

Chords with Color

Making Normal Chords More Colorful



An Interchangeable Chord Options Chart
for Creative Guitarists

by Jared Borkowski

soundguitarlessons.com

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How to Use This Guide

Important! Read This First!

Purpose of The Guide

This booklet gives you interesting, rich, and colorful sounding chord options that are interchangeable and can replace any given chord that you want to explore alternatives for.

Alternate chords can prove especially useful for songwriting, arranging cover songs to sound unique, studying chord-tone theory, harmonic ear training, fretboard mapping, and even just technique practice.

This is not a typical chord book. The chord diagrams that follow are not just different voicings of the exact same chord—they are unique chord quality types that add color in various ways but don't interfere with tonality or harmonic function (which is why they are interchangeable).

How to Use the Charts

You'll see a column for each chord number in a key (I, ii, iii, etc...). Chords in the same column are the options that are interchangeable with each other.

Let's say you're in the key of 'A', and you're tired of playing that same old 'D' major triad chord shape:

1. Go to the *Key of 'A' Major* section (pages 5-6)
2. Determine what chord number 'D' is in the key of 'A' (it's IV)
3. Find the 'IV' column
4. Replace the standard 'D' triad chord with any of the other eight chord options in that column. (They are all still IV chords in the key and will function in any song just as well as the original chord).

I'm not proposing that you need to learn every chord, so don't let the options overwhelm you. This guide is meant to be used as a source to find colorful chord alternatives when feeling "blah" about specific chords, not to be taken in as a whole. Some chords you'll like, some you won't. Some will be easy to play, some will be harder. If you discover even one new sound from this resource, then we've both succeeded!

That being said, you certainly can switch between any of the chord shapes within one key section and they will all sound good together. This use of the chord charts below could result in some very cool and sophisticated sounding chord progressions.

Note that the numbers inside the fretboard dots are chord-tone numbers based on their distance from the root of the chord (they are not finger numbers). Use these to explore the chord theory if desired. A greyed-out dot means that it's optional—including it or not doesn't change the chord quality.

Explanation of Harmonic "Color"

Chord extensions are chord tones that are non-essential but add harmonic color such as '9', '11', and '13'. These are additional tones from the same scale as the chord. They are also called "color tones".

Blank Diagrams

Some extensions interfere with the harmonic function of certain chords. Therefore they wouldn't be totally interchangeable if included. You'll see an empty space labeled "n/a" where this is the case.

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Key of C Major (& A Minor)

	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii ^o
Triad	C 	Dm 	Em 	F 	G 	Am 	B^o
sus2	C sus2 	D sus2 	n/a	F sus2/C 	G sus2 	A sus2 	n/a
sus4	C sus4 	D sus4 	E sus4 	n/a	G sus4 	A sus4 	n/a
add9	C add9 	Dm add9 / F 	n/a	F add9 	G add9 	Am add9 	n/a
6	C maj6 	Dmin6 	n/a	F maj6 	G maj6 	n/a	n/a
Minor Key	bIII	iv	v	bVI	bVII	i	ii^o

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Key of C Major (& A Minor) [continued]

	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii ^o
7	C maj7 	D min7 	E min7 	F maj7 	G7 	A min7 	Bø
9	C maj9 	D min9 	n/a	F maj9 	G9 	A min9 	n/a
6/9	C 6/9 	Dm 6/9 	n/a	F 6/9 	G 6/9 	n/a	n/a
11	n/a	D min11 	E min11 	F maj7 (#11) 	n/a	A min11 	Bø (add11)
13	C maj13 	n/a	n/a	F maj13 	G13 	n/a	n/a
Minor Key	bIII	iv	v	bVI	bVII	i	ii^o

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Key of A Major (& F# Minor)

