

Chord-learning program & practice drills for beginners

Regardless of what style or genre of guitar you want learn, you should always begin by learning **chords**.

Of course it's important to learn **notes**, but that will come in time. Begin with **chords**.

Broadly, there are 2 types of chords: 'open chords' and 'barre chords'.

- **Open chords** - This should be your focus. These are chords that are played on the first 3 frets and are MUCH easier than barre chords.
- **Barre chords** – These chords require you to make a 'barre' and press down on the strings while also forming chord shapes with fingers 2,3 and 4. These are tough for beginners, so forget about them for now!

FYI, here's what a barre chord looks like:



Open chords you should learn first

Ok, so we need to focus on **OPEN CHORDS** first.

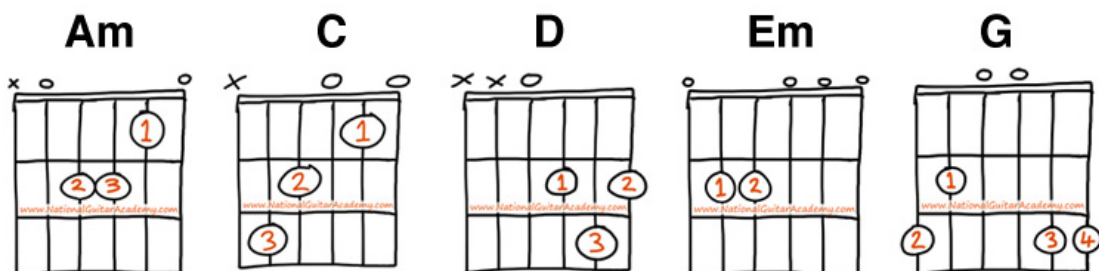
Let's look at which open chords you should learn and in what order.

Ok, here's comes' a big tip!

Learn chords in 'batches'.

The first batch of open chords you should learn are: **Am, C, D, Em** and **G**.
(These are the most common guitar chords of all.)

Standard Chords



You can make things a LOT easier for yourself here if you learn the stepping-stone version of each chord.

The secret to learning chords and making music at lightning speed...

The best way to learn chords quickly is to follow my steppingstone approach.

This is a proven method for quickly developing your finger dexterity and control while also allowing you to *have fun and make music*.

My motto is 'make things easy & fun' and the stepping-stone chord system is a fundamental part of that philosophy.

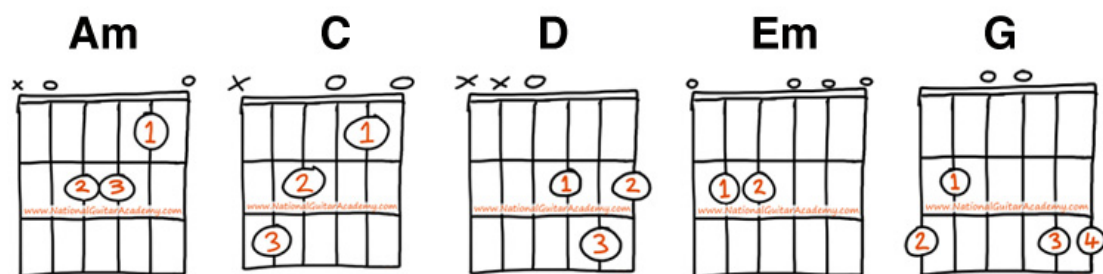
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The premise is very simple: there is an easy version of every chord.

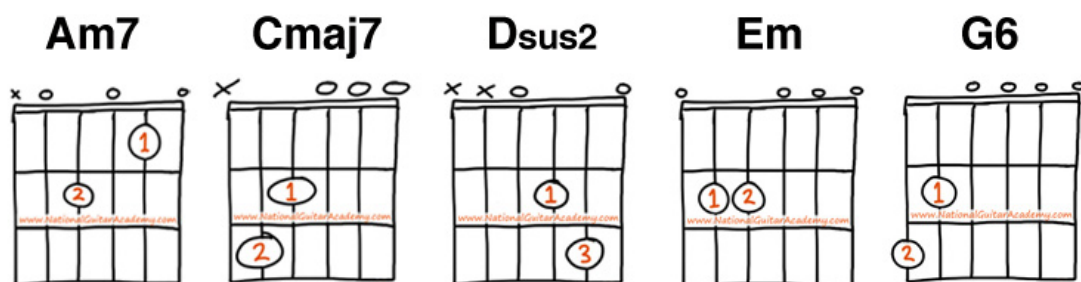
As a beginner guitarist you should learn the easy version before you learn the harder standard version.

Let's look at some examples, using the chords above:

Standard Chords



Stepping-Stone Version



As you can see the easier stepping-stone chord versions are simply different *voicings* of the original chords.

