

THE PERFECT BAR CHORD SOLUTION

**PLAY ANY BAR CHORD EASILY
AND WITH CONFIDENCE**



TOMAS MICHAUD



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My System for Playing Bar Chords That Never Fails

One of the most common issues when learning to play guitar that I've encountered with students is a general grumbling about bar chords. And rightly so. Most students struggle with buzzing notes and a sore hand and wrist.

Struggle be gone!

Here's my step-by-step systematic approach to learning bar chords. You can use this system to learn how to master bar chords and it'll save you a lot of time and frustration. Most importantly I want you to see how a system can really help you learn much faster and more efficiently by breaking things down and practicing them in a concentrated fashion.



Enter the Bar Chord Exercise

Bar chords consist of placing the first finger across all six strings of the guitar, in essence moving the nut of the guitar up to where your finger is. Then you place the remaining fingers to form whatever type of chord you want to make.

Most all bar chords you'll be working with get their name from either the note on the sixth string or the fifth string of the guitar. If you make a form of chord like the major form and move the chord so your first finger is across the note G on the sixth string the chord will be called G major. Don't worry if this doesn't make perfect sense to you yet. We will going to do this much further later on. The main point for now is that it will be very very helpful to know the names of the notes on the fifth and sixth strings.

The Bar Chord Exercise hits a double bull's-eye with one arrow (my revised version of a popular saying). You'll strengthen your first finger so it can press down all the strings easily. At the same time you'll be practicing and memorizing the names of the notes. And crucially, you'll be doing this before attempting your first bar chord.



