Fingerstyle Guitar *In a Flash:* Module 1 – The Basics
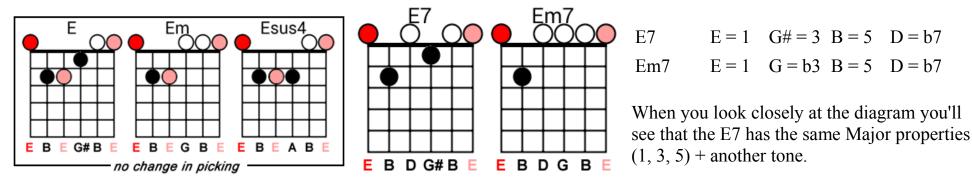
The "Crab and Bird Pinch" Method

Well I'm just full of quirky names today, right? In this lesson you'll learn how to add your middle finger (you know...the *bird*) into the arrangement, enabling you to start adding higher notes to the mix. In this lesson you will gain the power and understanding to utilize all three digits. It'll add depth and flavor to your progression in a simple but effective way.

This is at the heart of how you begin to integrate the melody of a song into the bass at the same time. With a name like this, you'll never forget your finger arrangement. In the previous tutorial I discussed all the basic chord properties and showed you how to make use of all 3 notes using just two fingerpicking digits, which were the thumb (T) and the first (1st) finger.

What happens when we deal with more specific chords that use a different chord construction formula? We can go back to the E7 and Em7 chords we checked out right near the beginning.

Below is a diagram that boxes in the E, Em and Esus4. We have established that these three chords will use the exact same fingerpicking pattern.

E7   E = 1   G# = 3 B = 5   D = b7

Em7   E = 1   G = b3 B = 5   D = b7

When you look closely at the diagram you'll see that the E7 has the same Major properties (1, 3, 5) + another tone.
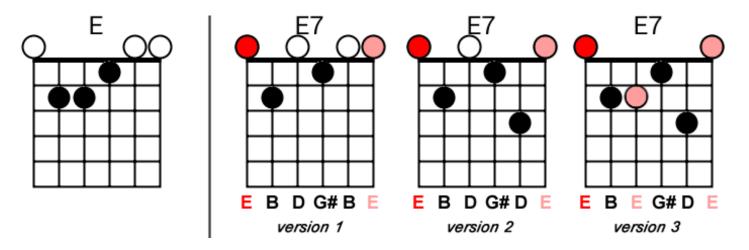
The same applies for the Em7. It has the same minor properties (1, b3, 5) + another tone. Because these two chords use FOUR tones instead of 3, we need to establish where we might want to place these notes in a fingerstyle progression so that we "hear" the tones we want. As mentioned before, we aren't necessarily required to use all 4 tones, but it would be wise at first.

This is especially true if:

1. You plan on singing while you play a fingerstyle passage. Remember, you are just as much a listener as your audience. If you plan on singing and playing at the same time, your voice will need to mimic the tones of your guitar in some form or fashion. This is actually very helpful when trying to sing. Many people neglect this whole idea of pinpointing tones in a chord and then wonder why they can't match their voice to the chord being played. It's often due to the lack of putting those defining tones in a progression.

2. You are looking to remain consistent when you play a fingerstyle passage. Once you move beyond the basics of this training system, you'll be able to determine (all on your own) whether or not you really need certain tones, how to take certain tones and create split chords from them (such as D/F#) and more – but again, everyone needs to start somewhere.

Thus, we need to see how we might get the "7" and the "m7" in our progression. I'll start with the E7 here.
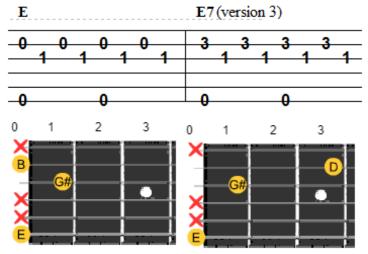
Interjection: There are a few variations of the E7 chord. Here are the basic versions in open position:

When you look at the original form of E Major, you'll see that the versions of E7 are actually rather consistent here.

Now, of the E7 versions on the right, which one has three roots of E? The last one. This means you CAN use the exact same picking pattern for that last E7 as you do with any of the basic E group chords. In theory, all of these E7 versions would work using just the E group pattern, but there's a reason I didn't start you off with that. It's about getting the tones you need.

