

Seventh Chords

As you progress with your chord playing and start to explore more intermediate and advanced chord forms and shapes, a study of seventh chords is essential. As with all things guitar related, a systematic consistent approach will get the fastest results.

When dealing with chords, you will find that there are many chord progressions that have been used over and over again in all types of music. In this report, I want to focus on jazz and blues type progressions.

The Harmonized Scale

Let's start with the harmonized scale. This is a great way learn the chord shapes and you will often see chord progressions that go straight up or down the harmonized scale. If you need a refresher on the harmonized scale in 7th chords check this link...

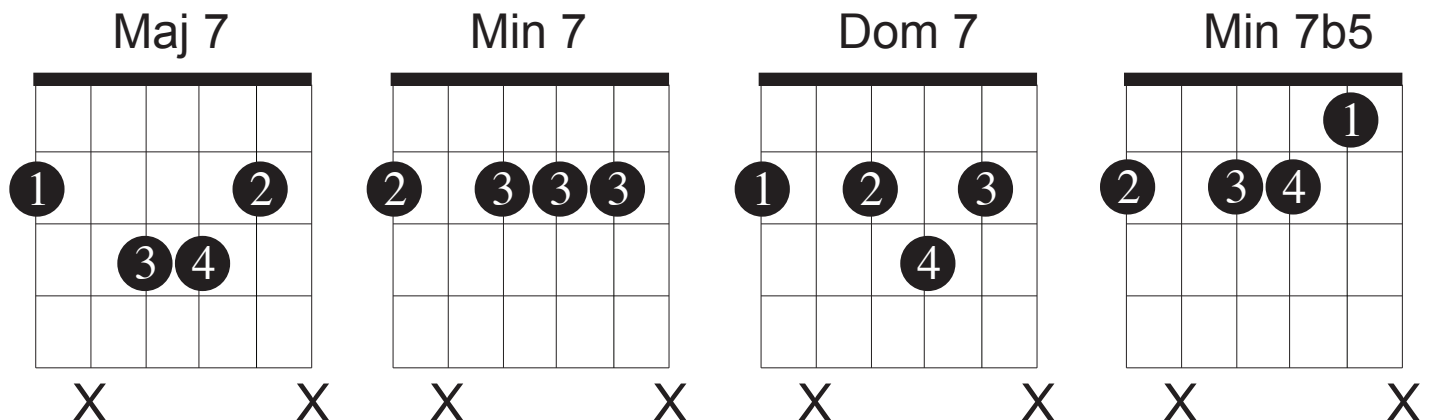
<http://www.learn-to-play-lead-guitar.com/music-theory-lesson-nine/>

In looking at the lesson on the harmonized scale you will see there are 4 different types of chords:

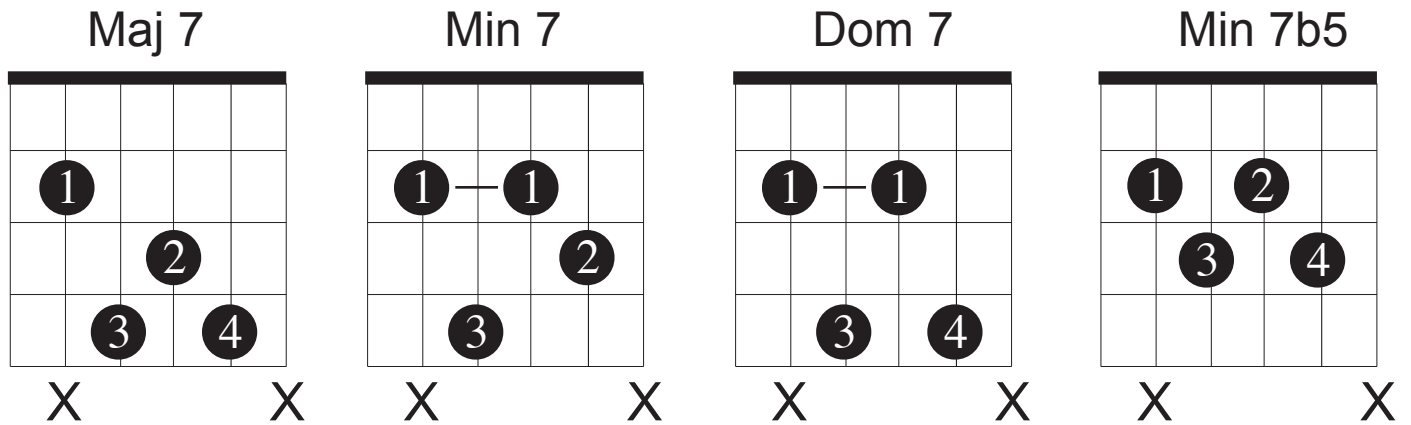
1. Major 7th
2. Minor 7th
3. Dominant 7th
4. Minor 7b5

In order to play the harmonized scale on the guitar we have to know forms for each of these chords. There are two sets of chords that are often used, in fact, they occur so frequently they are referred to as "garden variety." One set has the root on the 6th string and the second set has the root on the 5th string.

