE SOL DO} Luisiana mi amorcito está allí. Oh! Susana, no
^{SOL RE SOL} No llores más por mí. Vengo de Alabama
^{RE SOL} con mi banjo para ti

Con los mismos números exactamente como antes:

¹ Vengo de Alabama con mi banjo tan ^{5 1} feliz desde
^{5 1 4} Luisiana mi amorcito está allí. Oh! Susana, no
¹ No llores más por mí. Vengo de Alabama
^{5 1} con mi banjo para ti

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

Here's a song with more than three chords, in the key of C. Chords numbers 2 and 6 are needed.

Home on the Range²²

From the poem "My Western Home" by Dr. Brewster M. Higley 1872.

C

C7

F

Fm

Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam. Where

C

D7

G

C

C7

the deer and the antelope play. Where seldom is heard a

F

Fm

C

G

C

discouraging word and the skies are not cloudy all day

C

G

C

Am

Home, home on the range. Where the deer and the

D7

Dm7

G7

C

C7

F

antelope play. Where seldom is heard a discouraging

Fm

C

G

C

word and the skies are not cloudy all day

1

17

4

4m

Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam. Where

1

27

5

1

17

the deer and the antelope play. Where seldom is heard a

²² This song, a waltz, has a little-known 16-measure third part that is worth learning.

Dirá que esto tal vez sea fácil en cuanto a canciones de tres acordes pero que otras canciones no son tan sencillas.

Bueno. Es cierto que a menudo hay más números que recordar, pero el sistema sigue siendo tan simple como nunca. Lo siguiente muestra los cinco tonos más populares para guitarristas con sus números.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TONO DE DO	Do	Re	Mi	Fa	Sol	La	Si
TONO DE LA	La	Si	Do [♯]	Re	Mi	Fa [♯]	Sol [♯]
TONO DE SOL	Sol	La	Si	Do	Re	Me	F#
TONO DE MI	Mi	Fa [♯]	Sol [♯]	La	Si	Do [♯]	Re [♯]
TONO DE RE	Re	Mi	Fa [♯]	Sol	La	Si	Do [♯]

Aquí está "Hogar en el Rango,"²³ una canción con más de tres acordes en el tono de *do*. Se necesitan los acordes número 2 y 6.

Hogar en el Rango

Letra de un poema de 1872, "Mi hogar al oeste" del Dr. Brewster M. Higley

DO DO7 FA FAM
 Oh, dame un hogar donde los búfalos vaguen donde
 DO RE7 SOL DO
 jueguen el ciervo y el antílope. Donde rara vez se
 DO7 FA FAM DO
 escucha una palabra desalentadora y los cielos no están

²³ Ésta canción es un vals que tiene una tercera parte poco conocida de 16 compases que vale la pena aprender.

4 4m 1 5 1
 discouraging word and the skies are not cloudy all day
 1 5 1 6m
 Home, home on the range. Where the deer and the
 27 2m7 57 1 17 4
 antelope play. Where seldom is heard a discouraging
 4m 1 5 1
 word and the skies are not cloudy all day

Now look at "Home on the Range" in the key of E and then in *all* keys (above) with the numbers. Note that the numbers never change, and that the minors and sevenths are written on the numbers just as you would on letters.

E E7 A Am
 Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam. Where
 E F#7 B E E7
 the deer and the antelope play. Where seldom is heard a
 A Am E B E
 discouraging word and the skies are not cloudy all day
 E B E C#m
 Home, home on the range. Where the deer and the
 F#7 F#m7 B7 E E7 A
 antelope play. Where seldom is heard a discouraging
 Am E B E
 word and the skies are not cloudy all day

SOL DO SOL DO
nublados todo el día. Hogar, hogar en el rango donde
LAM RE7 REm7 SOL 7 DO
juegan el ciervo y el antílope. Donde rara vez se
DO7 FA FAm DO
escucha una palabra desalentadora y los cielos no están
SOL DO
nublados todo el día

1 17 4 4m
Oh, dame un hogar donde los búfalos vaguen donde
1 27 5 1
jueguen el ciervo y el antílope. Donde rara vez se
17 4 4m 1
escucha una palabra desalentadora y los cielos no están
5 1 5 1
nublados todo el día. Hogar, hogar en el rango donde
6m 27 2m7 57 1
juegan el ciervo y el antílope. Donde rara vez se
17 4 FAm 1
escucha una palabra desalentadora y los cielos no están
5 1
nublados todo el día

Ahora eche un vistazo a la misma canción escrita en el tono de *mi* y también en todos los tonos (de arriba) con el Sistema de Números de Nashville. Tenga en cuenta que los números nunca se cambian y que los menores y séptimos se escriben con los números como se hace con *do*, *re*, *mi*, etc.

