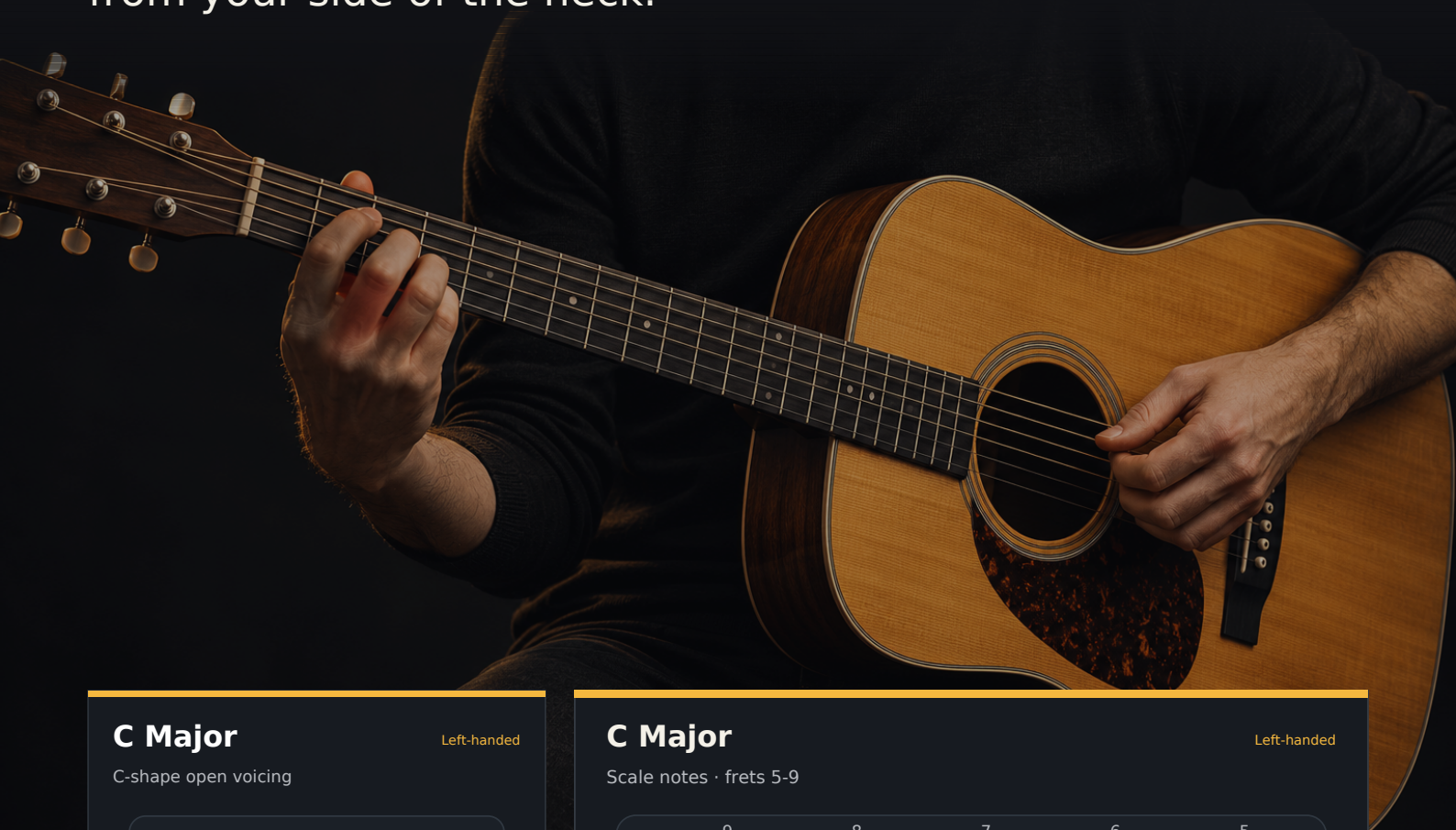


LEFT-HANDED GUITAR THEORY

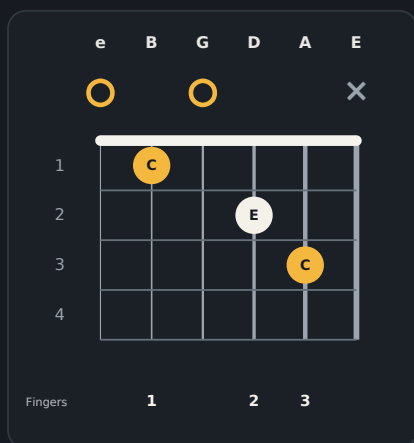
Learn notes, scales and chords
from your side of the neck.