Here are the 6th string root chords...



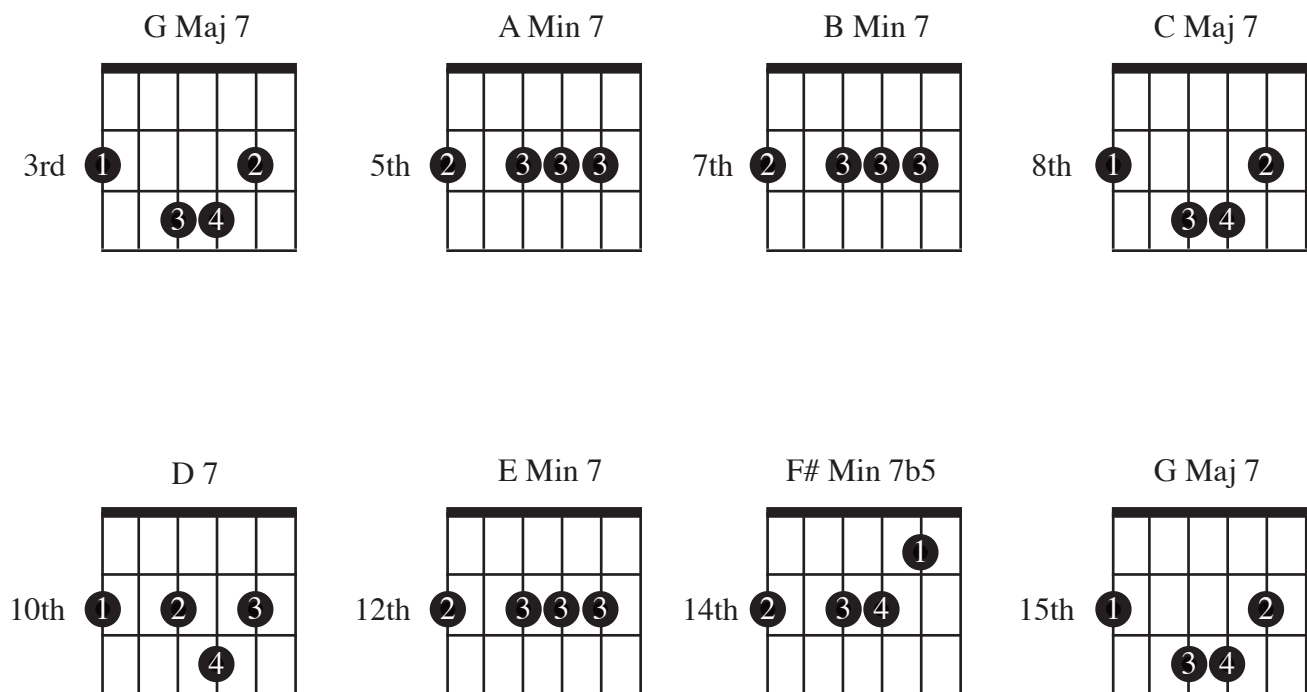
And the 5th string root chords...



The first step is to get familiar with the chord types and their names. Make sure that you can hear each note in the chord. Also be sure not to play the muted strings denoted with an X.

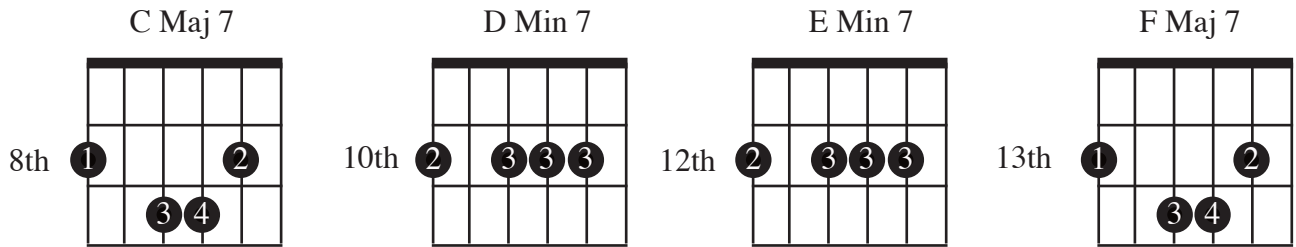
Now let's play the harmonized scale. When playing the harmonized scale you use only one set of chords, either the 6th string root or 5th string root but not both at the same time.

Here is the harmonized scale using the 6th string root chords in the key of G...

