

What Are Power Chords?

Introducing power chords are basically an easier way to simplify the concept of barre chords, which we will be focusing on next.

Of course, power chords don't ring out as brightly as a barre chord would, but there are numerous times that a power chord sounds more appropriate for a given piece of music you are working with.

Here's an easy way to understand the power chord:

Power chords are not really chords at all. Chords are usually 3 notes or more, whereas power chords only have 2 different notes. A more correct name would be "power intervals" because they only contain two different notes. Usually power chords are composed of the root, a perfect 5th interval, and the root note doubled at a higher pitch (called an octave).

Basically they are just like playing perfect 5th intervals and doubling up a note or two.

Power chords are easy to play just about anywhere on the neck, but lend very little harmonic texture to a song. They do not have a major or minor third interval. A chord needs this interval in order to make it a major or minor chord.

If you're playing a song with a lot of distortion, strumming a full chord might create too much dissonance. Plus if you have a fast chord change, it's often easier to use power chords for the really fast part.

No Substitute For Learning The Real Thing

A lot of players get caught in the power chord trap. They learn how to play power chords but fail to learn the real chords. This is a major mistake. Just because you can play a C power chord does not mean you know a C chord. As we said before, they aren't really chords anyway.

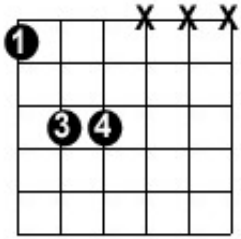
Learning chords is one of the most important things a guitar player can do. It does not matter what style of music you are interested in, you cannot avoid learning your chords! Failing to learn them will mean that you will fail as a guitarist in the long run.

Power Chords Move

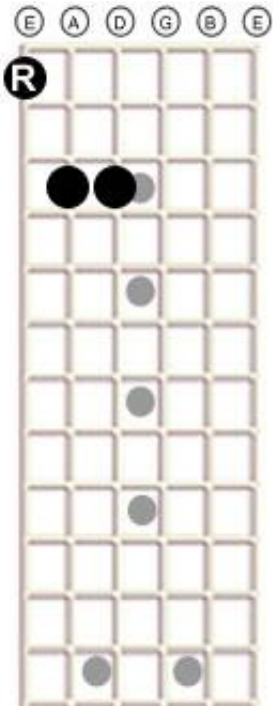
What I'm about to show you are power chord patterns. These patterns can be moved up and down to create different power chords. The root note determines what power chord it is.

Take a look at this power chord pattern.

The note on the low E string is it's root note:

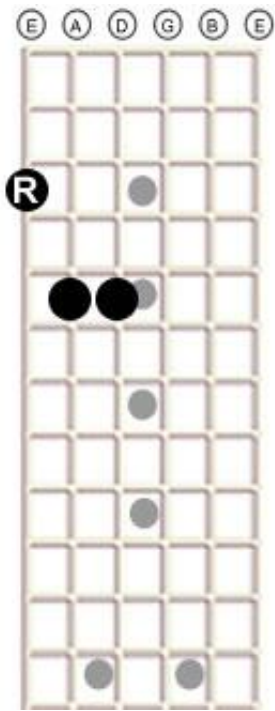


Now, by forming this pattern on the 1st fret we are creating an F power chord because the root note is on an F note.



We can play this pattern all the way up the fretboard creating different power chords.

Here it is with the root note on the 3rd fret. The note on the 3rd fret of the low E string is a G, so that makes this power chord a G.



If you don't quite remember the names of the notes on the guitar's fretboard (you should by now), then don't fret.

Use the chart below to help you. At the top are numbers for the frets on the low E string. Below that are the names of the notes on those frets. If you're playing the power chord pattern above with its root note on the fret numbers below, you'll know the name of the power chord by looking at the chord names under it.

Fret	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Chord	F	F#/Gb	G	G#/Ab	A	A#/Bb	B	C	C#/Db	D	D#/Eb	E



Video Reference: Much more material is covered in our Strumming School DVD. Please refer to Chapter 1 "Power Chords" on the DVD for additional information.