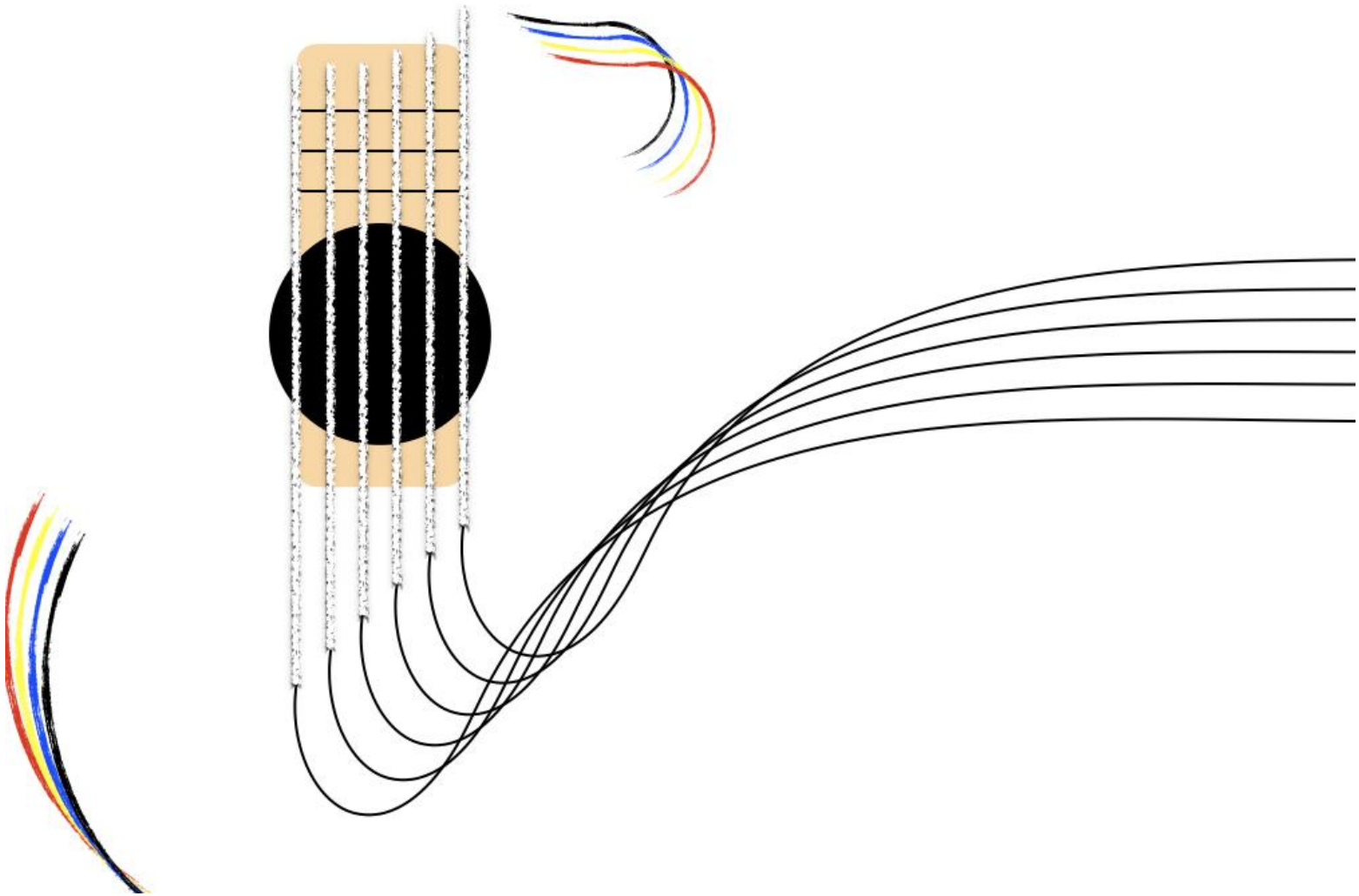


# Guitar Chord Handbook:

An Introduction to Commonly Used Chords

For Music Therapy and Music Education Students



Bill Matney and Brenna Niemuth

# **Guitar Chord Handbook:**

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For Music Therapy and Music Education Students

Bill Matney & Brenna Niemuth

University of Kansas Libraries  
Lawrence, KS 66045

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Free copies of this work and its two companion volumes are available for download in PDF format:

***Guitar Chord Handbook*** (<http://hdl.handle.net/1808/29433>)

***Chord Progression Handbook*** (<https://hdl.handle.net/1808/29434>)

***Strumming, Fingerpicking, and Hybrid Accompaniment Patterns for Guitar***  
(<https://hdl.handle.net/1808/29435>)

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Lawrence, KS 66045

## Preface

This work is one part of a three-part Open Educational Resource (OER) that teaches students how to play the guitar as an accompaniment instrument, facilitating technical, theoretical, and ear skill development that can translate into a range of song styles. Materials may be used either as primary or supplemental guides for: (a) non-primary guitar classes, (b) musicianship classes for music therapy and music education students, and (c) other musicianship classes.

This resource includes three handbooks and a set of supplementary videos.

- The ***Guitar Chord Handbook*** (<http://hdl.handle.net/1808/29433>) provides visuals for common open chords, as well as some barre and color chords.
- The ***Chord Progression Handbook*** (<https://hdl.handle.net/1808/29434>) maps out more than 20 common chord progressions found in folk and popular music, providing song examples.
- The third handbook, ***Strumming, Fingerpicking, and Hybrid Accompaniment Patterns for Guitar*** (<https://hdl.handle.net/1808/29435>), facilitates detailed development of strumming, muting, plucking, and combined skills with more than 150 exercises. Videos provide visual reinforcement for each strumming/fingerpicking exercise.
- **Videos for Strumming Patterns:** Each strumming pattern has been video recorded as a resource for you. These videos can be located at: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCZYlvXCKgIMZHkCvJ9wqgd8cpC0eZHYd>

## About Open Educational Resources

UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) defines Open Educational Resources (OER) as "teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions." OER may be legally retained, reused, revised, remixed, and redistributed (Wiley). These resources are a powerful mechanism for increasing access to and equity in educational content, as well as supporting innovation in pedagogy and increasing academic freedom. The University of Kansas Libraries actively promotes and supports the creation and use of OER. For more information see <https://openaccess.ku.edu/oer>.