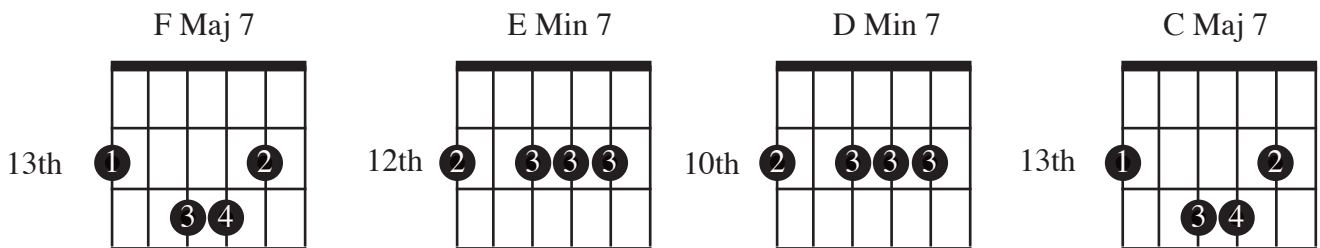


As you play through the harmonized scale you may find some of the fingerings to be difficult as you move up the neck. It can be a pretty tight squeeze in the higher frets. Just go up as far as you can and then turn around and come back down the scale.

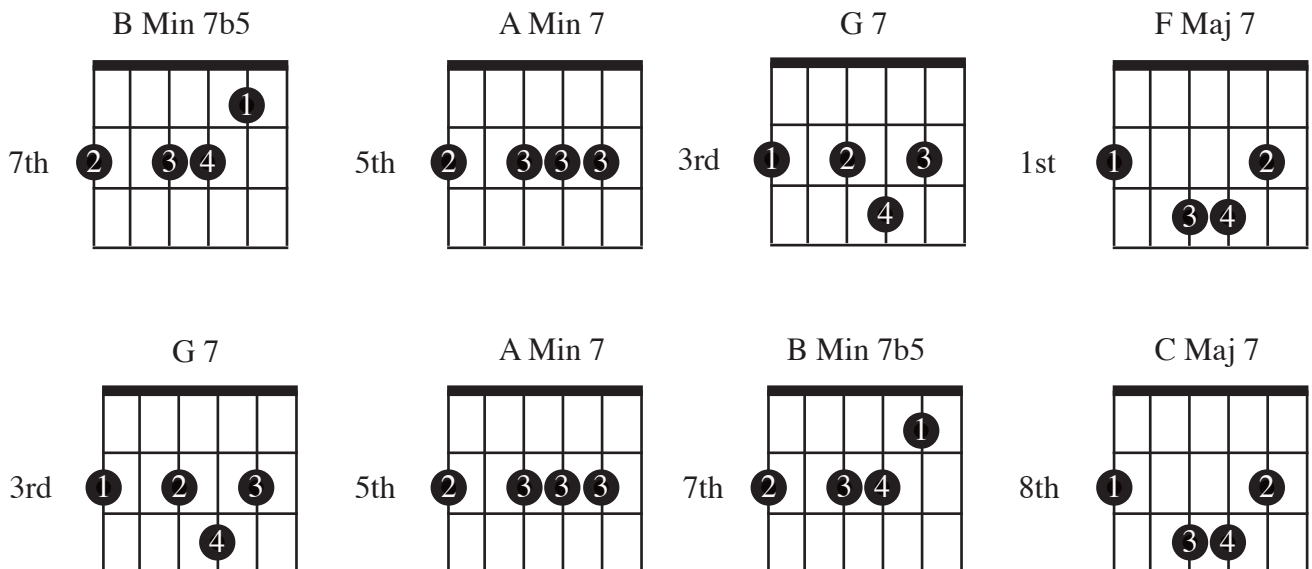
When you get back to the first chord continue down as far as you can go and then come back up to the one chord again. Here is an example in the key of C.



Suppose at this point I can't go any higher on the fretboard. I will now turn around and play as far as I can down the harmonized scale.



I am now back at the one chord but I need to continue down as far as I can go and then back up again to the one chord.



