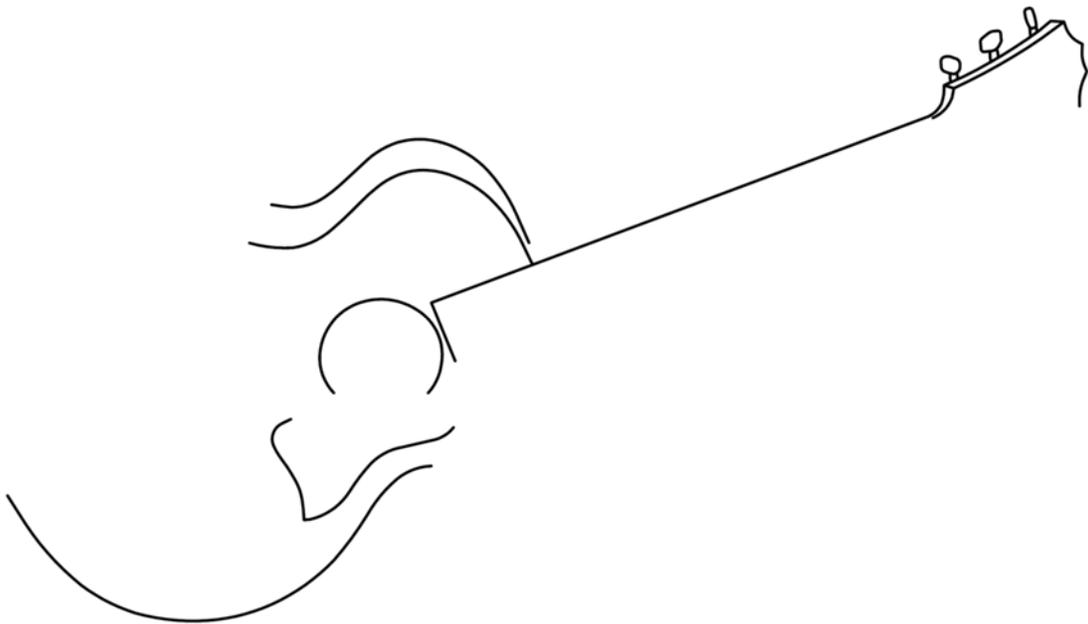


# The Guitar Book

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rpublications.com

# The Guitar Book



# Introduction

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## Observations

The guitar is easy to play and hard to master – that’s what makes it so much fun.

Practice slowly at first – speed comes with muscle memory.

Take the first part of this book seriously – it’s designed to skip years of searching for answers.

Never play on a bad guitar – even an inexpensive beginner guitar can be ‘set-up’ properly so that your fingers can press the strings easily.

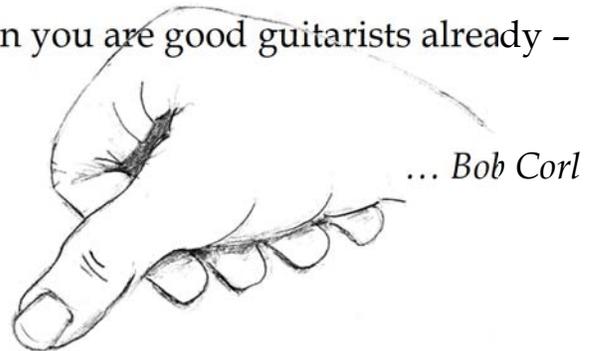
Use fresh, light-gauge strings, and have all strings changed at the same time.

Any source of information is good. Watch other players – live or on the internet. If they’re doing something right – copy it. If they’re doing something wrong, don’t.

Play a little bit every chance you get. Ten minutes here, ten minutes there – it all adds up.

Each time you go to learn something new it will feel like either your brain, your fingers or your choice of instrument is all wrong. The very next time you go to play the same thing, it will be easier, because the subconscious mind practices while you’re doing other stuff. Don’t argue. It just does.

