

Chords and Arpeggios

This Guitar Skill Sheet is a great way to learn one of the most enjoyable ways of making music on the guitar, playing chords. You will learn to play chords harmonically (playing all of the notes at the same time) and melodically as arpeggios (playing the notes one at a time).

Chords

A chord consists of three or more notes played together (when two notes are played together it is called an interval). There are many types of chords; this sheet will show you how to play two of them, the major triad and the dominant-seventh chord. A triad has only three different notes in it: the bass note or root which always gives the chord its letter name and two other notes. A seventh chord has four different notes in it: the fourth note always being seven scale tones away from the bass note, which is why it is called a seventh chord. The notes can be combined in many ways and there will be some notes that are duplicated.

There are three important chords in each key, called the Primary Chords. Their bass notes begin on the first, fourth and the fifth scale notes of any key, and are therefore called the one, four and five chords. The five chord is often not just a triad but a dominant seventh chord. These three chords have been the foundation of Western Music for over 300 years, from before J.S. Bach to the popular music of today. By learning to both play and recognize the sound of these chords you will be able to play thousands of songs.

The following chart organizes the Primary Chords used in this publication.

I	Tonic (Key)	C	G	D	A	E	F
IV	Subdominant	F	C	G	D	A	B ^b
V7	Dominant Seventh	G7	D7	A7	E7	B7	C7

There are three different ways to look at chords:

- As a number written in roman numerals, which identifies a chord by its place in the Major Scale
- As a function: Tonic, Subdominant, Dominant Seventh
- As a letter name: C F G7 etc.

The most important things that you need to consider now are: learning the chord names, memorizing the placement of your left hand fingers, and changing from one chord to another.

The following chord progressions are very common because they use the Primary Chords and can be easily memorized.

Using all downstrokes, strive to play evenly with no hesitation when changing from chord to chord.

Beginning students may want to play the following keys in this order: D A G E C F.

KEY OF C

The diagram shows two rows of guitar chord diagrams and their corresponding musical notation on a treble clef staff in 4/4 time. The first row shows the Tonic (C), Subdominant (F), Tonic (C), and Dominant Seventh (G7) chords. The second row shows a sequence of chords: Tonic (C), Subdominant (F), Dominant Seventh (G7), Subdominant (F), Dominant Seventh (G7), Tonic (C), Dominant Seventh (G7), and Tonic (C). Each chord diagram includes fingerings (e.g., 3211 for C, 3211 for F, 321 for G7) and Roman numerals (I, IV, V7).