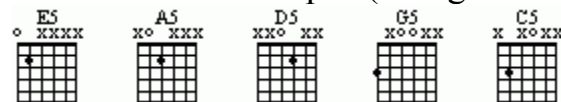


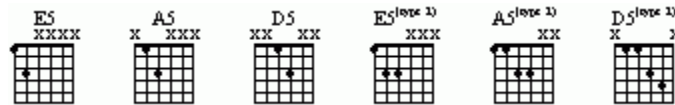
Basic skills and techniques, in a roughly progressive order: Copyright © 2005 Nick Antonaccio, Guitarz.org

- Left Hand: playing individual notes, then 2 simultaneous notes, then 3 and 4 note chords.
- Right Hand: playing individual notes, simultaneous note groups (double stops, intervals, and basic chords), strumming full chords with rhythmic patterns, performing alternate picking, cross string picking, fingerpicking, and hybrid picking.
- Developing 1-finger-per-fret stretches and finger independence in the left hand.
- Performing simple slides, bends, hammer-ons and pull-offs, harmonics, and muting techniques.
- Memorizing the fret numbers and notes on the strings.
- Recognizing and being able to play the most common chord and interval shapes (the diagrams below)
- Recognizing and being able to play basic song forms (12 bar blues examples and I, V, C, B, S charts)
- Using alternate tunings (especially dropped D and slack tuning)
- Learning to use electric guitar, amp, distortion, and effects to create common sounds.
- Using Capos and Slides
- Recognizing and being able to read all the above in tablature and diagram notation.

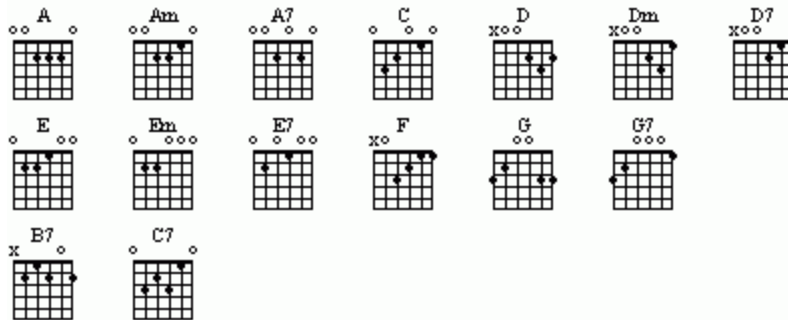
Open Power Chord Shapes (1 finger chords):



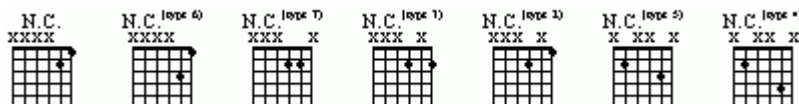
Movable Power Chord Shapes (2 finger chords):



Basic Open Chords (Major, Minor, and 7th, 2, 3, and 4 finger chords):



3rds, 6ths and 10th Double Stops:



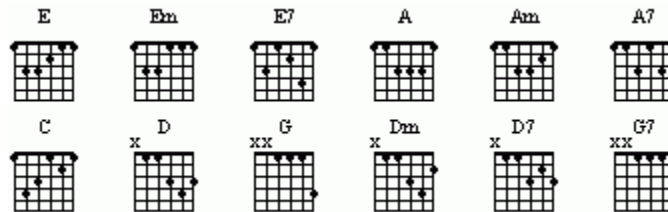
In the beginning, most students are surprised at how difficult it is to produce even the simplest sounds on the instrument. It *hurts* to press down on strings with the left hand fingers. The strings are close together and hard to aim for with the right hand. Both hands need to be synchronized to sound even a single note clearly without buzzes or dampened notes. The learning curve is *long* - adults typically take 3-6 months, and children take 6-12 months to be able to do everything above with decent tone and some rhythmic fluency. Even then, most students still find themselves regularly missing strings, deadening notes, etc.

Intermediate Skills and Techniques:

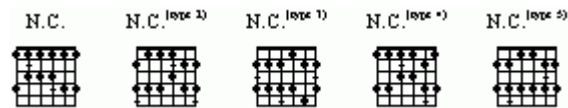
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- Playing bar chords and movable shapes and understanding how they're labeled.
- Lead techniques – more complex bends, slides, vibrato, right hand tapping, harmonics, legatos, and muting techniques - especially as they appear in common licks from the pentatonic/blues scales.
- Playing larger complete song forms and longer pieces.
- Reading standard music notation.
- Basic music theory: understanding which chords go together, and how pentatonic scales fit over them.

