

# TRIADS

**Welcome to Triads!** For a guitarist, chord playing is an essential part of what we do. But too often we get trapped into seeing chords in only one area of the guitar.

This is a series on using triads for chord playing that I hope will change how you see chords on the neck of the guitar. Chords are not just two or three familiar forms – but they are combinations of certain tones that can be made all over the guitar in an incredible variety of shapes, inversions and voicings.

Triads are chords containing three different tones. This series focuses on three types of triads – Major, Minor and Dominant Seventh Triads.

**Major triads consist of the ROOT, THIRD, and FIFTH notes of the major scale.**

**Minor triads consist of the ROOT, FLATTED THIRD & FIFTH of the major scale.**

**Seventh triads contain various combinations of the ROOT, THIRD, FIFTH and FLATTED SEVENTH of the major scale.**

The notes within a triad can appear in any order.

**Different arrangements of notes within a chord is called the chord's "voicing".**

Here's what everything means...

- Numbers on TAB Staff: Show what fret you should be pressing down.
- Fingering Diagrams for Each Chord
  - "X" at end of Chord Diagram = Mute String
  - Open Circle at end of Chord Diagram = Open String
  - Open Diamond = Root of a Chord which can be Moved

Learn all you can and let's get started!





# TRIADS

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# MAJOR

## Triads

Triads can be a variety of different chords. Let's look at Major chord triads first.

**Major triads consist of the ROOT, THIRD, and FIFTH notes of the major scale.**

## Voicings

The notes in the triad can be arranged in any order.

**OPEN VOICINGS** are voicings greater than an octave and involve skipping strings.

**CLOSED VOICINGS** are voicings where all the notes in the triad occur within one octave and usually appear on adjacent strings.

This series will be focusing on closed voicings.

## String Groupings

Triads in closed voicings use three adjacent strings and can be played on 4 different sets of strings.

String Set 1: Uses the 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> strings.

String Set 2: Uses the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> strings.

String Set 3: Uses the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> strings.

String Set 4: Uses the 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> strings.

String sets 3 and 4 share the same fingerings because the tuning of the guitar is identical for those strings.

This series will be focusing on triads on strings sets 1 and 2 because they are the most commonly used.



# TRIADS

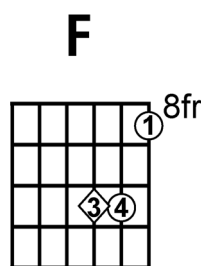
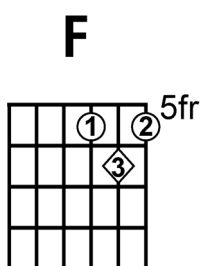
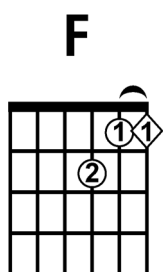
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## MAJOR

### Major Triad Forms (1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> Strings)

Here are the three closed voicing major triad shapes in the key of F using the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> strings.

The diamond indicates which note is the root in each form.



**Let's Learn: Memorize these forms and where the root is located in each form.**

Let's start by playing them up and down the neck in the key of F.

	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>T</b>	1	5	8	5	1
<b>A</b>	1	6	10	6	1
<b>B</b>	2	5	10	5	2

Now, let's do them in the key of G – two frets up.

	<b>G</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>G</b>
<b>T</b>	3	7	10	7	3
<b>A</b>	3	8	12	8	3
<b>B</b>	4	7	12	7	4

And, two frets higher in the key of A...

