

THE KEY IS FREE-INSTRUCIONS

Dear fellow guitar players,

What you will find in this small essay is the most basic and straight forward presentation of the information from my teaching method, "Quick Star Guitar, Symbols, Shapes and Patterns". All of the material presented here is in that book and or the accompanying DVD. All of the copyrights are secured by the original registrations (©Floyd Lovins 1996, 2003.) You can print this, make copies for your friends and spread it to the four corners of the world completely free of charge. My only request is that you include this page with it so I receive the credit for developing this system.

The original idea for the Key was to make a set of wooden discs to show the relationship of the guitar to musical theory. That idea was abandoned due to the expense of the discs and the time involved in cutting, printing and assembling them. The obvious solution was to create a printable version of the Key so the consumer could print, cut out and assemble their own copy. That was until Wes Newberry, a long time friend and fellow musician, suggested an animated version could be placed on this web site. (a printable version is also still available)

I hope this look at the guitar and how it reflects the structure of music will be helpful to you. I know that developing it over the last twenty-five (or so) years has helped me understand the instrument, the theory hidden in it's very construction, and added an aura of awe and respect for the unknown musicians that developed the design of this instrument we all love so much.

Be Safe,

---Floyd Lovins

***Special Thanks to: Kirby Stephens, Bill Cox, Doug Collins, Joe Morgan, Philip Hash, Ilse House, David Goff, Crystal Cox and Wes Newberry for their help in making this all become a reality.

The Quick Star Key is made of three parts. The outer ring is called “The Clock” and can be moved with your mouse. There are two Stars: “The 7- Star” and “The 5- Star.” You can click to shift between these stars. When you shift between them they always revert to their original positions.

USING THE QUICK STAR KEY – THE CLOCK

The musical system is based on only twelve note names. This works like a clock. A clock only has twelve numbers on it. Regardless of the day, week, month or year we have to use those twelve numbers to name the hour. Musical notes work the same way. Regardless of how high or low the pitch of a note, it must be named one of the twelve original note names. The outside ring of the Quick Star Key is the twelve musical note names arranged in the physical form of a clock.

To learn to use the clock takes just a few minutes. Seven of the twelve note names are the first seven letters of the alphabet: A, B, C, D, E, F and G. These seven notes are referred to as the “natural” notes. The other five notes are referred to as the “accidental” notes. The accidental notes have two-part names. They are: A # / B ♭, C # / D ♭, D # / E ♭, F # / G ♭ and G # / A ♭. The symbol # is pronounced “sharp” and indicates that the note is higher in pitch than the letter it accompanies. The symbol ♭ is pronounced “flat” and indicates a note lower in pitch than the letter it accompanies. It is only necessary to say one or the other when naming the accidental notes, but is important to recognize that they both refer to the same note. (Example: A # describes a note higher than A, and B ♭ describes a note lower than B, both are names for the same note.) Guitar players usually call all of the accidental notes “sharps” because of the keys we commonly play in, horn players and piano call them “flats” for the same reason. (More on this later.) ALL notes on ALL musical instruments are named from this system.

Being able to name the notes on your instrument sets up the possibility of communication with other musicians. The “Clock” is the single most important aspect of understanding musical structure and theory.

Here is the complete clock as a guitar player would think of it: A, A #, B, C, C #, D, D #, E, F, F #, G, G #, and back to A. The easiest way I have found to memorize this is to notice that there is no B # (between B and C) and there is no E # (between E and F.) If you remember these two places the rest is a matter of saying the other letters of the alphabet twice, once as a single letter and once with “sharp.” A quick memory tool is to remember the two letters that don’t have sharps spell the word “BE”....You can “be” a guitar player but you can’t “B #” or “E #” and do it.

If you are a piano player you would think of the clock like this: A, B ♭, B, C, D ♭, D, E ♭, E, F, G ♭, G, A ♭ and back to A. Notice there is no “C ♭” or “F ♭.”

Here is how you apply the clock to the guitar. Each of the six strings on your guitar is named one of the twelve note names. From your sixth string (biggest in diameter/ lowest sound) to the first string (smallest in diameter/highest sound), the names of the open string are: E, A, D, G, B, and E.