MI MI7 LA LAm
Oh, dame un hogar donde los búfalos vaguen donde
MI FA#7 SI7 MI
jueguen el ciervo y el antílope. Donde rara vez se
MI 7 LA LAm MI
escucha una palabra desalentadora y los cielos no están
SI MI SI MI
nublados todo el día. Hogar, hogar en el rango donde

Those who don't play instruments will find it hard to believe that it is really rather easy to switch from reading letters to reading numbers off of a lyrics/chord sheet this way. They may ask, "How can you *possibly* remember which of all of those notes corresponds to which number in all of those keys?"

Well, you don't *have* to; you can *see* them. If you play, the guitar, for instance, when you form a barre G chord, you can see that your index finger is holding down a G on both the first and sixth strings. If you slide the chord a full step up (two frets), the chord will be an A and your index finger will be holding down the note A on both strings. Since G is the number one chord if you're playing in that key, A, one step up, will be the number 2 chord. You can see this in a dozen ways with a dozen different kinds of chords.

If you know your way around the fretboard at all, you can immediately see that D, for instance, is the number 3 chord in the key of Bb and that Ab is the number 4 chord in the key of Eb. You just have to know your chords.

As I said, this system makes it easy to change key. If you realize a song is too high or low for your voice or something, you just try another key. You don't have to write any new letters on a new sheet; you have the numbers.

DO#M	FA#7	FA#m7	SI	MI
juegan el ciervo y el antílope. Donde rara vez se				
MI 7	LA	LAm	MI	
escucha una palabra desalentadora y los cielos no están				
SI7	MI			
nublados todo el día				

Los que no tocan instrumentos tal vez no creerán que sea en realidad fácil de usar números de esa manera. Preguntarán, "¿Cómo podría ser posible recordar cuales son las notas que coinciden con los números en todos esos tonos?"

Bueno, el hecho es que no se necesita recordar todo; puede *ver* las notas. Si toca la guitarra, por ejemplo, al usar un dedo como una cejilla para formar un acorde de *sol*, puede ver que el índice está apretando la nota *sol* en ambos la primera cuerda y la sexta. Si desliza el acorde dos trastes hacia arriba (una nota entera en la escala), estará tocando un acorde de *la* y el índice estará apretando la nota *la* en esas dos cuerdas. Ya que *sol* es el acorde número uno (en el tono de *sol*) sabe que *la* es el acorde número dos en este tono. Se puede ver tales relaciones con cualquier acorde que se toca.

Si conoce el diapasón de la guitarra, puede ver inmediatamente que *re* es acorde número tres en el tono de *si* bemol y que *la* bemol es el acorde número cuatro en el tono de *mi* bemol.

Como he dicho, este sistema hace que sea fácil cambiar a otro tono.

I mention the number system in my book *Recuerdo de amnesia/Memory of Amnesia* and I include an example that my musical hero Ranger Doug had played on an instructional video. I wrote out the lyrics and put the numbers above them. It was the introduction to "Stardust," and here I'm glad to take this new opportunity to put in the first verse.

⁴
 Sometimes I wonder why I spend the lonely night ^{6 aug}
^{4 m b}
 Dreaming of a song. The melody ¹haunts my reverie ^{3 m} ^{6 4}
^{2 m} ^{6 7}
 And I am once again with you ^{2 m}
⁵ ^{5 dim} ⁵ ^{5 aug} ^{1 b}
 When our love was new and each kiss an inspiration
^{2 7}
 But that was long ago. Now my consolation
^{5 7} ^{2 m 7} ^{5 7}
 Is in the stardust of a song

I'm putting together a simple but big notebook with with all the songs I like to perform whenever I have a gig, and thumbing through it, I find page after page of song lyrics with numbers rather than letters to represent the chords.

