

## Section 4: Chords

Make a NEW version of the progressions/strumming patterns to fit this section. G D Em C A7 D7 E7 blues etc. Also pop chords G Cadd9 Em7 Dsus4 Asus2 Talk about throw-away chords on 4+ - no farther than this!

3-4 chord strumming song – approved by teacher as an ACTUAL strumming song and not some watered-down strumming version of a song that isn't strumming. You should teach a student at least 3-4 strumming songs before moving on with the topic (brown eyed girl, crash my party, American pie, obladi, any Taylor swift song, etc)

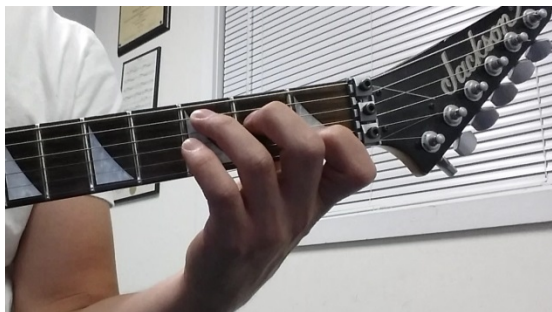
**EDIT CHORD PROGRESSIONS! ALSO CONSIDER EITHER FOR STARTER OR LEVEL 1 COMBINING 2 STRUM PATTERNS FOR LONGER PHRASES SUCH AS EVERY ROSE HAS ITS THORN**

### Chord Clarity and Progression

To become proficient at playing guitar, you must be knowledgeable about various categories of chords, as well as develop the ability to change chords in tempo. For this to happen, you must practice chords in two ways:

#### 1: Chord Clarity

The first goal in learning a chord is to play the chord correctly, with correct fingering, and without dampening or buzzing any of the notes. You should place your fingers as close to the fret-bars as possible to ensure good tone, avoid dampening adjacent strings, and analyze your hand position to make sure your elbow is not flared out causing fingers to be straightened rather than curved. Your hand should be close to the neck so your fingers are curved, but not so close that you are holding the neck like a baseball bat. There should be some space between you palm and the neck.



**GOOD!** – wrist straight, fingers spread, space between palm and neck



**BAD** – thumb and wrist too high. First finger leaning on E string



**BAD** – thumb and wrist too low, causing fingers to reach and dampen strings



**GOOD!** – wrist straight, thumb flat on back of neck, space between palm and neck



**BAD** – palm gripping the neck like a baseball bat



**BAD** – thumb and wrist way too low and forward

## 2: Chord Progression

Once you learn a chord and have memorized it, you must put it into a musical context – a chord progression. Initially, a beginner should practice the first exercise called “Chord Changes” below to gradually learn to move from one chord to the next **in time** (or with a steady beat). Chord clarity will suffer at first, but that’s OK. You do **NOT** want to stop, hesitating between chords to make sure the chord sounds perfectly clear. You should keep strumming **no matter what** – even if you don’t have the chord all of the way down and you’re strumming open or dead strings. This will sound terrible at first – but eventually, your fret-hand will catch up to the pick hand and you’ll be a better guitarist for it. It is a counter-intuitive feeling while practicing, but it will make sure you do not form a bad habit of hesitating and making an un-steady beat.

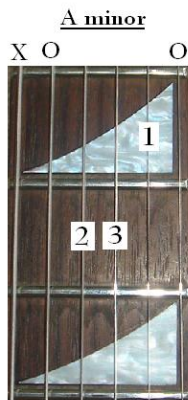
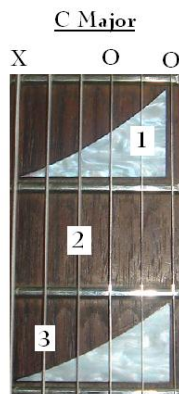
Think of your pick hand as “the band” – the band will not stop for you to fix a chord fingering. You need to learn to adjust to fit yourself into the rhythm, no matter what happens. Once you have learned a few chords and put them into a progression, **the band never stops**.