Just remember this – dumber people than you are good guitarists already – no excuses – you can do this.



# Chapter One: How the Guitar Relates to the Piano

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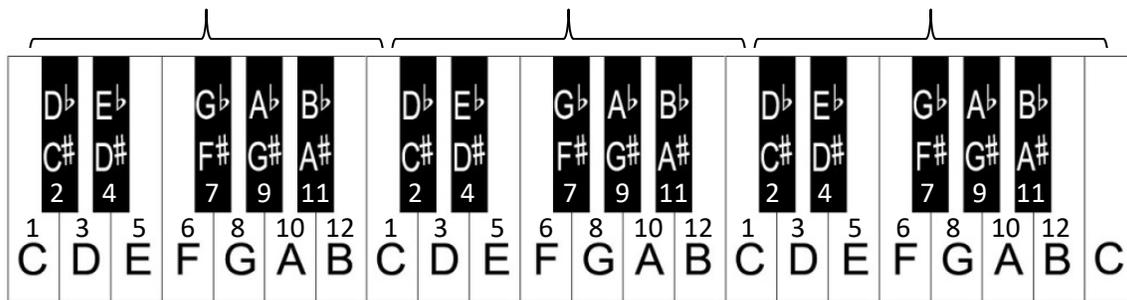
## From C to shining C

There is a pattern of essentially 12 alphabetically named keys on the piano which repeats itself again and again.

To go from one key to the very *next adjacent* key (whether black or white) is considered a *half-step* (a must-know concept).

The 12 half-steps (ascending) starting on C, include:

C, C#, D, D#, E, F, F#, G, G#, A, A#, B



**Start on any note on the piano** and count 12 **half-steps** (next adjacent key – whether black or white), and you will arrive at the same note - an ‘octave’ higher.

*The term ‘octave’ comes from the Latin word for 8 (octo), and it derives from the eight tones of the C Major Scale, which is played on all the white keys beginning on C and ending on the next C in either direction. Since that distance covers 8 white keys, then the interval from C to (shining) C is an octave.*

*Each black key on the piano has two names – sharp or flat, which is determined by the context in which that note is played (the key, scale or chord in which it is played).*

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## The Guitar repeats itself every 12 frets

**The main connection between the guitar and the piano is the half-step.**

On the piano, the next adjacent key is considered to be a half-step away.

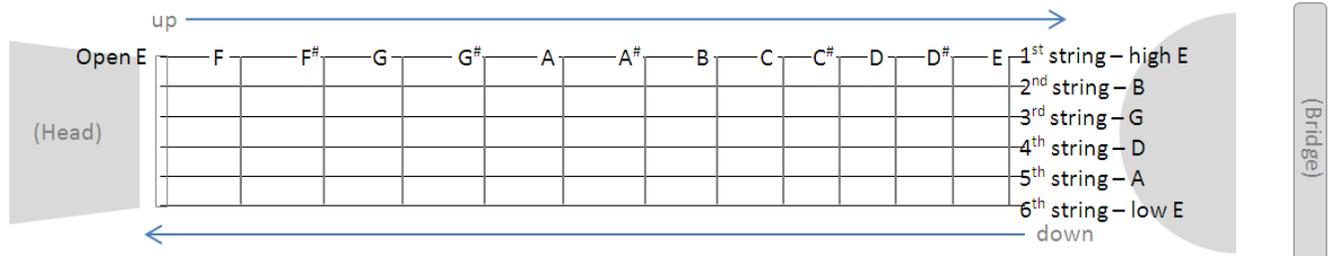
On the guitar, each fret\* is a half-step as well.

**\*Note: the term 'fret' is used to describe two things. First, the little metal strips embedded in the fingerboard are called frets. Second, when you place your finger on a string between those metal strips, that is called playing that 'fret'.**

## Fret to fret - a half step

Begin on any open string of the guitar and count 1 fret at a time going higher in pitch (moving towards the bridge and away from the head), and you will find that there are 12 half-steps before the same note is reached.

