

Easy Guitar Songbook (12 Songs)

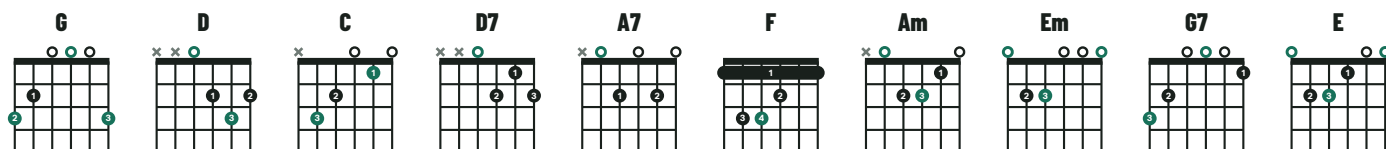
12 easy public-domain songs in one PDF: chord shapes, bar-by-bar charts and strumming for each.

Twelve classic songs that beginners can really play, collected in one printable book. Most use just two or three chords (G, C and D), so you can start playing songs in your first weeks. Every song has the chord shapes, the chord order bar by bar and a strumming or picking pattern. All public domain, all Fretwork arrangements.

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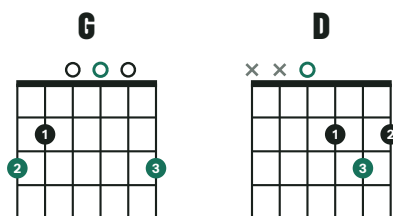
EVERY CHORD IN THIS BOOK



Buffalo Gals Guitar Chords

An 1844 dance tune that still sounds good on a front porch.

KEY **G** TIME **4/4** LEVEL **Easy** TEMPO **100 BPM** CHORDS **G, D**



VERSE

G	1	G	2	G	3	G	4
D	5	D	6	G	7	G	8

CHORUS

G	1	G	2	G	3	G	4
D	5	D	6	G	7	G	8

STRUM **D DU D DU**

How to learn it

1. Learn G and D, and make sure both ring cleanly. 2. Play D DU D DU on G, then the same strum on D. 3. Practise the change from G to D without stopping the strum. 4. Play at 100 beats per minute, and keep the rhythm going through messy changes.

Tips

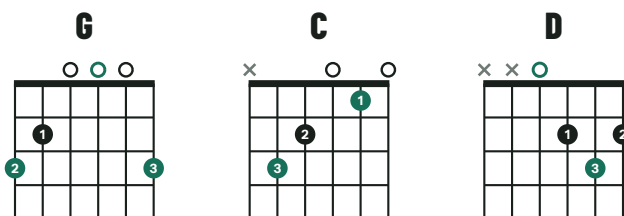
Keep moving. A slightly messy chord change is better than a stopped strum. Stay in time. Tap your foot on every beat so the changes land on time.

Written by Cool White in 1844; long in the public domain. Fretwork's arrangement above is our own simple version written for beginners.

Down by the Riverside Guitar Chords

Three chords and a swinging beat. A favourite first singalong.

KEY **G** TIME **4/4** LEVEL **Easy** TEMPO **100 BPM** CHORDS **G, C, D**



VERSE

G	1	G	2	G	3	G	4
C	5	C	6	G	7	G	8

CHORUS

G	1	G	2	C	3	C	4
G	5	D	6	G	7	G	8

STRUM **D DU DU DU**

How to learn it

1. Learn G, C and D until each rings clearly. 2. Play D DU DU DU on G, keeping the same strum for each change. 3. Move to C and D with the same strum. 4. Play at 100 beats per minute and keep the strum steady through every change.

Tips

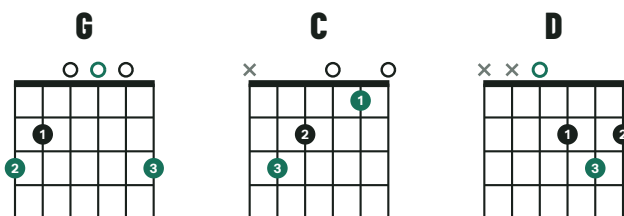
Keep it driving. The song should feel pushed forward, so do not let the strum drag. Count out loud. Four counts per bar keep the changes in place.

Traditional spiritual, published in 1918 and in the public domain. Fretwork's arrangement above is our own simple version written for beginners.

