

**Short but sweet - perfect for beginners!*

LIGHTNING FAST GUITAR CHORD CHANGES



6 STEPS TO RAPIDLY IMPROVE THE
SPEED OF YOUR FINGERS

DAN THORPE

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Getting Started

More often than not, the first HUGE obstacle that most beginner students arrive at is being able to change chords fluently.

For many novice players, the frustration of learning to change chords is so big that often success or failure here decides whether or not they will continue learning guitar or give it up altogether.

It's no surprise really, as changing chords takes a huge amounts of finger strength, coordination, muscle memory and concentration to be able to move 2-4 fingers from one place to another while pressing down those dastardly strings.

In this eBook, you`ll find 6 simple and systematic solutions to master this area of guitar in quick time as well plenty of powerful tips to help you master this essential are of guitar playing..... quickly.

Follow these 6 powerful steps and you`ll save hours and possibly months of frustration.

Even Usain Bolt was slow once

Even Usain Bolt ran slowly at some point. Well, by his standards anyway. He had to learn some technique to get faster, just like you are doing now.

All the techniques outlined in this book will make a huge difference to your ability to change chords quickly and effortlessly.

Once you're able to change chords effectively and quickly you will literally open the door to being able to play a huge amount of songs.

Armed with a few simple chords and a capo, many guitarists have gone on to achieve great things.

All the way from Bob Dylan, The Beatles, more recently Ed Sheeran, and many more in between have based the majority of their songs and careers around the **simple chords and capo combination**.

No matter what your aspirations are on guitar, whether it's to play like Metallica, Foo Fighters, Led Zeppelin or Radiohead, a great place to start is by learning the essentials and one of those essentials is the ability to change chords fluently.

All these artists use basic chords in their songs at some point.

When learning anything new, it's definitely best to break it down into chunks.

Trying complicated strumming techniques, and learning to change chords at the same time is **not a good idea**. There is far too much to focus on.

So, for this lesson, we will focus on only the left hand changing chords fluently and in a future book ([sign up here](#) to be notified and receive it when it is out) we will focus purely on right hand rhythm technique.

Once you have both techniques down, it is fairly simple to put them together,

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and you`ll be well on your way to mastering the basics of rhythm guitar.

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It's really not that hard once a methodical system is used.

Each step gets progressively harder, so go through the steps in order of **1 to 6**, moving onto the next step once you have mastered the previous step.

When practicing chords changes limit yourself to practicing the changes with just two chords at first even if you know plenty more.

Learning how to change between two simple chords is much better and far more useful than knowing 30 different, complex chords but not being able to change between them.

The Fundamentals of Posture and Positioning

Before we tackle the specifics of how to speed up the fretting hand in regards to our chord changes, we really need to look at how **you and your guitar fit together**.

Ignoring posture and positioning of your left hand in your guitar playing is like taking a drive around the United States with an un-oiled, spluttering, noisy engine that won't even get you off your drive way.

Many guitarists start off on a very bad foot when it comes to posture. They slouch back on a soft chair, or they are hunched over the guitar with the headstock pointing downwards in this cool looking but very inefficient way.

Does this sound familiar?

If so, let's sort this very important aspect of your guitar playing out once and for all. Not only will good posture help you avoid injuries, it will make all aspects of your guitar playing more efficient **and it will most certainly help with your chord changes**.

Bad posture might look a bit cooler but it can cause problems to the wrist and hand, leading to repetitive strain injury and injuries to the tendons and joints as well as back problems.

If you're injured or constantly in pain, believe me your chords changes won't be getting any quicker, but that will be the least of your worries!

Sitting Posture

You may not play classical guitar, and you may never really want to.

That`s totally your choice of course (although I do definitely recommend learning a few classical pieces at some point - classical guitar is awesome) but you can learn a huge amount just from looking at the **way classical guitarists sit with their instrument.**

Classical guitar music has some notoriously difficult phrases, chords and lead lines. Therefore to play this style of music well, the guitarist needs to be in the most efficient position possible with his or her guitar.

Look at photo of the acclaimed and superb guitarist Brian Katz below.



When you are sitting down, this is the sort of posture you should be replicating.

