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## Fretboard Toolbox: 5-String Banjo Edition



Major Key	Number of sharps (#'s) & flats (b's) in key	Relative Minor Key	Page #
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G Major	1 sharp	E minor	5
A <sup>b</sup> Major	4 flats	F minor	6
A Major	3 sharps	F <sup>#</sup> minor	7
B <sup>b</sup> Major	2 flats	G minor	8
B Major	5 sharps	G <sup>#</sup> minor	9
C Major	0 sharps/flats	A minor	10
C <sup>#</sup> /D <sup>b</sup> Major	7 sharps/5 flats	A <sup>#</sup> /B <sup>b</sup> minor	11
D Major	2 sharps	B minor	12
E <sup>b</sup> Major	3 flats	C minor	13
E Major	4 sharps	C <sup>#</sup> minor	14
F Major	1 flat	D minor	15
F <sup>#</sup> /G <sup>b</sup> Major	6 sharps/6 flats	D <sup>#</sup> /E <sup>b</sup> minor	16
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# Chord Jig Explained

(Chord Jig shown is from the G Major/E minor page)



### The Basics-

**How do I know which chords sound good together?** Major scales (do-re-mi...) sound good to our ears. By going down column "1" of the Chord Jig, you can play the Major scale for each of the keys. The Major scale for G Major, for example, is made of the notes G, A, B, C, D, E, and F#. The secret to understanding which chords sound good together is learning that **each note of the Major scale can be turned into its own chord.** Turn a "G" note into a "G Major" chord by playing the notes G, B, D. Turn an "A" note into an "A minor" chord by playing A, C, E, etc. (Major chords use notes from the 1, 3, and 5 columns of the Chord Jig, and minor chords use the notes 1, b3 (read "flat-3") and 5). **All of these chords (chords I-vii) sound good together because all of the notes from the G Major scale sound good together!** The chords I-vi are especially common, and countless songs use some or all of these chords in nearly endless arrangements!

**How can knowing the Nashville Numbers system improve my playing?** In the Chord Jig for each key, chords are given Roman numerals, sometimes called "Nashville Numbers", so players can easily describe chord changes. In the key of G Major, the "I" chord is G Major, the "ii" chord is A minor, the "iii" chord is B minor, etc. Note that, in Major keys, the chords I, IV, and V are most often played as Major chords, and chords ii, iii, and vi are most often played as minor chords. If someone tells you a song is a simple I-IV-V progression in the key of G Major, you'd just play the chords G Major (I) - C Major (IV) - D Major (V). **This is a very common progression!** To play a song with a I-vi-IV-V progression in the key of G Major, you'd just play G Major (I) - E minor (vi) - C Major (IV) - D Major (V). When you start thinking in terms of Nashville Numbers, you'll start training your ear to recognize lots of different common progressions of chords. Practice learning the I-vi chords in every key, and watch your jams sessions transform when you're figuring out songs on the fly!

### Beyond Basics-

**What if I want to play a song in a different key ("transpose" a song)?** If you can figure out what the chord progression of a song is in one key, and change those chords into Nashville Numbers, then you can use your Fretboard Toolbox to find that same progression in any key! e.g. To play the I-vi-IV-V progression in D Major, just play D Major (I) - B minor (vi) - G Major (IV) - A Major (V). It's that easy!

**Can these chord rules be broken?** Once you know the chords that "go together" within a key, you can also see what substituting chords from outside the key will sound like. Fretboard Toolboxes are different in that you can **know** which chords fall outside of the key and give that chord change its particular sound in the song. In G Major, try changing the iii chord into a **Major III chord** (the B minor chord changes to a B Major chord- instead of playing the notes B, D, and F#, you'd play B, D#, and F#) and remember the sound you get. Another great variation in G Major is playing a I chord (G Major), and then a IV chord (C Major), followed by an iv chord (C minor). This has a beautiful, sad sound. The music we listen to has tons of these chord substitutions, and when you **know** which rules you're breaking, you can get that sound in any key you want! You can build tons of chords by studying the Chord Toolbox on p. 17-18.

These Roman numerals are what people are talking about when they refer to "Nashville Numbers".

The chords in column "1" are built by using the note in column "1" and adding various notes to the right.

These notes add various flavors to basic Major (1, 3, 5), minor (1, b3, 5), and diminished (1, b3, b5) chords.

