HOW TO FORM 1,200 BARRE CHORDS YOURSELF FOR GUITARISTS WHO CAN READ SHEET MUSIC

Günter Beyer

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I. Preface

I was born in 1941, am self-taught and have never had any guitar or keyboard lessons. In 1962 and 1963 I played dance music in Merzig, Saarland, Germany, in the first band with electric guitars in the following line-up: bass, rhythm and solo guitar, piano and drums. I mainly played rhythm guitar, but also several solo guitar pieces.

Back then we mainly played instrumental music as the "Rag Boys".

Over the next few years, I helped out a few times as a guitarist in other dance bands.

From 2002 I played rhythm guitar with the “Seffersbachlärchen” in Brotdorf, then with the “Funkentöter” (English: spark killers), the fire department choir in Merzig-Brotdorf.

In between, I also played with the Loreley brass band in 2016 and 2017, again in Merzig-Brotdorf. For the medley "James Last Golden Hits", for example, **35** different chords had to be mastered, mainly in B keys.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my son Sven for valuable tips for the translation in the English and my Persian friend Masoud Shaloo, who quickly introduced me to the Powerpoint program so that I could visualize the many chord patterns, which I was unfortunately unable to do with Excel.

I had already figured out the "barré chord" system very early on. But it was only when I had the idea of representing the fingering points of the simple major chord using different symbols - root = **O**, third = ● - and fifth = **Q** (in **German fifth = Q**uinte**)**- that I was able to offer a good way for any guitarist who can read sheet music to easily understand the system. Changes to the simple major chord are all clearly marked by **larger** signs, **larger** numbers or the **larger** letter **m** for minor in **grey o**r **bold black**. In the books available for purchase and on the Internet, the barré fingerings are usually shown in tables as follows:

1. Vertical or horizontal tables with black lines for the 6 guitar strings and the frets as well as black dots.

2. The barré finger is listed as a more or less thick horizontal or vertical line in the table.

3. The 3 grip points of the other fingers are uniformly black and do not differ from each other.

4. It is not clear which chord pattern is used and where the changes in the fingering points are compared to the normal, simple major chord.

5. For each chord C, C sharp, D, D sharp etc. all chord possibilities are listed again.

I list 34+2 chords in C and F. The displacements for C sharp, D, D sharp and from F to F sharp etc. are explained logically, so that all the tables for the possible chords for C sharp, D, D sharp and F sharp, G etc. become redundant.

I believe that you can easily form and find most of the handles yourself. That's why I've created this little work to offer an understandable solution.

The prerequisite is that the player can read a little music, namely App. 1, and also understands it. Being able to play a keyboard instrument makes it even easier to understand.

Please read the preface and the text up to page 47 before studying App. 11 to 15. This is the only way to understand the relationships between the individual barré chords.

My DINA5 booklet contains **34** + 2 (see page 41, point VIII, **C11** and **Cmin11**) = **36** different **C chords** in barré for the guitar, but there are even more.

The explained shifts result in a total of 36 x 12 = **432** different chords from C to B (= 12 semitone steps). As there are usually **up to 3** usable fingering possibilities for a particular chord, which are not too high on the guitar neck, this also means **up to** 432 x 3 = **1,296** chord patterns for chords across all strings - possibly with muted strings.

Another calculation for usable chords: appendices 11 to 15 contain 43+32+22+26+32+2 (see page 41, point VIII.) = a total of **157** chords. If you multiply this number by the possible **12** semitone steps from C to B of an octave, then there are **1,884** different chords. Assuming that approx. **33%** of these are too high on the fingerboard, this results in an average of up to **1,262** playable chords.

In my opinion, this book is a **world first** and therefore a **"must"** for all guitarists who play barré chords.

II. Introduction to the new system

The following abbreviations are used:

App. = **App**endix or **App**endices
CP = **c**hord **p**attern e.g. for the simple major chords without derivatives
m = **m**in or **m**inor tone, **♭3** or **minor** third
I to **XIII =** Roman numerals for frets 1 to 13
IF, M, R and **L** = abbreviation for **i**ndex, **m**iddle, **r**ing and **l**ittle finger
1 to **13** = Arabic numerals for chord tones in scales

Fret numbers in italics means that the barre finger has been moved one or two trets up or down.

