

### 3 Playing Chords and Arpeggios

#### Introduction

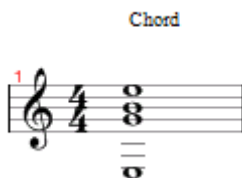
*You may remember seeing or hearing the word 'chords' in the previous section. It is commonly understood to mean the playing of two or more notes simultaneously. Many people can play several chords on the guitar, and indeed even if you can only strum the open strings, you are in fact playing a chord. (Question: which well known Beatles song starts with that chord?) Anyway, this section is all about chords, and arpeggios, as the facility to play them is an important element in playing guitar, of any style.*

#### About Chords and Arpeggios

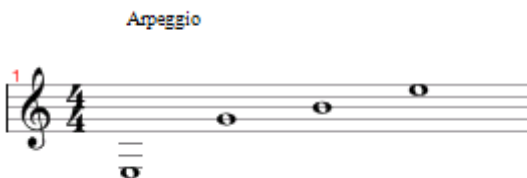
Chords form the harmony of music. Once you play two notes you have the basis of a chord, but you require three notes to have all the essential ingredients of a chord. The word chord also can mean 'harmonious' in that the notes should at least go together to support the melody, as against being a 'discord' which is a jangling sound on your ear.

However, there are certain chords which fall in the middle of that definition, in that an element of discord provides movement to the music, through creating a tension and then moving to a resolution. When these chords are played on their own, they can sound quite 'discordant', but played in the context of a harmonic progression supporting a tune, then it all makes sense.

An arpeggio is a chord but with the individual notes played separately or spread out. In other words the chord split into its separate 'parts': A chord could be written as follows:



While an arpeggio with all the notes ringing out would be written like this:



It is a good idea to take a little diversion from the strictly classical world just now, and learn some left hand chords. Purists might say that this is not in the 'classical method' of learning the guitar, but in reality most people learning to play guitar either already know some chords, or they want to. Apart from being good fun, in its own right, it's now time to develop the facility in your left hand and one of the best ways is to learn some chords, which also starts your knowledge of harmony. With the maxim that you should concentrate on one thing at a time, it provides the learner with the opportunity to focus on the left (fretting hand) now rather than the right.

Also, even if you're simply strumming, with three chords you can accompany many tunes satisfactorily and you can invent your own accompaniments by using the right hand techniques that you have learned so far.

In classical 'finger style' playing, most left hand shapes on the fret board are parts of chords, and even though you may be playing what sounds like a melody and accompanying bass – there is an implied chord there too.

## Reading chord charts

You may have already picked up a chord book, and been baffled by the number and variety of chords. Don't worry – there are a lot less than you think, and many are simply variations on the main ones, or the same chord moved up or down the fret board.

You can play the same chords in different positions - the guitar provides a myriad way of providing different 'voicings' according to where you play on the fingerboard. As you will see in this section, even advanced harmony can be boiled down to major or minor. Haydn wrote whole symphonies based on just three chords!

Here's a picture of a chord of Am with the corresponding chart as it will be shown from now on:

### Am (reads A minor)



- Remember that the fingers are placed just behind the frets. The thumb is not visible from the front of the guitar, as it should be placed midway behind the neck.
- Don't press so hard that your hand aches. The pressure needed to hold the strings down will depend on the action of the guitar (that is the height that the strings are from the finger board), the quality of your guitar and whereabouts on the fretboard you are playing.
- If a chord is major, the convention is that you simply write or describe it as for example, a D, or E, but if it's a minor chord, then it will be Dm, or Em.

## Bridging your fingers

One of the problems when learning to play chords (or simply more than one note, or notes in the inside strings when outside strings are also played) is that your fingers interfere with the other notes to be played. To get round this, concentrate on bringing your fretting finger down behind the fret, using the tip, as far as possible, at a 90 degree angle. The classical guitar has the advantage of a wider neck, so this issue is less than for say an electric guitar with a very narrow neck.

- Some chords fall under your fingers easily, and others don't. It's simply a matter of practice, and learning the harder ones so that your fingers will start to mould themselves into the correct position.

