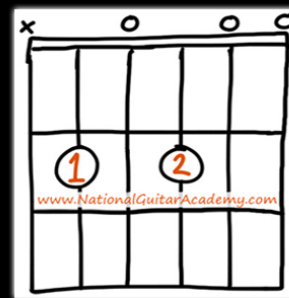
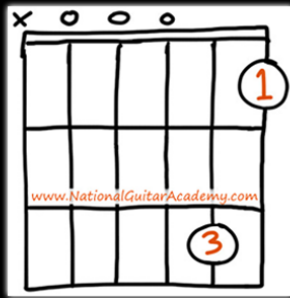
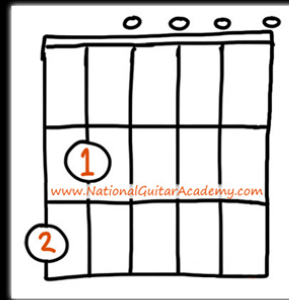
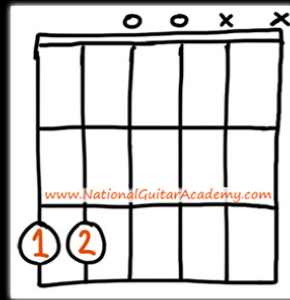


Guitar Chords For Beginners

LEARN EASY CHORDS

GUITAR CHORDS FOR BEGINNERS



MIKE KENNEDY



National
Guitar Academy



National Guitar Academy
Become the guitarist of your dreams

Guitar Chords For Beginners

A super-simple chords guide for novice guitarists.

I wrote this book after teaching one-to-one guitar lessons for tens of thousands of hours.

I know the things that guitar-learners struggle with because I've seen them up-close with real people (hundreds and hundreds of times) and I know how frustrating it can be to make slow progress.

Learning the guitar is the best thing I've ever done in my life. And sharing the gift of music with new guitar learners is an absolute blessing that I feel grateful for every day.

My guitar-teaching philosophy can be summed up in just five words: 'Make things **simple** and **fun**'.

So in this book, I'm going to share the tips I've learned for making the most important part of the guitar world, chords, as simple and fun as possible.

If you have a good grounding in chords, you have a fantastic foundation to succeed as a guitarist.

This book will put you in the 'fast lane' towards becoming the guitarist of your dreams (whatever that may be for you).

Ready to get started? Let's do it!

Mike Kennedy - NGA Founder



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How To Read Guitar Chordboxes

An essential skill for all guitarists.

You must be able to read chordboxes to use this book, so let's explain how to do it.

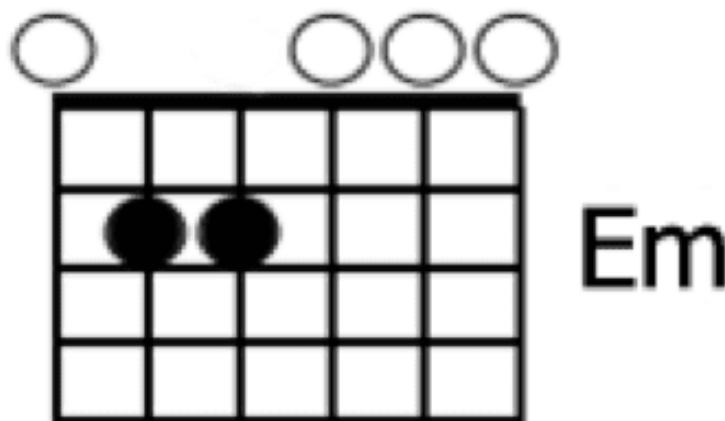
(If you already know how to read chordboxes, you can safely skip ahead.)

What is a chordbox?

A chordbox is how one guitar player tells another *where* to press down on the fretboard to play a given chord.

Let's look at an example. We'll look at the chord box for Em. (Remember, whenever you see a lowercase 'm' it denotes a minor version of a chord. For example "Am" is A Minor, "Dm" is D minor and so on.)

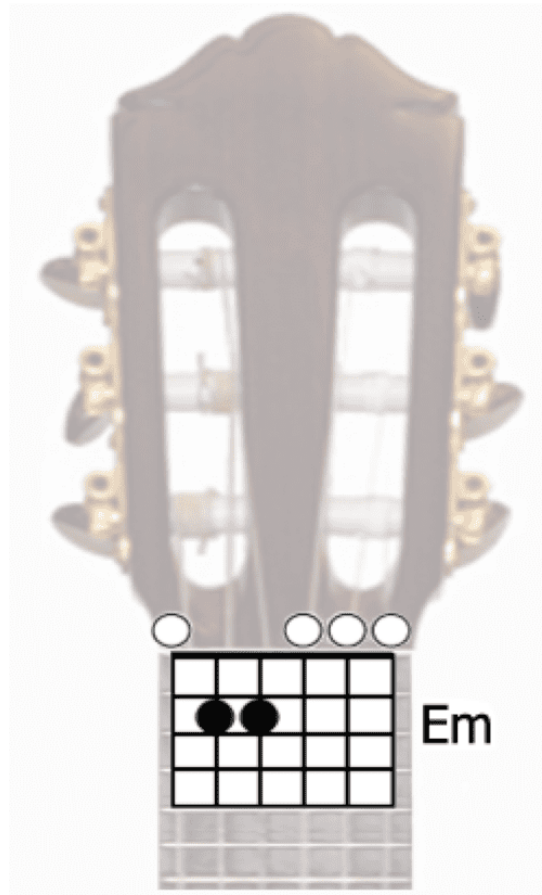
Example chordbox



Looks a bit technical? It's actually not technical at all, so don't worry.

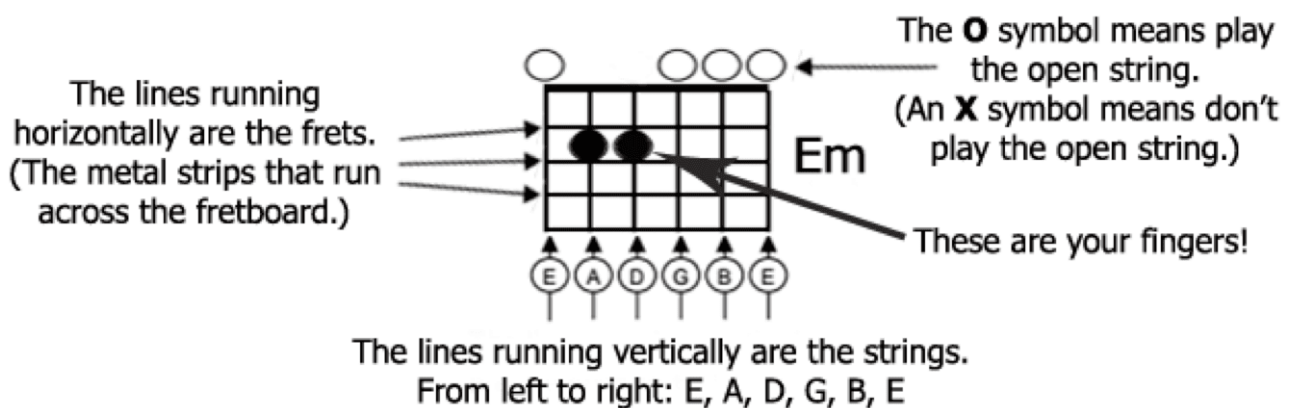
What you're looking at here is simply a visual representation of your fingers (the black circles) pressing on the fretboard (the grid).

This image should help make things clearer:



Take 5 minutes to digest and understand the photo above and the image below.

Don't worry if it takes a few minutes for this to 'click' in your mind, it takes **everyone** a little while to comprehend.



A chordbox in real life

Here's what the above Em chordbox looks like in the flesh:



To play this chord we strum all six strings.

- Two strings are what we call 'closed' because your fingers are pressing on them.
- The other 4 strings are what we call 'open' because you aren't pressing on them, but they are still strummed.

That's it!

Spend a few minutes reviewing this and getting comfortable with it. It's very important you understand chord boxes.

If this still hasn't 'clicked' in your mind, then you may find it useful to re-read this article from the beginning. It can take a while for people to 'get' this and repetition really helps!

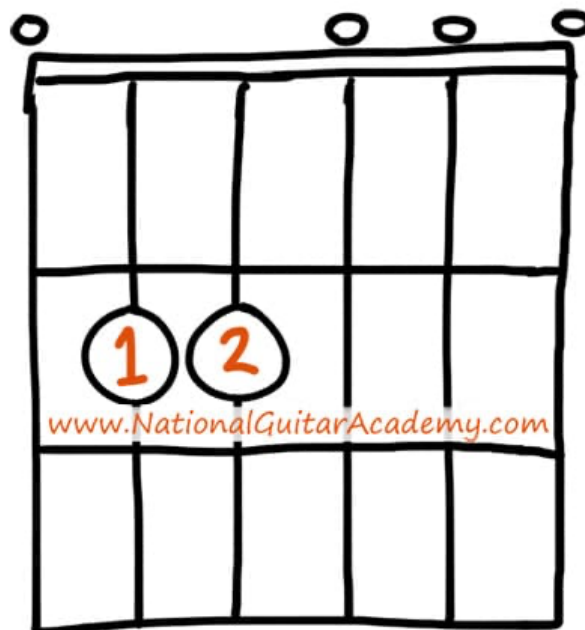
Here's some extra questions that people often ask me about chordboxes...

Sometimes I see chordboxes with numbers inside, instead of solid black dots. What does that mean?

The numbers correspond to your fingers. Like this:



So if we go back to our Em chordbox...



... you can see that instead of two black dots, we see a '1' and a '2'. This is because sometimes we want to SPECIFY exactly what fingers should be used. In this case, you should use fingers 1 & 2 to fret your Em chord.

Again, in the flesh, it should look like this:



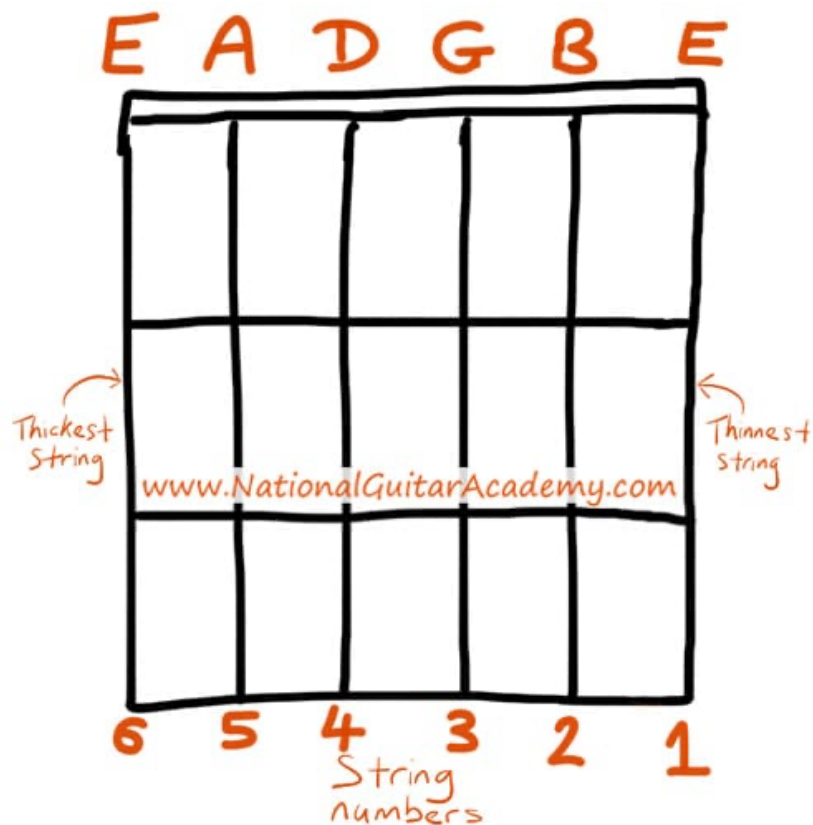
Can you see how fingers 1 & 2 are being used?

Ok, so is this related to string numbers too?

No. Not at all. Your fingers have numbers, like this:



AND the strings have numbers too, like this:



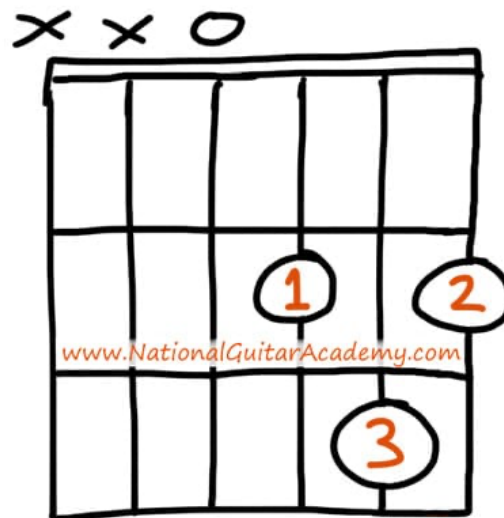
I'm confused!

Don't be! Let me make it clear:

- Your fingers have numbers 'assigned' to them
- The guitar strings have numbers 'assigned' to them
- **The numbers inside chordboxes refer to your fingers.**

What does it mean when I see an 'X' on a chordbox?

The X means 'don't play this string'. Here's the chordbox for D:

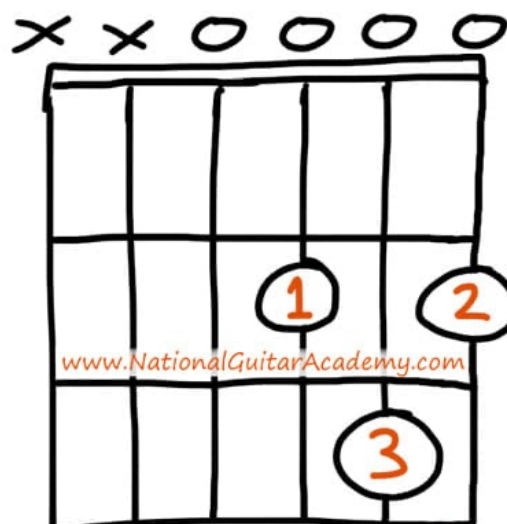


As you can see, strings 5 and 6 have an 'X' above them. This means, don't strum these strings.

Strings 4,3,2 and 1 are the only strings that we play when we want to voice a D chord like this.

We know this because you can see the 'O' above string 4 and we **assume** that you are going to strum strings 3,2 and 1 if you're going to the trouble of fretting notes there!

If we wanted to make this even clearer, we could draw the chordbox like this:



On this example we have four circles above strings 1,2,3 & 4, but really, 3 of those circles are redundant. Of course we'll strum strings 1, 2 and 3 if we're going to put our fingers there!

A Major

A common and compact 3-finger chord.

A major (Usually just called “A”)

This common chord pops up again and again, in all styles of music.

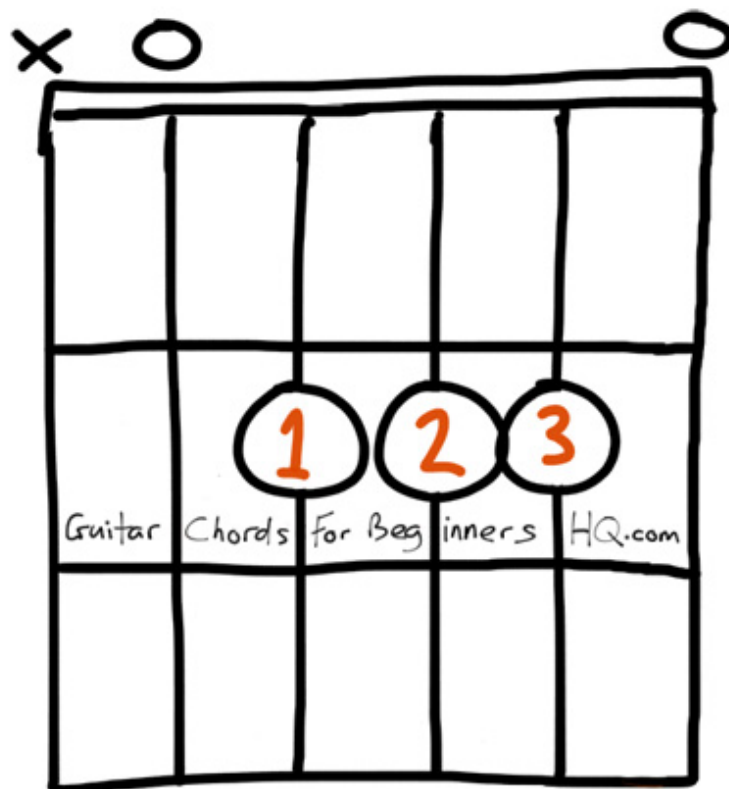
In this free lesson you will learn:

- How to play the A chord on guitar correctly
- The best A chord for beginner guitarists to use
- The 2 Most Important Tips For Mastering An A Chord on Guitar
- 2 bonus tricks you can use to make your A chords sound better

Mastering The A Chord On Guitar

The full name of the A chord is “A Major”, but most people simply call it “A”. In it’s full form the A chord on guitar looks like this:

A Major



Playing an A chord on guitar is relatively straightforward (compared to some other chords, such as F), but it still presents a big challenge to the absolute guitar beginner.

So what can you do to quickly learn how to play the A chord on guitar?

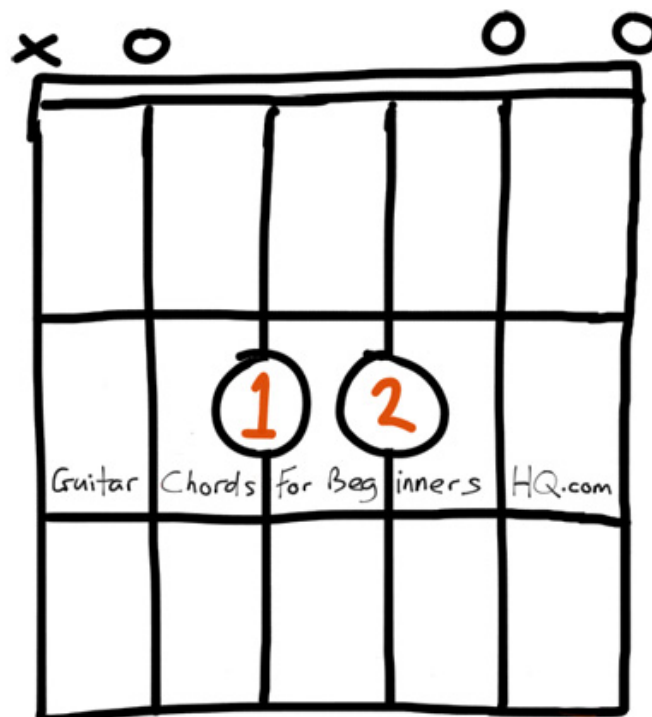
2 Important Tips For Playing The A Chord On Guitar

- Compress your fingers together as much as possible – try to form them into 1 ‘block’ that you can fret as a single movement.
- It is *essential* that you play with your fingertips (the very ends of your fingers – just below your fingernails). Do not use the ‘pads’ of your fingers (where your fingerprints are). **Your fingertips need to make contact with the fretboard at a 90-degree angle.**

Easy ways to play the A chord on guitar

I tell my new students to play an easier version of A, just to get them started. This very easy chord is called “Asus2” and it looks like this:

Asus2

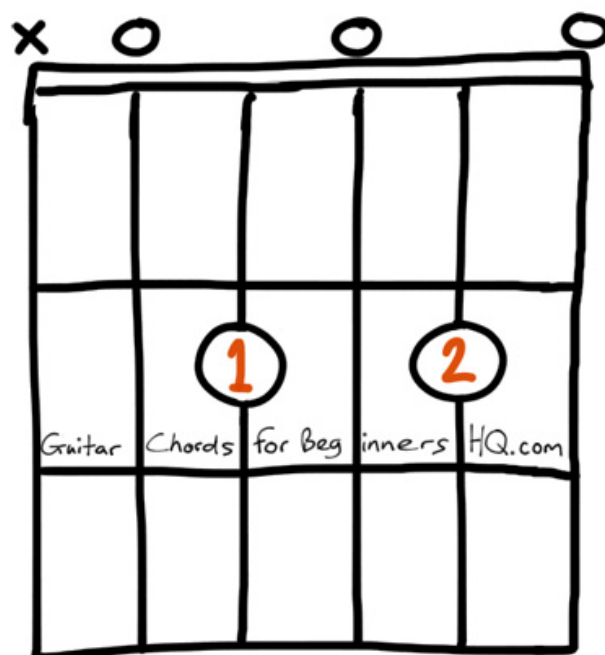


This is a fabulous version of A to learn and it acts as an excellent stepping stone towards playing the full A chord.