Key Points:

- The guitar is placed in between the legs as opposed to the round part being placed on the right leg.
- The headstock is pointing upwards as opposed to the lazy guitarist who points the headstock downwards.
- The left leg is raised on a small footstool to allow your left hand to be at a comfortable height.

If you mimic players like Brian Katz, you will have a head start on all the lazy technique guitarists out there and the **techniques in this book will be even more effective.**

Standing Posture

When playing standing up, for most guitarists looking cool is everything.

Having the strap nice and low, with the guitar swinging round by their knees just like Tom DeLonge of Blink 182 or James Hetfield of Metallica is a look a lot of players really strive for.

It does look cool, but as with bad sitting posture it can cause problems to the wrist and hand, leading to repetitive strain injury and injuries to the tendons.

So, let`s get the strap tightened up a bit. What we want to do is **replicate our sitting position while standing up.**

Look at the picture of Tom Morello of Rage Against The Machine and Audioslave below.



He has his strap nice and tight and he can REALLY play.

In fact, when you see Tom Morello jumping about on stage playing his huge riffs in perfect time and with ease, you realise that **having the guitar in an optimal position is a must.**

Key points:

- The guitar is up high and most importantly the headstock is about level or just below the shoulder.
- The headstock is pointing upwards allowing you access to all parts of the fretboard with your fretting hand
- The guitar is centered in relation to the body.

Hand and Thumb Position

Let`s get our final points of posture and positioning sorted before we look at the specifics of changing chords.

When changing chords quickly the last point we really need to remember is that **our fretting hand needs to be in the ideal position.**

This makes the process of moving those fingers from chord to chord so much easier.

Tips for the fretting hand and thumb:

- Your left wrist should be generally be flat, or in a slight and natural arch.
- The left hand is straight, in-line with the forearm. Do not angle the wrist or bend it in a concave or convex angle.
- Your left thumb should be vertical and not bent at the knuckle
- Your left thumb should be somewhere between the 1st and 2nd fingers
- Your left thumb shouldn`t move about too much when changing between chords. Keep it between those 1st and 2nd fingers.

How a thirty dollar guitar sucked but improved my technique!

It definitely helps to have decent gear setup correctly. A good guitar with a suitable action and strings that are not heavy will make a difference.

A high action is very off putting for beginners, so I recommend getting this sorted ASAP if your guitar has this problem.

My first guitar was awful. It was from a shop here in the UK called Argos. Many of you may know it. It is notorious for selling pretty much anything, but a lot (not all) of the stuff is not of great quality.

I was about 10 years old when I got the guitar (for my birthday) but was about 15 when I actually had the desire to play it. The action on this thing was **so freaking` high I felt like I needed a clamp just to get the strings to touch the fretboard.**

That is the bad side.

It was painful to play and sounded rubbish, although because I had to show HUGE amounts of dedication to getting it sounding good, I believe it helped me in the long term.

I hardly strummed the thing for the month or two I had it, (until I got a better guitar – my trusty [Yamaha Pacifica](#) which I still own by the way), but what I did do was constantly practice my chord shapes and changes while watching TV.

The moral of the story. Even if your guitar is rubbish, you can still make some progress.

Once you have mastered changing from the first two chords you have chosen, add in another, then another, and so on.

I remember when I started learning I felt like banging my head against a brick wall trying to make the chord changes in the **Red Hot Chili Peppers** song **`Californication`**.

I pretty much had to pick up the fingers in my left hand and move them to the correct spot using my right hand!

Absolutely EVERY guitarist has to get past this point, so don't give up, try these tips and you'll be well on your way in no time.

The Essential Chords

Do not focus on learning lots of chords.

Learn these ESSENTIAL FIVE, and then learn lots of songs. You will be wasting your time learning lots and lots of chords. Many sound cool but are not necessary.

I'm sure you have seen books like [this](#) before. Stay away from them for now.

At least until you can play 10 songs comfortably from start to finish.

The first chords change I recommend and teach people is the change from **E minor to G Major**.

This chord change is commonly used in a LOT of songs.

You also get to keep you first finger in the same place which makes it easier too.

