



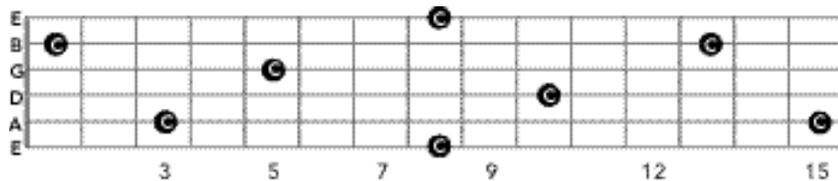
An Introduction to the CAGED System

By Scott Blanchard

In this edition of the Theory Corner, we'll take a look at an excerpt from Raleigh Green's new book, *The Versatile Guitarist*, available through Alfred Publishing. In this excerpt, Raleigh will show you some easy ways to navigate the fretboard by introducing a simple octave pattern and dissecting the CAGED system of chords. You'll learn how to connect familiar shapes and play many chord voicings all over the neck. In addition, you'll develop a clear understanding of reference points on the fretboard, making your playing experience more fun and easier than ever before! If you want to learn about musical relationships and their ties into many styles, *The Versatile Guitarist* is a great place to start. Green's concise diagrams and accessible teaching style make this book a great addition to any guitarist's collection. Start mastering the fretboard and sharpening your skills today! The book includes a CD so you can easily follow along with all the examples. Check it out below!

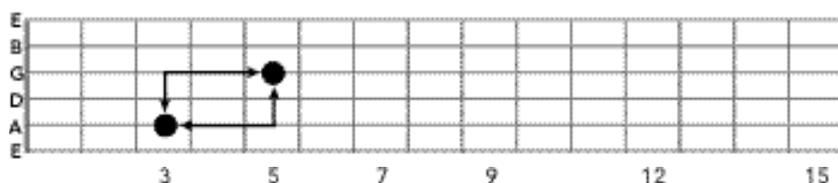
Lesson 2: The Octave Pattern

This diagram represents all the C's within a 15-fret span:

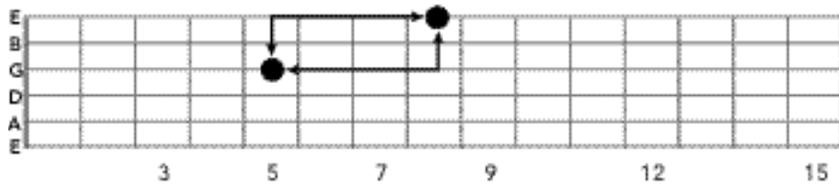


At first glance, the pattern above might seem like a fairly random collection of notes. However, if you visualize it from the right perspective, it is possible to simplify this pattern to only two simple shapes—a short rectangle and a long rectangle—that connect across the fretboard.

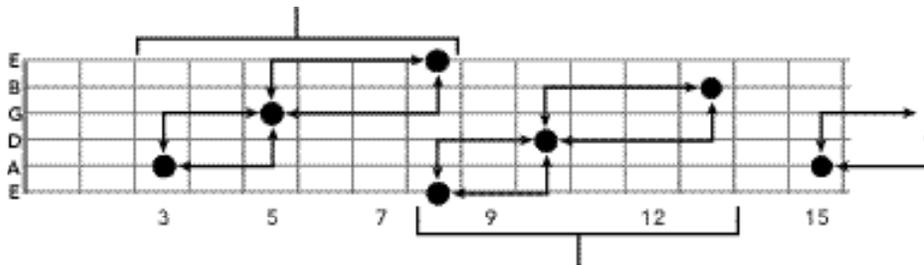
1) Here's how to build the short rectangle: Start at the left and connect the first note to the second by skipping two frets to the right, and two strings over. Do you see how the two notes create two corners of a rectangle?



2) Here's how to build the long rectangle: Start at the left and connect the first note to the second by skipping three frets to the right, and two strings up. Do you see how the two notes create two corners of a longer rectangle?