Assuming we went from a standard E Major chord to an E7 chord using version 3, here's what you would play:

This is a perfectly fine fingerpicking pattern. It's consistent and could be used at any time. But there's a problem with it. The E Major is picked out with a full spectrum of notes: E, G#, B ← all good there.

The E7 here is NOT picked out with a full spectrum of notes. For a true E7, we need E, G#, B and D.

We aren't getting our B note, and that is the 5 in the chord. From the very beginning we stacked our 1 and 5 together, and in this E7 we won't get that.

So, it's not consistent because we are starting out with our 1 (E) and b7 (D)

Version 2 won't work either based on the note run because you still make use of that "D" (b7) with your first stacked notes.

What about this E to E7 using version 1? Well, it won't work either because you would just be playing an E. We need an E7.
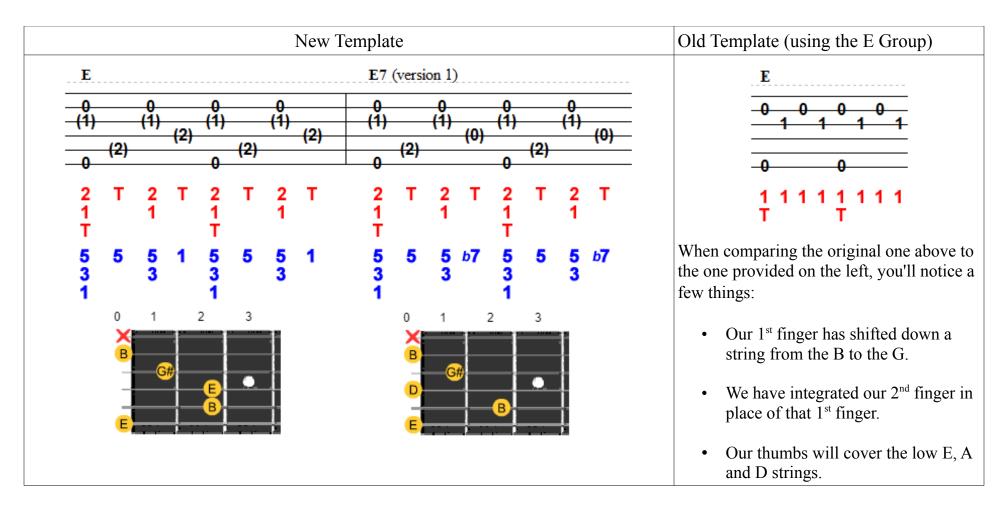
This is ALSO an issue with Em7, A7, Am7, D7, and Dm7. Long story short – you need to use FOUR tones to get the properties of these chords to ring out.

    (I could plot all this out for you, but I don't want to bore you to death. Just trust me and you'll get it all much easier.)

We are NOW ready to take our open chords and work with the (1) Crab Pinch {[T] and [1]} in conjunction with our MIDDLE finger (or 2nd finger, or, well, you know...the 'bird') which then becomes the "Crab and Bird Pinch" method of playing. We'll use our thumb, 1st finger and our 2nd fingers.

Here's an example on how we might play an E Major to an E7 (super common!) with a slightly modified template:

1 → The notes in parentheses ( ) below indicate our "new" note spectrum.
2 → Any of the B and G string notes have merely shifted backward, which results in a stack.
3 → Since we have stacked notes, we then have room for the A and D strings =)

New Template	Old Template (using the E Group)

E ... **E7 (version 1)** ... **E**

(tablature and chord diagrams)

When comparing the original one above to the one provided on the left, you'll notice a few things:

- Our 1st finger has shifted down a string from the B to the G.

- We have integrated our 2nd finger in place of that 1st finger.

