

The

**BIG
Book
Of
Power
Chords**

Kenny Mann

THE BIG BOOK OF POWER CHORDS

About the Author

Kenny Mann is the author of books such as “Lead Guitar In 30 Minutes”, “The Magic Of Drop D”, and has been the webmaster of Guitar Alliance since 2001. He currently lives in Arkansas, with his wife Billie Jean, and their three children, Arthur, Amy, and Austin.

THE BIG BOOK OF POWER CHORDS

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I got a few funny faces when I announced that I was writing a book about power chords.

Who can really blame them? There's only so much that you can say about power chords, right?

I beg to differ.

Power chords are synonymous with the guitar. Usually people think about someone on an electric guitar, with nice fat distortion, chugging away on power chords.

There are undoubtedly hundreds of classic guitar riffs that use power chords as their primary tool, but they are not limited to just the electric guitar, as typical acoustic guitarist finds them helpful tools as well.

Plus, the name 'Power Chord' is a cool name. This is not just some regular old chord. No, it's a Power Chord!

Think back to the picture of the power chord rocker we visualised a moment ago. Don't you think he or she feels empowered by these, so-called Power Chords?

They are powerful sounding and empowering at the same time. Power Chords! What's not to like about them?

So, yes. I can write a whole book on simple power chords.

I will show you the theory behind them. I will also tell you about the bigger picture that power chords belong to.

I will show you how power chords are an integral part of the guitar and popular music as a whole.

I will also introduce plenty of evidence to you about the merits of power chords. I'm talking about decade after decade of great guitar riffs that are wholly comprised of power chords. These are some of the greatest guitar riffs ever and they are played with power chords!

Once I'm done here, there will be no doubters out there. You will come to fully appreciate the power chord and have a firm grasp of it's use, not only for yourself, but for music in general. It will be a truly enlightening moment for you.

On the other hand, they are only power chords. This meaning that they do have their limitations. I can't tell you how many players I've seen who could play power chords fine, but couldn't play an open chord or a barre chord to save their life, and not to mention, having no clue as to what they were playing. This will not be YOU, because you are lucky enough to have this book in your hands. I hope you enjoy it!

1

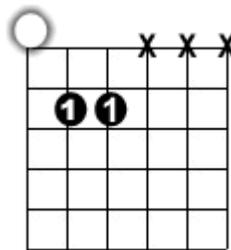
LET'S PLAY A POWER CHORD

EASY DOES IT

There are a few different ways to play a power chord, and we'll cover them all, but for now we're going to concentrate on just one.

All power chords are easy to learn and play, but the first one I'll show you is delightfully easy, because we only need one finger to play it.

THE E POWER CHORD



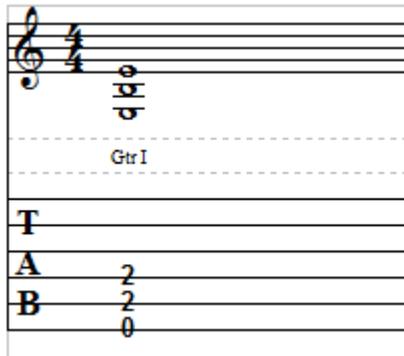
*Illustration 1: E5
Power Chord*

To play E power chord, you'll play the low E string open (the sixth string—closest to the ceiling) and play the 2nd frets of the A and D strings with your 1st finger (pointer). You'll strum all 3 strings at the same time (while being careful not to play the other 3 strings: G, B, and high E). Pretty simple, right?

If you can't read the fancy diagram in illustration 1, then I suggest you hit the Guitar Alliance website, and check out this tutorial:

[“How To Read A Chord Diagram”](#)

An alternate way of presenting the E power chords is with tablature as in illustration 2.



*Illustration 2: E power chord
in tab*

Don't know how to read tablature? No worries! We've got that covered, too. Just visit Guitar Alliance at the link below to learn this needed skill. It only takes a couple of minutes to get the hang of it:

[“How To Read Tablature”](#)

Do you have the chord down, yet? Great! Now, lock yourself in your room, plug your guitar into your favourite amp, and turn it up. When you're all set, hit the E power chord, and feel the power!

All should go well as long as you only play the bottom three strings, your finger is on the right fret, and you're firmly holding down those two notes on the A and D string.

FOR THOSE ABOUT TO ROCK...

Ok, so we have our first power chord down. Now what? Well, we're going to embark on a journey that will turn this into the first step of many. The next step is learning about the who, what, why of the power chord. What is it made of? It's certainly not made of cheese. We'll discover the theory behind power chords and find the pieces that combine to create them.

Then we'll learn about the many different ways to play power chords, how they relate to other chords, how we can use them in our own music, and finally how they have been used for the past 40 years in popular music.

All of this will result from the first step you made in this first chapter, but we're getting ahead of ourselves. Soon, you will be rocking out to your own power chords, but you've got to learn how to walk before you can run.

With that in mind let's now proceed to chapter 2 where we'll learn that power chords aren't really chords at all...

2

THE POWER CHORD RECIPE

POWER CHORDS ARE AN IMPOSTOR

Power chords have a big secret that has been hidden from the world. It's something that is never talked about or even mentioned. Do you want to know what the big secret is?

Power chords are not real chords.

There, I said it.

I'm sure you're a little confused at this point, because all I've been talking about throughout this book is “power *chord* this, power *chord* that”. The key word being 'chord'. So, why am I now telling you that it's not a real chord?

At this point you may ask “Is it, or is it not a chord?”. I know I'm sending you mixed signals. Let's just get to the bottom of it. To do this we'll get a little technical and dive into some theory.

GETTING TECHNICAL...

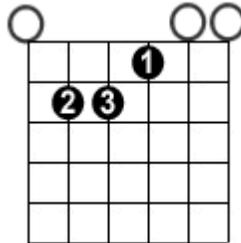
In music, a chord is the simultaneous sounding of three or more different notes at one time. Whereas the power chord is constructed of only two different notes.