# Rock Starter Level Chords

## 7<sup>th</sup> Chords - Blues Chords



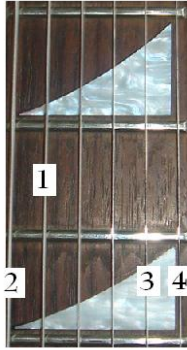
## Open Position Chords - Essentials



(1 2) alternate fingering

# Pop-Rock Chords

G Major  
O O



Em7



Asus2



Dsus4

X X O



Cadd9

X O



Dsus2

X X O O



A7sus4

X O



# Chord Changes

A7 D7 A7 D7 *Repeat several times*

A7 D7 A7 D7 *Repeat several times*

A7 D7 A7 D7 *Repeat several times*

A7 D7 A7 D7 *Repeat several times*

Repeat this drill with the following chord pairs:

1. A7-E7
2. D7-E7
3. G-Em\*
4. Em-C\*
5. Am-C\*
6. Am-Em\* (1-2 fingering)
7. Am-Em (2-3 fingering)
8. G-D
9. G-C
10. G-Am
11. C-D
12. Em-D
13. Am-D
14. Am-E7
15. G-D7
16. C-D7\*
17. D-A7
18. Em-A7

*\*PIVOT FINGERS – When 2 chords share a finger/fret, you must leave that common finger down and “pivot” the other fingers around it. For example, the C and Am chords have two pivot fingers, fingers 1 and 2. While leaving the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> fingers in position, the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger is the only finger that needs to move between the chords. This creates efficient movement and easily connected chords.*

Once you have mastered this exercise with all chord pairs, you are ready to begin playing chord progressions. If you are struggling with a progression, you may use the above protocol for gradual mastery of a progression with a steady beat. Try to find any common fingers between chords (Am-C for example, as well as Em-C using the alternate fingering) and hold them down as anchors while changing chords. In addition, look for similar finger shapes between chords (the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> fingers in A7-D7 for example).

## Leading with the Weak Finger

A student’s natural inclination is to fret a chord starting with placing down the first finger, then second, etc. This is called leading with the strong finger and feels natural. However, with certain chords this will hinder efficient chord changing. **The C chord and D chord**, as well as with most students the G chord, should be fretted with the 3<sup>RD</sup> FINGER FIRST. This is called leading with the weak finger. Over time, practicing in this manner will help students change chords more efficiently, although it feels awkward at first. When leading with the first finger, the weaker fingers are thrown out of position, necessitating a secondary movement to get back into position – causing the chord change to hesitate. When leading with the third finger, the other fingers nicely find their position without excessive, unwanted movement.

## Tapping Your Foot and Counting is Vital!

You MUST be able to tap your foot to the beat as you play – *especially the syncopated rhythms!* I cannot emphasize the importance of this skill enough. It will impact the future of your ability to learn new songs, play tough rhythms with a band, and take unnecessary stress and anxiety out of the learning/playing process. In addition, when learning a new rhythm, you should be able to tap your foot, count out loud, and play all at the same time. Knowing which chords are played on an upbeat, downbeat, or offbeat (and with an upstroke or a downstroke) will mean the difference between success and failure when learning a new song. I’ve seen this more times than I’d like to admit. Try learning anything by Dream Theater, Van Halen, Tool, or Rush without ever learning to count and tap and you’ll experience a grand new level of frustration! Lastly, communication is so much smoother and without confusion. If the student is having a problem progressing to a chord on the “and of 3” or “3-and” – whichever lingo you use consistently (don’t change it up on your student and add confusion) – the student should be able to identify and communicate the exact point the problem arises. Think about how powerful this skill is for problem-solving in the student’s future!

## Your First Progression: 12-Bar Blues in A

12-Bar Blues is the backbone of blues music. Since rock music is significantly influenced by blues music all the way back to the roots of rock and roll, it is important that the student gain experience with

the progression's sound and feel right from the beginning. Below is an example of basic 12-Bar Blues and "Quick Change" Blues that I simply labeled as "More Blues." You will be required to perform More Blues from memory during your certification test using a strumming pattern of your choice from any example in this section.

## 12 BAR BLUES SHEET HERE

### Essential Progressions – Open Position Chords and Strumming Patterns

The following progressions are the most common in popular music from classic rock to modern popular styles. Your teacher may provide you with supplementary progressions such as G-C-G-D *a la* Brown Eyed Girl. There are plenty of variations to practice, but these progressions serve as a good summary of common progressions.

Strum from the elbow, following all the way through the high E string on a downstroke. Upstrokes may have an arch upward from the wrist, producing a bright sound from the highest 3-4 strings. Each progression should be learned with 4 quarter note strums (downstrokes). Once the progression is mastered on a steady beat, substitute 4 beats of quarter notes with each of the strumming patterns listed. For example, basic strumming #1 is counted "1, 2, 3 + 4 – play that rhythm in each measure of the progression. Then, start the progression over with the next pattern until the student has played each progression with all of the strumming patterns.

