CAGED System Chart.

The five CAGED shapes of a C chord, each with its arpeggio, pentatonic and major scale, and how they join up the neck.

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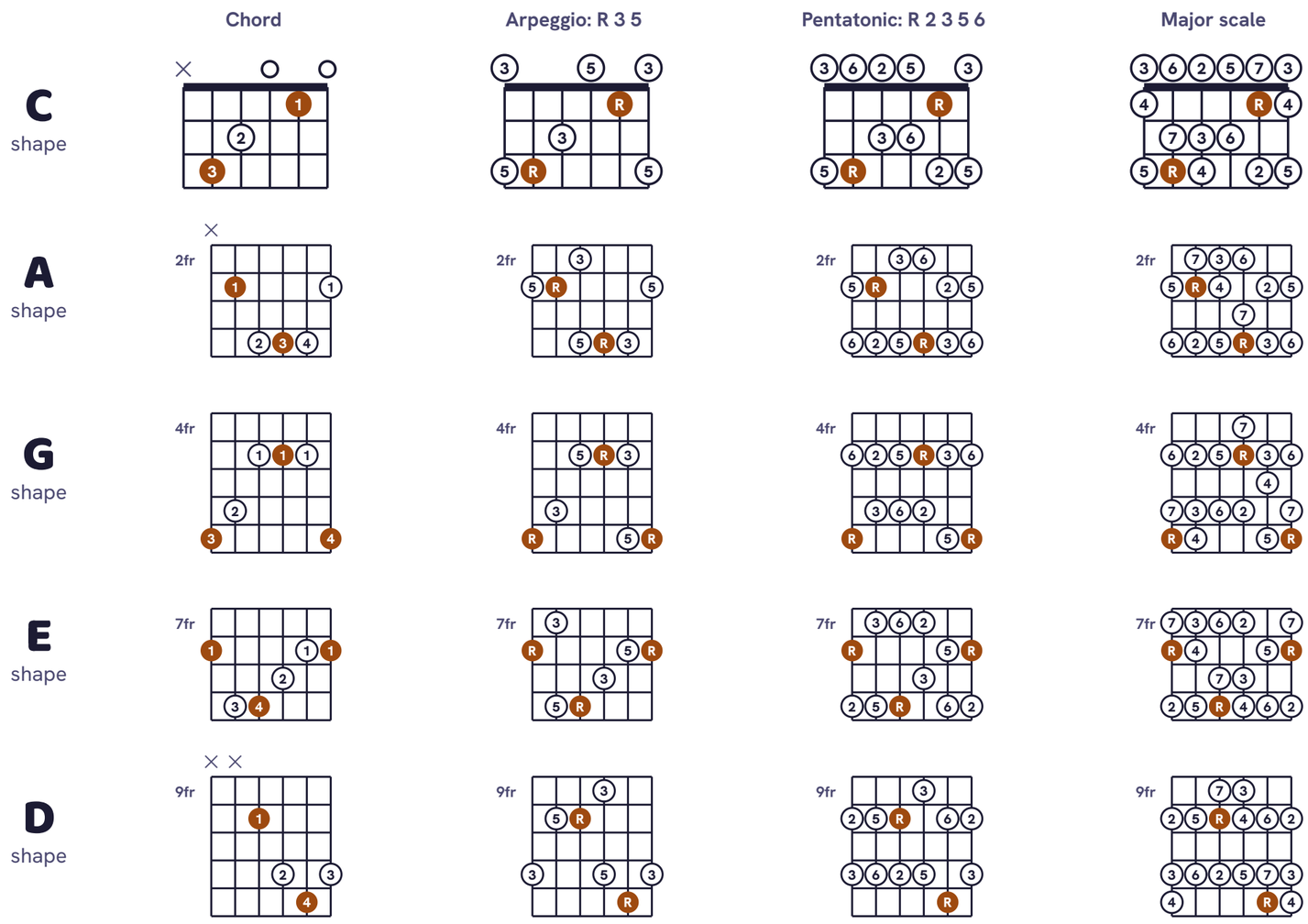
CHORDS & HARMONY

The Five CAGED Shapes

The open C, A, G, E and D chords, moved so each plays a C chord. Around each shape: the C major arpeggio, pentatonic and scale.

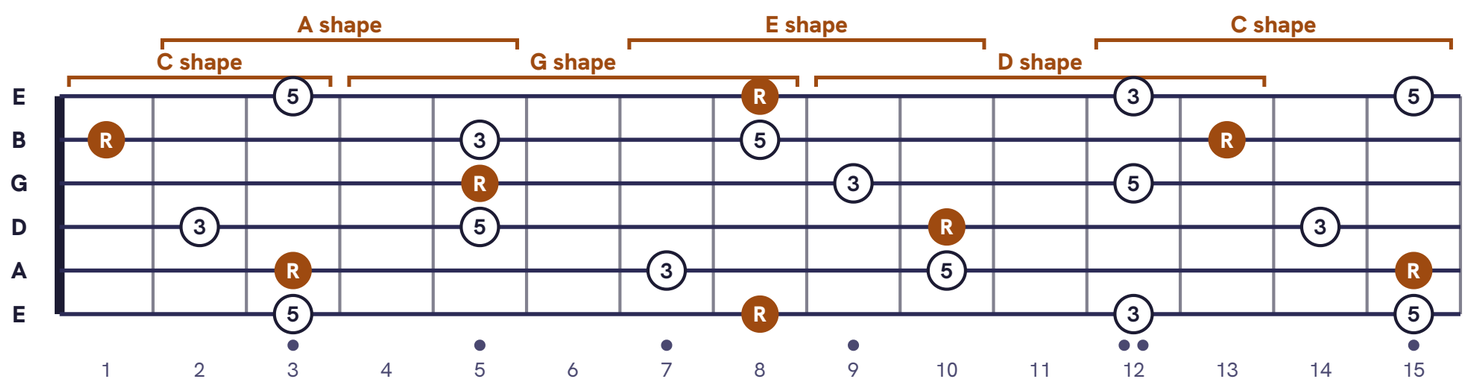


Colored dot R: the root, C. Numbers are scale degrees: 3 is E, 5 is G. In the chord boxes, numbers are fingers. 3fr: the box starts at the 3rd fret.

CHORDS & HARMONY

CAGED Up the Neck

The notes of a C chord, open to the 15th fret. The five shapes join end to end, always in the order C, A, G, E, D; after D the C shape starts again at the 12th fret.



R: C, 3: E, 5: G. The brackets show where each shape sits.

PRACTICE TIP

Practice slowly. Speed comes from playing it right, not from playing it fast.

CHORDS & HARMONY

Using CAGED

Four ways the system helps.

One chord, five places

Any chord can be played with all five shapes, each a little higher up the neck. Pick the one nearest to where your hand already is.

In C

C open → **A** fret 3 → **G** fret 5 → **E** fret 8 → **D** fret 10

The order never changes

Up the neck the shapes always come C, A, G, E, D, then C again. In G, the open G shape comes first.

In G

G open → **E** fret 3 → **D** fret 5 → **C** fret 7 → **A** fret 10

Find the root first

Every shape is built around its roots: on the low E string (E and G shapes), the A string (A and C shapes) or the D string (D shape).

E, G low E string
A, C A string
D D string

Solo over the chord

The pentatonic around a shape fits the chord it surrounds, and its arpeggio notes (R, 3, 5) are the safest notes to land on.

R 3 5 = C E G

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.
Colored dot	The root: the note that names the chord.

PRACTICE TIP

Say the note names out loud as you read.

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