

BAR CHORDS

By covering two or more strings in the same fret with any finger we form what is called the bar. Therefore there are many different bars - 2 string bars with any finger, 3 string bars with any finger, etc.

The most common bar though is the six string bar using finger one which is called the grand bar.

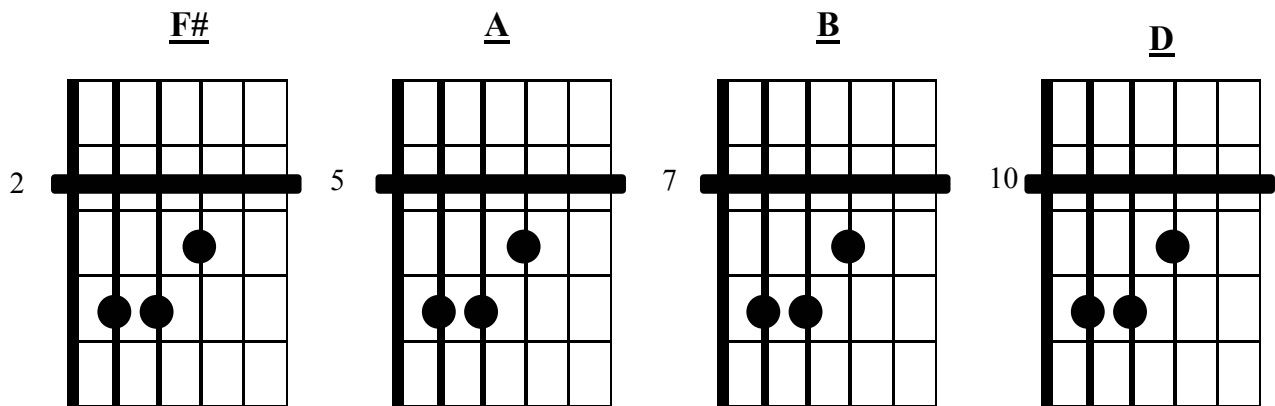
Once the bar is in place you arrange the remaining fingers to form a chord shape. This combination of bar and chord shape is obviously called a bar chord.

It is interesting that all the chords we have played so far are in fact bar chords. The nut is acting as the bar - it covers all six strings in the same fret (the zero or open fret). This is commonly called the natural bar. From this bar we form our chord shapes. So the open chords are really natural bar chords.

So we are going to use these same shapes but move them up the guitar. Only as you move up you'll have to provide the bar (or nut). Many of the shapes require you to reshuffle your fingers for reasons like needing finger 1 from the original fingering to form the bar. Even though you may use different fingers the shape is exactly the same as it was in the natural bar.

The beauty of bar chords is that the one chord shape can be held and moved along the fretboard.

Notice how each chord is exactly the same shape, but because they are in different frets each has a different name. Remember how with open chords you had to learn a different shape for each chord. It is now possible to play all the chords using one bar chord shape.



Other advantages of the bar chords are as follows –

(a) You will be able to play all the flat and sharp chords.

(b) Each chord has the same quality of colour because they are the same chord shape. The quality of the open chords varied from shape to shape.

Bar chords require a clever mixture of strength and technique to master. Read and take careful note of these hints but make sure to experiment so that you get the hand and finger positions that really suit you. You must get a clear sound out of each string for your bar chords.

(a) Push your chord hand more around the front of the guitar. This will make it easier to get finger 1 to go across the strings to form the grand bar. Try to lock finger 1 rigid so that it is in a straight line from the knuckle on your hand to the tip of your finger.

(b) Finger 1 should be slightly tilted back for the bar. Don't use it flat across the strings. When flat across the strings the flesh of your finger will not press the strings down. When tilted back you use the side of your finger which has less flesh and the bone is closer to the surface.

(c) When you are changing bar chords never lift the bar off the strings. Just relax your

pressure, slide the bar and then put the pressure back on.

(d) Although you generally need to use more pressure with your chord hand to play bar chords don't over squeeze. Use only the minimum amount of squeeze required.

Your muscles won't get so tired, your finger tips won't get so sore and you will find it easier to move as you don't have to relax and re-squeeze so much pressure.

Practice this minimum squeeze by forming the bar chord but with no squeeze.

As you strum gradually squeeze a little harder until the chord sounds clearly – this is all the squeeze you need.

To check the sound of your bar chords try these two ideas. In general pick each string and listen. Don't rush to the next string. Remember to make a good sound it is mostly technique – so check the shape of your hand and fingers.

(a) Pick across the strings. Go from string 6 to string 1, and then back.

(b) Use any string as a homebase e.g. using string 6 as a homebase 6 -5, 6-4, 6-3, 6-2, 6-1. Eventually use each string as a homebase.

To name the bar chords you must understand the alphabet of music which is explained on the next page.

# ALPHABET

The alphabet of music is the first seven letters of the English alphabet i.e. A, B, C, D, E, F, and G.

To name all the notes or chords on any instrument the alphabet is repeated over and over. This means that the note or chord after G is A, and we continue on from there.

