

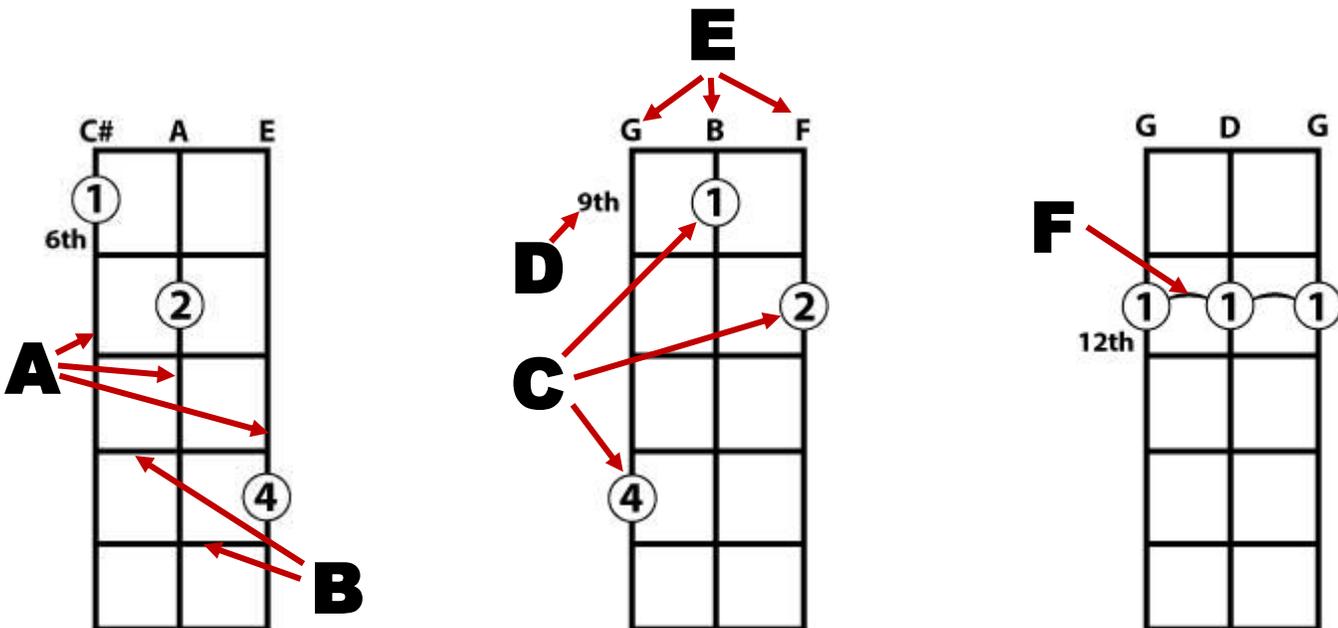
Cigar Box Guitar Chord Forms

HOW-TO GUIDE

Presented by [C. B. Gitty Crafter Supply](#) and the [Southbound String Company](#).

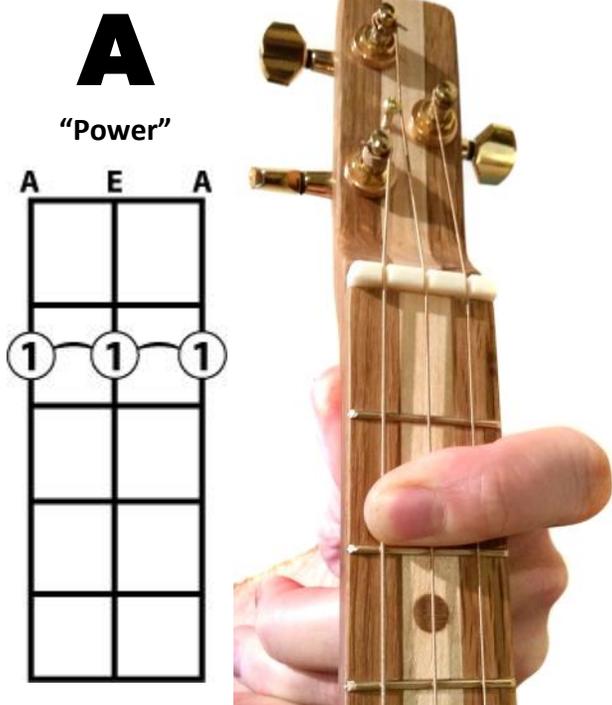
Need a little help making sense of the Cigar Box Guitar chord diagrams on CigarBoxGuitar.com? If so, don't feel bad — this sort of thing can be confusing until you get the hang of it. That's where this guide comes in - we'll show you exactly how to read and make sense of our chord diagrams, show you photos of C. B. Gitty playing them on an actual 3-string CBG, and give you all of the tools and know-how you need to get busy playing songs yourself!