We'll use the high E string as an example:



*Note: pressing a string behind a fret shortens the length of the string and raises the pitch going towards the bridge, or lowers the pitch going towards the head.*

Just as with the piano, those frets (actually, fret spaces between the embedded metal strips) on each string that are designated as sharps (in the diagram above) may also be referred to as flats. It all depends on the context in which they are being played (the key, scale or chord). For example, the F sharp (above) could also be called a G flat, etc.

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## Chords and Melody

The piano can be used to play chords – 2 or more tones sounding at the same time, or melody – a string of tones. A melody can be harmonized with another melody or melodies, or it can be harmonized with a background structure of chords.

Understanding chords – what they are, how they're formed, how they can be substituted for one another, how they're linked to scales, melodies and lead guitar playing, and how chord progressions work – are all essential to becoming a good guitarist.

**The guitar can be used in much the same way as the piano:**

1. *Rhythm guitar* – generally plays the essential chords to ‘back’ a melody (either sung or played).
2. *Lead guitar* – plays melodies – whether exactly as written or improvised – based on a large array of scales.
3. *Chord-melody style* – jazz and classical guitars are generally used to play both chords and melody in such a way as to make the guitar ‘sing’ and accompany itself.
4. *Bass guitar* – is primarily an accompaniment instrument, but there are many fine players who can hold their own playing recognizable riffs (snatches of melody), planned or improvised, that are similar to the lead guitar role (especially when ‘taking a solo’).

## Chords based on the C scale

The **C scale has no sharps or flats**, so it serves as the model for everything else, including the basic chords common to every major scale. A three tone (triad) scale can be built using each of the notes of the C Scale.

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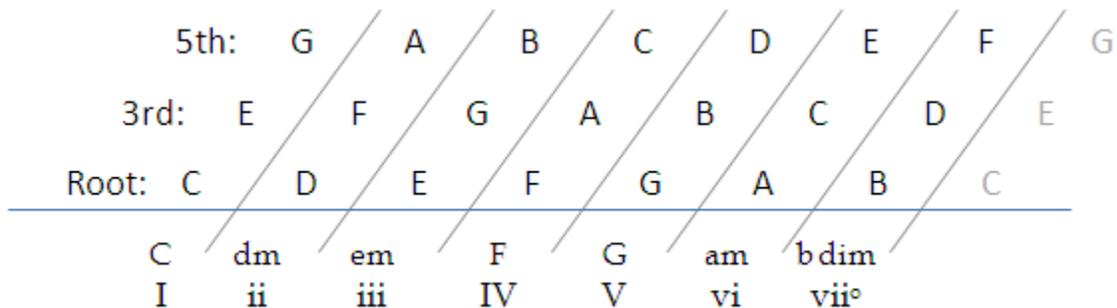
A **Triad** is a three tone chord consisting of a **root** (the letter that gives it its name), a **third** (the third letter above the root) and a **fifth** (the fifth letter above the root). From the root to the third is a distance (interval) of a third, and from the third to the fifth note is also the distance (interval) of a third.

The interval of *a third* is the distance between two lettered notes with one skipped letter note in between. A third can be different sizes based on the number of half steps encountered between its two lettered notes.

The **major third** has a distance of four half steps, or **2 whole steps**. So, for example, from C to E on the keyboard is a distance of 4 half steps (C to C#, C# to D, D to D#, D# to E), or 2 whole steps.

The **minor third** has a distance of only three half steps, or **1.5 steps**. So, for example, from E to G is three half steps (E to F, F to F#, F# to G), or 1.5 steps.

