Barre Chords and Beyond.

Barre chords, 7ths, sus, add9, 9ths and progressions.

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CHORDS & HARMONY

Barre Chords

Two shapes play every major and minor chord: the open E and A chords, moved up the neck with your first finger as the nut.

E shape · E shape, minor · A shape · A shape, minor

The shaded strip is the barre: lay your first finger flat across those strings. Coloured dot: the root, which names the chord.

Move it

	F	G	A	B	C	D
E SHAPE: ROOT ON THE 6TH STRING	fret 1	fret 3	fret 5	fret 7	fret 8	fret 10
A SHAPE: ROOT ON THE 5TH STRING	B♭ fret 1	C fret 3	D fret 5	E fret 7	F fret 8	G fret 10

Slide a shape up two frets to go up a tone: F becomes G, B♭ becomes C. Minor shapes move the same way.

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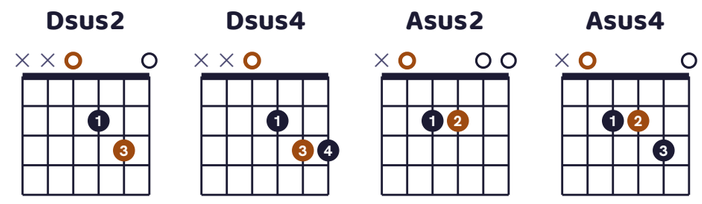
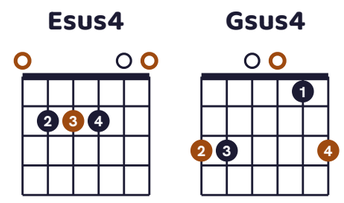
Sus Chords

Suspended chords swap the 3rd for the 2nd (sus2) or the 4th (sus4): open and unresolved, neither major nor minor.





Numbers are fingers (1 = index). ○ play the open string, × don't play it. The coloured dot is the root.

Play D, then Dsus4, then D again: the 4th wants to fall back to the 3rd.

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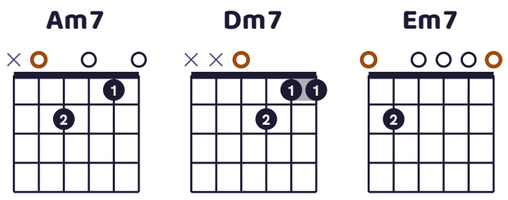
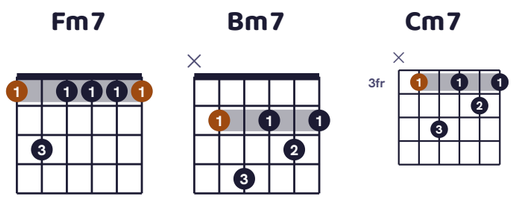
Minor 7th Chords

A minor chord plus the flat 7th: smoother and more relaxed than plain minor. The sound of soul, pop ballads and jazz.

Open



Barre



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The barre shapes move like the barre chords: Fm7 up two frets is Gm7.

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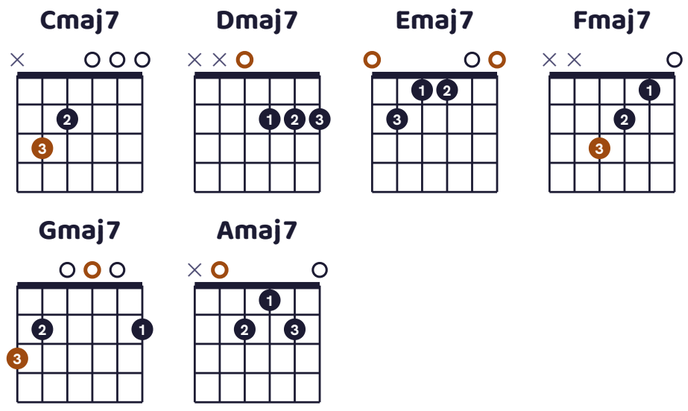
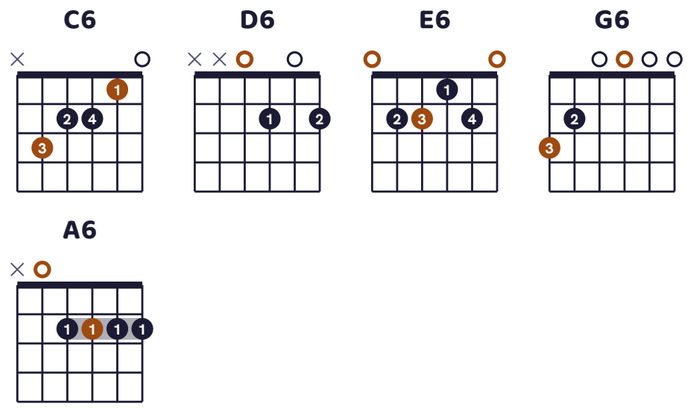
Major 7th and 6th Chords

Two soft, jazzy colours for a major chord: add the 7th (maj7) or the 6th (6).