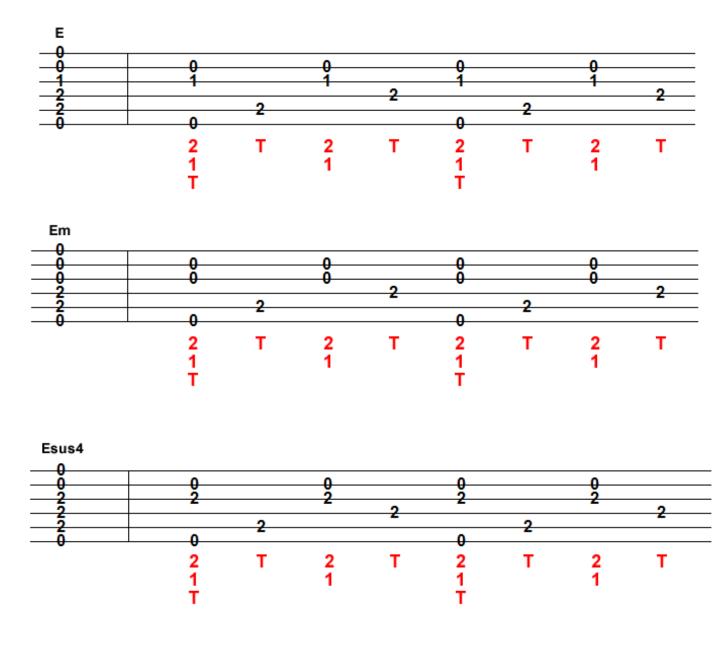- Our thumbs will cover the low E, A and D strings.

The blue numbers here indicate the notes used in the fingerstyle arrangement. While you can just play what I give you, I do think it's important that you take a look at what happens *specifically* on the D string.

In the E Major, we play the D string on the 4th pluck. That's the root of E. It's not the lowest root, but it's a root.
In the E7, we play the D string on the 4th pluck as well. That's the b7 of E7. It pops right out!
Why does this matter? Well, up until the 4th pluck in the E7 chord, it was just an E chord. That specific instance of the b7 (the D note) popping right out makes it darn clear you are going to an E7. Had you not included that b7 note, you wouldn't have an E7.

The video will explain more about this template, but the moment you play it you'll see why it works so well.

Believe it or not, that new(ish) template is ALL you need for any E group chord! You'll get plenty of practice progressions, but my plan now is to quite literally just throw that new template on ALL of the E group chords, including that original (somewhat) wonky G Major.
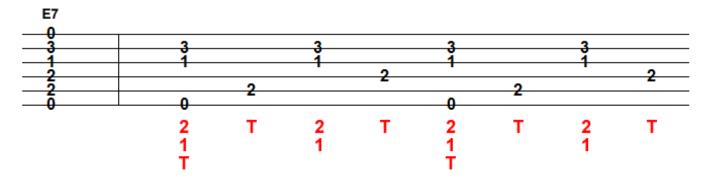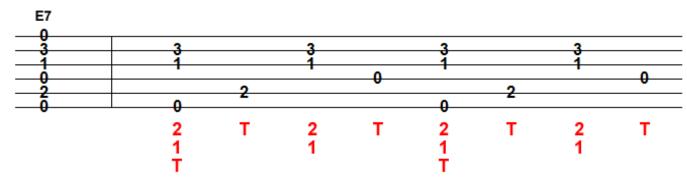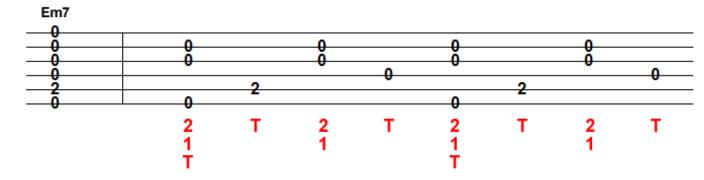
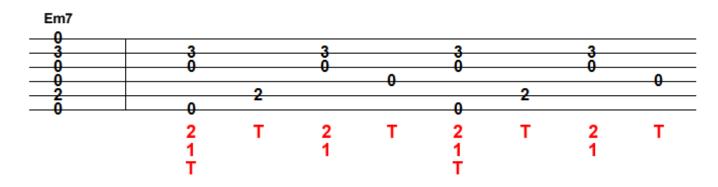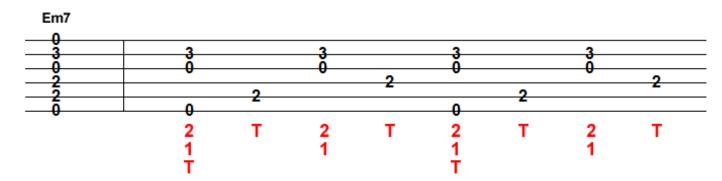Here are all of the chords you've seen in the E group with our new "Crab and Bird Pinch" method of playing:

E

```
E
--0---------------------------------------------------------------------------
--0----------0-----------0-----------0-----------0----------------------------
--1----------1-----------1--------2--1-----------1--------2-------------2------
--2-------------------2-----------------------------------2-------------------
--2----------2-----------------------------------2---------------------------
--0----------0-----------------------0---------------------------------------
             2     T     2     T     2     T     2     T
             1           1           1           1
             T                       T
```