The distance between each note of the alphabet is shown in the table below. Two terms you will have to know are –

1. semitone which is the smallest distance between two notes. Notes that are a semitone

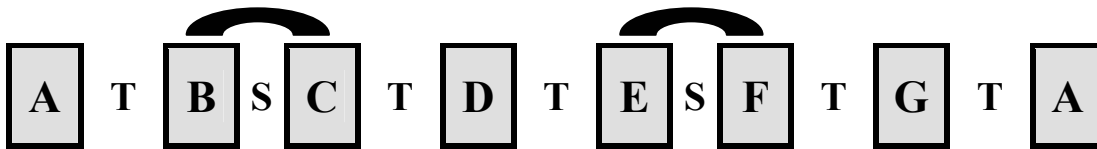
apart are right beside each other with nothing in between. On the guitar this is one fret. On the piano this is one key.

2. tone which is two semitones. On the guitar this would be two frets.

Notice that only B-C and E-F are a semitone apart. You can remember this by saying Big Cats Eat Fast.

S = semitone = 1 fret.

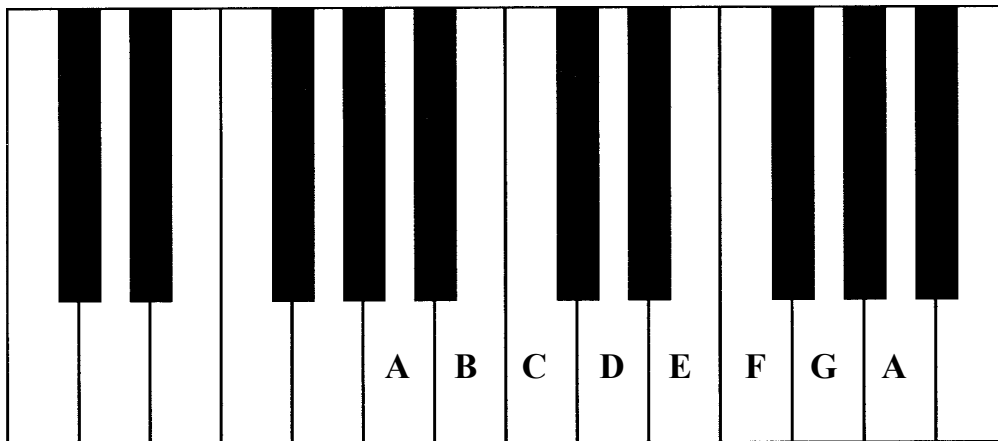
T = tone = 2 frets.



Here is an example of the alphabet on the piano.

Notice that B – C and E – F are only 1 key apart. They don't have a black key in between. These notes are a semitone apart.

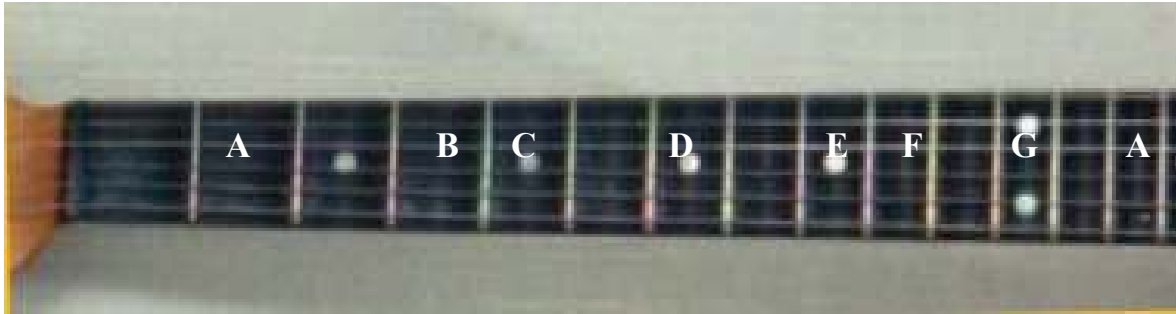
All the other notes have a black key in between. These notes are a tone apart.



## Chords Level 2

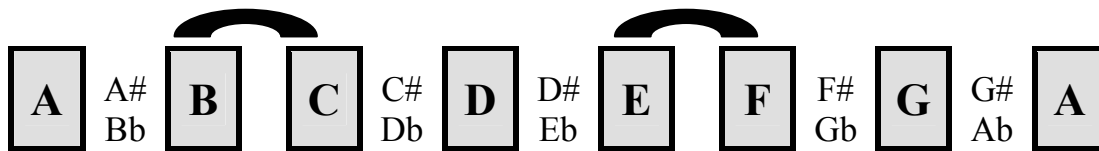
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Here is an example of the alphabet on the guitar. Again B – C and E – F are the only notes a semitone apart.



Notes that are separated by a tone have a note in between. These notes are collectively called accidentals. (The plain notes are collectively called naturals.) There are two types of accidentals -

Sharp which means any note one semitone higher. The sign for a sharp is #.  
Flat which means any note one semitone lower. The sign for a flat is b.



Notice there are no accidentals between B-C and E-F. There are only a semitone apart and therefore can have no note in between. By remembering this you can figure out the alphabet easily - all other natural note combinations have an accidental in between.

To name the bar chords you must know the name of the chord in the open or first fret and from there you can figure the rest out using your knowledge of the alphabet. In the following pages the basic bar chord shapes are shown. The names of the chords are given for the open and some other frets. You must figure the rest out.

Here the piano showing the full alphabet.

