

## Barre Chords

A **barre chord** requires the first finger to lay across or *barre* strings in order to make a chord shape movable. Compared to the moveable 'F' and power chord shapes, barre chords are more challenging to play due to the increased number of strings that need to be fretted. Learning barre chords will be less of a challenge if a beginner has enough finger strength to play a moveable 'F' chord shape with clarity (*Chord Vocabulary -1*).

### Moveable 'E' Chord Shape

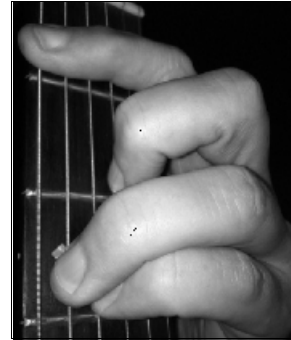
The most popular barre chord uses a **moveable 'E' chord shape**. Below is a step-by-step method on how to barre a moveable 'E' chord shape:

**Step 1:** Play a standard open 'E' arpeggio.

**Step 2:** Play the same 'E' arpeggio with the second, third, and fourth fingers (*instead of the first, second, and third fingers*).

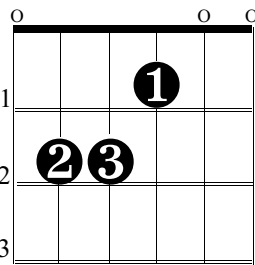
**Step 3:** Slide the entire shape up one fret, then **barre** the first finger across all six strings along the first fret. The chord is now an 'F' chord. The *sixth string bass note* determines the letter name of this moveable chord, producing twelve potential major chords. With the added fifth and sixth strings, this 'F' chord has more of a 'bassier' or 'fuller' sound compared to the four-string 'F' chord.

**Step 4:** Along the fifth fret, the same chord shape is an 'A' chord.



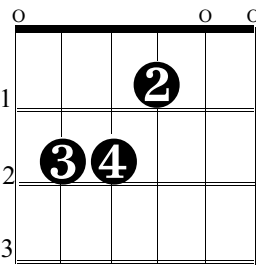
**Step 3:** 'F' barre chord

**Step 1**



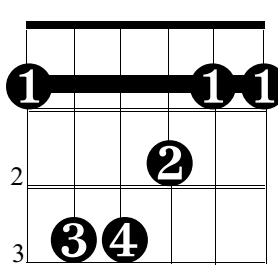
open 'E'

**Step 2**



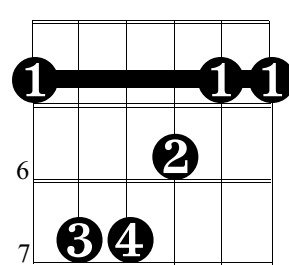
open 'E'

**Step 3**



'F' (barre first fret)

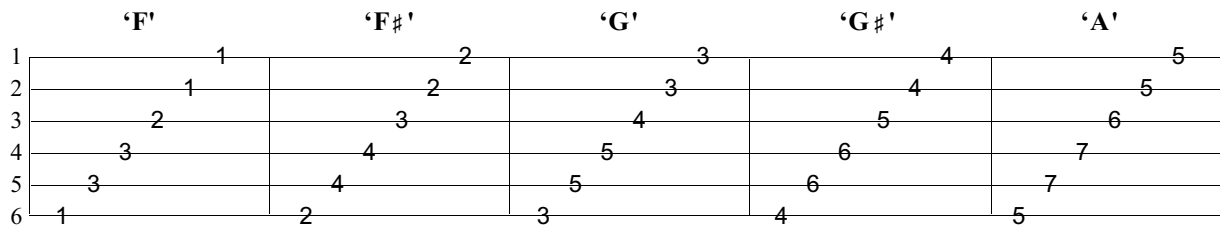
**Step 4**



'A' (barre fifth fret)

### Barre Chord Exercise

For the beginning guitarist, understanding the concept of a moveable barre chord will not take as long as actually being able play all six strings of a barre chord with clarity. To get the fretting fingers in shape, a **barre chord exercise** featuring moveable 'E' shape arpeggios is shown below:



### Chord Synonyms

The same concept that applies to enharmonic notes (*sharps and flats*) will also apply to chords. For example, an 'F#' barre chord can also be referred to as a 'Gb' chord. A moveable 'E' chord shape played along the sixth fret position can be referred to as either an 'A#' chord or a 'Bb' chord.