Si cree que una canción es demasiado sostenida o bemol para la voz, nada más estrena otro tono. No hay que escribir otros acordes en otra página; ya tiene los números.

Menciono el sistema de números en mi libro *Recuerdo de amnesia/Memory of Amnesia* y incluyo un ejemplo que mi héroe musical Ranger Doug había tocado en un video instructivo. Escribí la letra y puse los números encima. Era la introducción de "Stardust." En lugar de ella, pondré aquí el primer verso.

Sometimes I wonder why I spend the lonely night
 Dreaming of a song. The melody haunts my reverie
 And I am once again with you
 When our love was new and each kiss an inspiration
 But that was long ago. Now my consolation
 Is in the stardust of a song

Estoy juntando canciones para un grande aunque simple cuaderno con todas las canciones que me gustan tocar cuando tengo una actuación. Ojeando por él me encuentro con página tras página de letra con números encima de ella.

Here's an example of one that I'd like to close with.
 It's wonderfully perky, upbeat tune from the 1920s. Pick
 your key!

Keep Your Sunny Side Up

¹ There's one thing to think of when you're ^{5 7} blue,

There are others much worse off than you! ^{5 7}

^{2m} If a load of troubles should arrive, ^{6 7} ^{2m}

^{2 7} Laugh and say, "It's great to be alive!" ^{5 7}

And keep your ¹ sunny side up, up! ^{5 7} ¹ ^{1 aug}

⁴ Hide the side that gets blue. ^{4th dim} ¹

⁵ ^{5 dim} ^{5 7} ^{1 dim} ¹
 If their team is knocking us flat,

^{2 7} Smile and say, "We're better than that!" ^{5 7} ^{5 aug}

¹ Keep your funny side up, up! ^{5 7} ¹ ^{1 aug}

⁴ Let your laughter come through, do! ^{3 7} ^{6m} ^{6 7}

^{2m} Stand up on your legs,

¹ Be like two fried eggs. ^{6 7}

^{2 7} Keep your ^{5 7} sunny side up! ¹

Aquí tiene un ejemplo con la que quisiera concluir. Es una alegre y optimista canción de los años veinte. ¡Escoge el tono!

Keep Your Sunny Side Up

There's one thing to think of when you're blue,

There are others much worse off than you!

If a load of troubles should arrive,

Laugh and say, "It's great to be alive!"

And keep your sunny side up, up!

Hide the side that gets blue.

If their team is knocking us flat,

Smile and say, "We're better than that!"

Keep your funny side up, up!

Let your laughter come through, do!

Stand up on your legs,

Be like two fried eggs,

Keep your sunny side up!

Chapter Thirteen— Notes in Chords

In one chapter of my book *Over a City Bridge/Sobre un puente de la ciudad*, I assure the reader that if they didn't especially enjoy my essay on Edgar Rice Burroughs, they need not fear because despite one of his Tarzan book covers on the top of the first page, the new chapter was altogether different in subject matter.

I can't quite give that assurance here as my Chapter "The Nashville Number System" is closely related to this one. In fact, you could say this chapter builds upon what you learned in the other. It is best, then, for me to begin by saying that if you liked the chapter on the Nashville Number System, you're going to *love* this one!

It is a basic musical practice to use numbers to define the notes *within any chord*—this instead of using the numbers to simply represent chord names in a song as you saw in my other chapter. This means you can construct any different *kind* of chord in any key using numbers. It's easy to see this on the piano—especially in the key of C. You just need to know the following:

Capítulo Trece—Notas dentro de acordes

En un capítulo de my libro *Sobre un puente de la ciudad*, aseguro al lector que si no le había gustado mucho mi ensayo sobre Edgar Rice Burroughs, que no necesitaba preocuparse ya que a pesar de la portada de una de sus novelas de Tarzan en la primera página, el capítulo era totalmente diferente en cuanto al tema.

Realmente no puede asegurarle esto aquí como mi capítulo "El sistema de números de Nashville" está muy relacionado con éste capítulo. De hecho, se podría decir que este capítulo fortalece lo que ha aprendido en el otro. Es mejor, entonces, comenzar diciendo que si le gustó el capítulo "El sistema de números de Nashville", ¡le encantará éste!