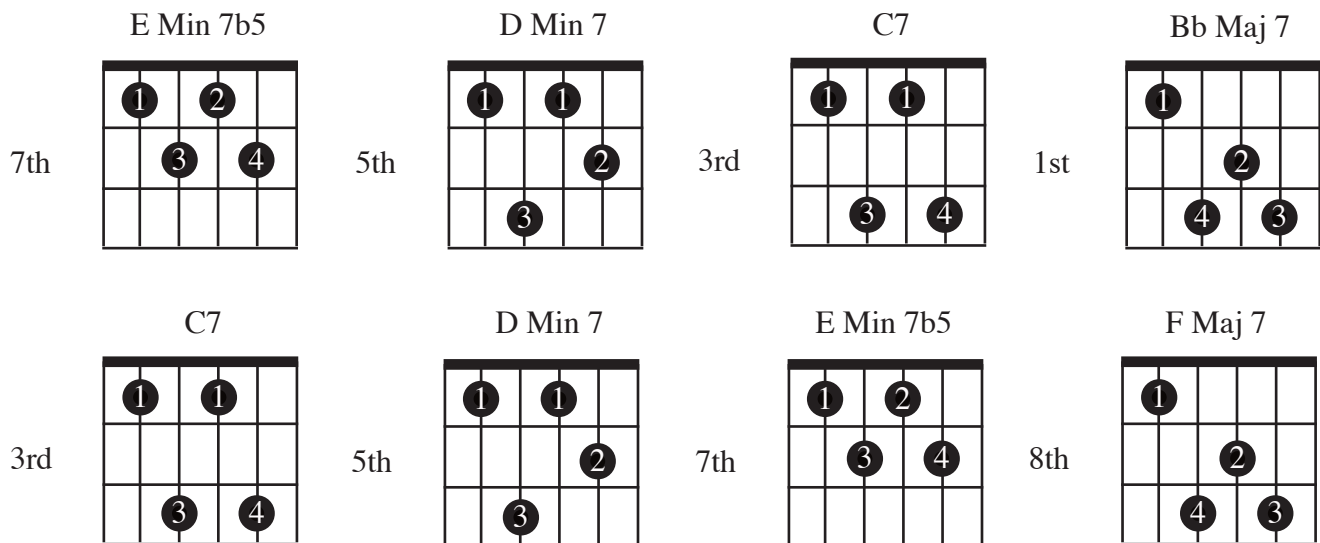
This is something that should be done in all keys. As you play through the harmonized scale you need to be aware of what key you are in, what number the chord is in that key (for example E min 7 is the three chord in the key of C) and of course the name of the chord you are on.

The harmonized scale using 5th string root chords...

	C Maj 7	D Min 7	E Min 7	F Maj 7
3rd				
	G7	A Min 7	B Min 7b5	C Maj 7
10th				

Once again you want to go up as far as you can. When you reach the upper limit then turn around and play down as far as you can go, then turn around again and go back up to the root. Here is an example in the key of F.

	F Maj 7	G Min 7	A Min 7	Bb Maj 7
8th				
	Bb Maj 7	A Min 7	G Min 7	F Maj 7
13th				



Again, this group of chords should be practiced using the same guidelines we established for the 6th string root chords.

Practicing Common Progressions

The next step in the process is to learn and practice some common chord progressions. Whether it's blues with its 1,4,5 progression, rock, country or jazz, all styles of music have certain sequences that get played over and over again. Learning these common patterns gives you the ability to quickly learn songs and play in any key.

We will explore a few of these common progressions in a moment but I want to point out a couple of things before we start.

1. When using the “garden variety” chords you just learned in a progression, the roots will most often alternate from 6th string to 5th string or the other way around depending on which one you start with.

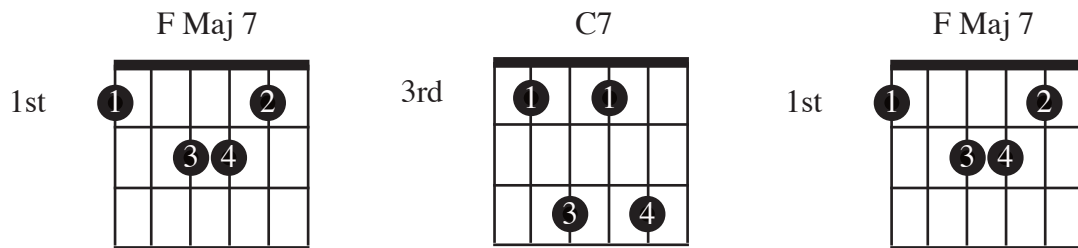
This won't always work out but when it does it is the most efficient way to get through chord progressions. In other words, moving between string sets will cut down on the amount of hand movement you have to use.

2. Pay attention to the patterns...do you move from one string set to the other and how many frets do you move? This will enable you to quickly change the progressions from one key to another.

When I refer to string sets I am talking about the 6th string root chords or 5th string root chords.

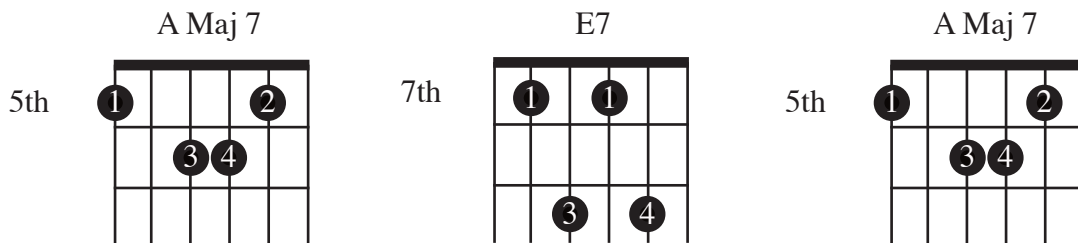
Let's work through a few common progressions.

