



Introduction to Barre Chords: Lesson 1

By Christopher Schlegel

In this tutorial we will use the concept (theory) of Barre Chords and how to apply them (practice) to the guitar. We will start with the mechanics of how to "barre" and then learn how to use our barring index finger as a sort of "movable capo". Using this idea enables us to use the basic open chords of E major, E minor, A major and A minor to play any given major or minor chord chromatically in many different positions covering the fretboard.

Most beginners are familiar with "open chord shapes". They are called "open" chords, because they use open strings. They are frequently close to the nut in the first position; using only the first few frets. Examples of these beginner "open" chords include E major and E minor; as well as A major and A minor. The reason that these chords are so frequently taught, learned and used first is because they are the most effective way of accomplishing playing the notes necessary to play the chord.

The origin of the movable chord shape known as a Barre Chord is using an open chord shape and sliding it up the neck. The reason it is called a "barre" chord is that we have to use our index finger to "bar" the notes that we previously open strings. So in effect we are using our index finger as a movable capo! So the first thing we need to do is learn to do this thing called "barring".

Place your index finger behind any given fret. In this first video lesson I suggest using the fifth fret to start to learn. It's a bit easier than trying the first fret for beginners because it a bit easier to hold down. Just like any chord or note, you want your finger right behind the fret. Not on top of the fret; not too far behind the fret. Right behind the fret is the optimal location because you will get the most leverage. You will want to make sure your thumb is providing enough pressure from behind the neck to do it's share of the work also.

Watch the video closely to see how I indicate proper arm to wrist to hand form as well. You can really make it hard on yourself if you don't approach playing barre chords properly. The barre chord can be a notorious enthusiasm killer for beginners! But with the right approach and dedication it doesn't have to slow you down at all.

Only after getting all the strings to sound clearly and cleanly with a full index finger bar are you ready for the next lesson.