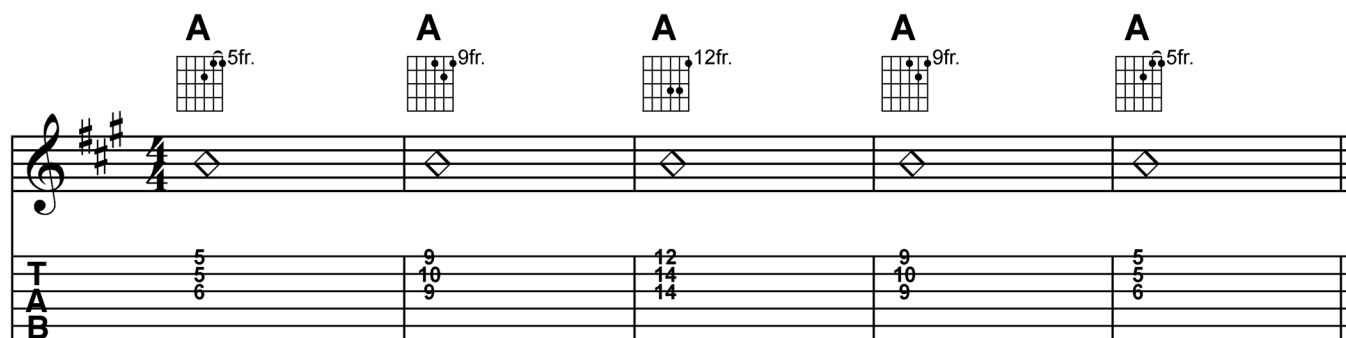


Diagram illustrating the A major triad shapes across the fretboard, showing the progression of the triad up the neck and then down, demonstrating the concept of flipping an octave.

Notice, as you move up the neck and the forms reach above the 13<sup>th</sup> fret the highest form can flip down an octave to a lower position on the neck.

For example, if we go up a half step to the next key of B $\flat$ , the highest form, which would be now above the 13<sup>th</sup> fret, can also be played an octave down at the 1<sup>st</sup> fret. Notice how the starting form is now the previously higher form.

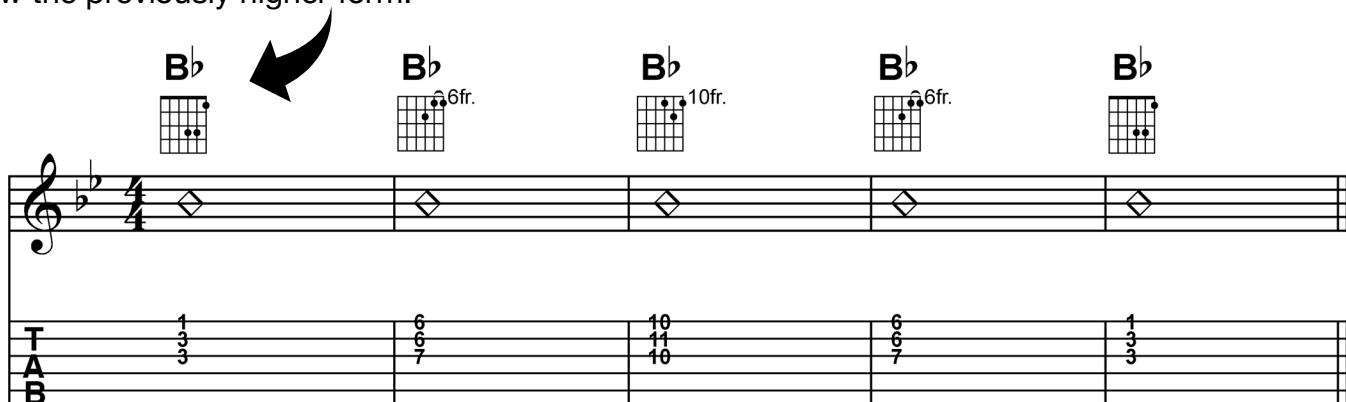


Diagram illustrating the B $\flat$  major triad shapes across the fretboard, showing the progression of the triad up the neck and then down, demonstrating the concept of flipping an octave.

As we continue up through keys, let's play the major triads in the key of C.

