

BARRE CHORDS

A FREE GUIDE



GUITAR THEORY

Barre chords are an excellent introduction to understanding the neck of the guitar. It's usually one of the first places I recommend people start when they say they want to get more familiar with their instrument.

By learning barre chords and where to place them, you learn how the chromatic scale works and how to find notes on the guitar. You also set yourself up later for more advanced techniques like arpeggios, triads, and harmonies as they model very similar patterns within the fundamental barre chords.

So what do we need to do to learn barre chords effectively? There are two steps which can be done in either order but will eventually need to be combined.

For the purposes of this exercise, I'll start with understanding the chromatic scale.

PART 1: THE CHROMATIC SCALE

The chromatic scale is basically every note possible on any instrument. The notes go from A to G# and then start again at A. The notes cycle up and down infinitely in both directions.

Eg. 1

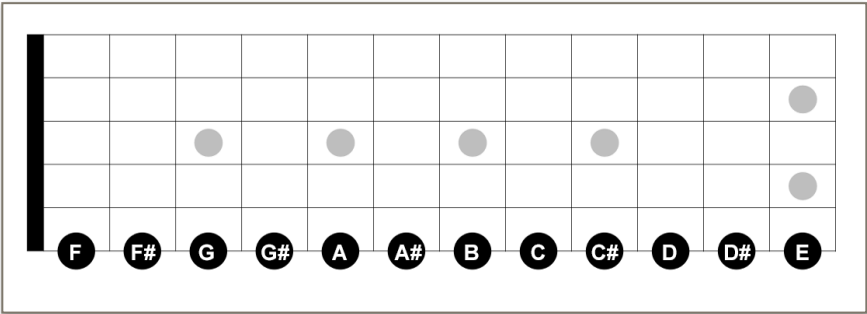
A - A# - B - C - C# - D - E - F - F# - G - G# - A - A# - B - etc.

You'll notice that in between most of the regular letters are notes with a sharp sign (#) next to them. These notes indicate a note value in between the regular letters. (These regular letters are properly known as *Naturals*.)

However not every note gets a sharp in between it. The note B does not get a sharp nor does the note E. This gives us 7 Natural notes and 5 sharp notes for a total of 12 notes.

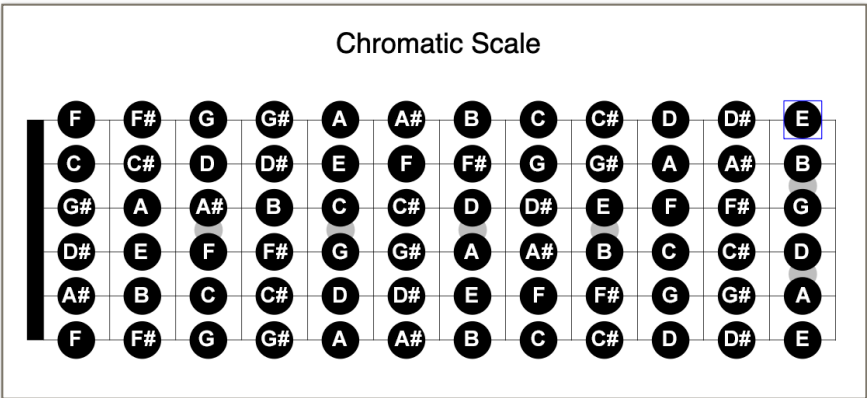
On our guitar, each fret represents another step in the chromatic scale. An open E string would represent an E. Moving to fret one of the E string progresses us one step up the chromatic scale making the note an F now. Using *Figure 1*, you can see the first 12 frets on the E string and what the notes for each fret are.

Figure 1



This technique can be applied to every string as demonstrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2



PART 2: CHORD SHAPES

Barre chords are named for the fact that they require a single finger to hold down multiple strings at the same time creating a bar across most, if not all, of the fret.

There are 4 primary chord shapes when it come to barre chords. There are 2 major shapes and 2 minor shapes. One of each shape having its root on the E string and one on the A string.

Figure 3 - A demonstration of how the 4 barre chords organized.

	Major Chord	Minor Chord
E String	Figure 4	Figure 5
A String	Figure 6	Figure 7

Listed below are the four shapes and their category. (All chord shapes are demonstrated on the fifth fret.)