C Major

Left-handed

C-shape open voicing

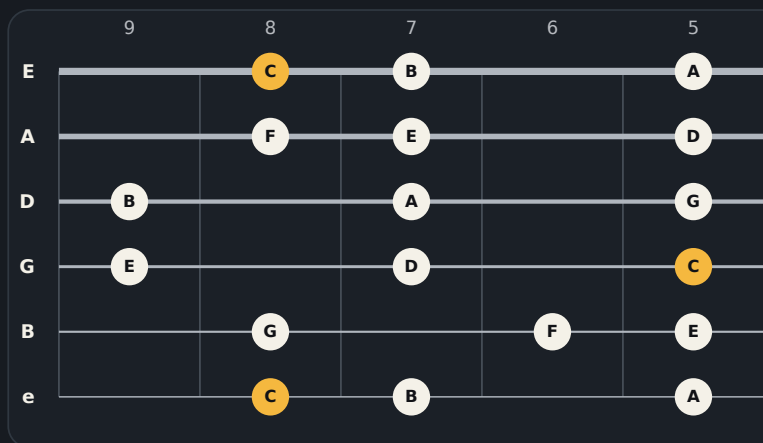


1 index · 2 middle · 3 ring · 4 little

C Major

Left-handed

Scale notes · frets 5-9



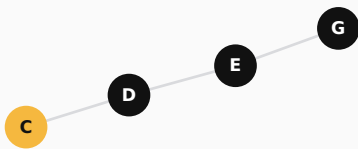
C · D · E · F · G · A · B

01 / START HERE

Music theory is a map for music.

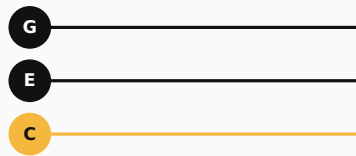
Music has three core elements: **melody, harmony and rhythm**. On guitar, these appear in the notes you play, the chords you form and your strumming or picking patterns. Understanding them helps you learn songs and communicate with other musicians.

Melody



The tune you follow: notes played one after another, like a sung line, guitar riff or solo.

Harmony



Notes heard together. Chords add depth and colour, and can support a melody.

Rhythm



How sounds and silences fall in time: the pulse, accents and patterns you strum or pick.

HARMONY ON THE GUITAR

A chord brings notes together.

A chord combines notes that sound together. A basic three-note chord is called a triad.

THE NOTES IN A MAJOR

A + **C#** + **E**

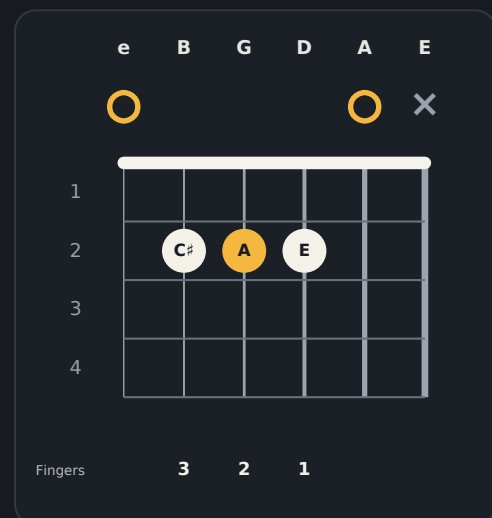
Strum this A-major shape and you hear A, C# and E, with some notes repeated across the strings.

The dots name the notes. Gold marks **A, the root**: the note the chord is built on and named after. The lower row suggests a fingering. A circle means play an open string; a cross means skip it.

A Major

Left-handed

A-shape open voicing



1 index · 2 middle · 3 ring · 4 little

02 / SOUND AND PITCH

A note begins as a vibration.

A plucked string creates pressure changes in the air that your ears detect as sound. Fretting changes the string's vibrating length; tuning changes its tension. Both affect its pitch.