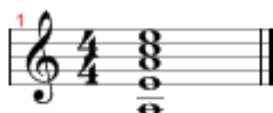
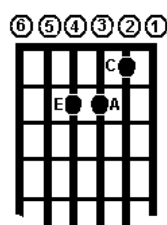
- The length of your fingers does not really matter, though if the student is very young, then they should have a guitar appropriate to their size of hand.
- Keeping your nails short is a key part of making a clean contact with the fretboard.
- Correct fingering is important - there are reasons why we play chords with the fingers that are shown. Sometimes it's to make a clear bridge, sometimes because the size of the fingers fits the frets better, or because there is a likelihood of moving to another chord after playing that one eg moving from G to G7.

#### Exercise 14

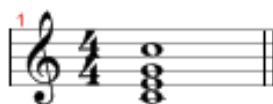
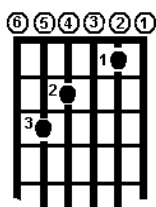
Now try this change from Am to C.

- Keep your fingers 'bridged' (eg use the tips of your fingers) so they don't interfere with the other strings.
- It's finger 3 that moves - the fingers that are common to both chords (the E and C) don't move.
- Try and change to and from each chord, smoothly, and strumming to a regular beat.

#### Am



#### C



### Major, Minor and Seventh Chords

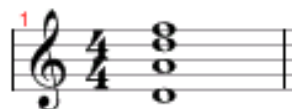
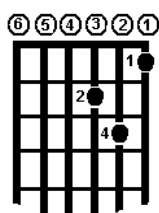
Here are the other chords that we will learn just now. Minor chords sound sadder and more reflective than the major ones. You will notice that there is only one note difference between a minor and major chord.

Adding a seventh note on to a chord provides a characteristic blues feel or slightly restless sound, like it has to go somewhere. You get a 7<sup>th</sup> by adding the seventh note of

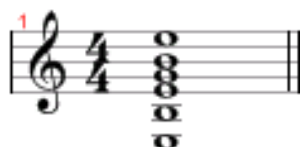
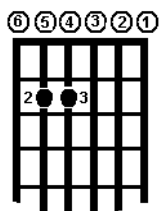
the scale (but flattened) to the chord - hence D7 is a D major chord with a C (the flattened 7<sup>th</sup> of the scale of D) in it.

Remember that a chord that is called MAJOR 7 (eg D Major 7) is not the same as a D7. This will be explained in more detail later. At this point in time we're more concerned with actually learning to play the chords and obtaining some fluency in changes.

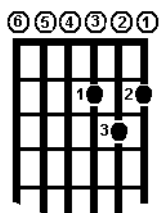
**D minor**



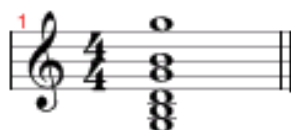
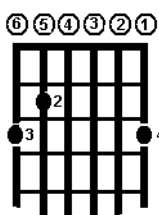
**E minor**



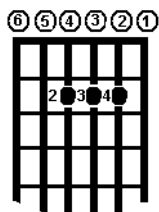
**D**



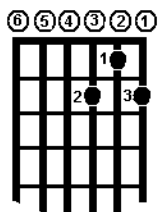
**G**



**A**



**D7**



<b>G7</b>		
<b>E</b>		
<b>E7</b>		

## Chord Progressions

The following chord progressions can be played by strumming - either using a plectrum or by your fingers. To strum with your fingers, brush the strings with the backs of the right hand fingers/nail.

Remember that if you're a beginner you won't find all these chords easy. It is quite difficult to change from one to the other smoothly without interrupting the rhythm. Some chords like G can take months to learn to play properly, so don't worry.

One thing to remember is that you don't take your finger off a fret unless you have to - so if there is a common finger, say between Am and C (in this case there are two common fingers, then those fingers stay on).

Once you have mastered the left hand fingering, try and practice your right hand techniques by finger picking the bass notes (eg when playing Am, play open A on the 5<sup>th</sup> string with the thumb and the trebles with *i, m, a*.)