First, let's break a diagram down into its components, and explain the significance of each one. Take a look at the diagrams below. Note that the letter labels are meant only to match up with the explanatory list below—they have nothing to do with the names of the chords being represented in the diagrams:

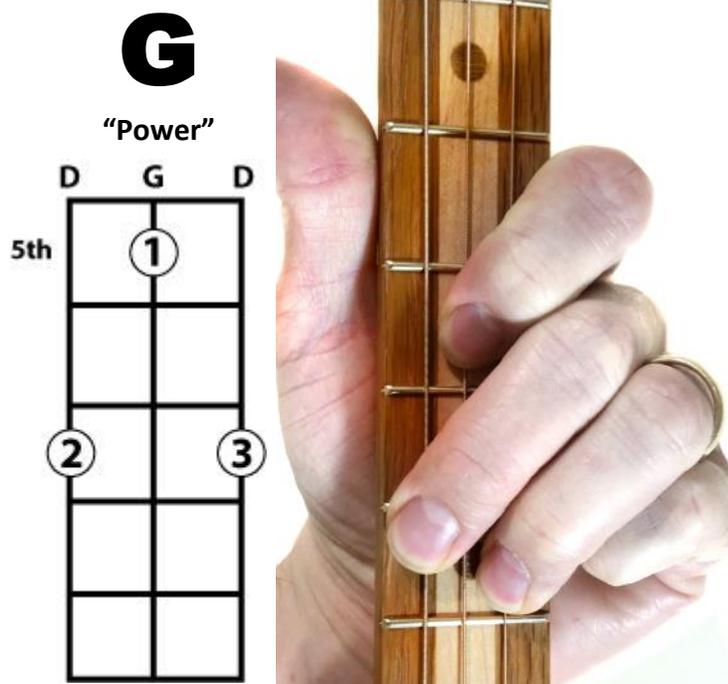


- A. **The vertical lines** represent the strings on your cigar box guitar. Hold your guitar up in front of your face with the fret board facing you. The low "G" string should be to the left, and the higher G string should be to the right. That is the same way the chord diagrams are laid out: lower G left, higher G right.
- B. **The horizontal lines** represent the frets (or fret position markers) on your guitar. Each diagram shows a span of 5 frets. If there is no indication of fret position (text like "5th" or "12th") next to one of the frets, then the 5 frets represent the first 5 frets/fret positions on the guitar, starting at the nut.
- C. **The circles with numbers in them** show you what finger to use on what fret/string in order to create the chord. 1 = Index finger, 2 = middle finger, 3 = ring finger and 4 = pinky/little finger. If a string doesn't have any circle on it, it should be played open/unfretted
- D. **Position Indicators** - text like "5th" or "6th" next to a fret indicates that you should finger the chord on the neck of your guitar relative to that fret position. More on this below
- E. **The letters at the top of each diagram** indicate the note that the string will play when the chord is properly fingered. These do NOT indicate a change in how the guitar is tuned - all of these chords are for guitars tuned to GDG.
- F. **More than one string with the same finger number**—some chords require “barring”, which is using one finger to cover multiple strings. This almost always involves the index finger. When you see a chord form like this with the same number in a circle more than once, and little curved lines connecting, it means that you need to “bar” this chord.