By the way, nobody has to reproduce all chord patterns immediately, it is usually enough to know at least 3 variants so that you are prepared for all cases in practice.

II.1 Explanation of the chord pattern C6add9

This chord is also illustrated on the cover. Vertical, slightly thicker lines between fingering points indicate the barré finger(s).

In contrast to other books on barré chords, the "tables" in my book are shown horizontally. The line for the low E string is dotted and lies at the bottom, just as the guitarist sees the strings of his guitar. A fingering diagram only includes 5 frets, 4 for the fingering points and one fret to explain the possible new note by clearly marked **larger** signs, numbers or the letter **m** note in **grey or bold black** for the minor tone.

The chord patterns can therefore be displayed **larger**, as only 5 frets are required for a chord and not 10.

The chord patterns are **sorted according to chord patterns** and arranged starting with the changes on the high E string. The same chords of the different chord patterns are therefore **not next to each other**, but see instead:

Appendix 5	5+1 chord patterns of the **simple major chord**,
Appendix 7	11 chord patterns of the **C7 chord**,
Appendix 8	5 chord patterns of the **simple minor chord**,
Appendix 9	5 chord patterns of the **C7♭9 chord**,
Point IV.3.	E♭**Δ7 chord**, see page 23,
Point VII.5.	E♭**m6/Fm6/Cm7♭5/Dm7♭5 chords**, see page 39, point 5.

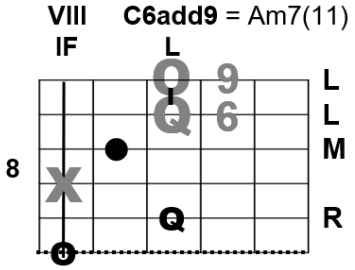
The number of the fret for the barré finger in Roman numerals, the name of the chord and the number of the chord pattern are in the first line of the head image; in the second line, there is the abbreviation for the **large** barré finger and any other barré fingers. To the left of the chord pattern, there is the number of the figure pattern and to the right the abbreviation for the other (barré) fingers to be used (**L** for **l**ittle finger etc.).

The root tone/octave of the simple major chord is shown in black as a round circle (**O**), the third as a thick, black dot (●) and the fifth as a black Q (**Q**), in German **Q**uinte, so that all three possible notes of the simple major chord are covered. A dampened string is marked with a black X (**X**).

The designation as a third or fifth is always **based** on a **lower** - sometimes **fictitious** – **root note**.

In the case of changes to the simple major chord, the signs and letters are all shown in clearly marked **larger** numbers or/and the letter **m** in **grey or bold black** to the right of the new fingering point.

To illustrate this, here is an example of the C6add9 chord according to chord pattern **1,** which is also shown on the cover.

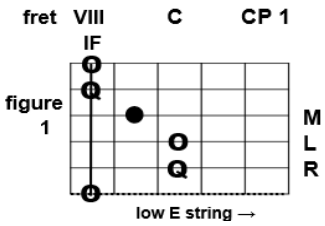


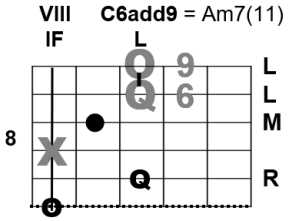
Fingering for chords

IF = index finger
M = middle finger
R = ring finger
L = little finger
Grip points connected with vertical line(s) = barre finger(s)

The little finger on the **B string** in the 10th fret is bent and can therefore play the **6th** and **9th** notes of the Cmajor scale. The letter **L** in the 2nd line in the head and the connecting line between the two **large** fingering points in **grey or bold black** indicate the little finger as the 2nd barré finger. The finger on he 8th fret of the D string has been raised slightly and is now damped with the big barré finger, hence the **large X** in **grey or bold black**. Apart from the index finger as the barré finger, there are normally only 3 fingers available for the other fingering points.

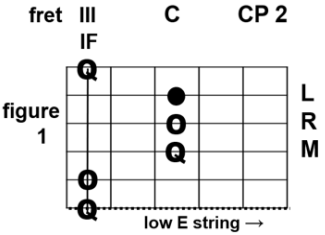
Below you can see the simple Cmajor chord with the fingering points root, third and fifth. If the fingering point on the high E string with the note **8 is designated** as **C** of the Cmajor scale, then the designations a **9th** note for **D** on the high E string *2* frets higher and also on the B string 2 frets higher the **6th** note for **A** are quite logical.

