

All The Chords I Needed To Know, I Learned At My First Lesson.

The other day someone asked: how many chords are there on the bass? Good question! Six, ten thousand, a million - no one knows - but what we do know is that there are only **5 simple shapes** from which all chords are created!

To begin, let's imagine a puzzle box. Visualize the picture on the box and see it as a "whole" picture. Now, take a pair of scissors and cut this whole picture into 5 pieces. How hard is it to put together a puzzle with only 5 pieces? Easy, right? Well, the "picture" on the puzzle box is the 7 letters of music: A B C D E F G placed **horizontally** (east and west) on each string of the **whole** fretboard. For this lesson, the whole fretboard will be 4 strings and 13 frets. Figure 1.

The 5 puzzle pieces are the 5 **non-movable** "open" major chord shapes: E D C A G. You probably already know these chords and you might have learned them as **CAGED**. Figure 2.

To see how these 5 major chord shapes "connect" to create a **holistic** fretboard, we need to know the **3 different letters** that "spell" any major chord **triad**. For this lesson, we'll use the **F major chord triad** as our example.

The F major chord triad is spelled: **FAC** and these 3 letters may be combined in any order. For example: FAC, ACF, CFA, FCA. Now, as we move up the fretboard and group these 3 letters **vertically** (north and south), the 5 **movable** F major chord **forms** appear! Figure 3.

Figure 1. The whole fretboard as 7 music letters, A B C D E F G, horizontal (east and west).

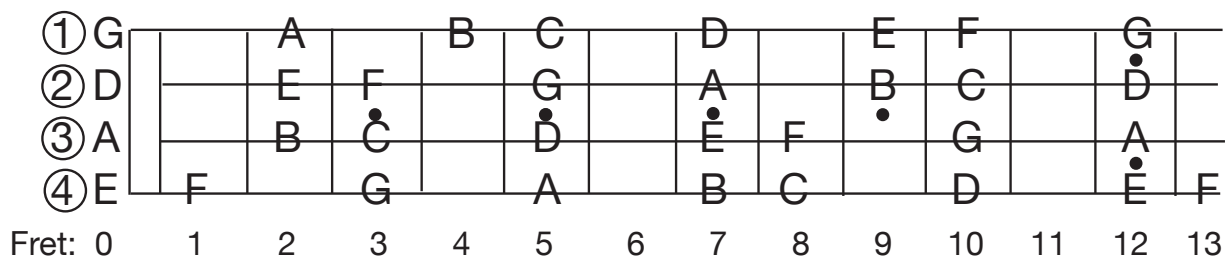


Figure 2. 5 "open" major chord shapes (EDCAG or CAGED).

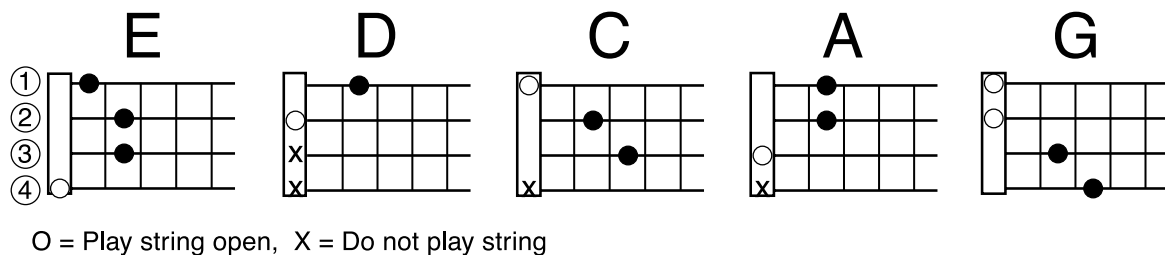
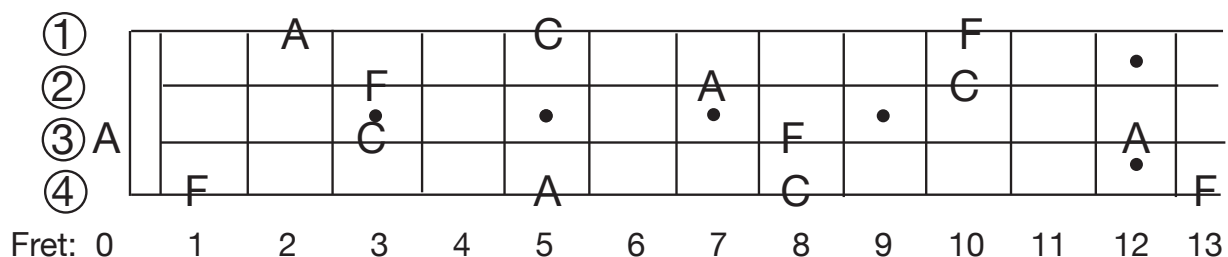