The 1-5-1 progression starting on the 6th string.

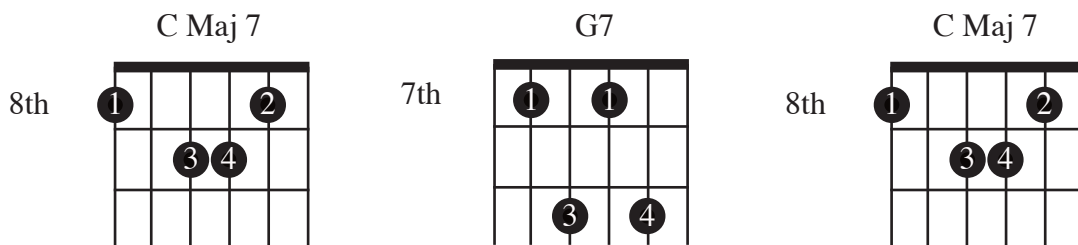


This is a 1-5-1 one progression in the key of F. (Note: If you are confused by the numbers read through the theory section, especially the lesson on the harmonized scale.) The 1-5-1 progression is probably the most often used progression in music. The 5-1 progression is definitely the most often used progression.

Now the cool thing about this is the pattern. It starts with a 6th string root chord and moves to a 5th string root chord up two frets. If I duplicate this move anywhere else on the guitar I still have a 1-5-1 progression but in a different key.

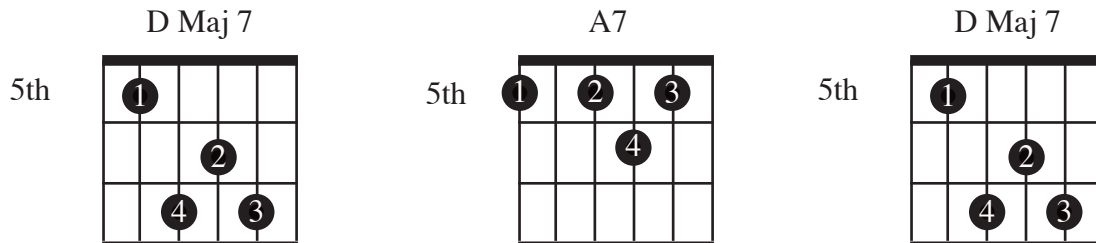


Here is the same progression in the key of A. Notice that the fret relationships are the same. It just starts on A maj7 instead of F maj7. You should now easily be able to do this in any key. Here's one more just to be sure.

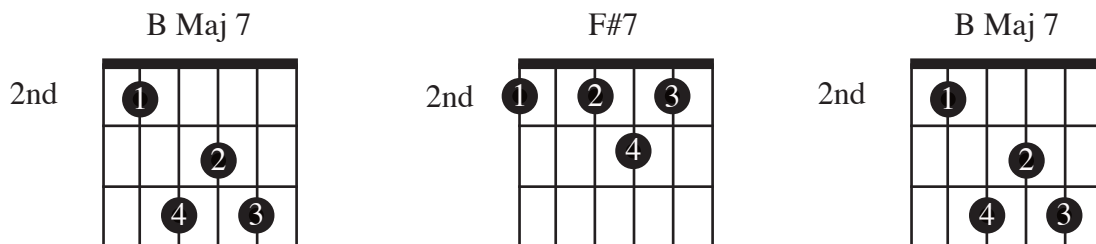


The 1-5-1 one progression in the key of C.

The 1-5-1 progression starting on the 5th string.



This is a 1-5-1 one progression in the key of D. It starts with a 5th string root chord and moves to a 6th string root chord in the same. If I duplicate this move anywhere else on the guitar I still have a 1-5-1 progression but in a different key.

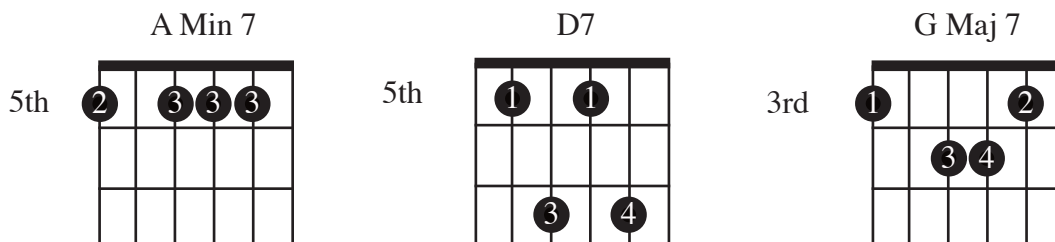


This is a 1-5-1 one progression in the key of B. Once again, notice that the moves are the same. The only thing that changes is the fret location.