3) Now, connect the two shapes together: You can visualize this as one big shape outlined by the notes on the 5th, 3rd, and 1st strings (going from left to right).



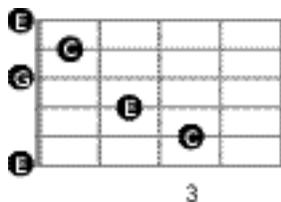
4) Now, copy the whole shape to the 6th, 4th, and 2nd strings: Notice how the last note of the first shape (on the 1st string) lines up on the same fret as the first note of the second shape (on the 6th string)? The shapes will always line up this way. You have now covered all six strings!

5) Start the pattern over from the beginning: Just go two frets to the right of the last note in the second shape, and start the whole pattern over. (This pattern repeats over the entire fretboard.) Here's the really good news: every note on the guitar follows this same pattern. For this reason, it's crucial to be able to shift the whole system up and down the fretboard, backwards and forwards. So, the next time you are faced with an unfamiliar note, ask yourself "what string am I on?" Then, refer to the pattern above to quickly move into familiar territory. Using this method, the open strings, the 12th fret, or the ACE shape will always be close by.

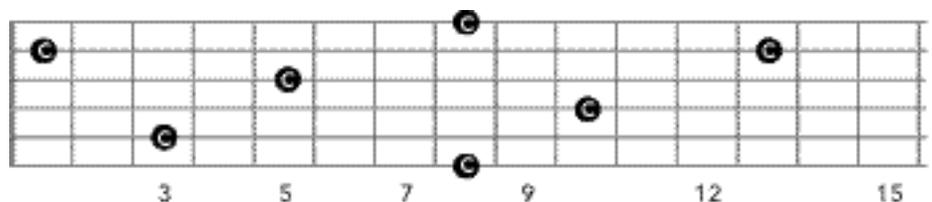
Lesson 3: The CAGED System

Have you ever wondered what would happen if you took a common C Major triad (a three-note chord composed of the root, 3rd, and 5th; in this case C-E-G) and plotted all three notes across the entire fretboard? Well if you did, you would get the CAGED system. This system provides a way to connect major chords across the entire fretboard by visualizing familiar open chords.

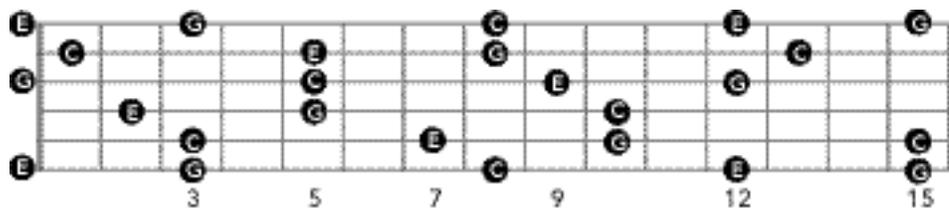
1) Build a C Major chord:



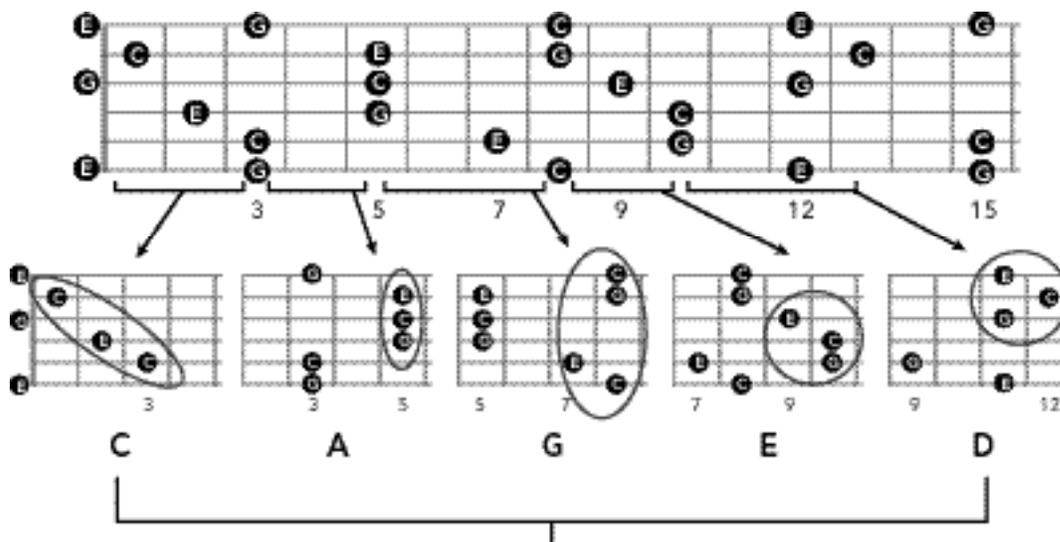
2) Use the octave pattern to locate all of the C's.



