

# Basic Chords in All 12 Keys

In Western music, there are 12 major keys. The music notation system evolved around the piano, so it is confusing for guitarists. We use the letter names A through G, and the other 5 note names are the sharps (#) and flats (b) which correspond to black keys on the piano. We sometimes call the note between A and B “A sharp” and sometimes it is called “B flat.” Remember there are no sharps or flats between B and C and between E and F.

Though we are not reading notes, we still need some language of music to communicate. The major scales and the letter names that go with each of the keys are important to troubadours. This chart shows the major scale positions for each of the 12 keys. The 1-4-5 positions are shown in red. We sing songs in all of the 12 keys. Guitars usually play in C, G, D, A and E. The *Liberty Guitar* method plays mostly in the keys of E

and A (shown below with a star) and allows beginners to play more complicated songs than ever before. This means we need some terminology to talk about what we are doing. To accompany songs with a guitar we need to be able to figure out how to play the guitar chords in the keys we can, and then try to match that to what is best for the singer.

**Men, women and children may all sing a particular song in different keys. It can take some strategy and patience to figure out how to do it best, and this chart is vital, though confusing at first.**

For example, a song might have a 1,4 and 5 chords, and also a 6 minor. We can look here and see in row 9 that to do that in the key of F we need F=1, B<sup>b</sup>=4, C=5 and Dm= 6 minor. A 2 minor chord in that key would be a Gm.

KEY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>A</b>	A	B	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	D	E	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>
A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	C	D	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	F	G	A
<b>B</b>	B	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	E	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>
<b>C</b>	C	D	E	F	G	A	B
C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	F (E <sup>#</sup> )	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	C
<b>D</b>	D	E	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G	A	B	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>
D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	F	G	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	C	D
<b>E</b>	E	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	A	B	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>
<b>F</b>	F	G	A	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	C	D	E
F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	B	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	F (E <sup>#</sup> )
<b>G</b>	G	A	B	C	D	E	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>
G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	C	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	F	G

There are songs that use more than just these scale position, such as a typical “modal” song (see page 34) which usually has a “flat 7” chord in it. This would mean that playing in the key of E, the flat 7 chord is a D chord. The 7th scale position in E is a D sharp, and “flattening” it takes us down one notch to D.

Since *Liberty Tuning* is slightly different from standard guitar tuning, here is a diagram of 15 frets of the guitar, with all the notes on the fingerboard shown, with the bass E string on the bottom.

## The Liberty Tuning Fingerboard

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
<b>E</b>	F	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	A	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	B	C	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	D	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	E	F	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G
<b>C</b>	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	D	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	E	F	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	A	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	B	C	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	D	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>
<b>G</b>	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	A	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	B	C	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	D	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	E	F	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	A	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>
<b>D</b>	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	E	F	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	A	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	B	C	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	D	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	E	F
<b>A</b>	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	B	C	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	D	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	E	F	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	A	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	B	C
<b>E</b>	F	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G	G <sup>#</sup> /A <sup>b</sup>	A	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup>	B	C	C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	D	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	E	F	F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup>	G