An interval is the sounding of only two notes at one time, so power chords, in theory, are intervals and not chords.

The plot thickens, because if you look deeper you'll discover that power chords are really a fragment of a chord. Do you remember the E power chord that we learned in chapter 1? It was the E power chord and if you look closely you'll see how it is only a fragment of the open E chord.

MEET BIG BROTHER

Illustration 3: The open E chord.



We strum all six strings when we are playing a full open E chord as in illustration 3. We are playing six notes since there are six strings, but there are only three *different* notes: E, B, and G#. The other three notes are duplicates. They are the same notes played at a different pitch.

To be precise, we are playing three E notes, two B notes, and one G# note. The E notes appear on the low E string (sixth string), high E (1st string, closer to floor), and the 2nd fret of the D string. The B notes can be found on the 2nd fret of the A string (5th string) and the open B string (2nd string). The lonely G# is found on the 1st fret of the G string (3rd string).

FORMING CHORDS WITH THE MAJOR SCALE

As stated previously, chords are three or more notes. The basic chord is three notes and is called a triad. We can use intervals of the major scale to create these chords.

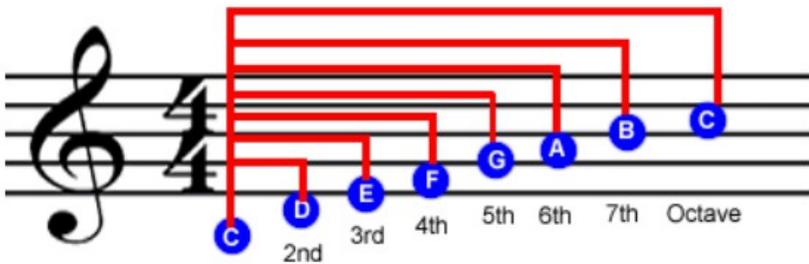


Illustration 4: The C major scale.

The major scale has seven different notes. In Illustration 4 we see the C major scale. The first note in the scale is called the root note or the 1st. In this case it's C, then comes the notes D, E, F, G, A, B, and then we begin all over again on C. We can number each subsequent note 2-7. When I, or someone else, asks you for the 3rd you'll know it's the 3rd step in the major scale.

Scales are always named after their root note, so to play a D major scale we would start on D. We can then construct the rest of the scale by applying a simple formula.

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|---|----|----|----|
| WS | | WS | | HS | WS | | WS | | WS | | HS |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |

Illustration 5: The Formula for the major scale.

In Illustration 5 you'll see a table with two rows of twelve blocks. The twelve blocks on the bottom represent the 12 notes in music. The blocks on top show the formula for constructing the major scale. We can do this with whole step and half step intervals.

To put this into guitar terms, a half step interval is the distance between two frets. For example, the note on the 3rd fret of the A string is a half step away from the note on the 2nd fret and a half step away from the note on the 4th of the A string.

If we apply logic we'll understand that two halves make a whole, so a whole step interval will be the distance of two half steps. The same note on the 3rd fret of the A string would be a whole step away from the notes on the 1st fret and a whole step away from the note 5th fret of the A string.

We know that the first note is the root note. We can make a root of any of the twelve different notes in music- therefore we have twelve possible major scales. To get the other 6 notes we apply the formula found in illustration 5. Whole step is represented by 'WS' and half step is represented by 'HS'. The formula goes as such: WS, WS, HS, WS, WS, WS, HS.

THE POWER CHORD FORMULA

To create a major chord we would take the 1st, 3rd, and 5th scale steps. To create a power chord we only take 1st and 5th scale steps. It's omission of the 3rd scale step that lends the ambiguity to power chords, because it's the 3rd scale step that determines if the chord is major or minor. It's almost like it's the Y chromosome that determines the sex of a baby. What would that make power chords?

PROPER IDENTIFICATION

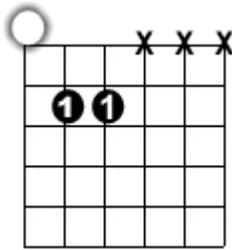


Illustration 6: E5 is the proper identification

We add the number 5 to power chords, because it has a 5th interval and the root note. For example, we would label the E power chord 'E5'. The full E chord would be denoted by just 'E'.

You can substitute E and Em with E5. In fact you can use it as a substitute for almost any type of E chord. It's the same with any chord. You can substitute C chords with C5, G chords with G5, and so on.

You'll start running into problems when you deal with chords that have an altered 5th such as 7^b5 chords. That's pretty advanced stuff, so we'll save it for another day. A chord with an altered 5th is always labelled in the chord name. These types of chords are not very common, so almost all the chords that you'll run into can be substituted with a power chord.

CHAPTER RESOURCES

Learn how to play the C major scale on guitar in the lesson linked below:

["The Major Scale"](#)

Learn more about the twelve notes in music:

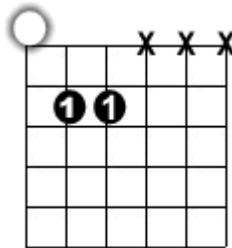
["The Twelve Notes In Western Music"](#)

3

PLAYING POWER CHORDS

6TH STRING ROOT

We already know the power chord with the 6th string root. It was the E5:



*Illustration 7: The
6th string root
power chord.*

5TH STRING ROOT POWER CHORD

The A₅ is very similar to the E₅. The A₅ is the power chord with the 5th string root. The only difference is the strings being used.

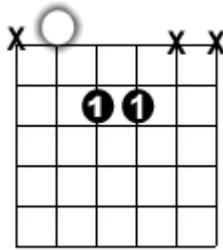


Illustration 8: The 5th string root power chord.

Let's take a look at illustration 8. Obviously the note on the open string is A. If we skip a string and look at the G string (3rd string) we'll find another A note (an octave higher). The note on the 2nd fret of the D string is E.

