

Power Chords

Power Chords are chords that use only the root and 5th steps of the major scale.

For example, if you take a C major scale and remove all of the other scale tones, you will be left with the root and 5th. When I combine these together it's called a power chord. Or more formally a C5.



So, power chords contain only two pitches – but these two pitches can be played in multiple octaves.

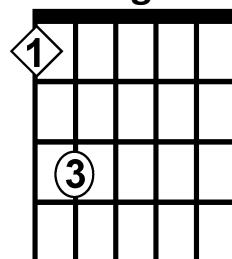
If we move to the key of F, an F power chord contains the root and 5th in the key of F, an F and a C.

Since power chords do not have the third they can be used in major or minor settings.

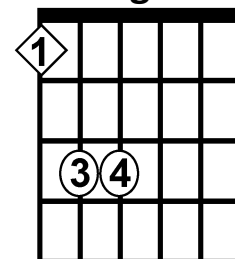
Power chords with roots on the 6th or 5th strings are typically played in these two forms.

(The root of the chord is indicated by the diamond.)

Power Chord 2 String Form



Power Chord 3 String Form

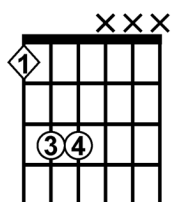


Power Chords: Moveable Forms

These are the four shapes of moveable power chords with their roots on various strings.

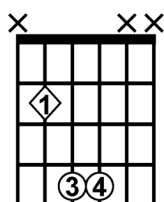
6th String Root Power Chord

F5



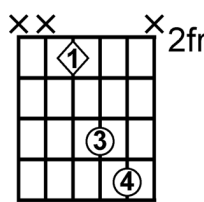
5th String Root Power Chord

B5



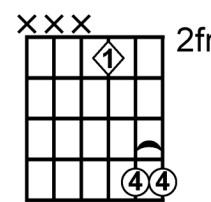
4th String Root Power Chord

E5



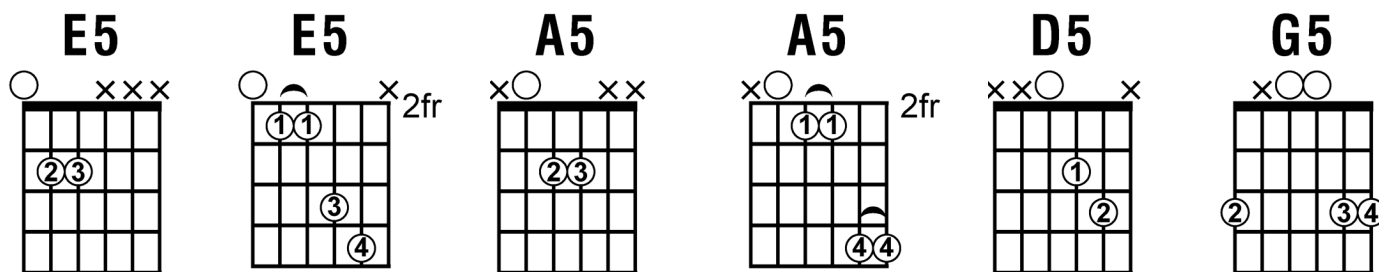
3rd String Root Power Chord

A5



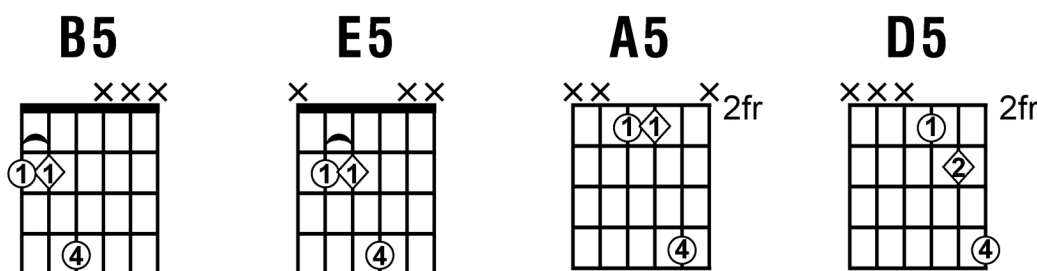
Power Chords: Open Forms

Power chords can also be played with open strings. Here are common open form power chords.



Power Chords: Inverted Forms

Power chords can also be played inverted with the 5th as the lowest tone, instead of the root. Inverted forms put the root above the 5th in the voicing – usually in between the 5ths. These get a less stable sound but work well when combined with nearby forms.