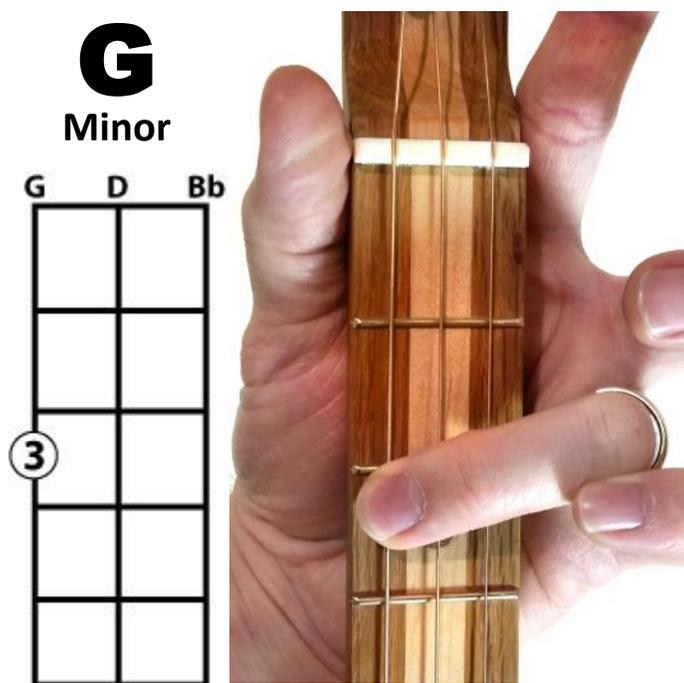
Now let's take a look at what some chord forms look like when actually fingered on a 3-string cigar box guitar.



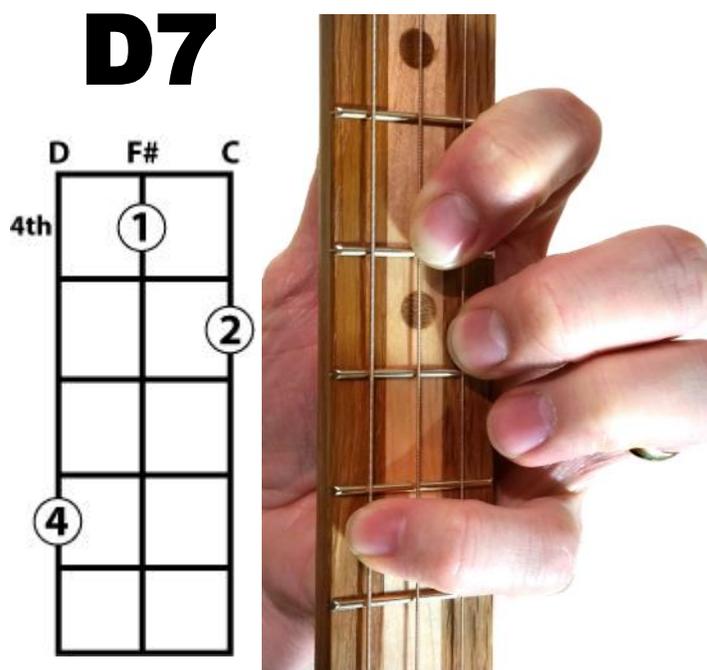
This is a "bar" chord, where the index finger is used to cover all three strings at the second fret. The result is the A "151" power chord consisting of the notes A, E and A (one or more octaves higher than the lower A).



This form of the G Power Chord is positioned starting at the 5th fret. So the index finger fretting the second string is at the fifth fret on the guitar, and the second and third fingers are fretting at the seventh fret.



This chord has two open/unfretted strings. The third finger reaches over the D and high G strings to fret the low G at the third fret. The D and high G strings are left open to ring.