MOVING POWER CHORDS

This is where the fun begins! We are going to move the E₅ and A₅ forms up the fretboard to create new power chords.

Do you remember that the root determines the name of the power chord? Good, that's all you need to know.

Now, picture the E₅ in your mind. What would happen if you shifted everything up a half step (1 fret)? The open E would become

the 1st fret. The notes on the 2nd frets of the A and D would fall on the 3rd frets respectively. Can you picture it in your mind?

Hopefully you can imagine it and it would look like what you'll see in illustration 9.

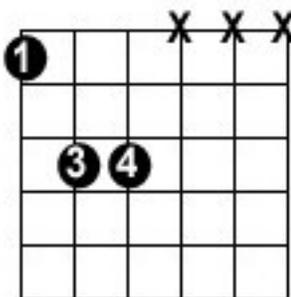


Illustration 9: Did you picture this?

Each note's relation to the other notes has stayed the same. The entire pattern has just moved up a half step. The E₅ chord shape has magically become F₅.

It's not really magic. If we just think back to what we have learned we'll realise the the root note now falls on the 1st fret of the E string. This happens to be an F note, and we know the chord will be named after the root, so we know it's F₅.

Take a look at illustration 10 to help you visualise it .

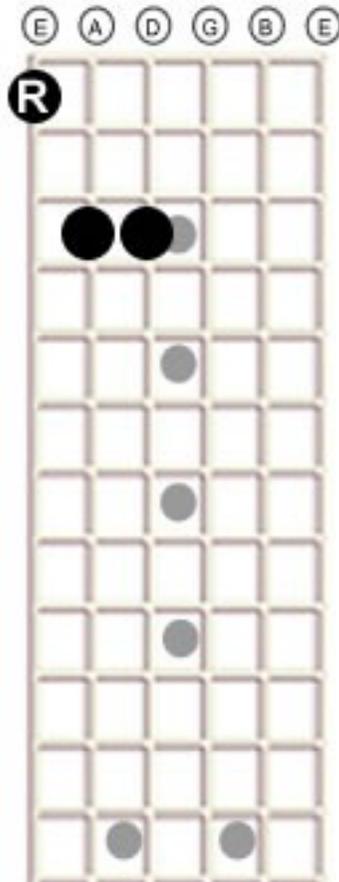


Illustration 10: The F5 power chord.

The 'R' marks the root. The 1st fret of the E string is F, so...

What happens if you moved the pattern up a whole step from there? The root would fall on the 3rd fret and therefore create a G 5 chord as seen in illustration 11.

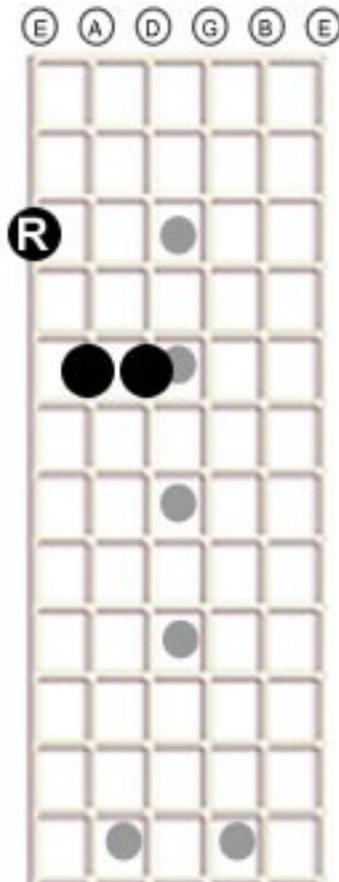


Illustration 11: The G5 power chord.

Again, the root is marked with an 'R'. That's a G which makes the chord form a G5.

I'm sure you can see where knowing the names of the notes on the guitar's fretboard could come in handy at this point. You're 100% right, but if you don't know their names yet, don't panic.

I've created a helpful table for you that will help you along until you can do it on your own. You'll find it below in illustration 12. The numbers in the row at the top signify the frets on the low E string. Fret 1 is marked with '1', fret 2 is marked by a '2', and so on. In the row at the bottom is the name of the note found on that particular fret.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|-------|---|-------|---|-------|---|---|-------|----|-------|----|
| Fret | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Chord | F | F#/Gb | G | G#/Ab | A | A#/Bb | B | C | C#/Db | D | D#/Eb | E |

Illustration 12: The names of the notes on the E string.

If we take our E5 pattern and play it on the 5th fret what do we get? According to the table the 5th fret is A, so it would be an A5. What about the 7th fret? Well, that's B5. 4th fret? That's a G#5.

| | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|--|
| F | | | | |
| F# | | | | |
| G | | ● | | |
| G# | | | | |
| A | | ● | | |
| A# | | | | |
| B | | ● | | |
| C | | | | |
| C# | | ● | | |
| D | | | | |
| D# | | | | |
| E | ● | | ● | |
| | | | | |

MOVING THE 5TH STRING ROOT

Remember our A₅? We can move it around to create new chords just as we did with the E₅. Picture the A₅ in your mind and then imagine all the notes of the E₅ sliding up a half step. What you'll get can be found in illustration 13.

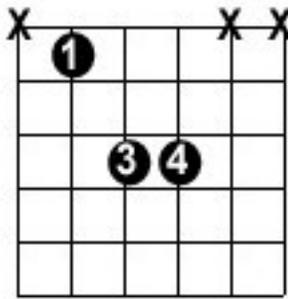


Illustration 13: A#₅

It has become A#₅ (the same as B_{b5}).

You can use the table in illustration 14 to help you identify the notes on the A string just as we did with the E string.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|---|---|-------------------|---|-------------------|---|---|-------------------|----|-------------------|----|
| Fret | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Chord | A#/B _b | B | C | C#/D _b | D | D#/E _b | E | F | F#/G _b | G | G#/A _b | A |

Illustration 14: The notes on the A string.