The triad chords in a major scale are numbered as follows:



**I, IV and V** (one, four and five) are **major** chords (in the key of C, these are C, F and G).

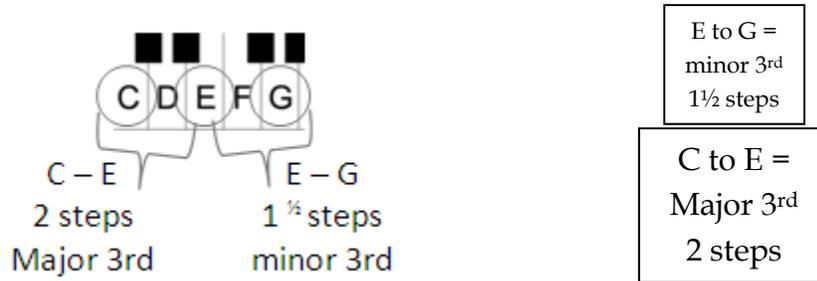
**ii, iii, and vi** (two, three and six) are **minor** chords (in the key of C, these are D minor, E minor and A minor).

And the **vii°** (seven) chord is a **diminished** chord (in the key of C, this is the B diminished or B°).

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Each **major chord** has a Major third on the bottom (lower tones) and a minor third on top (higher tones).

**C Major** (the I chord in the key of C) has a Major 3<sup>rd</sup> (2 whole steps\*) on the bottom and a **minor 3<sup>rd</sup>** (1½ steps) on top:



*\*Note: in traditional music theory a whole step is sometimes referred to as a tone, and a half step is referred to as a semi-tone. The easiest way to understand this is that the guitar frets each represent a half step (or semi-tone), and on the piano, the adjacent or next key, whether black or white, is always a half step (or semi-tone).*

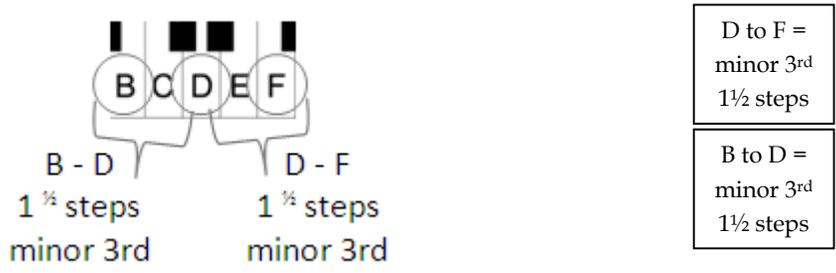
**The minor chord** is just the opposite. It has a minor third on the bottom and a major third on top.

**D minor** (the ii chord in the key of C) has a minor 3<sup>rd</sup> on the bottom and a Major 3<sup>rd</sup> on top:



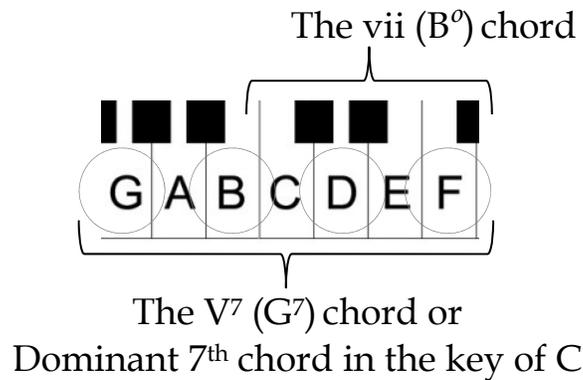
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**A diminished chord is unique.** The vii chord, built on the 7<sup>th</sup> note of every major scale (its root), is a diminished chord which consists of two (stacked) minor thirds:



The B diminished (symbol “ ° ” as in B<sup>o</sup>) chord above is rarely played by itself. The interval from B to F (above) is called a *diminished fifth*. It contains 6 half steps, and it is the *most unstable interval* in music. However, this chord is commonly *added* to the V chord, creating a chord with an added interval – the seventh (GBD + BDF = GBDF: R357).