	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii ^o
Triad	A 	Bm 	C#m 	D 	E 	F#m 	G#^o
sus2	A sus2 	B sus2 	n/a	D sus2 	E sus2 	F# sus2 	n/a
sus4	A sus4 	B sus4 	C# sus4 	n/a	E sus4 	F# sus4 	n/a
add9	A add9 	Bm add9 / D 	n/a	D add9/A 	E add9 	F#m add9 	n/a
6	A maj6 	Bmin6 	n/a	D maj6 	E maj6 	n/a	n/a
Minor Key	bIII	iv	v	bVI	bVII	i	ii^o

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Key of A Major (& F# Minor) [continued]

	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii°
7	A maj7 	B min7 	C#min7 	D maj7 	E7 	F# min7 	G#ø
9	A maj9 	B min9 	n/a	D maj9 	E9 	F# min9 	n/a
6/9	A 6/9 	Bm 6/9 	n/a	D 6/9 	E 6/9 	n/a	n/a
11	n/a	B min11 	C#min11 	D maj7 (#11) 	n/a	F# min11 	G#ø(add11)/B
13	A maj13 	n/a	n/a	D maj13 	E13 	n/a	n/a
Minor Key	bIII	iv	v	bVI	bVII	i	ii°

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Key of G Major (& E Minor)

	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii ^o
Triad	G 	Am 	Bm 	C 	D 	Em 	F#^o
sus2	G sus2 	A sus2 	n/a	C sus2 	D sus2 	E sus2 	n/a
sus4	G sus4 	A sus4 	B sus4 	n/a	D sus4 	E sus4 	n/a
add9	G add9 	Am add9 	n/a	C add9 	D add9 	Em add9 	n/a
6	G maj6 	Amin6 	n/a	C maj6 	D maj6 	n/a	n/a
Minor Key	bIII	iv	v	bVI	bVII	i	ii^o

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Key of G Major (& E Minor) [continued]

	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii°
7	G maj7 	A min7 	B min7 	C maj7 	D7 	E min7 	F#°
9	G maj9 	A min9 	n/a	C maj9 	D9 	E min9 	n/a
6/9	G 6/9 	Am 6/9 	n/a	C 6/9 	D 6/9 	n/a	n/a
11	n/a	A min11 	B min11 	C maj7 (#11) 	n/a	E min11 	F#°(add11)
13	G maj13 	n/a	n/a	C maj13 	D13 	n/a	n/a
Minor Key	bIII	iv	v	bVI	bVII	i	ii°

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Key of E Major (& C# Minor)

	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii ^o
Triad	E 	F#m 	G#m 	A 	B 	C#m 	D#o
sus2	E sus2 	F# sus2 	n/a	A sus2 	B sus2 	C# sus2 	n/a
sus4	E sus4 	F# sus4 	G# sus4 	n/a	B sus4 	C# sus4 	n/a
add9	E add9 	F#m add9 	n/a	A add9 	B add9 	C#m add9/G# 	n/a
6	E maj6 	F#min6 	n/a	A maj6 	B maj6 	n/a	n/a
Minor Key	bIII	iv	v	bVI	bVII	i	ii^o

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Key of E Major (& C# Minor) [continued]

	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii°
7	E maj7 	F# min7 	G# min7 	A maj7 	B7 	C# min7 	D#°
9	E maj9 	F# min9 	n/a	A maj9 	B9/D# 	C# min9 	n/a
6/9	E 6/9 	F#m 6/9 	n/a	A 6/9 	B 6/9 	n/a	n/a
11	n/a	F# min11 	G# min11/D# 	A maj7 (#11) 	n/a	C# min11 	n/a
13	E maj13 	n/a	n/a	A maj13 	B13 	n/a	n/a
Minor Key	bIII	iv	v	bVI	bVII	i	ii°

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Key of D Major (& B Minor)

	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii ^o
Triad	D 	Em 	F#m 	G 	A 	Bm 	C#^o
sus2	D sus2 	E sus2 	n/a	G sus2 	A sus2 	B sus2 	n/a
sus4	D sus4 	E sus4 	F# sus4 	n/a	A sus4 	B sus4 	n/a
add9	D add9 	Em add9 	n/a	G add9 	A add9 	Bm add9 	n/a
6	D maj6 	Emin6 	n/a	G maj6 	A maj6 	n/a	n/a
Minor Key	bIII	iv	v	bVI	bVII	i	ii^o

