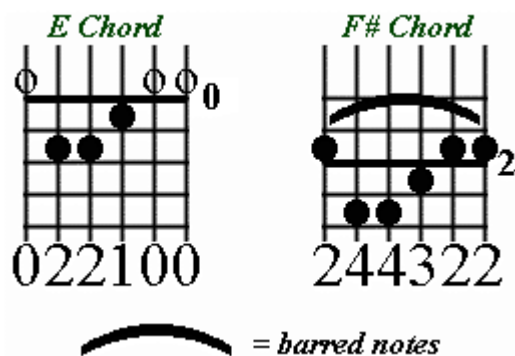


What Are Barre Chords?

Barre chords are an integral part of playing guitar. Probably 80% of all chords are barre chords in various forms. A barre chord is formed when you use your index finger to fret all the strings at one fret, then add other fingers to form a chord. This use of the index finger is called a "barre." Once you have barred the strings that fret, in effect, becomes the "nut," and any chord you build on top of the barre regards that fret as the nut. Take a look at an example:



As you can see, the barred second fret in the right image simply has an E chord built onto it, forming an F# chord. In other words, an F# chord is simply an E chord with the nut at the second fret. These chords are called E-derived barre chords because they are formed similarly to E chords. There are also A-derived barre chords, which are formed similarly to A chords. Both of these are covered in my guide to barre chords. I hope this helps!

The Barring Finger

Barre chords are an integral part of playing guitar. Probably 80% of all chords are barre chords in various forms. The hardest part of barre chords is learning how to use your index finger to barre all six strings at one fret. This page is designed to help you with this. Don't expect to be able to do this overnight--it took me three or four months until my fingers had enough strength to be able to barre at all. So take your time and don't get discouraged. Good luck!

The first exercise will help the finger position of your barring finger. Work at this one for a while; you won't be able to do the chords until you can do this. Let's get started!

First, place the edge of your index finger at the second fret across all 6 strings. The part of your index finger which should be touching the strings is shown in red in the diagram below:



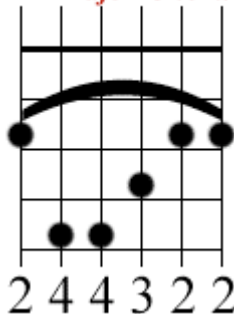
Now, simply strum as you normally would. Make sure you are holding down all six strings while you are strumming. This will be very difficult at first, so don't get discouraged. The main difficulties are getting the proper orientation of your finger on the strings, and having enough hand strength to hold the strings down. Keep working at it, trying different hand positions and finger positions to see if they may help. Also, make sure you are using your thumb to hold down your index finger. If you have a strength problem, try some of the exercises on my page on [strengthening your hand](#), especially the exercise on "Strengthening Your Thumb."

Once you can consistently hold down all six strings while you strum, you can progress to the barre chords. When you learn the shapes of the chords, and can therefore play the chords in songs, you will be able to practice this more and it will eventually come to you.

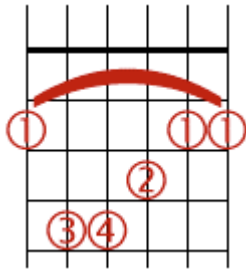
Barre Chord Notation

The six vertical lines in my notation refers to the six strings on your guitar, low strings appearing on the left. Basically this is how your strings would appear if you held your guitar neck vertically and looked at it. The numbers refer to the fret on each string that you press to make the chord. The numbers have nothing to do with which fingers you use to play each string. So an F# chord is notated and played as follows:

F# Major Chord



The next part of notation deals with the fingers used for each string. As an example, I will use the same F# chord shown above. Each 1, 2, 3, and 4 indicates which finger you use to fret that note.



The fingers represented by the symbols on the diagram are:

-  *barre*
- ① *index*
- ② *middle*
- ③ *ring*
- ④ *pinkie*