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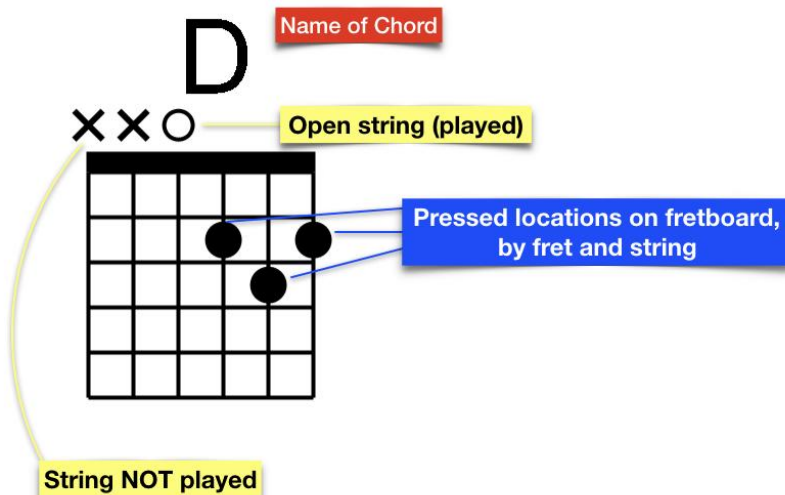
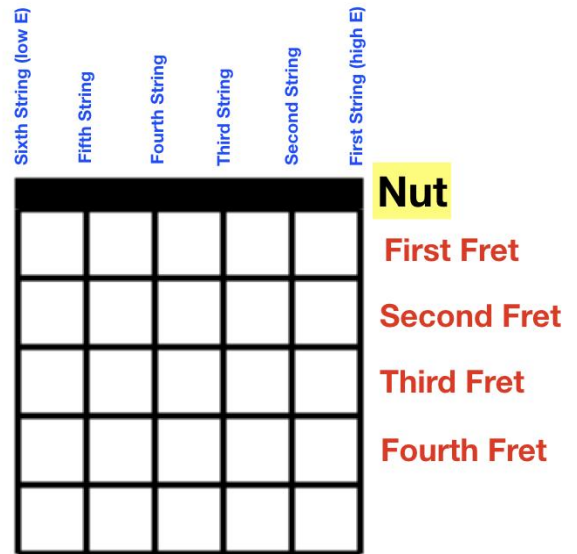
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# Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you visual resources as you are learning guitar chords. Chords are sequenced in a fashion that takes into account a few factors, including ease of play, commonality of play, type of chord, and other groupings (such as barre chords). The book provides both standard chord visuals and pictures. Both of these visual resource types are described below.

## Chord Visuals

If you place your guitar in a way that it is both upright and the front is facing you, you see the six strings leading up vertically to the *nut* of the guitar. Most introductory chords on the guitar are placed close to this top area of the fretboard. Chord visuals resemble this vertical placement, showing the nut of the guitar and the first four or five frets. The adjacent visual shows you numbering for frets and strings. The below visual shows how these are combined to show where you depress strings on the fretboard.

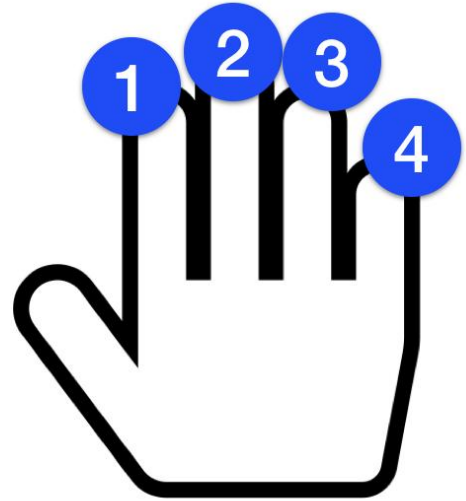


The next visual helps us to understand what strings are depressed in a chord (circles on fretboard), what strings are played even when not depressed (O's above nut of guitar visual), and what strings are NOT played (X's above nut of guitar visual). We also see the name of the chord above.

## Numbers for Fingers on Chording Hand

Our chording hand is the hand with which we make chords. Since most people play a “right handed” guitar, the chording hand is most often the left hand.

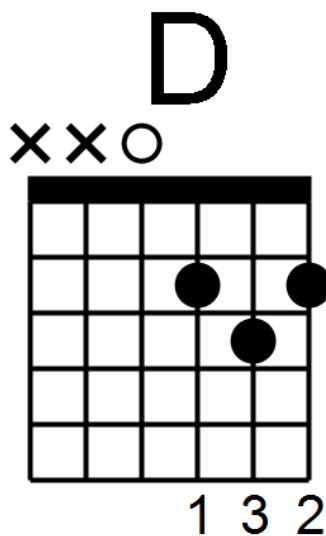
We use our fingers to depress strings, numbering them in this order. Chord visuals use these numbers to show us common ways to place fingers for chords.



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We then end up with a chord visual like below, showing the complete information for the chord. We need to keep in mind the following:

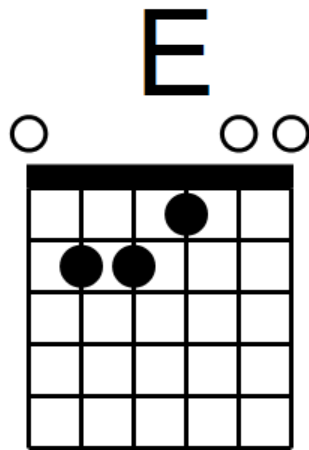
- What fingers are being used
- Where those fingers are placed on the fretboard (what frets and strings)
- What open strings are being played (O's)
- What strings are NOT being played (X's)