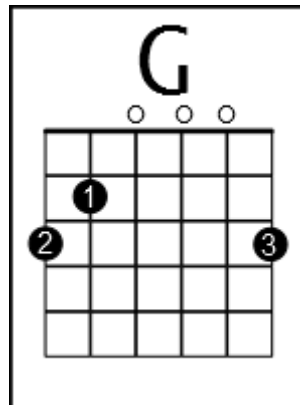
We will go through all the techniques using this example AND 3 other essential chords.

(Note: There are often multiple ways to play different chords, and this version of E minor is probably not the most commonly used, but when changing to a G chord, it is simpler to play it like this, especially when starting out).

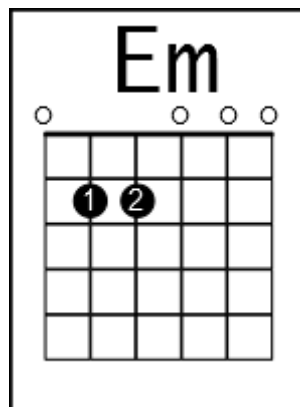
Once you have practiced the following techniques with G Major and E minor chords, add in C Major, then, D Major and finally A minor.

Once you can move between these 5 chords easily, armed with just a capo and a few strum patterns, **you will be able to play so many songs you will be blown away.**

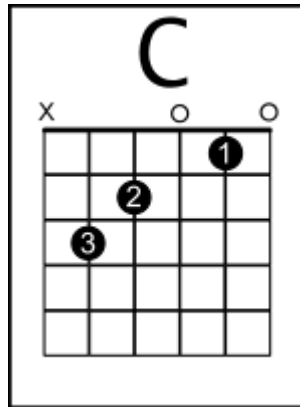
G Major



E minor

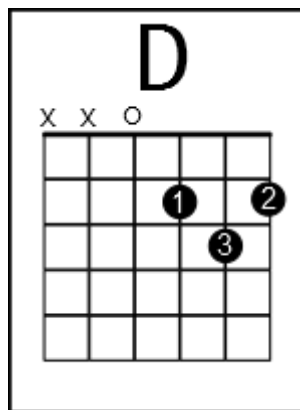


C Major



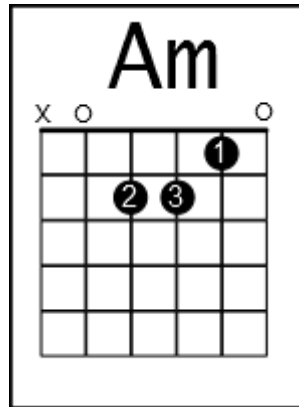
This is where things start to get a bit trickier. C Major is a difficult chord as the fingers are fanned across three frets but it is so common. Stick with it.

D Major



D Major can also be hard to master at first, but just like C, it is used everywhere. Once you have learned G, Em, C, D you can literally play a huge amount of songs.

A minor



We now have just one more chord to master (for now) and that is A minor. Not as common as the other chords, it is still a great chord to play and is featured in a huge amount of songs.

1) `Pivot` method

Mastering chord changes is all about muscle memory. When learning a new chord change, the first and simplest way to get your fingers used to moving to the right spot is by using what is called the `Pivot` method.

One finger will move first and then one by one the other fingers will pivot around that finger into the correct spot. Usually you will move the finger moving to lowest string first and then the other finger(s) move one at a time around that.

For example, in our E min to G Maj chord change the:

1st finger stays in the same position (use as pivot)

2nd finger will move from – the 2nd fret, 4th string to the 3rd fret, 6th string,

3rd finger moves to the 3rd fret, 1st string.

Most chord changes start on a down strum, so moving the relevant finger to the lowest string first makes sense as it gives you that fraction of extra time to play the chord.

The reason why this is such a good method is that it makes it much easier to get all the fingers in the correct position without being confused and allows you to build up the all important muscle memory required to change chords effectively.

Eventually, you will find your 2nd, 3rd and 4th fingers will be moving as fast as your first finger and the chord change will be fluent and clear.

2) `Freeze` method

The `Freeze` method is a lot of fun and can actually be done even without a guitar.

To do the `Freeze` method, do the following:

- Form the shape of the chord on the fretboard
- Strum it once making sure it sounds good
- Take your fingers off the fretboard, while keeping the chord shape as exact as possible.
- Hold the shape of the chord away from the fretboard for 2 seconds
- Place the fingers back on the fretboard.

Do this ten times for every chord you know.

