

The Problem: Easy Guitar Is Still Too Hard

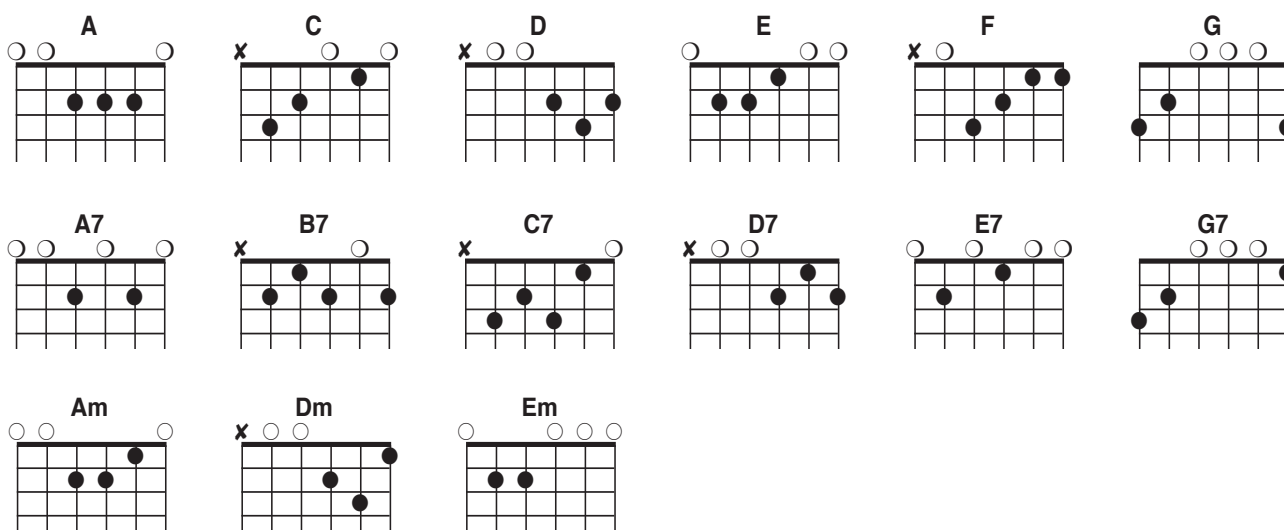
The biggest challenge in beginning guitar is that it takes even a motivated adult months of effort before they can play the simplest chords to accompany songs. Basic guitar chords require 3 and 4 fingers of the left hand. Previously the only way to avoid using 3 fingers to form basic chords was to skip some strings and give up a lot of the resonant sound of the instrument.

Many people can't get going playing recreational "campfire" guitar because it's just a bit too hard to do. It takes a surprising amount of time and dexterity just to learn some basic chords to accompany simple songs.

Children with smaller hands, and those with hand injuries or disabilities have been left out of the guitar troubadour experience entirely. Untold numbers of people have tried to learn guitar chords and not succeeded.

Liberty Tuning is an exciting new discovery that allows almost anyone to play great-sounding guitar music using only 2 fingers of the left hand.

BASIC CHORDS IN STANDARD TUNING



The other 21 basic chords not in this chart can only be played as barre chords, and are even harder to play than these.

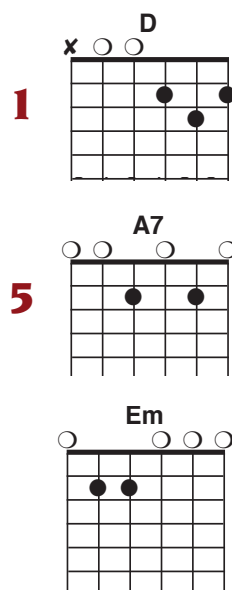
Teachers commonly steer beginning students into playing instrumental single-note guitar, since chords are often too hard at first, and there is often only a feeling of frustration, sore fingertips and little progress. Single-note guitar appears to make sense; it is a logical, step-by-step approach, it feels like you are learning music, but it has a very high drop-out rate, and is not really "recreational." Instrumental guitar is not easy, and it doesn't offer much to casual beginners who only want to play some campfire-style guitar to accompany songs and have some musical fun.