Another way to play the A chord

Another alternative version of the A chord on guitar is “A7”. This is a relatively easy chord to play and has an interesting (and much stronger) sound than Asus2.

A7

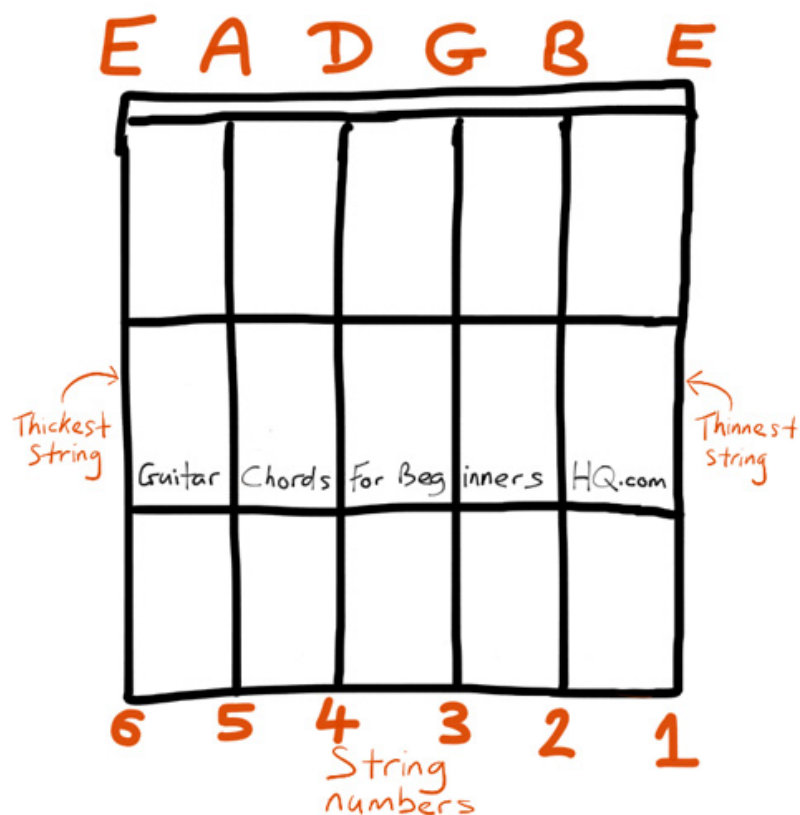


This chord works particularly well for rock, blues and jazz.

2 bonus tips to use when playing A chords

Remember that regardless of what version of A chord you play, you should only play strings 1-5. String 6 should not be played!

Let's have a quick refresher on string numbers:



Don't ever be tempted to play Am (pronounced "A minor") or Am7 (pronounced "A minor 7") instead of the A chords above.

A minor has a very different sound to A!

A Minor

A beautiful and balanced chord that pairs well with C.

The Am guitar chord is one of the most most common guitar chords of all. I always tell my students that this one is non-negotiable, you *must* master it if you want to play the guitar! 😊

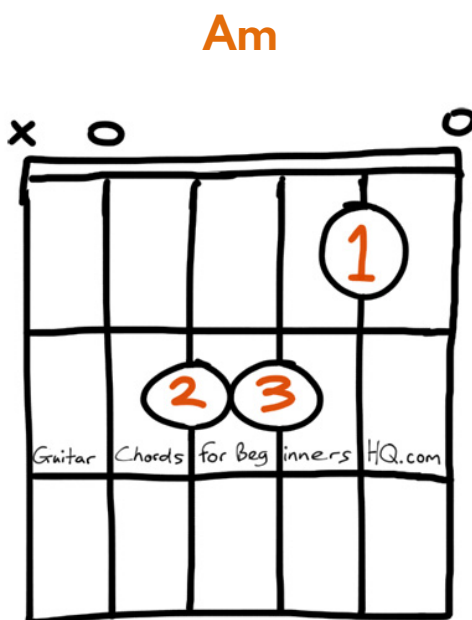
In this free lesson you will learn:

- How to play the Am guitar chord correctly
- The best Am guitar chord for beginner guitarists to use
- A simple 3-string version of the Am guitar chord
- Bonus tricks you can use to make your Am chords sound better

How to play the Am guitar chord correctly

Like all guitar chords, the A minor chord can be played in several different places on the fretboard. You'll be pleased to hear there's a few clear favourites for beginner guitarists – these chords are easy to play and sound great.

Firstly, the correct way to play Am is like this:



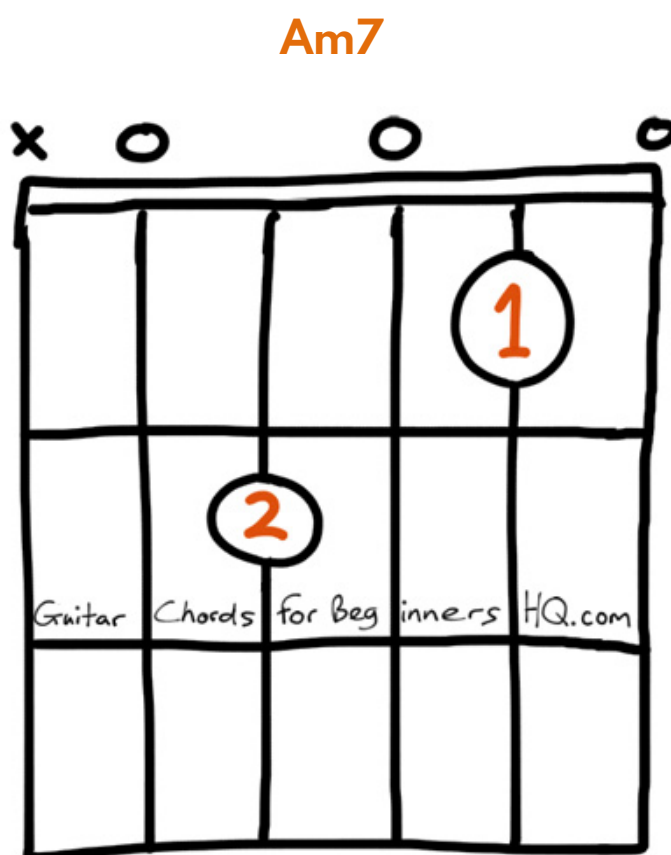
Even though this requires 3 fingers to play (and is therefore more difficult than chords like Em), most people don't have too many problems learning to play the Am guitar chord.

But if you're a total beginner you will find it difficult to 'bunch' your fingers together quick enough to play this A minor chord. In this situation you have two choices:

1. You can tough it out and repeatedly make the A minor chord shape until you can do it quickly. (This isn't much fun which is why I tell all my students to go for the option 2!)
2. You can play an easier version of Am until you've developed better accuracy and dexterity in your guitar-playing fingers.

The Best Am Guitar Chord For Beginners

The best version of Am for beginner guitarists to use is Am7. It looks like this:



As you can see this requires only two fingers, so it significantly easier to play.

Am7 is a lovely open chord that sounds similar enough to A minor that we can substitute it without worrying about a big drop in sound quality.

Give them both a try and listen to the difference. They both sound cool, right?

If you opt to take the harder option of learning the Am guitar chord then more power to you, that's great.

The easier option is to play Am7 until your finger dexterity and control has improved to the point where you can play Am.

As you'll read elsewhere on the site, I strongly believe in a 'stepping-stone' approach to learning guitar. The most important element of success in learning the guitar is *motivation*.

The easiest way to stay motivated is to *enjoy* your practice time. The simplest way to enjoy practice time is to *play songs*.

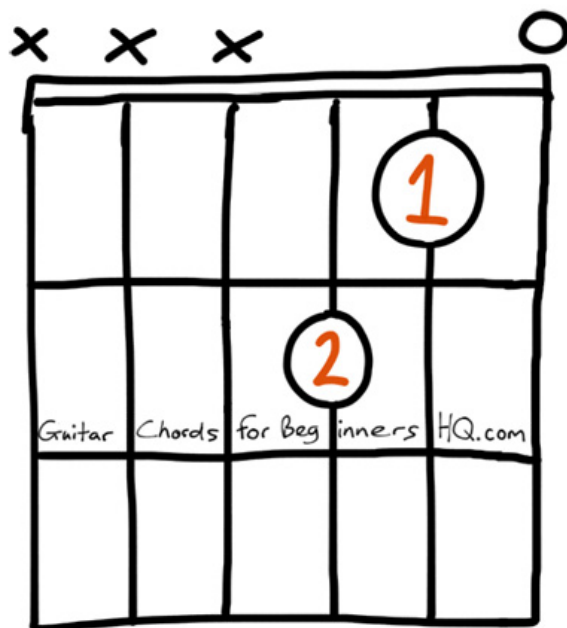
If you can't shape chords quickly enough to play a song without constant interruption then you're not making music – your banging your head against a wall and it can quickly become frustrating!

Adopt the stepping stone approach and you will be making music from the start. This increases the chances of you practicing regularly and thus improving and continuing along your guitar journey. Trust me, it works! 😊

A Super-Simple 3-String Version of the Am Guitar Chord

For children or people with learning difficulties (or very small hands) this 3-string version of the Am guitar chord is a good option:

Am (3-string version)



As you can see this is very straightforward to play. It doesn't sound as good as a standard Am or Am7 of course, but it's passable and does the job.... Just. The key to making this chord sound its best is to ensure you only strum strings 1,2 and 3. Strings 4,5 and 6 must not be played.

The Am guitar chord is a great one to get under your belt, it crops up often and sounds great. (Check out [this](#) video of 'Wild Wood' by Paul Weller – the entire song is built around an Am shape.)

Are there any other ways to play Am?

Yes, lots! But they're too difficult for beginner guitarists to play so we're not going to cover them here.

B Major

A difficult and stubborn chord for novice guitarists.

B guitar chord – Tips for this tough chord

The B guitar chord is probably the hardest of all chords for beginner guitarists to play.

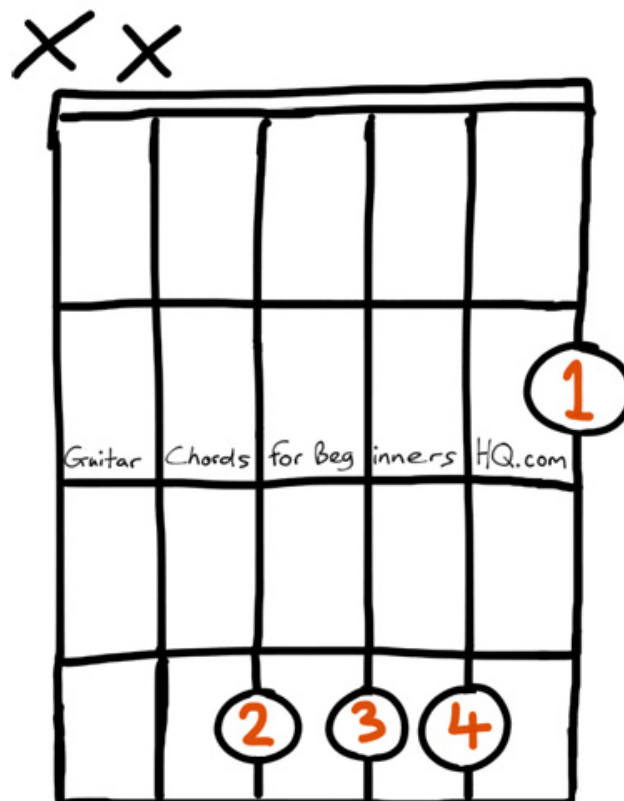
In this free lesson you will learn:

- How to play the B guitar chord correctly
- The best B chord for beginner guitarists to use
- A simple 3-string version of the B guitar chord
- 3 bonus tricks you can use to make your B chords sound better

How to play the B guitar chord properly

Ok, before we look at the easier alternatives let's see how the B guitar chord should ideally be played (note that the full name of B is actually "B Major", but most people just refer to it as "B"):

B Major

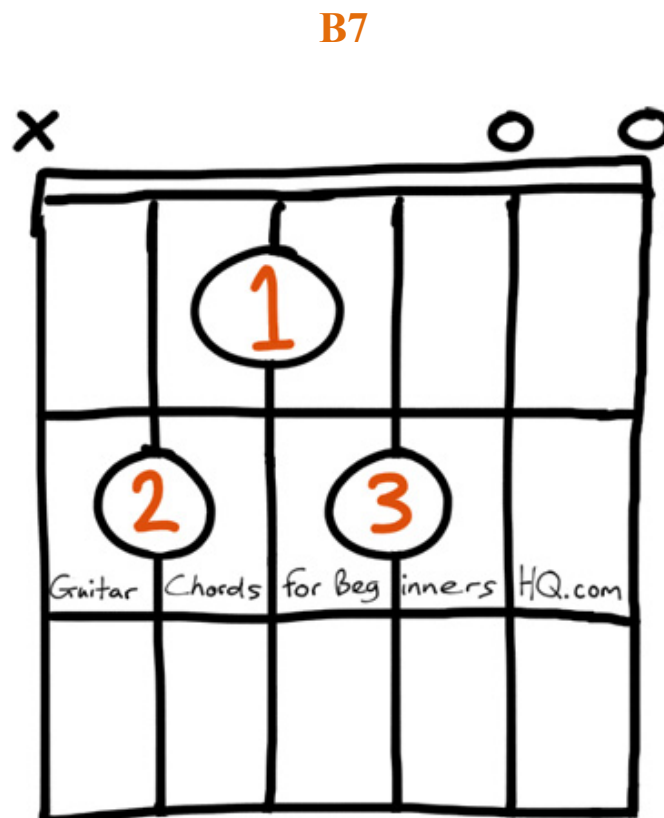


Give it a try. As you will see it's a challenging chord to play. 😊

I've learnt through thousands of hours of teaching that the B guitar chord is simply out of reach for beginner guitarists. We need an alternative; a different version of B that you can use as a stepping stone to develop your finger dexterity and accuracy.

Mastering the B guitar chord – Two great versions for beginner guitarists

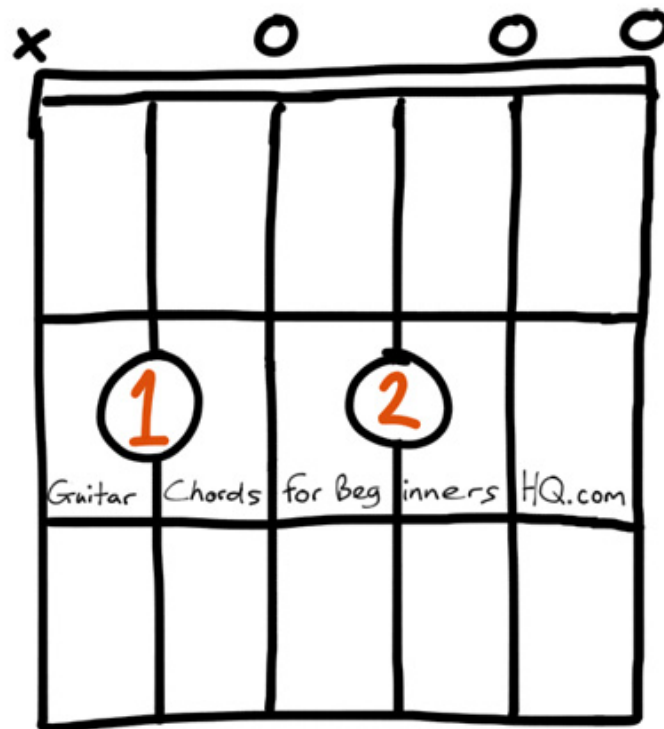
The first of these two chords is called "B7". It look like this:



As you can see this is a much easier version of the B guitar chord, though it's still a little tricky for total beginners because it requires 3 fingers. Stick with it! **This is the best version of the B guitar chord for beginners to learn.**

Let's look at a 2-finger version of the B guitar chord. (This is easier to play than B7 but doesn't sound as good, so it doesn't win my overall recommendation.)

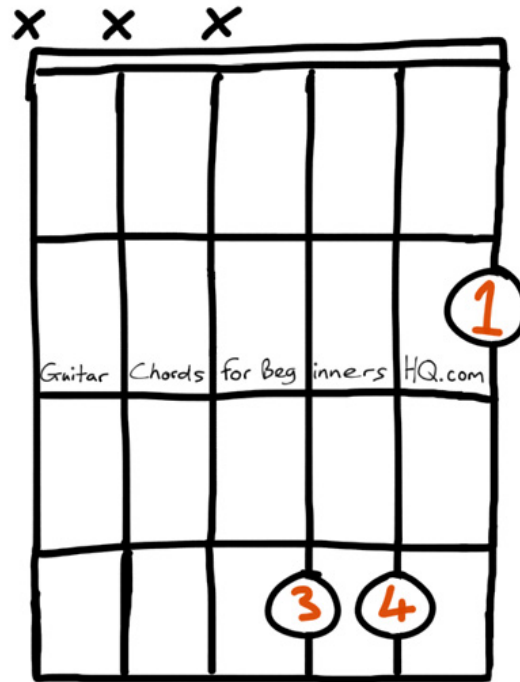
Bm11



This is a great version of the B guitar chord for beginners to use. Even though it doesn't sound as good as a full B major chord, or as strong as a B7, it does contain the all-important B root note and is a *passable* B chord for absolute guitar beginners.

Once you have 10-15 hours of guitar playing under your belt you should look to 'upgrade' from Bm11 and play B7 instead.

A super-simple, 3-string version of the B guitar chord

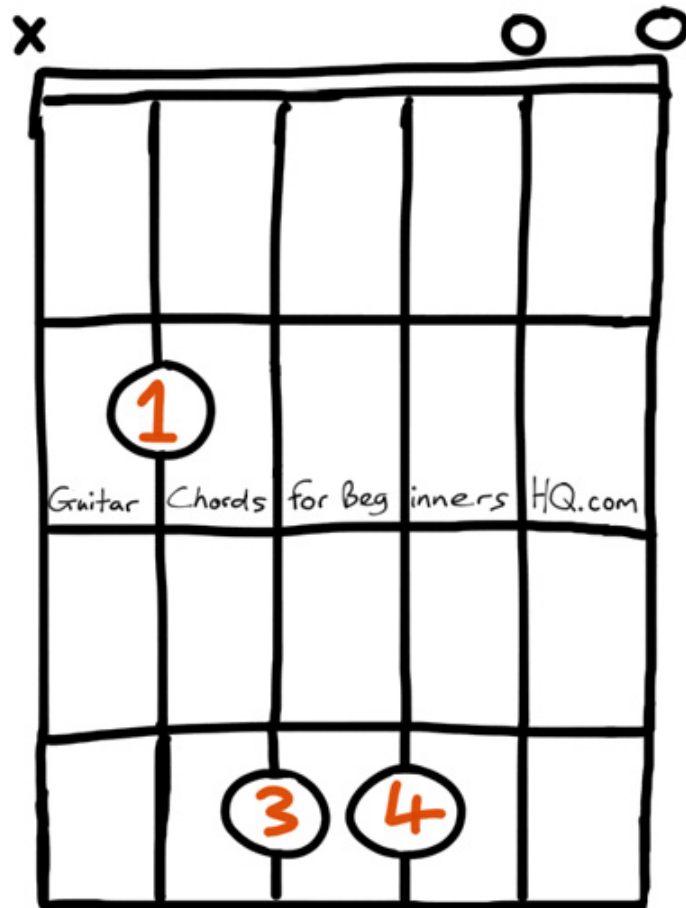


This version of the B guitar chord sounds a little thin (it's bound to, of course, as you're only using half of the strings), but it's still a valid B major chord and is ideal for children's smaller hands and adults who are struggling to play the other versions of B.