Em

```
Em
--0---------------------------------------------------------------------------
--0----------0-----------0-----------0-----------0----------------------------
--0----------0-----------0--------2--0-----------0--------2-------------2------
--2-------------------2-----------------------------------2-------------------
--2----------2-----------------------------------2---------------------------
--0----------0-----------------------0---------------------------------------
             2     T     2     T     2     T     2     T
             1           1           1           1
             T                       T
```

Esus4

```
Esus4
--0---------------------------------------------------------------------------
--0----------0-----------0-----------0-----------0----------------------------
--2----------2-----------2--------2--2-----------2--------2-------------2------
--2-------------------2-----------------------------------2-------------------
--2----------2-----------------------------------2---------------------------
--0----------0-----------------------0---------------------------------------
             2     T     2     T     2     T     2     T
             1           1           1           1
             T                       T
```

Em7

```
0
3          3          3          3          3
0          0          0          0          0
0                                0          0
2            2                              2        0
0          0                     0
           2    T     2    T     2    T     2    T
                1          1          1          1
                T          T
```

Em7

```
0
3          3          3          3          3
0          0          0          0          0
2                                0          0        2
2            2          2                   2
0          0                     0
           2    T     2    T     2    T     2    T
                1          1          1          1
                T          T
```

And Finally - - - - - G Major!

G

```
3
3          3          3          3          3
0          0          0          0          0
0                                0          0        0
2            2                              2
3          3                     3
           2    T     2    T     2    T     2    T
                1          1          1          1
                T          T
```
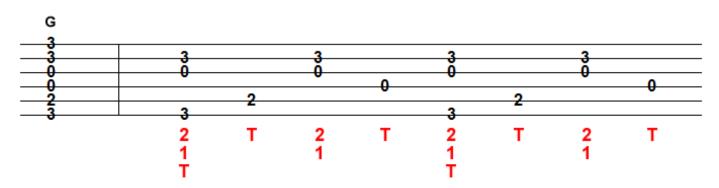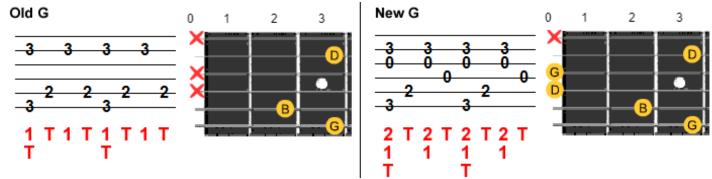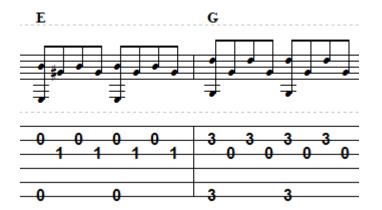
Now, why does this G Major look different than the one I showed initially?

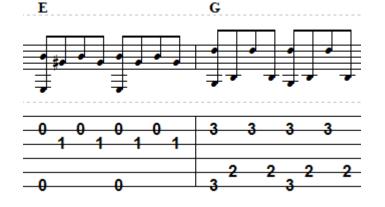Let's take a quick glance at them side-by-side for comparison:

Old G

```
0   1   2   3
X
-3---3---3---3-                              D
X
X
-2---2---2---2-
-3-------3-----                         B
1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T                              G
T       T
```

New G

```
0   1   2   3
X
-3---3---3---3-                              D
-0---0---0---0-
---------0-------0---                    G
-2-------2-----                          D
-3-------3-----                          B
2 T 2 T 2 T 2 T                              G
1       1   1   1
T           T
```

Now, it should be mentioned that BOTH of these G versions are absolutely fine. The only real issue at the beginning with the old G Major related to the consistency in the picking pattern. When playing the original form of G Major <u>trying</u> to use the E group template, you had this:

E   G

```
-0---0---0---0-  |  -3---3---3---3-
---1---1---1---1-|  ---0---0---0---0-

-0-------0-------|  -3-------3-------
```

This gave us a full E Major chord, but it only gave us a G5. Again, there's nothing wrong with that, but there was no logical way to get a true G Major chord using that template.