Oh! Susanna Guitar Chords

Three chords and a tune you cannot get wrong. A good test of whether your G to D change is fast enough yet.

KEY **G major** TIME **4/4** LEVEL **Easy** TEMPO **112 BPM** CHORDS **G, C, D**



VERSE

G	1	G	2	D	3	D	4
G	5	G	6	D	7	G	8
G	9	G	10	C	11	C	12
G	13	G	14	D	15	G	16

STRUM **D D U D D U**

How to learn it

1. Make sure G, C and D are all ringing cleanly. 2. Time yourself: how many G to D changes can you make in a minute? Aim for thirty or more before trying the song at tempo. 3. Strum the pattern on G alone until the hand movement is automatic. 4. Play bars one to four at half speed: two bars of G, two of D. 5. Work through the chart, then play along at a slow tempo and build up.

Tips

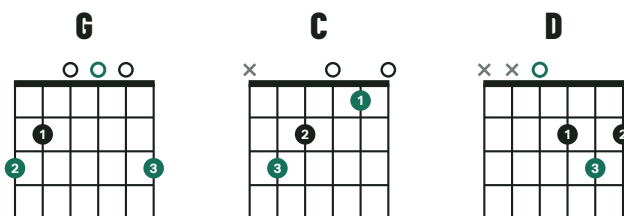
G to D is the whole song. Practise that one change on its own and the rest follows. Use the play-along slowly first. Set it to around 70 beats per minute, then raise it in steps of ten. The C arrives late. It only appears in bars eleven and twelve, so do not expect it earlier.

Stephen Foster, 1848. Public domain.

Amazing Grace Guitar Chords

Three chords, three beats to the bar, and a melody almost everyone already knows. The best possible first song in 3/4.

KEY **G major** TIME **3/4** LEVEL **Easy** TEMPO **84 BPM** CHORDS **G, C, D**



VERSE

G	1	G	2	C	3	G	4
G	5	G	6	D	7	D	8
G	9	G	10	C	11	G	12
G	13	D	14	G	15	G	16

STRUM **D D D**

How to learn it

1. Get G, C and D ringing cleanly on their own. Pick each string one at a time and fix any that buzz. 2. Practise the changes in pairs: G to C, then G to D, then C to G. One minute each. 3. Strum three times per bar on G alone, counting one, two, three out loud. 4. Play the first four bars: G, G, C, G. This is most of the song already. 5. Add the rest of the chart and play along at a slow tempo.

Tips

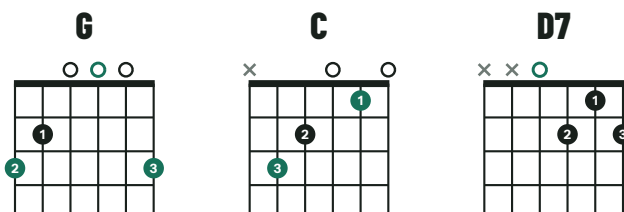
Three beats, not four. If it starts feeling like four, stop and count out loud again. Keep the strum even. A beginner's instinct is to hit beat one hard and let two and three fade. Aim for three strums of equal weight. Then try the bass-strum-strum. Once even strumming is comfortable, play the bass note of the chord on beat one and strum on two and three. It sounds much more like a real accompaniment.

Words by John Newton, 1779; the New Britain melody dates from 1829. Public domain.

Red River Valley Guitar Chords

A waltz in three with three chords. The easiest place to learn the bass-strum-strum that makes an accompaniment sound real.

KEY **G major** TIME **3/4** LEVEL **Easy** TEMPO **100 BPM** CHORDS **G, C, D7**

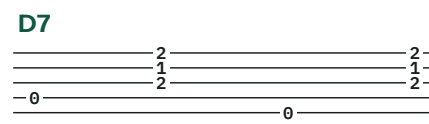
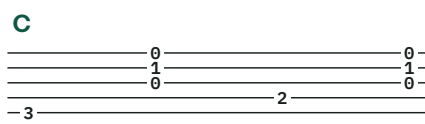
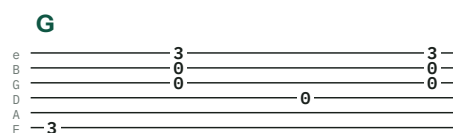


VERSE

G	1	G	2	C	3	C	4
G	5	G	6	D7	7	D7	8
G	9	G	10	C	11	C	12
G	13	D7	14	G	15	G	16

STRUM Bass strum strum

PICKING PATTERN (one bar of each chord)



How to learn it

1. Learn G, C and D7. D7 is easier than D for most beginners. 2. On G alone, pick the low E string on beat one, then strum the top three strings on beats two and three. 3. Do the same on C, picking the fifth string as the bass note, and on D7, picking the fourth. 4. Play bars one to four: two bars of G, two of C. 5. Add D7 and play the full sixteen bars with the play-along.

