

First Contact

Chords, by definition are two or more notes played at the same time. On the guitar this is achieved by playing two or more strings at once. In this lesson we will be learning how to play 'Open Chords'. Open chords are considered to be the most rudimentary and essential skill on the guitar, it is through learning these shapes that we will be able to play simple songs. These chords are referred to as open chords because each of them contain some strings which are struck at their full length.

Figure 1. shows us how to read a chord diagram. This illustration shows that the strings have been numbered from one to six. String six will always be the largest string, and string one the smallest. You can also see indicators for the 'Nut', and frets one through four. The nut is like a permanent fret which allows the strings to be played at their full length, or as we have described it in the above paragraph, as an open string. The frets refer to the small steel bars that run across the neck at ever decreasing intervals.

On the right hand side of figure 1. is a sketch of a chord diagram, similar to the ones seen at the bottom of this page. This sketch is larger and more evenly spaced to accommodate symbols to indicate how to play a chord.

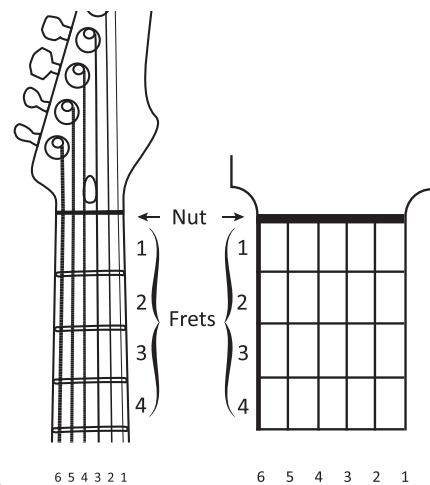


Figure 1.

The chord diagrams at the bottom of the page have vertical lines that vary in thickness, this has been done to provide you with some indication of which strings are thick, and which strings are thin. The horizontal lines are the frets, the thickest line at the top represents the nut. Circles are placed on the diagram to indicate where your fingers should be placed. The numbers placed inside these circles indicate which finger should be used for each note. Figure 2 demonstrates how your fingers are numbered. Hollow circles placed above the nut indicate strings that are played open. The solid 'X' symbols indicate strings which are not played, dotted 'X' symbols indicate strings that the chord will sound at its purest without, but can also be included in the chord at your own discretion.

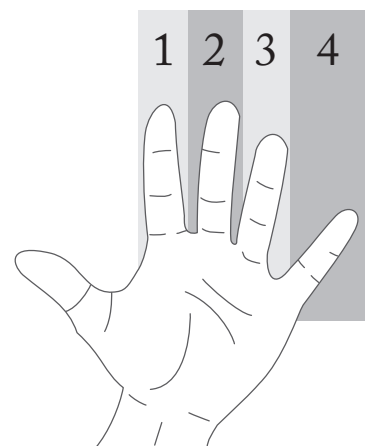


Figure 2.

