

Around The World

When it comes to guitar, chords are one of the most important things you need know and to be able to play. Having a good repertoire of chords and being able to change between them smoothly is essential for aspiring guitar players no matter what genre of music you are into. Unfortunately most teachers give you a chord chart as a reference sheet but never actually teach you how to practice your chords or effectively memorise them. In this article we are going to explore an exciting new way to practice chords that will make practice fun and quickly improve your ability to memorise and change between different chords. Before you know it the chords you are struggling with will sound more and more like the songs and music you are trying to play.

When it comes to learning chords, most teachers give you a chord chart and tell you to memorise your chords. You'll have to figure out where to put your fingers, then play each chord two or three times before moving onto the next one. After a few weeks you might have memorised most of your chords and have some of them sound okay, but trying to put them together is difficult and none of your songs sound like real music. This is because you don't practice memorising the chords efficiently nor do you practice changing between chords.

How To Memorise Chords Efficiently

By far the best way to memorise chords is with what I call the Strum/Mute/Lift Technique. It is a 4 step process which will help you get a high number of repetitions in a short period of time. To do this follow these easy steps

1. Put your fingers on the right frets needed to play the chords
2. Strum the chord
3. Mute the strings with your picking hand
4. Lift your fingers up 2 cm above the fretboard while maintaining the shape of the chord
5. Put your fingers back down and repeat the process, making any adjustments before your strum
6. Repeat this 20 times.

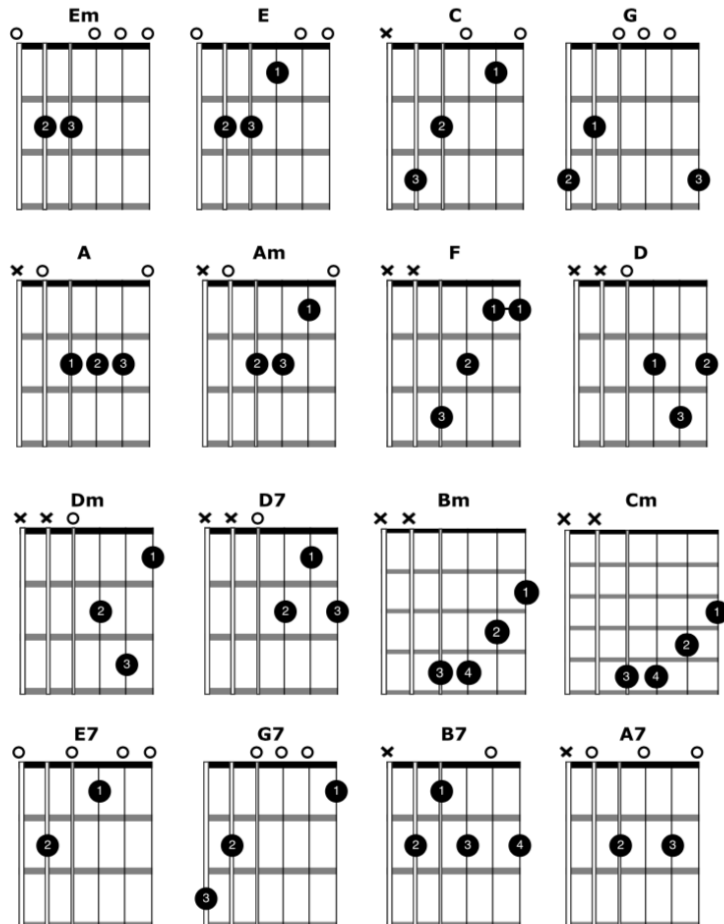
Practicing this way will allow you to get maximum repetitions in a short period of time which is essential to developing good technique. If you can practice each chord for 2 minutes or 20 repetitions several times a week you will quickly develop great sounding chords and good control of your fingers.

How To Change Chords Efficiently

A common problem that most people make when practicing their guitar chords is just following the order they appear in your chord chart. Look at the chart below.

Level 3 Chords

A Chord is when you play three or more notes at the same time using the strumming technique. Chords often require multiple fingers to play which can make changing between them smoothly quite difficult for beginners. Make sure you have memorised all off the Level 1 & 2 chords and can change between them smoothly before taking on the Level 3 chords below.



© Michael Gumley
www.melbourneguitaracademy.com

Most people would strum the Em chord a few times, then the E chord, then the C and the G etc, Going through each chord sequentially until they have done all the chords. This is bad for two reasons, the first is you only do a few repetitions before moving on which doesn't allow you to build any muscle memory of the shape. The second is that you practice going in the same order every time without actually practicing the chord changes. This results in you only ever getting good at isolated changes without developing your ability to change between chords smoothly.

A solution to this is what I call the *Around The World* exercise which is very easy to do and will help you build up both muscle memory of the shape and smooth transitions between each chord. Instead of playing each chord sequentially we are going to focus on one chord and practice changing between it and every other chord on the chord chart.

For example

If Em is your first chord, you are going to strum Em, then switch to E major and strum, then back to Em, and back to E major twenty times. Once you have done your twenty changes you are going to keep playing Em but swop to C major and practice transitioning between those two chords twenty times. You will follow this by doing Em to G, Em to A, Em to Am and so on and so forth until you have completed every chord on the chart. Once you've completed the chart you put E major as your main chord and go around the world all over gain.

When you practice this way you will work on each chord at least 20 times, and the main chord over 200 times which is why it is so effective in helping you quickly memorise your chords and build up your ability to change between them fluently. If you have only a little bit of time, try putting a different chord in the middle each day for a 5-10 minute exercise. If you have hours to practice try doing this with not only all the chords, but your scales, bar chords arpeggios and modes too. You will be pleasantly surprised at how this exercise works with any kind of shape or pattern. I hope that you have found this lesson helpful. If you're looking for [guitar lessons in Essendon](#) I can help you become a much better guitar player by sharing with you many more of my special practice techniques.

About The Author



Michael Gumley is a shred fusion guitarist, teacher and music school owner from Melbourne, Australia. He started playing guitar at the age of 15 and has been in love with instrument ever since. Michael plays actively in rock, metal, blues and acoustic groups and has toured both nationally and internationally. He is an endorser of Ormsby Guitars, Line 6 Effects, Blackstar Amps, & Ernie Ball Strings. Michael is passionate about success and makes it his personal mission to enrich the lives of all those around him.