

A, D, & E Major Chords

By Christopher Schlegel

Now we know some open position chords. Since most songs use more than one chord, we need to learn how to switch between them. More to the point, we need to learn how to switch from one chord to the next chord in time with music.

First, simply get used to the physical motions involved in moving from one chord to the next. Practicing putting your fingers in place for an A major chord, then strum the chord. Then, switch to a D major chord and strum it. Switch back to an A major chord, strum it. Next, switch to an E major chord, strum it.

Finally, switch back to an A major chord, strum it. Keep doing this switching between A major, D major, A major, and E major until you start to get the hang of it. Over time your hands and fingers will slowly start to more easily "remember" these motions and carry them out more automatically. This is called building "muscle memory". This is the ability of a part of your body to be trained to automatically, quickly and effectively carry out orders from your mind. You think, "Play an A major chord," and your arms, hands, and fingers take care of the details!

Next, we need to get used to the idea of switching chords "in time" or "in rhythm" with an implied beat. In this case we are working on playing a chord once and then holding it for four evenly spaced "beats"; a slow but steady count of "1, 2, 3, 4". Then when the next count of "1" comes around again, strum the chord again. This time we have from counts 2, 3, and 4 to get ready to play the next chord. Use this time to get ready to play the D major. Then when the count of "1" comes around again, play the D major chord. Hold the D major chord for 4 counts. Then play the D major chord again.

Now we have from 2, 3 and 4 to get our hands in place for the return of the A major chord. When 1 comes around again, play the A major chord. Four more counts and we play A major again. Then we have to get ready for the E major chord on the next count of 1. Play the E major chord. count to 4, play the E major chord again on 1 and get ready to return to A major on the next 1 to start the entire pattern again.

Remember that we are focusing on two things: getting from one chord shape to the next and doing it in time to play that next chord on the count of "1".

Keep practicing these motions until you can do it consistently and effectively. The next step is going to be playing these chords along with a backing track.

Chord Practice

A, D, E Major Chords

Slowly ♩ = 80
A major

D major

Musical notation for A major and D major chords. The top staff shows a treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 4/4 time signature. The first measure is the A major chord (x02232), the second is the D major chord (xx0232), the third is the A major chord (x02232), and the fourth is the D major chord (xx0232). The bottom staff is a guitar tablature with the same sequence of chords: A major (x02232), D major (xx0232), A major (x02232), and D major (xx0232).

A major

E major

Musical notation for A major and E major chords. The top staff shows a treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 4/4 time signature. The first measure is the A major chord (x02232), the second is the E major chord (x21320), the third is the A major chord (x02232), and the fourth is the E major chord (x21320). The bottom staff is a guitar tablature with the same sequence of chords: A major (x02232), E major (x21320), A major (x02232), and E major (x21320).