We still wanted to get the full range of "G" in it without (1) having to create a technique-based chord phrase and/or (2) without having to create a split chord. There was no other way to get the full G Major.
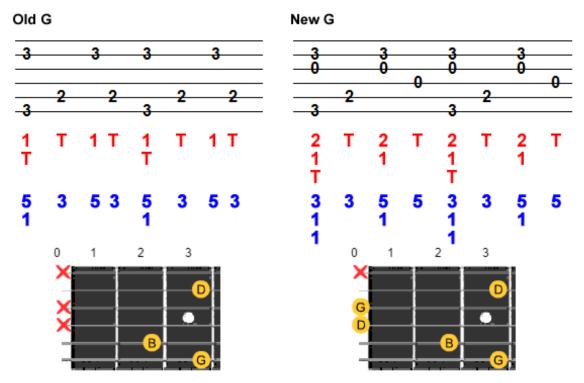
So, I had to give you another template (exclusive to G) that is designed for a beginner and featured at least 2 digits, which was:

E   G

```
-0---0---0---0-  |  -3---3---3---3-
---1---1---1---1-|
                    ---2---2---2---2-
-0-------0-------|  -3-------3-------
```

You'll get tired of me saying this, but again – there's nothing wrong with that G Major pattern, either. However, it doesn't look much like the E group version. The idea here is still consistency.

Thus, by incorporating your 2nd finger into the mix across the E group, you can actually use the EXACT same picking pattern for that one "iffy" G Major chord! Sweeeet.

Because G Major uses a fretted root note (even though it's on the low E string) the notes that are produced in the picking arrangement will sound out in a different order, but this only applies to the open G Major chord situation:

Old G

```
-3--------3-----3----------3-------
-----------------------------------
-----------------------------------
------2-----2------2------2--------
-3-----------3---------------------
```

1 T 1 T 1 T 1 T
T   T

5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3
1   1

New G

```
-3--------3-----3----------3-------
-0--------0-----0----------0-------
----------------0----------0-------
------2-----------------2----------
-3------------------3--------------
```

2 T 2 T 2 T 2 T
1   1   1   1
T   T

3 3 5 5 3 3 5 5
1   1   1   1
1   1

Keep in mind that the note order doesn't actually matter as long as we get the tones we need at some point in the measure.

What matters is maintaining the picking hand consistency, which we have here. =)

The first "G" (the old G) makes use of a movement of 3-5-3 after the initial stacked pattern.

The second "G" (the new G) makes use of a slightly different 3-5-5 pattern.

Either works fine, and the "new" G would be great if a song is either in the key of C because the G chord (the "V" in the key of C Major) would sound nice and dominant here. Naturally, the new G would also sound great in the key of G Major. However, the first (old) G would also work just fine in both situations and/or if you were playing the G Major chord when it's not in a dominant position. (i.e. - in the key of D, where the G Major chord is the IV chord)

Again – either works, but the last one will give you a full consistency based on our fingerstyle pattern. You'll see how to "plug in" that new G Major chord in just a moment.

"Nate – why didn't you just give me this full E group template from the beginning...?"

Because that's not how fingerstyle should really be addressed. In order to understand the tones used in *any* group of chords, you must discover how each note works. Plus, if I threw on a 3 digit picking pattern on you from the beginning, there's no guarantee you'll be able to actually play it. While even these basic patterns might not look terribly challenging, you'll be surprised at how tricky they can become if you don't start with the basics. You'll see when you get to the progressive backing track challenge.

Furthermore, when you start using fingerstyle phrasing and additional techniques, you'll need to know how to alter your fretting hand fingerings without (necessarily) altering your picking hand.

It all goes back to making sure you get the proper tones in ANY chord. The only way I could show you that was by explaining that elephant in the room, which was the open G Major chord. It's still in the E group, but since it makes use of fretted root notes, it initially had to be explained in a way that didn't make it look like I was screwing up the consistency.

