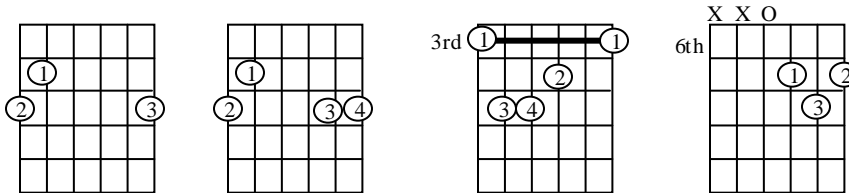


## Acoustic Guitar for Worship

### Playing acoustic guitar

For anyone who has been playing guitar a while, you know that there are many ways to play the same chord. For example, a G chord can be played:

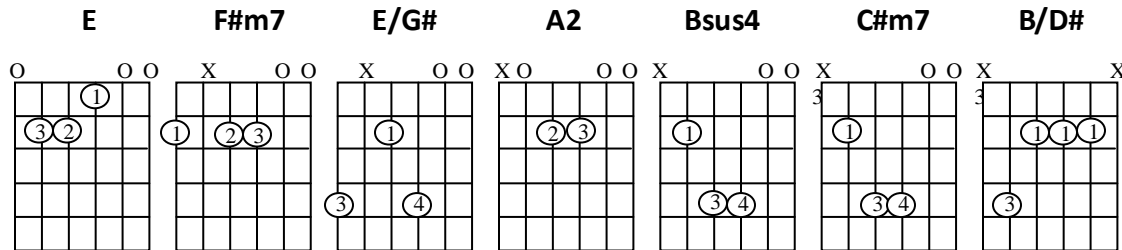


There are many more variations of the G chord, those are 4 of the most popular ones. So, when you see a “G” written on a leadsheet, which of the many styles, or voicings, of G chord should you play?

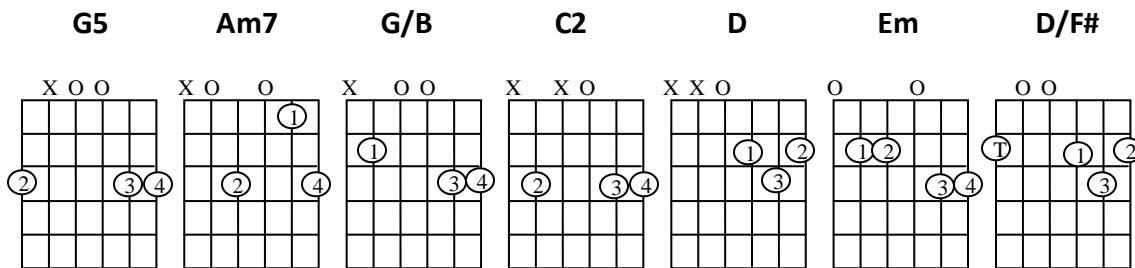
If you find yourself always choosing the same voicing, then you can very quickly become a better guitarist by learning some new voicings of the same chord. This opens up a whole new tonal spectrum for me every time I learn a new chord voicing. I then use it in every song and pretty soon get burned out on it and start looking for the next great chord voicing. But eventually you accumulate a large arsenal of voicings, and develop an ear to hear which voicing is appropriate to use in various settings.

But there is a science to it as well... acoustic guitars just plain sound better using open voicings. Electric players don't have to worry about this because they have lower action (string height) and amplifiers to make each string heard. Good acoustic players, on the other hand, tend to use the open chords to project a consistent volume and tone from their guitar. I'm not saying you can't play an acoustic like you would an electric, but I am saying it tends to sound better if you don't! Also, if you see a C chord on the chart, play a C2 or C/G. If you see an E chord, play an E2 or some form of E with lots of open strings to make it sound bigger! If you see a G chord, play a G5 instead of the traditional G with the third in it. The idea is to make the acoustic sound as big and aggressively strummable as possible so you can dig in and give the song energy.

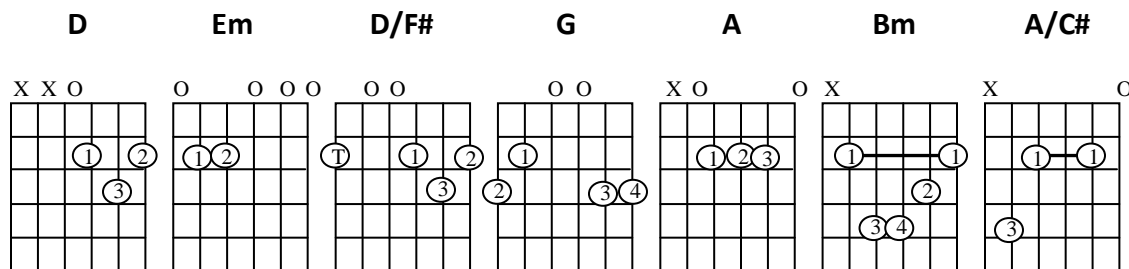
The “key” or tonal center of a song also plays into the chord voicing selection as well, as does the general style of the song you’re trying to play. If you had a modern worship song in the key of “E”, and the chart contained the typical chords of E, F#m, A, B, C#m, etc..., here is some examples of chord voicings that work well in E and use a lot of “open” strings.



Conversely, a modern worship song (or most any modern song for that matter!) with a tonal center in the key of G works great with these open voicings:



The last great key for the acoustic guitar is D... so here are the most common chords you’ll find in a song in the key of D:



You’ll notice how sometimes the same chord (A and A2, for example) is played differently depending on the tonal center. This is because in some keys it is ok to leave certain strings open (in that example, the B and E strings), but it is different for each key. I tried to give you best combination of chords for each key above. By the way, the quickest way to sound like a proficient guitar player is to pay close attention to which strings should be muted or not strummed (indicated by an X over the string).

I've given you a lot of chords... don't worry if there's a lot there you don't know. I wanted to give you a complete vocabulary of chord voicings to work on, on your own time. There are a couple fancy chords in there that I had to put in, simply because I was trying to show every chord you'd likely run across in a certain key. When you run across a "fancy" chord, you can easily substitute it for something you are more familiar with.

**B/D#:** you could just play a **Bsus**

**D/F#:** you could just play a **D**

**A/C#:** you could just play an **A**

**Lastly**, the greatest friend of the acoustic guitar is the capo. This allows you to play open chord voicings, but play in the same key as everyone else. Electric guitar players, with the lower action, are able to bar & mute strings much easier and usually don't require a capo. Acoustic guitars, though, provide that wide-open sound when using those open chord positions, and a capo becomes necessary to keep the voicing, but change the key.

If you don't believe me, try playing something in the key of F, a common key for piano-led worship music. An acoustic player can either place the capo on the 1<sup>st</sup> fret and transpose the chords to the key of E, or place the capo on the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret and transpose the chords to the key of D. Either way, it's going to sound a whole lot better than trying to bar an F chord on an acoustic guitar.

Every fret you move up with your capo, you are raising the key a half step.

Ex: if you wanted to play a song using chords from the key of "E" ...

<b>Capo on fret:</b>	(none)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>Actual key:</b>	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C

The 3 best keys for playing songs in on the acoustic guitar are **G, D, and E**. The following chart will help you know where to put your capo to play in other keys:

	<b>Guitar key↓</b>											
<b>Song key→</b>	E	F	F#/Gb	G	G#/Ab	A	A#/Bb	B	C	C#/Db	D	D#/Eb
<b>G</b>				0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>D</b>	2	3	4	5	6	7					0	1
<b>E</b>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7				

*I don't recommend capoing above the 7 fret unless you are actually trying to sound like a mandolin or a ukulele.*