**The Dominant 7<sup>th</sup> or V<sup>7</sup> chord** has a root, third, fifth and seventh (R,3,5,7) tone. The V<sup>7</sup> chord in the key of C is the G<sup>7</sup> chord - “GBDF” and it contains the vii<sup>o</sup> (“B,D,F”) chord within it:



The Dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chord is built on the 5<sup>th</sup> (or, dominant) tone of the scale. It has a root (the 5<sup>th</sup> tone of the scale), 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> tone. In the key of C, the G tone is the ‘dominant’ tone (C is the tonic) and building a 7<sup>th</sup> chord on that G we have G (root), B (third), D (fifth) and F (7<sup>th</sup>).

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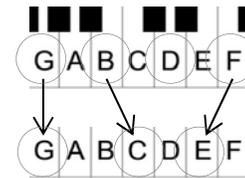
Adding the 7<sup>th</sup> tone above that root, in this case the F, creates within the chord the unstable diminished fifth interval (in this case, B to F), which 'wants to' (*feels as if it should*) resolve to the tonic (the I chord – in this case, the C chord).

Try playing just the B to F interval on a piano sometime (an old joke in music schools – someone will always run to the piano to resolve it), and you'll find that it's a sound that is obvious to the ear and sounds incomplete.. But the interval (and the need to 'resolve' it) can also be explained visually.

In trying to find resolution or *repose*, the B 'wants to' move the half step up to C, and the F 'wants to' move the half step down to E.

Also, note that the G is common to both the G<sup>7</sup> chord and the C chord, so the 'resolution' looks like this:

So the V<sup>7</sup> chord (GBDF) resolves to the C chord (CEG) – and in this case the C chord is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> inversion (see *Inversions* below), with the G or 5<sup>th</sup> of the chord in the bass, and the root and the third (C



## Chord structures on the Guitar

Chords can be built out to as many as seven notes (not counting 'suspensions' – notes played along with the chord that are not part of the chord structure).

So, for example, take the C chord and let's add the flat 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> :

- C:** C – E – G
- C7:** C – E – G – B<sub>♭</sub>
- C9:** C – E – G – B<sub>♭</sub> – D
- C11:** C – E – G – B<sub>♭</sub> – D – F
- C13:** C – E – G – B<sub>♭</sub> – D – F – A

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## Inversions

On the piano, a chord can be played in any 'inversion'. An inversion is simply a *restructuring* of the order of the chord.

Let's begin with a C chord in 'root position' on the piano. It would be played in this order: C - E - G. This is its *root position* (no inversion).

The *first inversion* places the C on top, making the E the bottom tone: E - G - C (C Chord, 1st inversion).

Likewise, if we now put the E on top, we would have G as the bottom tone: G - C - E (C chord, 2nd inversion).

C chord <i>root position</i> :	C	E	G		
C chord <i>first inversion</i> :		E	G	C	
C chord <i>second inversion</i> :			G	C	E

**By the way, this concept applies to all chords.**

Furthermore, the piano can play any of the chords mentioned above, in any order, and still make them sound correct. In fact, there would be no problem playing the C13 (R,3,5,7,9,11,13 - seven tones) directly as written above with both hands, using seven fingers.

**The problem on the guitar** is that we only have six strings, and we can only use 4 fingers of the left hand at a time (although some players will occasionally add the thumb of the left hand). So, even if we use one finger to play more than one string, the maximum number of tones that can be sounded on the guitar is six - one tone per string.

So, what's the solution?

## Chord Substitution

Yes... chord substitution.

**This is the guitar's greatest secret.**

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## Chord Substitution

The guitar has the ability to capture the essence of any chord that can be played on the piano, or even in the orchestra for that matter, by playing the 'color tones' of the chord – the tones that really convey the harmonic 'impression' of the chord.