The open string name gives you a place to start on the clock. As you play fretted notes up the string, each fret is equal to one click on the clock moving in a clockwise direction. The open sixth string (E) is a good one to start with. Play it open and it is an E, play the note on the first fret and it becomes an F, play the note on the second fret and it becomes F #, the third fret is a G, the fourth fret is a G #, the fifth fret is A....and so on. At the twelfth fret you come back to E. This E is one octave higher and completes one cycle on the clock. Most guitars have a special inlay at the twelfth fret indicating that you have completed one cycle and you're beginning the second cycle. Having two dots is common. At the thirteenth fret you have another F, at the fourteenth fret you have another F # and at the fifteenth fret is another G, and so on until you run out of frets. (You could also start at the twelfth fret and play each note down the fretboard counting one click on the clock moving in a counter-clockwise direction.)

The other strings work the same way. Locate the open string name on the clock and fret-by-fret the clock will name the notes on that string. At the twelfth fret, you will be back to the open string name, only one octave higher.

Here is how you apply the clock to a piano or keyboard: The white keys are the natural notes (A, B, C, D, E, F and G) and the black keys are the accidental notes (A # / B b , C # / D b , D# / E b , F # / G b and G # / A b) To name all of the notes on the entire keyboard, you have to locate the two places where white keys are touching without a black key between them. One place will be the note names B and C, the other place will be the note names E and F. To the right of the C note will be two black keys. Once you are sure which place is which, the clock will enable you to name all of the notes up and down the keyboard. As you play each key (black ones and white ones) up the keyboard, the note names move clockwise around the clock. As you play each key (black ones and white ones) down the keyboard, the note names move counter-clockwise around the clock.

Other instruments work like guitar and keyboard do. On string instruments like banjo, bass guitar and mandolin, it is easier to see how the clock works. They all have frets that move one click at a time around the clock. You just have to know the open string name to get started. Instruments like trumpets, trombones and saxophones have the same note names, but you have to know the various fingerings involved to name the notes in the order they appear on the clock.

The first way to use the Quick Star Key is simply to name the notes on your instrument with the clock. But there's more...much more!

USING THE QUICK STAR KEY – THE 7-STAR PART ONE – NOTES IN A KEY

While the development of a twelve-note system based on the mathematical relationships of a string was a big step in the organization of music, it is the naming of the notes that is the true genius of this system. The fact that there are two types of note names implies that there are two different relationships here. The natural notes are one set (containing seven notes) and the accidental notes are another set (containing five notes.) If the point was just to name the twelve notes as a single idea, they would have been named “A” through “L.” This is where the two stars come into play. In its default position the points of the 7-Star line up with the natural notes. The 5-Star lines up with the accidental notes in its default position.

Let’s look at the 7-Star first.

When you play the seven natural notes (A, B, C, D, E, F and G) you are playing a set of notes that have an internal relationship called a “Key.” (the seven note key is called a “diatonic” key, a five note key is called “pentatonic” key...more on this later.)

If a song is in a key, then all of the notes that are used to play it are limited to the set of notes indicated by the points of the 7-Star. This includes all octaves. The “key” locks all the musicians together, ensuring they use the same set of seven notes. When musicians play together, the first and most important decision is: *What “key?”* This is true for everyone from rock bands to orchestras.

There are two primary ways to use the seven natural notes. One way is called the key of C Major. The other way is called the key of A Minor.

The difference between the two ways to use the same seven notes has to do with taste, preference, and correct application. The key of C Major gives the note C the position of resolve. This means a melody played with the seven natural notes (used as the key of C Major), would finally come to rest on the C note. The melody would then sound finished or complete. Stopping on any other notes would sound unfinished or incomplete. The melody would be left hanging, waiting for the C note to come.

The key of A Minor gives the note A the position of resolve. This means a melody played with the seven natural notes (used as the key of A Minor), would finally come to rest on the A note. The melody would then sound finished or complete. Stopping on any other notes would sound unfinished or incomplete. The melody would be left hanging, waiting for the A note to come.

This point is hard for many people to understand. How can the same notes be used two ways? An analogy might help. A hammer can also be used two ways. It can drive a nail, or it can pull a nail. The job at hand dictates how the tool will be used. In music, the seven natural notes have these two primary uses....the song or melody will dictate which way to use the notes. A song is

either Major or Minor....it cannot be both. It cannot be changed from one to the other and still be the same song.

Until about the 10th Century, the most commonly used key relationship was based on the Greek system and gave the A note the position of resolve. This is a point where taste and preference came into the musical system. The Romans used melodies based on the same system of seven notes the Greeks used, but they gave the note C the position of resolve. Since the Roman Church was responsible for most of the early written information about music, their choice of giving the C note the position of resolve has been the way music has been structured for over a thousand years. We cannot change that! We must simply accept it and learn to use it. The Key of A Minor is used just as much as the Key of C Major. It is in no way less than equal, although the name "Minor" might cause you to think so.