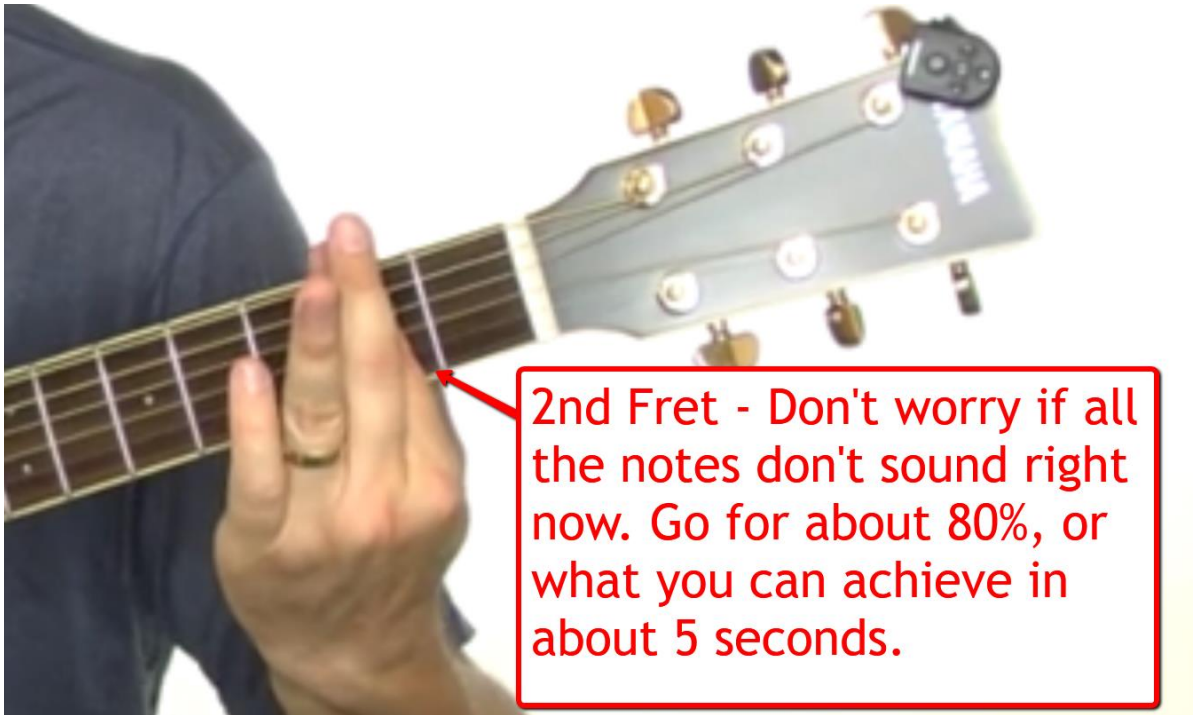
Here's How the Bar Chord Exercise Works



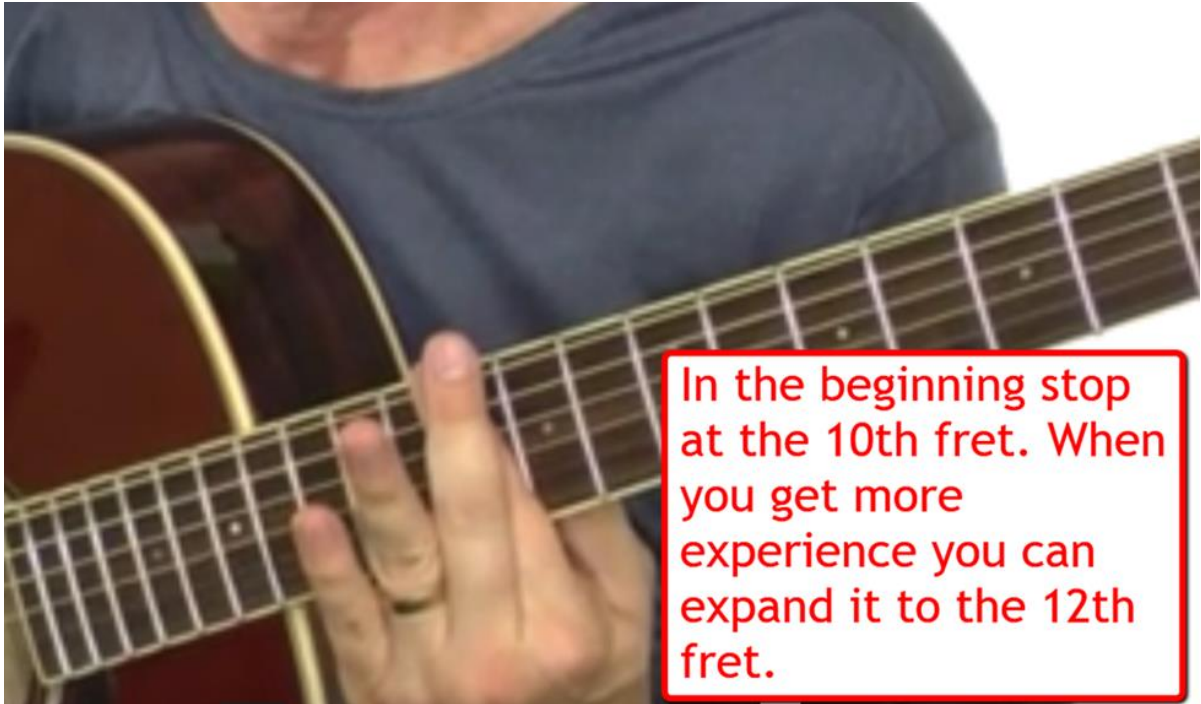
1. **Form the Bar.** Will start by forming "the bar". Place your first finger of your left hand across all the strings just behind the first fret of the guitar. Now strum the strings with the right hand and check to see if all the strings are sounding. Usually at first some sound some don't. Good... That's normal. Now adjust your finger until you get most of them sounding. Don't worry if you don't get it perfect... aim for 80% just about all sounding. The hardest one is the first fret.
2. **Name That Note.** Now you're gonna name the note on the sixth string, that's gonna be the name of the bar chord so in this case it's an F. The open 6th string is E... this one is F.
3. **Moving Up.** Go up to the second fret and name that note. We will call this F sharp (F#). Then the third fret... that's G. Keep going up spending just a few seconds on each bar and naming the note... G sharp, A, A#, B, C there's only half step between B and C, C sharp and D this is far as we have to go. We hardly use bar chords past



that. Refer to the included chart until you memorize the names of the notes.