## Moveable Minor Chords

Any chord that has at least one non-fretted or 'open' string is considered an 'open chord'. There are only three open minor chords: 'Am', 'Dm', and 'Em'. Other minor chords require a barre in order to be played. Knowing how to barre a *moveable minor chord shape* will dramatically increase one's chord vocabulary, and the two most-often used moveable minor chord shapes are the 'Am' and 'Em' chord shapes.

### Moveable 'Am' Chord Shape

Three steps to play a *moveable 'Am' chord shape*:

**Step 1:** Play a standard open 'Am' arpeggio.

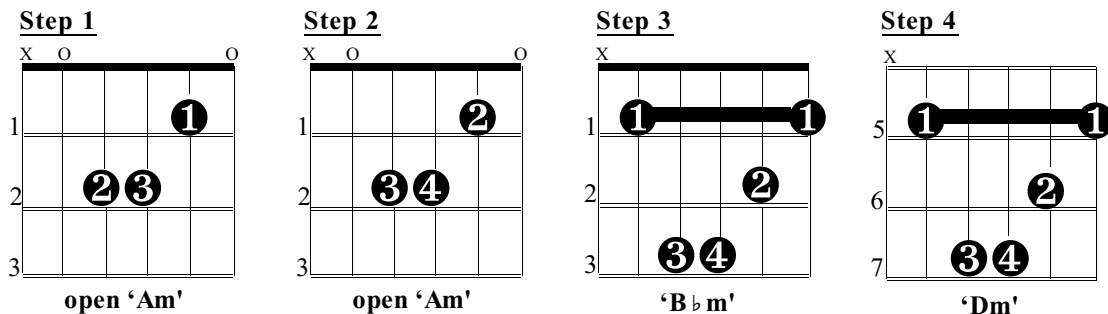
**Step 2:** Fret the same 'Am' arpeggio with the second, third, and fourth fingers (*instead of the first, second, and third fingers*).

**Step 3:** Slide the entire shape up one fret, then barre the first finger across five strings along the first fret. The chord is now 'Bbm' (*aka 'A#m'*). The *fifth string bass note* determines the letter name of this moveable chord. At the fifth fret position, the same chord shape is 'Dm'. (*see right*)

### Example



Step 3: 'Dm' barre chord



### Moveable 'Em' Chord Shape

Three steps to play a *moveable 'Em' chord shape*:

**Step 1:** Play a standard open 'Em' arpeggio.

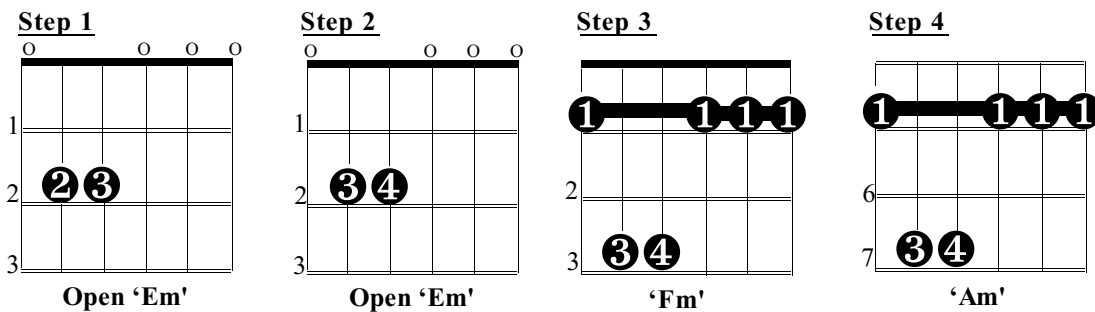
**Step 2:** Play the same 'Em' arpeggio with the third, and fourth fingers (*instead of the second, and third fingers*).