There is a system of numbering the notes in a key that uses Roman Numerals to show the C note as being the primary resolve note. C is "I", D is "ii", E is "iii" and so on....A is "vi" and B is "vii." This is the numbering of the 7-Star in its default position. The note "C" on the clock lines up with the numeral "I" on the 7-Star. This is a way of showing the spacing of the notes that make up a key. When the natural notes are sung or played starting with C and continuing the next C, it makes one of the most recognizable sounds of music: The C Major scale. (Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti, Do.)

In the modern western world, virtually all music is based around this seven-note system. When we name a key, we use a one-letter name that tells us which note has the position of being the resolve note. To be absolutely correct, the name should have a second part: Major or Minor. This tells us the way the notes in the key relate to each other.

This is a generalized system. Probably 90% of the songs that are written or played will hold exactly to this system. But there are exceptions. The inclusion of any note that is not a natural note is what gives the five remaining notes their name: accidental. As we move into the 21st Century, the occurrence of songs using the accidental notes is becoming more popular, especially in "heavier" styles. Nonetheless, most all songs are based (however loosely) on this system.

The 7-Star allows us to see the relationship of the seven notes in any key. The clock will move (use your mouse to drag the clock around) to line up any of the twelve notes with the point of the 7-Star numbered "I". This will show you the notes in any Major key. Since there are twelve notes and any one of them can be designated as the "I," there are only twelve possible keys or sets of seven notes. Just like the first set of seven notes has two uses (Major and Minor) the remaining eleven sets do also. The point of the 7-Star numbered "vi" indicates the Minor key. Major and Minor keys are always in pairs: C Major is always the same seven notes as A Minor, D Major is always the same seven notes as B Minor, G Major is always the same seven notes as E Minor, and so on. They are called "relative" keys.

USING THE QUICK STAR KEY-PART TWO-NOTES IN A CHORD/CHORDS IN A KEY

A chord is three or more notes of a key played at the same time. The 7-Star can show you the notes in any chord and the chords in any key.

The easiest way to think about which notes make a chord is to think in terms of play-a-note, skip-a-note, play-a-note, skip-a-note, play-a-note on the 7-Star. This will give you three notes. Drag the clock around until any note you want to build a Major chord from lines up with the point of the 7-Star numbered “I” then play “I”, “iii”, “V” (skipping “ii” and “IV”) To make any Minor chord place the note you want to build from on the point of the 7-Star numbered “vi” then play “vi”, “I”, “iii” (skipping “vi” and “ii”) The note you start with names the chord. This will work for any Major or Minor chord regardless of the key you are in.

When we play chords in a specific key some chords are Major and some chords are Minor. Notice the case of the Roman Numerals on the 7-Star. The “I”, “IV”, and “V” are upper case (capitals) and the “ii”, “iii”, “vi” and “vii” are lower case. The upper case numbers are the notes we build Major chords on and the lower case numbers are the notes we build Minor chords on. In any key you will have three Major chords and three Minor chords. These are the “I”, “IV”, “V” for Major and “ii”, “iii”, “vi” for Minor. The chord build on “vii” is generally grouped with the Minor chords but is in reality a Diminished chord. This is true of all keys, Major or Minor.

To see how to use the 7-Star to list the chords in a specific key and the notes in those chords, an example might be helpful. Let’s look at the key of A Major. Spin the clock around until the point of the 7-Star numbered “I” lines up with the note A. “IV” will the line up the note D and “V” will line up with E. Therefore A, D and E are the Major chords in the key of a Major. The point numbered “ii” will line up with B, the point numbered “iii” will line up with C #, and the point numbered “vi” will line up with F #. Therefore the Minor chords in the key of A Major are B, C # and F #. The point numbered “vii” will line up with the note G #; this is the Diminished chord in the key of A Major.

To list the notes in each of the chords you simply start with the note you want to build a chord on and follow the play-a-note, skip-a-note sequence explained earlier until you have three notes.

If you were to continue the play-a-note, skip-a-note sequence until you had four notes you would be building the 7th chords. When we think of 7th cords in a specific key, they come in four varieties: Major 7th (starting on the “I” or “IV”), the Minor 7th (starting on the “ii”, “iii” or “vi”), the Dominant 7th (built on the “V”) and the Diminished 7th (built on the ‘vii’). Note: the Diminished chord requires that the fourth note be flatted or played one click on the clock lower than the point of the 7-Star suggests.