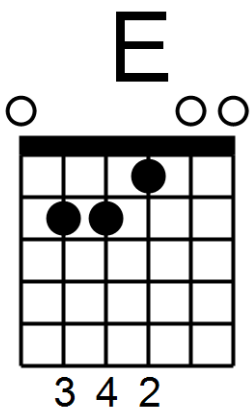
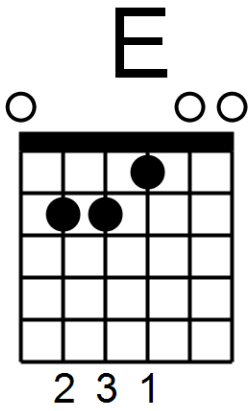
# **Major Chords**



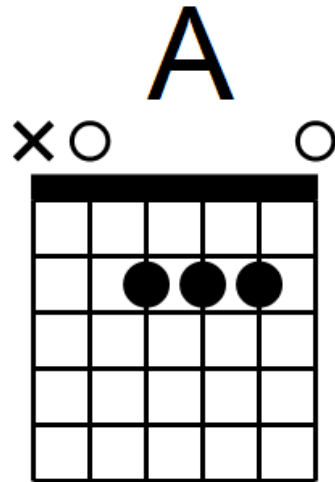
# E Major Chord



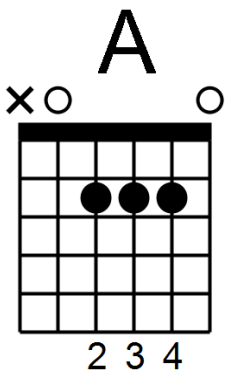
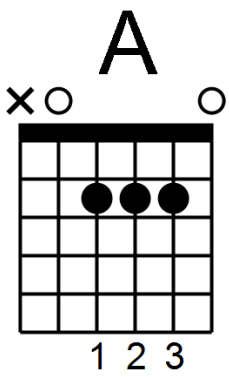
## Fingerings for E Major



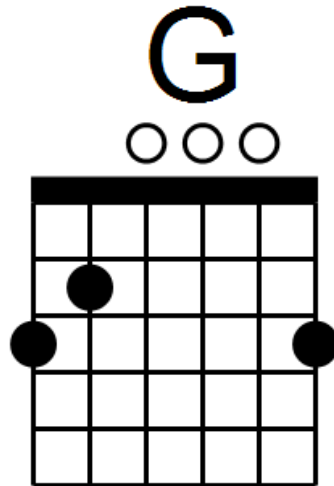
# A Major Chord



## Fingerings for A Major

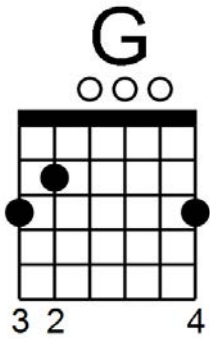
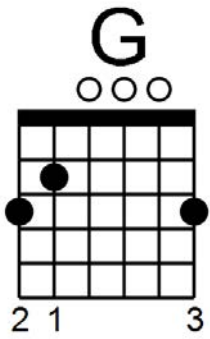


# G Major Chord

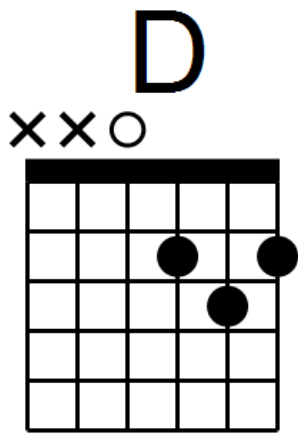


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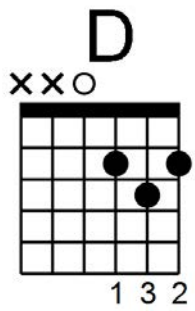
## Fingerings for G Major



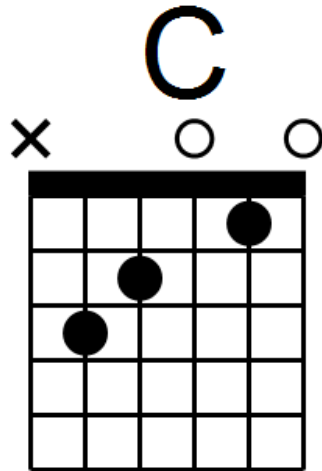
# D Major Chord



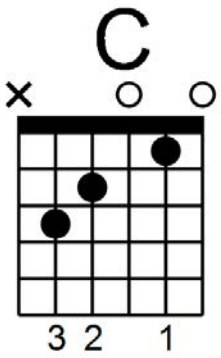
Fingerings for D Major



# C Major Chord



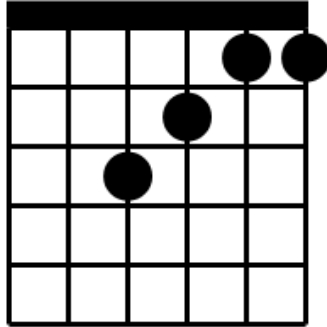
## Fingerings for C Major



# F Major Chord

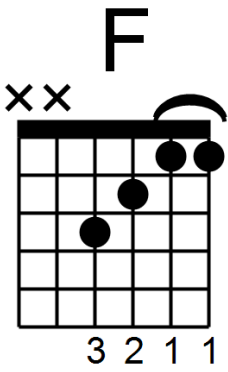
# F

xx

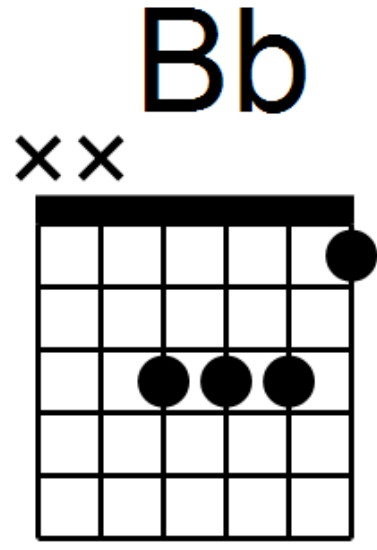


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## Fingerings for F Major

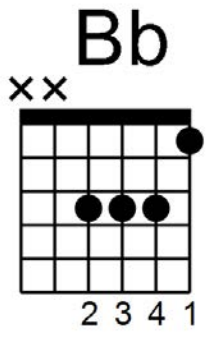


# Bb Major Chord



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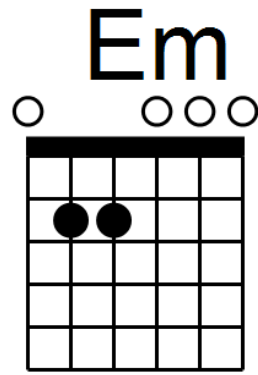
## Fingerings for Bb Major