4. **Going Down.** Okay now we're gonna go down. On the way down the sharps are gonna turn into flats. Start where you left off with that the D note (10th fret). Go back one fret... what we called C sharp before you will now also call D flat (Db). It's sort of just a different way of looking at it. It sounds the same but you'd write it either C# or Db (they're enharmonic*). There's reasons you might use one name or the other, but that's not what's important right now. Then go down to C. Next down to B (no flat or sharp between B and C). Then Bb (A# on the way up), then A, Ab, G... keep going G#, F and finally open E... no flats or sharps between E and F. Okay, so you wanna practice that up and down the neck while naming the notes.



5. **Rinse and Repeat.** Now repeat the entire process but name the notes on the fifth string. Use the same system of calling out sharp notes on the way up and flat notes on the way down. As with the sixth string you can refer to the included chart until you memorize the names of the notes.



Bar Chord Exercise Summary

- Put your finger across the first fret.
- Strum the notes and adjust your finger to get them to sound the best you can in a few seconds.
- Name that note on the sixth string (F).
- Move to the second fret and repeat. Used the sharp version of the notes on the way up (i.e. F#, etc.).
- Continue one fret at a time until you get to the 10th fret.
- Repeat going down the frets and name the notes using the flat versions (i.e. C# becomes Db, etc.)
- Repeat naming notes on the 5th string.

*Enharmonic?

That's the name given when a note that sounds the same but is written in two different ways. For example the note A# and Bb sounds exactly the same, but looks different on the musical staff.

The diagram shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a guitar fretboard below it. On the staff, the note A# is written on the second line (F#) and the note Bb is written on the second space (Bb). A red box with the text "They look different on the staff and are called different names." has arrows pointing to both notes. Below the staff, the guitar fretboard is shown with the 6th string. The 6th fret is marked with a red '6' and an arrow pointing to it from a red box that says "Sound and fingered the same on the guitar." The word "ENHARMONIC" is written in a red box to the right of the staff.



3 Common Bar Chord Myths

First let's get a few of the myths, or rather excuses, out of the way that I've encountered that just hold people back.

1 - **My hands are too small or large.** I've heard this many times over the years. Certainly some people's hands are smaller and some larger. However it usually is not a significant issue.

I've had students with small hands and with larger hands that play beautifully and effortlessly. Then I've had other students with average size hands that continue to struggle. The hand size doesn't seem to be the deciding factor.

2 - **My fingers are too short.** This is another common concern that I've heard often from students. Because barring chords involves stretching your index finger across the neck it makes sense that if your finger was too short that wouldn't stretch far enough.

Again this hasn't been what I see as a deciding factor. If it really was it would be just a matter of getting a guitar with a thinner neck. 98.3% of the time that's not the first place to go. It's best to work with the physical attributes that you have and look for how you can make the best use of them, not focus on how they're holding you back.

3 - **No it's not because you just suck.** It is human nature when something is difficult to first start looking for a reason that you are somehow handicapped (as in short or fat fingers). The second tendency is for students to think something is generally wrong with them that they can't learn, or they're just unable to do it like other people. Let's get that out of the way right now. Your difficulties with bar chords are not because YOU suck!

Here are the most significant five issues that is keeping you from playing bar chords the way you want to.



5 Reasons Your Bar Chords Suck... And What To Do About It

#1 - YOUR GUITAR IS FIGHTING YOU

There are times when you need to consider making changes with your guitar.

I briefly mentioned that if your fingers are exceptionally small you may want to consider a guitar with a thinner neck. Occasionally there are times that is helpful to have a guitar with a wider neck if you have exceptionally large hands.

Many times it's not really necessary, but it's something to consider.

The biggest issue is when the guitar is not set up properly. In particular it means the strings are too high off the neck of the guitar. This will make it tremendously difficult to play bar chords properly.

SOLUTION: Have your guitar instructor or a competent repairman look at your guitar and see if it would benefit from a [guitar action setup](#).

This involves a combination of things including adjusting the bridge and the nut of the guitar to lower the "[action](#)". Also they may recommend adjusting the angle of the neck and even smoothing down the frets.

When done properly it can make most guitars easier to play and even sound better.