Figure 4 - E String Major Chord

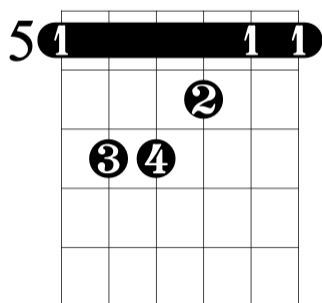


Figure 5 - E String Minor Chord

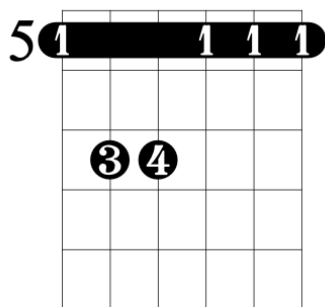


Figure 6 - A String Major Chord

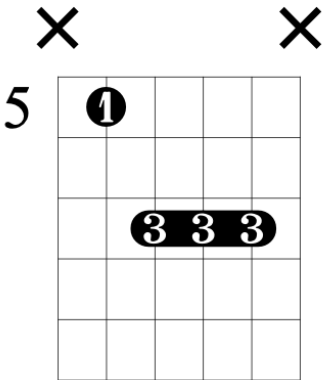
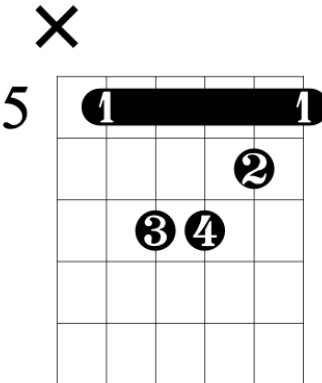


Figure 7 - A String Minor Chord



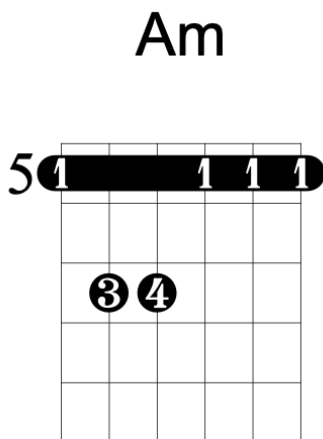
PART 3: FINDING YOUR CHORDS

The beauty of barre chords is that they are movable. The four shapes we learned can be applied on any fret. The only problem is that we don't know what the chord is when we move.

However, if you know how to find the notes on the strings like we talked about in the first section, you can easily figure out what a chord becomes when it's moved.

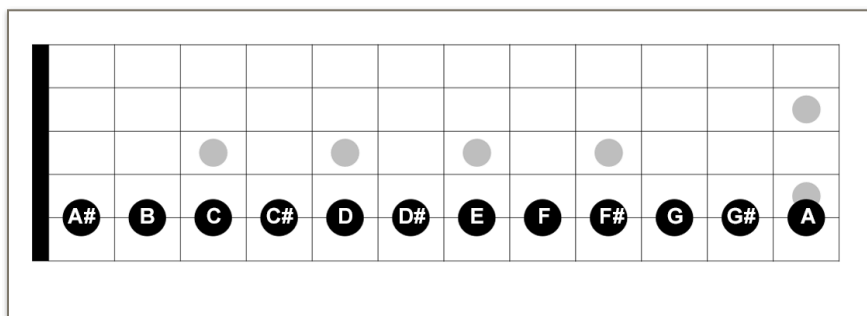
Let's use our E string minor chord from Figure 5. The root of this chord begins on the fifth fret of the E string. By walking up the E string to the fifth fret, we can figure out that the actual root of this chord is an A (see Figure 1). Therefore, this chord would actually be A minor.

Figure 8 - A Minor Chord



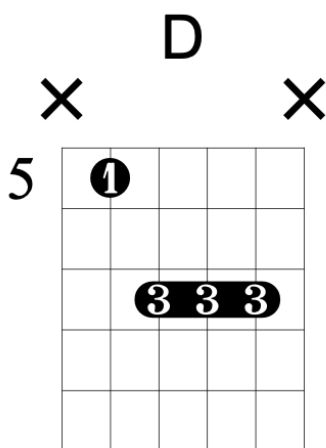
Let's use another example. The A string major chord (see figure 6) is rooted on the A string. This time instead of following the E string, we will walk up the a string.

Figure 9 - A String Chromatic Scale



By following the A string to the fifth fret, we know that the root note is D making this a D Major Chord.

Figure 9 - D Minor Chord



WRAPPING IT UP

With those tools, you should be able to find your barre chords anywhere on the neck. Major and Minor chords are the most common chords out there. While it won't cover everything, it should cover a lot of situations and help you get comfortable identifying notes around the neck.

I hope you found this free guide helpful. For more lessons, visit ABCGuitarTheory.com.