

The Top Guitar Chords in Any Key



with Steve Krenz

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With all of the thousands of songs out there, you would think that they would use countless different chords. But, actually, most common songs use a pretty limited number of chords.

And, most of those commonly used chords have the same function within whatever key they are in.

The most commonly used chords in any key are the I (one), IV (four), V7(five), and vim (six minor).

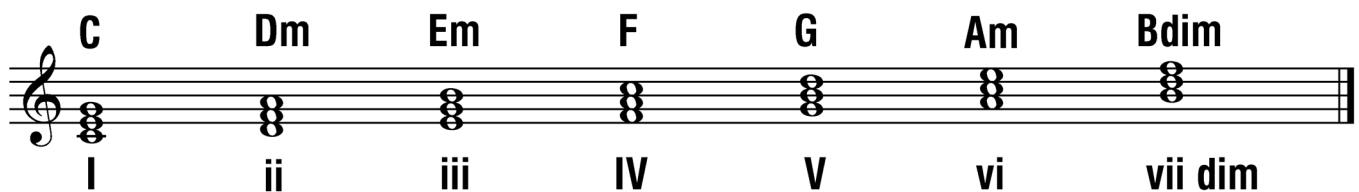
Yes, I know there are a lot of other chords possible, but if you could get an average of the chords used in any song you would see that MOST of them are one of these four chords.

So, as a guitarist, it is important and very helpful that we can play these four types of chords in any key.

The Chords in Any Key

The chords in a key are derived from the major scale steps of that key.

For example, in the key of C, the chords are shown here. (Upper case roman numerals are major chords, lower case are minor chords.)



The type of chords – major and minor – are consistent in every key.

- The chords built on the 1st, 4th, and 5th scale steps are MAJOR CHORDS.
- The chords built on the 2nd, 3rd, and 6th scale steps are MINOR CHORDS.
- The chord built on the 7th scale step is a DIMINISHED CHORD. (This is less commonly used.)

The V (five chord) typically adds the 7th to it making it a V7.

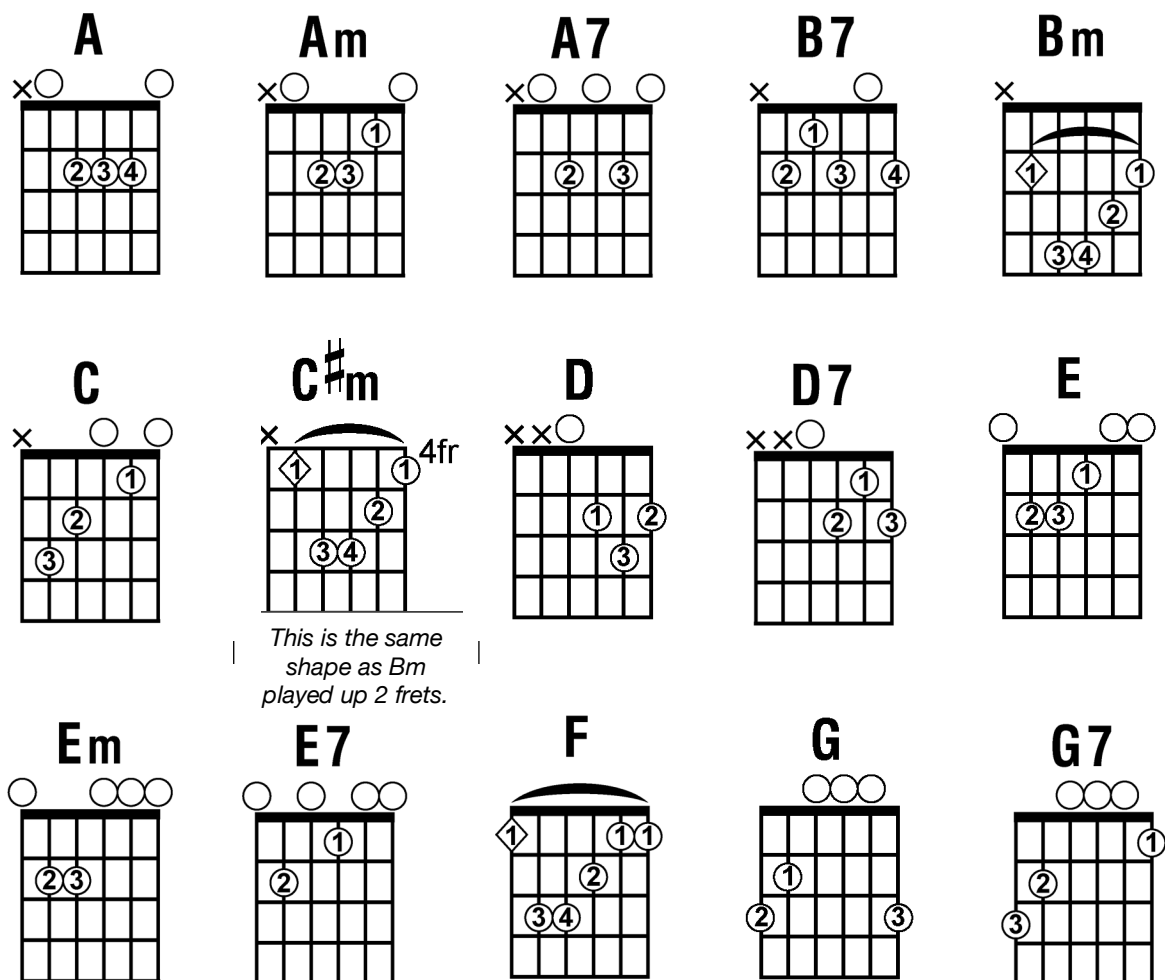
The Top Guitar Chord Shapes

There are 15 main chords that every guitarist should know (shown below).

Most of these chords use at least one open string. These would be called OPEN CHORDS.

Three of these chords use one finger to cover more than one string. These are called BARRE CHORDS. The Bm, C#m, and F chords do not use any open strings and can be moved to other frets by keeping the same shape. The diamond indicates the root note.

All of these chords should be memorized.



Using a Capo to Play in Any Key

Using the 15 chord shapes shown on the previous page and a capo allows you to play all of the most common chords used in songs in any key.

Use the chart below to determine the key that you want to play in, if you need to use a capo, where to put the capo, what are the top guitar chords in that key, PLUS two other usable chords in that key.

KEY OF SONG	WHERE TO PUT CAPO	COMMON CHORDS IN ANY KEY				OTHER USABLE CHORDS	
		I	IV	V7	vim	lim	iiim
A	No Capo	A	D	E7	F#m	Bm	C#m
Bb	Capo 1 st Fret	A	D	E7	F#m		
B	Capo 2 nd Fret	A	D	E7	F#m		
C	No Capo	C	F	G7	Am	Dm	Em
C#/Db	Capo 1 st Fret	C	F	G7	Am		
D	No Capo	D	G	A7	Bm	Em	F#m
Eb	Capo 1 st Fret	D	G	A7	Bm		
E	No Capo	E	A	B7	C#m	F#m	G#m
F	Capo 1 st Fret	E	A	B7	C#m		
F#/Gb	Capo 2 nd Fret	E	A	B7	C#m		
G	No Capo	G	C	D7	Em	Am	Bm
G#/Ab	Capo 1 st Fret	G	C	D7	Em		