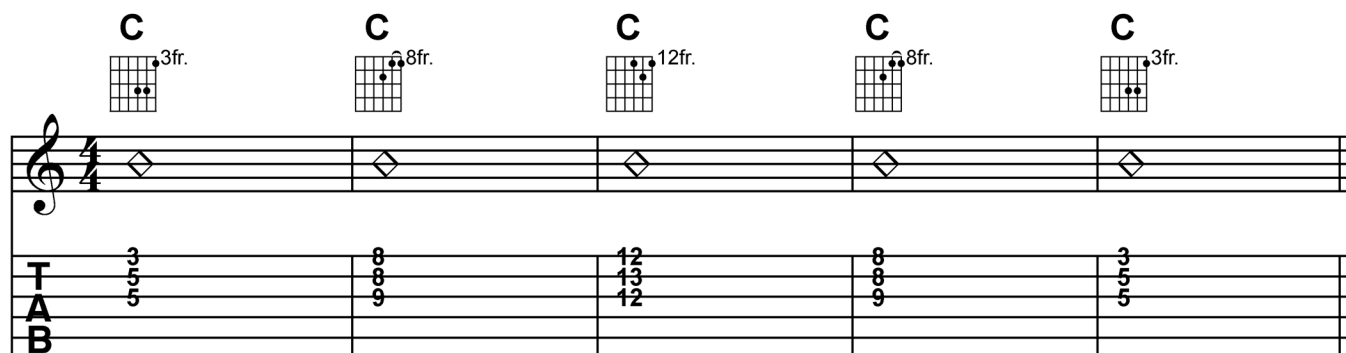
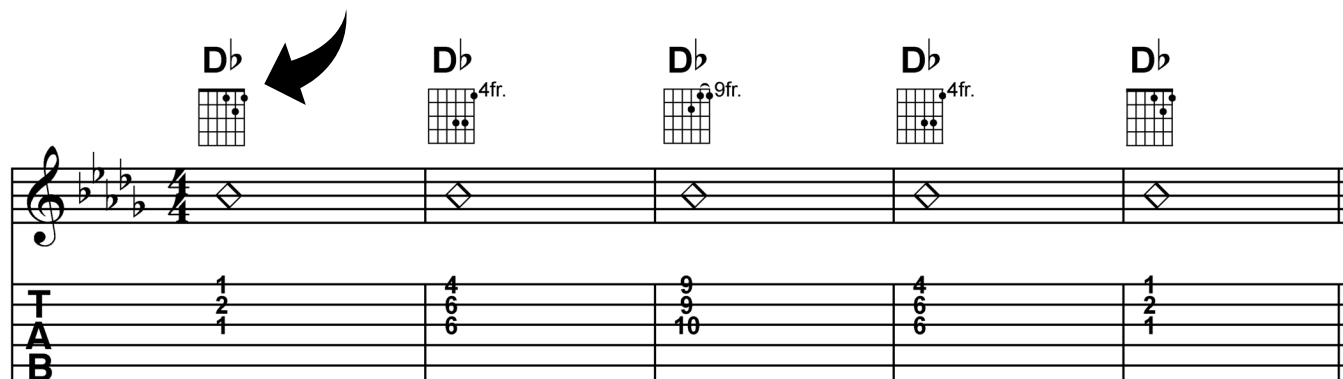


Diagram illustrating the C major triad shapes across the fretboard, showing the progression of the triad up the neck and then down, demonstrating the concept of flipping an octave.

When we move to the key of Db the highest voicing now gets above the 13<sup>th</sup> fret and can be flipped down an octave.



T	1	4	9	4	1
A	2	6	9	6	2
B	1	6	10	6	1

## Let's Practice & Learn

**Practice Challenge 1:** Play through the major triad forms up and down the neck in this order...

- F
- F#
- G
- G#
- A
- Bb (the highest form flips down an octave)
- B
- C
- Db (the highest form flips down an octave)
- D
- Eb
- E.

