



## Learning to Play the Guitar Faster Using Common Chord Progressions

Understanding common patterns in music can be a tremendous help to learning guitar. Many songs are constructed of common patterns. Practicing patterns of chords instead of individual chords is a more efficient use of practice time. In addition, by learning to play and identify the patterns you will save a lot of time when you want to learn and memorize new songs.

### What is a Common Chord Pattern?

**Common chord progressions or patterns are groups of chords arranged in a specific order and used in many popular songs.** Another name for this is a Common Chord Progression. Most music listeners don't realize that the music they enjoy is comprised of only a small selection of chord progressions. What gives popular music a sense of familiarity is the fact that much is composed from these patterns. What makes it sound different is because other aspects of the music vary like the melody, rhythm and instrumentation. We can use this to our advantage when learning guitar.

With the exception of the infamous "F" chord learning individual chords is not often a major difficulty for guitar students. The difficulty lies in getting from one chord to another smoothly and in time. One great solution for this problem is to **learn chords in groups so you can practice the movement from one chord to another.** Why not take it a step further and use Common Chord Patterns instead of random groups of chords. This way you are practicing patterns that you can use to play songs and training your ear to hear these patterns at the same time.

### Learn Songs Fast With "Templates"

When using common patterns to learn songs there are a couple of different possibilities. In this case I often refer to the common patterns as "templates". Often you can use a pattern to play either an entire song or the majority of the song. There are many songs that are constructed completely from a common pattern. All you have to do is identify the pattern, apply a strum and away you go.

More often you'll find that much of the song uses a common pattern and some sections deviate from the pattern. Perhaps the song uses a different chord progression in the middle section. The

intro and endings are also likely places for something different. In this case you identify the pattern used in most of the song and practice that until you feel fairly confident. Then isolate the sections that are different and practice them separately. Finally you put it all together. This will still save a lot of time over the alternate approach of treating the entire song as if it's completely new material.

### Here's a closing tip:

When practicing aim to change chords smoothly without hesitating. *Go as slow as you need to and pick up speed little by little.* I like to use a metronome in my practice to help keep the timing accurate and measure my progress.