You can even spray the fingers of your fretting hand with an imaginary can of freeze spray!

To do this method without a guitar, just try to form and hold the shape of the chord are in the air, imagining that you are playing it on the fretboard.

It's almost like chord changing practice for the air guitarist. Even this is useful, especially for when you are at work or whenever a guitar isn't near.

If you can see that your attempt at forming a G Major chord actually looks like a G chord in mid air you are on the right path.

It might take a while though, but results will definitely come.

It's a simple yet very effective technique, and really does help with the muscle memory needed to be able to change chords inside out.

3) `Blast` method

Form the chord shape and play it once, just to make sure you are playing it cleanly. Then mute the strings with your right hand (simply place your hand over strings where you would normally strum) and keep changing chords. Over and over keep changing back and forth between the chords.

It's called the `Blast` method as you aren't spending time practicing your strumming while getting the chord changes down, you are simply focusing on your left hand. (We won't neglect strumming, there will be lessons on that later, as it's essential).

This is a great exercise to do when you're watching TV or have people round as you are not strumming or making any `noise` while your long lost uncle is catching up with the family after 20 years of being on a desert island (or something like that). It's a great discreet method.

I used to use it back in the day when I started out. My family would often watch awful soap operas, so I would just get the guitar out, and master those changes!

Once you have all the fingers in your left moving back and forth to the correct place, try adding a simple strum to make sure you are playing the chords cleanly.

4) `Diamond` method

The next step is to be able to strum a chord for one whole bar and change the chord at the beginning of a new bar. This is what we are doing here.

Just play one down stroke of your chosen chord, count a full bar of 1,2,3,4 and change chord on the next 1. For example, if you`re changing from E min to G Maj, it will look like:

1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Em				G			

It`s called the `Diamond` method as on sheet music one strum per bar is often notated as a diamond.

This is the penultimate step before you are able to make your chord changes fluently in the context of a song.

Once you have mastered this, you`ll be able to focus more on your strumming patterns which I go into more detail in my book [Strumming 101](#).

5) `Lift up` Method

Many beginner guitarists don't realise this until someone shows them, but a lot of pro's and I mean a LOT use what I call the lift up method.

This is a great method and one you should use today.

It is when on the LAST UPSTROKE YOU SIMPLY LIFT YOUR FINGERS OFF THE FRETBOARD. This buys you time to get your fingers into position for the next chord.

Yes, it is just a fraction of a second, but hopefully by now, you will have realised that fraction a second makes all the difference.

If you were to strum a very basic pattern of:

1	and	2	and	3	and	4	and
D		D	U		U	D	U

Normally that last upstroke you would play with your fingers in the chord, but now we lift our fingers off on that highlighted blue upstroke.

As your fingers of your fretting hand are in the air they should be moving towards the next chord while the right hand is still strumming.

It is difficult at first as you need to be moving your fretting hand on an upstroke which you probably won't have done yet, but stick with it as it will make BIG difference.

6) `Keep On Strumming` Method

Keep your right hand moving when strumming. Your right hand should move like a pendulum - down up down up.

If your right hand stops while you change chords that sends a subconscious message to your left hand that it's allowed to move slower. Instead you want to beat your brain at its own game.

Your brain wants your hands to move at the same time. If one hand stops, so does the other. But if you force your right hand to keep moving, your left hand will automatically speed up!

One way to help with the keep on strumming method is to play along with your favorite songs as the recording won't slow down and wait for you to change chord. This is great practice.

You will find however that a lot of songs will be too fast for you to begin with.

I use [this](#) software with my students. It makes a big difference and is simple to use.

Either way, just keep that strumming arm moving!

Supercharge Your Finger Strength

One of the best ways to improve your finger strength is to:

- Write down every single **3 finger OPEN Chords** you know how to play, (Eg. A minor, C Major, E Major, D Major, etc)
- Instead of playing them with fingers 1, 2, and 3 - **swap your fingers around so that you now play them with fingers 2, 3, and 4.**

This is an awesome exercise that has multiple benefits such as **strengthening your 3rd finger and particularly the (often) underused 4th finger.**

It also gets your fingers playing familiar shapes in new ways which in turn helps to keep them nimble as well as improve their dexterity.