Memorisation of the notes on the E and A strings are mandatory if you really want to be able to get around.

It comes in handy to know both 6th string and 5th string root forms. Imagine having to play an F5 and then playing a B5. On the E string you would have to jump from the 1st fret all the way up to the 7th fret. That's a huge jump and you could miss the change. To make things easier for yourself, and improve your chance of a good performance, you could just use the B on the 2nd fret of the A string to create your B5. Going from the 1st fret of the E string to the 2nd fret of the A string is as easy as it gets.

CHAPTER RESOURCES

It's time to see if things are beginning to gel. Take the knowledge you've gained here, so far, and visit Guitar Alliance at the link below to try some exercises.

[“Power Chord Exercises”](#)

4

THE BARRE CHORD CONNECTION

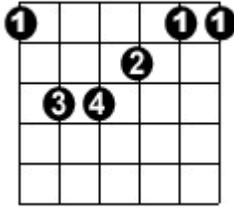
POWER CHORDS ARE FRAGMENTS

We learned in chapter 2 that power chords are but fragments of a larger chord shape. E5 was a fragment of the open E chord and A5 is a fragment of the open A chord.

What happens when we move our power chord shapes up the fretboard?

They become fragments of barre chords.

A barre chord follows the same logic we used when we visualised moving our power chord patterns up the fretboard. Imagine taking that entire open E chord shape and moving it up one fret. It would look something like illustration 14.



*Illustration 15:
Creating a barre
chord.*

A barre chord is where we take a basic chord pattern and "move" it up the neck of the guitar to create different chords.

Let's take another look. The open E chord looks something like this...

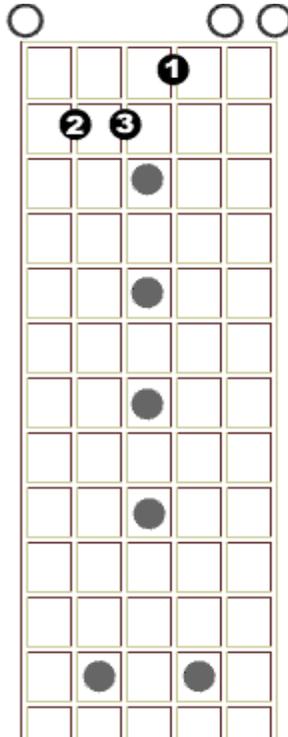


Illustration 16: Open E chord.

To move the chord pattern up the neck, we create a barre with our 1st finger. This barre, in a way, replaces the nut of your guitar. The notes that were played open to produce the E chord will now be fingered with the barre that you create with your 1st finger.

If we were to move the entire pattern up one fret it would look like this:

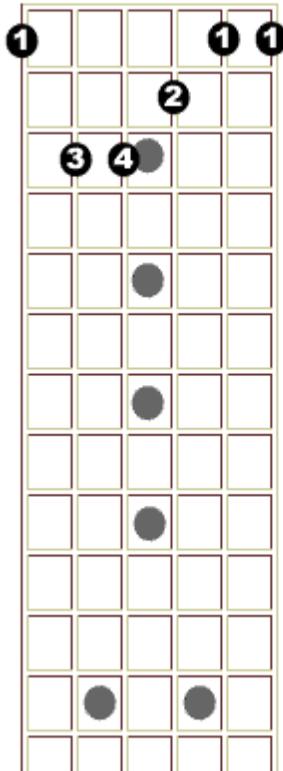


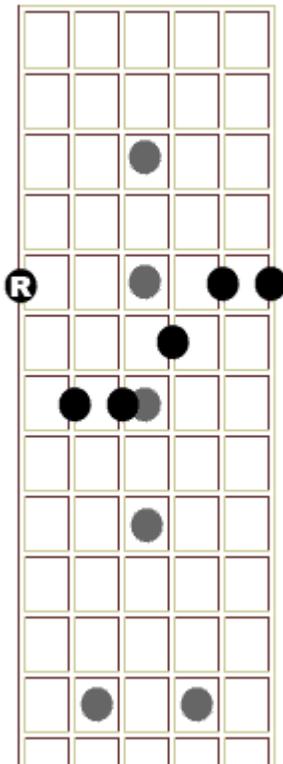
Illustration 17: F barre chord.

It's the same pattern, but now that we have moved the pattern up one fret, it's no longer an E chord. Now it's an F chord.

The reason we know that it's an F chord is because of the root note. The root note of the chord will be the lowest note.

In the E chord, the root note was the low E string played open. Now that we have moved the chord shape up one fret the note on the first fret of the low E string is now the root note. That note is an F. Therefore we know we're dealing with an F chord.

What if we moved it up to the 5th fret as in the illustration below?



That would be an A!

CHAPTER RESOURCES

Here's a helpful video dealing with barre chords:

[“What Are Barre Chords?”](#)

5

MANY WAYS TO PLAY POWER CHORDS

A VARIETY OF OPTIONS

There are many more ways to play power chords and we'll cover them all in this chapter. They say variety is the spice of life, so it pays to know the many options available to you.

You never know when you might need a rare power chord form. Plus, knowing all the positions of the power chords leads to a deeper understanding of the guitar and music in general.

It's true that you'll use the 6th and 5th string root power chords most of the time. In most cases they are all you'll ever need, but it doesn't hurt to know all your options for the times when they don't work.

6TH STRING ROOT

In illustration 18 you'll see all the power chords that use the E string as it's root tabbed out. You can keep going above the 12th fret if you wish. Everything begins anew on the 12th fret, so the 12th fret begins on E again.