Es una costumbre básica musical usar números para representar las notas dentro de un acorde—se hace esto en lugar de usar los números para simplemente representar los nombres de los acordes en una canción como ha visto en el capítulo anterior. Esto quiere decir que se puede construir cualquier *clase* de acorde en cualquier tono utilizando números.

Es fácil de ver esto en un piano—sobre todo en el tono de *do*. Solamente tiene que saber lo siguiente:

A triad is a major chord and consists of notes 1, 3, and 5 in any scale.²⁴

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
C D E F G A B C D

So a C major chord would consist of C, E, and G. Obviously, then, it makes sense that adding the sixth note in the scale (A) will make a C sixth chord. It does: C sixth = 1, 3, 5, 6 = C, E, G, A



C Sixth on My Piano

Here's what defines a few essential chords:

A minor chord: You flat the 3rd in the triad to make a minor chord, so C minor would be C, *E_b*, and G.

²⁴ No, not 1, 4, and 5. That's for songs!

Una tríada es un acorde mayor que consiste en tres notas, 1, 3, y 5 en cualquier escala.²⁵

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
do re **mi** fa **sol** la si do re

Por eso, tiene sentido que un acorde sexto de *do* consista en *do*, *mi*, *sol* y *la*. Así:



El acorde de *do* sexto menor

Lo que sigue enseña como se forman algunos acordes imprescindibles:

Un acorde menor: Se disminuye la tercera nota en la tríada para formar un acorde menor. Así que el acorde de *do* menor sería *do*, *mi* bemol, y *sol*.

²⁵ No, no es 1, 4, y 5. ¡Eso es para canciones!

A diminished chord: You flat *both* the 3rd and the fifth to make a diminished chord: in the key of C that is, of course, C, *Eb*, and *Gb*.

A seventh chord (also called a dominant seventh) includes the *flatted* seventh note: 1, 3, 5 and *b7*

A major seventh chord, however, is 1, 3, 5 and an unaltered 7. No flatting it.

A ninth chord has *two* notes added to the triad, the ninth and the flatted seventh.

The properties of all of the chords in the chart at the end of the chapter are defined clearly in the first column. Remember, the numbers are always the same for every key. Only the letters change.

On a guitar, chords take on shapes that become familiar to the player. Since in most jazz chords, there are no open strings (Which just means that every string that is played has a finger on it.), the player can change the chord from, say, Cm6th to C#m6th by simply sliding it one fret up the fingerboard:

Un acorde disminuido: Se disminuye tanto la tercera nota como la quinta para formar un acorde disminuido: en el tono de *do* sería, desde luego, *do*, *mi* bemol, y *sol* bemol.

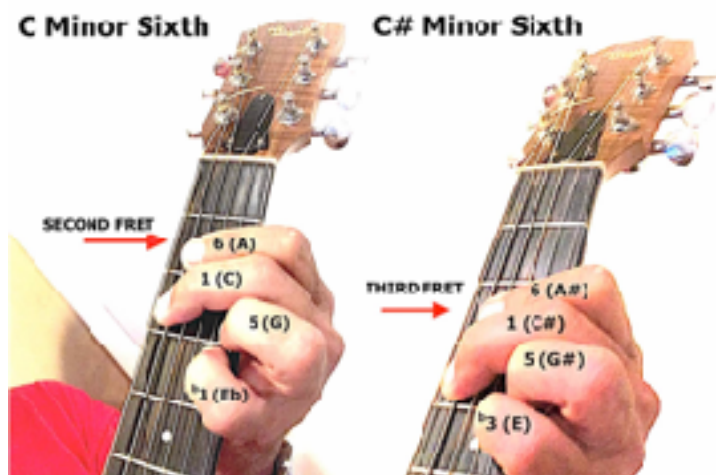
Un séptimo (también llamado el séptimo dominante) añade la bemol séptima nota a la tríada: 1, 3, 5 y $b7$

Un séptimo mayor, sin embargo, consiste en las notas 1, 3, y 5—y la séptima mayor que no ha sido diminuida.

Un noveno consiste en dos notas extra: la novena y la séptima bemol.

Las propiedades de todos los acordes se ven en la tabla al final del capítulo. Recuerde que los números son los mismos en cualquier tono.