Try it: Play the open A string, then fret it at the 12th fret. Both notes are A; the second is one octave higher.



01 / THE STRING

A plucked string vibrates.

02 / THE AIR

Changing pressure carries the vibration.

03 / YOUR HEARING

Your ear and brain interpret the sound.

ONE NOTE NAME, THREE OCTAVES

A2

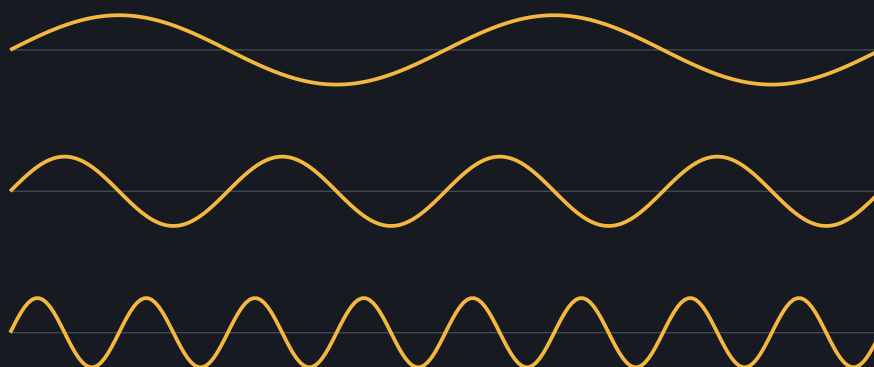
110 Hz

A3

220 Hz

A4

440 Hz



Simplified waveforms, shown over the same time window. Twice the cycles means twice the frequency.

Frequency

Frequency is the number of complete vibration cycles per second, measured in hertz (Hz). More cycles per second means a higher pitch.

Octaves

An octave up doubles the frequency; an octave down halves it. The note name stays the same: 110, 220 and 440 Hz are all A.

Plucking harder mainly increases amplitude (how far the string moves), making the note louder. Frequency determines pitch. Human hearing spans roughly 20 Hz to 20,000 Hz - about ten octaves, though the range varies.

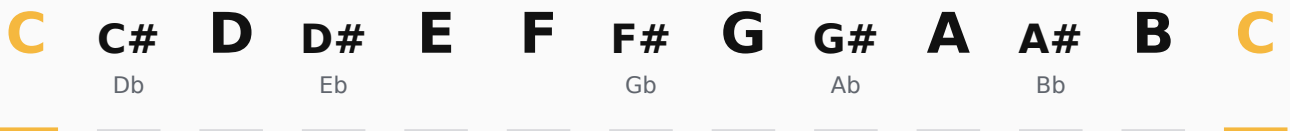
03 / THE TWELVE NOTES

An octave is divided into twelve steps.

Each fret raises a string by one semitone; twelve frets take you an octave higher. Most modern fretted guitars use twelve-tone equal temperament: twelve equal frequency ratios per octave, rather than a fixed number of extra hertz at each step.

THE CHROMATIC SCALE

TWELVE STEPS, THEN REPEAT



Move one place to the right: one semitone higher.

Notes across the neck

Standard tuning · the first octave

Left-handed

	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
E	E	D#	D	C#	C	B	A#	A	G#	G	F#	F	E
A	A	G#	G	F#	F	E	D#	D	C#	C	B	A#	A
D	D	C#	C	B	A#	A	G#	G	F#	F	E	D#	D
G	G	F#	F	E	D#	D	C#	C	B	A#	A	G#	G
B	B	A#	A	G#	G	F#	F	E	D#	D	C#	C	B
e	E	D#	D	C#	C	B	A#	A	G#	G	F#	F	E

Gold marks every C.

Fret 12 = open note, one octave higher

Seven letters, twelve pitches

Letter names run from A to G. Sharps raise a note by one semitone; flats lower it. **Enharmonic equivalents**, such as C# and Db, are different names for the same pitch.

Two natural neighbours

E to F and B to C are already one semitone apart. The other consecutive natural-note pairs have a pitch between them.

Find C on the A string at fret 3. Now look for the other gold notes: the same note name appears in several places.