**Practice Challenge 2:** Play through the major triad forms in a cycle of 4ths in this order...

- F
- Bb
- Eb
- Ab
- Db
- F#
- B
- E
- A
- D
- G
- C

# Major Triad Patterns (1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> Strings)

Now, that you've learned the forms on the neck let's start combining them to form common chord movements that you will see in songs.

## I-IV-I Patterns

The first common movement is between the I and the IV chord in a key.

Here is the I-IV-I pattern in the key of F for all three triad inversion combinations.

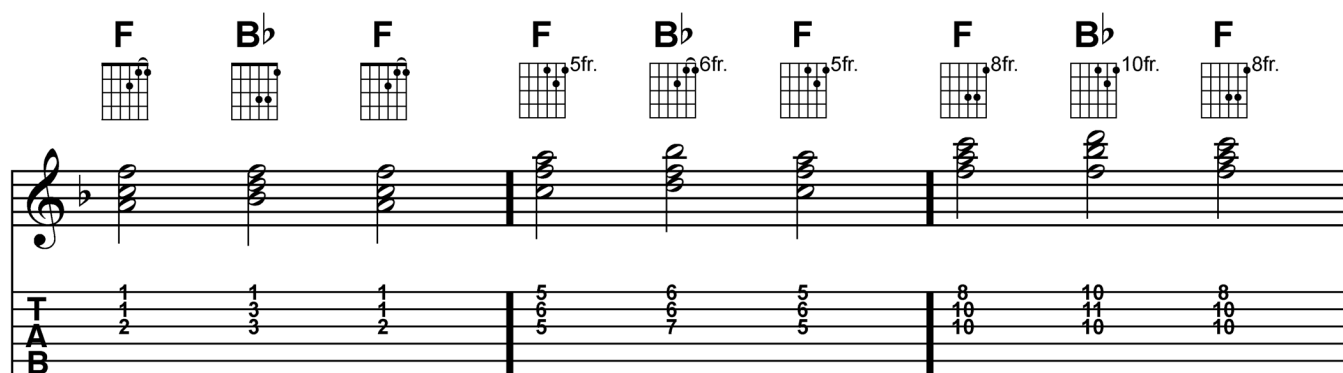


Diagram illustrating the I-IV-I pattern in the key of F (F major) for all three triad inversion combinations. The pattern consists of nine chords: F (I), B $\flat$  (IV), F (I), F (I), B $\flat$  (IV), F (I), F (I), B $\flat$  (IV), and F (I). The fret numbers for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd strings are provided below the guitar staff.

Chord	1st String	2nd String	3rd String
F (I)	1	1	1
B $\flat$ (IV)	5	6	5
F (I)	8	10	8
F (I)	10	11	10
B $\flat$ (IV)	10	10	10
F (I)	8	10	8
F (I)	10	11	10
B $\flat$ (IV)	10	10	10
F (I)	8	10	8

Here is the I-IV-I pattern in the key of G for all three triad inversion combinations.