Con la guitarra, los acordes toman formas que llegan a ser familiares a los guitarristas. Ya que la mayoría de los acordes de jazz no tienen cuerdas *al aire* (Que nada más quiere decir que cada cuerda tiene un dedo encima de ella.), el músico puede cambiar el acorde simplemente por deslizarlo un solo traste hacia arriba del diapasón. Así que el guitarrista puede cambiar un acorde de *DOm6* a *DO#m6* así:

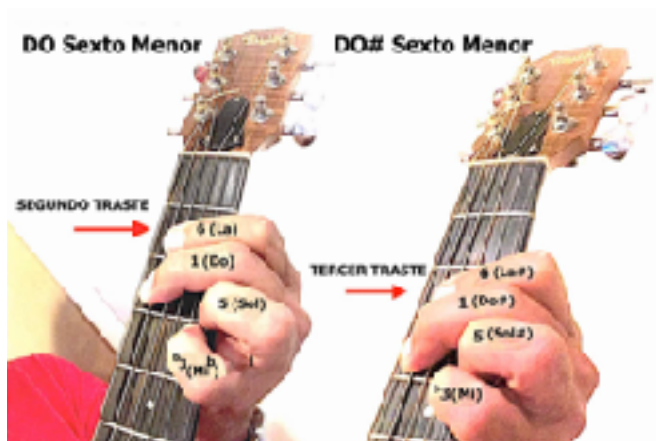


And for this reason, while the simple piano chord for C minor sixth (above) appears visually far less complicated than the chord played on a guitar, it is really not as difficult to play guitar chords as it might seem; what the eye communicates is somewhat deceiving.

When chords, by the way, are played in jazz, there is also at times another advantage. A guitar is partly a rhythm instrument whose chords can work well enough without the exactness that might be specified on the sheet music. A story from my Jazz Ensemble class illustrates this.

I didn't know a chord. The music called for a major ninth and I had never played one before. I didn't have much time to think, and so I just played a regular old ninth.

It didn't sound right. The instructor stopped



Por eso, aunque el acorde simple del piano de *do* sexto menor (de arriba) parece visualmente mucho menos complicado que el acorde de la guitarra, no es tan difícil tocar acordes en la guitarra como parece; lo que ve el ojo te engaña.

A propósito, cuando se tocan acordes en jazz, hay de vez en cuando otra ventaja. Una guitarra es una especie de instrumento de ritmo cuyos acordes puede funcionar bien sin la exactitud que la partitura especifica. Una historia de la clase que tomé en la que yo era el guitarrista en un conjunto de jazz ilustra esto.

No sabía un acorde. La partitura especifica un noveno mayor y nunca había tocado uno. No tenía mucho tiempo y por eso toqué un noveno común y corriente.

Sonó mal. El profesor me paró y dijo que

me and said he could hear the flatted seventh²⁶ in the ninth chord and since it was a *major* ninth, the seventh shouldn't be flatted.

Ah. Made sense. Fine with me. Only I had never played major ninth and I had no familiar shape for it. I didn't know where to put my fingers. "Just play a major seventh," said the instructor. "Close enough. It'll sound fine. No one will notice the missing ninth note."

I did. Piece of cake, and it sounded perfect.

You know, I never did bother to find out how to play a major ninth. I got along without that chord for many years and with any luck at all I figure I can make that happen for many more to come. Besides, I now know that I can just play a plain old vanilla major seventh.

But I must relent. Now that I think of it, that isn't a very good attitude. I just went online and learned the chord. It kills!

I can't help but add to the practicality of this essay by including a very few of my favorite chord progressions. There's no room for the millions of others, but these two or three I just happen to like. The chords are closed and have no open strings, so it's easy to switch keys. Start with the first chord and start with it again to repeat the progression over and over.

²⁶ You always hear the strident call of the seventh no matter the chord in which it appears.

podía oír la séptima nota bemol²⁷ en el acorde y ya que era un noveno *mayor*, no se debe hacer bemol la séptima.

Bueno. Esto tenía sentido. Estaba bien para mí. Pero nunca había tocado el acorde. No sabía dónde poner los dedos.

—Nada más toca un séptimo mayor —dijo el profesor—. Nadie va a notar que le falta la novena nota.

Lo hice. Pan comido, y sonaba perfecto.

¿Sabes una cosa? Nunca me molesté en aprender el acorde. Había vivido muy contento sin este acorde por muchos años y con suerte pienso que puedo continuar viviendo así por muchos años más.