All I originally did with the open G Major was "force" ourselves to find the 3 tones required based on just the thumb (T) and first (1) finger. We had to manipulate the pattern (initially) because the open G Major chord has a different property of fretted roots vs. the standard E group of chords. **Now that we are able to bring in our "bird" (2ⁿᵈ finger) we don't have to worry about that at all! :)**
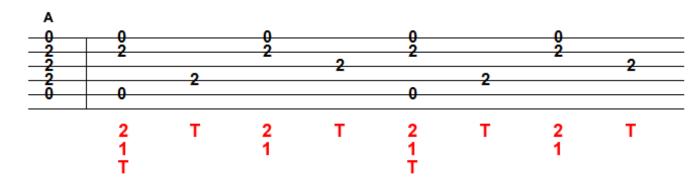
As you will likely recognize immediately, the A group and D group works the same way. I'll toss those below in a moment. Just realize that we do still have to examine the other exception in the A group, which is C Major. However, that one will likely be easy to spot now that you know the G Major. Before we do that, here is your NEW "E Group" template:
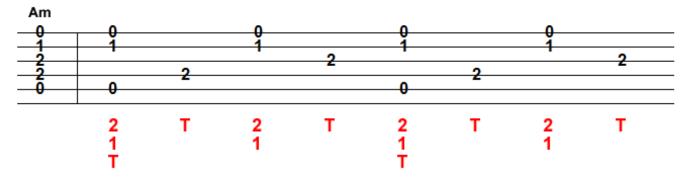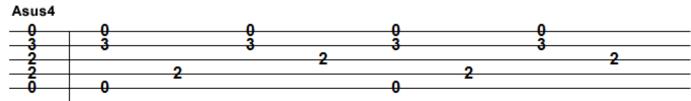

And there you have it. This works for ANY chord you want within the E group.
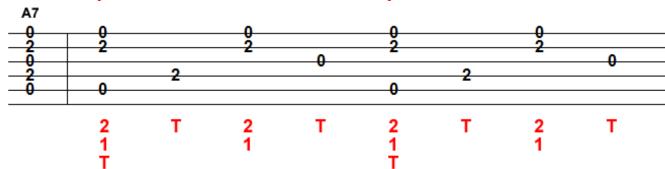(Seriously – try it.)

You can also see below how it works with all the standard A group chords. Notice that the picking arrangement hasn't truly changed. It has simply shifted to the "five-string" concept to start with the open A note itself:
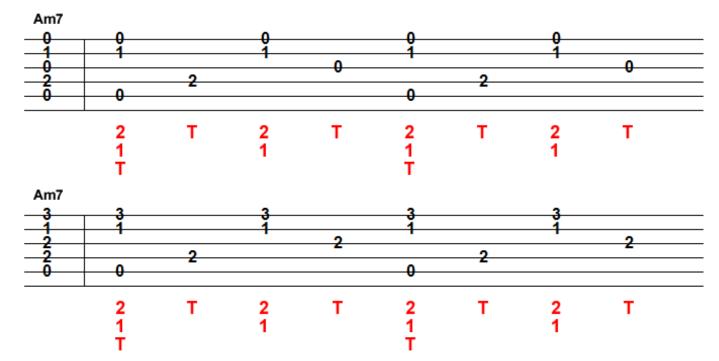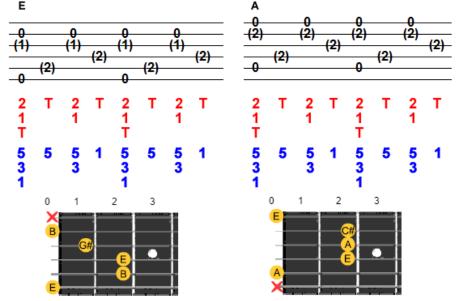
This also works for either Am7 variation as shown below:

Am7

Am7

While I didn't lay these two chords out in comparison like I did with the E group, there is no difference here either since we are making use of all 5 strings. As a quick relation to the note spectrum being played, here is a comparison between the open E Major and open A Major:

Take a look at the strings and how they simply move to the higher root from the E to the A group.
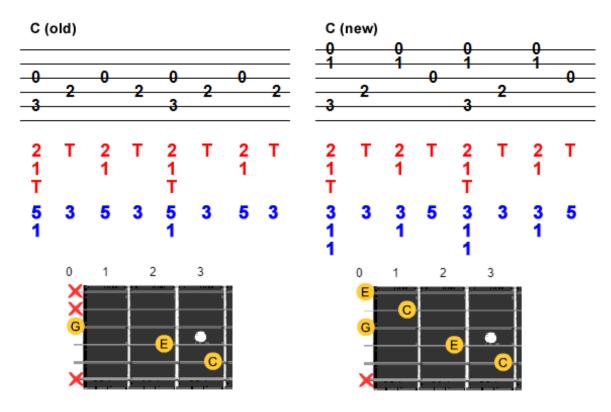
Also pay attention to the red numbers, which indicate your picking hand. There is no deviation in the pattern at all.