When musicians say something like, “Play a G7 chord,” they generally mean a Dominant 7th chord. If they wanted you to play any of the other 7th chords they would include one of the qualifying names...Major 7th, Minor 7th or Diminished 7th.

USING THE QUICK STAR KEY – THE 7-STAR - PART THREE - THE MODES

Modes are ways to use the seven notes in a key in ways other than the Major/Minor usage we have discussed so far. As we have seen, the seven natural notes can be used to express the key of C Major or the key of A Minor. They can also be used to express all of the modes. There are seven modes: Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian and Locrian. This is an advanced idea. If you don't have a firm grasp on Major/Minor you won't be able to understand the modes and how to use them.

The easiest way to understand modes is to think of each of them as a scale built on one of the seven natural notes, and its corresponding Roman numeral. In Fact we have already been talking about two of the modes. The Major key is the same as the Ionian mode and the Minor key is the same as the Aeolian mode. The other modes work the same way, they just resolve to a different note in the set of seven numbered notes. Here's a list:

Ionian	C	("I")
Aeolian	A	("vi")
Mixolydian	G	("V")
Phrygian	E	("iii")
Dorian	D	("ii")
Lydian	F	("IV")
Locrian	B	("vii")

To list the notes in any mode you simply spin the clock around until the appropriate point of the 7-Star lines up with the note you want to build a mode on. For example: To find the notes of the A Dorian mode you would line up the A note with the point of the 7-Star numbered "ii." The points of the star show you the other notes in this mode. They are: A, B, C, D, E, F # and G. To find the notes of the A Mixolydian mode you would line up the point "V" with the A note. The notes in this mode are: A, B, C #, D, E, F # and G.

USING THE QUICK STAR KEY – THE 5-STAR

It is the 5-Star that shows us the hidden musical structure built into the guitar.

In its default position the 5-Star lines up with the five accidental notes. The relationship between these notes functions just like the notes of the 7-Star. It is a key. You will notice that the position of the “I” is at 10:00 and the “vi” is at 7:00. If you spin the clock around until the note C lines up with the point numbered “I” you will see that the note A lines up with the point numbered “vi” just like it did on the 7-Star. In truth it is just a simplified version of the seven note key.

The fact that the notes of the 5-Star can function as a key by themselves and are five of the seven notes of the Diatonic key immediately suggest that they are more useful and more “powerful.” Easy melodies are often Pentatonic. The Blues is primarily Pentatonic. Such memorable songs as Amazing Grace are Pentatonic. And the secret to the guitar lies in this pentatonic relationship.

To see how the guitar was designed to this relationship spin the clock until the note A lines up with the point numbered “ii”. Now if you follow the string names of the guitar from low to high you can see how they “draw a star.” (see fig. The Tuning Star) The fact that the names of the guitar strings draw this star so exactly with an E string to start on and end on, proves beyond any doubt that the guitar was designed with this system in mind.

If you spin the clock around until D lines up with the point numbered “ii” you have the names of the five basic chord shapes on the guitar as well as the Pentatonic C Major/A Minor key. It also corresponds to the five most commonly used Major keys and the practical modes we can play. (see fig. The Chord Star)

When these chord shapes are played as barre chords they open up the possibility of playing any of the twelve possible chord names in any of the five shapes. This is the “KEY” to playing all of the chords on the guitar. When you play a chord of a given name, for example G, you start with the G shape and move counter-clockwise around the Chord Star to find the next shape a G chord could be played in. That would be an E shape. The next shape would be a D shape and so on through the five shapes.

When you buy a chord encyclopedia you are merely getting all of the possibilities of the five basic shapes. The twelve possible names of chords (A, A #, B, C, C # ...and so on) times the five shapes would give you sixty chords. When you start making variations like Minor, Minor 7th, Major 7th, and things like that, each variation will give you sixty more chords. That’s how an encyclopedia can boast of having thousands of chords for the guitar. I have never seen one of these encyclopedias organized in a way that you can see the five chord shapes and understand how to use them. If you take these basic shapes and learn the common variations you can create your own chord encyclopedia and truly understand how all chords are made.

The final relationship we want to look at places the note G at the “ii” position. This shows us the relationship the scale patterns have to each other and what original keys they occur in. (see fig. The Scale Star)

At the top of the Scale Star is the 2e pattern. The note it corresponds to is G. The lowest pattern you can use to play the G Major scale, without using any open strings, is the 2e pattern. The other patterns are located the same way: they are the lowest position you can play a scale, in a given key, without using any open strings. The 4e pattern occurs in the key of A Major, the 4a occurs on the key of D Major and on through the other patterns.