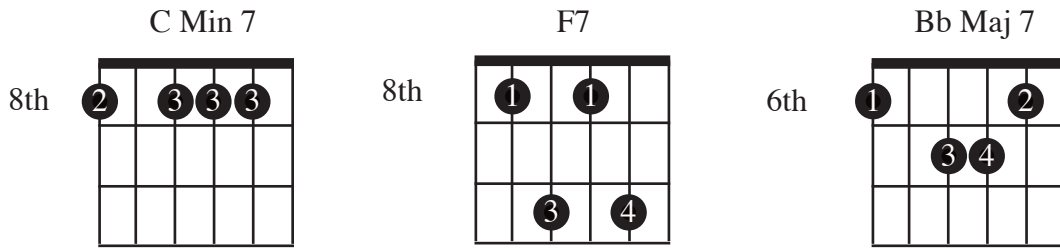
The 2-5-1 progression starting on the 6th string.

Let's move on to another common progression, the 2-5-1. This sequence of chords is the a staple in the jazz world. If you have any interest in jazz you have to know this one although it occurs in other stylay of music as well.

Take a look at the following 2-5-1 progression in the key of G.

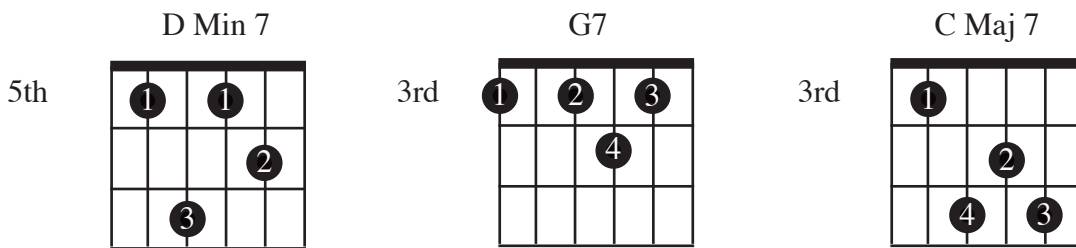


Once again notice the pattern. The chords alternate 6th string root, 5th string root, 6th string root. The 2 and 5 chords are in the same fret and the 1 chord is two frets lower. Keep that relationship to easily change to another key.



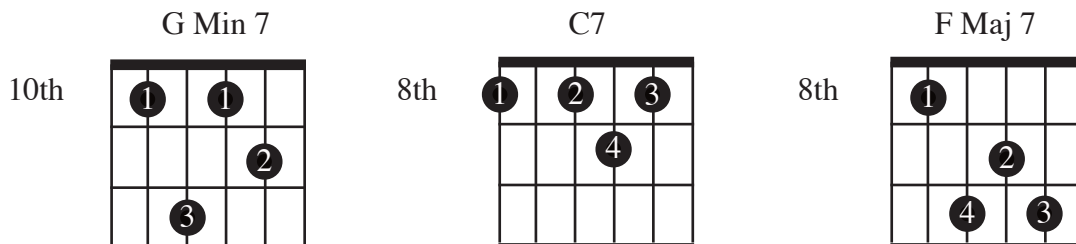
Here is a 2-5-1 in the key of Bb. Again, it's just the same as the 2-5-1 in the key of G. To move to a different key keep the same pattern and move to a different fret. Make sure to practice these in every key all over the fretboard.

The 2-5-1 progression starting on the 5th string.



Here is the 2-5-1 progression starting with the root on the 5th string. Again, notice that the roots alternate strings as will be the case with most of these progressions. This time the 5 and 1 chords are in the same fret and the 2 chord starts two frets higher on the guitar.

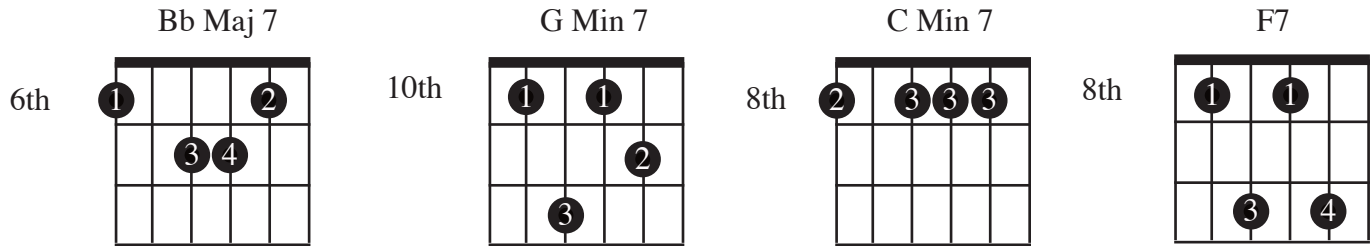
Here's the same progression in the key of F.



