

Chapter 2 – How To “Cheat” A Barre Chord

Now that you’ve learned a variety of chords in different positions, there are times that we want to eliminate some of the notes. I know, in the previous chapter I explained that we want to use as many notes as possible when playing barre chords, and that sometimes adding a few additional notes with power chords allow a brighter spectrum, but just like anything else in life – there are exceptions.

Let’s say you’re having trouble fingering a barre chord. Common issues that you might face include (1) the length of your fingers or (2) the strength in your fretting hand, or even (3) getting your fingers to cooperate.

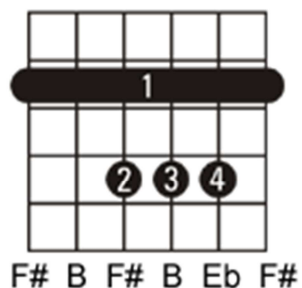
My intent in this chapter is to show you a quick and easy method in eliminating all of this. Of course, I know that you still might face issues when trying to play these barre chords, even when cheating with these chords, so this all should be taken as ‘food for thought.’ What I mean by that is learning to cheat won’t necessarily unlock all the mysteries of barre chords. It will just help you apply them in a real world setting.

I won’t be discussing EVERY barre chord. Instead I will just be taking a few major and minor barre chords and show you how to eliminate pesky additional notes that cause one or all of the three issues you might face as a strumming guitarist.

I’ll be addressing the following barre chords, as these are the ones I’ve received the most questions about. Remember – ALL of what you are about to learn can be applied to ANY barre chord, as long as you follow the formula provided.

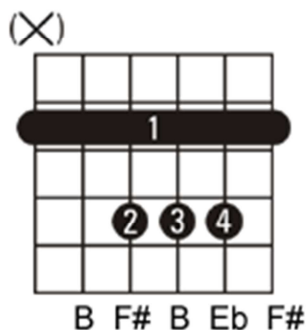
The B Major Chord

B Major Standard



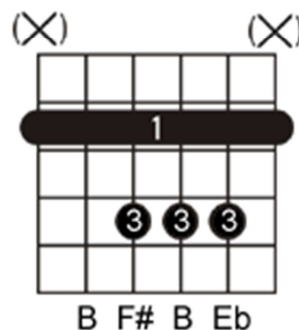
Ex. 1

Alteration 1



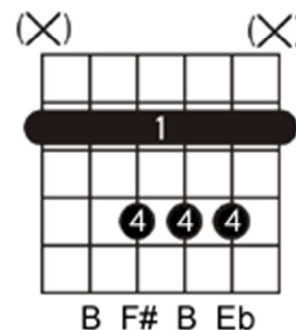
Ex. 2

Alteration 2



Ex. 3

Alteration 3



Ex. 4

There are only 3 required notes to produce a B Major Chord:

B (root) - F#/Gb - Eb/D#

Here we have a total of four versions of the B Major chord. The first version, the B Major standard, or Example 1, shows what I would consider the 'truest' form of the B Major. However, I don't play this version because it is way too taxing on the hand. If you perform often, you'll find that any cheat will save you a world of trouble. You'll also see that I've included the notes under each string with the respective fret being played. Since we ONLY need the root note, in this case the note "B," the F#/Gb note, and the Eb/D# note, we can remove additional notes to make the barre chord much easier. I'm also PURPOSELY tricking you by interchanging the dual name sharps or flats. Remember – these notes are the same, and are only used because the notes in music were based on piano, where there are sharps and flats. On the guitar, it's either one or the other. F# = Gb and Eb = D#.

Let's get down to business:

Example 1: This chord diagram includes ALL of the possible notes that can be played. But, since we only need a total of three notes, we can start removing notes that aren't necessary in order to actually play the barre chord. In this case we have (3) F#/Gb's, (2) B's, and (1) Eb/D# notes. A standard guitar has six strings, so we've covered EVERY string imaginable. Why? Sure it won't sound quite as thick if we remove notes, but depending on the chord, sometimes less is more. In the case of B Major, less IS usually more.