Tips

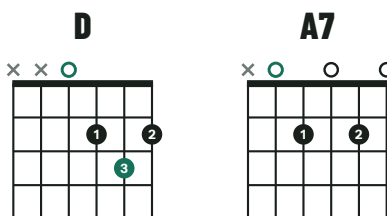
The bass note changes with the chord. Low E for G, fifth string for C, fourth string for D7. Getting this right is what makes the pattern sound correct. Strum only the thin strings on beats two and three. Hitting all six makes it sound heavy and muddles the bass note. Count one, two, three out loud. Three-beat time slips into four very easily when you stop counting.

Traditional North American folk song, 19th century. Public domain.

Tom Dooley Guitar Chords

Two chords, one steady strum. If you have never finished a song before, start here.

KEY **D** TIME **4/4** LEVEL **Easy** TEMPO **100 BPM** CHORDS **D, A7**



VERSE

D 1	D 2	A7 3	A7 4
A7 5	A7 6	D 7	D 8

CHORUS

D 1	D 2	A7 3	A7 4
A7 5	A7 6	D 7	D 8

STRUM **D DU D DU**

How to learn it

1. Learn D and A7, and make sure both ring cleanly. 2. Play D DU D DU on D, then on A7. 3. Practise the change from D to A7, which is the only chord move in the song. 4. Play at 100 beats per minute and keep the rhythm even.

Tips

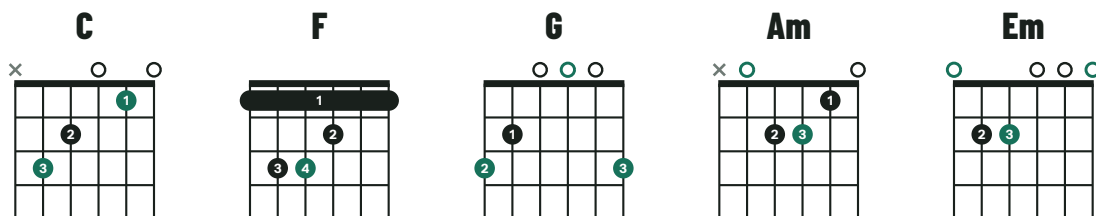
Change on the beat. Move to A7 on beat one of the bar, then hold it. Keep your hand loose. A relaxed hand makes the two-chord switch quicker.

Traditional American ballad from the 1860s; words and tune are long out of copyright. Fretwork's arrangement above is our own simple version written for beginners.

Kumbaya Guitar Chords

A 1926 spiritual that became the campfire song.

KEY: **C** TIME: **4/4** LEVEL: **Easy** TEMPO: **100 BPM** CHORDS: **C, F, G, Am, Em**



VERSE

C 1	C 2	F 3	C 4
C 5	Am 6	G 7	G 8

CHORUS

C 1	F 2	C 3	Am 4
C 5	G 6	C 7	C 8

STRUM **D DU D DU (slow)**

How to learn it

1. Learn C, F and G, then Am and Em. 2. Play D DU D DU on each chord, one chord per bar. 3. Practise the change from C to F, which comes up often. 4. Play at 100 beats per minute, or slower if you are singing along.

Tips

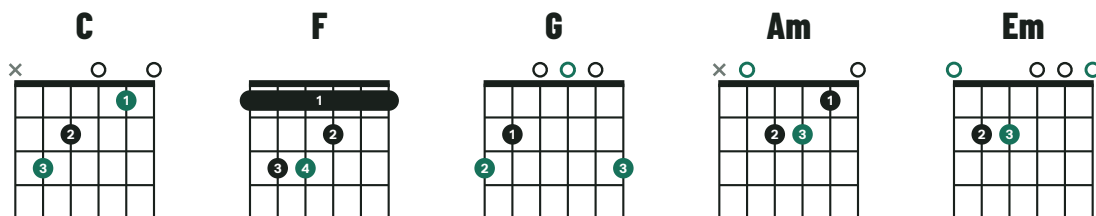
Sing with it. Campfire songs are sung first; the guitar follows the voice. Keep it relaxed. A slow tempo gives you time to find the next chord.