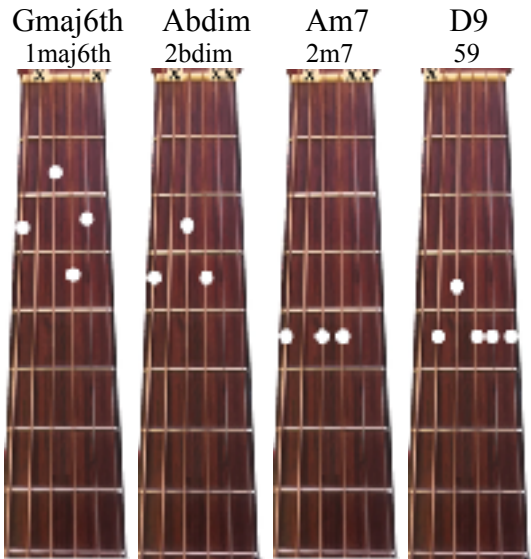
Pero debo ceder. Ahora que lo pienso, eso no es una actitud muy buena. Acabo de hacer una búsqueda online y aprendí el acorde. ¡Es fenomenal!

No puedo evitar agregar aquí más de lo práctico con algunas progresiones de acordes predilectas mías. No hay lugar para los millones de otras, pero estas dos o tres me gustan. No tienen cuerdas *al aire* y por eso se puede cambiar el tono fácilmente. Empiece con el primer acorde y luego empiece de nuevo con él para repetir la progresión una y otra vez.

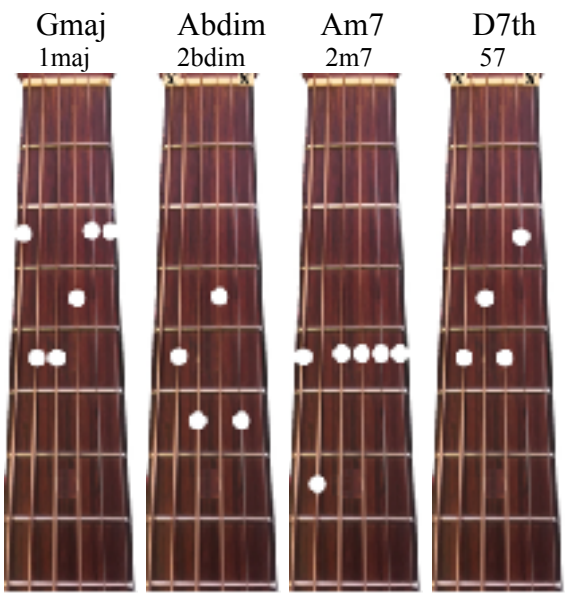
²⁷ En cualquier acorde que lo tenga siempre se puede oír el sonido chirriante de la séptima nota bemol.

FOUR-CHORD PROGRESSION 1A (Key of G)

Remember play only the notes shown! No open strings!



FOUR-CHORD PROGRESSION 1B (Key of G)

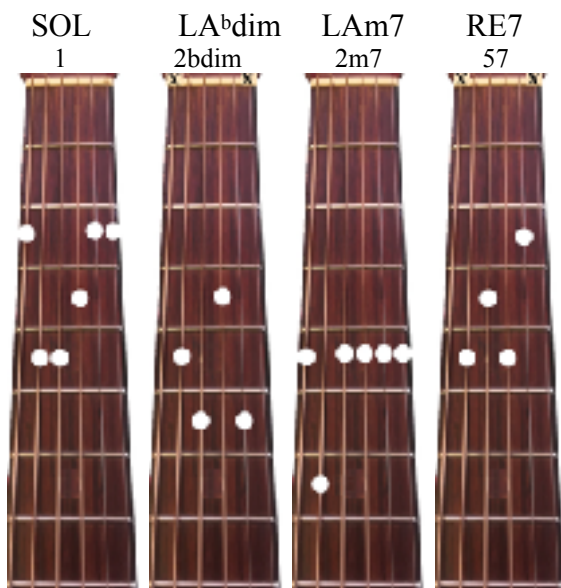


PROGRESIÓN DE CUATRO ACORDES 1A (Tono de Sol)