Illustration 18 shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of power chords on the E string, starting from fret 2 and ending at fret 12. Below the staff is a guitar tab with four rows: T (Treble), A (4th), B (5th), and B (6th). The fret numbers are as follows:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| T | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| A | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| B | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| B | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |

Illustration 18: E string power chords.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|-------|---|-------|---|-------|---|---|-------|----|-------|----|
| Fret | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Chord | F | F#/Gb | G | G#/Ab | A | A#/Bb | B | C | C#/Db | D | D#/Eb | E |

Illustration 19: Notes on the E string.

Once again, you can use the table above to find your notes. It's key to your success that you can name the chords-note just play them.

A STRING ROOT

In illustration 19 you'll see all the power chords with a 5th string root tabbed out.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| T | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| A | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| B | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |

Illustration 20: A string power chords.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|---|---|-------|---|-------|---|---|-------|----|-------|----|
| Fret | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Chord | A#/Bb | B | C | C#/Dd | D | D#/Eb | E | F | F#/GB | G | G#/AB | A |

Illustration 21: A string notes.

Use the table above to find your notes if needed.

I'm sure that you're well aware that we've covered all of this already, but the next part is new. I just wanted to recap a little before we head into new territory.

Can you guess what comes next? We've got our 6th string root and 5th string root. Do you suppose that we can translate this and create a 4th string root?

Yep, it's true. We can create a 4th string root power chord, but it looks a little different!

4TH STRING ROOT

Ok, here it is. The 4th string root power chord. The 4th string is the D string, so it's a D5:

Illustration 22: D5

It's got one major change in how we play it in that the octave of the D note is one step higher on the B string than we are used to.

Here are the power chords found on the D string:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| T | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| A | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| B | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |

Illustration 23: 4th string root power chords.

Here's a table of the notes on the D string:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|---|---|-------|---|-------|---|-------|---|----|-------|----|
| Fret | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Chord | D#/Eb | E | F | F#/Gb | G | G#/Ab | A | A#/Bb | B | C | C#/Db | D |

Illustration 24: D string notes.

3RD STRING ROOT

We can also create a power chord with the 3rd string as the root. It's the G string, so the first power chord that we make is G5:

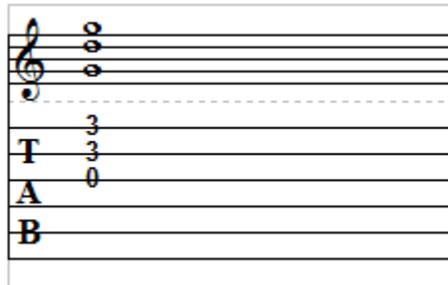


Illustration 25: G5

Here the tab of the power chords that you can play with the 3rd string root:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| T | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| A | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| B | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Illustration 26: 3rd string root.

I suppose you'll want a table to show you the names of the notes on the G string, so here it is:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|---|-------|---|---|-------|---|-------|---|----|-------|----|
| Fret | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Chord | G#/Ab | A | A#/Bb | B | C | C#/Db | D | D#/Eb | E | F | F#/Gb | G |

Illustration 27: Notes on the G string.

6

SLASH CHORDS

A slash chord or slashed chord is a chord whose bass note or inversion is indicated by the addition of a slash and the letter of the bass after the root note letter. It does not indicate "or".

For example, C₅/G. That's C₅ slash G. This would indicate that we would alter a C₅ chord by adding a G note as the lowest note as in the illustration below.

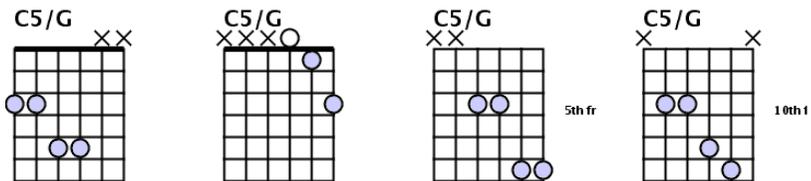
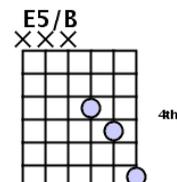
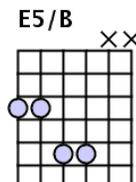
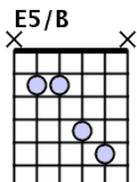
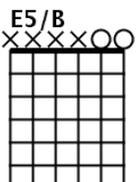
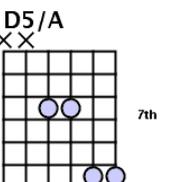
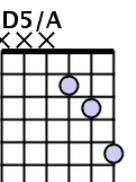
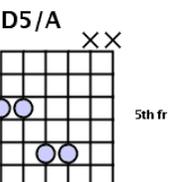
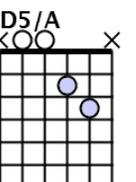
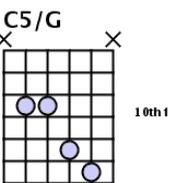
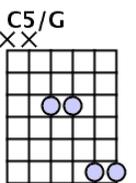
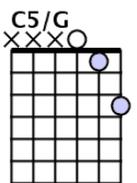
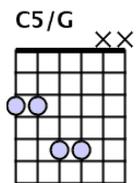
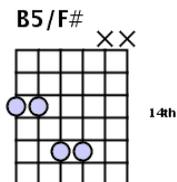
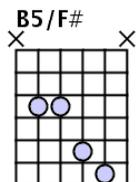
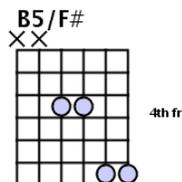
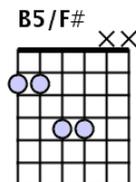
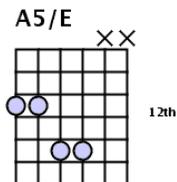
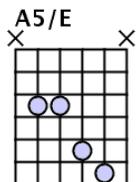
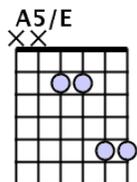
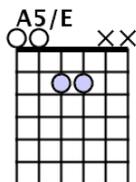
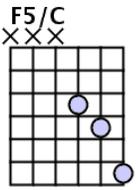
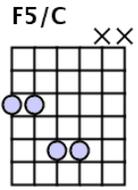
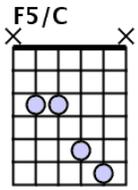
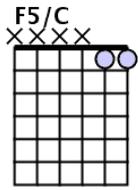


Illustration 28: Power chord inversion.