Finally, you'll notice that the blue numbers, which indicate the notes used (intervals) in these two chords.

They follow the same arrangement as well.

While these are both Major chords, if the A Major were an Am, the "3" above would be replaced for the "b3" instead. The same would apply to any b7 for the other variations. It's pure consistency – and it works across any of the A group chords.

In addition, that strange C Major I had you play earlier can now translate into this:

Just as with our G Major chord (which falls in the E group) – we do have a slight deviation in the actual tones produced, but we're still getting all 3 of the tones we need here.

Due to the arrangement of our fretted notes in either of the C Major chords produced here, we can see the difference each one offers.
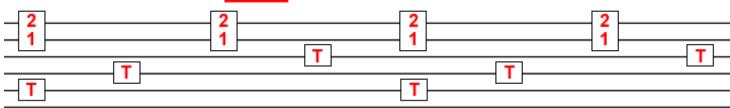
In the first C Major (our old one) we have a 3-5-3 going on. This would be nice in any instance. If you've ever heard of "middle C" on a piano, this chord is basically equivalent to that. It's quite literally the "middle zone" in chord tone.

The specific note that is considered "middle C" in the C Major chord (in general) is actually the 1st fret C note on the B string. That doesn't really matter, but it's nice to know.

The second one is more of a 3-3-5 arrangement, which helps dominate the chord when used in either the key of C Major (it would be the tonic) or in a progression based on the key of F Major. The C chord in the key of F Major would be the dominant (V) in that case.
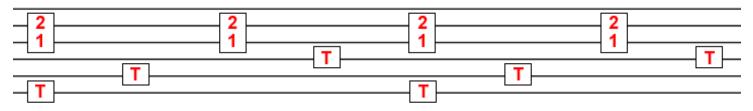
When we generalize the <u>entire</u> A group of chords (including our new C Major chord) we can use this template:
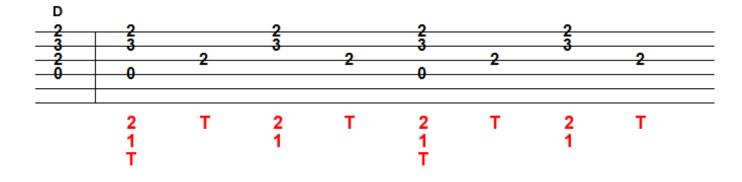
ANY A Group Chord

```
2        2        2        2
1        1        1        1
              T                   T
      T              T              T
  T                    T
```

Reflect back real quick at the "<u>Any</u> E Group Chord" template:

ANY E Group Chord

```
2        2        2        2
1        1        1        1
              T                   T
      T              T
  T                    T
```

Bump your pattern from the Low E to the A – and it's the same.

Tired of all this yet? Well, there's only the D group to go, but since it doesn't have any weird grouping issue (no G or C) I can just slam you with the results:

```
D
2   2        2        2        2
3   3        3        3        3
3   3        3        3        3
2        2        2        2        2
0   0        0
                         0

   2    T    2    T    2    T    2    T
   1         1         1         1
   T                   T
```

Here's what we have done to make that original D group turn into something slightly bigger:

Old D

```
--2-------2--------2--------2--     --2--------2--------2--------2--
                                    --3--------3--------3--------3--
--2----2-----2-----2---             -----2--------2--------2--------2--
--0----------0--                    --0--------------0--
```

```
1   T   1   T   1   T   1   T       2   T   2   T   2   T   2   T
T           T                       1       1       1       1
                                    T               T
5   3   5   3   5   3   5   3       3   5   3   5   3   5   3   5
1           1                       1       1       1       1
                                    1               1
```

New D

The first one makes use of a 3-5-3 arrangement and works just fine.
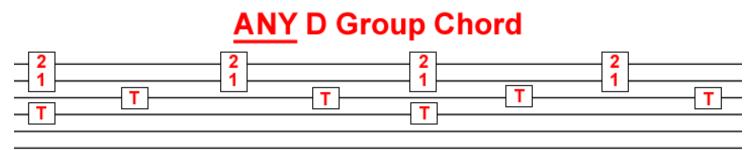
It would be a great way to play a D chord using just two digits either when D is the key (the "I") or when the D is used as a chord in another progression, such as a progression in the key of A Major, where the D would be the IV chord.

If you look at the next one, which is our new fingerstyle arrangement, you'll find that this one works more in a 5-3-5 arrangement.

