

7 Ways to Play the C Major Chord on Guitar



URL: <https://www.guitarchalk.com/c-major-chord-guitar/>

QUICK HIT: Seven C major guitar chord examples all played in a different voicing with diagrams, tabs and audio samples, ideal for personal study, teaching or quick reference.

This simple lesson contains seven C major chord guitar diagrams. These particular voicings - some of the most common - are easy to play and ideal for beginners or anyone who wants a way to expand their chord vocabulary without getting into complex chord shapes.

All of these C major chords are displayed with a diagram, arpeggiated guitar tab and sound sample.

INCLUDED FOR EACH CHORD

- Full chord diagram
- Tab version (of the arpeggiated chord - one note at a time)

- [Audio sample](#)

In the table of contents section, we've listed all the chords covered here (seven total) with a click-to-jump link for easy browsing. We'll start with the most common open C major chord shape and work our way down.

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This form of the C major chord is likely one of the first chords you've learned, and is the most common voicing of the chord. It's considered an open chord because of the open G (third string) that provides the fifth interval. You'll play the chord using your third finger (ring finger) to anchor the root note at the third fret.

CHORD PROPERTIES

- Root location: **3rd fret**
- Intervals: **Major 3rd, Perfect 5th and Octave**
- Difficulty: **Moderate**

#2: Root Plus the Fifth

C MAJOR POWER CHORD

g

C DYAD
perfect fifth & third fret position

GUITAR CHALK

Dyadic C chord with only two notes. ([View Larger Image](#))

1

T
A
B

4
4

3 5

Tabbed version of the dyadic C chord. ([View Larger Image](#))

This chord shape is more properly called a "dyad" because it uses only two notes, the root and the perfect fifth. It's a commonly used power chord, regardless of the root note, though in this case it's a perfectly acceptable way to play the C chord. You could use the same shape with the root C note on the eighth fret and the sixth string.

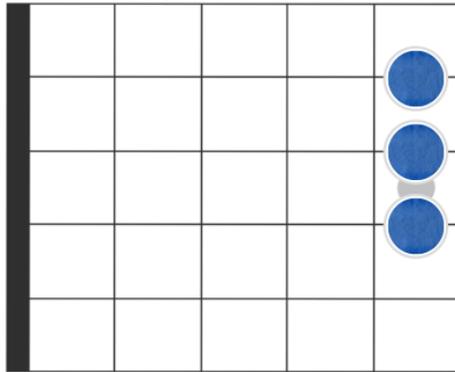
CHORD PROPERTIES

- Root location: **3rd or 8th fret**
- Intervals: **Perfect 5th**
- Difficulty: **Easy**

#3: Barred Triad

ROOT, MAJOR THIRD & PERFECT FIFTH

g



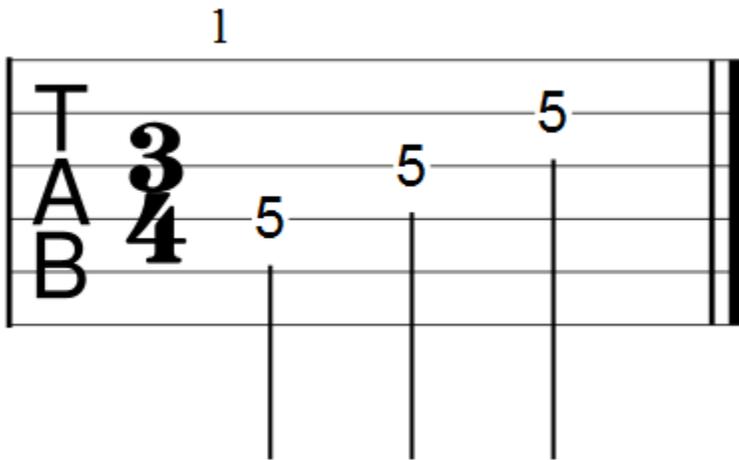
3 5

C MAJOR TRIAD

root, third and fifth,
inverted at the fifth fret
position

GUITAR CHALK

C major triad chord diagram. ([View Larger Image](#))



C major triad guitar tab. ([View Larger Image](#))

If you're unfamiliar with barre chords, this shape can be a little bit difficult to play, because barring is the most effective way to fret all three notes. It's best to use either your first or third finger to barre the chord meaning the shape doesn't require much stretching. Note that the lower-most note is a G, meaning the chord is inverted.

You can check additional resources at the bottom of this page for more info on chord inversions. It basically means that the bass note - C - is *assumed* and the chord we play has an interval as the lowest note in the chord (G in this case).

If you ignore the theory - which is fine to do for now - it's an easy C chord to learn.

