

# The CAGED System Explained

## LGIL Premium Intermediate Acoustic

*\*Please watch the video on the lesson page for more detail about this system\**

### Overview...

In simple terms the CAGED system uses the common open chords of C, A, G, E and D. I'm sure you know these chords already!

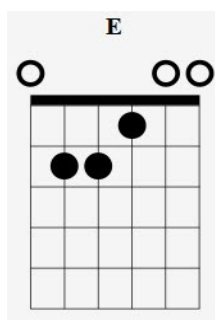
We take these common chords (or chord shapes if you prefer) and we transpose them to other keys.

We do this by moving them up the neck and using a barre finger if necessary.

This is the music theory basis of barre chords.

A knowledge of the note names on the E, A and D strings will be very useful for the next steps.

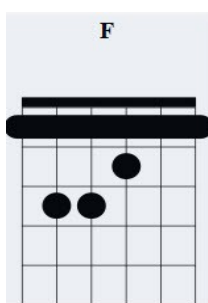
Let's start by taking our **E major chord**...



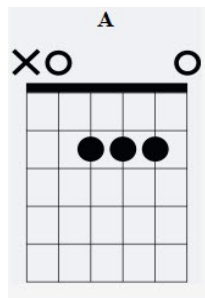
If we move this chord shape up by one fret and then place a capo behind it we get the chord of F. As a half tone movement (one fret) up the neck means one movement up the musical alphabet. Here's the musical alphabet for reference:

**A – A# - B – C – C# - D – D#- E – F – F# - G – G#**

If we place a barre finger on the first fret (which acts like a capo) and move the chord the E chord up one fret we get the F chord.

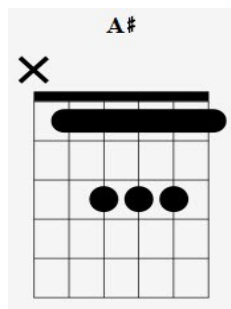


We can do the same process for the **A Major chord...**



Notice how the A chord sits into the second fret. So when we place the capo/barre finger down there has to be a gap at fret 2 before we make the chord.

Moving this chord up by one fret and placing a barre finger/capo down makes the chord of **A# major**.



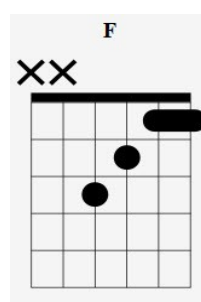
The same process can be applied to all other chords in the CAGED system.

### **Common Chords We Use:**

The most common open chords that are used in the CAGED system are E, A, D and sometime C. We don't often use the G chord.

Of course, some of these chords are a stretch when using the barre finger as well. But we can make some of these chords as partial and not the full chord.

For example here's the F chord with just the bottom 4 strings being played:

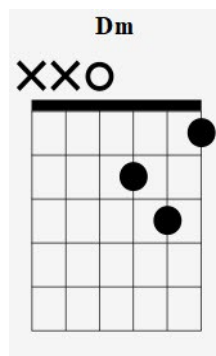


If you move this chord up and down the neck and just play the bottom 4 strings you'll get different major chords.

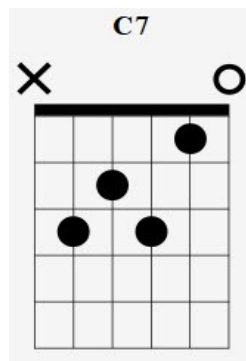
**Two of my favourite chord shapes using CAGED:**

We can not only play major chords using this system but any open chord shape from the 5 families we learnt about in our 5 Families 12 Bar Blues Workshop.

Try moving these shapes around the neck:



For a higher sounding minor chord move the D minor around and only play the bottom 3 strings:



The C7 chord can be moved around the neck as well to get interesting seven chords without sitting in open position. Just remember to only strum or pick the middle 4 strings.

Experiment with moving the CAGED chords around the neck.

And the next time you see a common chord progression with predictable open chords perhaps chuck in a CAGED chord to add variety to your songs.