



Chord Theory

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A chord is generally considered 2 or more notes played simultaneously (usually 3 notes, the 1, 3 and 5). *Power chords have since been created that omit the "3rd" and use just the root (1) and the 5th (perfect 5th) notes to make up the appropriate major or minor chord using only 2 notes.*

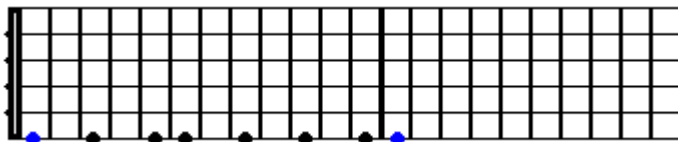
You're probably thinking: "1, 3, 5, perfect 5th? what crazy talk is he talkin'?"

This is where you need to understand the intervals of a given key...

A quick refresher course from [Scale Building 101](#): A major scale has 7 notes that repeat in a set pattern, or *interval (just take my word for it)*. The interval, or *pattern* for a major scale is whole step, whole step, half step, whole step, whole step, whole step, half step (*referred to as: WWHWWWH*). *How do I know this? I looked it up in my favorite scales book.*

Next, let's pick a key: F Major.

Starting at F (1st fret) and walking through the interval pattern for the major key (*using just one string for simplicity sake*) we get our 7 notes, which are F, G, A, B^b, C, D and E. This came about by starting at F, then you have a whole step to G, another whole step to A, a 1/2 step to B^b, a whole step to C, a whole step to D, another whole step to E and finally a half step back to F, an octave higher: (image1)



Chords are determined by finding the 1st , 3rd and 5th notes (*for basic chords anyhow*), which then make up the elementary chord for that position. Did I lose you? Lets walk through a couple of examples together...

To play a **F major**: Start with position #1 (the root, or F). This is the "1". 2 is G, but we want "3" so we skip to the A, which is the 3rd note in the scale. Next we want the "5", so we skip B^b and go to C, which is the 5th note in the scale. This gives us F (1), A (3) and C (5). F, A & C make a F Major: (1, 3, 5).

To play a **F minor**: Start with position #1 (the root, or F). This is the "1". 2 is G, but we want "3" so we skip to the A, which is the 3rd note in the scale. But since it's a minor chord we're after, this needs to be flatted, so we drop a 1/2 step to A^b. Next we want the "5", so we skip B^b and go to C, which is the 5th note in the scale. This gives us F (1), A^b (3^b) and C (5). F, A^b & C make a F minor: (1, 3^b, 5).

- By playing a 1, 3 & 5 you get a *major* chord (F, A, C)
- By flattening the 3rd (by a 1/2 step), you get a *minor* chord (F, A^b, C)
- By adding a 7th note to the major chord, you get a *major 7th* chord (F, A, C, E)

To play a **F major 7th**: Start with position #1 (the root, or F). This is the "1". 2 is G, but we want "3" so we skip to the A, which is the 3rd note in the scale. Next we want the "5", so we skip B^b and go to C, which is the 5th note in the scale, but now we're going to add a fourth note so we skip D and go to E, which is the 7th note in the scale. This gives us F (1), A (3), C (5) and E (7). F, A, C and E make a F Major 7th: (1, 3, 5, 7).

To play a F major chord, you would finger a F, an A and a C note. *Anywhere* on the fretboard, and it would be a F major chord. The same applies to playing a F minor chord: finger a F, an A^b and a C *anywhere* on the fretboard and you will be playing a F minor chord. This could require some serious dexterity and acrobatics depending on how far apart you pick your notes from one another, thus long ago, someone sat down and wrote basic chord forms that are playable by most people (e.g. *placing the notes within 3 or 4 frets of each other*). you can move these chords to *any* key and in *any* position by just placing the root or "1" note on the key you want to move to (e.g. *to move to C major: just move the 1 to C, then the 3 would fall on E and the 5 would be on G. C, E & G make a C major chord (1, 3, 5)*).

Feel free to revisit [Scale Theory 1](#) if you need a little more help on this concept (it's quite a lot in a little time).

Taking this further, you can use the following chart to add additional notes to the chords, flattening and sharpening various notes to create more exotic chords.

Primary Chord Formulas:

Major & Minor	major	1	3	5			
	minor	1	3 ^b	5			
Altered Chords	suspended 2nd (sus2)	1	2	5			
	suspended 4th (sus4)	1	4	5			
Seventh Chords	dominant 7th	1	3	5	7 ^b		
	major 7th	1	3	5	7		
	minor 7th	1	3 ^b	5	7 ^b		
	minor (Major 7th)	1	3 ^b	5	7		
Ninth Chords	dominant 9th	1	3	5	7 ^b	9	
	major 9th	1	3	5	7	9	
	minor 9th	1	3 ^b	5	7 ^b	9	
Added Tones	added 9th	1	3	5	9		
	minor added 9th	1	3 ^b	5	9		
	6th	1	3	5	6		
	minor 6th	1	3 ^b	5	6		
	6th added 9th	1	3	5	6	9	
Altered Tones	7th flatted 5th	1	3	5 ^b	7 ^b		

	7th flatted 9th	1	3	5	7 ^b	9 ^b	
	7th sharped 9th	1	3	5	7 ^b	9 [#]	
	7th suspended 4th	1	4	5	7 ^b		
<i>Diminished & Augmented Chords</i>	diminished	1	3 ^b	5 ^b			
	diminished 7th	1	3 ^b	5 ^b	7 ^{bb}		
	Augmented	1	3 ^b	5 [#]			
	Augmented 7th	1	3 ^b	5 [#]	7 ^b		
	dominant 11th	1	3	5	7 ^b	9	11
	minor 11th	1	3 ^b	5	7 ^b	9	11