

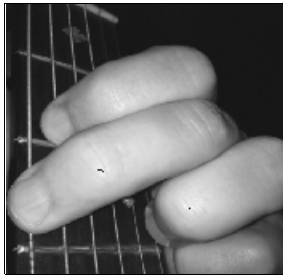
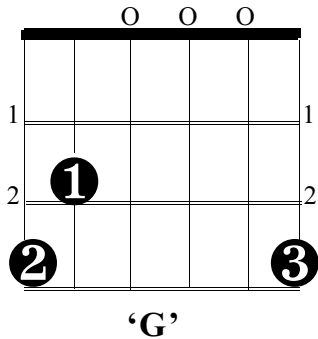
## Basic Major Chords

Learning to play chords is essential for every guitarist. A **chord** consists of three or more notes (or *strings on guitar*) played together in succession. Though there are hundreds of potential chords to play, a beginner guitarist only needs to memorize about several chord shapes in order to start learning some basic guitar songs. The following sections will be an introduction to learning some of the standard, most-often played chords for all styles of guitar music.

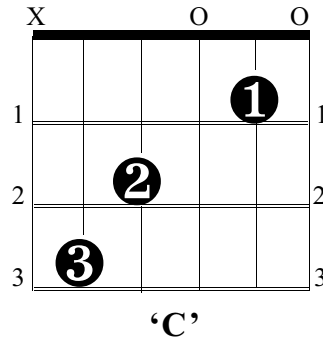
### Reading Chord Diagrams

The **chord diagrams** below present an ‘aerial view’ of the fretboard, with the sixth ‘bottom’ string being on the far left and the first ‘top’ string being on the far right. The fingers numbers to fret with are shown in black circles. The double lines represent the frets and are numbered. The thick black line on top represents the ‘nut’ or the open ‘0’ fret position. The ‘x’ above each string means the string is not played, while the ‘o’ above each string means the string is played ‘open’ (*not fretted*). Below each diagram is a corresponding photo of each chord.

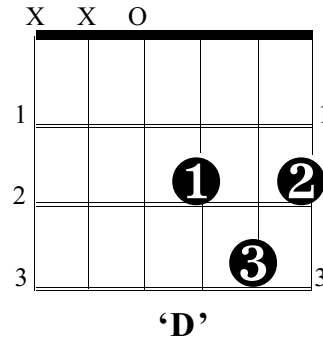
### Chord Diagrams



‘G’



‘C’



‘D’

### Playing Arpeggios

The best way to learn chords is to initially play them as *arpeggios*. An *arpeggio* is when each string is plucked individually instead of strumming all of the strings at once. The Tab below shows how to play each ‘G’, ‘C’, and ‘D’ chord as an arpeggio. While fretting the entire chord with the left hand, use the right hand thumb to pluck each string and try to make each note ring or sustain clearly:

	‘G’ arpeggio	‘C’ arpeggio	‘D’ arpeggio
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

### Arpeggios: Tips for the Fretting Hand

1. The fretting fingers need to be as close to the frets as possible without touching them.
2. Bend the knuckles so the tips of the fretting fingers are pushing down on the strings.
3. Avoid *muting* strings by not having the fingers lean on other strings.



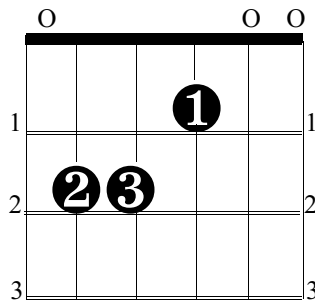
Arching fingers

### Arpeggios: Tips for the Right Hand

Many beginners tend to apply too much pressure plucking the strings with the right hand while not applying enough pressure with the left (*fretting*) hand to fret the strings. The fretting hand controls the clarity of notes played, and beginners should focus on applying extra pressure with the fretting hand until finger strength improves.

**Clarity = Left Hand**  
**Volume = Right Hand**

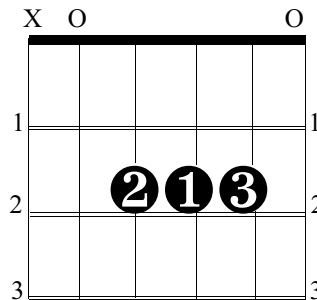
### 'E' & 'A' Chords



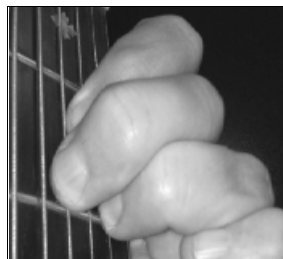
'E'



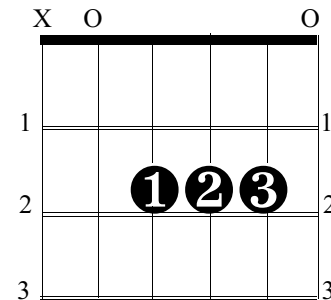
'E'



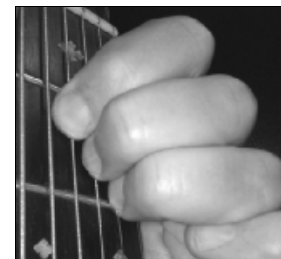
'A'



'A'



'A' (alt. shape)



'A' (alternate shape)

### Alternate 'A' Chord Shape

Regardless of which 'A' chord is played (*both are popular*), all three fingers cannot actually 'fit' directly along the second fret. With the middle 'A' chord for example, the first finger on the third string will be slightly below the second fret, forming more of a 'mini-triangle' shape rather than a straight line.

### Bass Notes

The *bass note* of a chord is the lowest sounding string played in the chord. The total number of strings that make up a chord determine the bass note of the chord. For example, a 'G' chord uses all six strings, so the bass note of a 'G' chord is the sixth string. The bass note of a 'C' chord is the fifth string, and the bass note for a 'D' chord will be the fourth string.

### Five Chords - Five Seconds Each

A good test to verify if the five basic chords ('G', 'C', 'D', 'E', & 'A') are memorized properly is to have someone randomly 'call off' any of the five chords and to be able to play a clear-sounding arpeggio for each chord *within five seconds*.