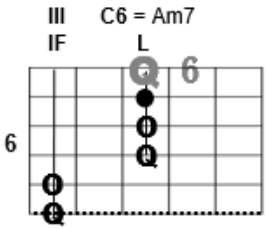




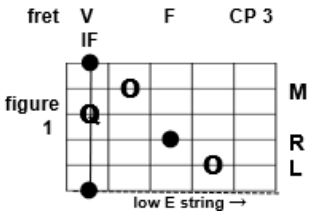
In my case, the position of a note, whether in the 1st, 2nd or 3rd octave, is irrelevant; the notes are given without additional numbers for the octaves, which serves to simplify the representation and for later shifts.

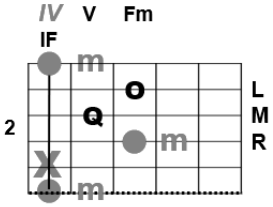
The higher the string on which the new note of an altered chord is struck, the better and clearer it sounds. Example: **C6** with chord pattern 2, 1st barré finger on fret III, the little finger on fret V over the strings D, G, B and E serves as the 2nd barré finger. The note **A** sounds on the high E string in fret V, see also App. 12, figure 6.





If the newly added note is heard several times in different octaves, the new chord is clearly distinct from the original chord, example: **Fm**, developed from the Fmajor chord, App. 13, chord pattern 3, figure 2. The note **A flat** is present **3 times** here, see also page 20, explanations to the App. 13, fig. 2.





II.2 Structure of major chords

The simple major chord, here **C**, consists of only 3 different tones, the **root**, here **C** (= **O)**, the third, here **E** (= **●)** and the fifth, here **G** (= **Q)**. The third is 4 semitones above the root, the fifth 7 semitones above the root. As the guitar has 6 strings, some notes are represented two or three times, which is irrelevant. **The order of the notes is also irrelevant**. But **each note** must occur **at least once**, even in later derivations.

I call the **7th** note of the Cmajor scale **B, which is** usually listed as H in Germany. I call the next note, lowered by half a tone, **B♭**, known as B in Germany.

A special feature of the chord name here is that C7 is not the seventh note of the Cmajor scale: C7 does not mean that the seventh note of the Cmajor scale is added, but the note **B♭,** which is 2 semitones lower than the root note. With chord **C7maj** only the 7th note of the Cmajor scale, namely **B**, is added to the simple Cmajor chord.

C7 and CΔ7 are possible chords, otherwise the notes correspond to the number in App. **3** in one or more octaves. The chord **D7** therefore consists of the notes **D**, F♯, A and 2 half notes below the octave of the root note **C**.

In an Add9 chord, the 9th note can also be on the low E string, example: appendix 14, figures 9 and 11, as we will learn later.

The simple **Cm** chord consists of the 3 notes C, **E♭** and G.

II.3 Designation of the chords

I designate all chords with the necessary numbers and letters, there is no **Csus** for me, the chord is either **Csus2** or Csus**4,** just as **C9** only corresponds to the chord **Cadd9** for me and not **C7add9**, as is often stated. I can only understand the new chord and reproduce it myself if all the

changes compared to the simple Cmajor chord are listed exactly in numbers and/or letters.

Here are examples of simple major chords and the notes:

Cmajor = tones C+E+G
Dmajor = tones D+F♯+A
Emajor = tones E+G♯+B
Fmajor = tones F+A+C
Gmajor = tones G+B+D
Amajor = tones A+C♯+E
Bmajor = tones B+D♯+F♯

D♭major = D♭+F+A♭
E♭major = E♭+G+B♭
G♭major = G♭+B♭+D♭
A♭major = A♭+C+E♭
B♭major = B♭+D+F

For cross key, we have:

C sharp chord = **C♯** = **Cis chord** = tones C♯ + E♯ (=F) + G♯ and so on.

If you know the notes of the simple major chords for all keys by heart and can reliably determine their position on the individual strings for the simple major chords, it will not be difficult for you to understand and reproduce all derivations later on. Otherwise, realize again that the third is 4 semitones above the root, the fifth 7 semitones above the - sometimes **fictitious** - root.

Difference between Cadd9 and Csus2

The **Cadd9 chord consists** of the **4** notes C, E, G and **D** in a different octave. The **Csus2** chord only consists of the **3 notes** C, **D** and G, the note **E** is missing!