A great version of the B guitar chord for acoustic players

This loose-sounding B guitar chord is called Bsus4 (which is short for “B suspended fourth”). It’s a wonderful chord for acoustic guitars and creates a light, free sound.

Bsus4



B minor

A sad and melancholy mid-range chord.

The Bm guitar chord is probably the one that my students hate the most.

It's difficult to play and that's why this is one of our most popular lessons!

In this free lesson you will learn:

- How to play the Bm guitar chord correctly
- The best Bm guitar chord for beginner guitarists to use
- A super-simple 2-finger version of Bm

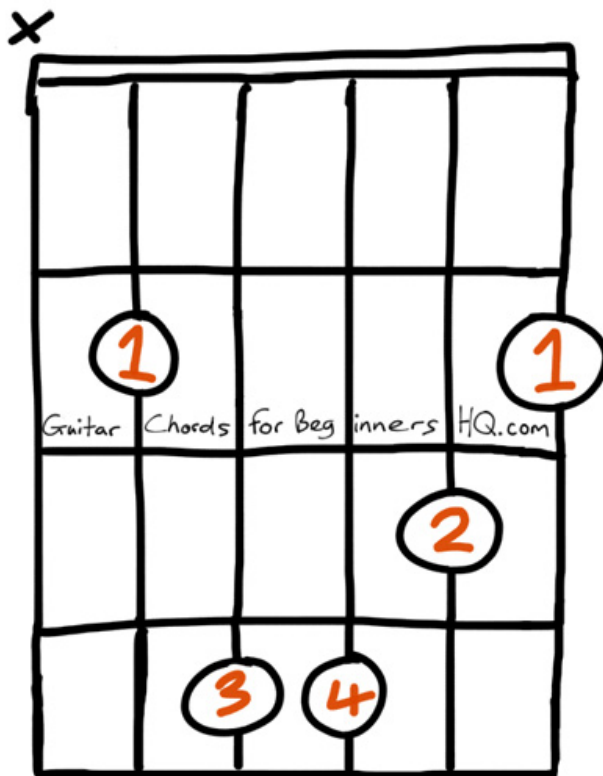
How to play the Bm guitar chord correctly

Why is the B minor guitar chord so hard to play? Because a 'barre' is needed to play the chord in its standard form.

("Using a barre" and "barring a string" simply means to use your first finger to press down several strings.)

A standard Bm chord looks like this:

Bm



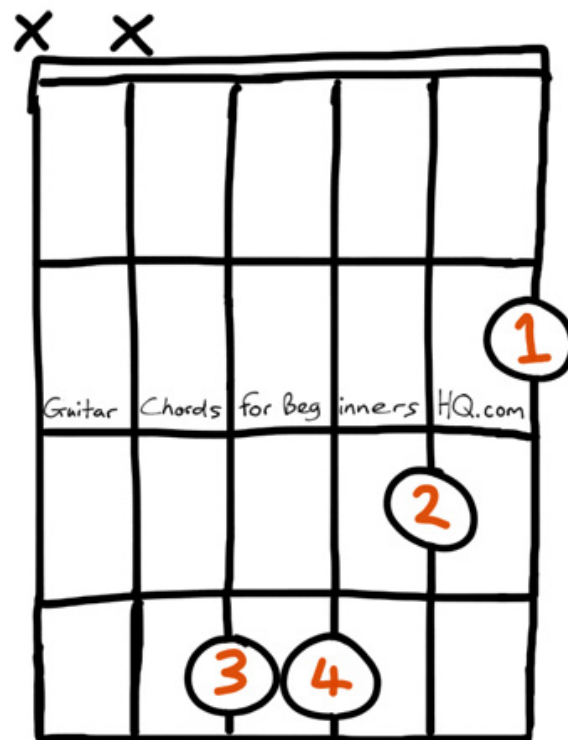
As you can see, it's a tough chord to play. You'll need to be an intermediate guitar player to consistently play this chord quickly and accurately.

Beginner guitarists need easier options. Let's check them out!

An easier way to play the Bm chord on guitar

Probably the most widely recommended 'beginner Bm' looks like this:

Bm (no barre)

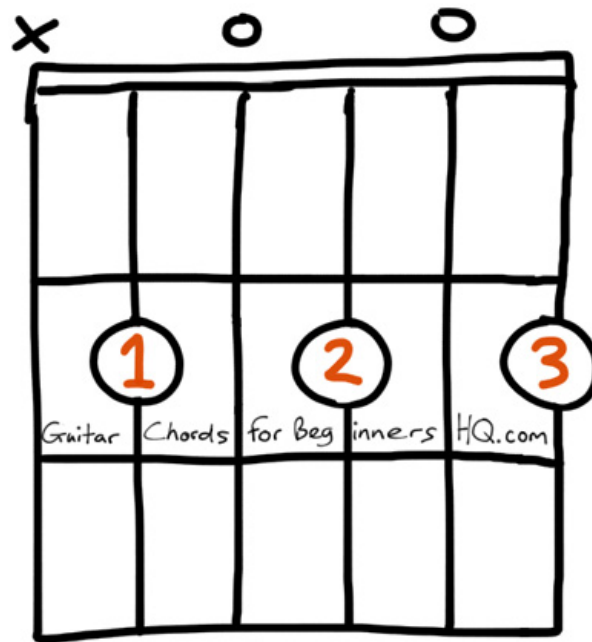


I'm not a fan of this version of Bm. Sure, it's a B minor guitar chord and it is easier to play than a barred Bm, but my beginner students still find this chord too difficult to play, so I always recommend **an even easier version of Bm.**

My favourite easy Bm guitar chord

This lovely chord is called Bm7. It's a close variant of Bm that sounds great and is much easier to play than a standard B minor guitar chord.

Bm7



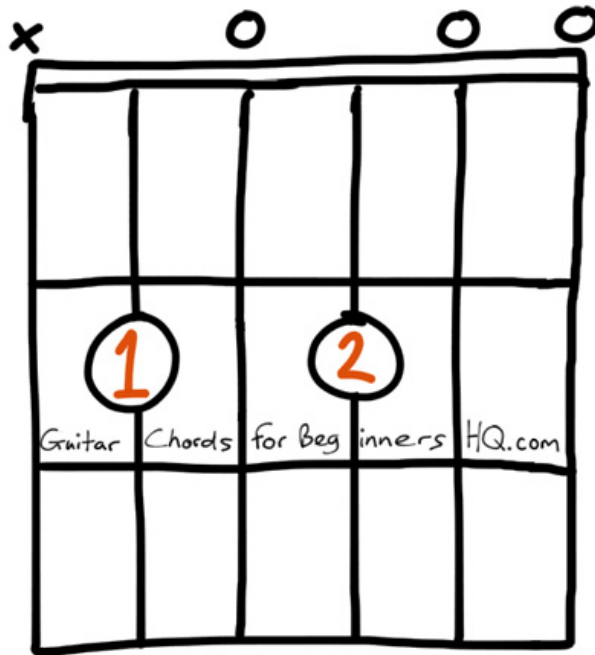
Bm7 is still still a bit fiddly because it requires 3 fingers, but it's simpler to remember and to play because the notes are all on the same fret.

In my experience most beginner guitarists can learn to play this chord accurately and consistently within a few weeks.

The Super-Simple 2- finger way to play Bm

There's an even easier version of Bm that you can play, which looks like this:

Bm (2-finger version)



This doesn't sound as good as Bm7 (it isn't as closely linked to Bm) but it still has that all important B root note and is a much **much** easier chord to play than a standard Bm.

NOTICE THIS IMPORTANT NOTICE...!

Regardless of which of the above versions you choose to play it's very important that you **don't play the 6th string**. ([String numbers are explained here.](#))

The first note that we want to hear in a pure and clean Bm guitar chord is the B note on the 5th string. (The note being played by the 1st finger in the above chordbox.)

I have to avoid strumming certain strings? That sounds really hard Mike!

Don't get too hung about skipping the 6th string. It's definitely something you should work towards as an aim, but you'll initially find it very difficult to do. That's ok and it's normal.

Don't fall into the trap of spending ages lining up your pick in just the right place before strumming the chord. **It's much more important that you just strum the guitar.**

Through repetition, you will very quickly improve and be able to perfect the chord. But if you wait for too long, trying to get everything to be perfect before you play the chord you will fall into the "analysis paralysis" trap and you'll learn at a snail's pace. **Don't make this mistake!** 😊

'I'd rather just learn the Bm guitar chord the correct way from the beginning'

This is something I hear a lot from new students. I admire your determination!

But look at it like this: In the long-term we want you to be able to strum a Bm guitar chord while skipping the 6th string. That's true. But it's hard to do and is simply beyond the ability of most beginner guitarists.

Trying to achieve this too early on just slows you down and stunts your progress. Trust me, I've seen people try to do this both ways and there's a clear winner between the two methods.

In the short-term, it's more important that you just dive in and strum the guitar lots. Our first goal is to get you feeling comfortable holding and strumming the guitar. As you progress you'll find that finessing a Bm guitar chord (and others like it) will get exponentially easier.

Are there any other types of Bm guitar chords?

Yes, there's lots of them, but we won't go through them here. They are all too hard for beginner guitarists to play, so let's master the easiest one first!



If you're still struggling, just play the super-easy Bm chord shape and keep practicing. You'll crack it after a few hours.

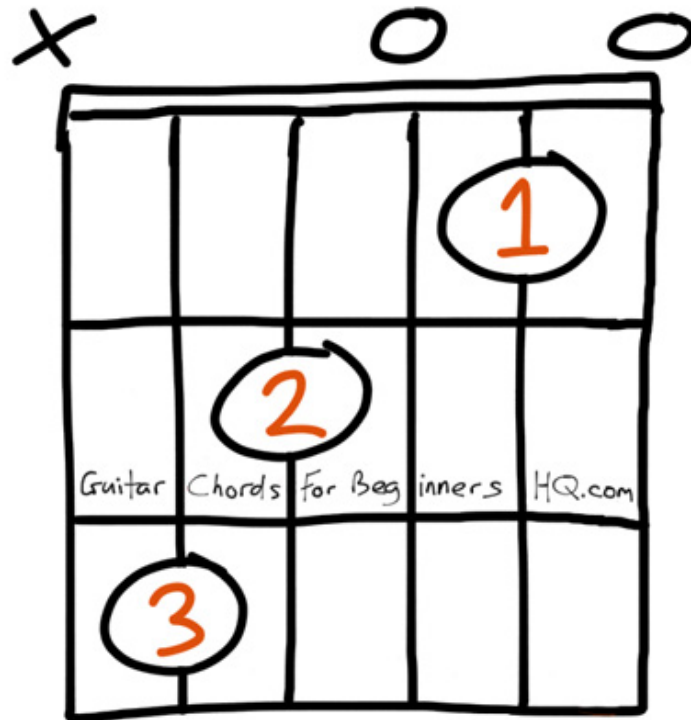
C Major

One of the most common guitar chords of all.

C major

The C guitar chord is one of the most common guitar chords of all. Its full name is “C Major” but most of the time people just call it, “C”. In its full form it looks like this:

C Major



‘Wow, the C guitar chord looks difficult to play...’

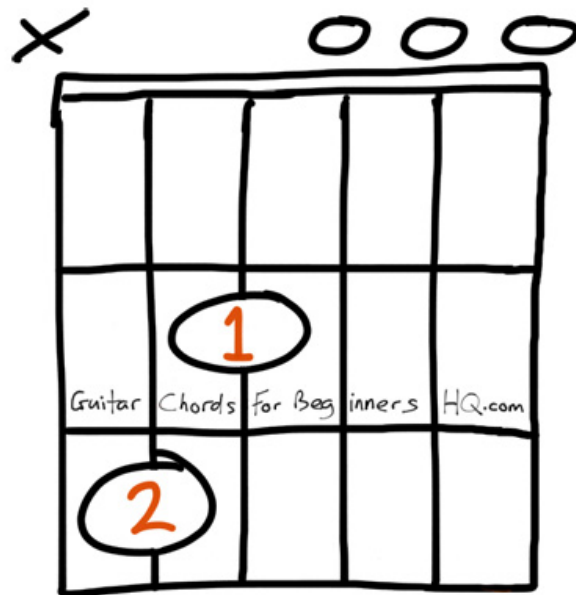
Yes, this is a tough chord for beginner guitarists to play because it’s spread over three frets, so it requires three fingers to be ‘split’. This is hard in the early days of learning guitar as you don’t have the necessary amount of dexterity, flexibility or strength in your fingers yet.

But don’t worry, thankfully there are some much easier versions of the C guitar chord that you can play that still sound good and will act as ‘stepping stones’ for you in learning the full version of C.

‘Ok, show me the best way to play the C guitar chord as a beginner guitarist’

My preferred version of the C guitar chord for beginner guitarists is called ‘C Major 7’. It looks like this:

C Major 7



As you can see this only requires 2 fingers which makes it much easier to play. The chord sounds very similar to a full C chord (because it retains the most important notes).

The Golden Rule when playing C Major 7

During your first 4-6 hours of playing guitar it's best to play C Major 7 exactly as shown above. At that early stage you just want to get comfortable holding the guitar and strumming simple chords.

But once you have 6-10 hours of guitar playing under your belt you should begin playing this chord with fingers 2 and 3 (instead of 1 and 2). **This will make it much easier for you to progress to play a the full C guitar chord in the near future**, as you'll be accustomed to having finger 1 spare. Adding it on at a later date will be easy.

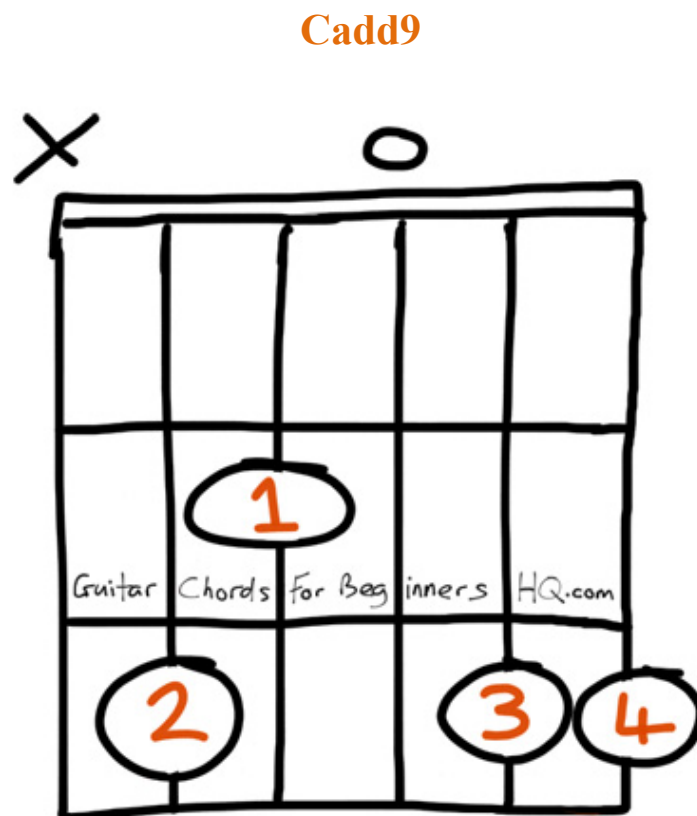
Trust me, this is hugely important and is the key to learning how to play a full C guitar chord quickly.

However, if you break this ‘Golden Rule’ and continue to play C Major 7 with fingers 1 and 2 (which initially feels more natural) then you will take no long-term benefit from playing it, as the full C shape will still feel foreign and difficult when you eventually try to play it.

Learning to play C Major 7, with fingers 2 and 3, is the ideal stepping stone for you to use in learning to play a full C guitar chord.

‘Great! What other versions of C should I know about?’

Cadd9 is a fabulous version of C. It’s pronounced “C added nine” and is a great chord to get under your belt, particularly for acoustic players. It sounds wonderful and flows very nicely before or after a G chord. It looks like this:



As you can see Cadd9 is basically a G chord with the two bass notes played a string higher.

The chords of C and G frequently appear together, so playing a Cadd9 instead of C whenever G is the adjacent chord works very well. Not only because it sounds good, but because it's a very similar shape to G; This means that your fingers don't have to move much to sound great. Win win!

When the C guitar chord is needed before or after a G chord, try playing Cadd9 instead.

Go on, give it a try. It sounds good, yes? 😊

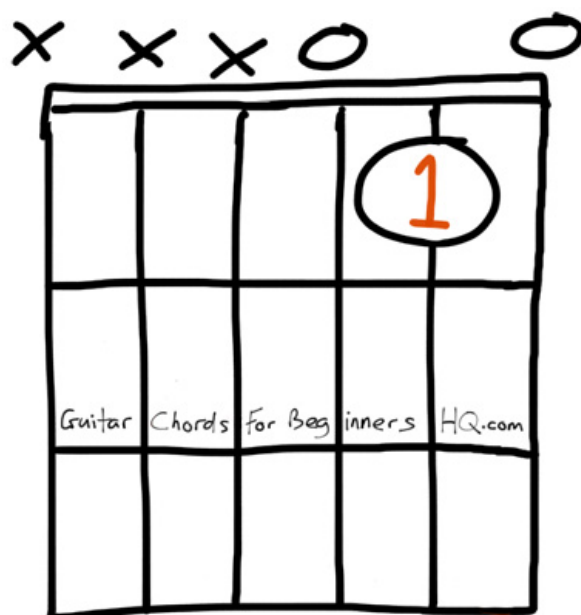
Cadd9 isn't a super-hard chord to learn, but it's not an easy one either as it requires 4 fingers. Thankfully these are only spread over two frets and are similar in shape to G, so it's a hand shape that you'll quickly become accustomed to.

NOTE: As with all versions of C, you should aim to not play the 6th string.

A super-simple version of the C guitar chord

This is the easiest possible version of the C guitar chord. It's simple to play and is ideal for children (with their smaller hands). It's also good for adults who are struggling or just starting out with guitar.

C Major (1-finger)



The biggest benefit here is that it only requires 1 finger. (Just 1 finger!) The biggest drawback is it doesn't sound great – it sounds very thin and trebly.

But hey it's only a stepping stone, remember?

This is a good place to start for a C guitar chord, but it would be much better to simply learn C Major 7 as that chord sounds better and is very close to a full C, which should be your ultimate goal.

So there you have it! Some very simple alternative ways to play the C guitar chord, one of the most common guitar chords of all.