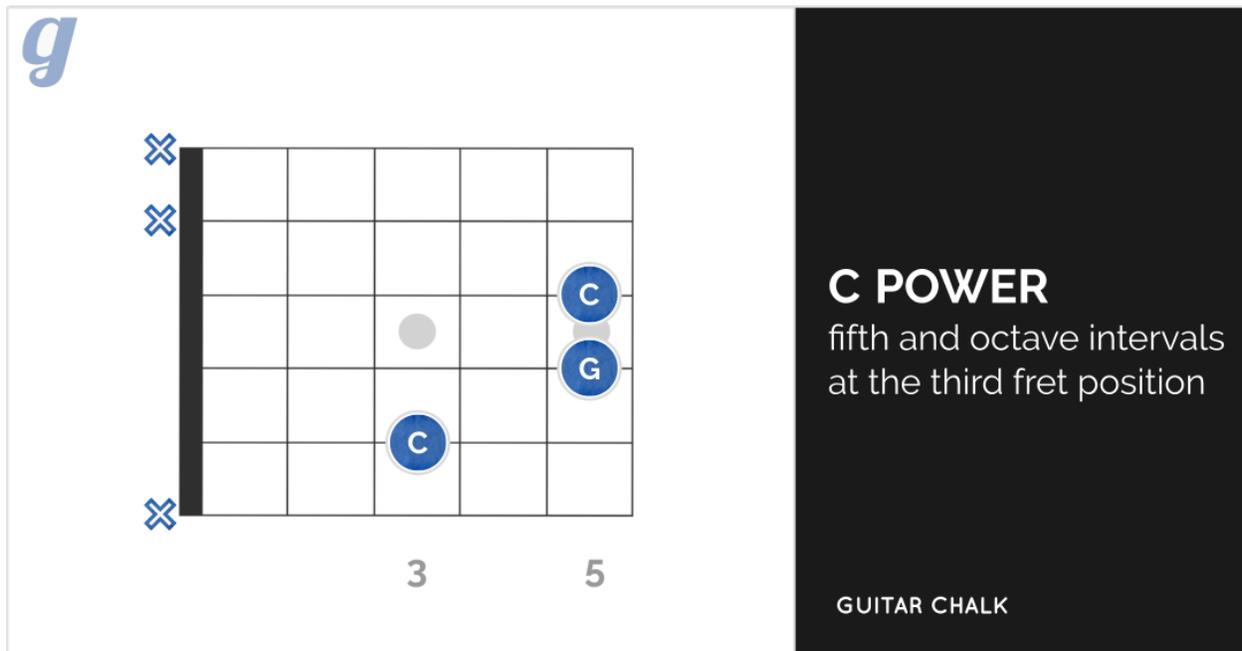
CHORD PROPERTIES

- Root location: **5th fret**
- Intervals: **Major 3rd & perfect 5th (inverted)**
- Difficulty: **Moderate**

#4: Full C Major Power Chord

ROOT, FIFTH & OCTAVE

g

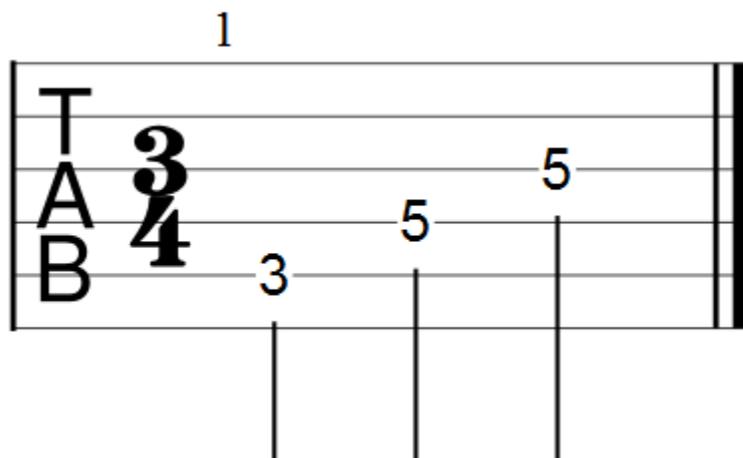


C POWER
fifth and octave intervals
at the third fret position

GUITAR CHALK

Thick C major power chord example. ([View Larger Image](#))

1



TAB
3
4
5
3

Tab example. ([View Larger Image](#))

This is another really common power chord shape, differing from our previous power chord by only one note while adding an octave above the root C. You might use this shape to thicken a power chord or give it some additional sustain. Once again, it can be applied in the key of C to either the third fret fifth string or eighth fret sixth string.

