

The CAGED System

Introduction

All barre chords are derived from the open chords C, A, G, E, D, and their various forms e.g. minor, sevenths etc

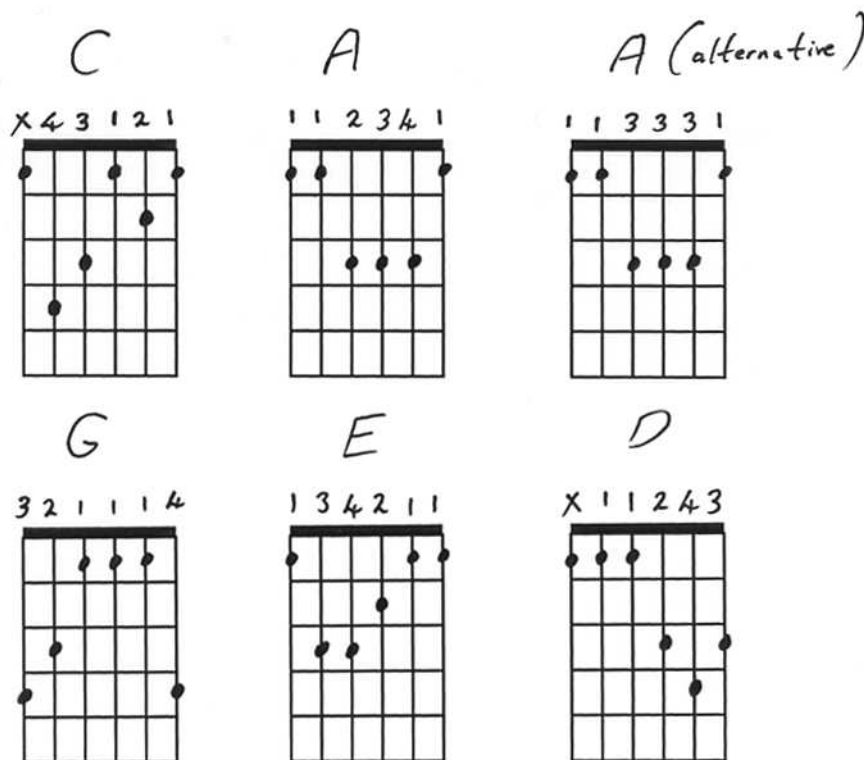
These five basic chord shapes form the building blocks for the CAGED system and provide us with a basic 'road map' of the fret board.

How It Works

Take the open chord C: finger this chord by placing your first finger over the nut and using the remainder of your fingers to fret the chord. If you now slide the whole shape up two frets you are playing a D chord using the C shape.

This moveable (transposable) quality is applicable to all our open chords C, A, G, E and D. You will have to re-finger the chords as below but then you will have many new voicings of each chord. (Same chord played in different places)

Remember - all chords are "barre chords" really, even open chords... it's just that with open chords the barre is effectively played by the nut of the guitar.



Here's the Exercise

This exercise will require you to apply the CAGED system. Consequently, you will have to play the same chord sequence but using different voicings. Once you've mastered this your guitar playing will have taken a massive leap forward!

This exercise is based on the chord sequence E G A E

Loads of songs use this sequence of just 3 chords with the most famous latest piece being Robbie Williams' 'Let me entertain you'.

Paul McCartney, Status Quo, The Who, Hawkwind and many others have taken this sequence to make songs.

Steps in applying the CAGED system

Step 1 – the chords you want to play are:

E G A E

these are shown in bold at the top of each exercise

play these in the open position first

Step 2 – The shape / voicing

the plain text in the exercises, for example:

D E D C are the chord 'shape' / voicings

Step 3 – Position of the Shape / voicing

Under the chord shapes are roman numerals

D E D C
II III VII IV

these are the positions , or fret at which you need to make the barre for the chord shapes above for it to become the chord you want to play