The main benefit though is that it **will improve your barre chords.**

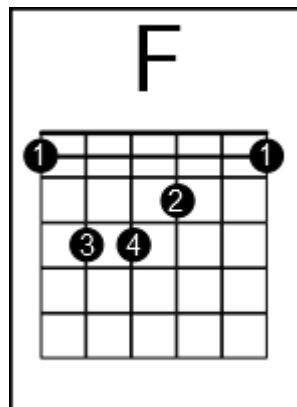
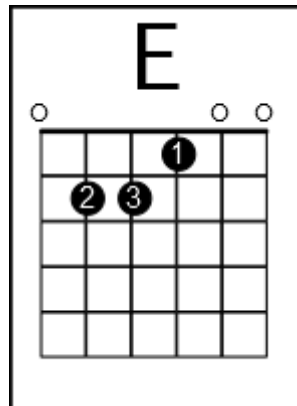
When you play barre chords you will need to use all 4 fingers a lot of the time.

A barre chord is essentially an open chord, but played with fingers 2, 3, and 4 higher up the fretboard with your 1st finger acting as a capo.

See the below diagram of how we take an **E Major chord** and turn it into an **F Major barre chord.**

See that the E chord shape is now played with different fingers which frees up our 1st finger to play the barre.

Therefore as a gate way to being able to play barre chords, practicing your open E chords (and all the other open chords) with only fingers 2, 3 and 4 will **massively help the transition from open chords to barre chords.**



Try playing a whole song you know that uses 3 finger (or less) open chords using this alternative method of fingering the chords.

It will be worth it. The benefits are huge!

The Need for Speed

Every day, go through all 6 methods for speeding up your chord changes and then test yourself with the following:

60 Second Changes

- Choose 2-4 chords that you are struggling to make faster and set a timer for one minute and see how many chord changes you can get through.
- Do this once every day for as long as it takes to improve the speed of the chord changes.
- Make a note of how many changes you made and strive to improve your `score` every day.

Time Trial

- Select a **key** from the below chart
- Then time yourself playing all of those chords in the order shown in the below chart and then an order of your choosing.
- Log how fast it takes and try to beat your time every day

Use the chart below to help you know which chords are in which **key**.

Start with the keys of **C Major and G Major** as they are the simplest. The chart tells you the key and below that it tells you which chords are in that key.

To show which chords are barre chords, I have placed a small (b) in brackets next to the chord. The barre chords are optional.

If you have not yet learned any barre chords it`s best to wait until you are comfortable with open chords. In which case, simply skip past them.

Although, it's a good idea to try out a barre chord quite early on to get a taste for them.

Note: Every standard key has 3 Major chords, 3 minor chords and a diminished chord. The diminished chord is very rarely used in mainstream music because of its unusual sound, so I have omitted them from this list.

Key - G Major

G Major, A minor, B minor (b), C Major, D Major, E minor

Key - C Major

C Major, D minor, E minor, F Major (b), G Major, A minor

Key - D Major

D Major, E minor, F# minor (b), G Major, A Major, B minor (b)

Key - A Major

A Major, B minor (b), C# minor (b), D Major, E Major, F# minor (b)

Key - E Major

E Major, F# minor (b), G# minor (b), A Major, B Major (b), C# minor (b)

As you will notice if you look closely at the above chart, there is just 1 barre chord in both keys of **G Major and C Major**.

That is one of the reasons those keys are both so popular on guitar. I recommend getting comfortable with all the chords in both those keys first and then work your way down to the keys of:

- D Major (2 barre chords),
- A Major (3 barre chords),
- E Major (4 barre chords!)

Random Chord Generator

Here`s an exercise I love to do with my students. Get a piece of card or paper and:

- Write down every chord you know how to play
- Cut up the card or paper to even sizes
- Fold each segment and put them into a hat or box
- Pick out two chords and practice changing between those two chords

Once you have done this with the first two chords that you pull out of the hat at least ten times, throw them back in the hat and start again.

This is a fun little game and if you know lots of chords you will get some unusual combinations.

Eg. If you know how to play an **E minor** and **C# minor** you will find it sounds a bit unusual.

The point with this game though, is to get your fingers making movements that they are not use to. This will help them **adapt quicker and get stronger for making those chord changes you are familiar with** as well as learning new chord changes in the future in a much faster manner.

