

2. GETTING STARTED

When we talk about learning the chords for a tune by watching a guitar player’s hand, we mean you can identify the root names of the chords being played, and see the sequence in which these chords are played. How do you know where to begin and what to focus on, especially if you’re a novice? Not to worry – we’ll provide guidance.

For Those New To Reading Hands (“Newbies”)



You only need a small part of the material in this book to get started reading hands. Here’s the deal:

- Look for the Newbie Bee in chapters 2, 3, and 6. The bee marks the most important things you need to know right now.
- Focus on just the 7 main Cowboy chord shapes in chapter 3, “Cowboy Chords.” They’re marked with the bee.
- See Chapter 6, “Learning to Read Hands,” for help with practicing.

With just this small amount of information and some practice, you’ll be well on your way to reading a guitar player’s hand.

The Secret To Reading Hands: Chord Shapes



Most guitarists think of the chords they play as having **shapes**. This refers to the arrangement of their fingers on the fingerboard. You can learn to recognize these hand/finger shapes when you look at a guitarist’s hand.

Take a look at the photos below. It should be obvious that the fingers are in different positions on the fingerboard in these two pictures, and the overall appearance of the hand is different.



The secret: different shapes for different chords

You’ve just discovered the secret to learning chords by reading the guitar player’s hand! If you learn the chord name associated with a particular chord shape, then when you see a guitar player’s hand making that shape, you can “read” the shape – i.e., translate the shape to the chord name. The chord chapters provide the information you need to do this.