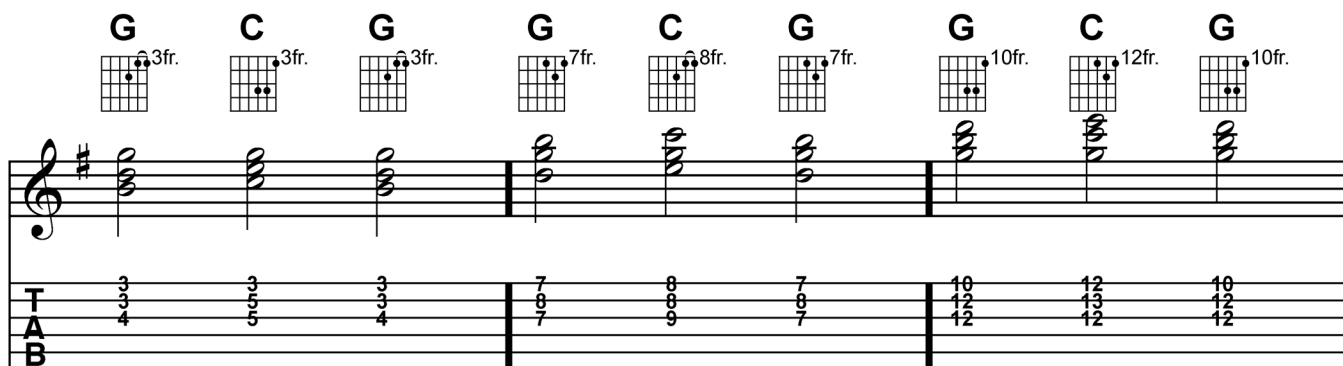


Diagram illustrating the I-IV-I pattern in the key of G (G major) for all three triad inversion combinations. The pattern consists of nine chords: G (I), C (IV), G (I), G (I), C (IV), G (I), G (I), C (IV), and G (I). The fret numbers for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd strings are provided below the guitar staff.

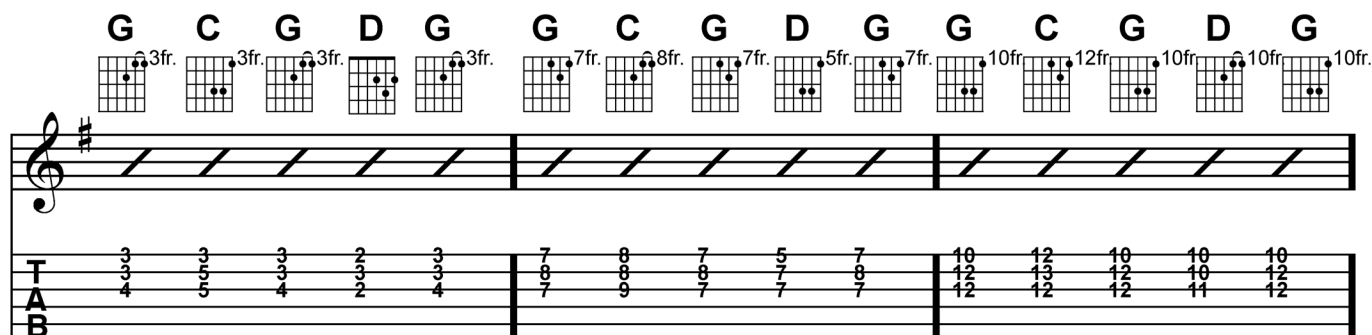
Chord	1st String	2nd String	3rd String
G (I)	3	3	3
C (IV)	7	8	7
G (I)	10	12	10
G (I)	12	13	12
C (IV)	12	12	12
G (I)	10	12	10
G (I)	12	13	12
C (IV)	12	12	12
G (I)	10	12	10

# I-IV-I-V-I Patterns

Now, let's add the V chord to the previous pattern to create a I-IV-I-V-I chord progression.

Here is the I-IV-I-V-I pattern in the key of G for all three triad inversion combinations.

**G C G D G G C G D G G C G D G**



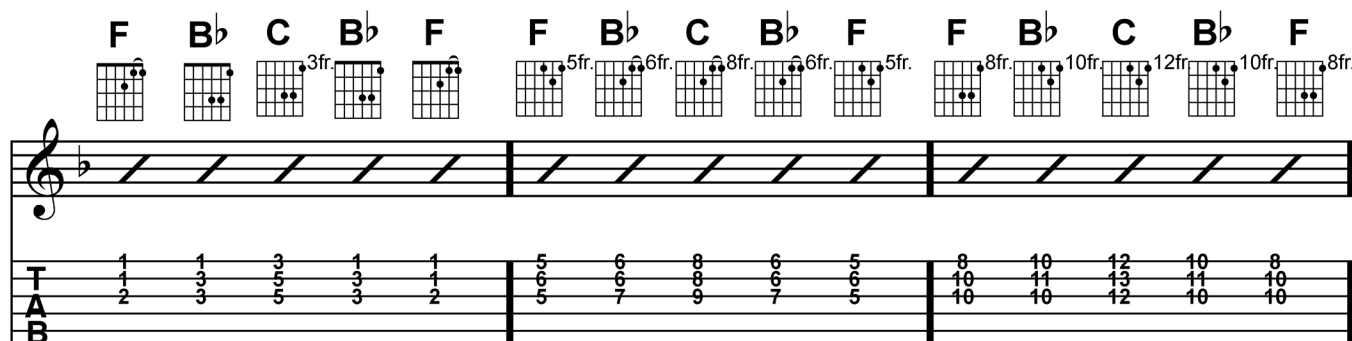
	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3
T	3 3 3 3 3	7 8 7 5 7	10 12 10 10 10
A	4 5 4 2 4	7 8 7 7 7	12 13 12 10 11
B			12 12 11 12 12