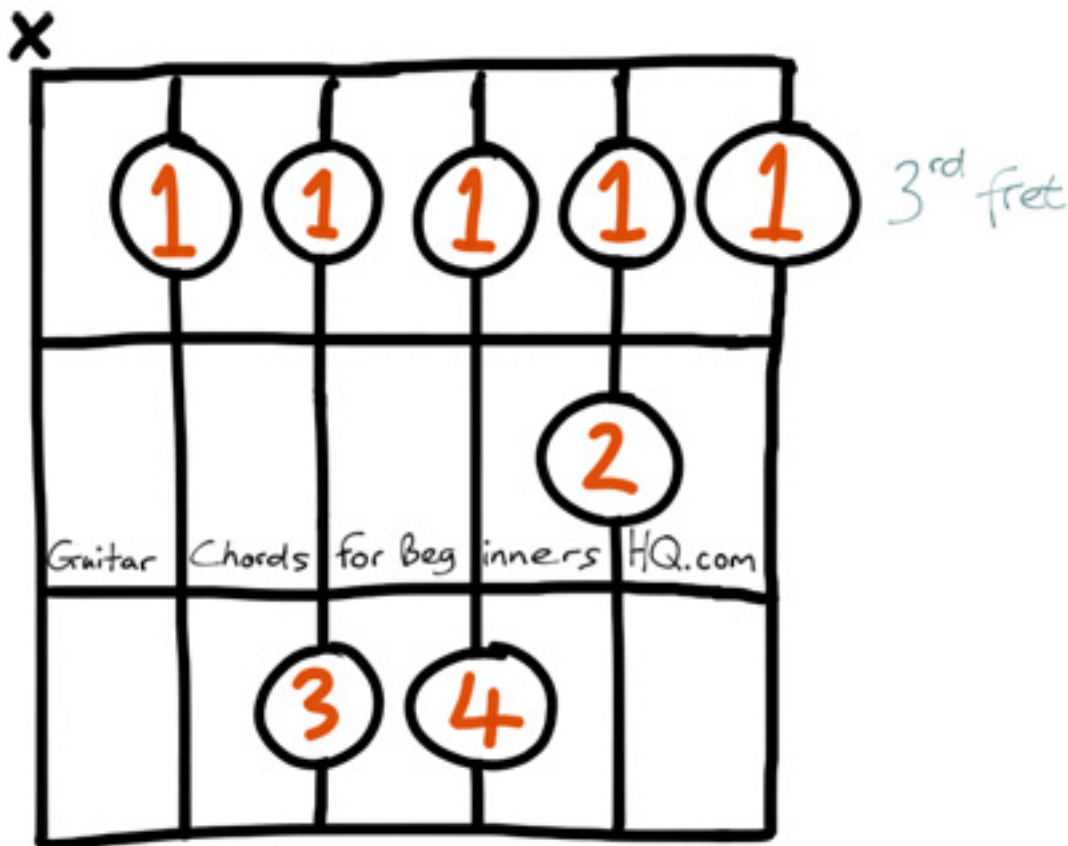
C Minor

A relatively rare chord (that's awkward to play).

The C minor guitar chord is one of those awkward chord shapes... My students hate it! In its standard form it's very difficult to play, but there are some good easy alternatives.

The standard way to play the C minor guitar chord

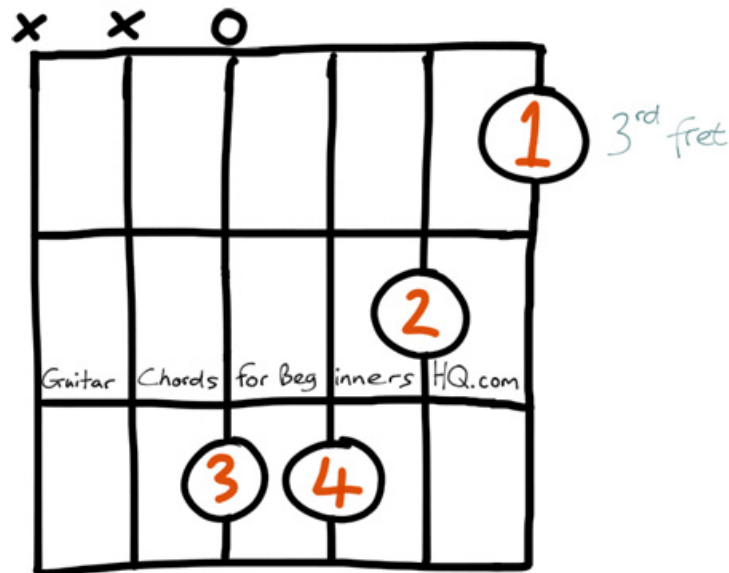
So why is the Cm guitar chord so difficult to play? Well, in its standard form it's usually played as a "barre chord". It looks like this:



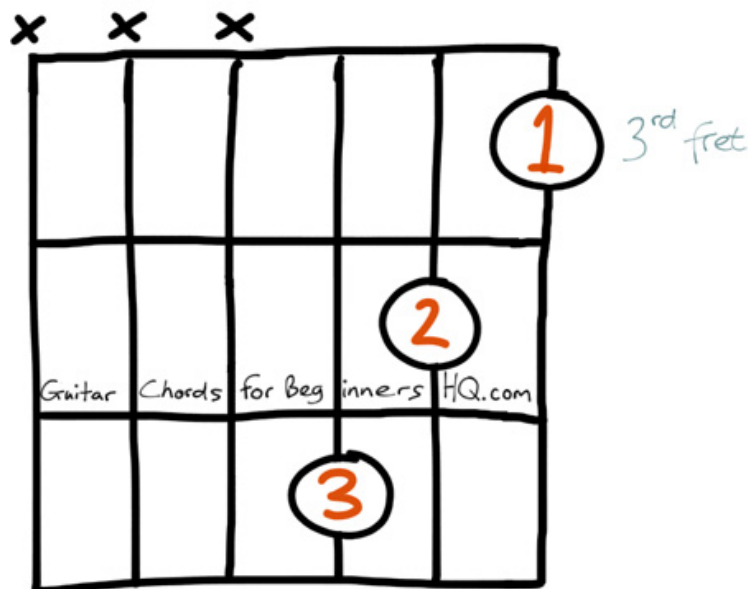
As you can see, this is far too difficult for guitar beginners to play. We need an easier option. So what are the alternative versions of the C minor guitar chord?

An easier version of the Cm guitar chord

This version of the C minor guitar chord is easier to play than the barred version:



This is a much better option than the standard Cm, but it's still not EASY to play, so I prefer to recommend the following version of the C minor guitar chord to my students:



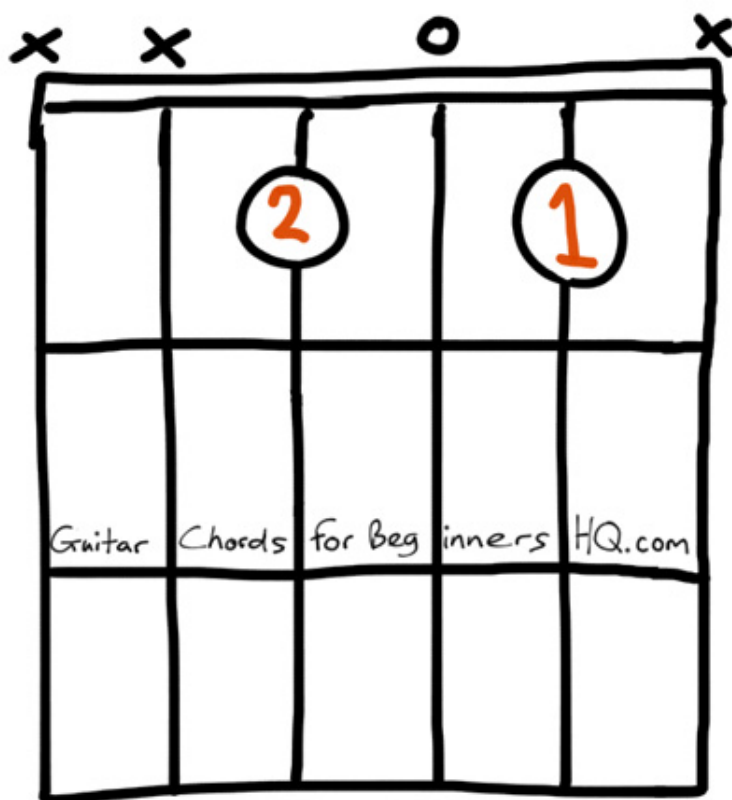
This is a great chord shape to learn as it crops up often in the future. It's not super-easy to play, but it IS a lot simpler than the standard version of the

Cm guitar chord. **This is my preferred version of Cm for my beginner students to learn.**

There's two other versions of the Cm guitar chord that I'd like you to bear in mind. Especially if you're a beginner guitarist...

A 2-finger version of the C minor guitar chord

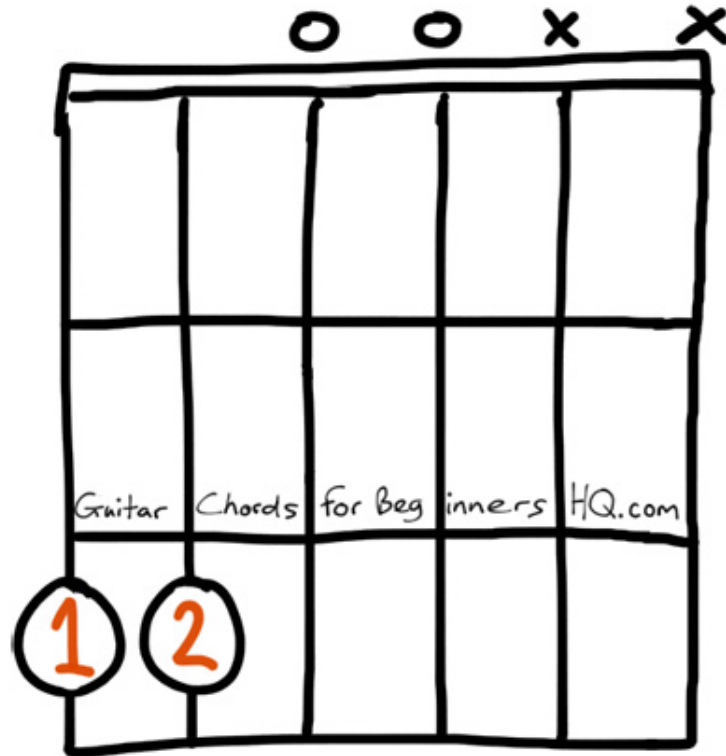
This version of the Cm guitar chord is a handy one to know:



This Cm guitar chord is much easier to fret, but remember that you must only play strings 2,3 and 4. Strings 1, 5 and 6 must not be played. (String numbers explained [here](#).)

The easiest-of-all version of the C minor guitar chord

This version of the Cm guitar chord is a little bass-heavy, but it's very easy to make the chord shape and less fiddly to strum than the above version. Check it out!



As you can see, this is much easier than any of the other versions of the C minor guitar chord we've looked at.

Take care not to strum strings 1 & 2 though, or this won't sound anything like a C minor guitar chord any more! (Strumming strings 1 & 2 would turn this into a different chord.)

Guitars have been around [for a long time](#), but in all that time I don't think anyone has found an easier way to play the Cm guitar chord than this! 😊

My recommendation for your Cm guitar chords

I think you should try all of the above Cm shapes and see which one fits your current ability level AND the song you are trying to play. Some chords

are well suited to specific situations and what sounds good in one context will often sound out-of-place in another.

If you're a total beginner you should try the last two above versions of the Cm guitar chord, as all the other versions will simply be too tough for you to play. But if you have 15-20 hours of guitar practice under your belt already, I prefer for my students to learn the third version of the Cm guitar chord shown above. (Because that shape can be used for multiple other chords in the future.)

Are there any other versions of the C minor guitar chord?

Yes, there's lots, but they're too difficult for beginner guitarists so we're not going to cover them here. I hope you've enjoyed this free lesson and learnt something new and useful. Enjoy playing your new C minor guitar chord!

D Major

One of the most common guitar chords of all.

D major (usually just called “D”)

The D chord on guitar crops up a lot (it’s one of the most common chords of all). This is one you’ve simply got to know if you want to play guitar!

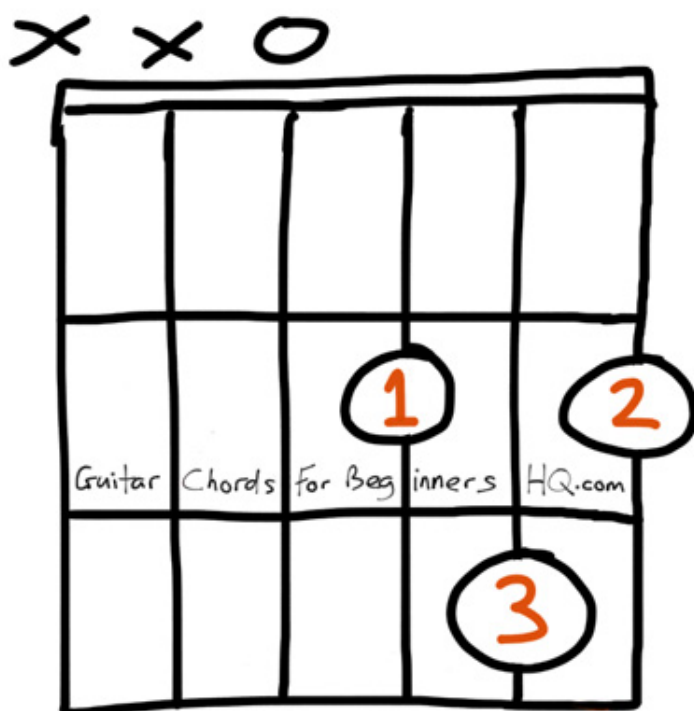
In this article you’ll learn:

- How to play the D chord on guitar correctly
- The best D chord for beginner guitarists to use
- A simple 1-finger version of the D chord
- 5 bonus tricks you can use to make your D chords sound better

The correct way to play the D chord on guitar

The full name of D is actually “D Major”, but most people just call it, “D”. It looks like this:

D Major



Why is this chord so hard? And how can we make it easy?

The D chord on guitar is very difficult for beginners because you have to use three ‘split’ fingers (they’re not bunched together in an easy or compact group) and secondly you must avoid playing 2 strings. (See those X symbols on the chord box? They mean “don’t play this string”.)

Ouch. This one’s tough!

Now of course your overall aim should be to play the full chord correctly, as shown above. For most people it takes around 2-4 weeks of regular practice to be able to nail this chord consistently.

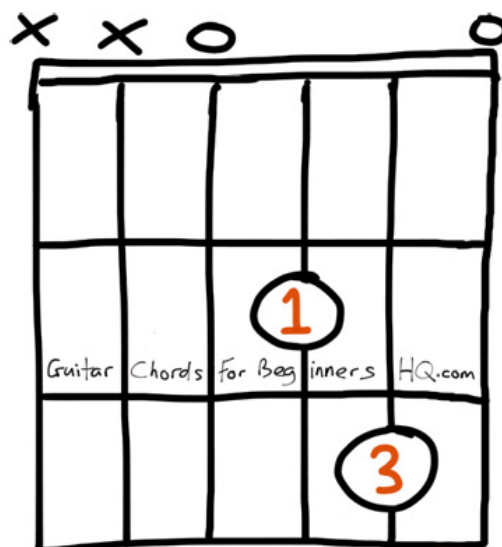
Thankfully there’s a few things you can do to make this difficult process easier and some simpler versions of D that you can play right now.

How to quickly master the D chord on guitar

Step number 1 to master the D chord on guitar is to use an easier version of D first, as a ‘stepping stone’ towards playing the full D chord.

This easier version of the D chord is called “Dsus2” and it’s incredibly useful. It looks like this:

Dsus2



As you can see, this is a simpler version of the D chord and it only requires 2 fingers to play. This is a fabulous stepping stone chord for beginner guitarists because it's easier to play than a full D chord and it still sounds great.

The rule is simple: Whenever you see a D chord on guitar, play a Dsus2 instead!

Why bother learning the Dsus2 chord?

Some of my new students occasionally say to me, "Mike I don't want to learn the 'baby' version, I'd rather just learn the full version of D from the outset."

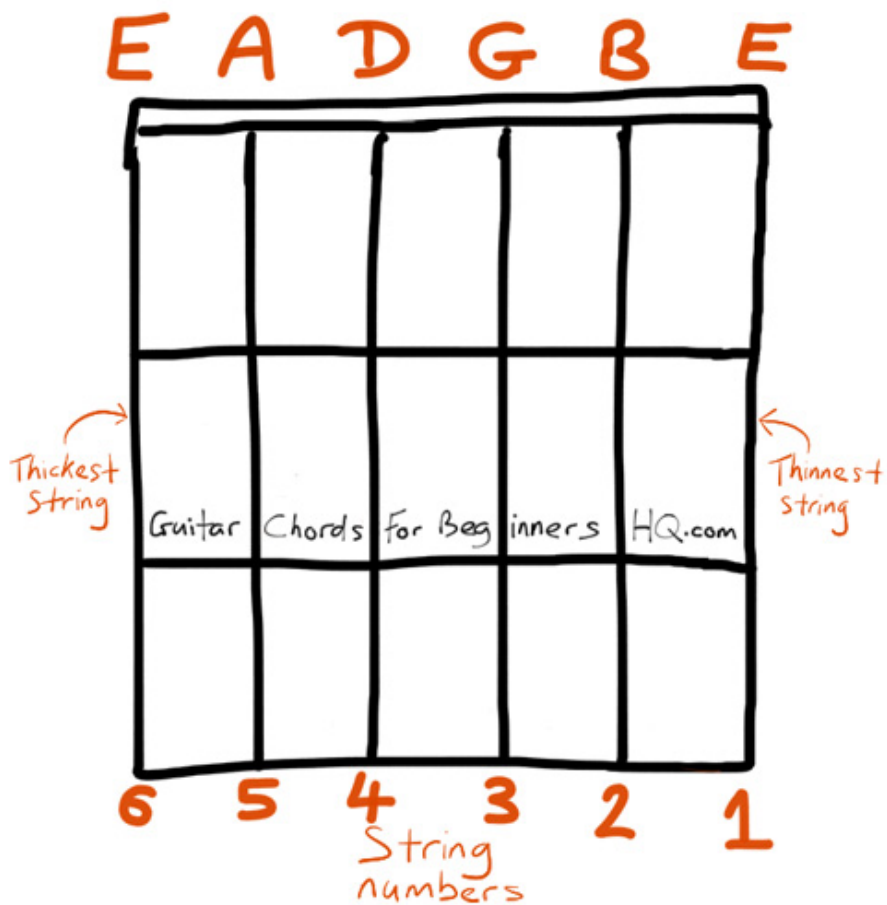
My answer is always the same: learning Dsus2 first isn't the 'easy' or 'wimpy' option. It's the smart thing to do. Why? **Because it's an accelerator.**

Learning Dsus2 before D creates a stepping stone for you. It gets you comfortable applying the hand shape needed to play a D chord, but requires 33% less dexterity than a D chord. (Remember we're using just 2 fingers, not 3.)

Does this sound like a good plan to you? I hope so, now let's give it a try!

Important: It's vital you use the correct fingers to play Dsus2

Let's have a quick refresher on string numbers:



As you can see from the previous image of Dsus2 it's best to use fingers 1 and 3. Why? Because we want to keep finger 2 (your middle finger) in reserve, on 'standby', so you can add it in a couple of weeks and turn Dsus2 into D.

Don't be tempted to ignore the correct finger pattern of Dsus2 by using fingers 1 & 2 instead! I know from experience with my students that you will want to do this initially, as you have more control and dexterity in fingers 1 & 2.

But if you do that, then you won't be making real progress towards learning D; you'll merely have learnt Dsus2 and the full D shape will keep feeling foreign and difficult when you try to make the jump up.

D chords on guitar – String Selection

Whenever you play a D chord on guitar you should only ever play strings 1-4.

Regardless of whether you're playing D, Dsus2, Dm, D5 – it doesn't matter. If the chord begins with the letter D, then you should NOT play strings 5 and 6. Your strumming/picking should begin on the 4th string.

I'm going to repeat that as it's so important: for any D chord you must only use the first four strings! 😊

If you play the fifth string (the A string) when playing a D chord on guitar it won't sound too bad. *Ideally* we don't want to hear it at all, but if you play it by mistake it's not the end of the world.

But if you accidentally play the 6th string, the E string, when playing a D chord it will create a very muddy, nasty sounding chord. **It's vital that you don't play the E string when strumming any type of D chord.**

ACTION POINT: Listen to how 'pure' a D chord on guitar sounds when you strum it correctly, with 4 strings. Now listen to how terrible a D chord sounds if you strum all six strings.

Try it now, before we move on. There's a BIG difference, right?

How to strum the guitar while missing strings out

You'll initially find it very hard to strum just four strings with any fluidity. Don't worry, this will come in time. To begin with, just focus on missing the E string and don't worry too much about avoiding the A string.

Avoid "analysis paralysis" and just *play*

Some people focus so much on playing the correct strings that they hardly strum the guitar at all, they'll line everything up, their fingers, the pick/plectrum, and fuff around for 20-30 seconds before they even start to play the guitar. **This should be avoided at all costs.**

In the early stages of learning it's far more important that you get comfortable strumming the guitar and start having fun than it is to PERFECTLY execute every chord.