**Step 3:** Slide the entire shape up one fret, then barre the first finger across six strings along the first fret. The chord is now 'Fm'. The *sixth string bass note* determines the letter name of this moveable chord, which produces twelve potential minor chords. At the fifth fret, the same chord shape is 'Am'. (*see right*)

### Example



Step 3: 'Am' barre chord

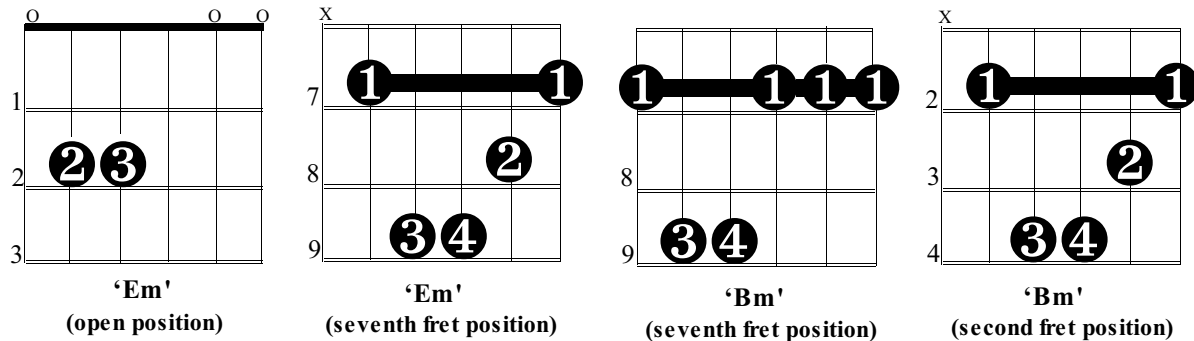


## Chord Voicings

With two moveable ‘Am’ and ‘Em’ chord shapes, there are two potential *chord voicings* for any moveable minor chord. For example, an ‘Am’ chord can be played either with a *fifth string bass note* (using its standard open chord shape), or with a *sixth string bass note* at the fifth fret position (using the moveable ‘Em’ shape). Each chord voicing will consist of the same three fundamental notes (‘A’, ‘C’, ‘E’) that makeup an ‘Am’ chord. The following sections go into more detail on chord voicings.

### Minor Chord Voicings

Below are examples of different *chord voicings* used for the ‘Em’ and ‘Bm’ chords.



### ‘Flat’ vs. ‘Minor’

Is there such a thing as a ‘B flat Minor’ chord? The answer is yes. Many beginners tend to confuse the terms ‘flat’ with ‘minor’. The terms *‘flat’* (♭) and *‘sharp’* (♯) are used to describe individual *notes*, while the terms *‘major’* and *‘minor’* describe *chords* and *scales*. Sometimes the two descriptions need to be combined in order to describe certain minor chords. For example, a ‘B♭m’ chord is a minor chord with a ‘B♭’ root or bass note, and is located one fret below any ‘Bm’ chord.

### 24 Total Minor Chords

With twelve different notes on each string, there are **24 total minor chords** that can be played with just two moveable minor chord shapes (‘Am’ and ‘Em’).

### Chord Synonyms

The same concept that applies to *enharmonic notes* (sharps and flats) will also apply to moveable minor chords. For example, a ‘B♭’ minor chord (‘B♭m’) can also be referred to as an ‘A♯’ minor chord (‘A♯m’). A moveable ‘Em’ chord shape played along the second fret position can be referred to as either a ‘G♭m’ chord or an ‘F♯m’ chord.

#### Examples

‘A♯m’ = ‘B♭m’  
 ‘F♯m’ = ‘G♭m’  
 ‘E♭m’ = ‘D♯m’

### The ‘Dm’ Chord Shape

In theory, every chord shape is moveable. Certain chord shapes, however, will not ‘fit’ the hand as well as others. For example, playing a *moveable ‘Dm’ chord shape* requires the fretting hand to adjust in a way that simply isn’t feasible when it comes to getting clarity from each string, let alone being able to switch between chords with efficiency. Nevertheless, beginning students are always curious to at least try the moveable ‘Dm’ chord shape, so an example is shown right.

#### Examples



Moveable ‘Dm’ chord shape