# I-IV-V-IV-I Patterns

Now, let's switch the chords to a different progression.

Here is the I-IV-V-IV-I pattern in the key of F for all three triad inversion combinations.

**F B $\flat$  C B $\flat$  F F B $\flat$  C B $\flat$  F F B $\flat$  C B $\flat$  F**



	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3
T	1 1 3 1 1	5 6 8 6 5	8 10 12 10 8
A	2 3 5 3 2	5 6 8 6 5	10 11 13 11 10
B			10 10 12 10 10

# Let's Practice & Learn

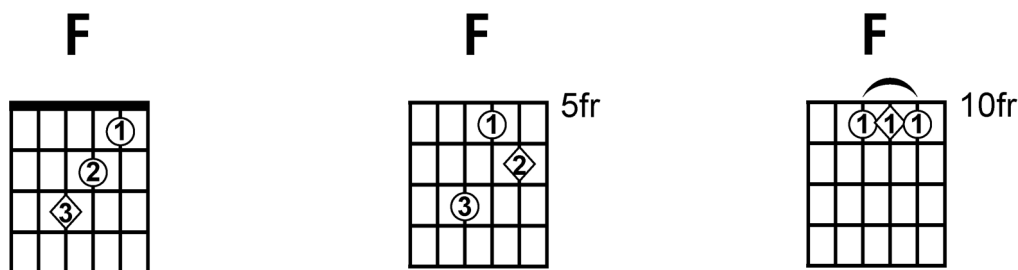
Practice Challenge 3: Play through all three of the the major triad patterns in all keys.

# TRIADS

## MAJOR

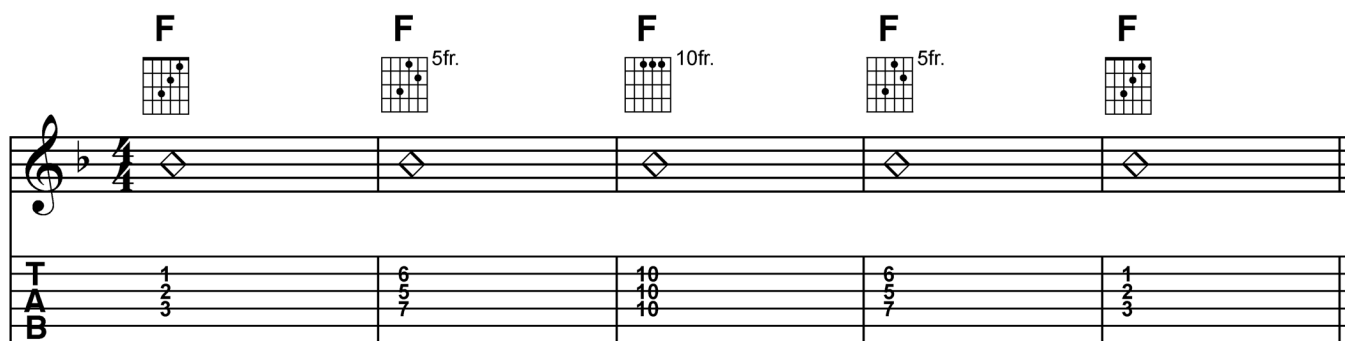
### Major Triad Forms (2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> Strings)

Here are the three closed voicing major triad shapes in the key of F using the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> strings.