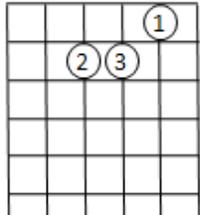
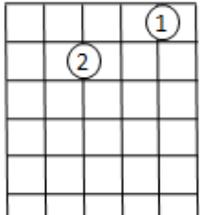
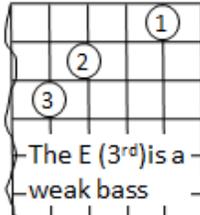
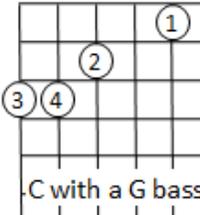
This is possible because there are certain tones that the ear clearly identifies as the sounds that determine the type of chord being played.

Take a simple chord like Am<sup>7</sup> (A minor 7<sup>th</sup>).

The notes of the Am<sup>7</sup> chord are A – C – E – G.

Notice that the upper three notes of the chord are C – E – G.

If you are playing an Am chord (A – C – E), and another guitarist is playing a C chord (C – E – G), then together you are playing the Am<sup>7</sup> chord.

<b>Am</b> E A E A C E 0 0 2 2 1 0	<b>Am<sup>7</sup></b> E A E G C E 0 0 2 0 1 0	<b>C</b> X A E A C E X 3 2 0 1 0	<b>C/G</b> X A E A C E 3 3 2 0 1 0
			

In fact, if a third player was playing all 4 notes of the Am<sup>7</sup> chord, while the piano played a C chord and the bass was playing back and forth on A and E, the listener would in fact continue to hear some combination of all four notes of the Am<sup>7</sup> chord (ACEG), thus creating the correct *harmonic impression* - that of the Am<sup>7</sup> chord.

This is the wonder of the guitar. The guitar can create the correct *harmonic impression* by playing the *color tones* that the ear normally identifies as a specific chord.

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As a chording instrument, the guitar, using inversions and/or chord substitution, can play any combination of notes within the structure of a chord, anywhere on the neck, in any inversion or note combination, and still create the same or correct *harmonic impression*.

### Color Tones

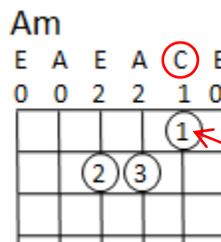
The simplest definition of a *color tone* is that it has the power to sway or change the harmonic impression conveyed by the chord.

For example, the third of a basic triad (3-note) chord determines whether it is a major or a minor chord.

Take the simple **A minor chord** (Am)... A-C-E.

Played on the guitar in position one ( I ), at the first fret, the numerical chord description is: 002210 (fretted and open positions).

The actual tones on the guitar indicated by these numbers are: EAEACE:



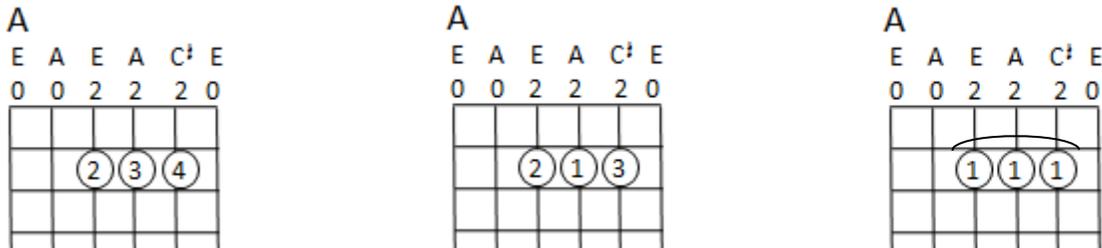
Note that only the second string, played at the first fret will sound the **C** tone, thus playing the third of the Am chord. Yet, that *color tone* is all that is needed to create the 'harmonic impression' of a minor tonality.

*It's interesting to note that Beethoven used the key of C minor for his familiar Fifth Symphony for its dark and heroic impression – an impression conveyed by the entire orchestra using very simple chord changes. In essence, music is organized sound. The guitar, like the orchestra, organizes sound to create a distinct impression.*

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If we were to raise that C natural (♮) to a C sharp (♯) by moving the position on the second string to the second fret, the numeric description of the resulting chord would be: 002220. Only one note out of six strings is changed.

