

Lesson Thirteen Developing Barre Chords

Gigajam Guitar School Lesson 13 IGS DBC

Lesson Objectives

- Introduce the concept of **Barre Chords**.
- Learn the shapes of major, minor, 7th and minor 7th Barre Chords.
- Understand and learn to play the Barre Chords of; E, F, Fm, F7, Fm7, F#, F#m, A, Am, Ab, Am7, A7, G, Gm, G7, G#m, Bb, Bm7, B and C.
- Integrate Barre chords with other **Open chords**.

Barre Chords

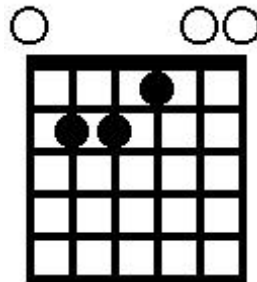
A Barre chord is so called as we place a finger across more than one string on a given fret which holds down and plays from two to six notes at a time.

We only have four fingers which can be used on the guitar to play chords (the thumb is used for bass notes occasionally but not often). We have six strings though and sometimes they all must be played. By making use of the Barre we can access all the notes we need to form certain chords.

A big advantage of learning barre chords is that it enables us to learn a large number of chords with relatively few shapes.

To demonstrate the principle of how Barre chords work we are going to revise the chord of E firstly. You may well remember learning how to play E from lesson 8, but for the sake of ease, here it is again. Look at the Chord box below and form the chord. Use the multimedia files as always to make sure you have formed the chord correctly.

Exercise 1 Chord of E lesson008.techstore.04



Understanding the formation of Barre Chords

The chord of E utilises all six strings and roots from the bottom E string. E is the lowest note in the chord of E and this is a very important fact when understanding how Barre chords work!

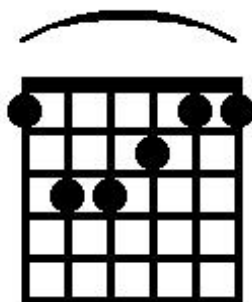
The shape of the E chord is the key concept behind playing Barre Chords. Let's take the example of playing the chord of F, which is the lowest note on the 6th string, and one note up from an open E string.

We can move the chord of E up one fret to play F. Now the problem with this is that only the notes under our fingers have moved. We also need to move the three open strings (1st, 2nd and 6th strings) to ensure that we have accessed the next chord.

The only way we can do this is to place a Barre across the first fret using our first finger. Accordingly we then need to re-finger the chord of E using fingers 2, 3 and 4, which will leave our 1st finger free to form the Barre. We now have the chord of F.

Look at our second chord box below for the chord of F. Try forming the chord with the help of the multimedia files.

Exercise 2 Chord of F lesson013.techstore.01



Note that the curved line at the top of the Chord box means form a barre. This example is the chord of F, so you are forming a bar across the first fret, barring all six strings rooting from string 6, which is of course, F.

Chord Names and Barre Chords

So we have moved our E chord shape up one fret so that the Barre is on the first fret and that gives us the chord of F. So if we move one fret up again so that the Barre is on the 2nd fret we have the chord of F#- also known as Gb. If we move up to the next fret so our Barre is on the 3rd fret we have the chord of G and so on.

If you have done your homework with you power chords from part 1 you will have noticed how the letter names of the chords are the same as the power chords!

Chord Letters and Shapes

There are two main points to consider when trying to find the correct Barre Chord.

The first point is the chord letter. For example, A, B, C#, Eb etc. This is found by placing the bar finger on the fret which contains the required note on the 6th string. If the chord of B is required then the barring finger is placed on fret 7.

The second point we need to consider is the shape that the remaining fingers play.

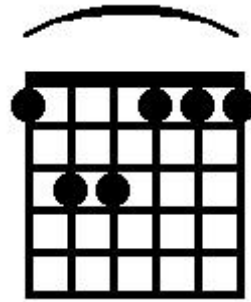
As the Barre chord is rooting from the E string, we simply form the type of E chord that we require next to the Barre. Therefore, if we want a chord of F minor, we place the Barre finger at the first fret, as this is where the F is on the 6th string. We then form a chord shape of E minor next to the Barre. The minor shape for E gives us the Barre chord shape for minor chords. We have in effect moved the chord of E minor up one fret and created F minor.

Similarly if we require F7 we play a chord of E7 with the a Barre at the first fret. A chord of Fm7 would be a chord shape of Em7, with a Barre at the first fret.