So don't overanalyse. At this stage we want progress, not perfection. 😊

Shape the chord and just start strumming with the picture in your mind that you won't strum the E string. Two quick tips:

- Aim to strum as usual, but from a slightly lower starting position.
- Try holding the pick/plectrum nearer to the pointed end (so there's a **shorter** amount of pick between your finger and the body of the

guitar). This will give you more control and accuracy. This is the maximum amount of pick that you should be able to see when you look down at your hand (any more than this and you'll be making life very difficult for yourself):



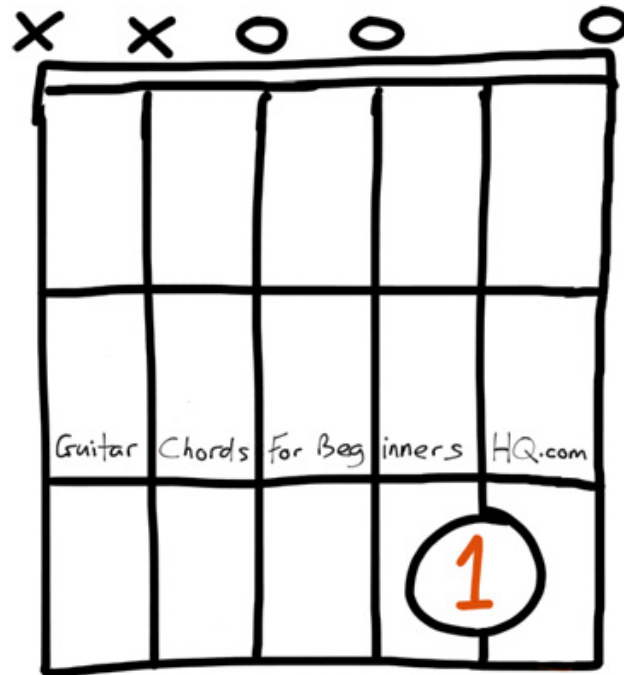
You'll be surprised at how quickly you improve at intentionally missing strings while strumming. It's not as hard as it first seems.

Once you can strum a D chord on guitar while consistently skipping the E string, you can then move on and try to also skip the A string.

A super-easy 1 finger version of D

For children or adults with disabilities that want to play the D chord on guitar there is a decent 1-finger version. It looks like this:

D Major (1-finger version)



This D chord obviously doesn't sound as good as a full D, but it's passable, and as a 1-finger version it works well.

D Minor

A sweet sounding high-range minor chord.

D Minor

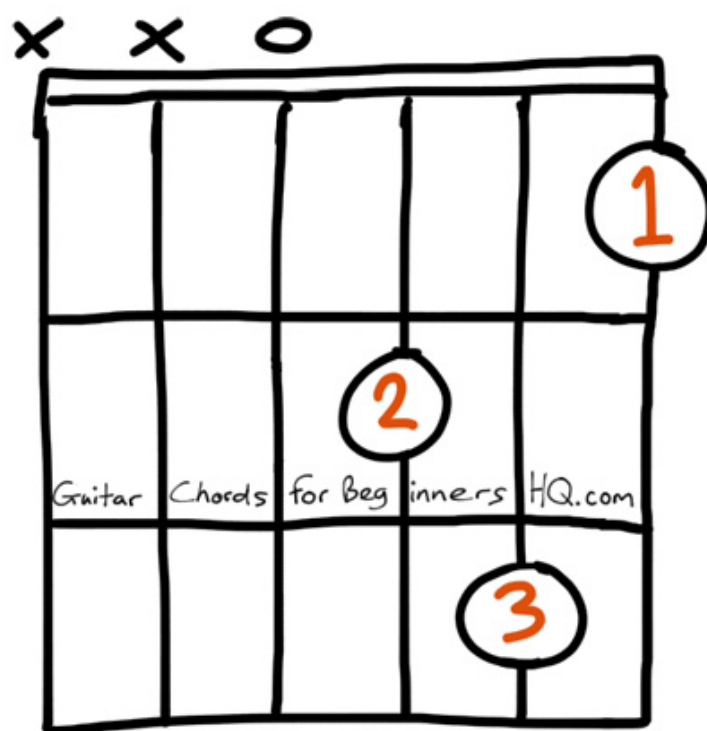
The Dm guitar chord is a really cool chord to know, but my students find it hard to play because it requires a different hand position to a standard D chord. Let's look at how we can make this easier!

In this free lesson you will learn:

- How to play the Dm guitar chord correctly
- Two easy 2-finger alternatives for the Dm guitar chord
- A dark and moody version of the Dm guitar chord

The standard way to play the Dm guitar chord

In its standard form, the D minor guitar chord (usually written as “Dm”) looks like this:

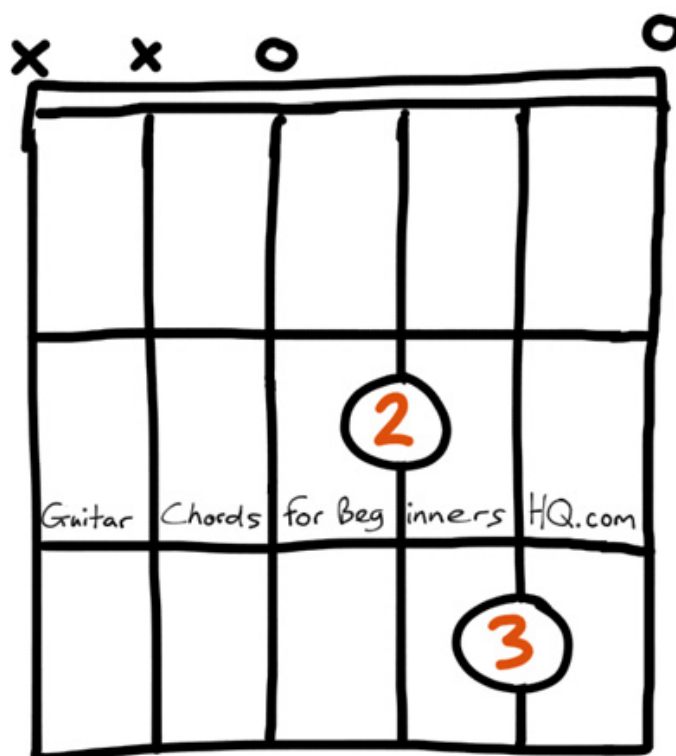


As you can see the Dm guitar chord is a 3-finger chord which needs you to play across 3 different frets. This makes it hard for beginner guitarists who are making the step up from easy chords like Em, Cmaj7 and Asus.

All of my students find the Dm guitar chord tough to play when they first encounter it, so don't worry if you struggle with it too! It's worth persevering with because it's a chord that crops up often. It's good to get it under your belt near the start of your guitar journey if possible.

An easy 2-finger alternative for the D minor guitar chord

An easy alternative to the Dm guitar chord is to play Dsus which looks like this:



NOTE: Dsus is a very useful chord to know as it will often sound ok in the place of any D chord.

As you can see Dsus2 (the 'sus' is an abbreviated way of saying 'suspended') only requires two fingers to play and the hand shape is easier to form than a full Dm chord.

Our goal is for you to be able to play the Dm guitar chord in its full form as soon as possible. However in the early days of your guitar journey (under 30 hours of practice) you will find it too challenging so **we're going to use Dsus2 as a stepping stone to get you to the full Dm guitar chord.**

Does that make sense? I hope so! 😊

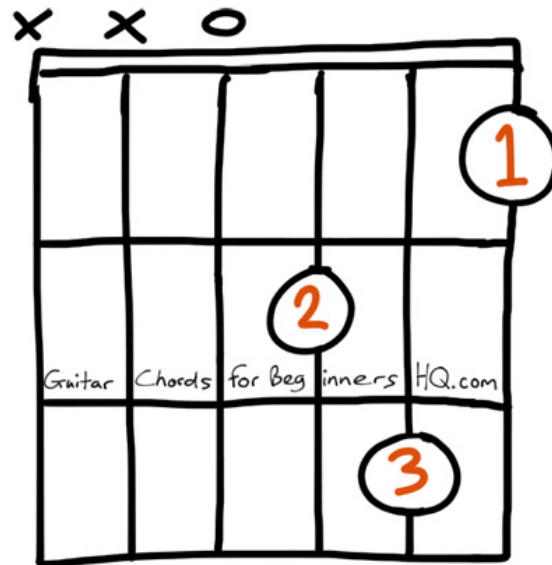
An important point

You must use fingers 2 and 3 when using Dsus2 as an alternative to the Dm guitar chord. This will ensure you get used to having finger 1 free which you will need to if you want to play a proper Dm.



Can you see what we're doing here? We're 'training' your hand to get accustomed to the Dm shape *in stages*.

After a few weeks of playing Dsus2 with fingers 2 and 3, you will find it fairly easy to add finger 1 on and turn this into a full Dm chord, like this:

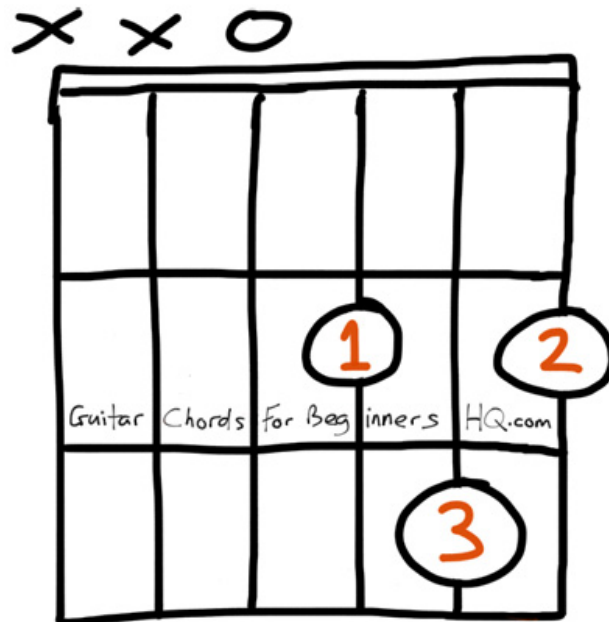


I hope you can see the logic in this and can resist the temptation to play Dsus2 with fingers 1 and 2 which will be your natural urge! You have more control over fingers 1 and 2, so it's understandable that you'll want to use them – my students do it all the time! 😊

It's important for you to resist that urge if you want to have good long-term technique. By following my instructions in using the correct fingers you will be planting seeds now for a better future as a guitarist.

A straightforward alternative to the Dm guitar chord

A very simple alternative to the D minor guitar chord is to simply use a standard D chord. It's not ideal, but it's a quick-fix that's *passable*. Unlike other major/minor variants, you can actually use a D major in place of D minor without too much damage to the song.

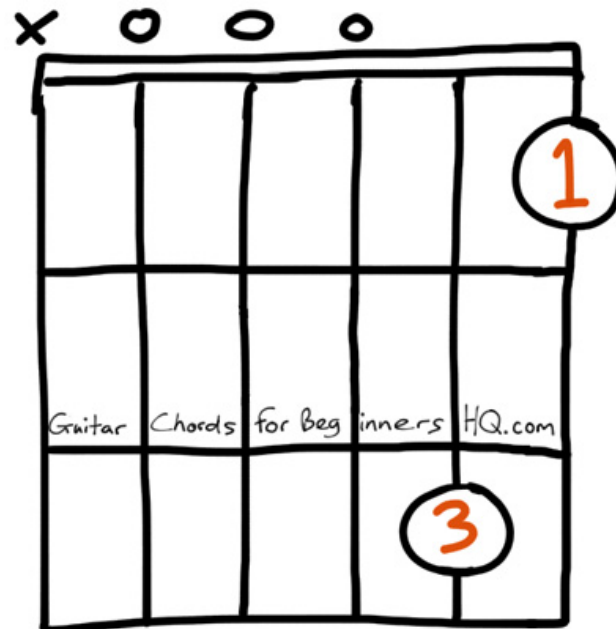


Give it a try. Sure, it doesn't sound *ideal*, but while you're developing your guitar skills to a level where you can play a standard Dm, it can do a decent job.

An interesting 2-finger version of the Dm guitar chord

This unusual D voicing (it's called "Dadd4") gives you an open sounding alternative to the Dm guitar chord and as you can see, it will also train your hand to keep finger 2 free.

You can add finger 2 on to make this a full D minor guitar chord after a few weeks' practice.

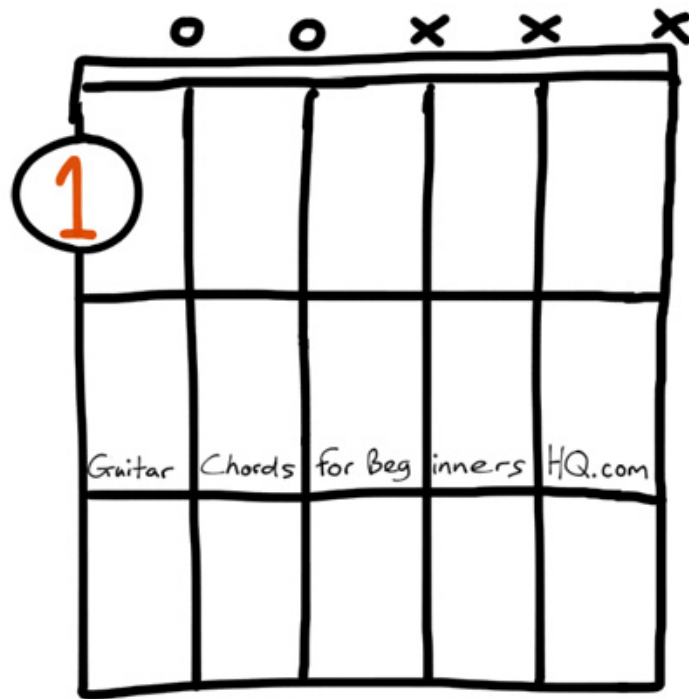


As you can see this is also a 2-finger chord but it has a different personality to Dsus2. Try them both. Can you hear the difference?

A dark & moody version of the Dm guitar chord

This bass-heavy version of Dm sounds very dark. Unlike some of the other alternatives here, this is actually a pure Dm guitar chord.

It sounds very muddy compared to the standard form of the Dm guitar chord, but it IS a D minor and would work well for dark metal sounds and heavier genres.



Are there other ways to play the Dm guitar chord?

Yes, there's lots but most of them are beyond the skill of a beginner guitarist so we won't look at them here. I hope you've enjoyed this free lesson and have fun exploring these different types of Dm guitar chord.

E Major

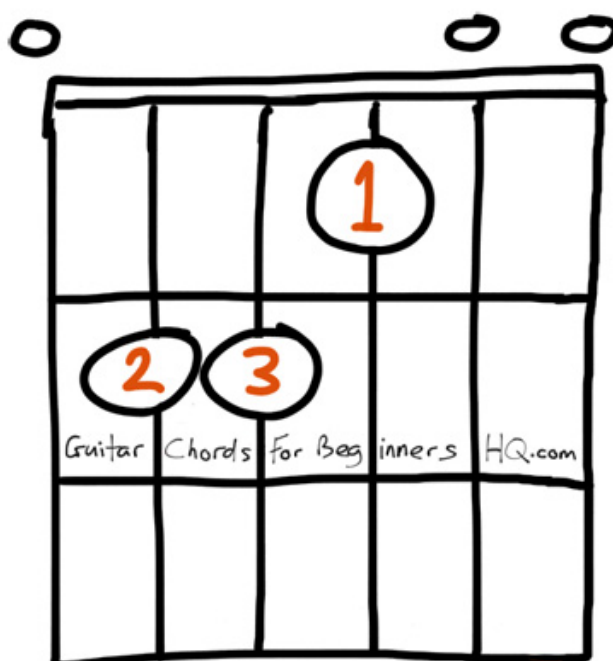
A bold and strong major chord with monster low-end.

The chord of E is one of the most fundamental guitar chords of all. (It's full name is "E Major" but most people just call it, "E".)

It crops up in most styles of music, but is most widely used in blues and rock music.

In its full form it looks like this:

E Major



Playing E major on the guitar isn't super-difficult, this is a **medium** difficulty chord. It's straightforward to strum correctly as you simply play all 6 strings. (No need to worry about missing out any strings out here, phew!)

However, beginner guitarists will still find it challenging to play as it requires 3 fingers and in the early days of learning guitar you simply won't have the accuracy and finger dexterity required to play this chord shape quickly.

With that in mind, let's look at some easy alternatives.

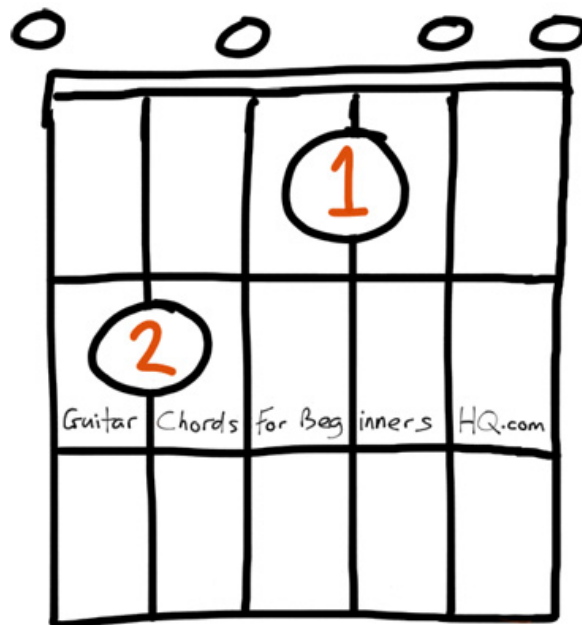
Easy Ways To Play E

There's a couple of easy ways to play an E chord. As always, it's a trade off between simplicity and sound quality. Take your pick from the list below!

The 'all-things-considered best option' for beginners: The 2-finger version

For most people (15-years-old and above) the easiest way to play E is like this:

E7



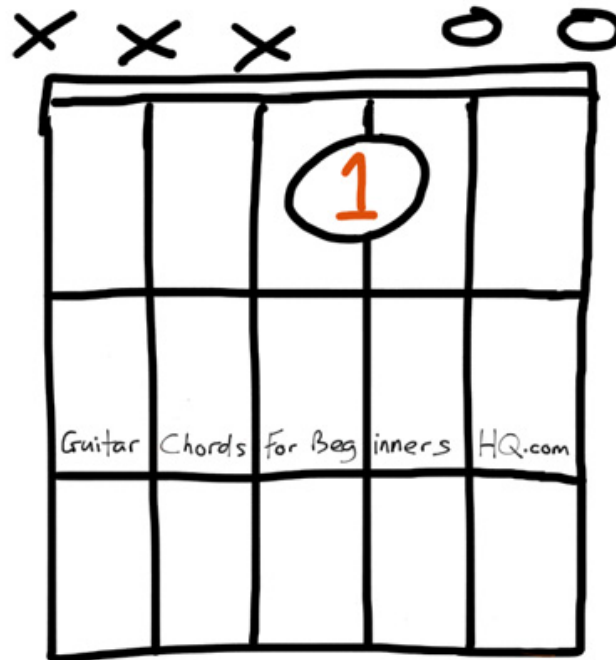
This is the best all round option, offering the strongest balance between playability and sound quality. This chord is E7, a version of E that sounds great and is easier to play than E major because it only requires 2 fingers. All things considered, this is the best version of E to learn if you're struggling to play a full E.

Note that you must strum all 6 strings for this chord to sound its best.

The Easiest Option: The 1-finger version of E

This is a super-simple way to play E. It's ideal for children or adults with small hands. It doesn't sound great though, so it's not my number 1 recommendation.