The trick is that only the 5th will be inverted when dealing with power chords. There's no other possible inversion available, because we are dealing with just two different notes: the 1st and the 5th.

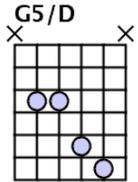
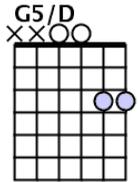
Power chord inversions are very common, so it's a good idea to get familiar with them. You'll notice that the same patterns pop up time and time again.



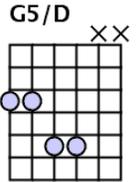


8th fr

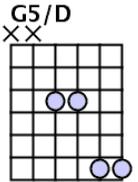
5th



5th fr



10th f



12th

7

TESTING YOUR KNOWLEDGE

TESTING, TESTING, TESTING...

We've covered a lot of ground, so let's take some time to test our new knowledge. Look at the diagrams on the following pages and determine what the name of the power chord by looking at it.

1

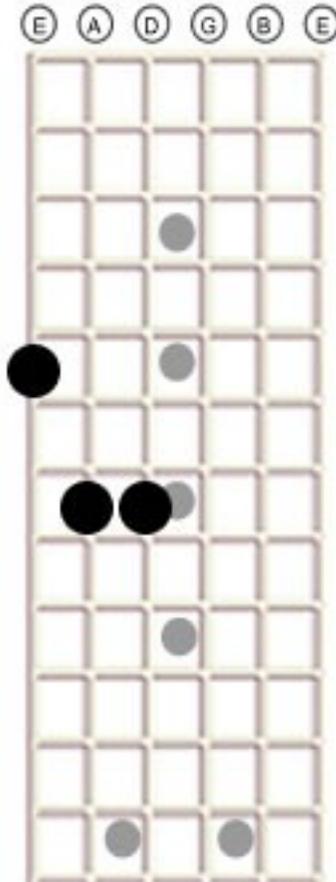


Illustration 29: What is the name of this power chord?

#2

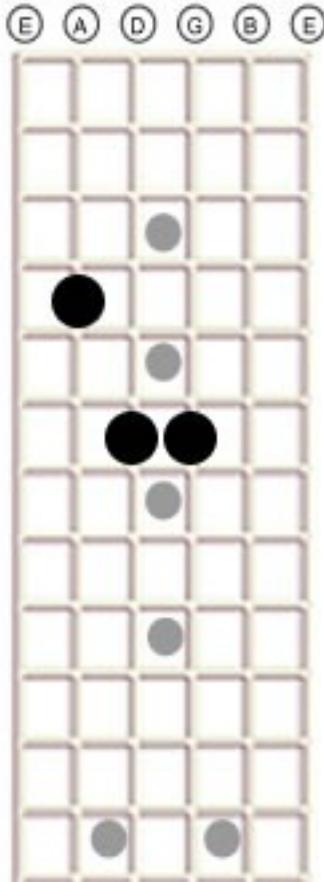


Illustration 30: What is the name of this power chord?

#3

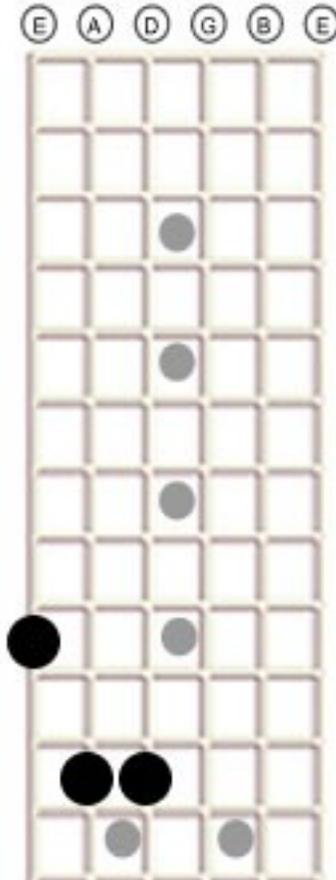


Illustration 31: What is the name of this power chord?

#4

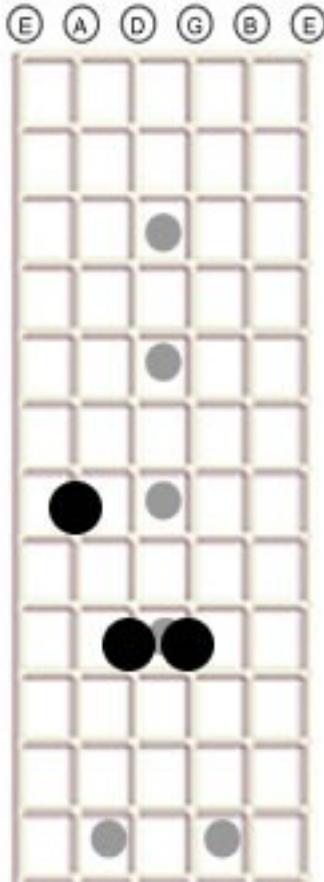


Illustration 32: What is the name of this power chord?