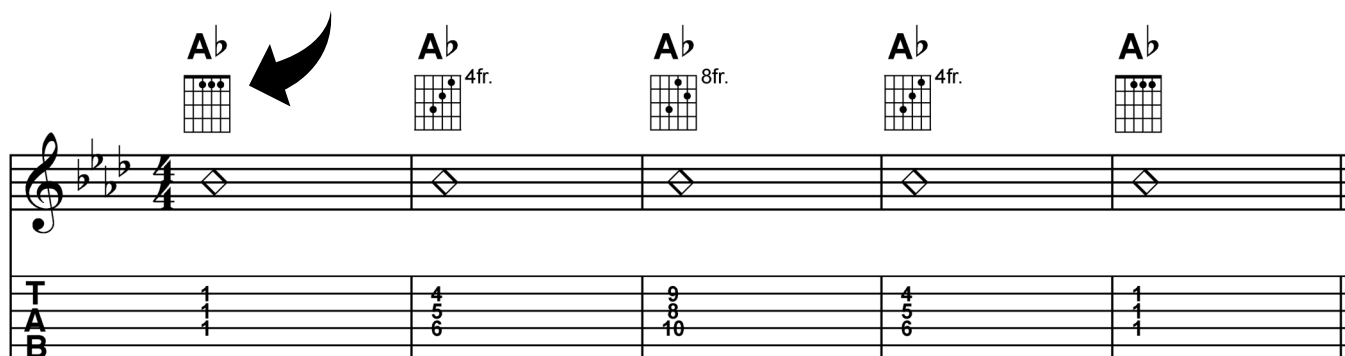


**Let's Learn: Memorize these forms and where the root is located in each form.**

Let's start by playing them up and down the neck in the key of F.

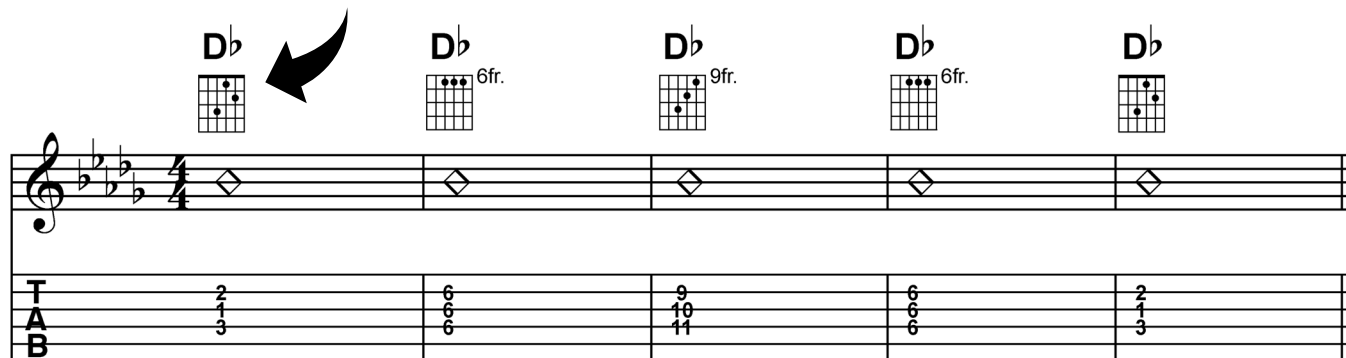


The first octave down shift from the high position occurs in the key of A<sup>b</sup>.





The next octave shift from the high position occurs in the key of Db.



T	2	6	9	6	2
A	1	6	10	6	1
B	3	6	11	6	3

## Let's Practice & Learn

**Practice Challenge 1:** Play through the major triad forms up and down the neck in this order...

- F
- F#
- G
- Ab (the highest form flips down an octave)
- A
- Bb
- B
- C
- Db (the highest form flips down an octave)
- D
- Eb
- E.

