

How to Use a Capo

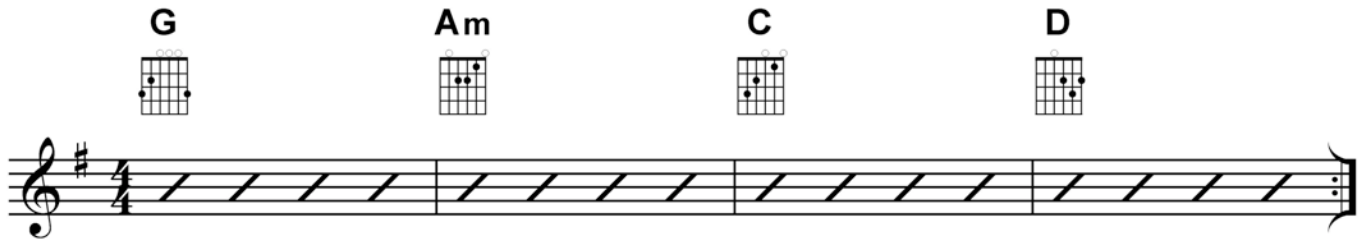
FOUNDATION LESSONS

beginner

Using a capo is a basic skill that every guitarist needs to know. Capos allow you to play in a variety of keys while using familiar chord shapes. Capos also work well when trying to find a good key to sing a particular song in by transposing songs up or down. This lesson discusses how to use a capo and the different types of capos.

A capo is a clamp that is placed on the fretboard that raises the pitch of the strings played.

Here is the chord progression illustrated in the video in the key of G using open chords without a capo.



If a capo is put at the third fret with these chord shapes being played three frets higher than originally then this progression will sound in the key of Bb as if the chords were Bb-Cm-Eb-F even though the original chord shapes were used.

If a capo is put at the seventh fret and these chords are played seven frets higher than originally then this progression will sound in the key of D as if the chords were D-Em-G-A.

Tips When Using a Capo

Position Capo Directly Behind the Fret.

When putting a capo on the neck, position it directly behind the desired fret. Don't put it directly on the fret as this will get a muted sound. Also, avoid putting the capo too close to the far fret behind the desired fret as this will not allow the strings good contact and the strings will buzz.

Position the Capo on the Neck Straight, Not Angled.

Be careful to position the capo straight up and down on the neck in order to make good contact with the strings. If the capo is angled some strings may buzz while others may be pulled out of tune.

Capos Work Best Up to the Ninth Fret.

Capos function best at the ninth fret or lower. When used above the ninth fret there is not much room for your hand to fit on the neck.

Capo Math

When using a capo to put a song into a different key, the player needs to calculate the distance between the original key and the new key in order to know where to place the capo.

Capos work off of the distance between notes in half-steps. A half-step is one fret's worth on the guitar.

Where Do I Put the Capo?

- Find where you are.
- Find where you are going.
- Count the half-steps between where you are and where you are going.
- Put the capo on the fret of the number of half steps between the two notes.

For example, if the original song is in G with a chord progression of G-Em-Am-D and it needs to be transposed to the key of A. Then, where you are is G and where you are going is A. There are two half steps between a G and an A so the capo should be placed at the second fret.

Another example using 5th string chords would be a progression in A using the open chords A-D-Esus-E that needs to be transposed to the key of C. The distance from A to C is three half steps so the capo should be placed at the third fret.

A final example uses a chord progression in D with the chords D2-G2-Em-Asus that needs to be transposed to the key of Ab. The distance from D to Ab is six half steps so the capo should be placed at the sixth fret.

Types of Capos

There are several types of capos commonly used. Here are some that I use on a regular basis shown that are shown in the video.

Kyser Clamp Capo



G7 Ratchet Capo



Greg Bennett Glider Capo



There are many other brands and types of capos available as well. Capos also come in different sizes depending on the width of the neck of your guitar. Others types have notches out of the bar that allow certain strings to ring open and not be affected by the capo.

For more ideas and instruction check out the award winning Gibson's Learn & Master Guitar course at www.LearnAndMaster.com and the lessons section at www.gibson.com for all the help you need to become the player you want to be!

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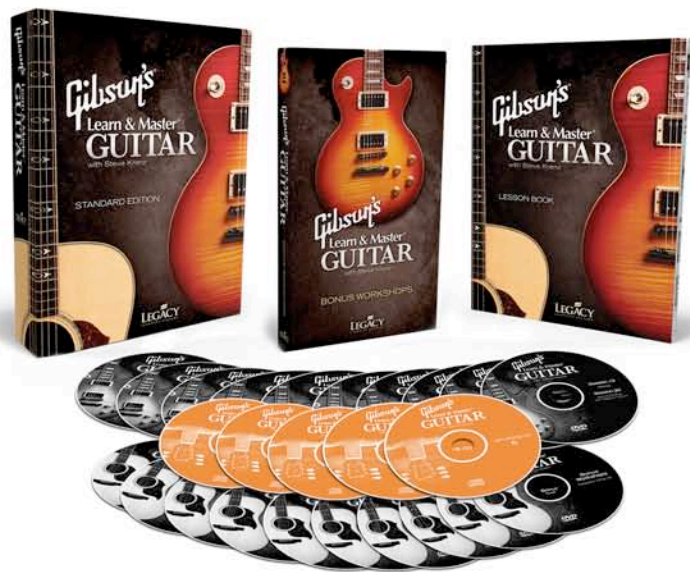
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