African-American spiritual first recorded in 1926 and in the public domain. Fretwork's arrangement above is our own simple version written for beginners.

Michael, Row the Boat Ashore Guitar Chords

A rowing song from 1867 with a rhythm that teaches itself.

KEY: C TIME: 4/4 LEVEL: Easy TEMPO: 100 BPM CHORDS: C, F, G, Am, Em



VERSE

C 1	F 2	C 3	Am 4
C 5	F 6	C 7	G 8

CHORUS

C 1	F 2	C 3	Am 4
C 5	G 6	C 7	C 8

STRUM D DU D DU

How to learn it

1. Learn C, F and G, then Am and Em. 2. Play D DU D DU on each chord, one chord per bar. 3. Practise the change from C to F, which comes up often. 4. Play at 100 beats per minute and sing along to keep the beat.

Tips

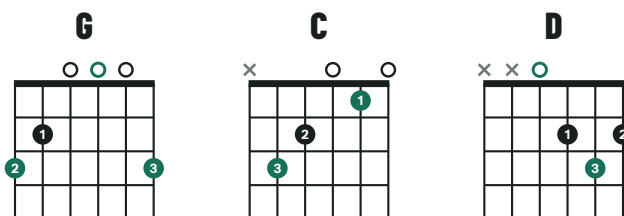
Use the call. The song is built on call-and-response, so pause on the line that answers. Stay steady. A calm strum fits the spiritual's pace.

African-American spiritual, written down in 1867 and in the public domain. Fretwork's arrangement above is our own simple version written for beginners.

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot Guitar Chords

A spiritual from before 1872, built on the first three chords you learn.

KEY: **G** TIME: **4/4** LEVEL: **Easy** TEMPO: **100 BPM** CHORDS: **G, C, D**



CHORUS

G 1	G 2	C 3	G 4
G 5	Em 6	D 7	D 8

VERSE

G 1	G 2	C 3	G 4
G 5	D 6	G 7	G 8

STRUM D DU D DU

How to learn it

1. Learn G, C and D until each rings clearly. 2. Add Em for the lines that need it. 3. Play D DU D DU on each chord, one chord per bar. 4. Play at 100 beats per minute and sing along to keep the pace.

Tips

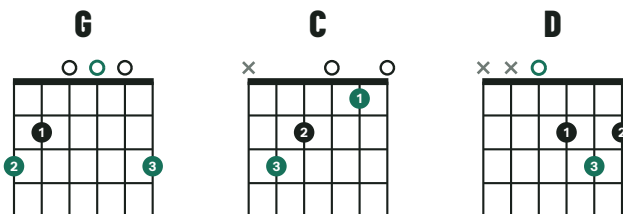
Sing the chorus. Singing helps you hear the change points. Keep it steady. A calm strum suits the spiritual.

African-American spiritual documented before 1872 and in the public domain. Fretwork's arrangement above is our own simple version written for beginners.

Will the Circle Be Unbroken Guitar Chords

A 1907 gospel standard built on the three chords you learn first.

KEY **G** TIME **4/4** LEVEL **Easy** TEMPO **100 BPM** CHORDS **G, C, D**



VERSE

G	1	G	2	C	3	C	4
G	5	G	6	D	7	D	8

CHORUS

G	1	G	2	C	3	C	4
G	5	D	6	G	7	G	8

STRUM **D DU D DU**

How to learn it

1. Learn G, C and D until each rings clearly. 2. Play D DU D DU on each chord. 3. Practise the change from G to D, which comes up often. 4. Play at 100 beats per minute and sing along to keep the beat.

Tips

Sing and play. Singing helps you keep the timing. Keep it steady. A calm strum suits the hymn.

Words by Ada Habershon, music by Charles Gabriel, 1907. Public domain. Fretwork's arrangement above is our own simple version written for beginners.

When the Saints Go Marching In Guitar Chords

The cheerful three-chord standard. If you can change between G, C and D, you can play this today.

