



Get To Know Your Bar Chords Better

Many players know how to play a few bar chords, but do not know the mainly used forms or their associated names. Although they are not advanced chords by any measure, you still need to know them well as they lead onto more advanced concepts later on. This lesson assumes you know how to play a few bar chords, but are not sure of the main ones you need to know, or how to remember their names. Bar chords are physically difficult to play, so I do not recommend learning them if you have been playing guitar for less than a year.

There are two main forms of the bar chord: the commonly called E and A shapes. There are four variations contained in each: major, minor, seventh and minor seventh (see the diagram). So, you have eight chord forms to learn, and because you can just move them along from fret to fret, this makes a total of ninety-six chord names to learn. Not an easy feat, but if you practice these a little each day, I am sure you will have them all down soon enough. Be sure to use your position markers on the side of the neck, as this will help you learn the chords quicker.

The best way to begin is to take the E shape major chord and play it up the neck starting from E. Make sure to play E the bar chord way with fingers 2, 3, and 4, not the open chord way of 1, 2 and 3. When you move up the neck, just put your bar finger on and begin moving up the neck one fret at a time. Note that although this chord is an E major, we normally call it E, and assume you know it is a major chord.

To remember the names of the major chords the fret number is written below the diagram with the corresponding chord name below the fret number. So F is at the first fret, F# or Gb (same chord with two names) is at the second fret, G is at the third fret and so on. Now practice each chord for a good sound at each fret, while saying the chord names aloud, as this helps memorise the chord names quicker. Writing out your own diagrams will help to. If you are playing an acoustic guitar you might not be able to play past the tenth fret very well.

Once you have this E major chord and the names memorised, then it's time to move onto the seventh chord. Use exactly the same process with this as you did with the major chord, then move onto the minor and minor seventh chords.

The A shape bar chords not only have different shapes, but also the fret names are different. To finger the A shape major chord the first finger butts up against the sixth string to mute it, while the third finger hyper-extends to

mute the first string. It is a tricky chord to get right, but keep at it and it will eventually come.

Now starting with the A major chord, play along the neck like you did with the E shape chords and say the chord names aloud. A will

chords and their names, depending on where you are now with your guitar knowledge. Take your time with this because having a good knowledge of bar chords will serve you well into the future.

The E shape bar chords

Major

7th Chord

Minor

Mi 7th

Fret	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Name	E	F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E
		F#	G#	A#	C#	D#							

The A shape bar chords

Major

7th

Minor

Mi 7th

Fret	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Name	A	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	Gb	G	Ab	A
		A#		C#	D#	F#	G#						

be in the open position, A# or Bb will be at first fret, B at second, and so on. Then do the seventh, minor and seventh minor chords as you did for the E shape above.

All this could take you months of solid practice, to get sounding right, memorising the

Kevin Downing is a professional guitarist, teacher, and author. He can be contacted through his website at www.guitar.co.nz or through PO Box 4586, Palmerston North, 4442. Ph (06) 357 0057.