

## CHORD CONSTRUCTION

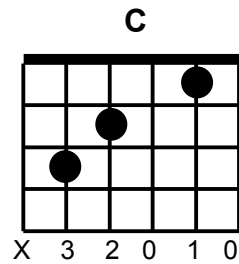
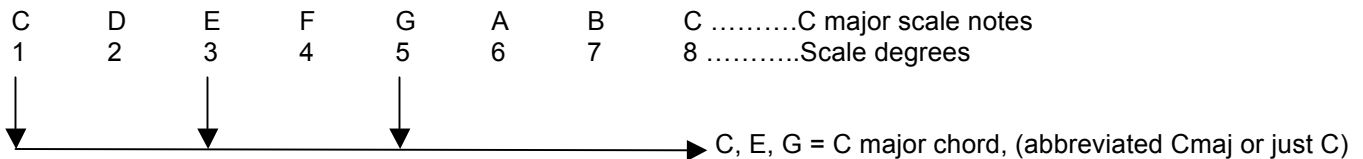
Understanding chord construction will give you the knowledge of why certain notes make up certain chords. Analyzing chord construction will also illustrate the relationships between notes, chords, and scales. It will tie many concepts together that we will discuss throughout these materials. Chord construction will help your lead playing as you will then know to land on the notes that make up the chords, or chord tones. You also will know what number each chord is referred to like what is the one chord (I), four (IV) chord, five chord (V), etc.

Chords are built from notes in certain scales. A scale is a series of sounds arranged by order of pitch, or alphabetically, from any given note to its octave. In order to analyze chord construction we need to look at scales and the notes that make them up. All major keys are constructed in the same fashion and all music theory is compared to the major scale. The major scale is the standard in music that all is compared. You have probably heard the major scale - doe, re, me, fa, so, la, ti, and then back to doe.

Lets examine the C major scale. The key of C major has no sharps or flats. In fact, C is the only major key with no accidentals, (a sharp or flat is also referred to as an accidental). So if you see a piece of sheet music and it has no sharp or flat symbols next to the clef you know it is probably in the key of C major.

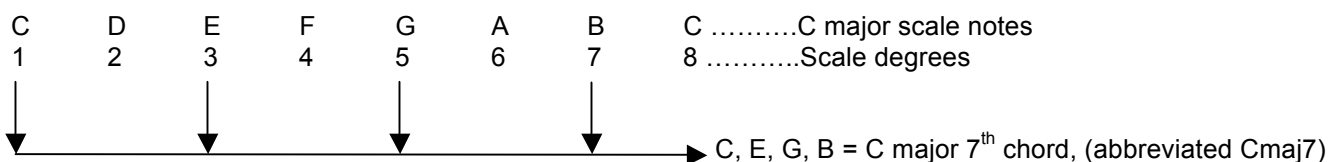
**C major scale = C, D, E, F, G, A, B,**

The three notes that construct a major chord are a root or 1<sup>st</sup> degree, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>, (1,3,5). So to illustrate the relationship between the key signature, chords, and notes lets draw out the C major scale and start counting. Remember that the scale is always laid out in order and each successive note is assigned a number or degree, and always in order. Start on the C and count to the third degree and you have an E note. In the key of C major the third is the E. Now count to the 5<sup>th</sup> degree or 5<sup>th</sup> note starting from the C note and you have a G note. In the key of C major the 5<sup>th</sup> is a G. Now put the three notes together as shown in the illustration below and you have a C major chord – root, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and fifth or C, E, G.

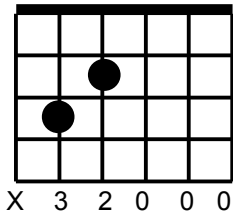


Lets look at an open C major chord illustrated on the left. Like all major chords it is constructed from the root, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> degrees of the major scale. In the key of C major the notes would be C, E, and G as constructed from the C major scale illustrated above. Playing these notes on the guitar neck is a C major chord. So you can grab these three notes from anywhere on the guitar neck and play them together and you have a C major chord or some inversion of a C major chord. Now you can see from these three illustrations how the notes in a chord are constructed from a scale and their relationship degree chordal wise.