Example 2: Here we've removed the Low E string note. That's easier because it will then allow us to not need the 1st finger barre on all of the 2nd note frets. We can easily consider the A string as our root note, so we don't even need to place our 1st finger on the Low E string. The diagram shows an "(X)" on this string, indicating that it need not be played at all. As you'll see, the diagram still SHOWS the barre, which is common in chord diagrams. But – the easiest way to think of this is if you see an "X" you just don't play the string. If it is a LOW note, you don't even need to finger it at all.

Example 3: Here we remove the duplicate E string note, but this time it's on the High E string. Remember that the Low E and High E strings produce the same notes – only at different octaves. If we don't need the Low E string note, in the case of the B Major barre chord, we don't need the High E string note either. The fingerings have also changed. Instead of our 1, 2, 3, 4 positioning, we can use 1, 3, 3, 3 instead. The third fingers take on the extra 'weight' of the 2, 3, 4. Since we don't need the High E string note to ring out, we can literally anchor our 3rd finger in the same way we do with our 1st finger in creating a barre chord.

Example 4: This is the one most of us will become comfortable with. It's the same thing as the third example, but instead we're using our 4th fingers. This will help train you for using power chords quickly and easily.

Speaking of Power Chords...

I've already discussed how to create power chords in the previous chapter, so if you STILL can't quite finger the B Major chord using the altered methods above, just remember that a B power chord simply NEEDS the root and the fifth. You can then play the B Major chord as a B5. If you choose to add the octave above the root then it's fine. You've ALMOST played the B Major chord in its actual form.

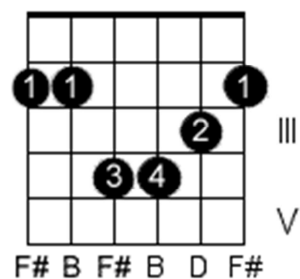
Tab Legend for Various B Major Chords:



Again, there simply isn't time to cover all of the possible positions, so these fit what we've just discussed.

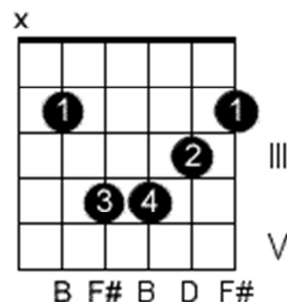
The B Minor Chord

B minor Standard



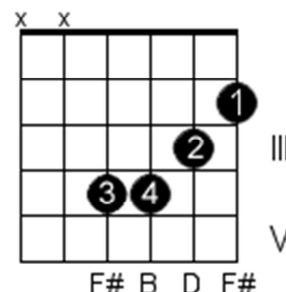
Ex. 1

Alteration 1



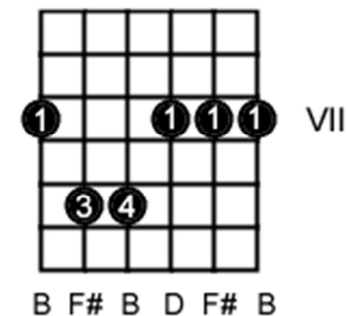
Ex. 2

Alteration 2



Ex. 3

Alteration 3



Ex. 4

There are only 3 required notes to produce a B minor Chord:

B (root) - F#/Gb - D

I've changed it up a little on you this time.

Example 1: You already understand that the first example is the 'truest' form, but we want to remove as many notes as possible to keep it simple. There are (2) B notes, (3) F#/Gb notes, and (1) D note. Again – six strings. Six notes.