#5

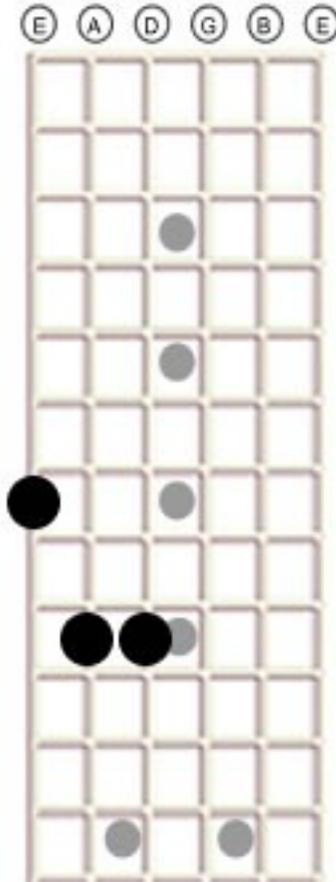


Illustration 33: What is the name of this power chord?

#6

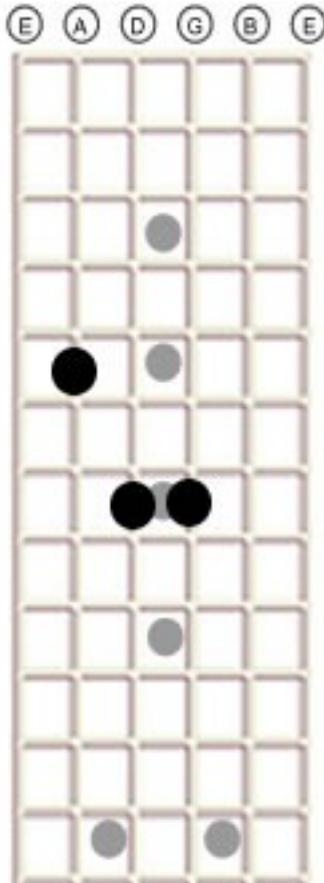


Illustration 34: What is the name of this power chord.

7

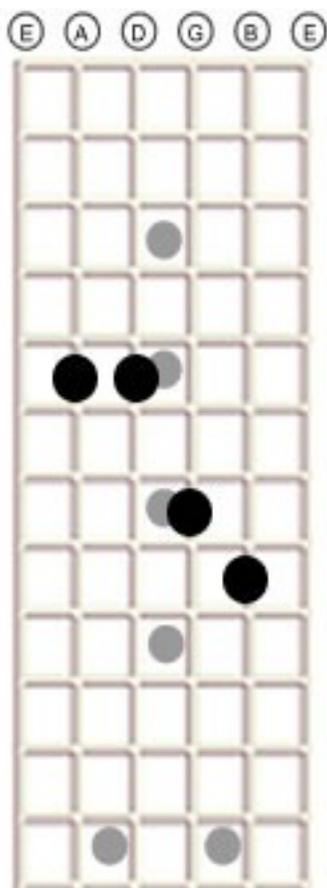


Illustration 35: What power chord is this?

8

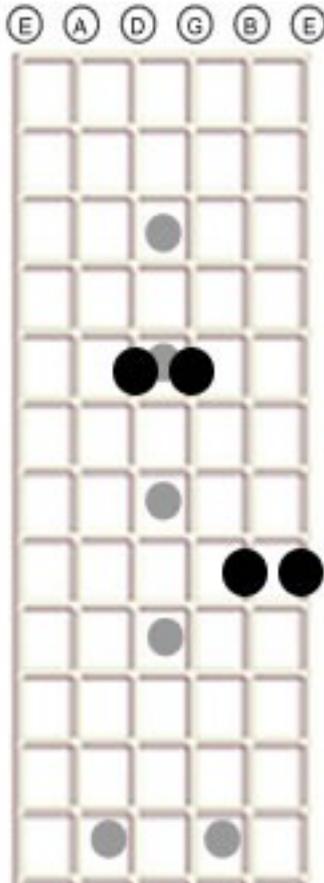


Illustration 36: What is the name of this power chord?

#9

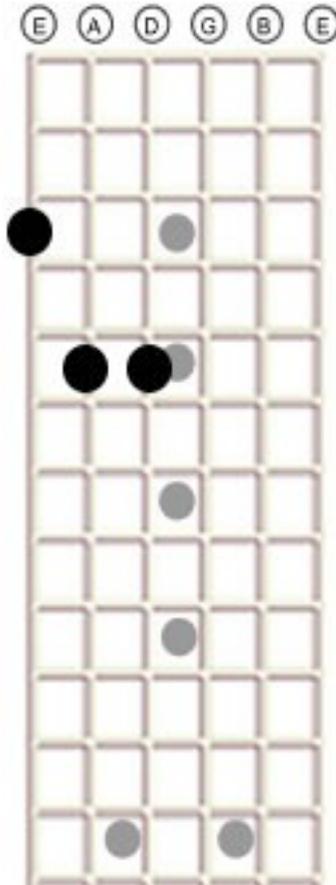


Illustration 37: What is the name of this power chord?

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS

I'd hate to give you a test and not give you a way to check your answers, so feel free to skip to the back of the book to check your answers.

8

POWER CHORDS IN ACTION

THE INFLUENCE OF POWER CHORDS

I hope you won't be surprised when I tell you that there are a ton of classic songs that use power chords as one of the primary creative tools. They can be found in virtually all types of music.

Rock and metal music use them most of all. The main reason for this is that the power chord allows for a lot of distortion. It doesn't lose its impact with the distortion added, whereas a full chord with the 3rd may be too dissonant with a lot of distortion. The easy chord form also allows for quick chord changes.

In this chapter we'll look at some of the best power chord riffs of all time.

ROCK YOU LIKE A HURRICANE

The band 'The Scorpions' hit it big in the 80's with this mega hit. The primary riff of the song is nothing but power chords.

The riff features quick chord changes and the use of power chords make this easy to do.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T | | | | | | | | | |
| A | 9 | 9 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 |
| B | 7 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 5 |
| | | | | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | | |

Illustration 38: "Rock You Like A Hurricane" by The Scorpions

EYE OF THE TIGER

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T | | | | | | | | | |
| A | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| B | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| | | | | | | | | 3 | 4 |

Illustration 39: "Eye Of The Tiger" by Survivor

"IRON MAN" BY BLACK SABBATH

This is an awesome power chord based riff. It uses a lot of slides which is a great trick to add to your arsenal.

