Play Any Chord (and the Circle of Fifths) ‘Anywhere’ On The Neck
(with Minimal Memorization and Even Less Thought.)

Chris Brown, 9/08, 10/08

You need to know:

1. **SHAPES**: Barred form of C A G E D chord shapes (with associated minors, 7ths, etc.) (Fig. 1).

2. **NOTES**: The note on each fret of each string.

3. **ROOTS**: Location of the root for each CAGED shape (Fig. 1).

4. **STR-SHAP**: What SHAPes have roots on each STRing (Table 1). (Closely related to ROOTS).

![Image of guitar neck with notes and shapes]

Figure 1: Strings, SHAPEs and ROOTS. Roots are black. You can see that in all, there are two roots on each string (which are shown in Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String</th>
<th>SHAPE</th>
<th>SHAPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: STR-SHAP: For each string, what CAGED shapes have roots there? (Incidentally but not accidentally, reading across and down they spell GED CAGED CAGE.)

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The Method: To play any chord named R (with root R) ‘anywhere’: Find a note named R close to the desired neck position. Say it is on string S and fret F: let’s call it MY-NOTE. Table 1 gives you two shapes you can use for string S. Make the shape you choose with its root on MY-NOTE. (Even if you can’t barre, you know the basic shape and where to put it.)
Example. You want an F chord around fifth position. Your knowledge of NOTES tells you there’s an F on string 2 at fret 6: that’s MY-NOTE. The easily-memorized STR-SHAP tells you that for string 2 you need a C or D shape with root on MY-NOTE. Using SHAPES you play one of the chords in Fig. 2. They are a C chord shifted up 5 frets and a D chord shifted up 3 frets, which makes sense.

![Figure 2: Strings, shapes and frets for two F chords around fifth position. The root (MY-NOTE) is black.](image)

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Circle of Fifths Patterns: There are some simple shape sequences for generating this important progression (e.g. ... E A D G C F Bb Eb Ab Db/C# Gb/F# B E A D ...). Here are two sequences, shown as (shape, relative fret). First, headed up the neck:

(E,0) (A,0) (D,0) (G,0) (C,0);
(E,1) ... (C,1); (i.e. one fret higher)
(E,2) ... (C,2); (one more fret up)
...

Couldn’t be simpler: just repeat EADGC shapes in successive positions.

Not so elegant but headed down the neck is:

(E,0) (A,0) (D,0) (G,0) (C,0);
(G, -2), C(-2),
(E, -1) (A, -1) (D, -1) (G, -1) (C,-1);
(G, -3), C(-3),
(E, -2) ... (C,-2); ...

Given you’ve found some shape for some chord somewhere, you can jump in to these patterns and get your … ii, V7, I -style progressions pretty mindlessly.

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