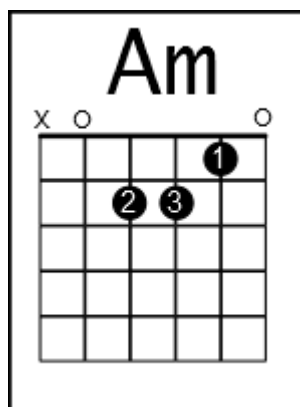
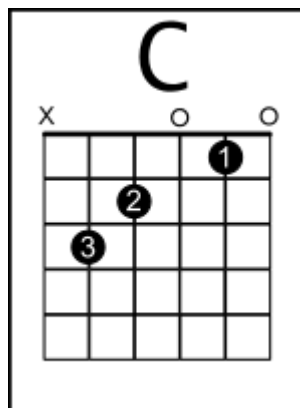
It`s also a lot of fun and can help you discover some interesting chord progressions for you to use in your own songs.

How to `Shortcut` Your Chord Changes

There are certain chord changes that we can shortcut. By `shortcut` I simply mean, **leave at least one finger on the fretboard in the exact same place for both chords.**

For example, let`s look at the commonly used chord change of **C Major to A minor.**

See below.



Take a close look at the above C Major and A minor example, and see if you can spot which fingers you can leave on the fretboard for both chords.

Yep, hopefully, you have noticed that you can leave:

- Finger 1 on the 1st fret, 2nd string
- Finger 2 on the 2nd fret, 4th string

This makes transitioning between the two chords much easier.

Every time you change from **C Major to A minor**, you will want to leave those **two fingers right where they are**. They act as anchors and can save you a lot of time mastering the change.

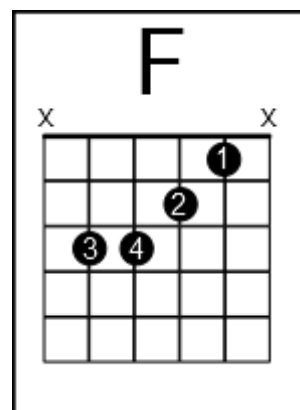
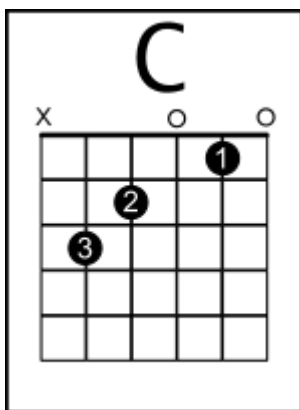
There are more chords we can `shortcut` like this.

There are however, certain chords that we cannot shortcut. Those chords require perseverance and the use of the methods outlined in this book on a regular basis.

As for the chords we can shortcut, let`s have a look at some more of them now.

The Most Common `Shortcut` chord changes

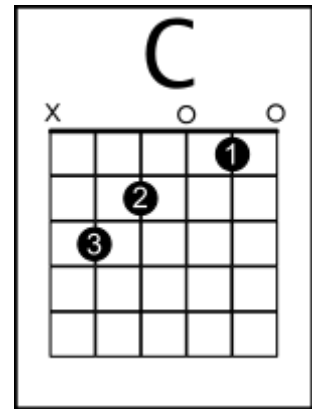
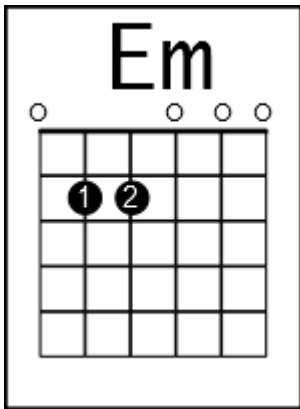
C Major to F Major (non-barre version)



Method:

- Leave finger 1 on fret 1, string 2
- Leave finger 3 on fret 3, string 5
- Move finger 2 across from fret 2, string 4, to fret 2, string 3.
- While playing C, hover finger 4 in close proximity to fret 3, string 4 ready to be placed down for the F chord