04 / INTERVALS AND SCALES

A scale is a pattern of distances

An **interval** is the distance between two notes. A **scale** puts a selection of notes in order. On guitar, one fret is a semitone and two frets make a whole tone. A scale follows a pattern of these distances from a starting note.

THE MAJOR-SCALE PATTERN

WHOLE

WHOLE

HALF

WHOLE

WHOLE

WHOLE

HALF

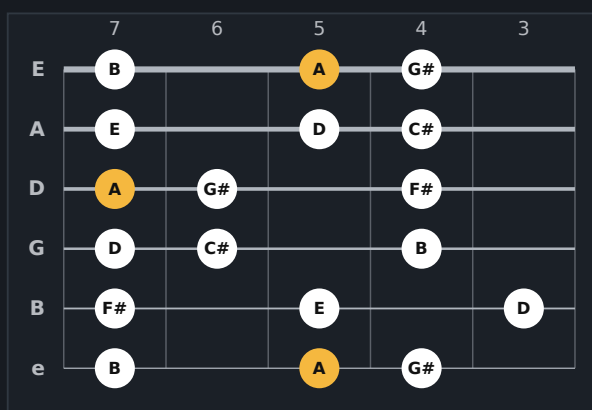
Whole = two semitones (two frets). Half = one semitone (one fret).

Starting on A, this pattern gives you **A, B, C#, D, E, F#, G#, A**. The charts below show A major in two fretboard positions. On page 6, we will use this same scale to build an A-major chord.

A Major

Left-handed

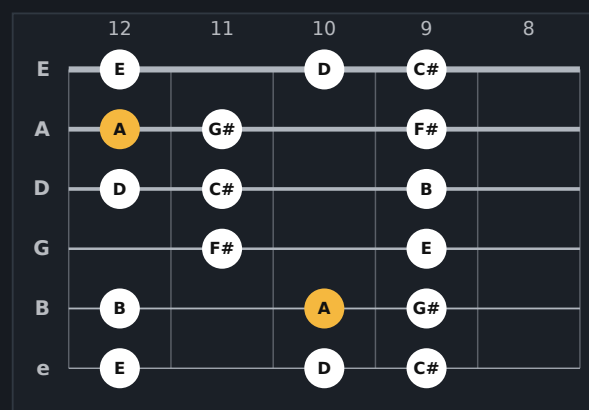
Position 1 · frets 3-7



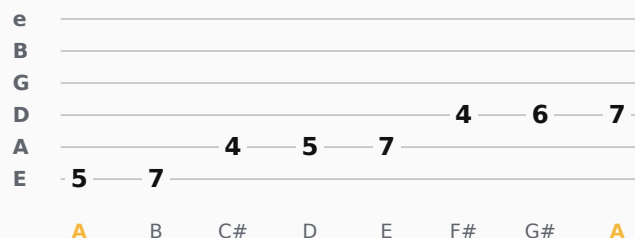
A Major

Left-handed

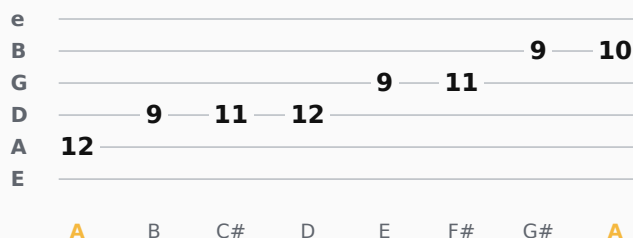
Position 2 · frets 8-12



TAB / A TO A



TAB / A TO A



Each tab plays one octave of A major using notes in the chart above: **A, B, C#, D, E, F#, G#, A**. The charts contain more notes; these short runs give you a place to start.

Read tab from left to right. The top line is the thinnest string, and the numbers tell you which frets to play. Try each run slowly, then play it backwards.