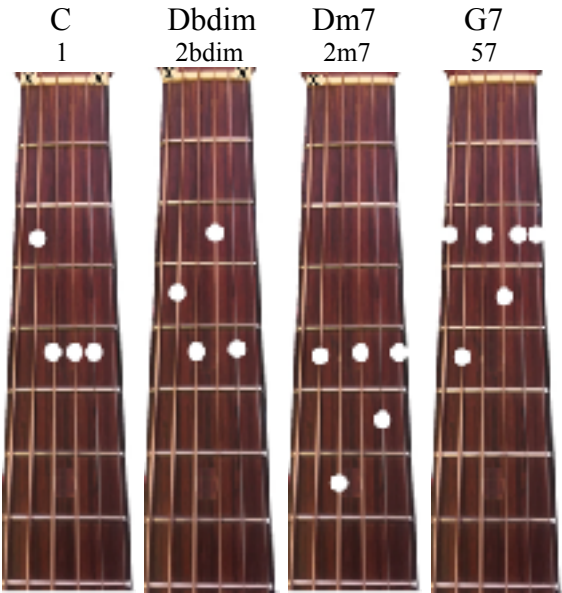
¡Toque solamente las cuerdas indicadas! ¡No hay cuerdas al aire!



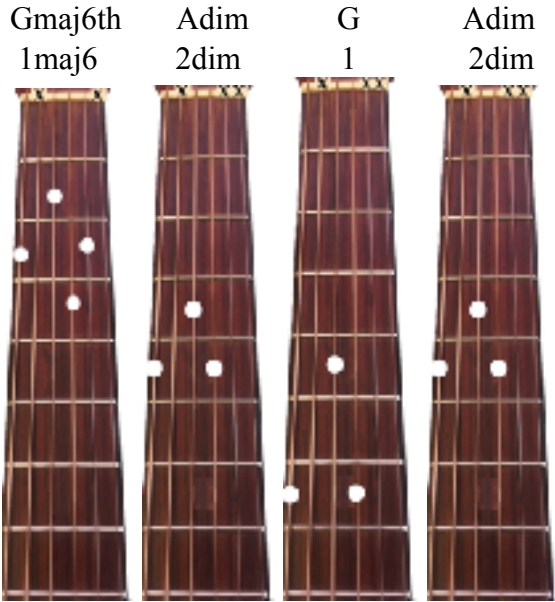
PROGRESIÓN DE CUATRO ACORDES 1B (Tono de Sol)



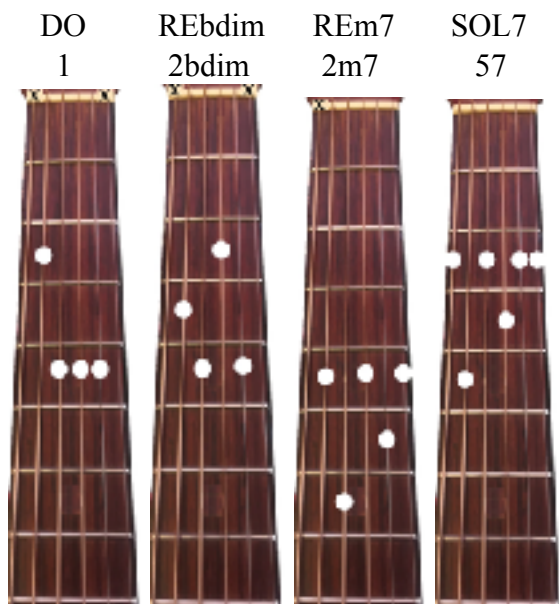
FOUR-CHORD PROGRESSION 1C (Key of C)



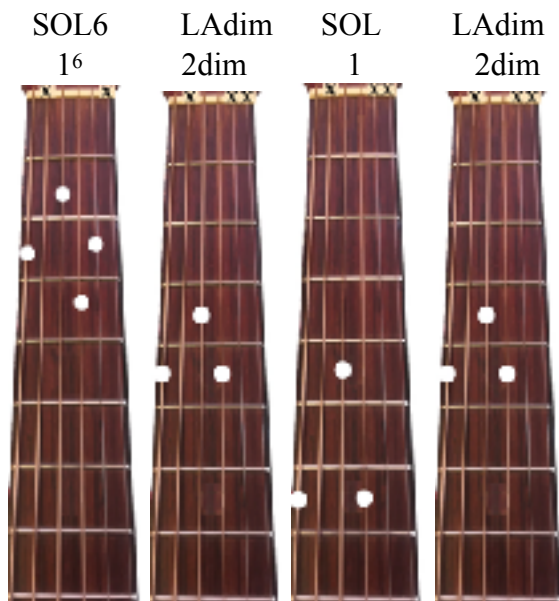
FOUR-CHORD PROGRESSION 2 (Key of G)