**Practice Challenge 2:** Play through the major triad forms in a cycle of 4ths in this order...

- F
- Bb
- Eb
- Ab
- Db
- F#
- B
- E
- A
- D
- G
- C


# Major Triad Patterns (2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> Strings)

Now, that you've learned the forms on the neck let's start combining them to form common chord movements that you will see in songs.

## I-IV-I Patterns

Here is the I-IV-I pattern in the key of G for all three triad inversion combinations.

Diagram showing the I-IV-I pattern in the key of G for all three triad inversion combinations. The pattern consists of G (I), C (IV), and G (I) chords. The fret numbers for each chord are indicated above the diagrams: 3fr., 5fr., 3fr., 7fr., 8fr., 7fr., 12fr., 12fr., 12fr.

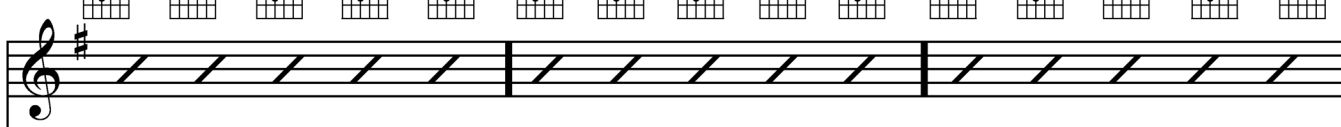


T	3	5	3	8	8	8	12	13	12
A	4	5	4	7	9	7	12	12	12
B	5	5	5	9	10	9	12	14	12

## I-IV-I-V-I Patterns

Now, let's add the V chord to the previous pattern to create a I-IV-I-V-I chord progression. Here is the I-IV-I-V-I pattern in the key of G for all three triad inversion combinations.

Diagram showing the I-IV-I-V-I pattern in the key of G for all three triad inversion combinations. The pattern consists of G (I), C (IV), G (I), D (V), and G (I) chords. The fret numbers for each chord are indicated above the diagrams: 3fr., 5fr., 3fr., 2fr., 3fr., 7fr., 8fr., 7fr., 7fr., 12fr., 12fr., 12fr., 10fr., 12fr.

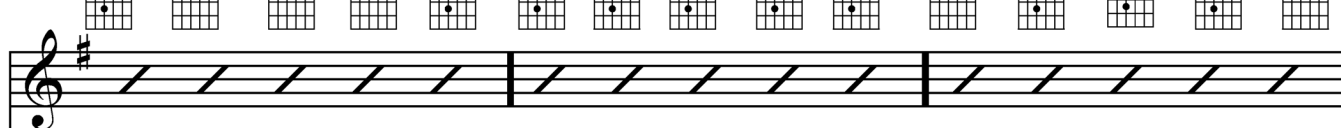


T	3	5	3	3	3	8	8	8	7	8	12	13	12	10	12
A	4	5	4	2	4	7	9	7	7	7	12	12	12	11	12
B	5	5	5	4	5	9	10	9	7	9	12	14	12	12	12

## I-IV-V-IV-I Patterns

Here is the I-IV-V-IV-I pattern in the key of G for all three triad inversion combinations.

Diagram showing the I-IV-V-IV-I pattern in the key of G for all three triad inversion combinations. The pattern consists of G (I), C (IV), D (V), C (IV), and G (I) chords. The fret numbers for each chord are indicated above the diagrams: 3fr., 5fr., 7fr., 5fr., 3fr., 7fr., 8fr., 10fr., 8fr., 7fr., 12fr., 12fr., 14fr., 12fr., 12fr.



T	3	5	7	5	3	8	8	10	8	8	12	13	15	13	12
A	4	5	7	5	4	7	9	11	9	7	12	12	14	12	12
B	5	5	7	5	5	9	10	12	10	9	12	14	16	14	12