You can play all of the patterns in any key. The black notes on the figure are the locator notes (root notes) of the Major key. G Major is a good key for an example. As we have seen the lowest pattern you could play a G Major scale in is the 2e pattern. The next pattern (moving up the guitar neck) would be the 1e. The next is the 4a right through all five patterns. At the twelfth fret the cycle of patterns start over.

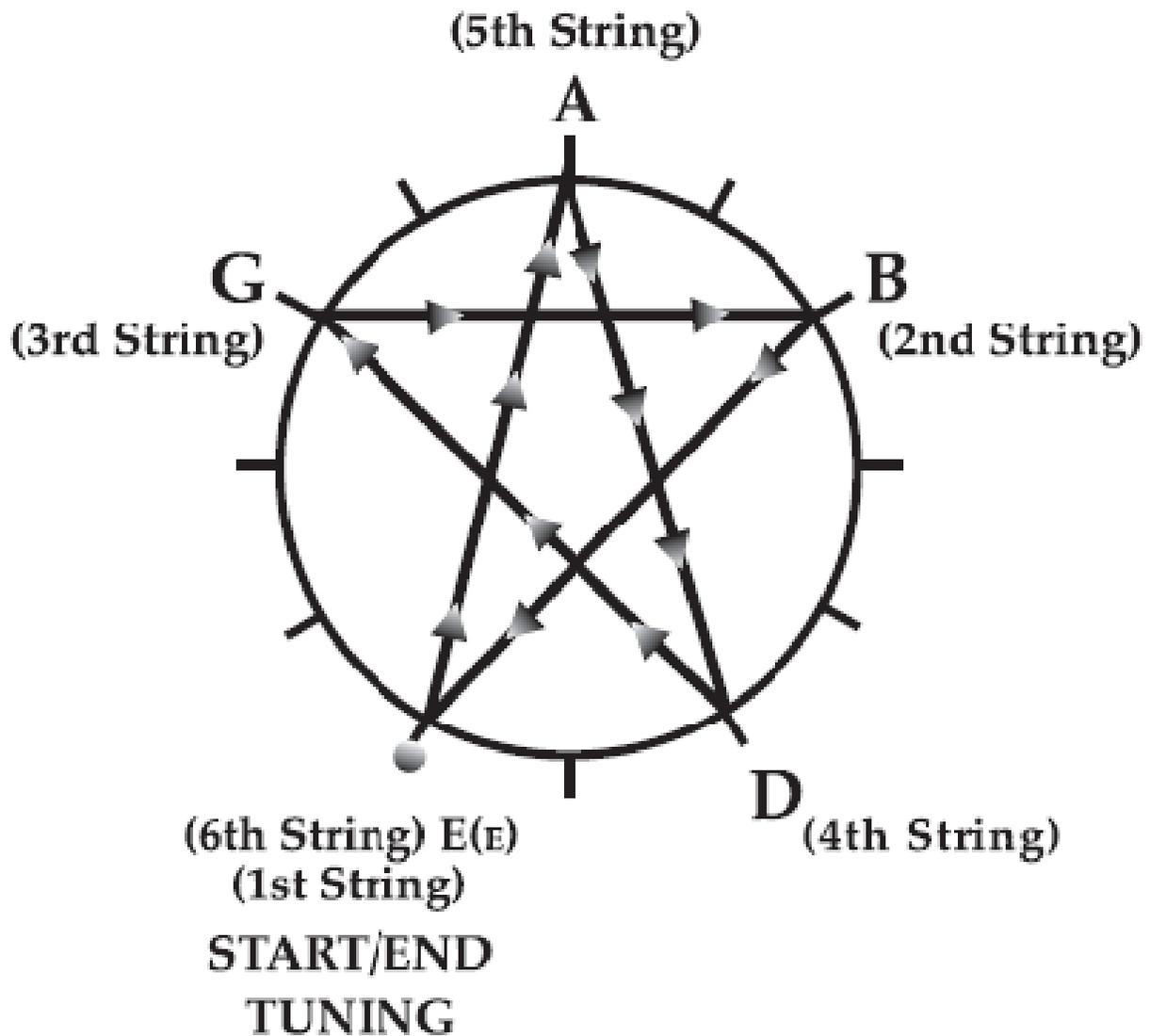
By listing all five patterns in all twelve possible Major keys you would get sixty “scales.” By playing the patterns as Minor keys you would get sixty more (remember that C Major is equal to A Minor) Applied as modes, each mode would multiply the “scales” by a factor of six. I believe you can see how those books that boast of showing you hundreds of “scales” are created. Save your money! Learn these five patterns and how to apply them and you will truly begin to understand the guitar.