### Strumming, Ties, and Throw-Away Chords

To start, let's make a rule that quarter notes are played with downstrokes and eighth notes are played with upstrokes. This will change later when you learn other types of rhythms, so there is no rule here that is fixed forever – things always change in a new context. But for now, the rule stands.

When a note is tied across a beat (in our example, there is a tie between "2+" and "3" in the *syncopation* examples below), you should perform a "ghost strum" on beat 3. You'll still strum a downstroke, but purposely *miss the strings* and strum the air on beat 3 so that the chord will sustain from 2+ through 3, at which point the upstroke will follow on 3+. Essentially, you'll have 2 upstrokes in a row with an air-guitar downstroke in between. I notated this by putting the downstroke symbol in parenthesis. Say this as you play – "1, 2 and *miss* and 4" as you strum "down, down up *miss* up down."

Throw-away chords can be played on a downstroke or an upstroke, but are most common on an upstroke. We'll start with one example of a downstroke, and then move to the upstroke. A throw-away chord is when a guitarist strums open strings in-between chords, a way to connect chords and keep the rhythm moving while the fingers are traveling through the air to form the next chord. The guitarist may strum all of the strings, the top half, the bottom half, or the middle portion of the open strings. This will be indicated in tablature as a group of "O's." Find quality tabs for "Highway to Hell" by AC/DC (chorus) and "Smells Like Teen Spirit" (intro) and you'll see open strings played between chord changes. Angus Young and Kurt Cobain use this technique frequently. Try the example below to get your feet wet with the technique, then move to the *throw-away chord* section of the strumming patterns list.





## Rock Starter Strumming Patterns

Basic Strumming #1      Basic Strumming #2      Syncopation #1

1 2 3 + 4      1 2 + 3 + 4      1 2 + (3) + 4

Throw-Away #1      Throw-Away #2      Throw-Away #3

1 2 3 4 +      1 2 3 + 4 +      1 2 + 3 + 4 +

Syncopation #2 with Throw-Away      Straight-Eighths with Throw-Away

1 2 + (3) + 4 +      1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

## Pop Progressions and Strumming Patterns

Along with 12-Bar Blues, you must internalize the most common pop progressions. Not only do they show up in pop music, but in alternative rock, classic rock, and even some metal songs. In addition, many acoustic players will re-use these progressions over and over, slightly varying them, or simply adding a capo and playing them in a higher key. In this section, a G chord will be played with the pop fingering – the one that uses all 4 fingers.

Pop Chord Pairs to Master: (note the high amount of pivot fingers in the pop genre)

1. G-Cadd9
2. G-Em7
3. Cadd9-G-Em7
4. Dsus4-G
5. Dsus4-Em7
6. Em7-A7sus4
7. A7sus4-Dsus4
8. D-Dsus4-D-Dsus2-D

**NOTE: - POP PROGRESSIONS NUMBER 2: The throw away contains the common tones – don't lift common tones!!!!1**

**Throw aways should also become less and less noticeable over time. Sneak the chord to the next one**

**Pop Progression #1**

*\*Write rhythm counts below each note for all pop progressions!*

Dsus<sup>2</sup>   □   □   V   (□)   V   □   Asus<sup>2</sup>   Em   G

**Pop Progression #2**

Em<sup>7</sup>   □   □   G   V   □   V   Dsus<sup>4</sup>   A<sup>7</sup>sus<sup>4</sup>

**Pop Progression #3**

*\*Count only 3 beats per measure in 3/4 time signature.*

G   □   □   V   □   V   D

Em<sup>7</sup>   Cadd<sup>9</sup>

**Pop Progression #4**

Cadd<sup>9</sup>   □   □   G   V   □   V   Dsus<sup>4</sup>   Em   V   □   V

↑  
Rest on beat \_\_\_\_ . Stop the strings directly on the beat and in tempo

### Pop Progression #5

Musical staff with notes and guitar chords: G, V, V, Cadd9. Includes fret numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 and a plus sign.

Musical staff with guitar chords: G, D, Cadd9.

Musical staff with guitar chords: G, Cadd9.

Edit this last one so the quarter note measures all go on the 2<sup>nd</sup> line so the first and last lines look the same

**CRASH MY PARTY HERE!!!!!!**

RECOMMENDED TEST SONGS LIST HERE