

How Many Guitar Chords Do I Need To Know?

Guitar chords, (note groups played specifically on a guitar,) differ only from other types of chords by virtue of instrument; they're simply a series of three or more notes played together. These notes don't necessarily have to be played simultaneously, however.

Broken chords (also referred to as arpeggios) are three or more notes that aren't played at the same time but closely enough to still be heard as a group or whole. And even the three-note rule is open to the occasional exception; some guitar chords consist of only two notes, but they still function as chords because they work diatonically in the same way that a major or minor chord would.

Guitar chords might very well be the most important element of guitar playing; after all, they're the basis of what makes a song. Most people picking up a guitar for the first time figure out a few guitar chords before even going for their first lesson, and still more teach themselves guitar without any help from an instructor. Self-taught guitarists learn chords in a number of ways. Some learn by listening to their favorite songs and slowly picking out the notes, a common yet often frustrating process. Others figure out the chords by learning to read tabs, a type of sheet music intended for fretted instruments that uses a graph-like chart to show where on the frets the fingers are placed. Both techniques are common among those learning the guitar, though the number of self-taught guitarists who never learned to read tab is fairly high.

Just like any other instrument, the sheer number of possible chord-groups can often be overwhelming for a new guitarist. And even the frequently taught chords are beginning to fall by the wayside, making room for a variety of guitar sounds created by tuning the strings in almost innumerable ways. Though power-chords (a type of note group using a base note, an octave note and the fifth) are still the most common type of chords, new bands are increasingly experimenting with alternate tunings to create new sounds; alternative bands have been toying with this way of playing interesting guitar sounds for decades.

So how many chords does a guitarist really need to know?

Most simple songs contain just 3 called "primary chords". So even a stark beginner can learn 3 simple note groups well enough to strum along and accompany himself as he sings. But after that, the sky is the limit; there are thousands of possible chords, so it is up to the individual guitarist as to how many he or she want to master.

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About the Author

Duane Shinn is the author of the popular free 101-week online e-mail newsletter titled "Amazing Secrets Of Exciting Piano Chords & Sizzling Chord Progressions - Intelligent Piano Lessons For Adults Only!" available at <http://www.playpiano.com> with over 84,400 current subscribers.