I strongly recommend having it done by a reputable repair person. I have known mechanically inclined people to do a reasonable job by watching YouTube videos... but it's risky.

#2 - THERE'S SOMETHING THAT YOU DON'T KNOW

There are specific things that you need to know to play bar chords properly.

Some of the things are knowing how to place your index finger properly across the neck, the best angle for your wrist, where to place your fingers in relation to the frets and how to think about changing from one chord to the another properly.

Without understanding the proper mechanics you'll always be swimming upstream.

And more importantly you'll probably be practicing incorrectly and have to undo some bad habits later.



SOLUTION: Learn the proper mechanics of playing bar chords. A time-tested way to do this is to find a competent guitar instructor who could not only show you the proper way to do it but help you make corrections when you get off.

Another way that's becoming more and more effective is to learn from a progressive set of videos online where you can watch the technique and make adjustments from what you see.

#3 – NOT ENOUGH PRACTICE

Yes, everyone seems to know they should practice. But in reality most students underestimate how much time and persistence is needed to make your body do something it's not used to doing... Like play bar chords :)

Okay, here's the bad news... You're probably going to need to practice more than you think you do.

Here's the good news. It doesn't have to be a bad thing.

Getting a consistent practice schedule can become a habit and gets easier what you do it regularly. Also the act of practicing can be a positive experience when you just put your heart into it and stop thinking about how hard it is or other things you want to be doing.

SOLUTION: First make some time to practice at least five days a week. I recommend 30 minute sessions for beginners.

Then spend some time in each practice session working methodically on bar chords. Don't expect immediate results but think of it as a long-term program.

You'll not only improve your bar chords but you'll be setting the mechanics in motion to improve everything that you choose to work on.

#4 – PRACTICING THE WRONG THINGS

So now you're practicing regularly. That's great. Let's take a look at what you're practicing.

I interview students at my music school that have been playing for a while and want to take lessons to get better. One of the questions I asked them is if they are currently practicing regularly. Most say yes.

Then I ask them how and what they practice.



What many tell me is that they play the guitar for some amount of time every day. This is not practicing. Playing songs or even techniques that you can already play is not considered practicing.

Practicing means working specifically on either techniques or exercises, or even songs, in a progressive attempt to get better.

In the case of bar chords that does not mean just trying to play them for a certain period of time each day. It's possible to get better very slowly this way, but that's a long and painful road.

SOLUTION: Use a progressive and methodical system to practice bar chords.

This would involve practicing specific exercises that will strengthen your hands and help you to get your fingers in the right place with the least amount of effort.

You also want to avoid creating too much tension in your hand and especially your wrist.

#5 – YOU JUST NEED MORE TIME

We all know patience is a virtue... Right?

But most people, including myself, often act like it's a sin.

Wouldn't it be great to take the "Play Awesome Bar Chord Pill"? I'm right there with you :)

SOLUTION: If your practicing regularly, practicing the right things and you've learned the proper technique to play bar chords there is just one more thing that you need...

That's to keep doing it until you get the results.

Playing bar chords accurately and smoothly is just a matter of getting the fingers in the right place, having the strength to press them down sufficiently and enough practice time (i.e. repetitions) to change chords and get to the next one in time.

That said I have never met a student who could not do it. It comes down to just doing the right things and to keep doing them.

Low E String (thick)

A#/Bb	B	C	C#/Db	D	D#/Eb	E	F	F#/Gb	G	G#/Ab	A	

Low E String (thick)



Notes On The 6th String - Going Up

Musical notation for the 6th string going up. The staff shows notes for frets 0 through 7. The fretboard below shows the corresponding fret numbers.

Fret	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Notes	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G

Notes On The 6th String - Going Down

Musical notation for the 6th string going down. The staff shows notes for frets 8, 9, 10, and then back down to 10, 9, 8, 7. The fretboard below shows the corresponding fret numbers.

Fret	8	9	10	10	9	8	7
Notes	G	F#	F	E	D#	D	C

Musical notation for the 6th string going down. The staff shows notes for frets 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, and 0. The fretboard below shows the corresponding fret numbers.