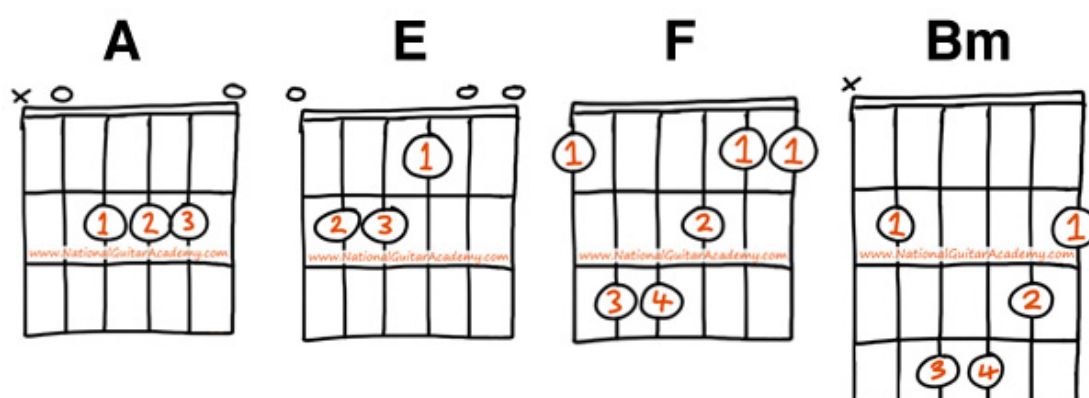
If you feel happy to tackle the standard versions then by all means begin with the standard versions, but most people find it much easier to use the stepping-stone version to get started having fun and making music. (Then after a few weeks you can move on to the standard chord versions.)

Batch 2

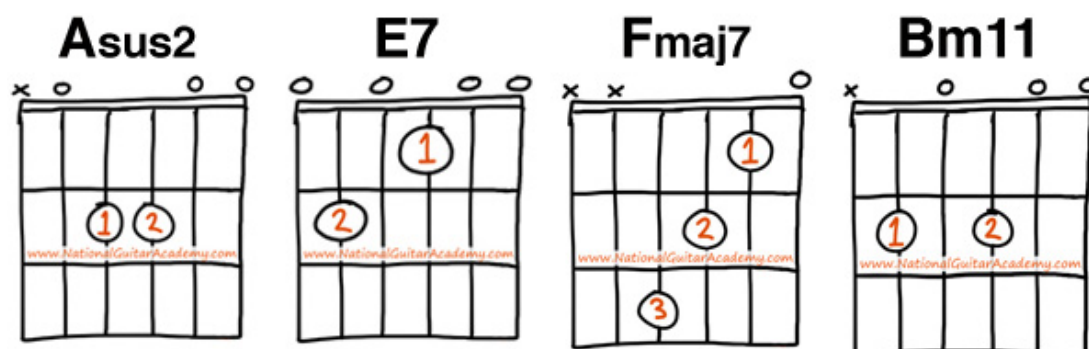
The next batch of chords you should learn are **A**, **E**, **F** and **Bm**.

These chords crop up often, but not as frequently as the chords in batch 1. As you can see, the standard chord versions are getting tougher. Check out those F and Bm chords. (Ouch!)

Standard Version



Stepping-Stone Version



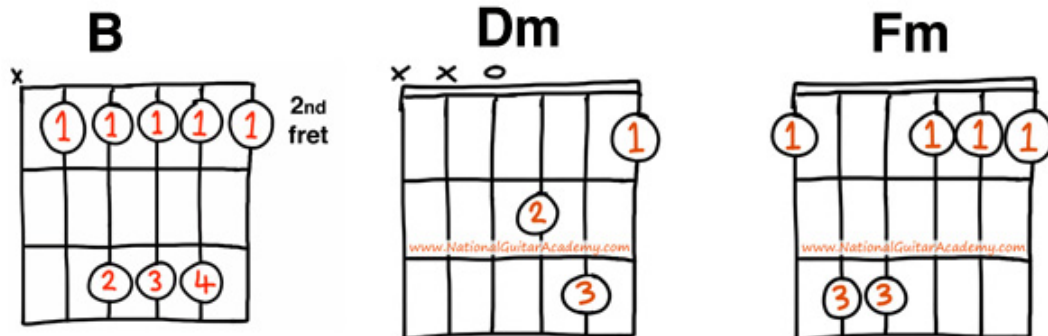
Stick with the stepping-stone versions here and you'll be fine.