E Major (1-finger version)

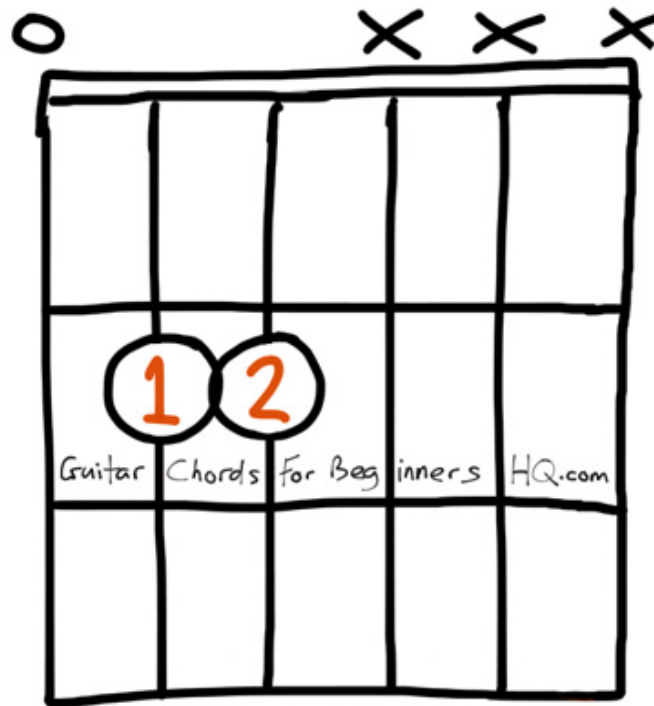


As you can see, with this version you should only play strings 1-3. This can leave the chord sounding a little thin, but it's still an E chord and a great alternative if you can't manage to play a full E major chord.

How to play E Major on guitar – other options

A powerful 2-finger version of E is called “E5”. This is a Power Chord and is a great bass-heavy option that’s ideal for rock, heavy blues, punk and metal. It looks like this:

E5



Important – note that with this chord you are only playing strings 4,5 and 6. It is essential that you don’t play any more strings than this, otherwise this chord will no longer be an E5. (It will turn into E minor, and have a very different sound.)

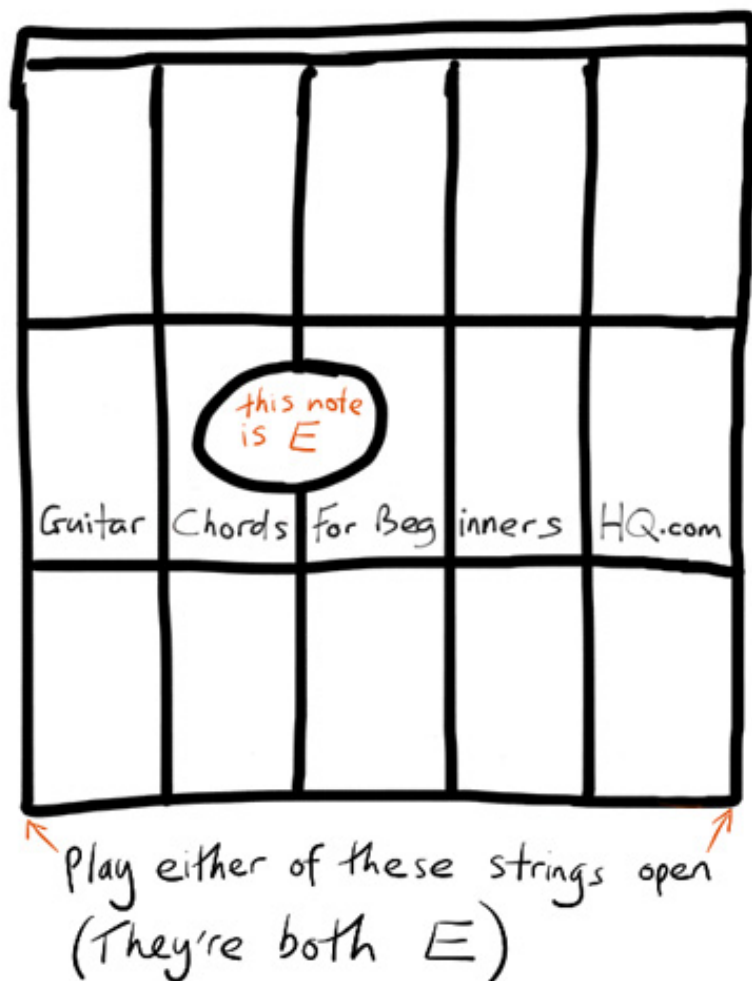
This is one of the best ways to fudge E major on guitar. It sounds similar to E major (because it’s the top half of E major!) but it’s easier to play because the finger shape is simple. (The finger shape is E minor – but we’re only playing strings 4-6, so we don’t hear the ‘minor’ part of the chord, hence, it becomes E5.)

This chord sounds incredibly badass on an electric guitars with a distorted or overdriven channel. It doesn’t sound as good on an acoustic guitar, but it still does the job and works well in blues and roots-based songs.

How to play the E chord on guitar – Some more 1-finger versions of E

These three notes are technically not chords, as they're just individual notes. They're very easy to play as they only require 1 finger, but of course they don't sound very full. Even so, these 3 are good options for children, total beginners, people with learning difficulties and beginner bass players.

Three E notes (highlighted in orange)



E Minor

A dark and easy guitar chord that's very common.

The Em guitar chord is one of the most common guitar chords of all.

There's several different ways you can play it and I'm always urging my students to learn them all because they all sound great!

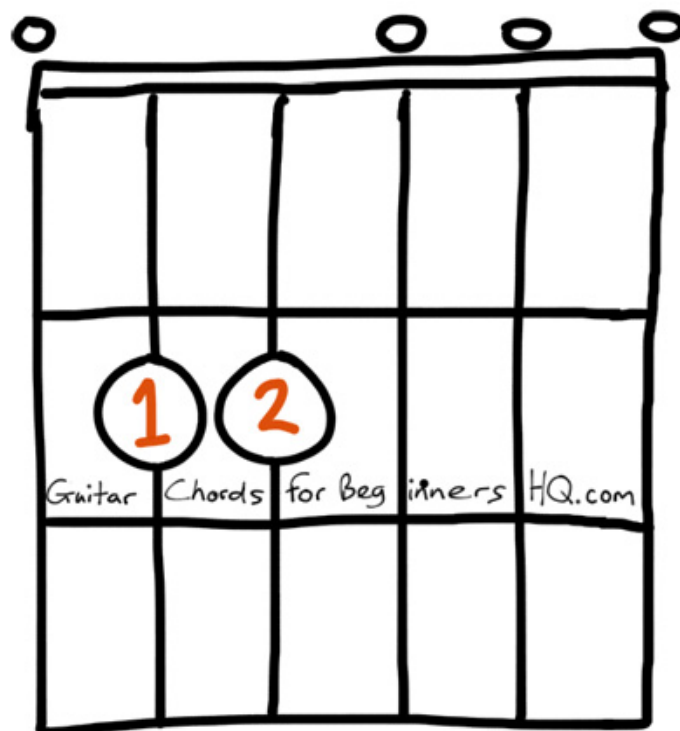
In this free lesson you will learn:

- How to play a standard Em guitar chord
- 3 easy ways to play the Em guitar chord (ideal for beginners)
- A super-simple 1-finger version of the Em guitar chord

The standard way to play the Em guitar chord

You'll play the E minor guitar chord (usually written as "Em") thousands of times during your guitar journey. It's everywhere! In its standard form it looks like this:

Em



As you can see the Em guitar chord is a simple 2-finger shape. Make sure you play all 6 strings so the chord sounds properly balanced. (This is

important as we want to hear the full voicing of the chord with both high and low notes.)

It's important that you use the correct fingers to play Em.

This will ensure you already have your first finger in the correct place when moving from Em to a G chord, which is a transition you will make many times. (The two chords are closely related and often appear together.)

The Em guitar chord is a nice simple one, enjoy it! 😊

Other cool ways to play the Em guitar chord

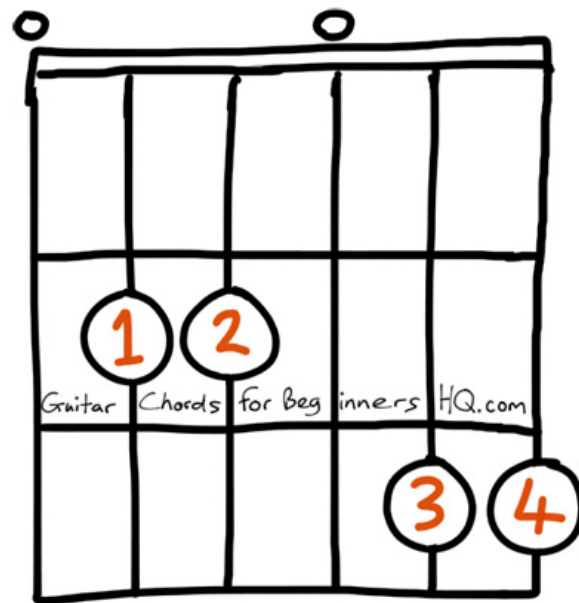
I love this chord. A commonly used version of the Em guitar chord is Em7 (pronounced as “E minor seven”). This is a very handy chord to know as it makes the transition to and from a G chord much easier.

It also works well for transitions to Cadd9 **which can often be used as a substitute for C.**

With this one simple addition to an Em chord you put yourself on easy street to play Em, C and G. (Three of the most-played guitar chords of all!)

Here's what Em7 looks like:

Em7



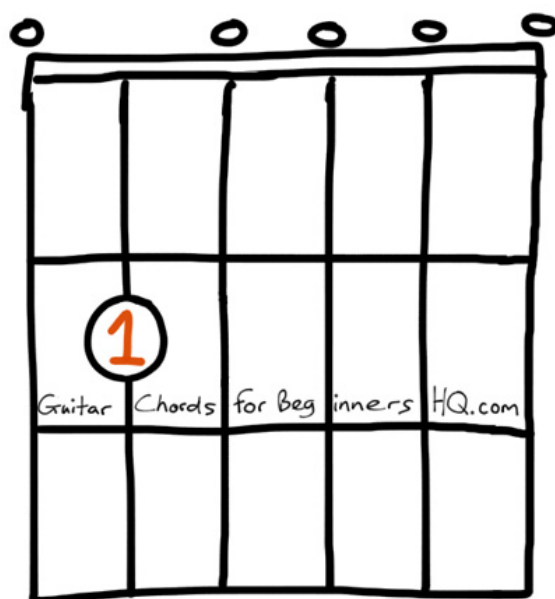
Note that this is now a 4-finger chord. How is this 'easier' than the standard version of Em? In isolation, it's not. But when the other chords in the song are G or C (which is often the case with Em) then playing an Em7 allows you to anchor fingers 3 and 4 on strings 1 and 2 ([learn about string numbers here](#)).

This is HUGE as it allows you to play Em, Cadd9 and G while keeping your hand in almost exactly the same place. This is much easier than playing Em, C and G. Listen carefully to this advice, it will save you many hours of frustration!

A 1-finger version of the Em guitar chord

Check out this easy version of the Em guitar chord, using just 1 finger!

Em (1-finger version)

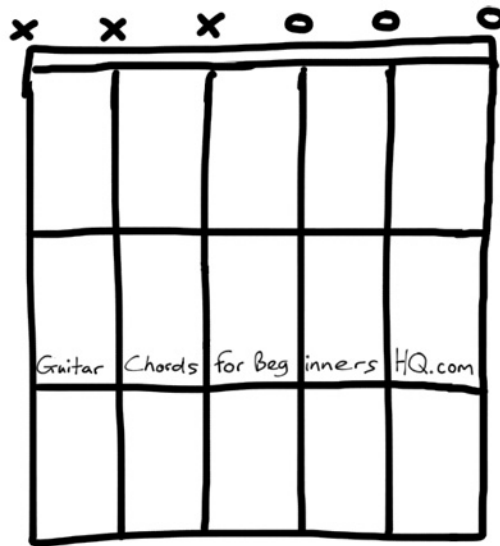


The easiest of all ways to play an Em guitar chord

Believe it or not, you can play an Em guitar chord by simply playing strings 1-3. Take care not to play strings 4-6! (String numbers are explained [here](#).)

This might be the easiest guitar chord of all time...

Em (no fingers needed!)



Are there any other ways to play the Em guitar chord?

There are lots more ways to play the Em guitar chord, but they're not suitable for beginners. Let's learn the easy ones first. Enjoy! 😊

F Major

A strong & dynamic chord with multiple voicings.

The F guitar chord is notoriously difficult for beginner guitarists. In this free lesson you will learn:

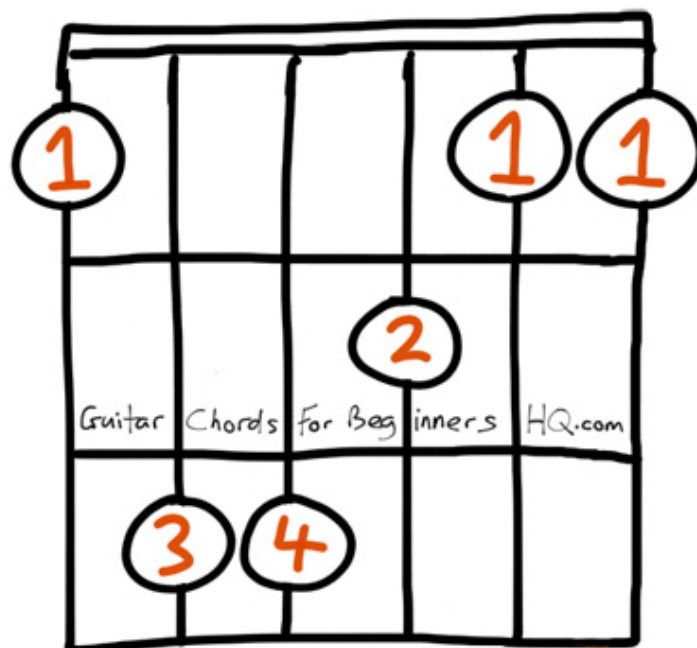
- How to play the F guitar chord correctly
- The best F chord for beginner guitarists to use
- A simple 3-string version of the F guitar chord
- 3 bonus tricks you can use to make your F chords sound better

How to play the F guitar chord properly

Let's look at the correct way to play an F guitar chord first, then we'll look at the easier alternatives. Sound like a plan? Let's do it.

Ok, this is how an accomplished guitarist plays an F chord. (By the way, did you know that the full name of an F chord is "F Major"? Most of the time people just call it "F".)

F Major



In real-life the F chord looks like this:



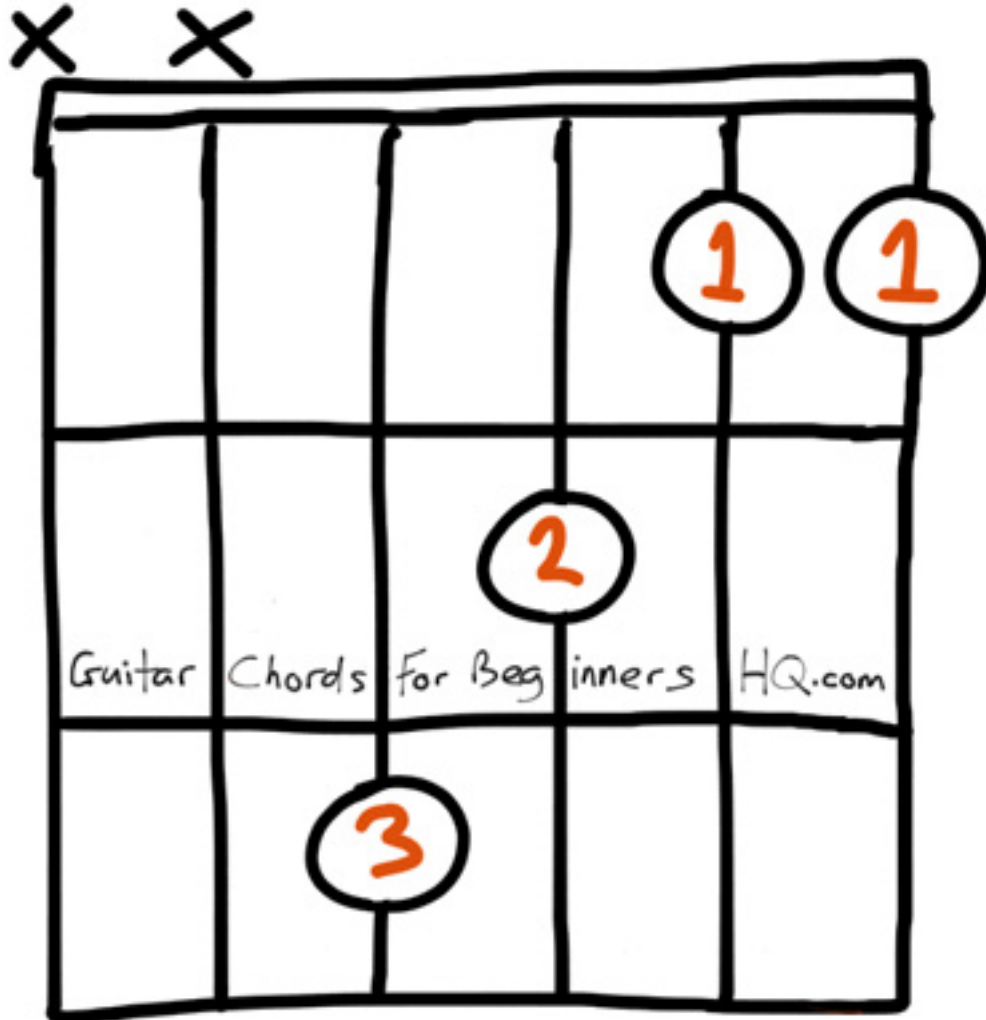
As you can see this is a difficult chord – it's simply not possible for a beginner guitarist to play an F guitar chord (in this way).

Clearly we need to find easier alternatives, so let's get to it!

Some easier ways to play an F guitar chord

This is the most widely-used easier version of F.

F Major (4-finger version)



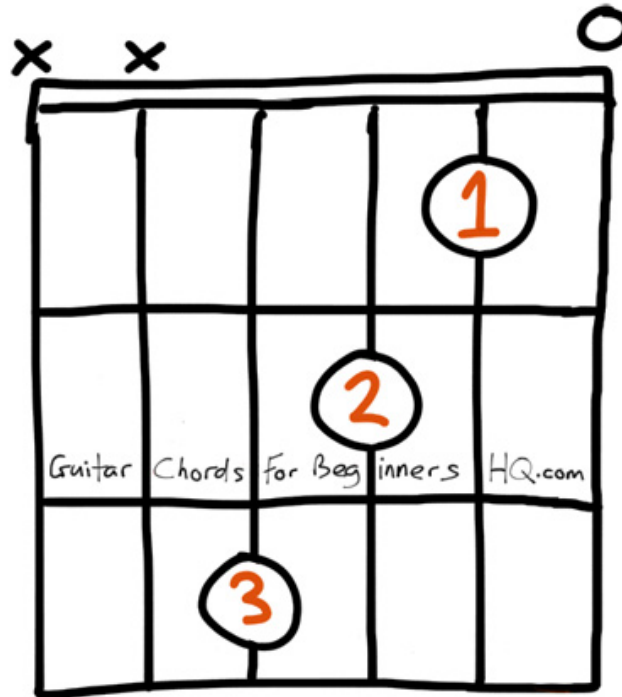
As you can see, we no longer need to totally barre the first fret, so that's a huge relief for a beginner guitarist. Even so, this chord still requires solid concentration and a good level of dexterity to play.

If you've been playing the guitar for only a few hours this will still be a very difficult chord for you to assemble quickly and consistently. We need an even easier alternative.

A 3-finger version of F

Ok, now we're getting to a lower barrier of entry. This chord is called "Fmaj7" (pronounced "F major seven").

Fmaj7



As you can see, this is significantly easier than the first version of F that we looked at.