PROGRESIÓN DE CUATRO ACORDES 1C (Tono de *Do*)



PROGRESIÓN DE CUATRO ACORDES 2 (Tono de *Sol*)



SIX-CHORD PROGRESSION (Key of G)

Gmaj6
1maj6



A^{dim}
2^{dim}



G
1



C
4



A^m7
2^m7



A^bm7
2^bm7



PROGRESIÓN DE SEIS ACORDES (Tono de *Sol*)

SOL6
1⁶



LA dim
2dim



SOL
1



DO
4



LAm7
2m7



LA^bm7
2bm7



CHORDS AND NUMBERS

C Major

A plain triad 1, 3, 5 C, E, G

C Minor

Flat the 3rd 1, b7, 5 C, Eb, G

C Diminished

Flat 3 and 5 1, b3 b, b5 C, Eb, Gb

C Sixth

Add the 6th 1, 3, 5, 6 C, E, G, A

C Seventh

Add the flatted 7th 1, 3, 5, b7 C, E, G, Bb

C Minor Seventh

Flat 3 and add 7b 1, b3, 5, b7 C, Eb, G, Bb

C Minor Sixth

Flat 3. Add 6. 1, b3, 5, 6 C, Eb, G, A

C Major seventh

Add 7 1, 3, 5, 7 C, E, G, B

C Ninth

Add b7 and 9 1, 3, 5, b7, 9 C, E, G, Bb*, D

C Major Ninth

Add 7 and 9 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 C, E, G, B, D

C Augmented

Sharp 5 1, 3, #5 C, E, G#

C Suspended

Replace 3 with 4 1, 4, 5 C, F, G

C Minor Seventh Flat 5

Flat 3 and 5, add b7

1, b3, b5, b7b C, Eb, Gb, Bb

C add Nine

Add 9 1, 3, 5, 9 C, E, G, D

C Six add Nine

Add 6 and 9 1, 3, 5, 6, 9 C, E, G, A, D

ACORDES Y NÚMEROS

DO Mayor 1, 3, 5 DO, MI, SOL

DO Menor Baja la tercera un semitono 1, b7, 5 DO, SIb, G

DO Disminuido Baja un semitono la tercera y la quinta 1, b3 b, b5 DO, SIb, SOLb

DO Sexto Añade una sexta nota 1, 3, 5, 6 DO, MI, SOL, LA

DO Séptimo Añade una séptima nota bemol 1, 3, 5, b7 DO, MI, SOL, SIb

DO Menor Séptimo Baja un semitono la tercera y añade una séptima nota bemol 1, b3, 5, b7 DO, MIb, SOL, SIb

DO Menor Sexto Baja un semitono la tercera y añade una sexta nota 1, b3, 5, 6 DO, MIb, SOL, LA

DO Mayor Séptimo Añade una séptima 1, 3, 5, 7 DO, MI, SOL, SI

DO Noveno Añade una séptima bemol y la novena 1, 3, 5, b7, 9 DO, MI, SOL, SIb, RE

DO Mayor Noveno Añade una séptima y la novena 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 DO, RE, SOL, SI, RE

DO Aumentado Eleva la quinta 1, 3, #5 DO, MI, SOL#

DO Suspendido Cambia la tercera por una cuarta 1, 4, 5 DO, FA, SOL

DO Menor Séptimo 5 Bemol Baja un semitono la tercera y añade la séptima bemol 1, b3, b5, b7b DO, MIb, SOLb, SIb

DO Nueve Añade la novena 1, 3, 5, 9 DO, MI, SOL, RE

DO Más Nueve Añade la sexta y la novena 1, 3, 5, 6, 9 C, E, G, A, D

Appendix

1 Tonic	4 Subdominant	5 Dominant
C	F	G
A	D	E
G	C	D
E	A	B
D	G	A

Del mismo autor/By the Same Author

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