II.4 The 5+1 Chords with empty strings and the CP

With empty strings you can play the 5 chords **C, D, E, G** and **A** on the first **3** frets of the guitar as so-called open chords, the G chord even in 2 variations.

This means that every major chord can be played as a barré chord in 5 variations, with the 2nd variation of chord pattern 5, even in 6, by replacing the nut with the barré finger and sliding it upwards on the guitar neck (see appendices 5 and 6). Sometimes you would have to move too far up, so that some chords above the 10th fret are not normally played, but they are there.

I have numbered the **c**hord **p**atterns (**CP**) according to popularity.

CP **1** = developed from **E** string open chord over frets 1 – 3,
CP **2** = developed from **A** string open chord over frets 1 – 3,
CP **3** = developed from **C** string open chord over frets 1 – **4,**
CP **4** = developed from **D** string open chord over frets 1 – **4,**
CP **5** = developed from **G** string open chord over frets 1 – **4**.

It is important to remember this order because it is maintained throughout the booklet, see appendices 5 and 6. I refer to altered major chords as derivations.

Chord patterns 1 and 2 are easier to grip because they usually only extend over 3 frets.

You should memorize the designation of the individual notes as root, third or fifth for all major chords, as they are marked differently as a circle (**O=root**), thick dot (●=third) or Q (**Q = fifth**). This is to remember the derivations more easily as we will see later.

II.5 Derivations of major chords

The number(s) after the root note of a major or minor chord indicate one or more new notes in the chord. The **large** letter **m** in **grey or bold black** stands for a minor chord.

C6, for example, means that the new note **A** is added to the simple major chord C as the **6th** note of the Cmajor scale, i.e. the new note **A** is added to the notes C, E and G.

The chords **C7(6)** and derivatives thereof should actually be called **C7(13)** etc., because in a chord the seventh and the 6th note of a scale never occur in the same octave, the sound would be as bad as a shrill fire engine siren. In addition, there is normally no barré fingering over 6 strings. However, the notation 7(6) makes it easier to classify the new notes correctly, because the **13th** note of the Cmajor scale is not directly known as "**A".**

We differentiate between the derivations of major chords:

1. Chords with newly added notes such as **C6**, **C7**, **CΔ7**, **C♭9**, **C9** as well as **C7(6)**, **C7add9**, **C7♭9**, **C7add9(13)** etc.

2. Chords in which the new notes displace other notes such as **Csus2** (D displaces E), **Cm** (E♭ displaces E), **Csus4** (F displaces E), **Caug** (G♯ displaces G) and **Cverm7**, in which all notes except the root are lowered by half a tone (**E♭** displaces E, **G♭** displaces G and **A** displaces B♭) and

3. Mixed forms of 1 and 2 such as **C7sus4** (notes C, **F,** G and **B♭**, the note **E** is missing), as well as **C7♭5, C7♯5 without** the tone **G.**

II.6 Chords with 2 or more root notes

In App. 11 to 15, the names of other chords with other root notes are also listed, but not in bold. The tones of the chords are listed from bottom to top:

Csus2 = **G**sus4 = C+**D**+G = G+C+D
Csus4 = **F**sus2 **=** C+**F**+G = **F**+G+C
Caug = **E**aug = **G♯**aug = C+E+**G♯ =** E+**G♯**+C = **G♯**+C+E
C6 = Am**7 =** C+E+G**+A =** A+C+E+**G**
C6add9 = Am**7(11)** = Am**7/4** = C+E+G**+A+D =** A+C+E**+G+D**
Cverm7 = **E♭**verm7 = **G♭**verm7 = **A**verm7 = C**+E♭+G♭+A**
Cm7♭5 = E♭**m6** = *C***+E♭+G♭+B♭** = E♭+**G♭**+B♭+**C**

III. Notes on the appendices

III.1 App. 1 C chords in notes

The chords are shown here in notes, starting with the three notes, the root **C,** the third **E** and the fifth **G** for the simple **Cmajor chord**. The classification as a third or fifth is always based on a lower, sometimes **fictitious, root note.** Also, the European expressions are mentioned, also in App. 2.

However, the guitar has 6 strings, so some notes actually occur up to three times, but this is irrelevant for further understanding. A distinction for the individual octaves is also not required.