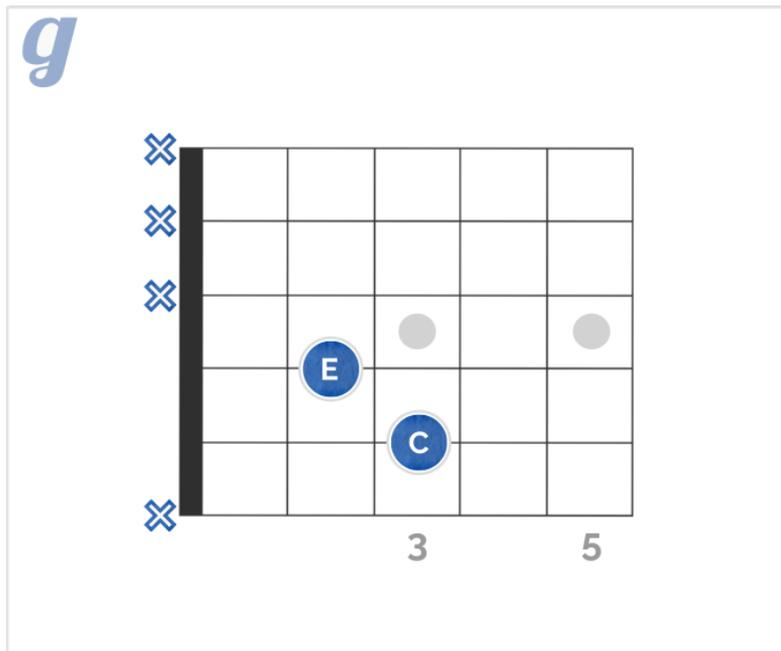
CHORD PROPERTIES

- Root location: **3rd or 8th fret**
- Intervals: **Perfect 5th & Octave**
- Difficulty: **Moderate**

#5: Root Plus Major Third

DYADIC MAJOR TONE POWER CHORD

g

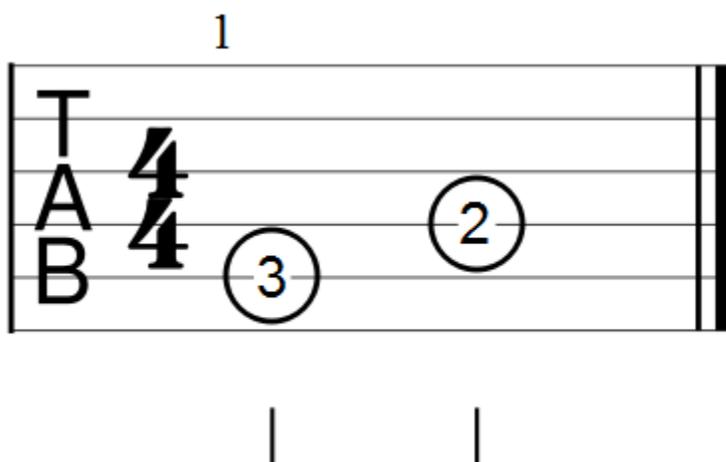


C MAJOR DYAD
major third & third fret position

GUITAR CHALK

C major dyad with root and major third. ([View Larger Image](#))

1



Tab example. ([View Larger Image](#))

Our second dyadic C chord adds a major third interval to the root note, which is easy to grab with your first finger if you use your second finger to fret the root C. Again, it's located at the third fret, but can work at the eighth as well where both locations place a C note in the chord's root.

CHORD PROPERTIES

- Root location: **3rd or 8th fret**
- Intervals: **Major 3rd**
- Difficulty: **Easy**

#6: Root Plus Octave

DYADIC C CHORD (TWO ROOTS)

g

C DYAD
octave and third fret position

GUITAR CHALK

Dyadic C with with only a root and octave. ([View Larger Image](#))

1

Tab example. ([View Larger Image](#))

Our third two-note chord is a pairing of two C notes, one on the third fret and another on the fifth. This forms a simple, two-note dyad in the key of