Expanding on this concept above lets build a C major 7<sup>th</sup> chord, (Cmaj7). Major 7<sup>th</sup> chords are constructed from the root, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup>, (1,3,5,7), degrees of the major scale. The major 7<sup>th</sup> chord is actually built off the major as it has the root, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> degrees in it and then we add the 7<sup>th</sup> making it a major 7th chord. In the key of C major the root or 1<sup>st</sup> degree is a C, the 3<sup>rd</sup> is an E, and the 5<sup>th</sup> is a G. Let's draw out the C major scale again and begin counting degrees. The 7<sup>th</sup> degree in C major is a B. So put all the notes for a C major 7th chord together and we have the root, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> and if we count degrees as illustrated below we have C, E, G, and B.



### Cmaj7



Lets look at an open Cmaj7 chord illustrated on the left. Like all major 7<sup>th</sup> chords it is constructed from the root, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> degrees of the major scale. In the key of C major the notes would be C, E, G, and B as constructed from the C major scale as illustrated above. Playing these notes on the guitar neck is a C major 7<sup>th</sup> chord. So you can grab these four notes from anywhere on the guitar neck and play them together and you have a Cmaj7 chord or some inversion of a Cmaj7 chord.

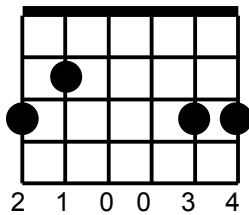
Lets try this same principle but this time we are going to change keys to G major. Remember, as discussed in the lesson above, all major keys are constructed in the same fashion. The G major scale has one sharp or accidental, (F#). The key of G major is the only major key with one sharp. Here are the notes of the G major scale:

**G major scale = G, A, B, C, D, E, F#**

Let's draw out the G major scale and start counting. Starting on the root note G, count to the third degree and you have a B note. In the key of G major the third is the B. Now count to the 5<sup>th</sup> degree and you have a D note. In the key of G major the 5<sup>th</sup> is a D. Now put the three together as shown in the illustration below and you have a G major chord – root, 3<sup>rd</sup>, fifth or G, B, D.

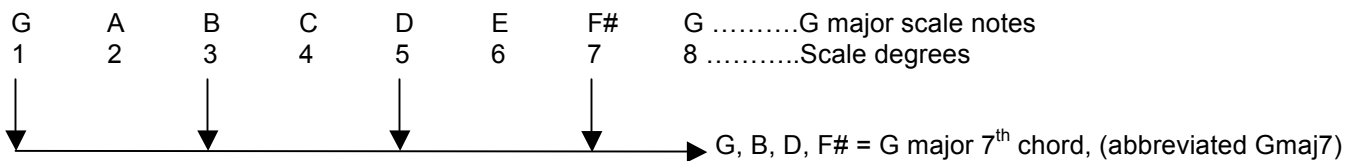


### G

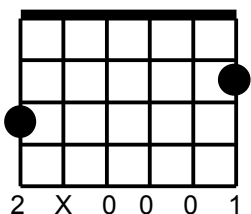


Lets look at an open G major guitar chord illustrated on the left. Like all major chords it is constructed from the root, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> degrees of the major scale. In the key of G major the notes would be G, B, and D as constructed from the G major scale illustrated above. Playing these three notes from anywhere on the guitar neck and play them together and you have a G major chord or some inversion of a G major chord.

Expanding further with the G major scale let's build a G major 7<sup>th</sup> chord, (Gmaj7). Major 7<sup>th</sup> chords are constructed from the root, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> degrees of the major scale as discussed above. In the key of G major the root or 1<sup>st</sup> degree is a G, the 3<sup>rd</sup> is a B, and the 5<sup>th</sup> is a D. Let's draw out the G major scale again and begin counting degrees. The 7<sup>th</sup> degree in G major is an F#. So put all the notes for a G major 7th chord together and we have the root, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> and if we count degrees as illustrated below we have G, B, D, and F#.



### Gmaj7



Lets look at an open Gmaj7 chord illustrated on the left. Like all major 7<sup>th</sup> chords it is constructed from the root, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> degrees of the major scale. In the key of G major the notes would be G, B, D, and F# as constructed from the G major scale as illustrated above. Playing these notes on the guitar neck is a Gmaj7 chord or some inversion of a G major7 chord.