Web sites, beginner guitar books and videos that emphasize how easy it is to play guitar have actually created an extra psychological barrier, causing even more beginners to give up and blame themselves for being un-musical or un-motivated because they expect it to be as easy as everyone says it is. **The truth is that beginning guitar chords take a surprising amount of time to master, and only a small percentage of those who start ever get to the point where they can actually play a song.**

The most common way used to start beginners in campfire-style guitar is with the D and A⁷ chords, which are called the “1” and “5” chords in the key of D. The E chord is better-sounding and easier to play than D, but it needs a more difficult B⁷ before you can get started playing a song. There are a few dozen 2-chord songs that can be played with just D and A⁷ chords, or any of the other eleven pairs of 1 and 5 chords (such as E-B⁷). It’s too bad that our starting chord D does not have a D bass note. Even worse, the bottom string on a guitar is an E note, which can really ruin the sound of the D chord.

So our first chord (D) takes 3 fingers to play, it has a mute bass string, and if we bump that bass E string, it sounds bad. Not exactly a powerful magnet to pull us into the guitar...

The E *minor* (Em) chord is the easiest basic chord on guitar, and it lets you enjoy the bass E string, but there are really no songs you can play with just an Em. The common 2-chord songs in the key of Em used in guitar books are *Sinner Man* and *Drunken Sailor*, which are basically the same song. They are not highly motivating songs, and also require a D chord. Other 2-chord songs in E minor also need the difficult B⁷. So the E minor chord is not the starting point it seems to be at a glance.

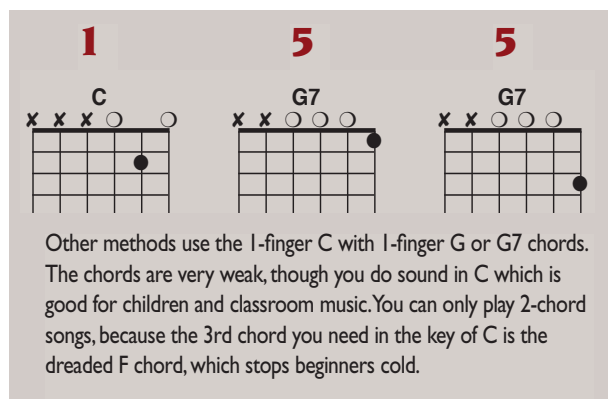
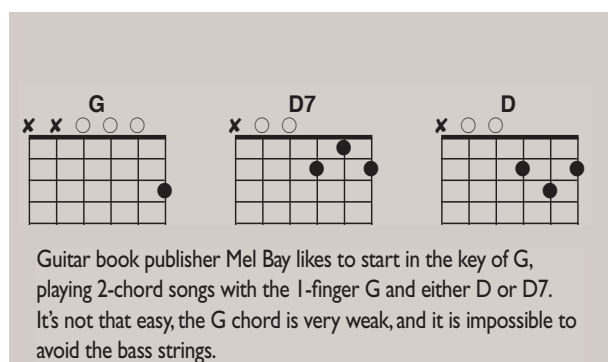


A number of beginning guitar methods use the approach of having you not play several strings as a way to get simpler chords. This generally sounds unmusical when children or beginners strum away, since it is impossible to avoid the muted strings. The guitar also has little resonance and is not particularly inviting.

Methods that have you tune the guitar to an open chord (what are usually called *open tunings*) limit you to playing only songs in one key, also with very limited chord-change options. We look carefully at these simplified methods in *The 2-Finger Guitar Guide*.

Using partial capos has been the best option for simplifying the guitar, first introduced in my *Duck Soup Guitar* book in 1982. Though this method does let beginners play some full-sounding chords and many songs with just 1 or 2 fingers in standard tuning, it has big limitations. You only get a few good chords with 1 or 2 fingers, and you can only play in one key. There are also only a couple kinds of chord changes you can play. Methods that start with either tunings or partial capos also involve almost entirely “substitute” chords that have extra or missing notes, and don’t sound right in a lot of common songs.

The Liberty Guitar Method solves all the basic problems in beginning guitar, without really introducing any complications. It can be done quickly and easily on a normal guitar with normal strings.



With the Liberty Guitar Method, children can start playing real music on a full-size guitar many years sooner, and adults who are short on time or who have less than 4 working fingers can now have a much simpler but very meaningful guitar experience.