

PREFACE TO CHORD GROUPINGS

Understanding chord groupings and voicings can in itself be a lifelong work. It would be incomprehensible for me to include all that there is to know about chords in the few pages following. This is intended to build on an existing chord vocabulary, and in no way should it be anyone's sole reference for chord structuring by any means. Use all available resources on theory and chording to achieve your goal in musical excellence.

A few things to keep in mind as you study the following section:

- ? While the chord charts are all moveable chords, the explanations are only given in the key of C major. If you wish to spell the chord tones in any other key, you **must** memorize that key's sharps or flats (the key signature). Then and only then can you truly master the art of developing chords in any key.
- ? The term "root note" is synonymous with the scale step "1". The root note of a chord determines the letter name you include before the description in the chord's identification. (EXAMPLE: In the key of C major, the dominant 9 chord consists of the scale steps 1 3 5 b7 9. These steps are equivalent to C E G Bb D. The 1, or *root note*, is C, and the descriptive symbol for dominant 9 is "9". Therefore its proper identification is "C9".
- ? Many chord charts may have more or less notes than the corresponding formula dictates. In the case of the major chord, there are only three tones (1 3 5), but a chord chart may show as many as six different notes. What is happening here is that some or all of these notes are being doubled (*The scale steps of the first major chord chart are 1 5 1 3 5 1, which do not add any notes other than 1 3 and 5*). In the case of the dominant 11/13 chord, there are seven chord tones. Now, unless you have an extra string on your guitar and an extra finger or two growing out of your forearm, this chord is unmistakably impossible to play as spelled. Therefore some chord tones are left out to accommodate the guitar's limitations (*The first dominant 13 chord I have charted is spelled 1 b7 3 13, which omits the 5 and 9*)*.
- ? As you will see, the 9 11 and 13 tones may be thought of as the 2 4 and 6, as they have the same letter name. So don't be confused if you see a chord spelled a different way. More than likely, this will be the reason why.
- ? Remember that in order to identify *any* chord that you are playing, you **must not only** understand its formula, but you **must also know the name of the root note**. Saying "Uh... it's a 7th chord on the fifth fret, dude..." may work in a rock band on a basic level, but won't even get you acknowledged at a serious session or gig. So before you give yourself the title of "Chord Czär", take the time to memorize the names and notation of **every note on the neck of the guitar**. A chart has been included for your reference. Please use it — learn it — KNOW it.

Now that I've scared you completely to death, let's relax and have some fun learning how to create all of those mysterious sounds you've heard and can't recreate.

Due to discrepancies in the voicings of chord extensions, I have chosen the method of not including the 11 in a 13 chord, and instead call a chord which has both 11 and 13 an 11/13th chord. You may find books that deal with this in other ways. Remember, it's called music **theory, not music **fact**, and we always have to treat it as such.*

NOTE NAMES ON THE FINGERBOARD

This chart is to aid in identification of root notes for the following chord charts.

It is imperative that you memorize these note names in order to effectively identify chords that you may play.

It is also important to be aware of the enharmonic relationship of notes. That is, that one note can have two different names (i.e. C# is the same note as Db).

Another important facet of naming and spelling chords is to know how the notes appear in standard musical notation. This will expand your abilities beyond reading chord charts and tablature into reading the notes and chords on the staff.

Use this chart for quick reference only, and rely on your memory as frequently as possible.

	E	A	D	G	B	E
	F	A#	D#	G#	C	F
	F#	B	E	A	C#	F#
3	G	C	F	A#	D	G
	G#	C#	F#	B	D#	G#
5	A	D	G	C	E	A
	A#	D#	G#	C#	F	A#
7	B	E	A	D	F#	B
	C	F	A#	D#	G	C
9	C#	F#	B	E	G#	C#
	D	G	C	F	A	D
	D#	G#	C#	F#	A#	D#
12	E	A	D	G	B	E

THE MINIATURE GUIDE TO CHORD GROUPINGS

The following section is devoted to chords and how they're spelled and fingered. I have included 120 fingering positions of popular chord shapes with fingering and root notes identified. But first, I will quickly explain how these chords are built so that you may try to build your own inversions. Keep in mind that many of these chords may sound awkward or ugly at first, but used in the right context these sounds can add a unique depth to the sound of a progression.