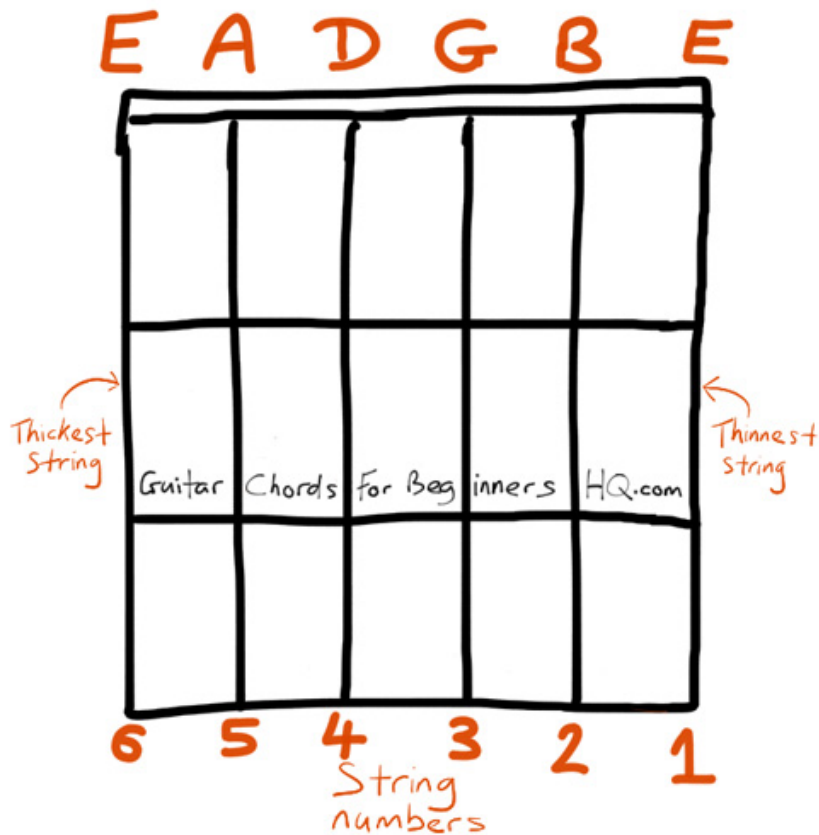
In a moment we'll look at the easiest-of-all ways to play an F guitar chord, but firstly there's an important point I need to flag to you.

F Guitar Chord – String Selection

Note that when playing both the above versions of an F guitar chord you should only play strings 1-4. **Your strumming/picking should begin on the 4th string.**

(Remember that an ‘X’ on a chordbox diagram means “don’t play this string”).

Let’s have a quick refresher on string numbers:

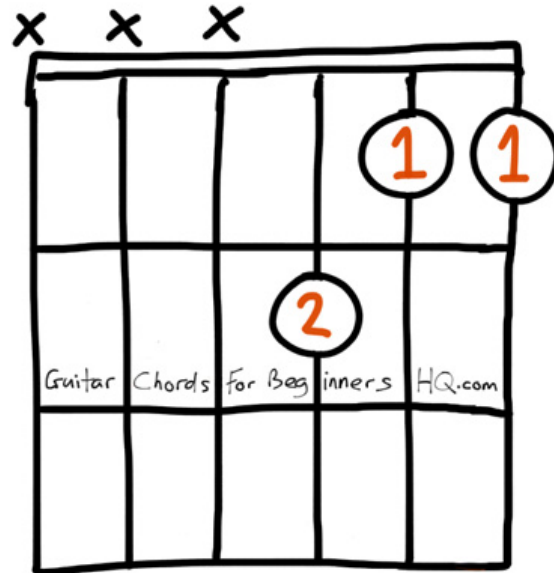


If you play the fifth string (the A string) when playing either of the above F guitar chords it won’t kill the chord (it’ll still sound ok, just) but if you accidentally play the 6th string (the E string) it will wreck the chord.

For tips on how to do this well read my free lesson “[How To Skip Strings When Strumming](#)”.

A super-simple, 3-string version of F

This version of an F guitar chord is fantastic for children and adults with learning difficulties or smaller hands:



This version of F doesn't sound as good as the earlier versions, but it's *passable*, and it will act as a stepping stone towards the better-sounding F chords.

Remember: F is a tough chord, so don't worry if you're struggling with it. Learning guitar takes time!

The F guitar chord is one of the very toughest chords for a beginner guitarist to play, so don't worry if you find it challenging. That's perfectly normal.

With this in mind, I tell my new students to skip all songs that feature an F chord until they've been playing guitar for at least a month.

After 4-6 weeks most people have mastered simpler chords like Em, G, Am, D and C. By that stage they have developed enough control and precision in their third finger that they can perform the above easier F chords without it being too tough.

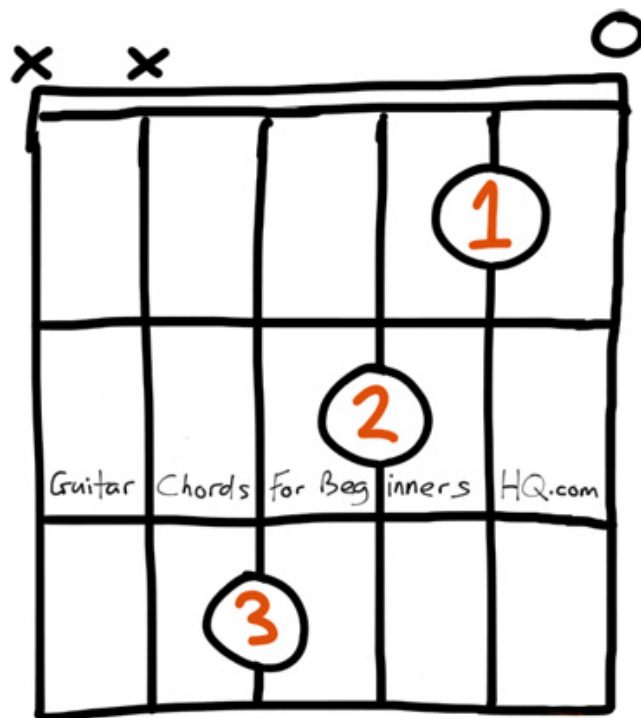
For the vast majority of adult learners, Fmaj7 should be the first goal. It sounds great and is much easier to play than a full F chord.

A Pro Tip For Using Fmaj7

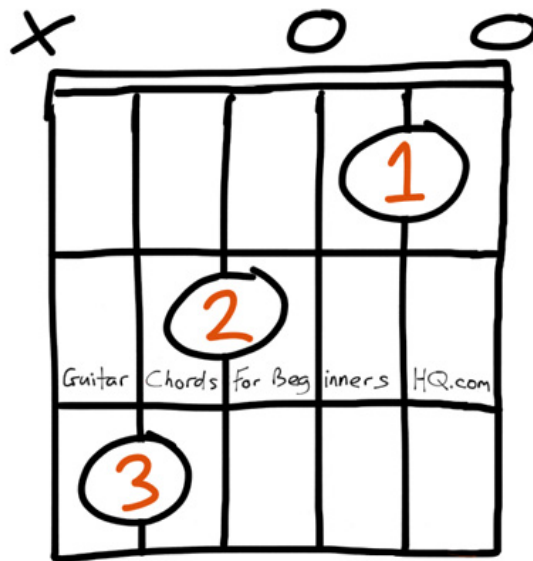
Note how closely a Fmaj7 chord resembles the shape of a C chord? This is one of the things that makes Fmaj7 a handy chord to know, because F and C are common bedfellows, [they crop up together often, along with G](#).

You can combine Fmaj7, C and G in the following way. It sounds great and allows you to maintain a similar handshape as you play. (*This makes things easier for you and allows you to play with more fluidity.*)

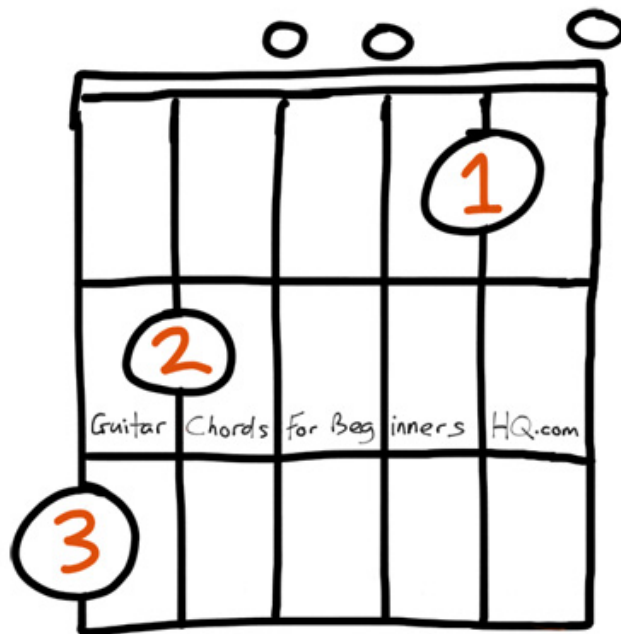
Check this pattern out. When you have F and/or C and/or G near to one another, try playing F like this:



...and C, as normal, like this...



...and use this version of G (called G6)...



This is a great example of using broader chord knowledge to make things easier and sound better. (You'll do this a LOT as you progress as a guitarist!)

F Minor

A relatively uncommon, deep, minor chord.

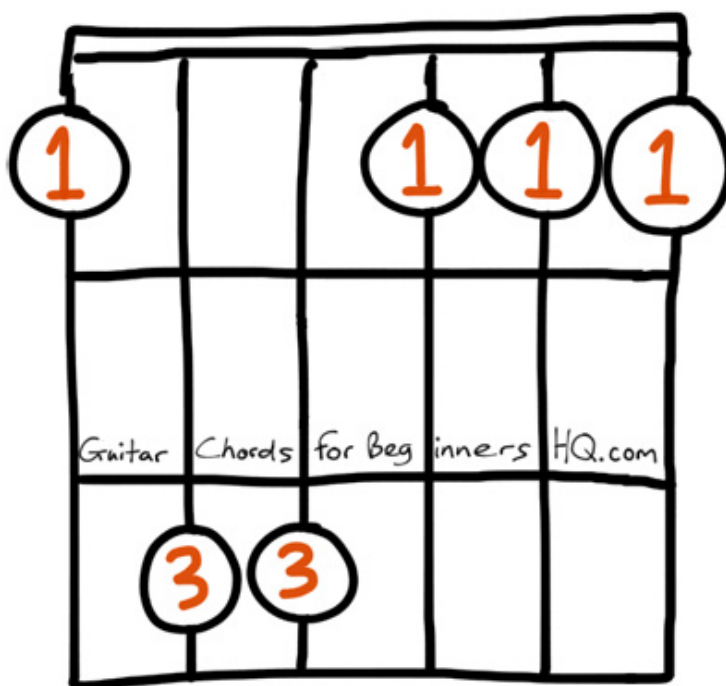
The Fm chord doesn't appear too often but it's one you need to know. I always tell my students "you need to know all of the major and minor chords if you want to call yourself a guitarist" so let's get stuck in! 😊

In this free Fm chord lesson you will learn:

- How to play a standard F minor chord correctly
- An easy 1-finger version of the Fm chord that's ideal for beginners
- Two great alternative versions for of the Fm chord

The standard way to play the Fm chord

In its full form the F minor chord looks like this:

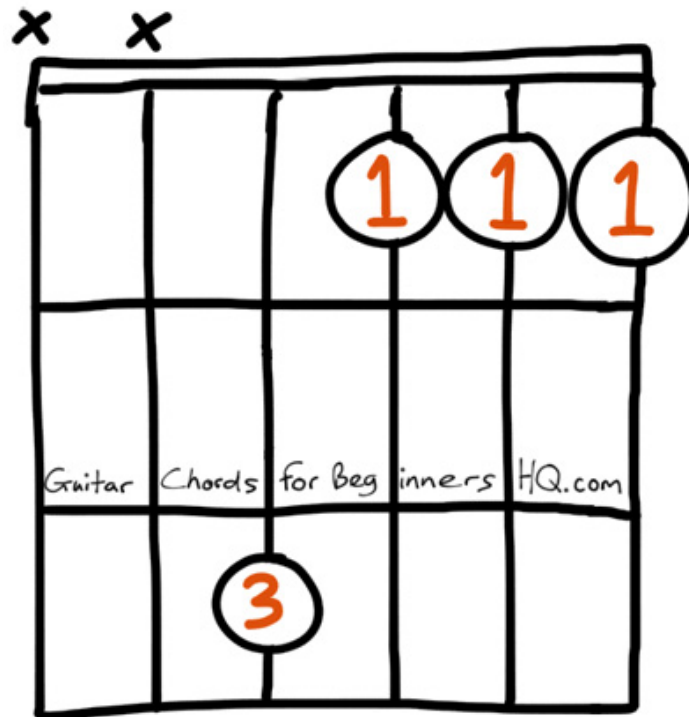


As you can see, the Fm chord is too difficult for beginner guitarists to play so we need to look at some easier options.

All of my students struggle with the F minor chord when they first encounter it, so don't worry if you find it tough, that's normal!

An easier way to play the Fm chord

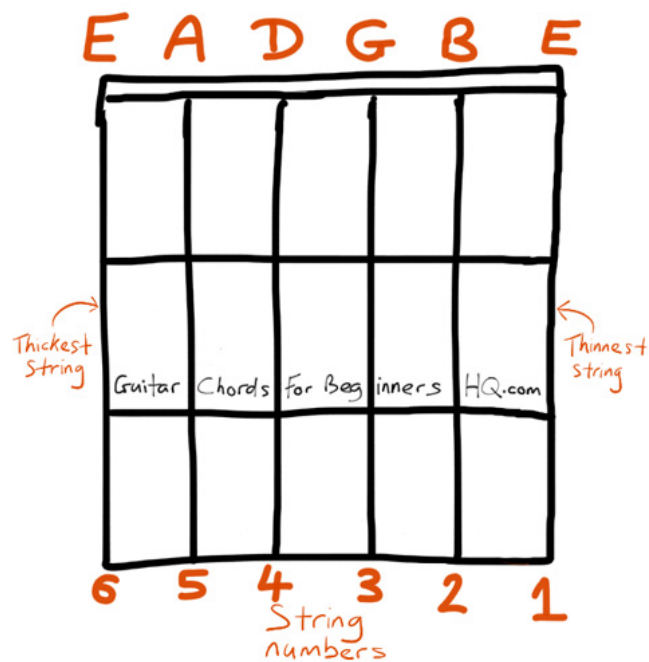
This first version of the Fm chord is a simple reduction of the chord above:



This Fm chord is easier to play than a standard one, but you will still find it quite tough to play.

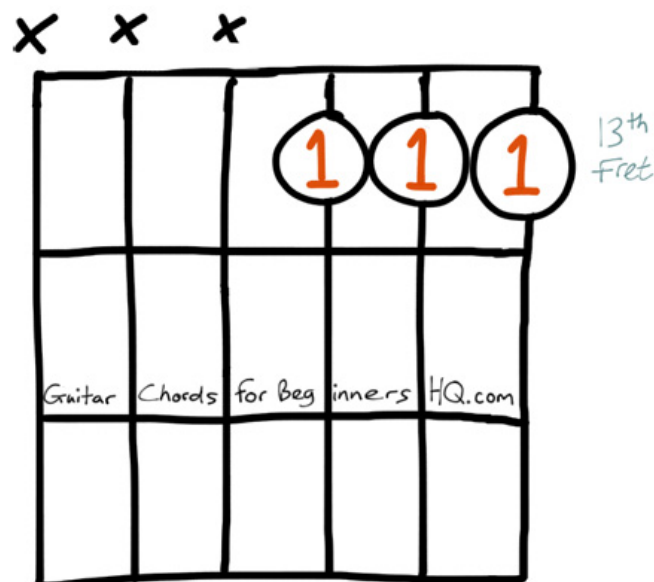
Beware the detail here – you must avoid playing strings 1 & 2 for this to sound correct.

Here's a quick refresher on string numbers:



A super-simple Fm chord

I love this way of playing the Fm chord. It's well suited to people who are very early on in their guitar journey. You can play it on the 1st fret or on the 13th.



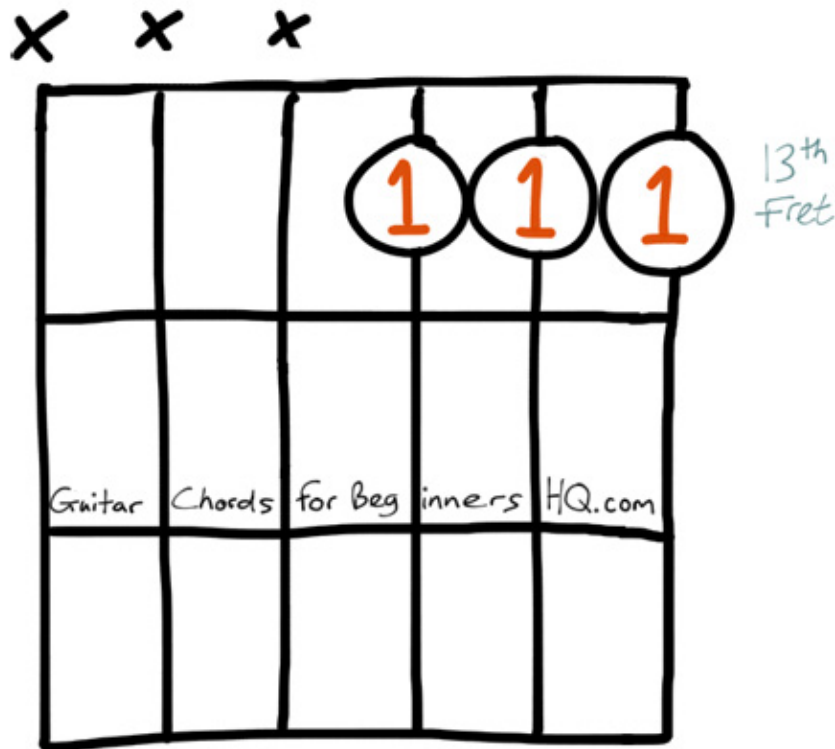
This is a much simpler version of the Fm chord (it's a pure minor triad). It doesn't sound as full as the two earlier versions of Fm chord we looked at,

but it will do the job until your skill improves to a point where you can play one of the other harder (and fuller-sounding) versions of the F minor chord.

Note that with this version you can simply use 1 finger to press all 3 strings down. Take care and ensure you don't play strings 1-3 as that will ruin the chord.

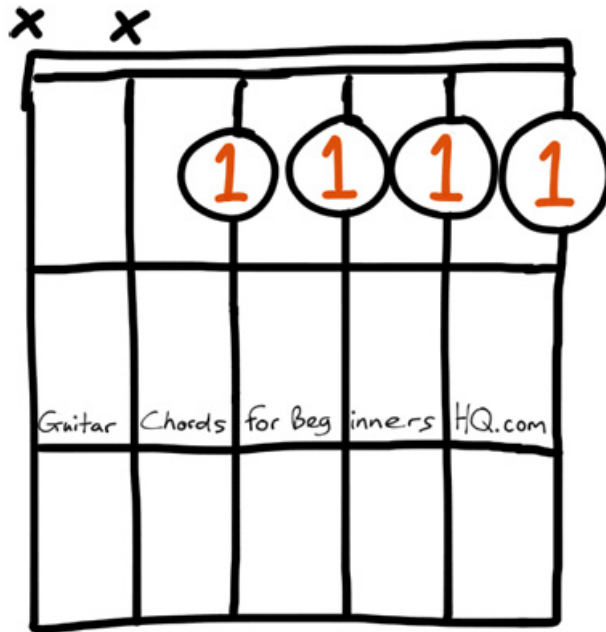
A simple and funky Fm chord

You can slide the above shape up to the higher octave. This sounds great in jazz/funk styles. Get your hands moving up to the 13th fret and give it a try!



Another cool F minor chord alternative

Technically this last version isn't an Fm chord, it's actually Fm7, but it's a good alternative all the same. Give it a try:



Can you hear the difference compared to the other versions of the Fm chord?

It's now up to you to decide which one suits your current level of ability and works best for the piece of music you are playing.

G Major

Maybe the most common guitar chord of all.
It's a deep & rich chord, that you will grow to love.