Figure 3. The three letters of the F major chord triad: F A C, vertical (north and south).

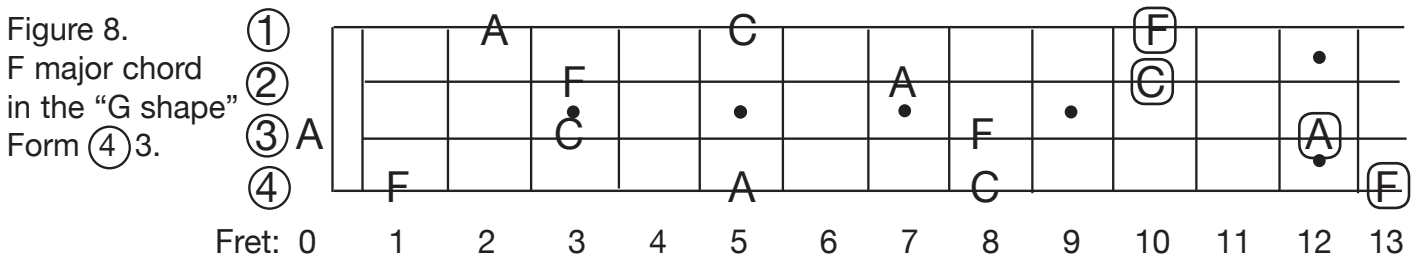
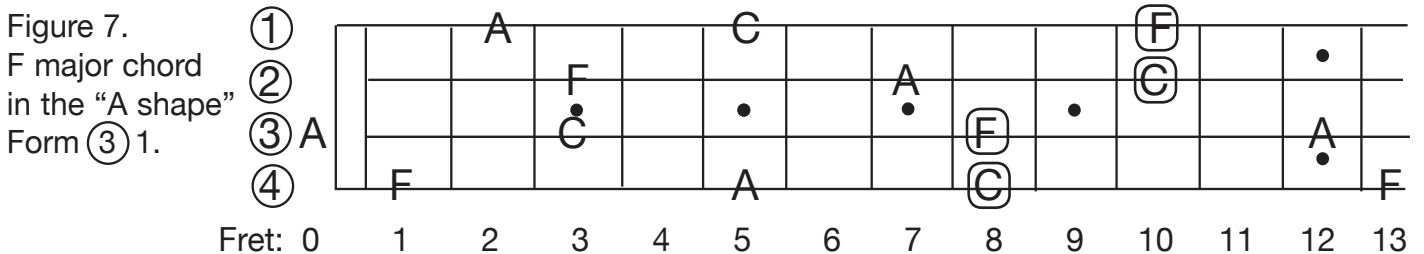
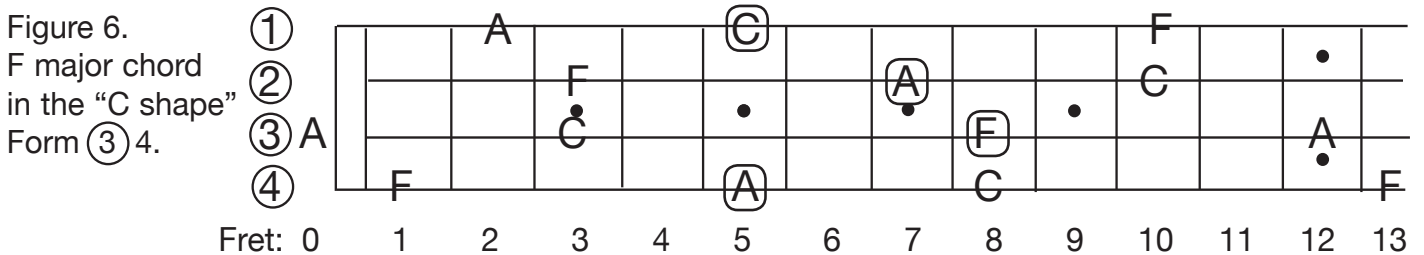
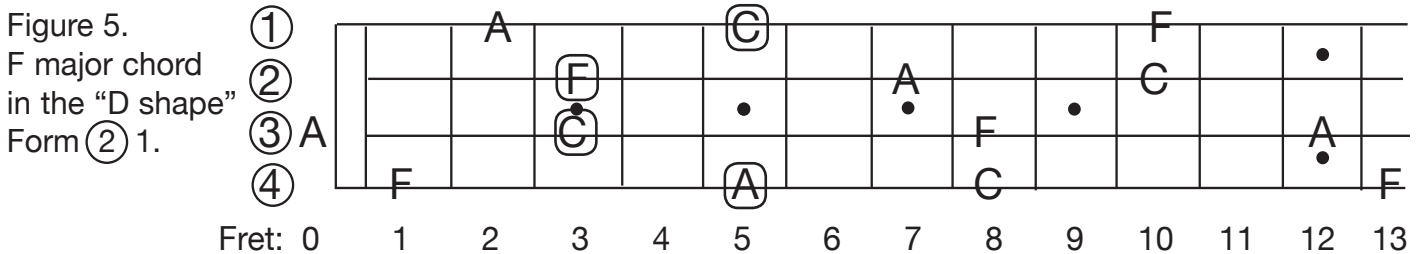
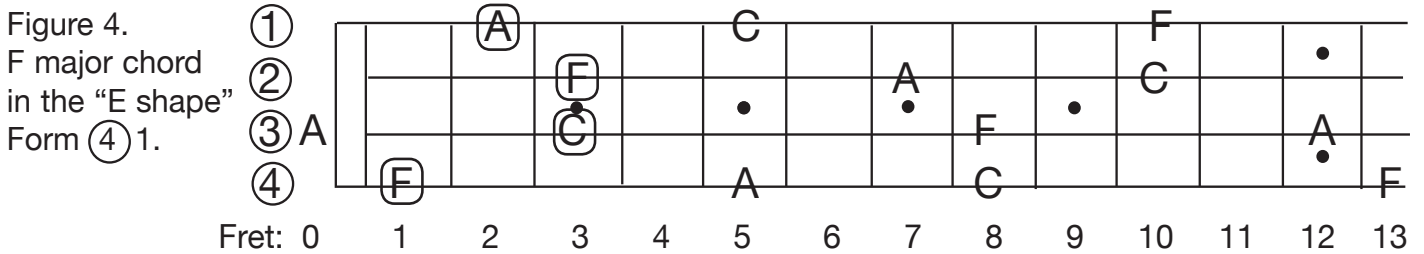


Are you having a little trouble seeing the 5 movable F major chord forms? To help you visualize them more clearly, let's place "squares" around the 3 letters FAC. Figures 4 through 8.

Congratulations. Now you can "see" all 5 F major chord forms "connected" on your holistic fretboard. No one knows any more vertically grouped F major chord triads than you do!

Now, by "shifting" the 5 movable major chord forms up and down the fretboard to different "root" letters, all other major chords can easily be located and played. Got your set of **Bass Fretboard Flashcards** yet?

Till next time, have some fun connecting the 5 puzzle pieces and enjoy playing the beautiful holistic fretboard picture. I'm listening...



Mike Overly is a regular contributor to *BassBooks.com* and author of *Bass EncycloMedia*, *BEM Jam audio disc 1*, *Bass Fretboard Facts* and *Bass Fretboard Flashcards for 4, 5 & 6 String Bass*.