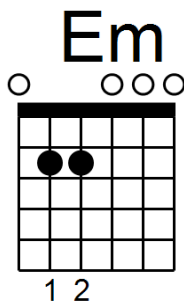
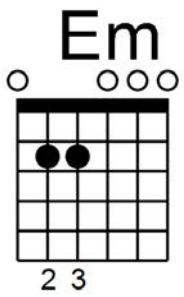
# **Minor Chords**



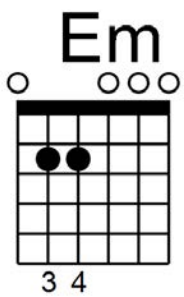
# E minor (Em)



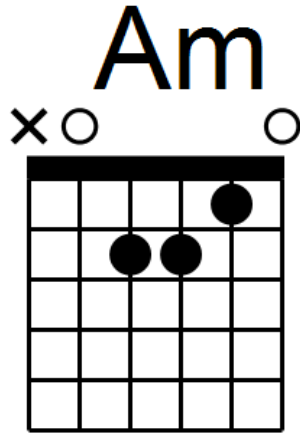
## Fingerings for E minor



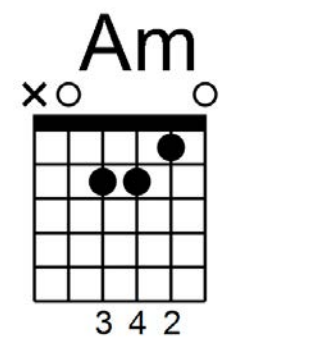
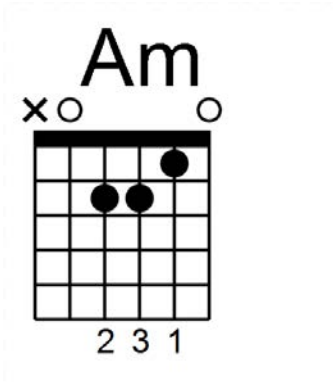
The following fingering is useful to prepare for minor barre chords on the 6th string



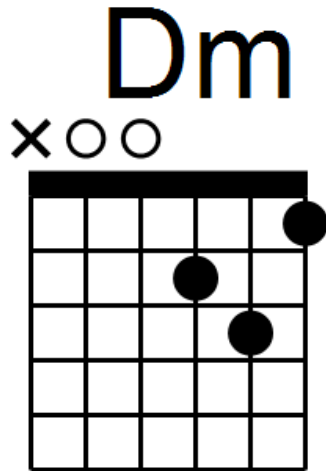
# A minor (Am)



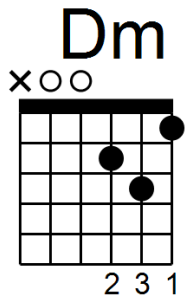
## Fingerings for A minor



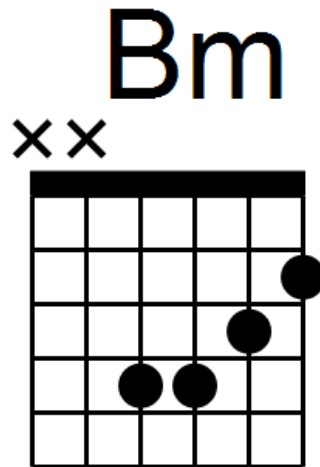
# D minor (Dm)



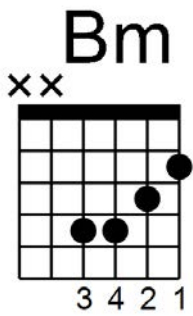
## Fingerings for D minor



# B minor (Bm)

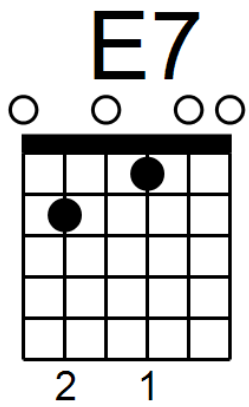
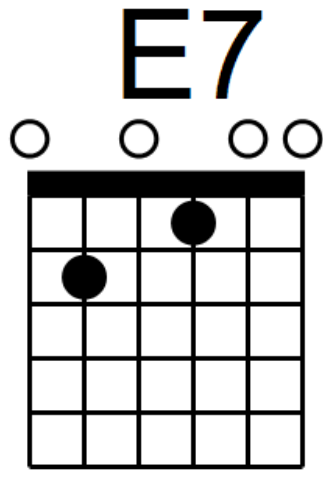


## Fingerings for B minor

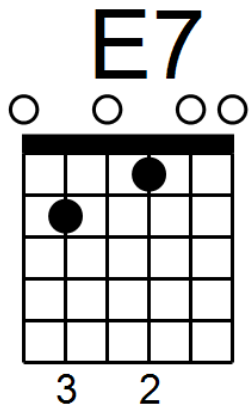


# **Dominant Seventh Chords**

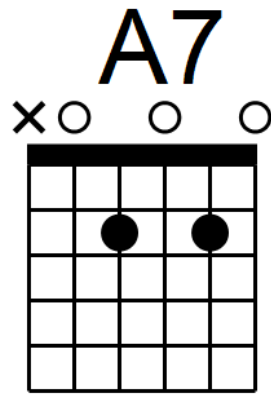
# E Dominant 7 Chord (E7)



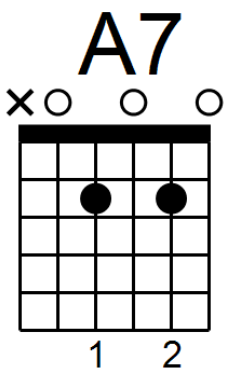
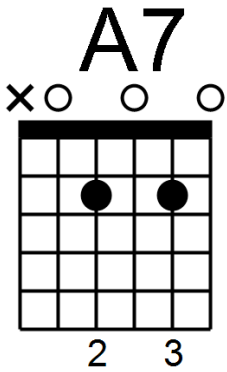
The below fingering is useful for setting up dominant 7th barre chords on the 6th string.



