

Changing chords

Richard Miller

I. The "secret" to changing chords is to move all the fingers at the same time into the new chord. For example, to change from A to D a guitarist lifts all the fingers from the A position and places directly and simultaneously on D. Often, the chord is shaped in the air before actually placing the fingers on the strings. Try this:

1. Play A then relax the fingers and allow them to rest on the strings with no pressure.
2. Lift the fingers so that they are just above the first three strings, and form the "D" shape in the air.
3. Place all the fingers down on the strings and apply pressure

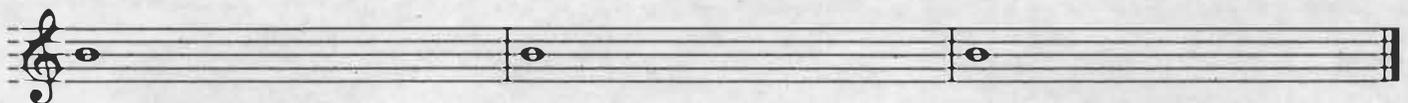


II. Be very cautious at this stage of learning. You are teaching your automatic or instinctive mind how to perform a complex action. If you introduce errors or tension by trying to play too fast or by not paying attention, your subconscious will learn it this way and reproduce the tension and errors faithfully. Practice does not make perfect! It makes permanent. Perfect practice makes perfect. So:

1. Practice very slowly being aware of tension and trying to perform the action effortlessly.
2. **DO NOT MAKE ANY MISTAKES!**
3. Take a small bite and chew it 100 times. This is the most important action you can take for proper digestion, be it food or music.

III. Often, beginning guitarists make a lot of extra movements when changing chords. The fingers should move from their current location to the new one directly, without any extra movement. For example, the third finger only has to move up one fret when changing from A to D. So:

1. Play A. Relax all tension in the left hand leaving the fingers on the strings.
2. Slide the third finger to the third fret without lifting it.
3. Bring the other two fingers down to the first and third strings in one motion.



This breaks the change into two movements which is not ideal but is helpful if the guitarist is making unnecessary movements with the fingers.

IV. Once the fingers are changing from A to D correctly, repeat the change many times to reinforce the movement in the instinctive mind. When the instinctive mind can perform an action correctly, the action becomes effortless. Learning to play a song for accompaniment on the guitar is essentially learning to change between chords. Take one change at a time (small bite) and master it (chew a lot). A song then is just a series of short steps.

Changing Chords in Time

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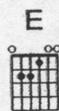
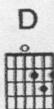
Another important principle in learning to change chords is that the change must take place in time. If you have to alter or stop the beat to make the chord change then the beat is too fast. Choose a tempo that is comfortable for you and allows you to make the change with ease and in time.

After practicing going from A to D as described in "Changing Chords," select a comfortable tempo and play the following changes while strumming the quarter notes. Do not slow the right hand down to accommodate the left hand. If you are tense or making mistakes, then slow the whole tempo down and/or return to "Changing Chords."



Guitar

Following the same steps, practice changing from D to E and from E to A

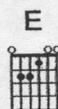


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Now play them all in sequence. These are the chord changes for many songs like "Twist and Shout," "Guantanamera," and "La Bamba."



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