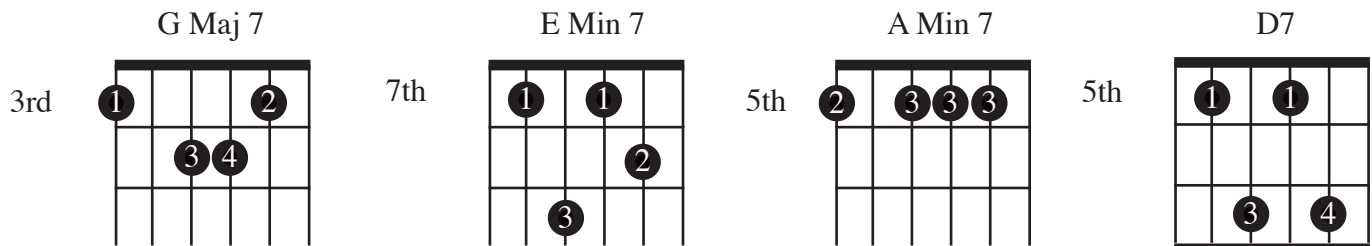
By now you should be able to see how simple this is. These moveable chord shapes can be put anywhere on the guitar. This is a big factor in keeping things simple.

Let's move onto the another common progression, the 1-6-2-5 progression. This is another common progression that you hear in lot's of music from the 50's. You also hear this progression used in jazz and in the last two measures of a song and the blues. It's also known as a turnaround.

The 1-6-2-5 progression starting on the 6th string.

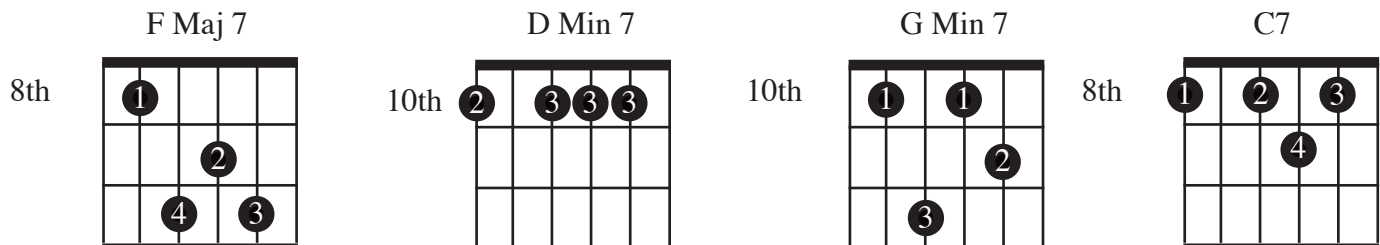


Here is the 1-6-2-5 progression in the key of Bb starting with the root on the 6th string. As with the other examples the roots alternate strings. Notice the pattern again and the fact that first move requires several frets.

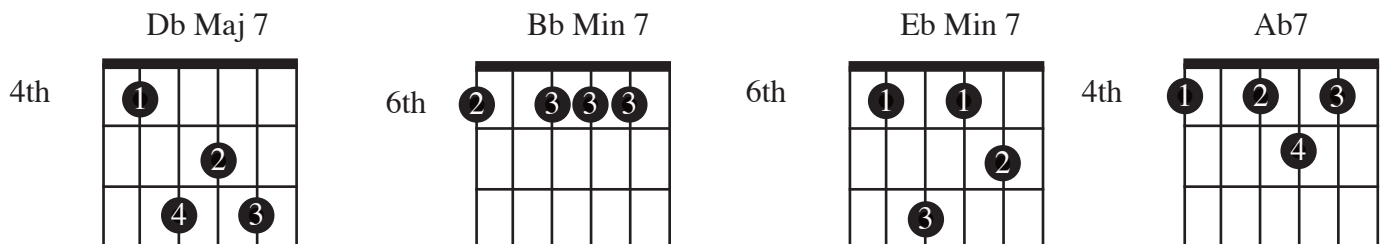


Here it is again in the key of G. By now I am sure you are starting to get the hang of this. Let's take a look at the same progression starting with the root on the 5th string.

The 1-6-2-5 progression starting on the 5th string.

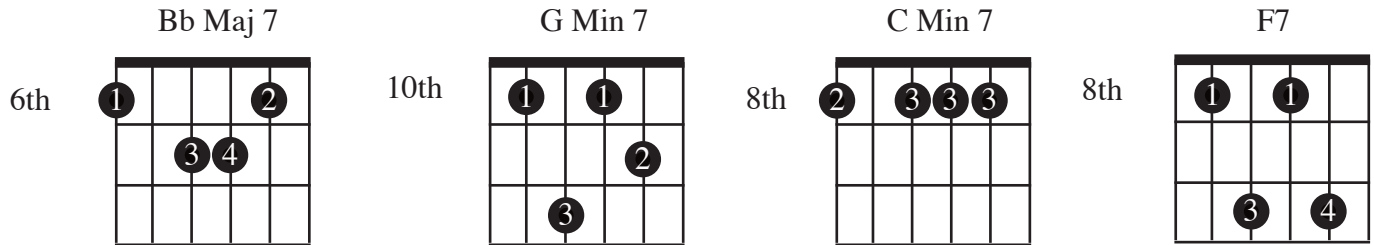


Again, the alternating roots, 5th string, 6th string etc. Here's one in a different key.

