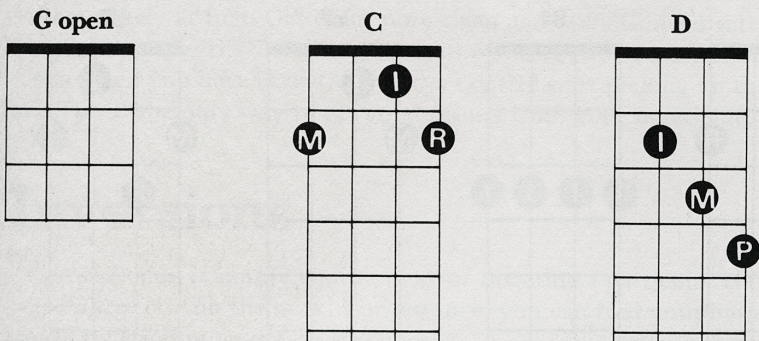


Chords

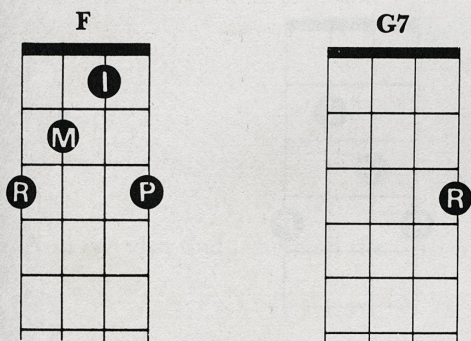
If you've done much listening to bluegrass, country and western or primal rock and roll you may have noticed that many of the tunes contain only three chords. These are known as I, IV, and V chords. So that you understand the meaning of these numbers, I'd like to talk about scales for a moment.

If you learned your do-re-mi's in elementary school you'll recall that there are eight notes in a scale: do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, and do. Since the I, IV and V refer to the chords based on the first, fourth and fifth notes in a scale, we're talking about do, fa and sol.

The I (do), IV (fa) and V (sol) chords we'll be using most often here are found in the key of G: G, C and D.



In C they turn out to be C, F and G.

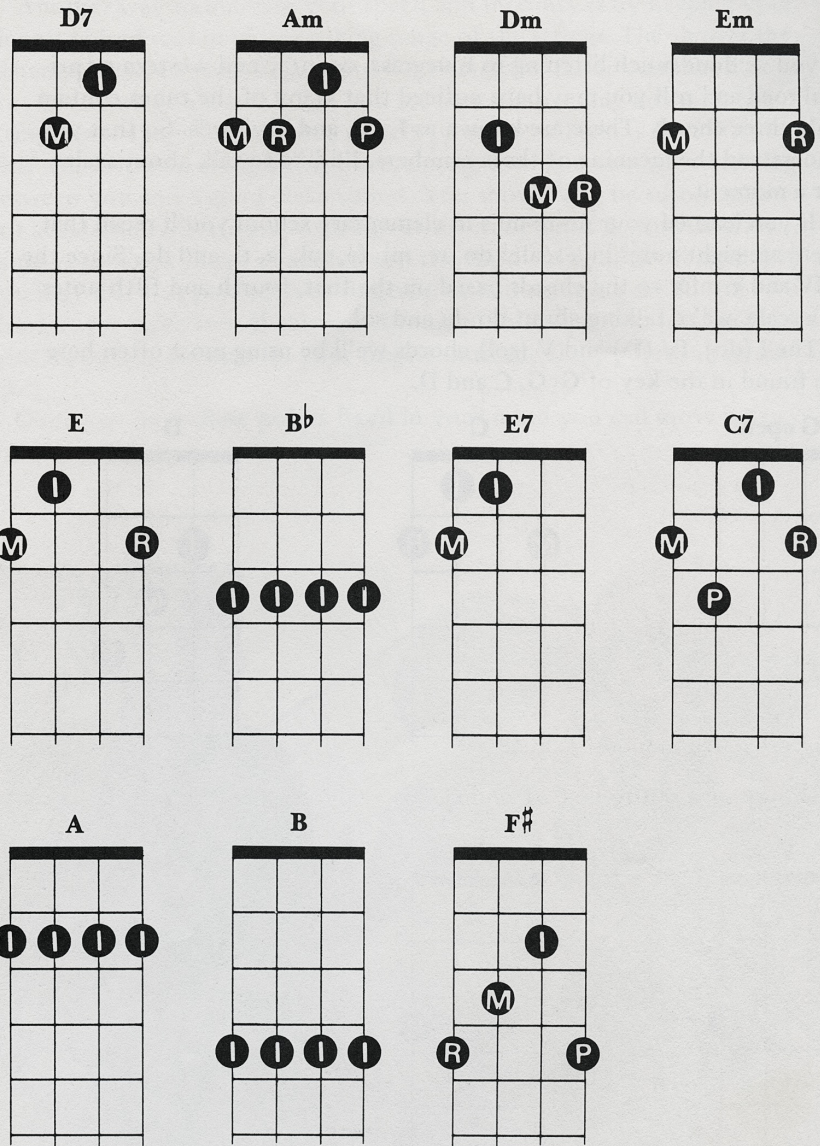


This next diagram lists the I, IV and V chords for the seven major keys.