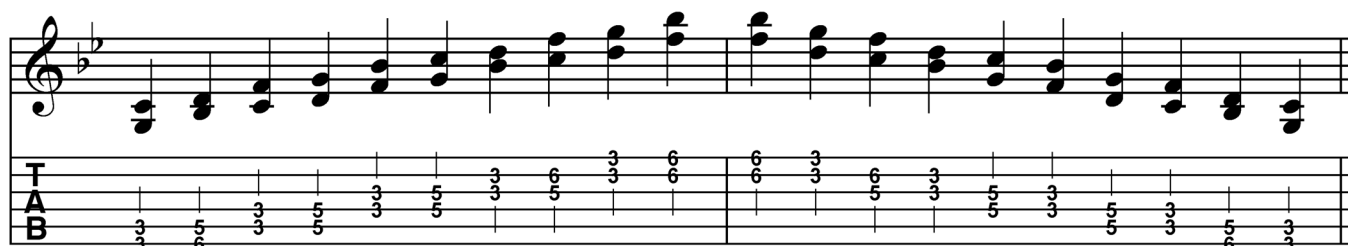
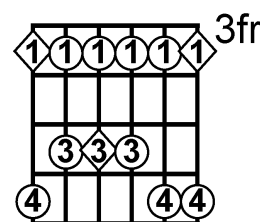
Diads: Two Note Combinations

Diads use two note combinations on adjacent strings to move between scales or chords.

Here is a G minor pentatonic scale form.

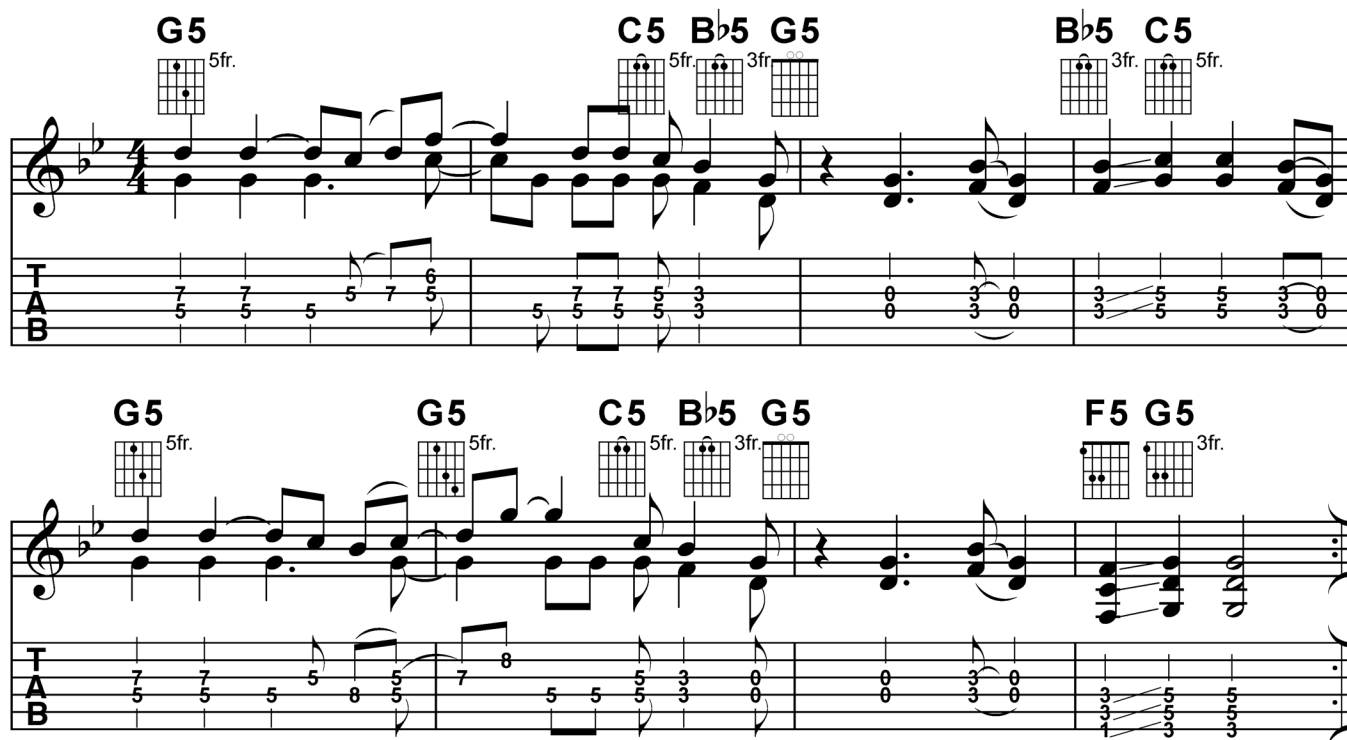
Below is the G minor pentatonic scale played as diads (two note chords).

G Minor Pentatonic Scale



Power Chord/Diad Ex.: Money for Nothing Lick

In the classic Rock song, "Money for Nothing" by Dire Straits, the legendary Mark Knopfler mixes power chords, diads and hybrid picking to create one of the most iconic guitar lines of all time.



System 1:

- G5** (5fr.)
- C5** (5fr.) **B \flat 5** (3fr.) **G5** (5fr.)
- B \flat 5** (3fr.) **C5** (5fr.)

System 2:

- G5** (5fr.)
- G5** (5fr.)
- C5** (5fr.) **B \flat 5** (3fr.) **G5** (5fr.)
- F5** (3fr.) **G5** (5fr.)