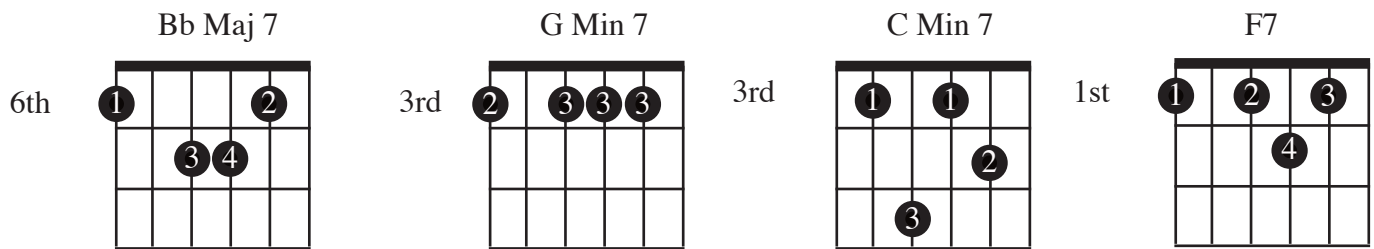


A few things to consider...

There are general guidelines that you can follow like the alternating strings/roots from the previous examples but they are only guidelines, not rules set in stone that you have to follow. Consider the following...

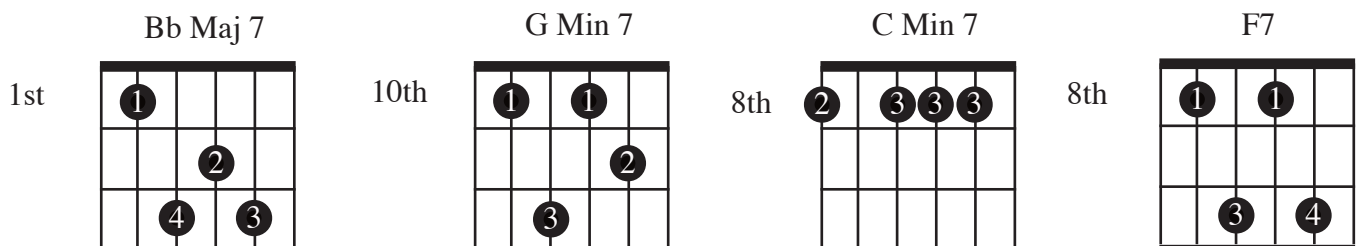


This is the 1-6-2-5 progression in Bb from a previous example. Suppose I needed to end up lower on the fretboard for some reason. I could also do this.



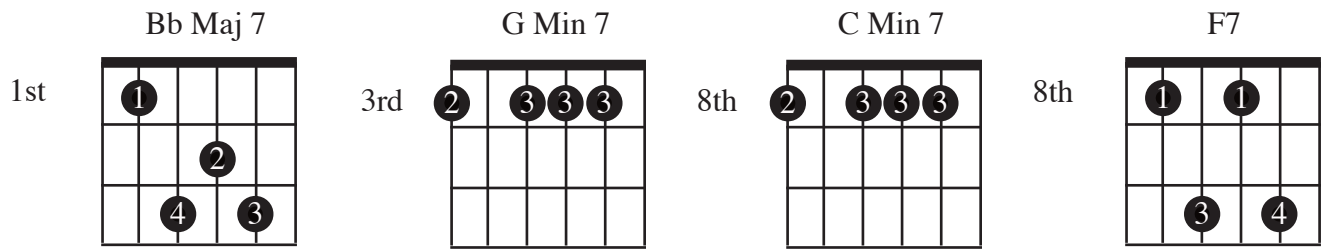
Instead of moving up to G min7 at the 10th fret, I went down to G min7 at the 3rd fret. Distance wise, there is not much of a difference between the two moves. The real difference is where I end up on the guitar.

Let's look at another example.



Now the jump from the 1 chord to the 6 chord covers a lot of ground on the guitar. Would I really want to do this? Maybe but you will probably find that big jumps like this don't sound as good or as smooth as moves that require less motion.

Something like this may be a better solution.



In this one I decided to keep the 6 chord close to the one chord and use the move between the 6 and the 2 to help me move up the guitar. This makes the jump up the guitar a shorter distance and by using the exact same chord shape, easier as well.