It would be nice to use when the D chord is the key (the "I") or even when it is used as a dominant chord.

An example of the D Major being a dominant chord would be found in the key of G Major. The D chord is the V in that key. But hey – you already know that either of these will work just fine. I just think you'll find it better to use the 3 digit version here. Since this D group is a four-string group, we can plot any of our D group chords in the template below and get a nice consistency.

When we generalize the <u>entire</u> D group of chords we can use this template:

ANY D Group Chord
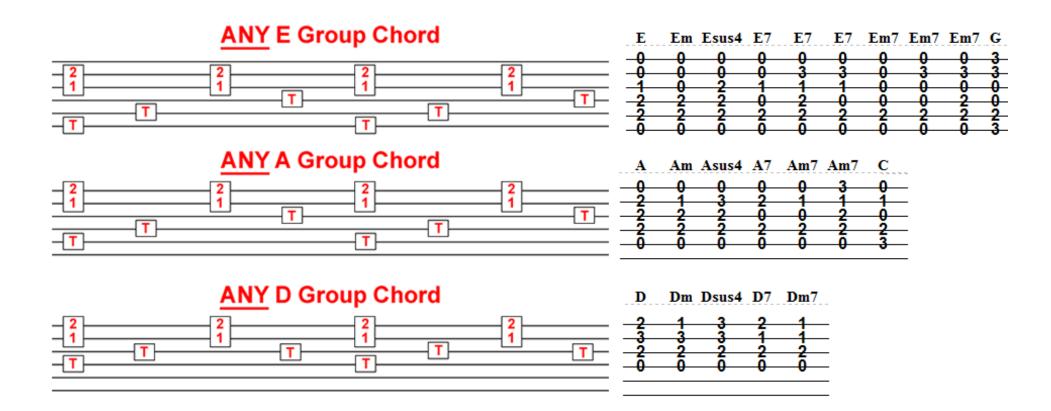
And There You Have It!

That is every single open chord group you'll ever need to know using just 3 groups of chords. Each of these 3 groups allow you to use ANY and every chord variation you encounter and quite literally plug in the chord arrangement based on the strings provided. It's all about consistency, which is found in the possible number of strings utilized in a given chord group.

- The E group will use up to 6 strings. The only chord in the E group that makes things slightly different in note order is G Major. However, it's because the open G Major chord uses a fretted note on the Low E string as a starting point. The picking hand doesn't change.

- The A group will use up to 5 strings. The only chord in the A group that makes things slightly different in note order is C Major. However, it's because the open C Major chord uses a fretted note on the A string as a starting point. The picking hand doesn't change.

- The D group will use up to 4 strings. This is one group that basically forces you to use a boom chuck style of playing as there IS a limitation of strings that can be played – at least for now.

All of these ideas are based on groups and strings, but as we work with moveable chord shapes and split chords, you will have the OPTION to find alternate methods of playing each of these groups.

Below is a quick rundown of all three groups shown side-by-side to help you relate the finger pattern. You'll be provided with a full blank template for each of these open groupings, which will allow you to insert any choice of chords you want into a progression.

As long as you know either (1) the number of strings you want to use and/or (2) the group a chord is found, you can use these forever!

ANY E Group Chord

	E	Em	Esus4	E7	E7	E7	Em7	Em7	Em7	G
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	3	3	3
	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
	2	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	0
	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3

ANY A Group Chord

	A	Am	Asus4	A7	Am7	Am7	C
	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
	2	1	3	2	1	1	1
	2	2	2	0	0	2	0
	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	0	0	0	0	0	0	3

ANY D Group Chord

	D	Dm	Dsus4	D7	Dm7
	2	1	3	2	1
	3	3	3	1	1
	2	2	2	2	2
	0	0	0	0	0

I did include some of the variations of the "same" chords, such as our E7/Em7 as well as our Am7 options as well. Notice that I also included the G Major in the E group as well as the C Major in the A group. Those will be picked out the same way with the picking hand, so the templates still work. You'll just hear a slightly different arrangement when you play them as they are the only specific fretted chords in those groups. Naturally you'll find chords that use 4 tones (the 7th and minor 7th chords) so they will also sound slightly different, but the picking hand won't change.

Our next step will be to work on some chord changes with our full "Crab and Bird Pinch" method using what is called a 4-step pattern. It's where everything falls right into place =)