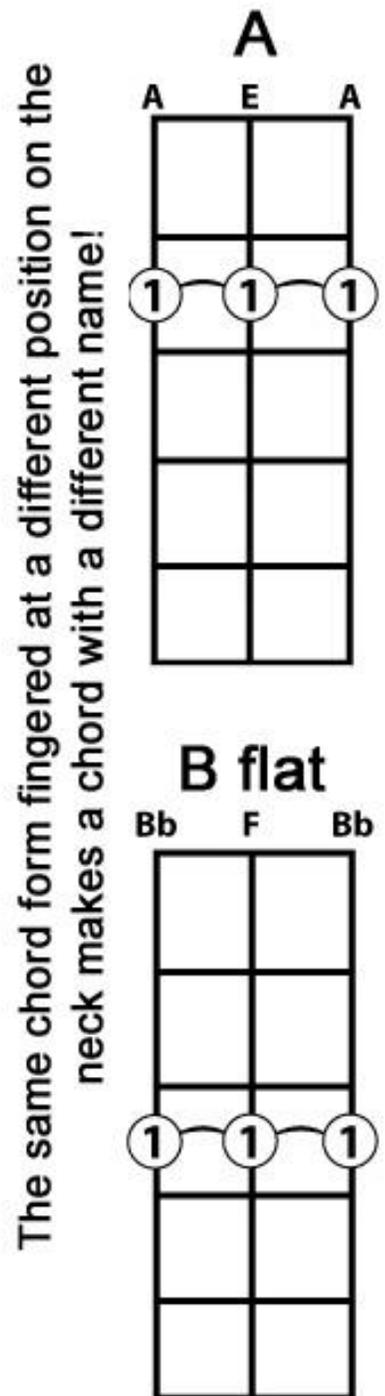


This D7 chord is positioned at the fourth fret. It can take some practice to get that little finger used to making the stretch over the first two strings without touching them!

How to choose the right chord form?

There is no set formula to choosing the “right” chord form to use. If you look at the list of “G” chord forms, there are quite a few to choose from, and you might feel confused and overwhelmed. Here are some general guidelines to help you.

- It’s fine to use the straightforward “power chord” form where it’s either open/unfretted G or you use your index finger to bar all three strings. Move that index finger around the neck and play your song. Strum twice on Open G (all strings unfretted), then bar all three strings at the fifth fret for C and strum twice, back to open G for two strums, then bar at the seventh fret for two more strums on D, then back to two open G strums. You just played a song!
- As you advance with your playing, try out some of the “major” chord forms. Major chord forms are different from the power chord forms in that they have all 3 notes in them to make up the “full” chord. Because of this, sometimes a major chord form will sound more “complete” in a song than a power chord form will.
- As you start to try out some of the non power-chord forms, start with the ones that are in the “home position” at the nut end of the neck (the chords forms that don’t have the “5th” or “7th” or “12th” position markers). Get comfortable with getting your fingers to go to the right places. The only way to do this is repetition and practice. **Don’t get frustrated and give up if your fingers don’t automatically want to go to the right places right at the start!** In time it will become automatic, as muscle memory takes over.
- Once you are starting to commit chord forms to memory in the “home position”, start to try out some of the chord forms that require you to move further up the neck.
- Any chord form that requires fretting all three strings can be called a “moveable” chord form. As you move that form up the fretboard fret by fret, the name of the chord you are playing will change. Take the Power A chord that you play by barring all 3 strings at the second fret, for instance. You can move that same chord form all the way up the neck—and you will see this same form appear in our chord form charts under different names. At the second fret, it is A. At the third fret, it is B-flat. At the fourth fret, it is B. At the fifth C, at the sixth C-sharp, at the seventh D, and so on. Learning these moveable forms and getting comfortable with what chord they play at the different positions on the neck is a VERY powerful tool to be able to jam and play along with others.
- Trust your ears. Sometimes one chord form just might not sound quite right in a particular place in a particular song. Try another form for the same chord and you might find that it sounds a lot better. There is a whole pile of musical theory that tries to explain the “why” behind this, but just keep this in mind and you’ll be OK: trust your ears, and if a chord doesn’t sound right, try another form of it.



We sincerely hope this helps you get the most out of the chord form PDFs posted on CigarBoxGuitar.com!

Be sure to visit C. B. Gitty Crafter Supply (www.cbgitty.com) for all of your Cigar Box Guitar and instrument-building needs!

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