3) Use the octave pattern to plot out all of the E's and G's as well, and you get this collection of notes:



4) Look at these notes carefully—familiar open chord shapes will start to appear.



And here they are: the common C, A, G, E, and D chord shapes. Keep in mind these don't necessarily represent the actual names of the chords. Instead, they represent the five positions of a single major chord (in this case, C Major) as it appears across the entire fretboard. By shifting this pattern up and down the neck, you can now use familiar open chord shapes to play any major chord, in any position.

Lesson 4: Simplifying the CAGED System

You might be wondering: is there a way to simplify the CAGED system to make it easier to visualize? Well, there is an alternate, and perhaps easier, way. Rather than conceptualize five chord shapes connected across the entire fretboard, you might try to visualize four chord shapes that are connected to two root locations. One of the roots is on the 5th string (A), and the other is on the 6th string (low E). Visualizing these two roots as a “toggle switch” with a chord on each side is a very practical way to simplify these patterns; especially since chord shape 2 and 4 are common barre chords. Study the following diagram carefully to understand this concept.

Start off with the CAGED system, using the C Major chord:

Chord shape 1 Chord shape 2

Chord shape 3 Chord shape 4

Here is where you would start over with chord shape 1.

Continue with chord shape 2, etc.

Visualize this 5th-string root as a toggle switch with a chord shape to the left and to the right. The chord shape to the right (chord shape 2) is a common major barre chord with the root on the 5th string, that resembles an open A Major chord. All you have to do is attach chord shape 1 (which resembles an open C Major chord) to the left of this root, and you have half of the fretboard covered.

Visualize this 6th-string root as a toggle switch with a chord shape to the left and to the right. The chord shape to the right (chord shape 4) is a common major barre chord with the root on the 6th string that resembles an open E Major chord. All you have to do is attach chord shape 3 (which resembles an open G Major chord) to the left of this root. Once you do this, you can connect chord shapes 3 and 4 with chord shapes 1 and 2 to play a single chord over the entire fretboard.

Now remember, this entire system is movable. So, if you were going to apply the CAGED system to, say, a G[#] Major chord, you would shift the entire system down four frets so that the root was G[#]. The pattern would now look like this:

This 6th-string G[#] can be visualized as a toggle switch with a chord shape to the left (chord shape 3) and to the right (chord shape 4).

This 5th-string G[#] can be visualized as a toggle switch with a chord shape to the left (chord shape 1) and to the right (chord shape 2).

Conclusion

For more information on octaves and the CAGED system, be sure to check out the Licks and Tricks section of this newsletter, or order Raleigh Green's book, *The Versatile Guitarist*, at www.ordermusictoday.com. Visit Raleigh Green at www.WorkshopLive.com today!

For some more insight on octaves, guitarists will want to check out the many lessons on this concept in the rock, blues, acoustic and jazz curriculums, as well as Tobias Hurwitz's advanced rock guitar lesson "Advanced Minor Scales and Modes Lesson 1," in which he demonstrates the CAGED system in relation to scale patterns.

Not a guitarist? Keyboardists should check out the Pianist's Toolbox lesson "Octaves," taught by David Pearl and Joe Rose.

Have fun—more in just two short weeks!