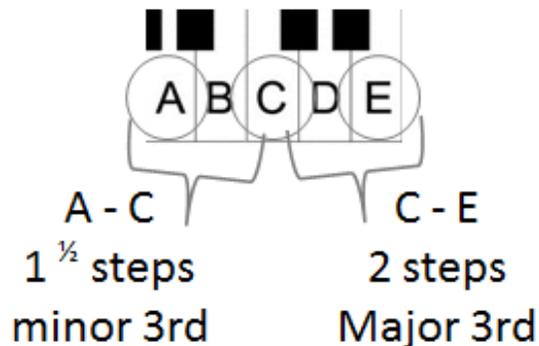
The actual tones indicated by these numbers are EAEAC♯E, with three possible left hand fingerings:



**So, what's happening here?**

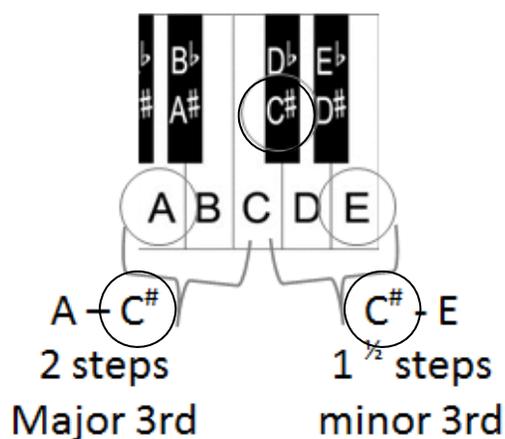
The third of the chord is one of the true color tones that determines the harmonic intent of the chord. By replacing the C natural with the C sharp the chord changes from an A minor to an A major chord. This change is easy to see on the piano diagrams below.

The Am (A minor) chord on the piano, A-C-E looks like this:



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While an A (Major) chord on the piano, A-C#-E looks like this:



True to form, as a minor chord, the Am chord (A-C-E) displays a minor third on the bottom and a major third on top.

But, if we change the C to a C sharp – thereby raising the third tone up a half step – the sound of the chord is altered noticeably in that now it does sound like a major chord (which it is).

This is because the distances (intervals) have changed. From A to C sharp is a distance of four half steps, or two whole steps, which is a major third. From C sharp to E is a distance of only one and a half steps, which is a minor third.

*Notice also, that we displayed three possible fingerings for the A Major chord for the left hand, all of which are used regularly. Learning multiple fingerings for all guitar chords is an essential part of the process.*

*Music theory is a thing that should be learned gradually, and then applied to real life playing. We'll be doing both – playing and theory – throughout this book. Now it's time to play!*

## *Chapter Two: Getting Ready to Play*

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### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Learn chords and fingerings for both left and right hand
2. In this lesson we'll be learning the following chords:  
Am, D, E, Dm, A<sup>7</sup>, C, G, G<sup>7</sup>
3. We'll learn how to form each chord in the left hand before placing the fingers on the strings.
4. We'll learn how to transition from one chord to the next with 'economy of motion'.
5. We'll learn some beginning right hand finger picking patterns.
6. We'll learn some basic strumming and flat picking techniques.

### **Preliminaries**

We're all anxious to play something as soon as possible.

Having said that, there are some basic housekeeping chores we'll need to address. We need to make sure that your guitar is in tune and easy to play, so we'll address tuning and playability before we begin to learn.

Beginning guitar players are often unaware that the guitar they are playing may not be set up properly. In fact, it might even be difficult for an experienced player to use. So, when they fail they think it's their fault and that guitar is not for them. We're going to avoid that trap by talking about the things every guitar player should know.

If you already know these things, by all means skip ahead to the new chords and fingerings section of this chapter.