The G chord on guitar is one of the most common chords of all. Along with C, Em and D the G guitar chord pops up again and again.

If you want to learn guitar you *must* be able to play a G chord, so let's learn!

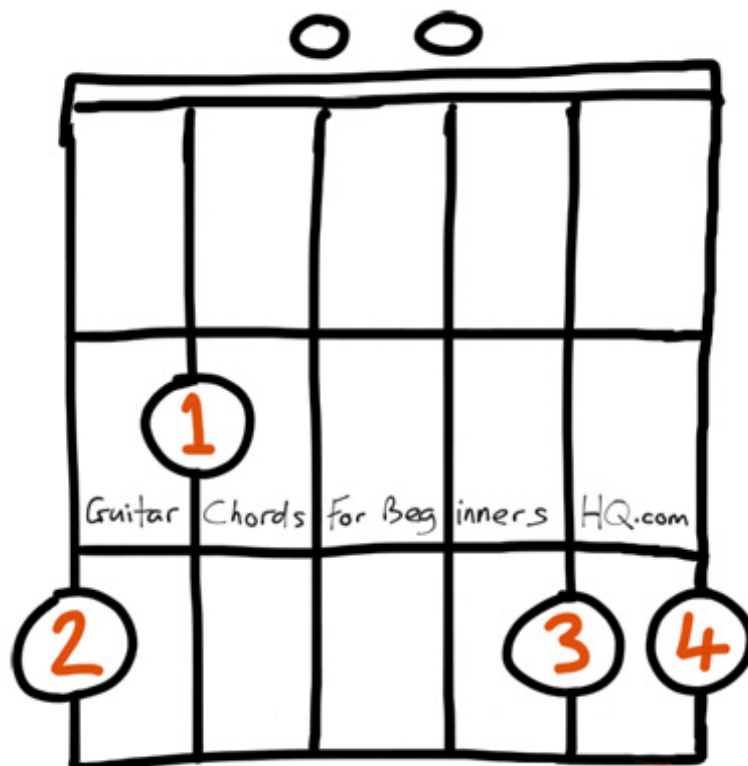
In this free lesson you will discover:

- How to play the full G chord on guitar correctly
- The best G chord for beginner guitarists to use
- A simple 1-finger version of the G guitar chord
- 4 bonus tricks you can use to make your G chords sound better

The G chord on guitar is a strange shape but it will quickly feel familiar as you'll play it so often.

Note that the full name for G is “G major”, but most people just refer to it as “G”. In it's full form it looks like this:

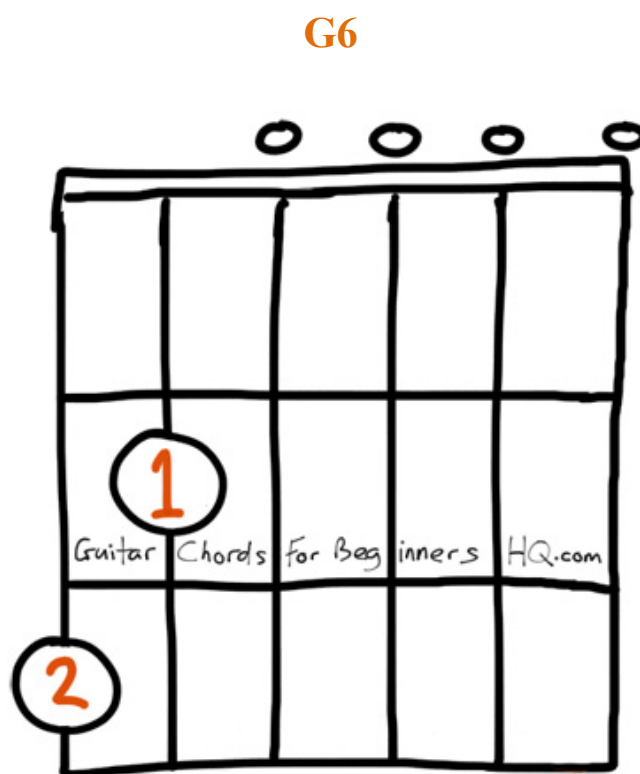
G Major



As you can see, this unusual shape requires 4 fingers to play. As a beginner guitarist you'll find this quite hard as you won't have much accuracy and control in fingers 3 & 4 yet. Let's look at some easier alternatives that you can use during the early stages of your guitar journey.

The Best G Chord on Guitar For Beginners

This chord is called "G6" and it's the version of G chord that I recommend to all my new students:



As you can see, this G chord requires only 2 fingers to play, so it's significantly easier to play than a normal G chord for a beginner guitarist.

Sure, it doesn't sound quite as good as a full G chord, but it's a lot easier to play and as I've written elsewhere on the site, in the early days of your guitar journey the most important thing is that you have fun and simply get accustomed to holding and strumming the guitar.

Stepping stones are the key to smooth progress

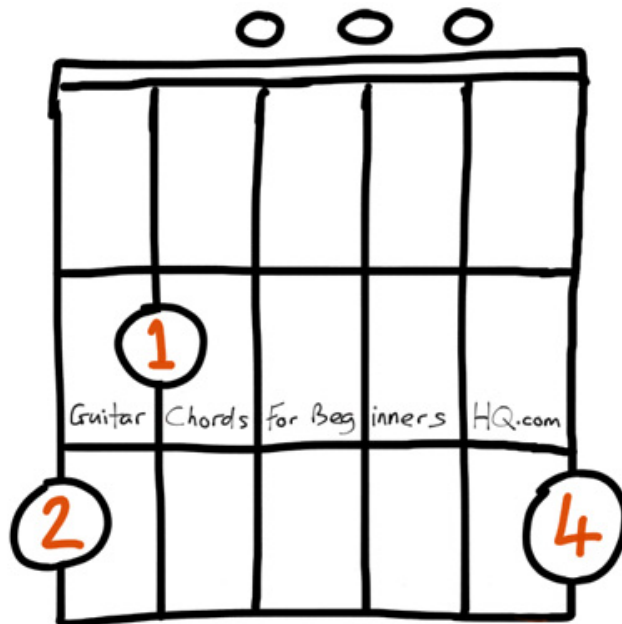
You can perfect and finesse chords later (and for many, many years into the future), but you should know that the most precarious time in your life as a guitarist is when you're first learning. If you're going to stick with the guitar and continue playing it -and I dearly hope that you will- *it's vital that you have fun and enjoy practising.*

Lowering the barrier to entry (and slowly increasing it over time) is the key to ensuring you progress in the future AND have fun now. 😊

And that's why I recommend you use G6 as your beginner G chord on guitar. The rule is simple: whenever you need to play a G chord on guitar, you play G6 instead.

This G6 chord above offers a great balance between sound quality and ease-of-use and is ideal for the beginner guitarist. After 10-15 hours of practice you should aim to graduate to the following version of G chord:

G Major (3-finger version)

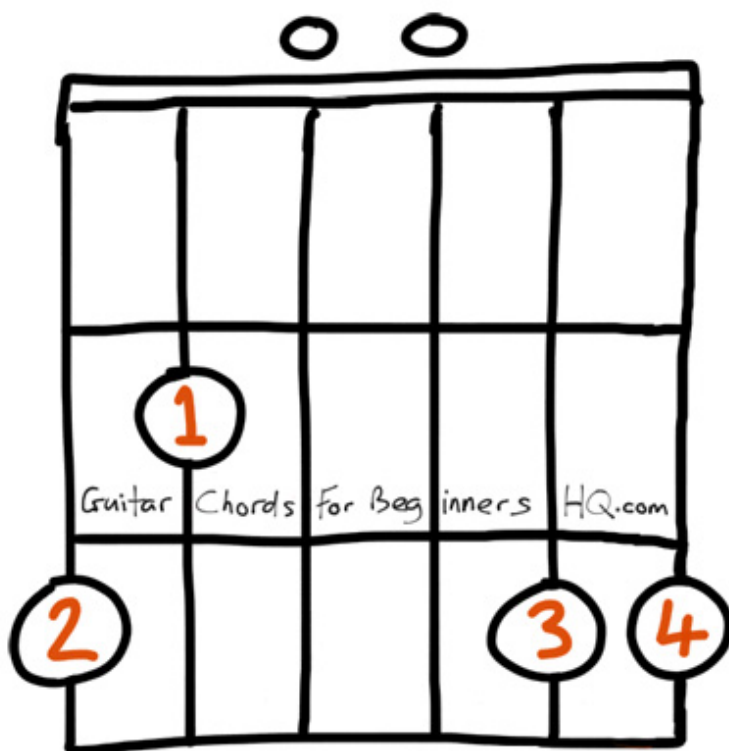


Learning the G chord on guitar is interesting because you can play it in a variety of ways. In this version of G chord you can see that we've introduced

finger 4 (your little finger). This is a perfectly valid G chord and lots of people play the G chord on guitar like this for their whole life.

However, my preferred version of the G chord on the guitar is the 4-finger version below. It sounds fuller. After another 5-10 hours of practice you should aim to ‘upgrade’ to it by adding on finger number 3, to create a full G Major chord. This was the version of G we saw at the start of the lesson. Here it is again:

G Major (full, 4-finger version)

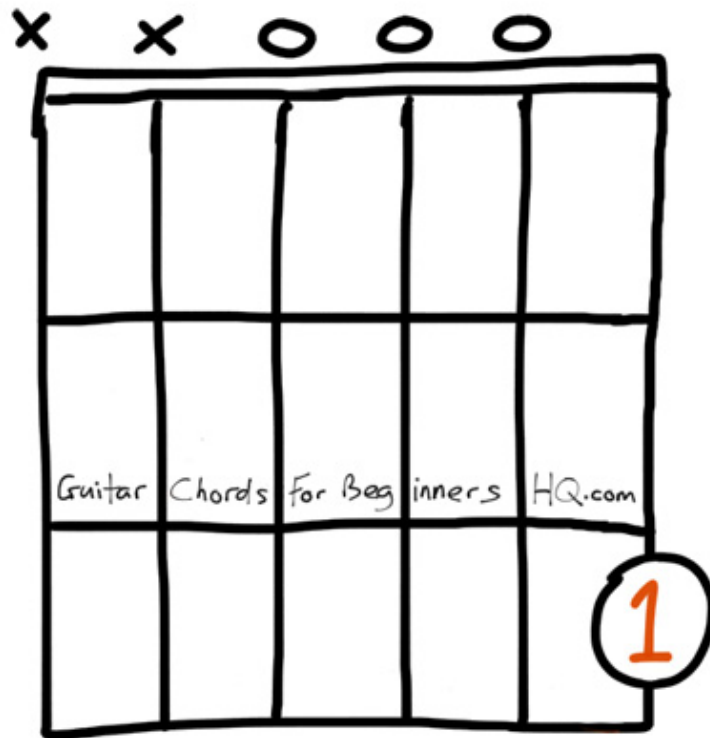


Hey presto! This is my favourite G chord on guitar and is the one I recommend you learn. It sounds fantastic and if you use G6 as a stepping stone you will have this chord mastered in no time! 😊

A 1-finger version of G on guitar

This 1-finger version of G is a superb way for kids or adults with learning difficulties to play the G chord on guitar. It doesn't sound as well-rounded as the 4-finger version of G Major (of course), but it does the job and is very, very easy to play.

G Major (1-finger version)



G Minor

A rare chord with a unique and interesting voicing.

The G minor guitar chord, usually written as “Gm”, is one of the least common minor guitar chords. I always tell my students that although it doesn’t appear too often it’s still a good chord to know because it sounds so cool.

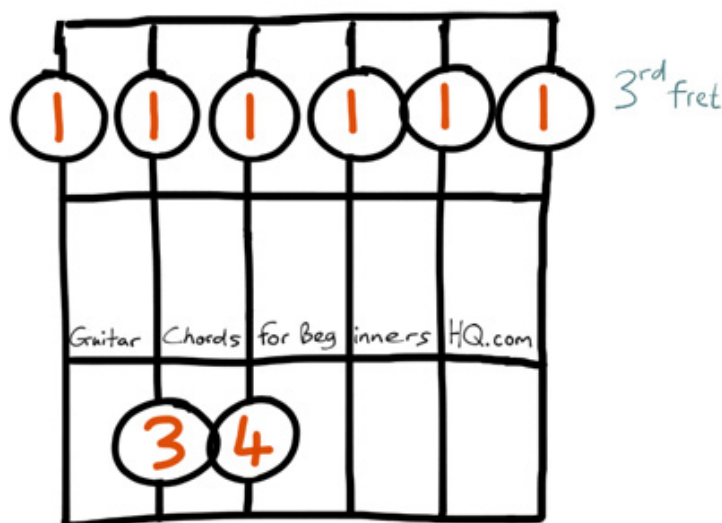
In this free lesson you will learn:

- How to play a standard G minor guitar chord
- 3 easier ways to play the G minor guitar chord (ideal for beginners)
- A super-simple 1-finger version of the Gm guitar chord

The standard way to play the G minor guitar chord

Here’s what a full G minor guitar chord looks like:

G Minor



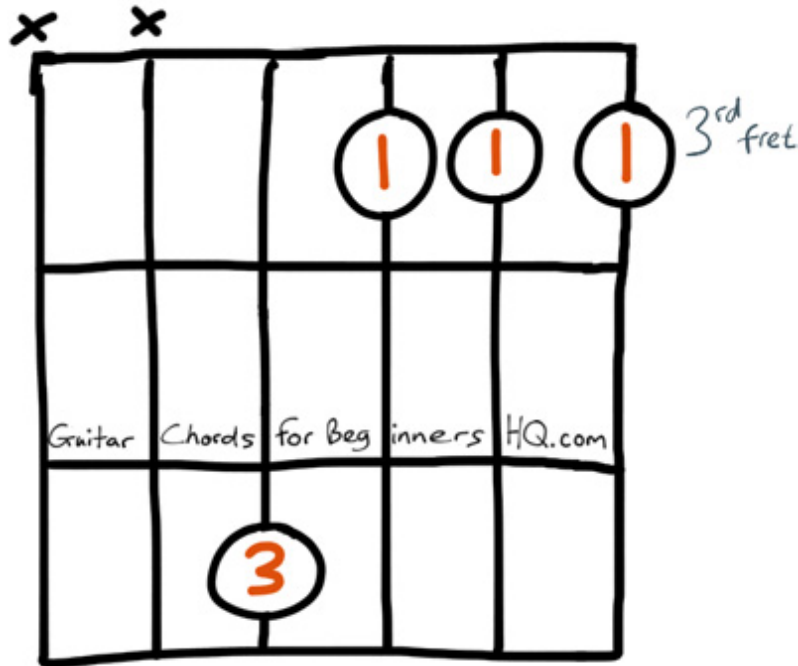
Barred guitar chords like this are too difficult for beginner guitarists to play, so let’s look at some easier ways to play a G minor guitar chord instead.

3 easier ways to play a G minor guitar chord (Gm)

Let's look at 3 easier alternatives that I often recommend to my students.

This first option is a simplified version of the full Gm guitar chord shown above:

Gm (version 2)

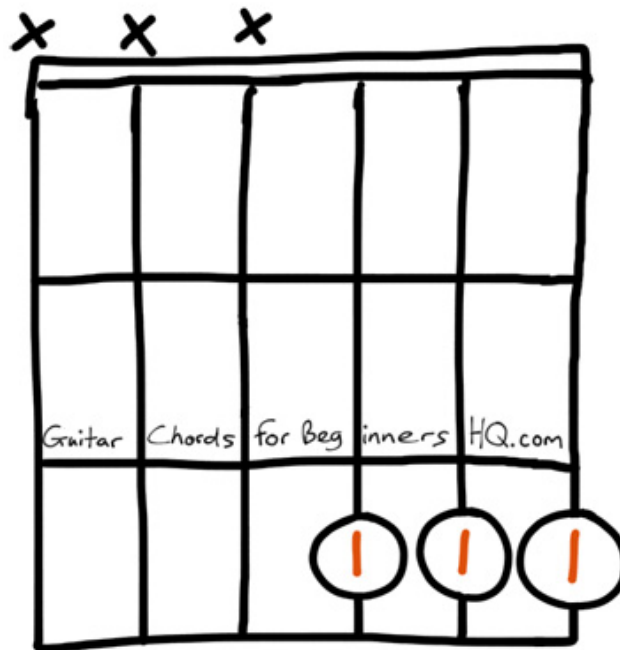


This is easier to play than a standard G minor guitar chord, but you will still find it tough to play. Make sure you don't play strings 5 & 6 when strumming this version of G minor. (String numbers are explained [here](#).)

That's still too difficult Mike! Is there an even easier way to play a G minor guitar chord?

Yes! 😊 This is the version I recommend for my students who are total beginners:

Gm (version 3)

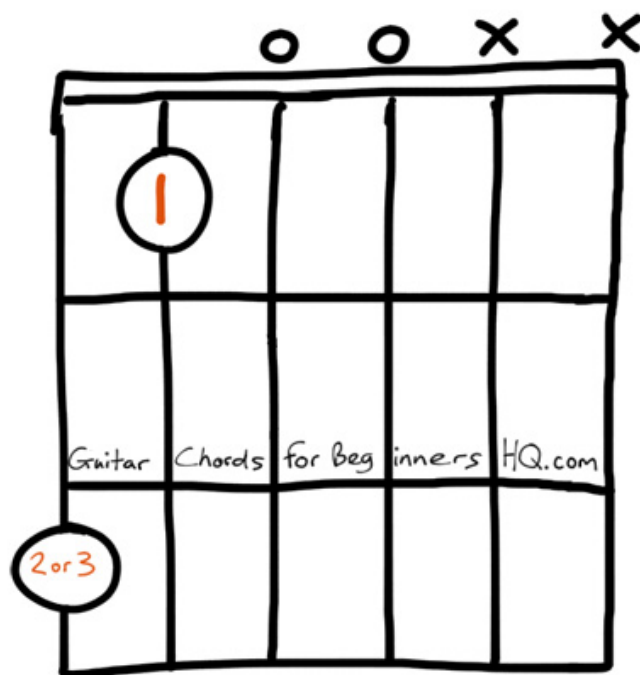


As you can see this is a much easier version the Gm guitar chord than the others! This Gm chord is well suited to people who are very early in their guitar journey.

The only issue with this version of the G minor guitar chord is that it sounds a little thin. That's the trade off we're making here; we're sacrificing the quality of a well-rounded and full G minor for the playability of this simple 3-string version of G minor chord.

Are there any other simple ways to play a G minor guitar chord?

This 2-finger version of the Gm chord gives us much more 'low end':



Be sure to skip strings 1 & 2 when playing this chord or it won't sound right (as it will no longer be a Gm chord if you play them). This version of the Gm guitar chord gives us a deeper and more melancholy tone and is a handy one to have in your locker. (But honestly, most of the time you'll be better using the previous version.)

“These easy versions don’t sound great Mike...”

Playing stripped-down versions of guitar chords inevitably affects the quality of the sound, but that’s the trade off for using simpler chords.

Think of these easy versions of the G minor guitar chord as stepping stones; chords you’ll play while you develop as a guitarist and improve your finger-control and dexterity to the point where you can play the full version of G minor guitar chord.

You need to decide which one of these easier chords works best for the piece of music you are playing and also suits your current ability level. They will all do the job, so take your pick and enjoy playing these different G minor guitar chords. You’ll be rocking away [like a madman](#) in no time at all! 😊

A useful tip for all difficult barre chords

You can use a capo to make a difficult piece of music easy. For example, if you put a capo on the 3rd fret and play an Em chord, the sound that comes out of the guitar will be Gm. Give it a try!

The capo simply does the job your finger is doing when you barre strings. It’s raising the key of the guitar which means you can play different (and easier) chords shapes to get the same result. Don’t be afraid of experimenting with a capo, it’s a beginner guitarist’s best friend!

If you found this e-book useful, you can get more of our stuff here:

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Our podcast

<https://nationalguitaracademy.com/podcast/>

Thanks, speak soon! 😊



Mike Kennedy - NGA Founder

Thank you!

It is our pleasure to help you along your musical journey.