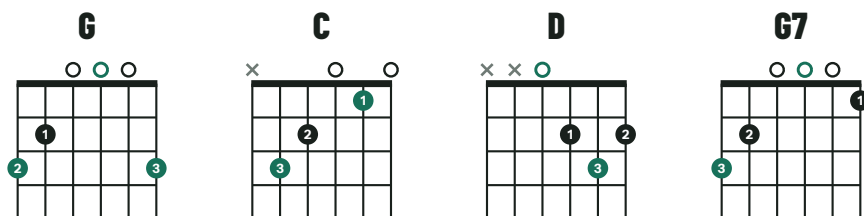
KEY
G major

TIME
4/4

LEVEL
Easy

TEMPO
104 BPM

CHORDS
G, C, D, G7



VERSE

G	1	G	2	G	3	G7	4
C	5	C	6	G	7	G	8
G	9	D	10	D	11	D	12
G	13	C	14	G	15	D	16

STRUM D D D U D U

How to learn it

1. Get G, C and D clean and learn the changes between them. 2. Add G7, which is G with one finger moved. It appears in bar four and makes the move into C sound right. 3. Strum four down-strums per bar on G alone, counting one, two, three, four. 4. Play bars one to four: three bars of G, then G7. Then add the two bars of C. 5. Build up through the chart and play along, raising the tempo once you can get through it without stopping.

Tips

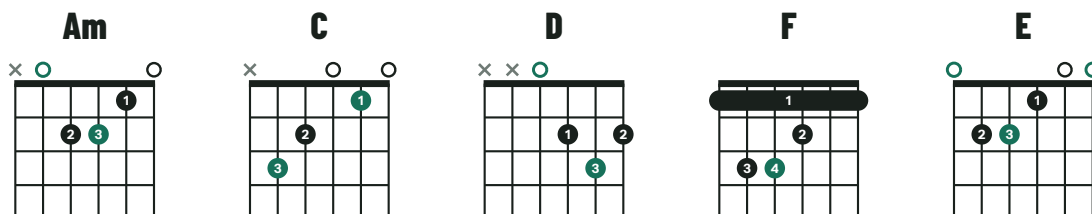
G7 matters more than it looks. It is what pulls the music toward C. Playing plain G there sounds flat by comparison. Keep the strumming hand going. If a chord is not ready, strum the beat anyway and catch up. Stopping is a worse habit than a missed chord. Start slower than feels natural. This song invites rushing, and rushing is what makes beginners' versions sound untidy.

Traditional American gospel hymn, early 20th century. Public domain.

House of the Rising Sun Guitar Chords

The arpeggio song every beginner wants. Five chords, one picking pattern, and it sounds finished from the first run-through.

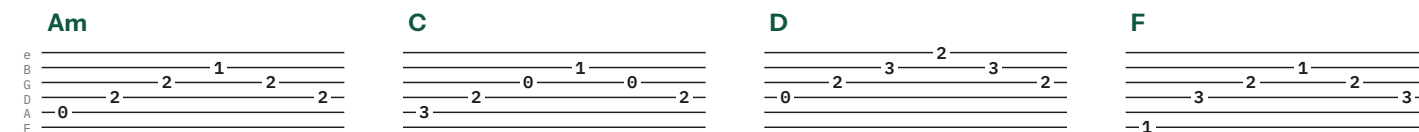
KEY **A minor** TIME **6/8** LEVEL **Improver** TEMPO **76 BPM** CHORDS **Am, C, D, F, E**



VERSE

Am C	1	D F	2	Am C	3	E E	4
Am C	5	D F	6	Am E	7	Am E	8

PICKING PATTERN (one bar of each chord)



How to learn it

1. Learn the five shapes on their own. Am and C you may already know. D and E are straightforward. F is the hard one, so use the alternative below until the barre is comfortable.
2. Play the pattern on Am alone, slowly, one note per count of six. Pick the notes cleanly rather than quickly.
3. Add C. Play four bars of Am, then four of C, keeping the right hand moving through the change.
4. Work through the chart two bars at a time. Am to C, then D to F, then back.
5. Put the whole eight-bar verse together at a slow tempo with the play-along, then raise the tempo.

Tips

The F is optional at first. Use Fmaj7 (xx3210) instead. It keeps the same feeling and needs three fingers rather than a barre. Let the notes ring. Do not lift your left hand between notes. The whole chord should be held while the right hand picks through it. Count out loud. Six per bar. Beginners rush bars three and four more than any other part of the song.

Traditional American folk ballad, published in collections from the 1920s. Public domain.