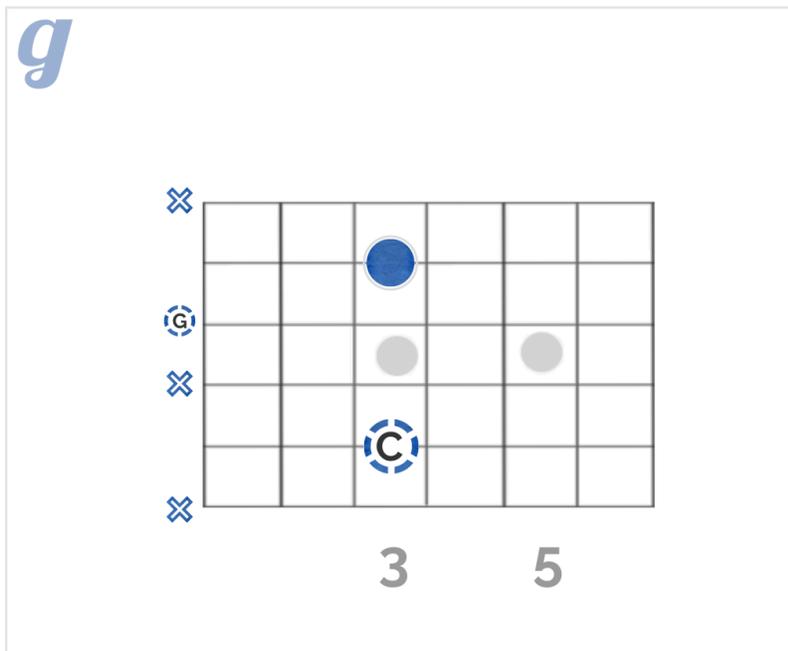
C which is movable and can also be played on the sixth string at the eighth fret.

CHORD PROPERTIES

- Root location: **3rd or 8th fret**
- Intervals: **Upper octave**
- Difficulty: **Easy**

#7: Open C Major (modded version)

POWER C CHORD WITH HIGH INTERVALS

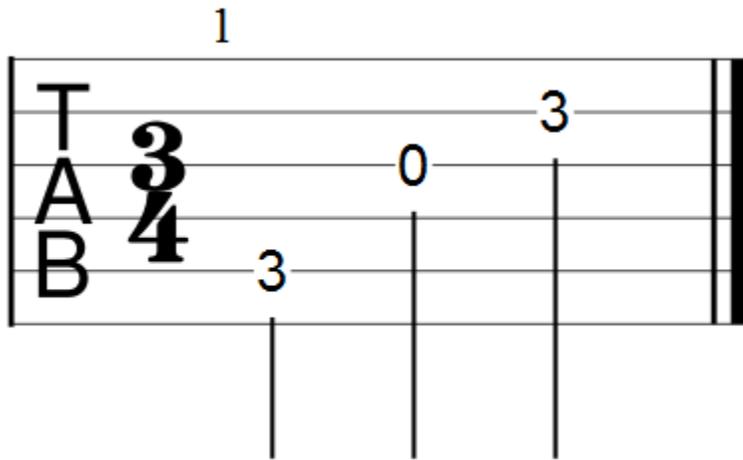


The diagram shows a guitar fretboard with six strings and five frets. The strings are labeled on the left with 'g' (top), 'C', and 'C' (bottom). The frets are labeled at the bottom with '3' and '5'. The chord is formed by pressing the 3rd fret on the 3rd string (blue circle), the 5th fret on the 4th string (grey circle), and the 3rd fret on the 5th string (blue circle). The 6th string is open (marked with 'x').

Open C (mod)
Simpler version of the open C major that can be played with only two fingers.

GUITARCHALK.com

Modded version of the open C chord with a major second. ([View Larger Image](#))



Tab example. ([View Larger Image](#))

This version of the open C major adds a major second interval (the D note at the second string on the third fret) and is considerably easier to play than the original open C major. You can use your middle finger to grab the root note while your ring finger will play the high D note. Your G will ring as the open third string.

CHORD PROPERTIES

- Root location: **3rd fret (open chord)**
- Intervals: **Perfect 5th, major 2nd**
- Difficulty: **Easy**

Conclusion

These chord shapes are some of the simplest and most intuitive ways to play C major on the guitar. They're by no means a comprehensive look at the C chord, but they do give you a lot of variety aside from the common open voicing. That form of the C chord is taught a lot and is often the first stop that teachers or students will make to learn the chord.

As such, if you're looking for some variety for the C chord or if you're a teacher and you want to give your students better examples to follow, these resources are a great option for you.

Sometimes using simpler chord shapes and working your way up to the more complex voicings is a better way to learn and to teach guitar chords. Start with the root note and add intervals as you go. Here's what we've covered in this lesson:

- Root (C)
- Major third (E)
- Perfect fifth (G)
- Octave (C)
- Major second (D)

If you need help with guitar notes or the concept of triads, here are some additional resources you might find helpful:

- [Knowing the Four Triad Qualities \(and their inversions\)](#)
- [Guitar Notes for Beginners](#)

YOUR QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

If you have questions about this material or even the supplemental material provided, feel free to ask them in the comments section below. We prefer that over an email, just because comments will stay on the page and have the potential to benefit future readers who might have similar questions.