Chord progression: B5, D5, E5, G5, F#5, G5, F#5, G5, D5, E5

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|------|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----|---|---|-----|
| T | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| A | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| B | 9 | 9-12 | 12-14 | 14 | 17-16 | 17-16 | 17-16 | 17-16 | 12-12 | 12-12 | 13-14 | 14 | 14 | 15-14 | 15-14 | 15-14 | 15-14 | 10-10 | 10-12 | 12 | x | 3 | |
| | | sl. | | sl. | sl. | sl. | sl. | sl. | | | sl. | sl. | | | | | | | | | | | sl. |

Illustration 42: "Iron Man" by Black Sabbath

"MORE THAN A FEELING" BY BOSTON

Chord progression: G5, C5, E5, D5

Gtrs I, II

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|------|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| T | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| A | 5 | 5-10 | 10 | 10 | 9 | x | x | 9 | 9 | x | x | 7 | 7 | 9 | x | x | 7 | 7 | | | | | |
| B | 5 | 5-10 | 10 | 10 | 7 | x | x | 7 | 7 | x | x | 5 | 5 | 7 | x | x | 5 | 5 | 0 | | | | |
| | 3 | 3-8 | 8 | 8 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | sl. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Illustration 43: "More Than A Feeling" by Boston

"COCAINE" BY ERIC CLAPTON

Much of the rhythm guitar parts to "Cocaine" are handled with power chords.

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|-----|
| T | 9 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 7 | | |
| A | 9 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 7 | | |
| B | 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 0 (2) | (0) |

Illustration 44: "Cocaine" by Eric Clapton

"OWNER OF A LONELY HEART" BY YES

Even progressive rocker like Yes find ways to utilise power chords.

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T | 2 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| A | 2 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| B | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 |

Illustration 45: "Owner Of A Lonely Heart" by Yes.

This is a very recognisable riff built on power chords.

"ALL THE SMALL THINGS" BY BLINK 182

G5 F5 C5 F5 G5 N.C. F5

Gtr I *f* Gtrs II *f* P.M.-----|

| | | | | |
|----------|------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| T | | 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 | | |
| A | | 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 | |
| B | 5 3 3 4 | 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 | 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 | 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 0 0 0 0 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 |

Illustration 50: "All The Small Things" by Blink 182

"BEST FRIEND'S GIRL" BY THE CARS

A Intro

$\text{♩} = 116$

F5 B^b5 C

Gtr I *mf* P.M.-----

| | | |
|----------|-----------------|-------------------|
| T | | |
| A | | 3 3 3 2 2 2 2 x |
| B | 3 3 3 3 | 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 3 x |
| | 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 | |

Illustration 51: "Best Friend's Girl" by The Cars

9

STRUMMING SONGS WITH POWER CHORDS

You can strum through virtually any popular song using nothing but power chords. It's a bit of a cheat for most song because it will turn out to be a “dumbed down” version of the song, but there's no better way to get started when you're a beginner.

We learned earlier that we can substitute a power chord for any other chord. This comes in handy when you don't know many chords.

In this chapter we'll take strumming versions of popular songs and learn how to play them using only power chords.

"BROWN EYED GIRL" BY VAN MORRISON

Take the song "Brown Eyed Girl" by Van Morrison. It has G, C, and D chords. You can substitute with G5, C5, and D5. When we hit the chorus we'll find an Em chord. Don't panic, just substitute with E5.

```

G           C
Hey, where did we go
G           D
Days when the rain came
G           C
Down in the hollow
G           D
Playin' a new game
G           C
Laughin' and a runnin', hey hey
G           D
Skippin' and a jumpin'
G           C
In the misty mornin' fog
G           D
With our hearts a thumpin'
C           D
And you
G           Em
My brown eyed girl
C           D
And you, my
G
Brown eyed girl

```

"SIMPLE MAN" BY LYNYRD SKYNYRD

In the song "Simple Man" we are dealing with C, G, Am, and Am7. We can substitute with power chords using C5, G5, A5, and A5 again.

A E F#m
My momma told me, when I was young
A E F#m
Come sit beside me, my only son.
A E F#m
And listen closely, to what I say
A E F#m
And if you do this, it will help you, some sunny day.

F#m/A A/E E/F#m 2x

A E F#m
Oh, take your time, don't live too fast
A E F#m
Troubles will come, and they will pass.
A E F#m
Well, find a woman, and you'll find love
A E F#m
And don't forget son, there is someone up above.

A E F#m
And be a simple kind of man.
A E F#m
Oh, be something you'll love and understand.
A E F#m
Baby be a simple kind of man.
A E F#m
Oh, won't you do this for me son if you can.

APPLIES TO VIRTUALLY ALL SONGS

Substituting power chords is a great way to get started. You can use the methods we've discussed to play the songs you want.

This comes with a strong warning:

See a lot of players get caught in the power chord trap. They learn how to play power chords but fail to learn the real chords. This is a major mistake!

Just because you can play a C power chord does not mean you know a C chord. As we said before, they aren't really chords anyway.

Learning the full chords is a very important step. It doesn't matter what style of music you play in, you shouldn't avoid learning the real chords.

Power chords allow you to get a running start to the world of music, but if you don't keep learning, they will become a crutch.

9

POWER CHORD

RESOURCES

I hope you enjoyed this book and found it informative. I will periodically update the book. You can download the latest version at any time at the link below:

<http://guitaralliance.com/big-book-of-power-chords>

You'll also find helpful videos that deal with power chords, related topics, or just something that comes in handy.

This concludes the big book on little ole power chords.

Until next time, keep on learning!

Sincerely,
Kenny Mann

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenny Mann". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a slight shadow effect behind the text.