Remember if a chord is shown without a maj or m after it, it is a major. For example, if you see D - it is a D major. Watch out for changes from minor to major, as they may not be shown as Dm to Dmaj, but simply Dm to D.

### Exercise 15

Try playing these chords in the sequence shown, then by making up your own progressions. They are all in 4/4 time - so count four beats in each bar, and in the beginning play each beat deliberately. Once you have the feel of the changes - you can double up the strums. When you are comfortable with that - try and play the same chord

progressions but with six counts in the bar, playing arpeggio style with *p, i, m, a, m, i*  
(p as count 1, i as count 2 etc)

1  
Am / / /	Am / / /	Em / / /	Em / / /
Am / / /	Am / / /	D7 / / /	D7 / / /
Am / / /	Am / / /	E / / /	Am / / / :

2  
Am / / /	C / / /	Am / / /	C / / /
Am / / /	Em / / /	E / / /	E / / /
Am / / /	C / / /	D7 / / /	Am / / /
G / / /	Em / / /	G / / /	G / / / :

3  
G / / /	G / / /	C / / /	C / / /
G / / /	G / / /	C / / /	Am / / /
D7 / / /	G / / /	Em / / /	D7 / / /
G / / /	C / / /	D7 / / /	G / / / :

4  
G / / /	G7 / / /	C / / /	Am / / /
A / / /	D / / /	D7 / / /	G / / /
G7 / / /	C / / /	Am / / /	Em / / /
E / / /	A / / /	Am / / /	D7 / / / :

5  
G / / /	G7 / / /	C / / /	Am / / /
A / / /	D / / /	D7 / / /	G / / /
G7 / / /	C / / /	Am / / /	Em / / /
E / / /	A / / /	Am / / /	D7 / / /
G / / /	C / / /	G / / /	G / D7 / :

6  
Dm / / /	Dm / / /	Am / / /	Am / / /
G / / /	G / G7 /	C / / /	Am / Amaj /
Dm / / /	Dm / / /	A / / /	D / / / :

## TopTip

*Practice slow changes between chords, and try and keep the rhythm going, even if you are not playing the full chord.*

## Playing Arpeggios

These chords are played arpeggio style and there are chord shapes above the music to help you. Try and look at the music once you know the shape of the chord on the fret board.

### Exercise 16

a) In 2/4 Time using a *p, i, m, a* pattern.

*p i m a*

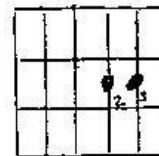
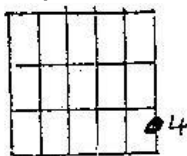
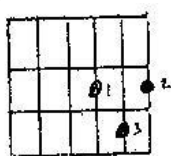
E A D G B E      E A D G B E      E A D G B E

b) In 3/4 Time using a *p, i, m, a, m, i* pattern.

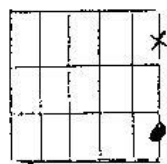
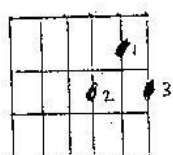
E A D G B E      E A D G B E      E A D G B E



c) In 2/4 Time (watch for the F#)



d) In 3/4





### Exercise 16

Now try playing the chords to Scarborough Fare. You can first try strumming the chords (One strum per bar on the first beat of each bar) and then once you have that mastered, try and play the chords 'arpeggio' style. Suggested finger patterns are:

*p,i,m,a,m,i*

And

*p,i,m,a,m,a*

Note that in bar 3 of the second line, there is an A on the fifth fret on the 1<sup>st</sup> string. To play this note, reduce the pressure on the 4<sup>th</sup> finger that is playing the G and gently slide up two frets.