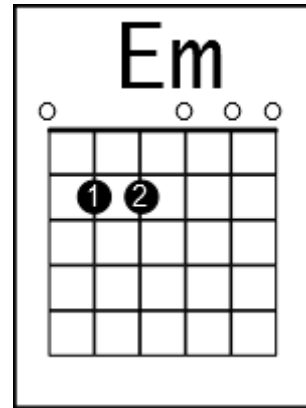
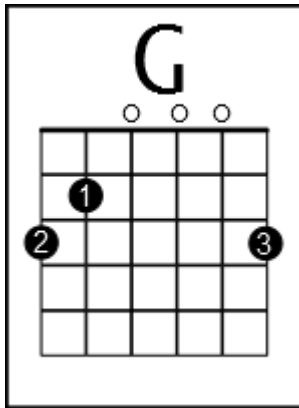
E minor to C Major



Method:

- Leave finger 2 on fret 2, string 4
- Pivot fingers 1 and 3 around finger 2 and place on their respective strings and frets simultaneously

G Major to E minor

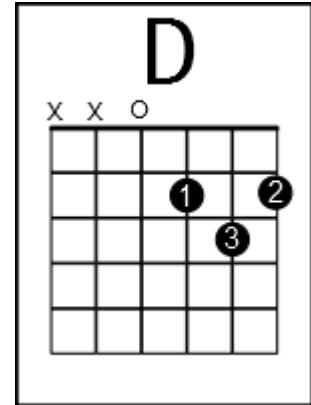
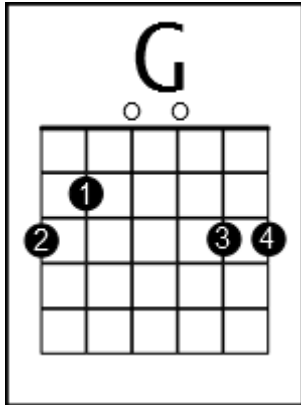


Method:

- Leave finger 1 on fret 2, string 5
- Pivot finger 2 around finger 1 and place on its respective string and fret.

G Major to D Major

Note: To allow us to shortcut this chord change we need to play the alternate version of the G Major chord which uses 4 fingers.



Method:

- Leave finger 3 on fret 3, string 2
- Pivot fingers 1 and 2 around finger 3 and place on their respective strings and frets.

Practice all these shortcut chord changes until you can play them in your sleep

Go back and forth between the two chords reversing what you did to get from chord A to chord B.

The above changes are some of the most common on guitar and you will no doubt play them in songs **tens of thousands of times during your guitar playing lifetime!**

5000 Changes to Perfection

It takes at least a few hundred attempts to be able to fluently change between two chords, and it can be very frustrating trying to learn.

In fact, the number is probably more like thousands.

When I teach a new student they often come to the first lesson and ask for tips to speed the process up of changing between chords.

Along the above tips, one thing I always tell them is:

“It takes 5000 attempts of changing between two chords before you get the change right every time. “

The number isn't exact and it's not meant to be (although I imagine it isn't that far off generally), but the number is there to encourage students to keep on making those changes because **every change is one step close to reaching this number and gaining perfection.**

Use these methods here whenever you are learning new chord changes and you will rapidly decrease the time it takes to get from A to B.

Remember, the more you practice the changes the faster you will master them. Don't give up and remember to have fun!

Use the methods here whenever you learn a new chord and you will rapidly decrease the time it takes to change from chord to chord.

Remember, the more you practice the changes the faster you will master them...and once mastered, you will be playing lots of great songs in no time!

Once you have learned a few songs, (ten is a great number) go and write a load of songs and keep practicing your skills. If you want help with song writing, have a look at [this](#).

Thanks for reading.

I hope you enjoyed this eBook.

Dan Thorpe

P.S. I have two brand new interactive e-courses coming soon for both **acoustic and electric guitarists** out there who want to see some stunning results in **less than 90 days**.

This is my biggest and best course and includes a huge amount of awesome content that I have honed and refined over many years of teaching.

Due to the course being interactive there are just **10 places available** for each course at the moment and both have a **huge 75% discount**.

Once all 10 places for each course are taken up, the price will return to normal, so act now if you are interested.

Click below for whichever course that interests you...

[90 Day Acoustic Ninja Course](#)

[90 Day Electric Bootcamp Course](#)

P.P.S

Good luck with your guitar playing. I wish you all the best for the future and **thank you so much for reading!**

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