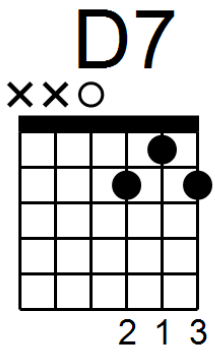
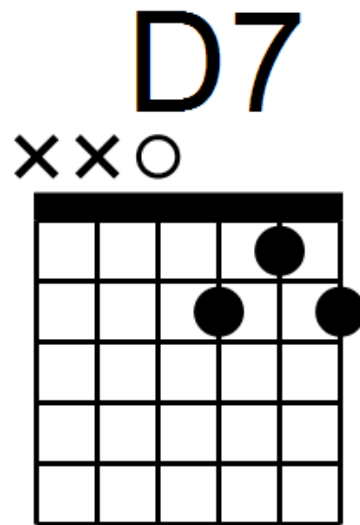
# A Dominant 7 (A7) Chord



## Fingerings for A7

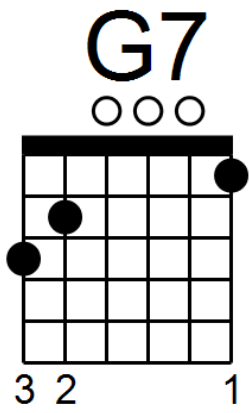
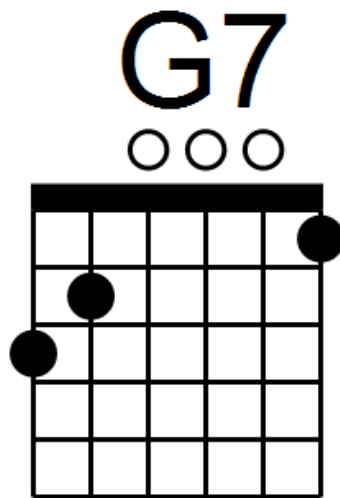


# D Dominant 7 Chord (D7)

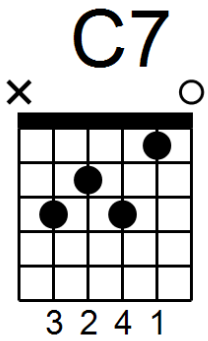
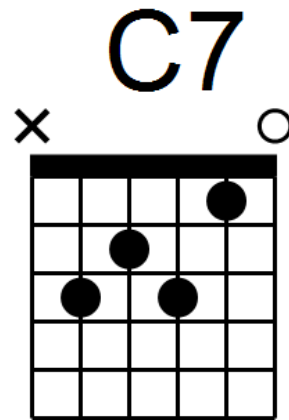




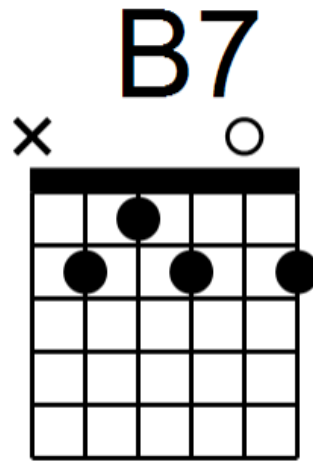
# G Dominant 7 Chord (G7)



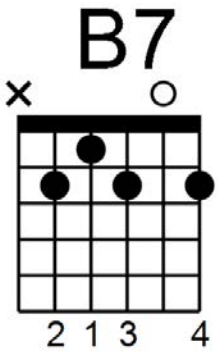
# C Dominant 7 Chord (C7)



# B Dominant 7 Chord (B7)

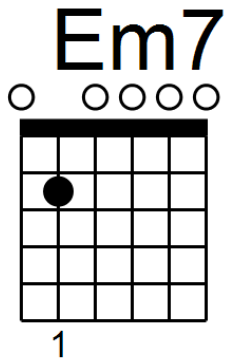
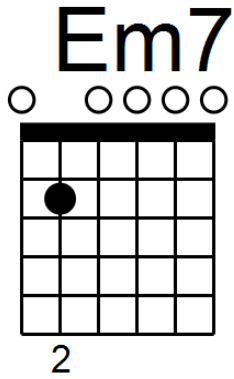
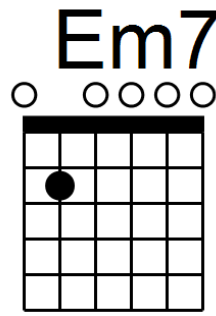


Fingerings for B7

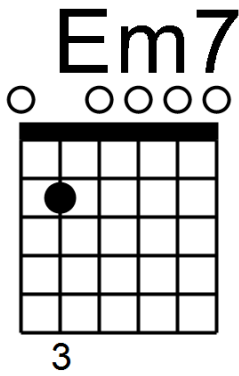


# **Minor Seventh Chords**

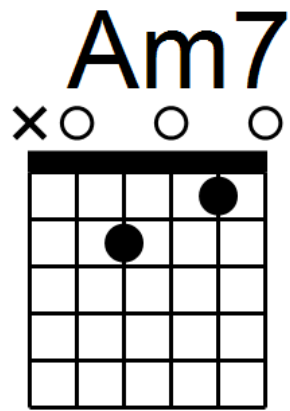
# E Minor 7 Chord (Em7)



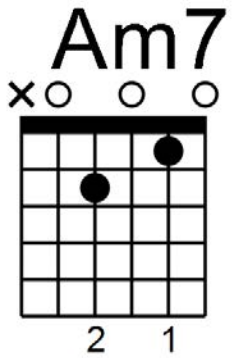
The following can be useful to prepping minor 7th barre chords on the 6th string.