### Exercise 17

## Scarborough Fare

*Moderato*

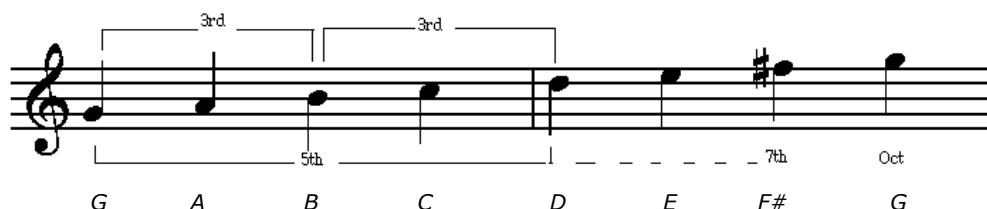
*Trad.*

The musical score for 'Scarborough Fare' is written in 3/4 time. It consists of three lines of music. The first line is labeled 'Introduction' and contains 8 measures. The second line contains 8 measures. The third line contains 8 measures. Chords are indicated below the notes: Am, Am, G, Am, Am, Am, G, Am, G, Am, G, Am. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 above the notes. A 'v' (accents) is placed above the 4th measure of the third line.

### Theory of Harmony and chords

A chord is made up of 'thirds'. If you remember the scale of G from the first book, we broke it down into 'intervals'. An interval is either a tone (two frets on the guitar) or a semi-tone (1 fret). E to F# is a tone, and E to F is a semi-tone.

So in the key of G:



Here is a list of the intervals in a scale with an attempt to describe the sound they make when played together. Try playing these notes together to see if you agree:

- G to A is a second [G, A] – dissonant
- G to B is a third [G, A, B] - harmonious and strong
- G to C is a 4th [G, A, B, C] – bare but not dissonant
- G to D is a 5<sup>th</sup> [G, A, B, C, D] – plain, strong, harmonious
- G to E is a 6<sup>th</sup> [G, A, B, C, D, E] – harmonious but not strong
- G to F# is a 7<sup>th</sup> [G, A, B, C, D, E, F#] – very dissonant
- G to G is an 8<sup>th</sup> or octave - strong but very bare

A chord is made up of two thirds, placed on top of each other.

G for example consists of G-B, and then B-D. Both of these intervals are thirds, but they are not the same. Why? Because one has more semitones (on the guitar, frets) in it than the other. In other words G to B is called a major third because it consists of 4 semitones (G#, A, A#, B), whereas B to D is called a minor third as it has only 3 semitones (C, C#, D).

So a major chord comprises a major third, and a minor third played together in some shape or fashion.

Interestingly, a minor chord is the other way round, a minor third with a major third and top. For example, A minor is A, C and E. The A to C is a minor third, and the C to E is a major third. Count the semitones and see if you agree.

No matter how many of these notes are played, and in what order, it will form that chord. So if you played on the piano, using all 10 fingers, the notes A, A, C, E, E, A, C, A, E, you would have played an Am chord. There are what is called 'inversions' of chords which just means that the order of the notes changes. For example, Am with C on the bottom, and A on the top is first inversion, and E on the bottom and then A, then C, would be second inversion.

It can be quite hard to recognise inverted chords, but after a little practice your ear will start to become aware that certain chords, when inverted, are similar to other chords.

This is part of harmony in that the relation of the bass notes to the others creates the dynamic tension in music.

Tunes will usually be accompanied by both major and minor chords. Major chords sound 'bright' and 'up front' while minor chords sound sad and reflective. Sad songs will tend to be in a minor key and happy songs in a major key. If you listen to 'Greensleeves' for example you will hear it is a typical minor key tune, but the last chord is A major, which gives it a more definite ending. This is called a 'Tierce de Picardy'.

By adding another third on to a chord, we get the seventh.

For example: G7 consists of G,B,D and F

G	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This chord has 10 semitones in it. If it were to have 11 semitones (in other words an F#) it would be called G major seventh, (or more properly written G major MAJOR seven) but that would be rather long winded. The major 7 bit refers to the interval between the G and the F#.

### Exercise in scales and chords

To demonstrate the sound of thirds, we'll revise the G major scale we learnt from the last book.