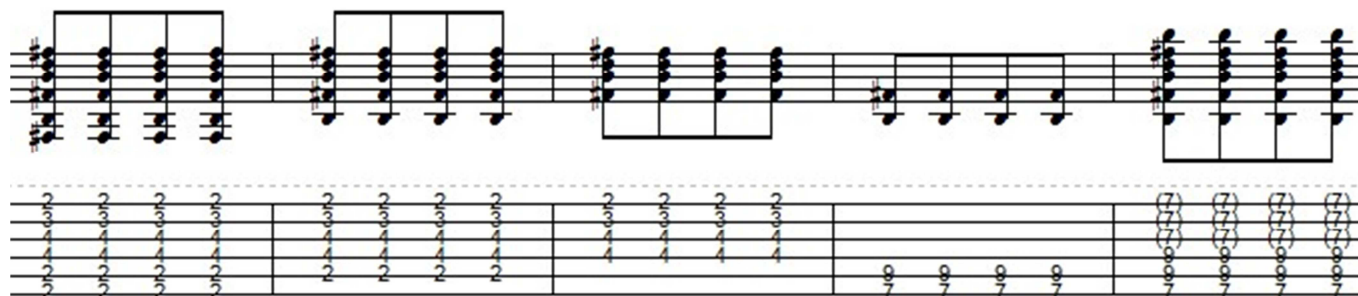
Example 2: Here we've removed the F#/Gb note on the Low E string. We don't need it. Also, we want the LOWEST root note to ring out. The F#/Gb creates a muddy tone to the B root. That's another good reason to remove notes that GENERALLY fall above the root. Why didn't we remove the High E string here? Well, try it yourself. You'll hear that it sounds MUCH better with the High E note applied. This is when your ear can be your guide. Remember – in the world of guitar, there are a lot of exceptions. However, IF you choose to remove this note, you're not doing any harm.

Example 3: Wait a minute! I've completely removed the lowest B note for the Bm chord on the A string. This is what you would call a "Mel Bay" Bm chord – and I completely disagree with this chord used as a FULLY strummed chord. With fingerstyle it's fine. However, removing the lowest root note of B on the guitar we've lost the magic of the chord. At least in my opinion. However, we DO have the necessary notes needed to still produce the Bm chord, so I guess there's no harm in it, but this is an example I wouldn't recommend. For me, the second example sounds much better.

EXCEPTION: If you are accompanying a fellow guitarist you can play this version. It's easier to use in that respect. Just remember that you'll need SOMEONE to apply that lower root note so that the song sounds 'full' enough.

Example 4: I went ahead and threw in an additional position, because the Bm chord kind of 'runs out' (so to speak) of options. This entire example takes place on the 7th and 9th frets, and uses the full spectrum of possible chords. Plus it's a great preparatory example when you want to use the power chord format when playing the heavier classic and moderate rock progressions.

Tab Legend for Various B minor Chords:



Note: in the last measure, the parentheses indicate the third example from our alterations above, not a series of 'ghost notes.'

Exercises:

Practice playing each tab below and decide which version you prefer playing of both the Major and minor possibilities. Be sure to mark down each position that appeals to you.

As you know I'm not a fundamentalist when it comes to learning chords. I want you to find the most comfortable variation and work with it. Once you are comfortable with it, you may then go back to the 'standard' approach to learning your chords.

This is a real-world environment, so starting where you feel accomplished is the key.

B Major



B minor

The image displays a musical score for B minor, consisting of two staves. The top staff is a standard musical staff with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It shows a sequence of chords and notes: a B minor triad (B2, D3, F#3) on the first staff, followed by a B minor triad (B2, D3, F#3) on the second staff, then a B minor triad (B2, D3, F#3) on the third staff, and finally a B minor triad (B2, D3, F#3) on the fourth staff. The bottom staff is a guitar fretboard diagram with six strings and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It shows a series of chords and notes: a B minor triad (B2, D3, F#3) on the first staff, followed by a B minor triad (B2, D3, F#3) on the second staff, then a B minor triad (B2, D3, F#3) on the third staff, and finally a B minor triad (B2, D3, F#3) on the fourth staff. The fretboard diagram includes fingerings (1-4) and a barre (7) for the B minor triad on the first staff.

Footnote: Remember that EACH and EVERY chord you ever come across in the realm of barred chords can be worked with in the way you just learned.