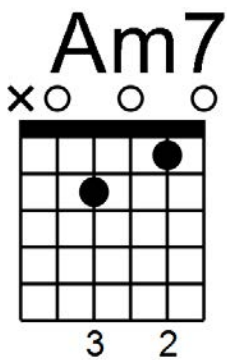
# A minor 7 (Am7)



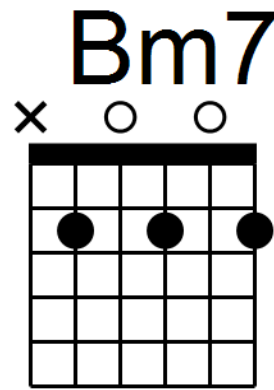
## Fingerings for Am7



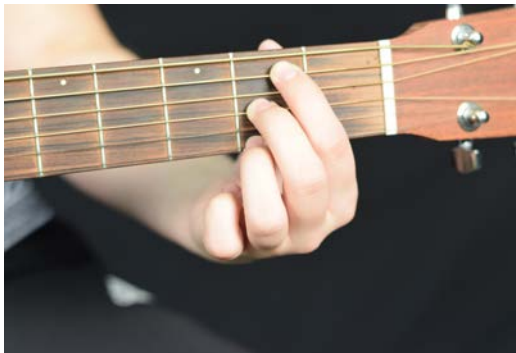
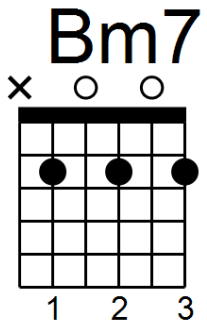
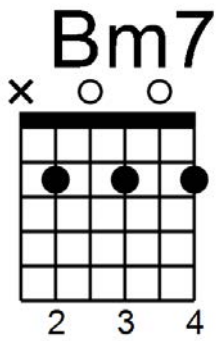
The following fingering is useful to set up minor 7 barre chords on the fifth string



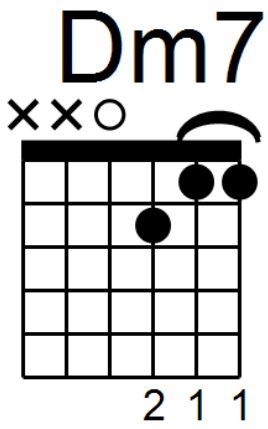
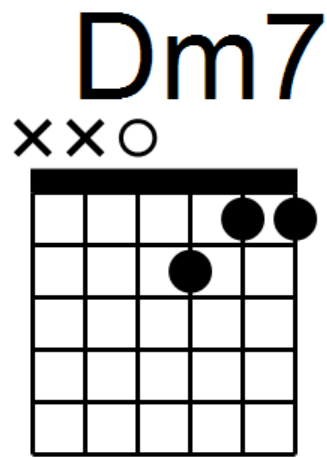
# B Minor 7 (Bm7)



## Fingerings for Bm7



D Minor 7 (Dm7)



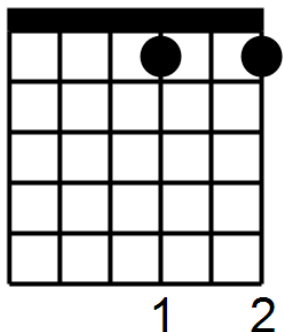


# Simple Diminished Chords

The following visuals provide examples for a simple way to play diminished chords. While this approach does not provide the individual root for each chord, it does provide the harmonic support required. You can search for more particular and advanced diminished chord shapes online.

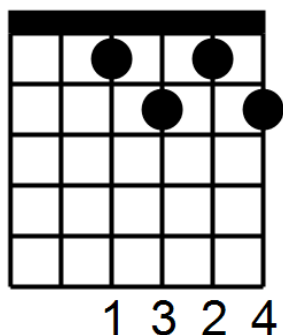
Shape for **Bdim, Ddim, Fdim, and Abdim**

XXO O



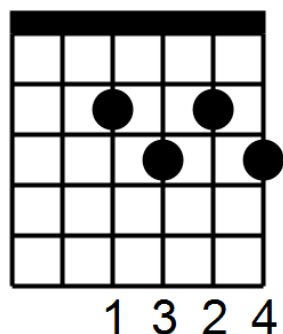
Shape for **Cdim, Ebdim, F#dim, and Adim**

XX



Shape for **Dbdim, Edim, Gdim, and Bbdim**

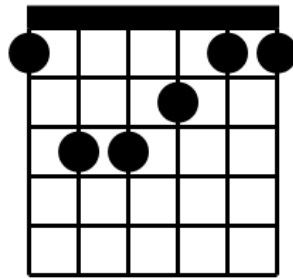
XX



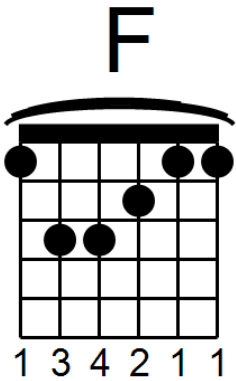
# Barre Chords

## F Major Barre Chord (template for 6th string Major Barre Chords)

# F



Fingering for F Major Barre Chord



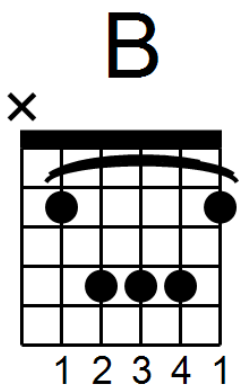
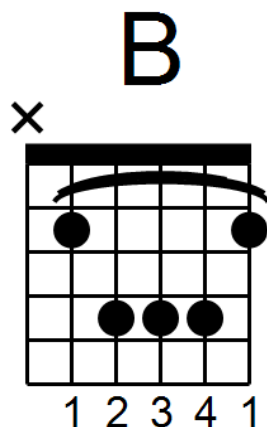
Examples of other 6th string major barre chords based on same shape:

F# Major Barre: Move the above shape up one fret.