Keys	I	IV	V
A	A	D	E
B	B	E	F#
C	C	F	G
D	D	G	A
E	E	A	B
F	F	Bb	C
G	G	C	D

If you're playing a song in the key of G, but your lead singer has to cross his legs to hit the high note, you may want to switch to a more comfortable key. This is known as transposing. To make transposing fun and easy simply consult the chart to find the I, IV and V chords in your new home key.

With the addition of this next set of chords you'll be able to transpose into any of the seven major keys.



You won't need all these chords for this book, but I've included them here in case you decide to go progressive at some point in the future.

Now that you're ready to start playing, strum through *Red River Valley* and *Amazing Grace*, substituting the chords of your choice for the I, IV and V designations. For starters, stick to the keys of G, C and D. These are the ones you'll be playing most often in the pages ahead. In case you're wondering about the heiroglyphics under the words, the dark strokes represent down-beats (when your foot is tapping the floor in time with the music) and the light strokes represent up-beats (the in-between points when your foot is raised off the floor).

Red River Valley

I
 From this valley they say you are going / / / / / / / / / /
 I V
 We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile; / / / / / / / / / /
 I IV
 For they say you are taking the sunshine / / / / / / / / / /
 V I
 That has brightened our path for awhile. / / / / / / / / / /
 Come and sit by my side if you love me
 Do not hasten to bid me adieu;
 But remember the Red River Valley
 And the cowboy who loved you so true.

Amazing Grace

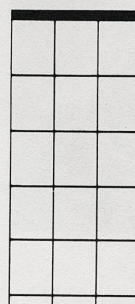
I IV I
 Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound / / / / / / / / / /
 I V
 That saved a wretch like me. / / / / / / / / / /
 I IV I
 I once was lost but now I'm found / / / / / / / / / /
 I V I
 Was blind but now I see. / / / / / / / / / /

The important thing to remember here, as in the rest of the book, is to take it slowly at first. Get every note clean and even. Concentrate on keeping a steady rhythm (I recommend working with a metronome). Then when you have everything under control start picking up the tempo. This is the only way to get good results from your practicing.

Inversions

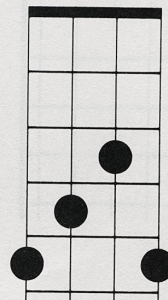
An inversion is simply another way of fingering a particular chord somewhere else on the neck. For instance, you can find your basic G chord by strumming the open strings:

G

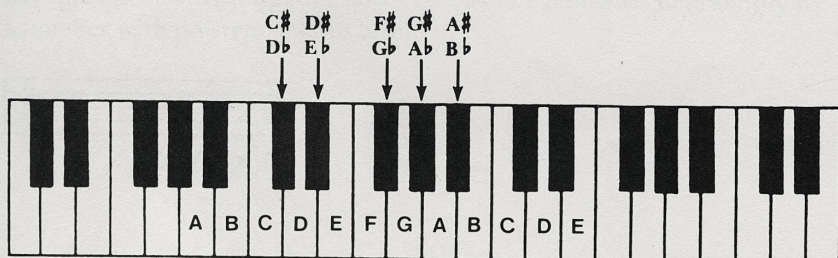


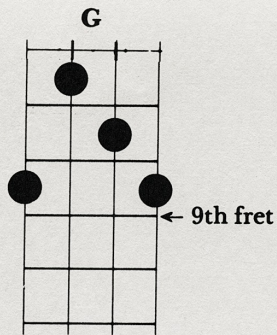
You can also find it here on the fifth fret:

G



Notice that the second inversion is the basic F position moved up two frets. To get a better understanding of how this works, familiarize yourself with the notes on the piano keyboard.





By going from one piano key to the very next one, black or white, or from one banjo fret to the next consecutive one, you'll be moving one half step. This is known as moving chromatically. So, to go back to our inversions, there are two half steps between F and G—from F to F \sharp and from F \sharp to G. Thus if you want to play a second inversion G chord, simply take your F and move it up two frets.

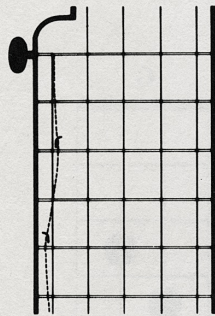
To get the next G inversion, look at your basic D chord. By checking the keyboard you can see that there are five half steps between D and G. So just move your D position up five frets and you'll have a ninth fret G.

With this knowledge, you'll be able to find the different inversions for any chord.

The Capo



The capo is a convenient device which allows you to play in different keys without changing basic left-hand positions. Since bluegrass is most comfortably played on the banjo in the G, C and D positions, those are the ones you're going to want to stay with. So if your lead singer insists on singing in the key of B, you can simply clamp your capo on the fourth fret (B is four half steps above G) and continue to play out of the hard driving open G position.



Don't forget, you also have to capo your fifth string the same number of frets as the other four strings. There are fifth string capos available which attach to the side of your banjo neck. However, I recommend model railroad tacks hammered into the seventh, ninth and tenth frets.

Make sure you have this done by a competent repairperson to avoid the woodpecker look on your neck.