Traditional chords are built by using every other note of the major scale. This is called stacking in *thirds*. These notes do not have to follow this pattern exclusively, as any note in the chord may be flatted (lowered a half-step), or sharped (raised a half-step). The most basic form of this is the *triad*, where the most complex is the seven note chord. In order to understand which notes to use in a particular chord, you must know the numbering of major scale notes, as well as the formula for the chord. Here is the numbering system as it applies to a C major scale:

C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

The most simple form, the major triad, is the first, third and fifth tones of the scale. A major triad would be 1 3 5, or C E G in this case. This triad constitutes the *major chord*. The most complex form uses every other scale step up to the 13 (1 3 5 7 9 11 13), or in this case, C E G B D F A. This grouping constitutes the *major 11/13 chord*.

Major chords, however, obviously do not make all musical sounds. In fact, there are enough different types of chords to fill a book by themselves. But if you learn how to name the chord you're playing, or how to build a chord you see only by name, you've saved yourself a lot of reading. The five basic chord types to know are **major**, **minor**, **augmented**, **diminished** and **dominant**.

A basic "quick look" at the elements of these chord types helps in the understanding of the formulas I have included. The term "major" simply means that all of the chord's tones are *natural* (not flatted or sharped). A minor chord type must flat the 3 (and the 7 if the chord tones go that high). An augmented chord must sharp the 5 (and flat the 7 if the chord tones go that high). A diminished chord must flat the 3 *and* the 5 (and *double flat* the 7 if the chord tones go that high). A dominant chord is only applicable if the chord tones *do* reach the 7 or higher, and it would necessarily have a flatted 7 *only*. For all practical purposes, augmented and diminished chords function similarly to dominant chords, and for that reason, they are frequently referred to as being the same type.

Any chord type that does not follow these rules is by definition a *hybrid* chord. Some of these chords are spelled out for you here. This includes suspended and altered chords. You will undoubtedly encounter many of these chord types in your experience as well.

The last thing I would like to add is that any altered chords I haven't included can be easily built by reading their name. For example, a C7b9b5 would merely be a C7 chord with its 5th flatted, and a flatted 9th added, or in other words, 1 3 b5 b7 b9. Remember that this is only an overview, which means that you will undoubtedly stumble across chords that are not included here, as well as find hundreds of other practical fingering possibilities for the few chords I have diagrammed. Keep in mind that just because a chord might be voiced 1 3 5 7 9, it doesn't have to be fingered in that order. You may invert the chord many ways, with those same notes in different orders, such as 1 3 7 9 5, or any other combination. Also, some chord voicings may not be physically possible to play on the guitar. In such a case, some non-defining tones (usually the 5 or 1) may be omitted for practicality. Let your imagination find the order that creates the sounds you hear in your head!

Here are the voicings of the more popular chords used today:

CHORD VOICING FORMULAS					
NAME	SYMBOL	FORMULA	NAME	SYMBOL	FORMULA
major		1 3 5	suspended 4	sus4	1 4 5
minor	m	1 b3 5	major add 9	add9	1 3 5 9
diminished	o	1 b3 b5 bb7	augmented	+	1 3 #5
major 6/9th	6/9	1 3 5 6 9	major 6	6	1 3 5 6
minor 6th	m 6	1 b3 5 6	minor 6/9th	m 6/9	1 b3 5 6 9
dominant 7 suspended 4	7sus4	1 4 5 b7	dominant 7	7	1 3 5 b7
min 7 flat 5	m7(b5)	1 b3 b5 b7	minor 7th	m7	1 b3 5 b7
dom 7 flat 9	7b9	1 3 5 b7 b9	major 7	maj7	1 3 5 7
dom 7 sharp 9	7#9	1 3 5 b7 #9	minor with a major 7	min/maj7	1 b3 5 7
dominant 9	9	1 3 5 b7 9	minor 9th	m9	1 b3 5 b7 9
min 9 with a maj 7	min9/ maj7	1 b3 5 7 9	dom 9 sharp 11	9#11	1 3 5 b7 9 #11
major 9	maj9	1 3 5 7 9	dom 11	11	1 3 5 b7 9 11
minor 11	m11	1 b3 5 b7 9 11	dom 13	13	1 3 5 b7 9 13
dom 13 flat 9	13(b9)	1 3 5 b7 b9 13	suspended 2nd	sus2	1 2 5
minor add 9	m add9	1 b3 5 9	minor major 9	m (maj 7/9)	1 b3 5 7 9