

Play Any Chord (and the Circle of Fifths) ‘Anywhere’ On The Neck (with Minimal Memorization and Even Less Thought.)

Chris Brown, 9/08, 10/08

You need to know:

1. **SHAPES:** Barred form of C A G E D chord shapes (with associated minors, 7^{ths}, etc.) (Fig. 1).
2. **NOTES:** The note on each fret of each string.
3. **ROOTS:** Location of the root for each CAGED shape (Fig. 1).
4. **STR-SHAP:** What **SHAP**es have roots on each **STR**ing (Table 1). (Closely related to **ROOTS**).

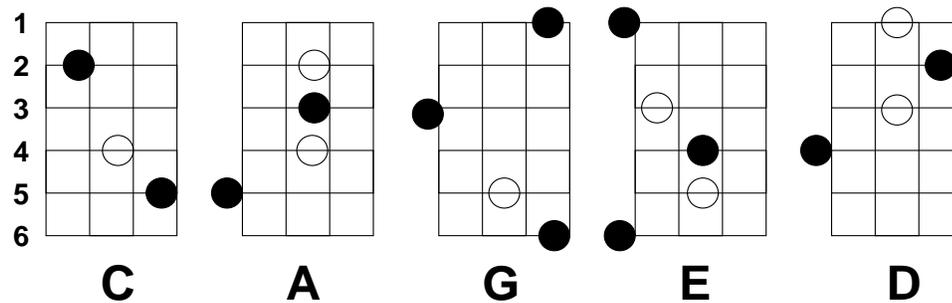


Figure 1: Strings, **SHAP**es and **ROOTS**. Roots are black. You can see that in all, there are two roots on each string (which are shown in Table 1).

String	SHAPE	SHAPE
1	G	E
2	D	C
3	A	G
4	E	D
5	C	A
6	G	E

Table 1: **STR-SHAP:** For each string, what CAGED shapes have roots there? (Incidentally but not accidentally, reading across and down they spell GED CAGED CAGE.)

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The Method: To play any chord named R (with root R) ‘anywhere’: Find a note named R close to the desired neck position. Say it is on string S and fret F: let’s call it MY-NOTE. Table 1 gives you two shapes you can use for string S. Make the shape you choose with its root on MY-NOTE. (Even if you can’t barre, you know the basic shape and where to put it.)

Example. You want an F chord around fifth position. Your knowledge of **NOTES** tells you there's an F on string 2 at fret 6: that's MY-NOTE. The easily-memorized **STR-SHAP** tells you that for string 2 you need a C or D shape with root on MY-NOTE. Using **SHAPES** you play one of the chords in Fig. 2. They are a C chord shifted up 5 frets and a D chord shifted up 3 frets, which makes sense.

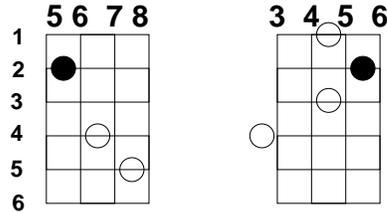


Figure 2: Strings, shapes and frets for two F chords around fifth position. The root (MY-NOTE) is black.

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Circle of Fifths Patterns: There are some simple shape sequences for generating this important progression (e.g. ... E A D G C F B \flat E \flat A \flat D \flat /C \sharp G \flat /F \sharp B E A D ...). Here are two sequences, shown as (shape, relative fret). First, headed up the neck:

- (E,0) (A,0) (D,0) (G,0) (C,0);
- (E,1) ... (C,1); (i.e. one fret higher)
- (E,2) ... (C,2); (one more fret up)

...

Couldn't be simpler: just repeat EADGC shapes in successive positions.

Not so elegant but headed down the neck is:

- (E,0) (A,0) (D,0) (G,0) (C,0);
- (G, -2), C(-2),
- (E, -1) (A, -1) (D, -1) (G, -1) (C,-1);
- (G, -3), C(-3),
- (E, -2) ... (C,-2); ...

Given you've found some shape for some chord somewhere, you can jump in to these patterns and get your ... *ii*, *V⁷*, *I* -style progressions pretty mindlessly.

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