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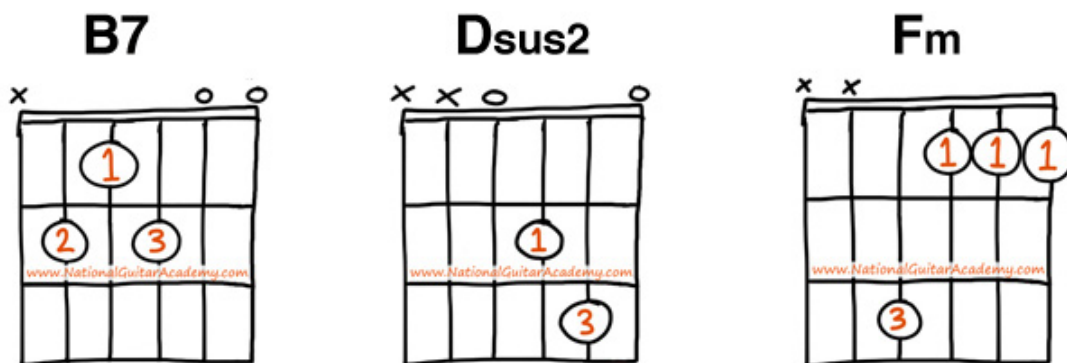
Batch 3

The final batch of chords you should learn are B, Dm and Fm. These chords appear less frequently, but they are still essential chords to know.

Standard Version



Stepping-Stone Version



How to practice these chords

The best way to practice these chords is by playing songs that include them.

However, if you prefer you can do 'drills' to really focus on building that muscle memory.

The secret to build muscle memory is to do things SLOWLY and CORRECTLY.

You will want to rush as your dexterity improves, but it's vital that you don't. Sure, we want your overall speed to improve, but you will see how much more mistakes you make when you try to change too fast.

Push yourself, sure, but don't forfeit your technique too much otherwise your accuracy will suffer.

On the next page you'll see some chord drills. This is a very mechanical way of learning how to play guitar. I'm not a huge fan of it, but I know that some people prefer this, so I want to offer you something very clear and tangible that you can follow if that's the way you prefer to learn. 😊

Essentially what we want to do here is learn how to change from a chord to another chord. But some chords simply don't crop up together (due to differences in key) so it's not as simple as saying "practice changing from every chord to every other chord". No, that would be a waste of time! So I've mapped out the most useful changes for you.

(As I said, I would much prefer you to learn these changes through playing them in SONGS that you personally love. But I know some people like to have a clear program they can follow and that's what will follow.)

Batch 1: Am, C, D, Em and G.

These chords frequently appear together, so we can literally practice these in any order and any sequence (and that will be valuable practice).

Practice each change 10 times before moving onto the next one.

- Am to C (x 10)
- Am to D (x 10)
- Am to Em (x 10)
- Am to G (x 10)

Then we can move onto changes that start with C.

- C to Am (x 10)
- C to D (x 10)
- C to Em (x 10)
- C to G (x 10)

Next, let's look at some D changes.

- D to Am (x 10)
- D to C (x 10)
- D to Em (x 10)
- D to G (x 10)

Now some Em changes

- Em to Am (x 10)
- Em to C (x 10)
- Em to D (x 10)
- Em to G (x 10)

And finally some G changes.

- G to Am (x 10)
- G to C (x 10)
- G to D (x 10)
- G to Em (x 10)

Batch 2: A, E, F and Bm.

We have to practice this batch differently because these chords aren't in the same key. (Don't worry about why right now!)

So there's no point practicing these like we did with batch 1. For this batch we need to mix it up; We'll be blending chords from one batch to the next here.

These are the most common changes that you'll encounter. Again, do each one 10 times.

- A to E (x 10)
- E to A (x 10)
- F to C (x 10)
- F to G (x 10)
- C to F (x 10)
- G to F (x 10)
- G to Bm (x 10)
- Em to Bm (x 10)
- D to Bm (x 10)
- Bm to A (x 10)
- Bm to Em (x 10)
- Bm to G (x 10)
- Bm to D (x 10)

And finally we're going to blend all three batches!

- B to E (x 10)
- B to A (x 10)
- E to B (x 10)
- A to B (x 10)
- Dm to F (x 10)
- Dm to C (x 10)
- Dm to G (x 10)
- F to Dm (x 10)
- C to Dm (x 10)
- G to Dm (x 10)
- Fm to Dm (x 10)
- Fm to C (x 10)
- C to Fm (x 10)

Timing & rhythm for these practice changes

Because these chord transitions are so common (and I've split them into key-aligned changes) it really doesn't matter what timing you use to learn them. It will all be muscle memory that you 'put in the bank' and will benefit from in the future.

However, I know from experience that there's a few things that will help you.

Try to stay on each chord for at least 8 beats. This will give you time to make the chord change, tidy up any messy or buzzing strings, and prepare for the next chord change.

A tempo of around 100-120 BPM would be perfect. But feel free to mix it up.

Use a metronome to set this and count the beats as you play. I use the smartphone app 'Metro Timer' on my iPhone when I teach students. Give it a shot, it's good.

You can also just google 'metronome' and there's lots of free online ones you can use. (Also, you can buy a metronome from your local music shop for about \$10 / £8.)

I hope you found this chord-learning program & the practice drills useful?

I'd love to hear your thoughts and suggestions. If you have any questions on anything just [drop me a line](#). Thanks & good luck!



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