G Major Barre: shape with barre finger on third fret

Ab Major Barre: move to fourth fret

## B Major Barre Chord (template for 5th string Major Barre Chords)



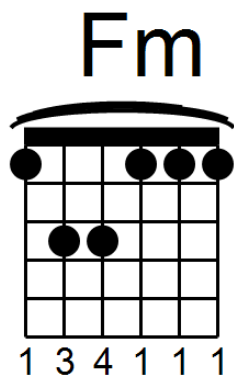
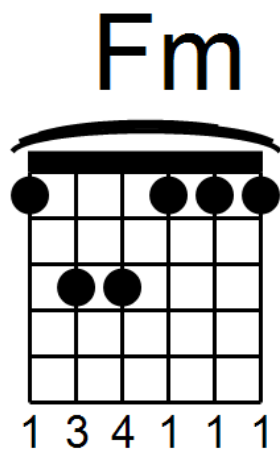
Examples of other 5th string major barre chords based on same shape:

Bb Major Barre: Move shape back one fret, so barre finger is on first fret

C Major Barre: Move the above shape up one fret (to third fret).

Db Major Barre: move to fourth fret

## F minor Barre Chord: (Template for 6th String Minor Barre Chords)



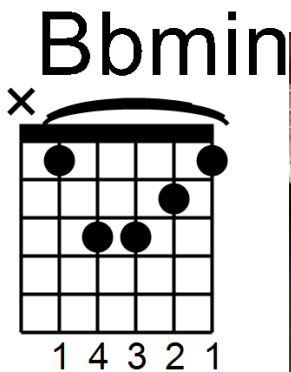
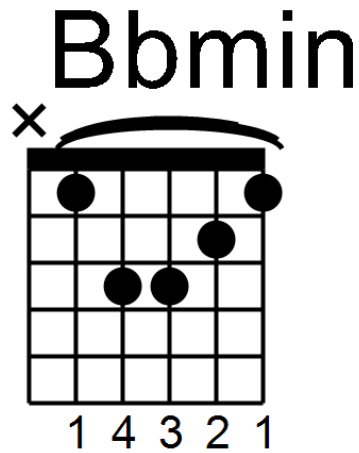
Examples of other 6th string minor barre chords based on same shape:

F# Minor Barre: Move the above shape up one fret.

G Minor Barre: shape with barre finger on third fret

Ab Minor Barre: move to fourth fret

## Bb minor Barre Chord: Template for 5th String Minor Barre Chords

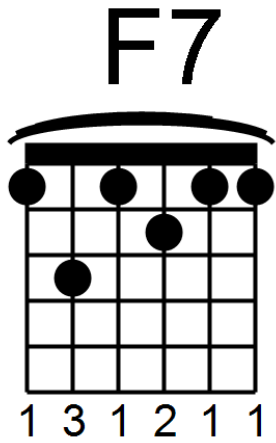
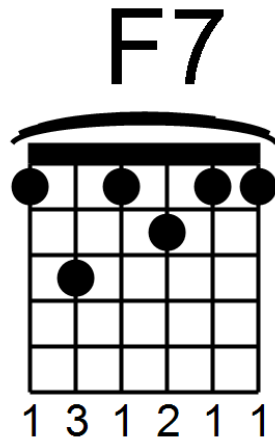


Examples of other 5th string minor barre chords based on same shape:

B Minor Barre: Move shape up one fret, so barre finger is on second fret

C Minor Barre: Move the above shape up two frets (to third fret).

## F7 Barre Chord: Template for 6<sup>th</sup> String Dominant 7th Barre Chords



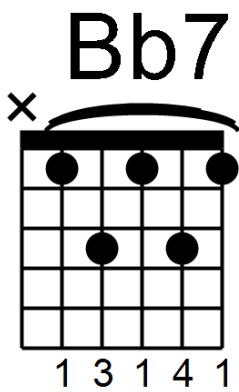
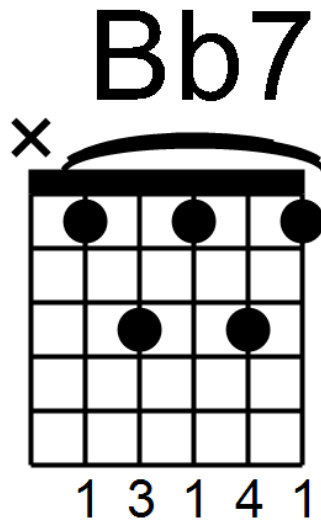
Examples of other 6th string 7th barre chords based on same shape:

F#7 Barre: Move the above shape up one fret.

G7 Barre: shape with barre finger on third fret

Ab7 Barre: move to fourth fret

## Bb7 minor Barre: Template for 5th String Dominant 7th Chords



Examples of other 5th string 7th barre chords based on same shape:

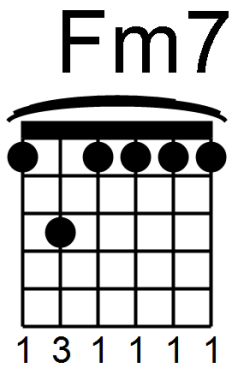
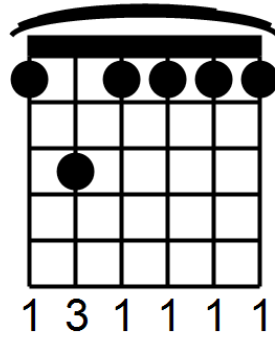
B7 Barre: Move shape up one fret, so barre finger is on second fret

C7 Barre: Move the above shape up two frets (to third fret).



## Fm7 Barre Chord: Template for Minor 7th Barre Chords, 6th String

# Fm7



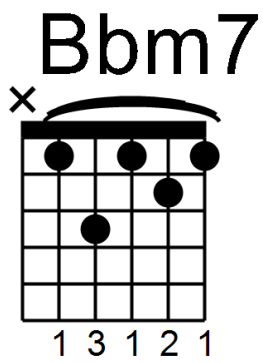
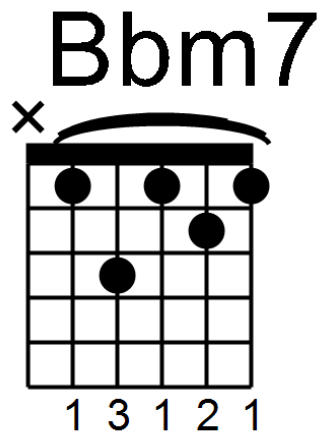
Examples of other 6th string minor 7th barre chords based on same shape:

F#m7 Barre: Move the above shape up one fret.