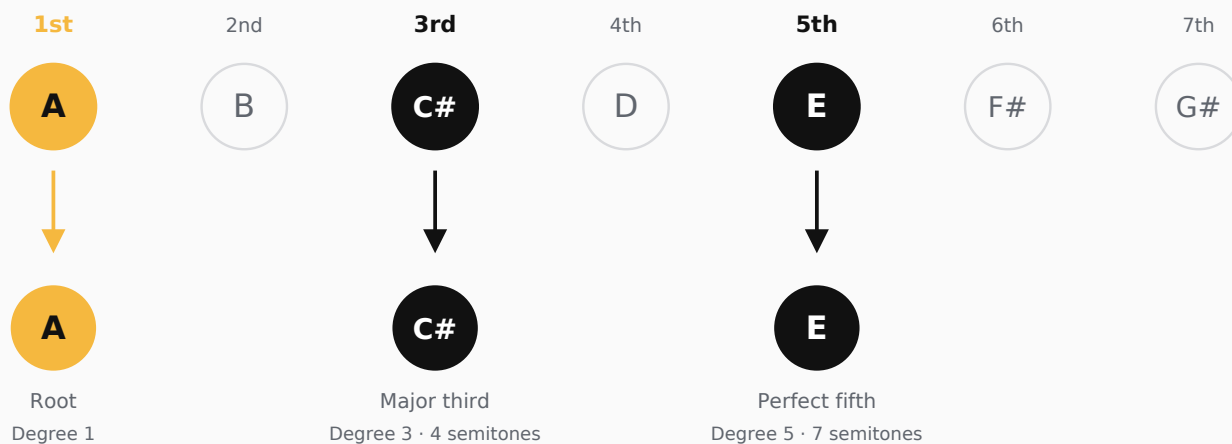
05 / CHORDS

Chords combine notes from a scale

A triad contains three notes. A **scale degree** is a note's numbered place in a scale. An **interval** is the distance between two notes, such as A up to C#.

A MAJOR SCALE

TAKE SCALE DEGREES 1, 3 AND 5



A MAJOR TRIAD

Intervals measured up from A.

Lower C# to C by one semitone to make A minor. A to C is a **minor third** (three semitones). The chord is **A - C - E**; the root and perfect fifth stay the same.

A Major

Left-handed

A-shape open voicing

Fingers 3 2 1

1 index · 2 middle · 3 ring · 4 little

A Minor

Left-handed

A-shape open voicing

Fingers 1 3 2

1 index · 2 middle · 3 ring · 4 little

The dots name the chord tones; gold marks the root, A. The small numbers below each grid suggest which fretting fingers to use. A circle means play the open string; a cross means skip it. Notice how C# becomes C.

06 / KEYS AND PROGRESSIONS

A key connects a scale to a chord family

A key connects a scale and its chords around a central note. In C major, the scale is C, D, E, F, G, A and B. Build a triad on each note and you get the chord family below.

I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii°
C	Dm	Em	F	G	Am	B°

Uppercase Roman numerals usually mark major chords; lowercase numerals mark minor chords. The small circle on vii° marks a diminished chord.

A COMMON FOUR-CHORD PROGRESSION

I - V - vi - IV

C - G - Am - F

The Roman numerals describe each chord's place in the key. The same pattern can be moved to another major key by using that key's chord family.

TWO MORE TO TRY IN C MAJOR

I - IV - V - I

C - F - G - C

Move away from C, then return to it. Listen to how the last C feels settled.

ii - V - I

Dm - G - C

A short route back to C. Hear the pull from G to the final chord.

Choose one progression and play four slow, steady beats per chord. Repeat it a few times, then try another. The same chord family can create a different feel when you change the order.

07 / YOUR NEXT STEPS

You have the map. Next, put it to work.

01 Find a note, then find it again

PAGE 04

Use the fretboard map to find three Cs. Play each one and say its name. Notice which ones sound higher or lower.

02 Play a scale and hear the distances

PAGE 05

Choose a tab example. Play A major slowly up and down, saying the notes as you go. Finish on A and listen to how it feels resolved.

03 Change one note in a chord

PAGE 06

Alternate between A major and A minor. Find C# in the first shape and C in the second. Listen to the difference that one fret makes.

04 Put the chords in an order

PAGE 07

Choose a progression and play four steady beats per chord. Repeat it, then try a different progression from the same key.

THE LEFTY GUITARIST

Keep exploring.

Use the website's chord and scale libraries to build on what you have just played.

Explore chord shapes →

Find a shape for a chord you want to learn, then identify its root notes.

Explore scale patterns →

Explore another scale pattern and connect it to the notes you already know.

theleftyguitarist.com