



Slash/Chords

A few readers have asked about slash chords over the last couple of months so I thought it would be a good topic for Guitar Cool. No, Slash chords are not named after the legendary Guns n' Roses' guitarist – although he does play these types of chords. They are chords that you see in music that look like F/A, or G/B. Verbally musicians call them 'F slash A', or 'F over A', or 'G with a B bass'. There is hardly a modern music chart that hasn't got one or two of these types of chords contained in it, knowing what these symbols mean and how to deal with them is part of being a good musician, so take the time to learn them well.

Typically people ask if the F/A means to play either F or A. The answer is no. What the symbol means is to play an F triad or chord as the top notes, while the A means to add an A as the lowest note, which can be seen in Example 1.

It can be clearly seen you have an F open-type chord at the first position with an open A as its bass note in that example. You play all the notes at once. I won't get too far into the theory of why chords are written like this as it would take a few pages to discuss. Just so long as you know what to do when you see such chord symbols is the most important thing, rather than understanding the complicated theory.

Example 2 shows an F chord with G as its lowest note (F/G). Example 3 is C/G, a simple open C chord with a G bass. Example 4 shows C as a bar with an A bass, and Example 5 shows C with a Bb bass.

Exercise 6 is a finger-style progression that is commonly heard in modern music. Notice there is a C chord on top all the way through with a descending diatonic bass line. It is fun to play – make sure you are using the correct right hand fingers as indicated; p = thumb, i = index finger, m = middle finger, a = ring finger. 'Simile' means to continue the finger-picking in a similar fashion for the following two measures.

Exercise 7 is a common rock-style chord progression using slash chords. This type of progression would be played in a band with the bass player playing the static A bass note while the guitar plays the chords on top, which would ring through the whole measure.

Ex 1 Ex 2 Ex 3 Ex 4 Ex 5

F/A F/G C/G C/A C/Bb

Example 1: F/A chord. Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: F4, A4, C5. Bass clef: T (1), A (2), B (3), B (0).

Example 2: F/G chord. Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: F4, A4, C5. Bass clef: T (1), G (2), B (3), B (3).

Example 3: C/G chord. Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: C4, E4, G4. Bass clef: T (0), G (0), B (0), B (3).

Example 4: C/A chord. Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: C4, E4, G4. Bass clef: T (5), A (5), B (5), B (5).

Example 5: C/Bb chord. Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: C4, E4, G4. Bass clef: T (5), Bb (5), B (5), B (6).

Ex 6

Exercise 6: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chords: C, C/B, C/A, C/G, C, C/B, C/A, C/G. Bass clef: T (0), A (1), B (0), B (0); T (0), A (1), B (0), B (0). Fingerings: p i m a p i m a p i m a p i m a simile.

Ex 7

Exercise 7: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chords: A, G/A, D/A, A. Bass clef: T (5), A (7), B (0); T (3), A (4), B (0); T (3), A (4), B (0); T (5), A (7), B (0).

Slash chords are not too difficult to understand, but many people find them difficult to hear in their favourite songs, so that might take a bit of practice. When faced with a slash chord in a new song you are playing, take the time to work it out first, as many are not standard chord shapes that you might be used to playing. Find a suitable chord shape and then cut it down to only three notes to make it easier to finger, then add the bass note. If you are using a non-standard fingering the new slash chord

might take a bit of practice getting into and out of it. Above all, just have fun with slash chords.

Thanks again to those who have contacted me recently. Your feedback and questions continue to give me many ideas for future articles and lessons.

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