#### Exercise 18



Play the following scale slowly, along with the track. Keep repeating it. Use the rest stroke for this just now. After the second play, you'll hear overlaid upon the scale the third above each note: for example when you play G, will also hear B. After several plays you'll also hear the fifth of the scale: for example when you play G, you'll hear D.

### Position playing

Up to now you have been playing mainly in the first position. That means that you have been playing notes on the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> frets. Playing in a higher position means moving your hand up the neck towards the body of the guitar.

The usual way of showing this is through the use of Roman numerals (ie I, II, III, IV, etc up to XII) and it works by describing where your 1<sup>st</sup> finger is in relation to the fret. So, playing in the fifth position, for example, would usually mean that your 1<sup>st</sup> finger is going to be playing a note or notes on the 5<sup>th</sup> fret. Your other fingers may be playing on any fret, like 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> etc.

Sometimes you will see the Roman numeral just indicating the fret, and not the actual hand position.



### Playing at 5<sup>th</sup> Position (V)

(Note that it's easier to bar in this part of the fret board as the string tension is less than the first position.)

### Playing thirds

This exercise involves 'shifting up' the fingers 1 and 2, to the third fret, to play the notes B and D. You are now in the III (or the third) position as your first finger is at the third fret, but only for that one bar.

When you're using your fourth, or little finger, remember to 'bridge out' to avoid obstructing the other string - this does require practice.

#### Exercise 19



### Top Tip

*Remember to not take your fingers off the strings till you have to. When you slide your fingers up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> position, just lift them slightly off the strings, so as not to make a Hawaiian guitar effect.*

### Block chords study

This 'block' chords study by D. Aguado has a couple of new shapes for you. These are quite tricky, so play it quite slowly at first, Then when you know the shapes play it with the appropriate 'louds' and 'softs'. This is called dynamics.



## Amazing Grace

*Moderato – with feeling*

*Trad.*

Handwritten musical score for 'Amazing Grace' in treble clef, 3/4 time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff has notes D, D, G, D with a triplet of eighth notes (D, E, F#) above the first D. The second staff has notes D, D, A, A, D with a triplet of eighth notes (D, E, F#) above the first D and a slur over the two A's. The third staff has notes D, G, D, D, A with a triplet of eighth notes (D, E, F#) above the second D. The fourth staff has notes G, D.

## Plaisir d'Amour

*Allegretto*

*M. Tedesco*

Handwritten musical score for 'Plaisir d'Amour' in treble clef, 3/4 time. The score consists of three staves. The first staff has notes G, D7, G, G, C. The second staff has notes G, D7, D7, C, D7, G. The third staff has notes Am, G, D7, G, G.

## El Condor Pasa

*Moderato*

*Trad.*

Em Em G G G G G Em

9 Em Em Em Em Em C C C

17 C G G G G C C C C G

27 G G G G Em Em Em Em

35 Em

### Recommended Listening

Not much is known about the composer, Tedesco, though the style indicates a piano composition, in the romantic style of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Listen out for romantic compositions and arrangement particularly by F. Tarrega and M. Llobet who contributed greatly to the guitar's popularity, expanded the repertoire by transcriptions as well by composing music that captured the culture and life of Spain. The CDs recommended in the Appendix provide you with a version of the other pieces here, to compare your playing to.

## END OF SECTION

Well done, this has been a challenging section, but you are making solid progress to get to this stage.

If all the theory is getting confusing, don't worry. You'll learn what you need as you go along. The knowledge of theory will assist your playing and increase your enjoyment but it isn't essential at this stage. The main thing is to develop your left hand and learn the chords.

Some of these can be quite difficult, but don't worry. Remember that perfection cannot be achieved overnight, and you can move on to the next section when you think you've learned the elements of whatever is in the present section, as long as you come back to revise and practice.

**By the end of this section, you should be able to:**

- **Play major, minor and 7<sup>th</sup> chords in the first position**
- **Play and change chords in a steady rhythm**
- **Play arpeggios fluently from the music**
- **Accompany a melody by strumming chords and with *p, i, m, a***
- **Understand what is meant by harmony, intervals and thirds.**
- **Play in the third position**
- **Understand and play triplets**