Fret	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Notes	E	D	C#	C	B	A	G



Notes On The 5th String

Notes On The 5th String - Going Up

Musical notation for the 5th string going up. The staff shows notes for frets 0 through 7. The notes are: 0 (A), 1 (B), 2 (C), 3 (D), 4 (E), 5 (F), 6 (G), 7 (A). The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers 0 through 7.

Notes On The 5th String - Going Down

Musical notation for the 5th string going down. The staff shows notes for frets 8 through 7. The notes are: 8 (A), 9 (B), 10 (C), 10 (D), 9 (E), 8 (F), 7 (G). The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers 8 through 7.

Musical notation for the 5th string going down. The staff shows notes for frets 6 through 0. The notes are: 6 (A), 5 (B), 4 (C), 3 (D), 2 (E), 1 (F), 0 (G). The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers 6 through 0.



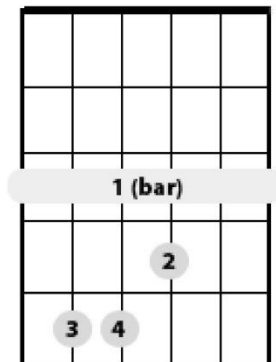
Chord Form Chart

6th String Root Forms

Here are the most common bar chords forms with the Root note on the 6th string (note that is also the name of the chord). If the note on the 6th string is a G note, then the chord will be called a G "something". The "something" depends on the rest of the notes.

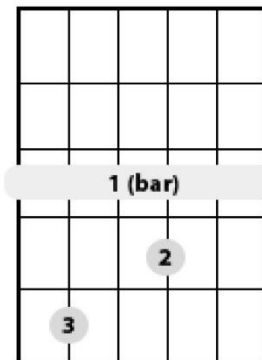
Major Form

G



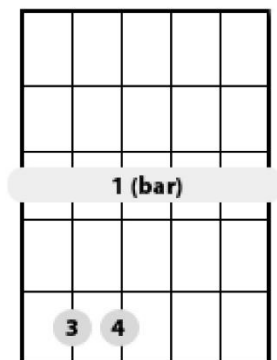
7th Form

G7



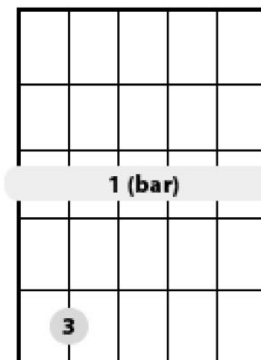
Minor Form

Gm



Minor 7th Form

Gm7



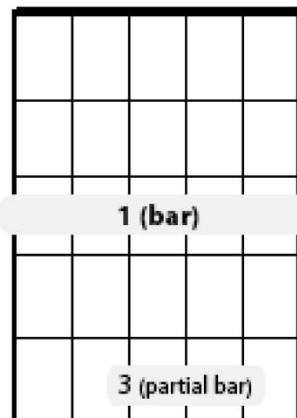


5th String Root Forms

Here are the most common bar chords forms with the Root note on the 5th string. Again, if the note on the 5th string is a C note, then the chord will be called a C “something”. The “something” depends on the rest of the notes.

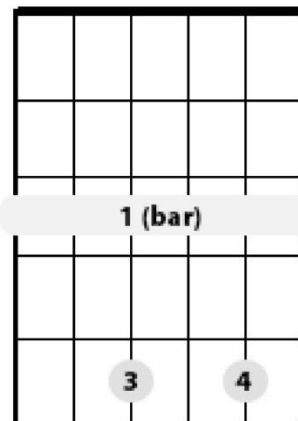
Major Form

C



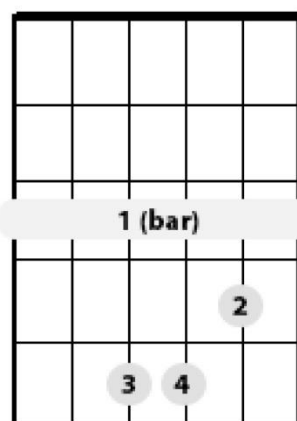
7th Form

C7



Minor Form

Cm



Minor 7th Form

Cm7