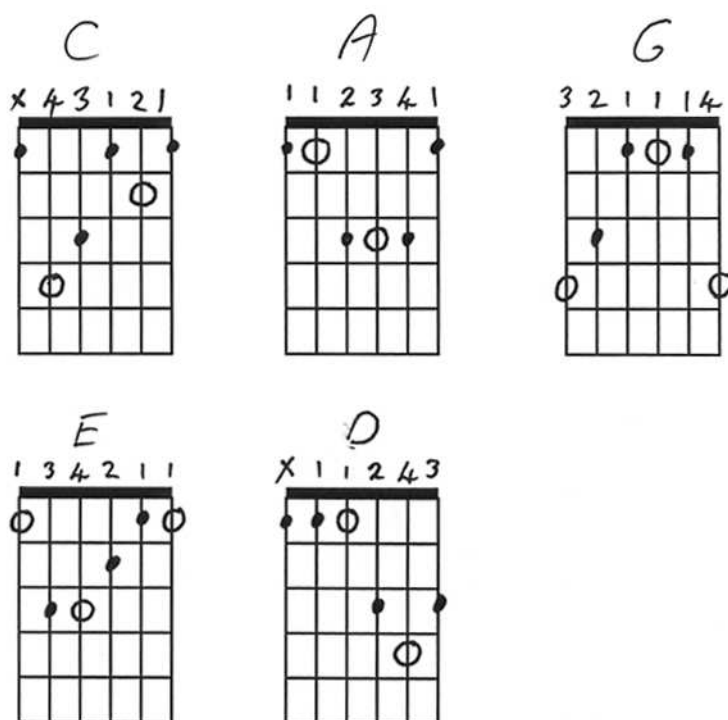
Step 4 -The importance of the root note

The root of a chord is the note from which the chord is built and thus gives the chord its name.

You must strum the chord from the lowest sounding root note or you will generate an inversion of that chord.

Have a look at the chord boxes again noting the fingering with black rings - these represent the root notes

Figure 2 C,A,G,E,D chords showing root notes



So for the C shape we see the root notes are on the 5th and 2nd strings. For the G shape the root notes are on the 6th, 3rd and 1st strings

An Example

So to play:

E G A E

We play the following chord shapes at the following fret positions.

D E D C
II III VII IV

If you take the first chord in the sequence above we are playing the chord of E using the D shape barred at the second.

Now try the rest.

THIS SET OF EXERCISES MAY TAKE MANY MONTHS TO MASTER SO TAKE IT EASY AND DON'T GO TOO QUICKLY

E G A E
0 0 0 0

Remember - shapes and position of barre to achieve chords above.

E G E D
0 0 V II

D E D C
II III VII IV

C D C A
IV V IX VII

A C A G
VII VII XII IX

G A G E
IX X XIV XII
 or II or O

Notice how, if you follow vertically and imagine these are symbols on the wheel of a fruit machine, that if you start at C they always spell CAGED

NB- practice this exercise by playing across line by line but also by playing **down** line by line

Now try another set of shapes for the same chords

E G A E
0 0 0 0

Shapes and position of barre to achieve chords above.

A	E	E	E
VII	III	V	0
G	D	D	D
IX	V	VII	II
E	C	C	C
XII	VII	IX	IV
D	A	A	A
II	X	XII	VII
or XIV			
C	G	G	G
IV	0	II	IX

NB- also practice this exercise by playing across line by line but also by playing **down** line by line.

My favourite voicings for a nice subtle texture are

E	G	A	E
0	0	0	0

Shapes and position of bar to achieve chords above.

D	G	A	E
II	0	0	0
A	C	E	C
VII	VII	V	IV

These seem much tighter than the other exercises and create nice harmonies and runs.

E	G	A	E
0	0	0	0

Shapes and position of barre to achieve chords above.

D	G	A	E
II	0	0	0
C	E	G	D

IV	III	II	II
A	D	E	C
VII	V	V	IV
G	C	D	A
IX	VII	VII	VII
E	A	C	G
XII	X	IX	III or XIV
E	G	A	E
0	0	0	0

Shapes and position of barre to achieve chords above.

A	C	E	C
VII	VII	V	IV
G	A	D	A
IX	X	V	VII
E	G	C	G
XII	O or XII	IX	IX
D	E	A	E
II or XIV	III or XV	O or XII	O or XII
C	D	G	D
IV	V	II or XIV	II or XIV