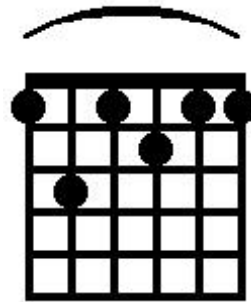
Understanding the relationship of Barre and chord shapes is a crucial part of understanding the formation of Barre chords.

We have already formed F, so let's now have a look at, Fm, F7 and Fm7, as Barre chords. As usual use the chord boxes and multimedia files to help form the chords correctly.

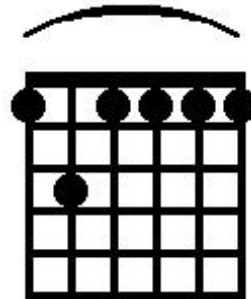
Exercise 3 Chord of Fm
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Exercise 4 Chord of F7
lesson013.techstore.03



Exercise 5 Chord of Fm7
lesson013.techstore.04



Four shapes, 48 Chords!

Our 4 main shapes need to be learned to enable you to play 48 different chords!

Why 48?... Well, you should have learned all the notes up to the 12th fret on the 6th string in lesson 6! Multiply those twelve notes by the four shapes above and you have 48 chords.

Being able to play chords on different parts of the Guitar will enable you to find your way around the Guitar much more easily and fluently, but obviously will take time to learn.

Is there a way to make learning all these chords easier?

Memorising Barre Chord shapes

- If you play a Bar Chord of F, all 4 fingers are being used.
- To access the minor shape simply remove finger 2.
- To access the 7th shape simply remove finger 4 (from the chord of F)
- To access the Minor 7 shape simply remove fingers 2 and 4 (from the chord of F).

Developing the technique to play Barre Chords

Most guitarists experience some physical difficulty in playing Barre Chords at first. The main difficulty is making all the strings, especially those under the barre, play clearly. The first thing to be aware of is hand position.

The back of the hand needs to be pushed forward and the wrist should be low. This will allow the hand to help press the strings, without having to squeeze too hard with the fingers.

Watch the technique store video very carefully to help you with your Barre technique.

Developing Barre Technique

lesson013.techstore.05



Developing Barre Chords

Let's now try and get some practical experience of playing Barre chords. It is worth noting that although you are barring all six strings, the barring finger is only playing 3 strings. Try to press on the relevant strings rather than on all six.

As the hand moves from one chord to the other, relax the hand emptying the fingers of tension. The fingers will still be in slight contact with the strings as they move from one chord to the other. They should not press down until the new chord is reached. This will enable a smooth change.

Play the following exercises after using the multimedia files as usual.

Exercise 6

lesson013.igsdbc.01



Exercise 7

lesson013.igsdbc.02



Exercise 8
lesson013.igsdbc.03



1 **B^b** 2 **Gm** 3 **A^b** 4 **F**

Exercise 9
lesson013.igsdbc.04



1 **C** 2 **Am⁷** 3 **F** 4 **G⁷**

Developing Fluency in your Chord Changes

In the following two examples there are two chords to each bar, increasing the level of fluency required to be able to make the changes sound smooth.

Exercise 10
lesson013.igsdbc.05



1 **G** **Am⁷** **Bm⁷** **Am⁷**

Exercise 11
lesson013.igsdbc.06



1 **F[#]** **G[#]m** **A⁷** **B**

More Practice

There are so many potential permutations it would be an exhaustive task to list them all here. You need to make up your own examples using variations of the 48 chords along the lines of the exercises we have shown you so far. This will give you an increasing working knowledge of the fingerboard whilst developing greater fluency of performance.

Integrating Barre chords with previously learned chords.

It is not common to play a song which only contains Barre chords, so we would be expected to combine Barre chords with Open chords. Open chords are so called as they have at least one open string contained in them. You will recall that an open string is a string which is played but has no finger on it.

Try the following examples which also incorporate strum patterns learned in lesson 11. In the following example only F#m is a Barre chord. The other chords are open chords.

Exercise 12 lesson013.igsdbc.07



In our last example of this lesson play F and G as Barre chords and C and Em as Open Chords.

Exercise 13 lesson013.igsdbc.08



Opportunities through Barre Chords

Barre chords provide a simple way of learning a lot of chords quickly. Obviously the skill is in being able to play them, rather than knowing them, so they will require a lot of practice to make them feel comfortable.

The ability to play chords and move seamlessly between many different chords is, as has been said many times before, a great skill for a musical guitarist. The integration of Barre chord knowledge into your playing should be of enormous benefit to you in both the short and long term...provide you practice them!