If you know how to use the three 5-Stars (the Tuning Star, the Chord Star and the Scale Star) you know all there is about the design of the guitar and how it reflects the structure of all music.

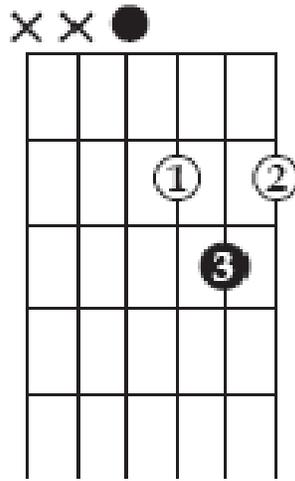
The Quick Star Key is an organizational tool more than anything else. It gives us a way to think about musical structure in the simplest of terms. It also shows us that the guitar was designed to contain and express this structure in the best way possible.

For someone that already plays guitar the Quick Star Key can be a revelation. Suddenly all of the pieces fit to form a total understanding of the instrument. For the beginner, the overview of the note names, what a key is, and how chords are built is possibly the best place you could start to learn to play guitar...but it won't be enough. You will need further instruction. A good teacher is invaluable but you can also learn from books or on-line. Every thing helps to some degree. Hopefully, the information you have gained from this little essay will help you organize your approach to learning music theory and understanding this wonderful instrument we love regardless of the source you work from.

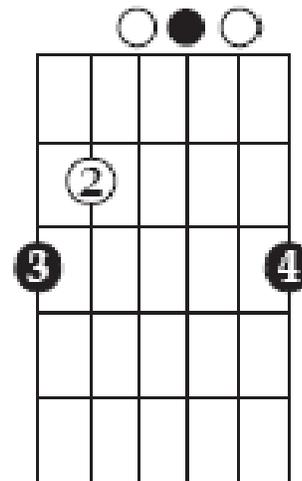
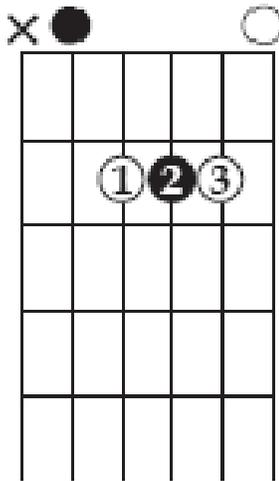
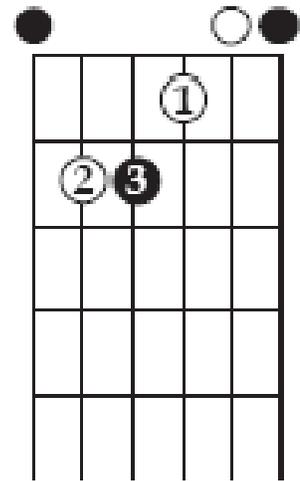
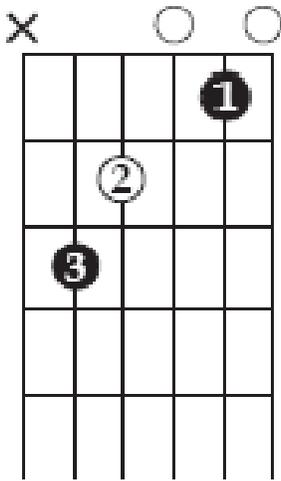
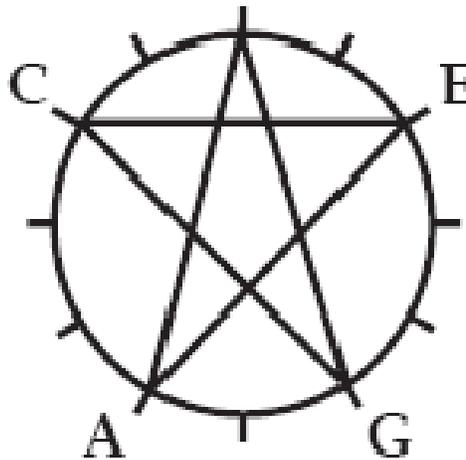
THE TUNING STAR



THE CHORD STAR



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THE SCALE STAR