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Key of D Major (& B Minor) [continued]

	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii°
7	D maj7 	E min7 	F# min7 	G maj7 	A7 	B min7 	C#°
9	D maj9 	E min9 	n/a	G maj9 	A9 	B min9 	n/a
6/9	D 6/9 	Em 6/9 	n/a	G 6/9 	A 6/9 	n/a	n/a
11	n/a	E min11 	F# min11 	G maj7 (#11) 	n/a	B min11 	C#°(add11)
13	D maj13 	n/a	n/a	G maj13 	A13 	n/a	n/a
Minor Key	bIII	iv	v	bVI	bVII	i	ii°

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20 Common Chord Progressions

Common Two-Chord Chord Progressions:

1. $||: I | ii :||$
 2. $||: I | IV :||$
 3. $||: I | vi :||$ (Hallelujah progression)
 4. $||: I | ^bVII I :||$
 5. $||: I | V | V | I :||$
 6. $||: ii | V :||$ or $||: ii^{min7} | V^7 :||$
-

Common Three-Chord Chord Progressions:

7. $||: I IV | V IV :||$ (Louie Louie Progression)
 8. $||: I | I | I | I | IV | IV | I | I | V | IV | I | V :||$ (Simple 12 bar blues)
 9. $||: ii^{min7} | V^7 | I^{maj7} | I^{maj7} :||$
 10. $||: i | i | i | i | iv | iv | V^7 | V^7 :||$ (used in “Bad Guy” by Billie Eilish)
 11. $||: i ^bVII | ^bVI ^bVII :||$ (All Along the Watchtower progression)
 12. $||: ii | IV | I | I :||$
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Common Four-Chord (or more) Chord Progressions:

13. $||: I vi | IV V :||$ (Doo-Wop/50's Progression)
 14. $||: I vi | ii V :||$
 15. $||: I | V | vi | IV :||$ (Yes, *that* progression)
 16. $||: I | iii | IV | V :||$ (Let's Get it On Progression)
 17. $||: i ^bVII | ^bVI V :||$ (Andalusian Cadence)
 18. $||: iii^{min7} | vi^{min7} | ii^{min7} | V^7 :||$ (Jazz turnaround progression)
 19. $||: i | i^{min(maj7)} | i^{min7} | i^{min6} :||$ (Line cliché used in Stairway to Heaven)
 20. $||: I | V | vi | iii | IV | I | IV | V :||$ (Canon in D progression)
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Note: You can play variations of these common chord progressions to make them your own by changing the quality (major vs minor) of any chord and/or by adding extensions (the color notes from this chart) to any chord.

Final Notes

With those five major keys (CAGED) and their relative minor keys, all of the most common chord shapes on the guitar—and their in-color alternatives—are included.

If you know anyone who might be interested in this free chord chart, instead of sending them a copy, please direct them to:

<https://www.soundguitarlessons.com/chordswithcolor>

That way I can follow up with supplementary guides and lessons on how to get the most out of this material.

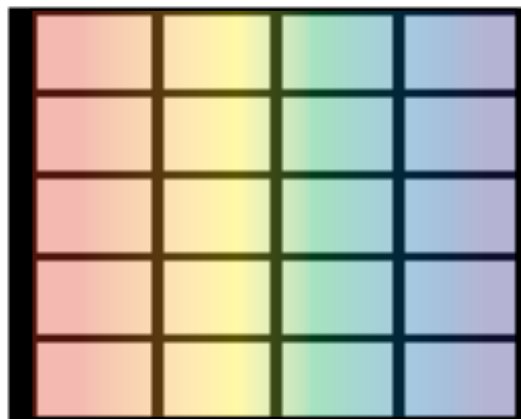
If you have any questions or suggestions please send me an email anytime:

jared@soundguitarlessons.com

Thanks, and happy chord coloring!

Jared Borkowski

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