Gm7 Barre: shape with barre finger on third fret

Abm7 Barre: move to fourth fret

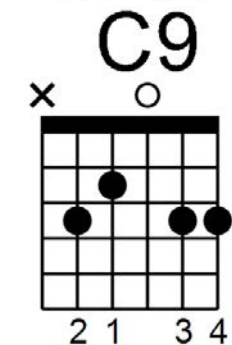
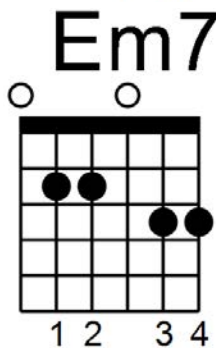
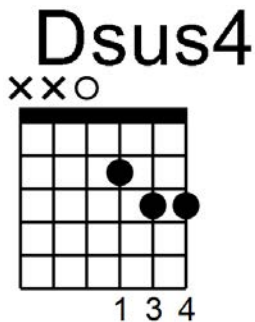
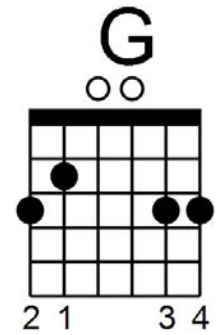
# Bbm7 Barre Chord: Template for Minor 7th Barre Chords, 5th String



# **Introduction to Color Chords**

# Chords with Shared Treble Voices

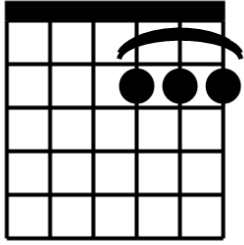
The below chords share notes in the upper register that make them appealing to use in songs. They offer a continuous treble line. One might hear these used in contemporary acoustic church bands, as well as in some popular music where the acoustic guitar is highlighted. They are commonly used in chord progressions in the key of G. With the below chords, the I, IV, V, and vi chords are presented.



# Major 7th Chords: Common Examples

## DMaj7

x x 0

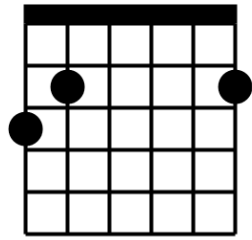


1 1 1



## GMaj7

0 0 0

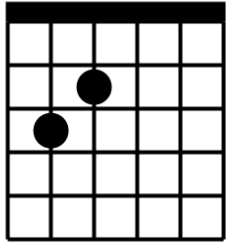


2 1 3



## CMaj7

x 0 0 0



2 1



# General Chord Reference Page

## Major Chords

A Bb C D E F G

Diagram showing fingerings for Major Chords: A, Bb, C, D, E, F, G. Each chord is shown with a guitar fretboard diagram and its corresponding string status (open circles for open strings, 'x' for muted strings).

## Minor Chords

Am Bm Dm Em

Diagram showing fingerings for Minor Chords: Am, Bm, Dm, Em. Each chord is shown with a guitar fretboard diagram and its corresponding string status.

## Dominant Seventh Chords

A7 B7 C7 D7 E7 G7

Diagram showing fingerings for Dominant Seventh Chords: A7, B7, C7, D7, E7, G7. Each chord is shown with a guitar fretboard diagram and its corresponding string status.

## Minor Seventh Chords

Am7 Bm7 Dm7 Em7

Diagram showing fingerings for Minor Seventh Chords: Am7, Bm7, Dm7, Em7. Each chord is shown with a guitar fretboard diagram and its corresponding string status.

## Basic Diminished Chords

Bdim, Ddim, Fdim, Abdim

xxo o

Diagram showing fingerings for Bdim, Ddim, Fdim, Abdim. Shows a guitar fretboard diagram with string status 'xxo o' and fingerings '1 2' on the 2nd and 3rd strings.

Adim, Cdim, Eb dim, F#dim

xx

Diagram showing fingerings for Adim, Cdim, Eb dim, F#dim. Shows a guitar fretboard diagram with string status 'xx' and fingerings '1 3 2 4' on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th strings.

Bbdim, Dbdim, Edim, Gdim

xx

Diagram showing fingerings for Bbdim, Dbdim, Edim, Gdim. Shows a guitar fretboard diagram with string status 'xx' and fingerings '1 3 2 4' on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th strings.

This work is one part of a three-part Open Educational Resource (OER) that teaches students how to play the guitar as an accompaniment instrument, facilitating technical, theoretical, and ear skill development that can translate into a range of song styles. Materials may be used either as primary or supplemental guides for: (a) non-primary guitar classes, (b) musicianship classes for music therapy and music education students, and (c) other musicianship classes.

This resource includes three handbooks and a set of supplementary videos.

- The ***Guitar Chord Handbook*** (<http://hdl.handle.net/1808/29433>) provides visuals for common open chords, as well as some barre and color chords.
- The ***Chord Progression Handbook*** (<https://hdl.handle.net/1808/29434>) maps out more than 20 common chord progressions found in folk and popular music, providing song examples.
- The third handbook, ***Strumming, Fingerpicking, and Hybrid Accompaniment Patterns for Guitar*** (<https://hdl.handle.net/1808/29435>), facilitates detailed development of strumming, muting, plucking, and combined skills with more than 150 exercises. Videos provide visual reinforcement for each strumming/fingerpicking exercise.
- **Videos for Strumming Patterns:** Each strumming pattern has been video recorded as a resource for you. These videos can be located at: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCZYlvXCKgIMZHkCvJ9wqqd8cpC0eZHYd>

Bill Matney, Ph.D., MT-BC is a professor in the music therapy program at the University of Kansas. He has taught classes focusing on musicianship – primarily percussion and guitar for music therapy and music education students – since 2006. He has authored books, book chapters, and journal articles on the use of percussion in music therapy, and brings a unique perspective on building skills on percussion, guitar, and piano. In this set of visual and audio resources, Bill brings a perspective on teaching guitar that focuses on practical skill building, seeking to develop each student's capacity for playing in different styles and responding to different chord progressions.

Brenna Niemuth is an undergraduate music therapy major and guitar primary at the University of Kansas. She demonstrates strong interest in developing guitar resources for music therapy students and professionals.