

Playing Simple Chords

MandoLessons Lesson Supplement

In this lesson you will learn how to play your first set of chords. The chords you will learn are G, C, D, A, F, Gm (minor), Dm, and Am. If you are unfamiliar with the basic concept behind music theory (i.e. notes of a scale, sharps and flats, etc.), please read and get comfortable with the information at www.mandolessons.com/lessons/musictheory.html.

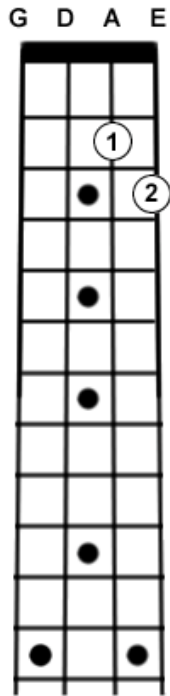
A chord, as you may or may not know, is made up of three or more notes. A simple major chord is made by combining the interval of the root, the third, and the fifth. For example, in the case of the C major chord, the root is the C, the third is an E (C, D, E), and the fifth is a G (C, D, E, F, G). These notes can be combined in any order (i.e. CEG, CGE, EGC, and so on) so long as all three notes are present.

In the case of minor chords, they are created the same way that major chords are except they have a flatted third. In the case of a G minor chord, the root is the G, the flatted third is B \flat (the third is B natural), and the fifth is a D. Again, these can be played in any order so long as all three notes are present.

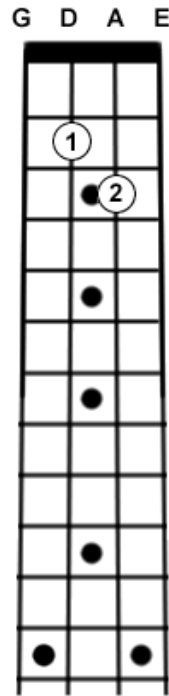
When playing chords on the mandolin, it is logical to arrange the notes in an order that results in the smallest amount of work for the player. As a result, many of the chords use only two fingers. In more advanced lessons I will show you many different ways to play the same chord that result in some really cool sounds.

There is a diagram of each chord played in this lesson's video on the following page, while some may seem like a stretch at first, keep at it and you will get the hang of it in no time.

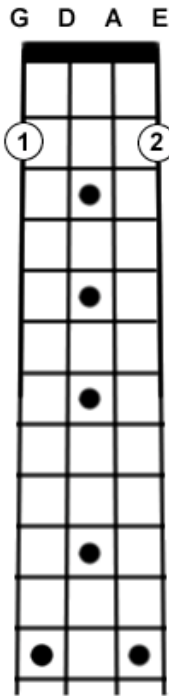
G Major



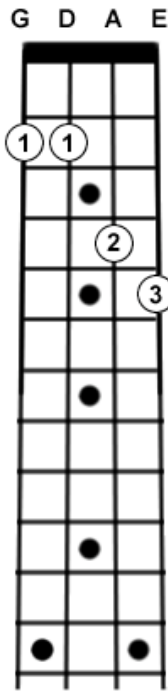
C Major



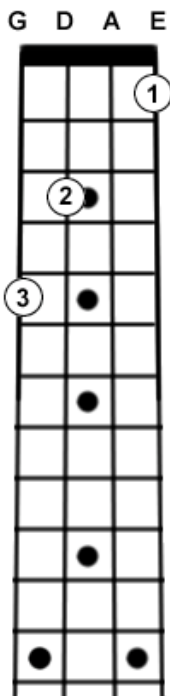
D Major



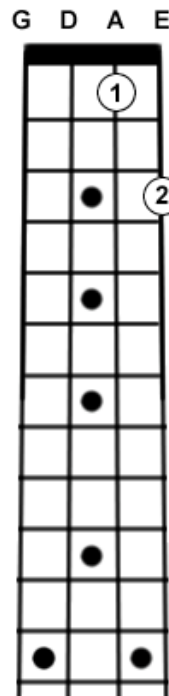
A Major



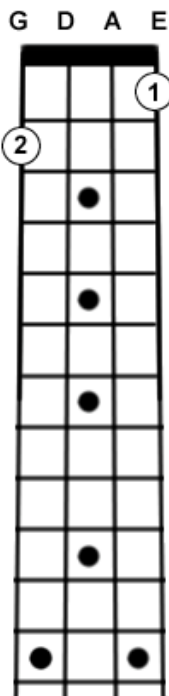
F Major



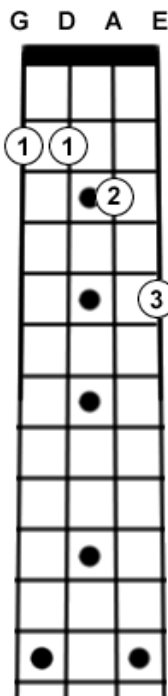
G Minor



D Minor



A Minor



Playing single chords on their own may entertain you for a few minutes, but will get boring after a short period of time and you will want to start playing along to songs. In many styles of music, there are three main chords for each key that you are playing in. The key of a song is often governed by what scale is being played. If you are playing a C scale, the song is (almost always) in the key of C.

The three chords that can be found in thousands of songs from almost every genre are the I (one), IV (four), and V (five) chords. Let me give you an example. Much like we count the semitones between notes to find an interval (see www.mandolessons.com/lessons/musictheory.html), we count the notes of a scale to classify chords. If we are in the key of C major, we would count in the following manner:

C (I), D (ii), E (iii), F (IV), G (V), etc.

As you can see, the F note is the IV and the G is the V. That means that when playing a song in the key of C, it is likely that you will run into the chords C, F, and G. Listen to the chord progressions towards the end of the video to get a feel for a few examples.

If you are extra observant, you may notice that the ii and iii chords are not capitalized. This is because, in the key of the root, the ii and iii chords are minor. That is a subject for a later lesson however. Until then, concentrate on the I, IV, V pattern and get as comfortable as you can with how it sounds.

Questions? Comments? Drop me an email at lessons@mandoleasons.com