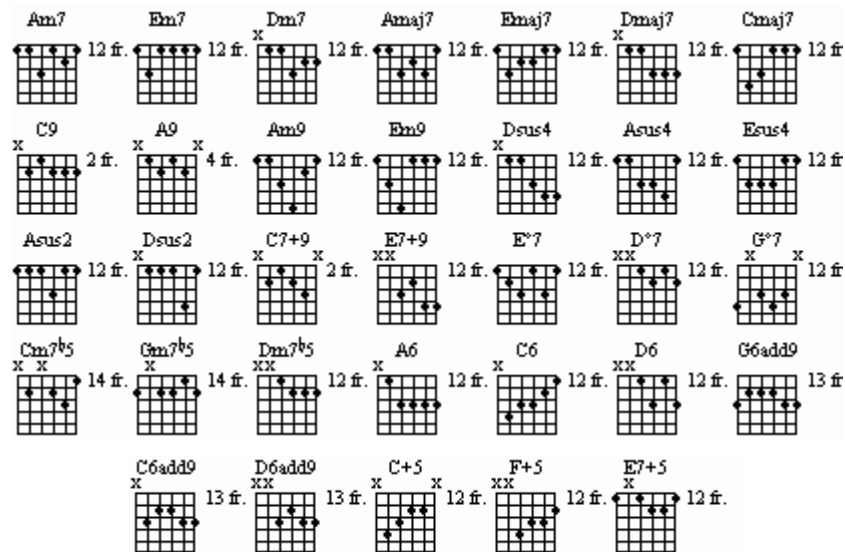
Basic Bar Chords:



Pentatonic/Blues Scale Fingerings:



Other More Advanced, But Still Common Chord Shapes:



If the first phases of learning are about simply getting good clear sounds from single notes and simple chords, the focus for intermediate guitarists turns toward developing stamina and using new movable patterns to play longer examples, complete song forms and extended solo pieces. The bar and bend techniques are the main physical skills to conquer, and *movable* shapes form the majority of materials to learn. Playing in rhythm and fitting guitar parts together with other instruments and voice becomes a primary goal during this stage. Performing/recording helps immeasurably to ingrain skills at this level.

More than 90% of all guitar playing, and virtually 100% of mainstream popular guitar music consists exclusively of the above materials, techniques, and skills. If you can recognize and perform all the materials/techniques on these pages, you can play virtually everything found in the mainstream popular guitar repertoire. To play *any* kind of music, regardless of style, you need to be able to play the materials on these pages. So, whatever approach you take to studying guitar (reading music, tab, self-study, school classes, lessons, etc.), these things need to be learned – they should be the focus of your study.

It typically takes between 6 months and 1 year to be introduced to all these materials, and 1-2 years to become fluent. *It takes time*, and the only way to make the learning curve move more quickly is to practice more! No matter what your innate ability, you'll need to practice at least a few times each week to continue developing habits, building muscles, improving coordination, and increasing dexterity. The most important part of the learning process is the development of *habits*, and that only happens with repetition – *lots of repetition*. The learning process doesn't need to be difficult or rigorous – in fact that will discourage most casual students. Just be consistent. Expect to take the first few months learning short licks, melodies, chord shapes and parts of familiar songs to introduce and isolate each of the basic techniques. Get the instrument to produce clear sounds, and learn the basic fingerings. Understand that most music will *not* sound fluid during those stages – the learning curve is steep, but it can be masked by playing doable short examples that *are possible* to master. Forcing single techniques to become perfect before moving on is virtually impossible in the beginning, and taking that approach only leads to boredom and frustration – learn to live with “close enough” while getting familiar with the basics.

The easiest, most enjoyable, and most effective way to learn guitar is to learn music that includes the fundamentals. To make the learning process simple, start with pieces that isolate individual techniques and easy shapes. Work gradually through more advanced music that combines increasingly difficult patterns and skills. Ingrain the above materials along the way - just by continuing to learn new examples. You'll eventually become intimately familiar with all of them, and every bit of music you see will make sense, contain materials you know, and will become easy to play – that's the goal!

Along the way, use the Internet to find tablature, play with other musicians, record, and perform – all are useful and satisfying skills to be acquired and activities to be enjoyed.

Advanced Skills and Areas of Study (each of these areas can take months-years to learn well):

- **Music Theory** – learning to play every conceivable chord by interval construction, learning materials needed to improvise, compose, play by ear, arrange, and to understand music completely. Understanding how Notes, Intervals, Chords, Scales, Chord Progressions (Roman Numerals) and Chord-Scale relationships are laid out on the guitar to “visualize” sounds on the instrument. For most advancing guitarists, learning “how music works” becomes a central area of study.
- **Chord/Melody** arrangement and contrapuntal playing (playing 2 or more parts at the same time). Building a repertoire of solo classical guitar pieces, and jazz/new age arrangements of standards are two areas of study which some players spend an entire life developing.
- **In Depth Stylistic Studies** – Learning the characteristic intricacies of each style of music, and of individual players is another area to which some players devote a lifetime.
- **Speed/Flash Techniques** - sweep picking, complex tapping patterns and techniques, cross string arpeggios, extreme stretches, etc., advanced harmonics (tapped and contrapuntal), live tunings, and other guitaristic effects/gimmicks are areas of learning at which some guitarists specialize.