Major 7th



6th



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Try Cmaj7 in place of C, or G6 in place of G: same job, gentler sound.

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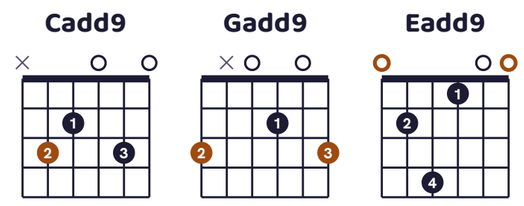
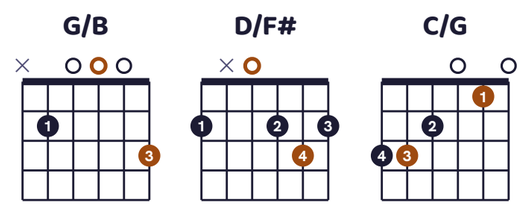
Add9 and Slash Chords

Add9 keeps the 3rd and adds the 9th, for a bright, open sound. A slash chord puts a different note in the bass: G/B is G with B lowest.

Add9



Slash chords



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Slash chords make smooth bass lines: try G, G/B, C, then C/G, D/F♯, G.

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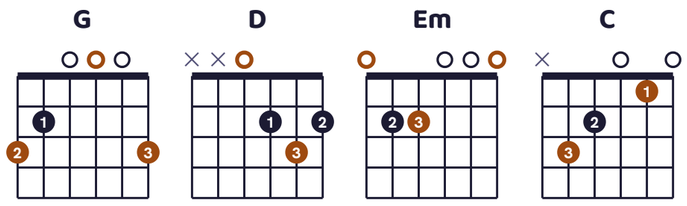
Guitar Progressions

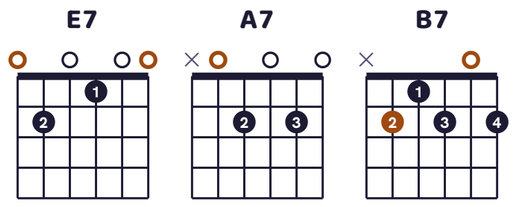
Real progressions in guitar-friendly keys, with the shapes to play them.

Pop in G: I V vi IV



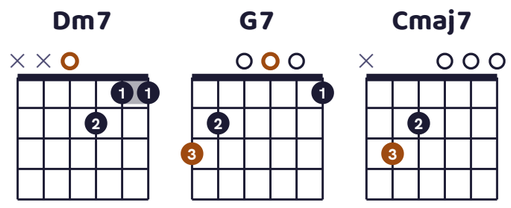
Hundreds of hits use these four chords.

12-bar blues in E: I7 IV7 V7



Four bars of E7, two of A7, two of E7, then B7, A7, E7, B7.

Jazz in C: ii7 V7 Imaj7



The ii–V–I: the move at the heart of jazz.

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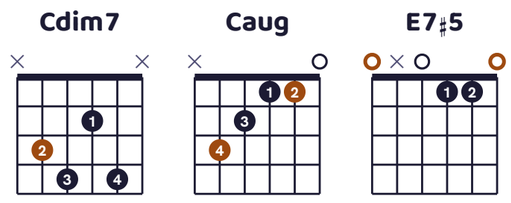
Diminished and Augmented

Tense, in-between chords that pull towards the next one. Their notes are evenly spaced, so the shapes repeat along the neck.



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A dim7 chord repeats every 3 frets, an augmented chord every 4: one shape, moved, gives the same notes.

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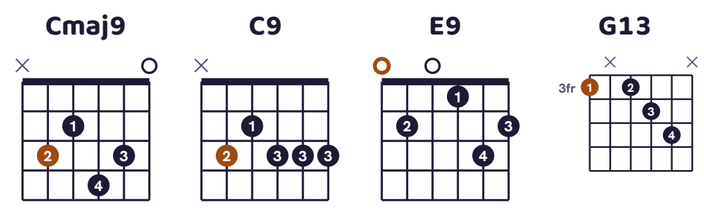
9th and 13th Chords

Extended chords add notes above the octave. The dominant 9 and 13 are blues and funk staples; maj9 is a softer, jazzier sound.



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Major or dominant? Cmaj9 has the major 7th (B); C9 and the 13th chords have the flat 7th, like a 7th chord.

FOUNDATIONS

How to Read a Chord Box

A chord box is a picture of the guitar neck, standing up, as you look at it.

Lines	Up and down: the six strings, low E on the left. Across: the frets.
Thick top line	The nut: the box starts at the first fret.
3fr	No nut: the box starts at the fret shown, here the 3rd.
1 2 3 4	Which finger: 1 index, 2 middle, 3 ring, 4 little.
○	Play the string open, with no finger on it.
×	Don't play this string.
Coloured dot	The root: the note that names the chord.

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