

eVirtuoso-Online Lessons

www.eVirtuoso.com

Chords Lesson 1

Introduction to Chords

A Chord is performed by playing multiple notes simultaneously. Its purpose is to create harmony to support the melody. A chord gets its name from its root note (C in the C major chord) and the chord's type (major for a C major chord). The notes of a chord, with the exception of the root note, determine the chord's type (major, minor, etc.). A chord type can also be written with a suffix (suspended fourth chord type is Sus4). This chapter will explore several methods of constructing chords, as well as combining chords to create many chord progressions and cadences.

How to Build Chords

Chords are built using intervals or taking specific notes from a scale. The first example will be building a C major chord using intervals. This chord has the three notes C, E, and G. Start on the root note (C) and add a major third interval from the root (E), and add a perfect fifth from the root (G). These same results can be achieved with intervals by starting on the root note (C) and adding a major third interval (E). Then, from the E note, add a minor third interval (G). Figure 1 below demonstrates this example.

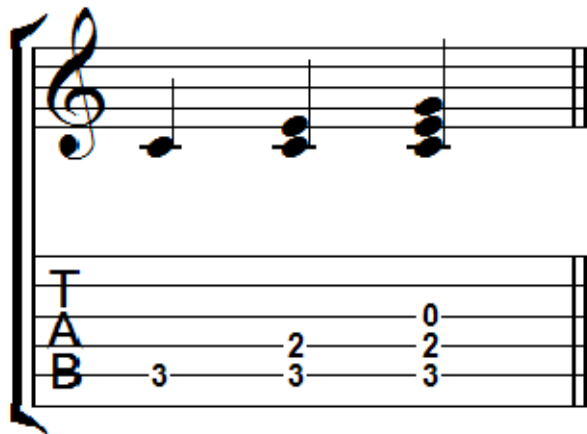


Figure 1 - C Chord Construction

The second example is to build a chord by taking specific notes from a scale. Every chord can be built using a particular scale. Major chords can be built using a major scale, and minor chords can be built using a minor scale. For example, when building a C major chord, the C major scale is used. Remember the notes in a C major scale are C,

D, E, F, G, A, and B. The specific notes needed to build a major chord are the major scale's first, third, and fifth steps (1, 3, 5). In a C major scale, those notes are C, E, and G. So, a C major chord is built with the notes C, E, and G. Figure 2 below demonstrates this example.

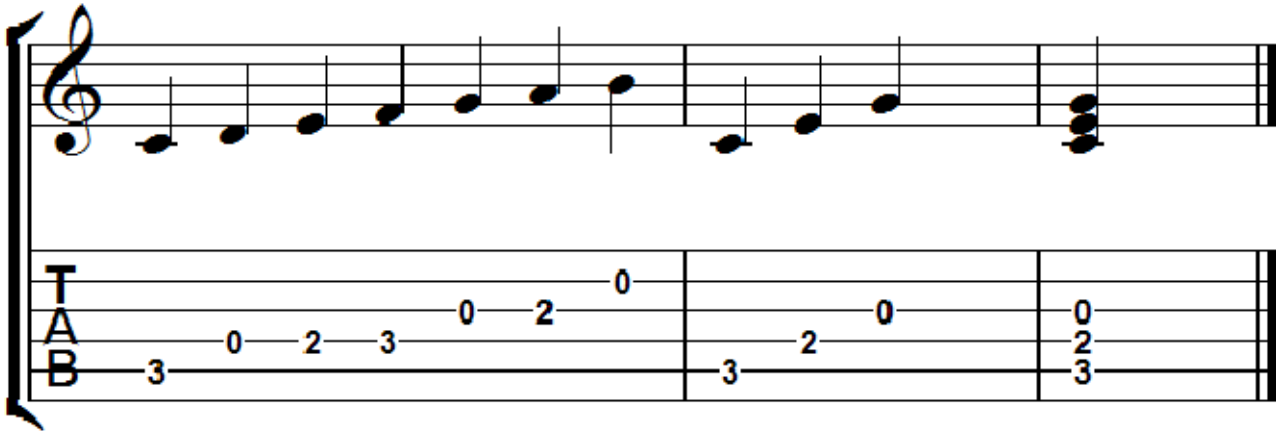


Figure 2 - C Major Scale, C Major Arpeggio, C Major Chord

This same process can be used to build any chord. Each chord will have its own step number formula, which is based on the major scale. These step numbers represent which notes are required to build a particular chord. Also, remember to keep the root note for the chord and scale the same. The link below shows many of the most common chords, along with their notes and step number formula. Recall, the step numbers are the notes from the root note's major scale because every chord formula is based on the major scale. Please take ample time to study and practice this table.