

The First Chords to learn would be G, C, D and Em (say E minor). Looking at the chord diagrams (pages 28-29) use:

The first G fingering (just 1 finger).

The second C fingering (with two fingers, either 1st and 3rd fingers, or even 1st and pinky).

The first D fingering (two fingers, put the 1st finger on the 3rd string)

The first Em (two fingers, put the 1st finger on the 2nd string).

Memorize your fingering for each of these chords, and practice changing from one to the other. Make up a little song; 4 strums each chord (G GG G)

G G G G , C C C C, G G G G, D D D D, G G G G, C C C C, G G, D D, G G G.

Or perhaps G G Em Em, C C D D, etc.

Use these little songs and the ones you make up to practice changing from one chord to another. You may even want to write words for these little exercises, what the heck, give them some life. Use free strumming if you like to make it more interesting (but not if it is so distracting that it makes it hard to change).

Some Songs in the Strumstick Songbook have Chord Names written over the melody and lyrics. If you finger the various chords, and strum a rhythm that fits the song, you can sing the melody (or accompany another Strumstick playing the melody!). Find a few songs that use the chords you have just learned and try strumming your way through the song.

Many of the Rhythm elements we looked at in Part 1 can be used to dress up your rhythm accompaniment to the song you are playing. You will have to become fluid at changing the chords before you can get very fancy, but let your boredom be your guide; if you are getting bored, you are ready for more challenge, so increase the complexity. If you are feeling overwhelmed or frustrated, drop back to a more comfortable level and move on when you are ready.

More Complicated Chords

Chords that show three dots across the same fret are called *barre* chords (pronounced bar). You will lay your 1st finger across all the strings at a given fret, and then another finger or two at different frets. To do the barre, straighten your finger out rather than having it be quite bent at the knuckles. This may seem counterintuitive since it moves your hand farther away from the neck, but it is the easiest way to get all the strings fretted. You can swing your elbow in to bring the other fingers closer to where they may have to go. It may also help to let your 1st finger roll a little on its side (that is, the thumb side) to help the rest of your hand. The interesting thing about barre chords is that they can move up and down the neck giving different chords at each fret. That is true of any chord that covers all the strings on the strumstick. With the barre-form chords, one fingering gives you several useful chords. Look at the "C" fingering. Barre with the 1st finger at the 3rd fret, then add 3rd finger (or pinky, recommended) at the 5th fret. This same fingering gives you Am at 1st fret, Bm at 2nd fret, C at 3rd, Dm or D at 4th (watch that extra fret there), Em at 5th, F at 6th, F#m at 7th,

and G at 8th fret. That's a lot of chords for learning just 1 fingering.

Sliding Chord Fingerings and Chord Melodies

While we are on the topic, you can actually move even two finger chord fingerings up the neck and find some useful combinations. Try our basic two finger C chord, move it up a fret at a time (keep the skipped fret interval between the fingers though, and skip 1 or 2 frets in the 6 7 8 area). It sounds good which ever fret you put it at. Some of these are legitimate chords, some are partial chords, but the main point is, they sound good! You can write songs just by sliding a fingering up or down; use the basic C fingering (which we will call 1st fret because that is where your 1st finger is) and strum it for two beats plus an upstrum (1 2+ down downup). Then slide it up to 2nd fret (pinky slides too, up to 4th), play 1 2+ (this is sort of a G maj7 chord), up to 3rd fret (another C fingering) 1 2+ then back to the Gmaj7 at 2nd fret 1 2+ :

C Gmaj7 C Gmaj7
1 2+ 1 2+ 1 2+ 1 2+ repeat

END OF SAMPLE