	1	(2)	b3	3	(4)	b5	5	(6) bb7	b7	7
<b>G MAJOR I</b>	G			B			D		F	F#
<b>A minor ii</b>	A		C				E		G	
<b>B minor iii</b>	B		D				F#		A	
<b>C MAJOR IV</b>	C			E			G		Bb	B
<b>D MAJOR V</b>	D			F#			A		C	C#
<b>E minor vi</b>	E		G				B		D	
<b>F# diminished vii</b>	F#		A			C		Eb	E	

**Chord Jig**

	7 <sup>th</sup> notes (e.g. C7 or Cdom7)
	7 <sup>th</sup> notes (e.g. CMAJ7)
	7 <sup>th</sup> notes (e.g. Cmin7)
	½ dim (e.g. C <sup>o</sup> or Cm7b5)
	dim 7 (e.g. C <sup>o</sup> 7 or Cdim7)

In the key of G Major, the chords G (I), Am (ii), Bm (iii), C (IV), D (V), and Em (vi) are frequently arranged into familiar music.



# Fretboard Layout Explained

(Fretboard Layout is the same for all keys)



**Fretboard Layout:** This part shows the layout of all the note names on all of the most frequently used frets for each of the strings. Notice that many of the same frets on the same strings have multiple names based on whether you are playing in a sharp or flat key.

### The Basics~

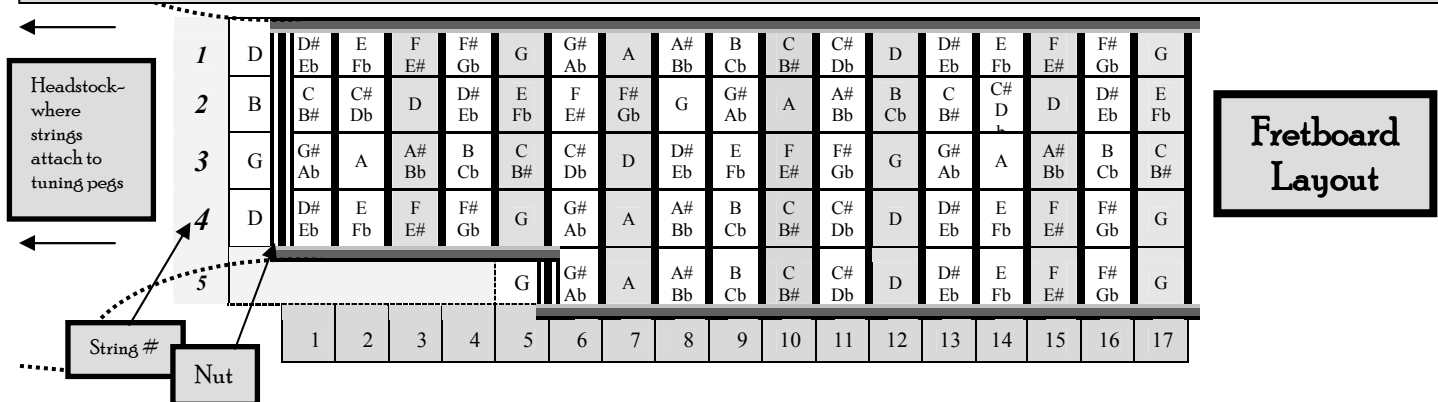
**How is a 5-String Banjo fretboard laid out?** Notes to the left of the nut (see diagram) are the notes of each open string in standard tuning. The top string (#5) has a tuner on the fifth fret and is tuned to "G", string #4 is tuned to "D" and bottom string (#1) to "D" an octave above the "D" note on string #4. Frets are labeled at the bottom, and frets that often have fret indicators (dots or other marks) are shaded. Single frets can have both sharp (#) and flat (b) names in different keys.

**Why learn notes all over the fretboard?** Instructors often talk about the importance of learning your fretboard all up and down the neck. This is often a point of frustration for people learning an instrument, because even if you memorize the notes all over the fretboard, you often still don't know *why* you needed to learn all of those notes. With a Fretboard Toolbox, this is no longer the case because if you understand how chords are built, and which chords "go together" (are in the same key), then you can start using the Fretboard Layout to see where all of those notes are found. This lets you start building chords and solos all over your fretboard!

### Beyond Basics~

**How do I use the Fretboard Layout to help figure out the key that a song is in?** Once you learn how to find the key of a song, (done by finding the root notes of a song- see my "Key to Finding a Song's Key" video on my YouTube channel if you're not sure how to do this [www.youtube.com/user/fretboardtoolbox](http://www.youtube.com/user/fretboardtoolbox)) then you can use the Fretboard Layout to play notes up and down the neck until you find that root note- the note often found at the beginning and end of verses in that in the song that feels like it relieves the tension. When you've found that note, then that note is most likely the key your song is in. The trick is to figure out whether that note belongs to a Major or minor key. If a song keeps coming back to an E note, then you can try playing an E Major (usually in "happier" sounding songs) and then an E minor (usually in "sadder" sounding songs) to see which fits best. The one that sounds best is probably that song's key, and then you can then turn to the E Major or E minor page and you'll already know the most likely chords (I-vi) that are in your song. If you still can't find the key of your song, pick a note you think is possible and try soloing with that note in the Major and minor root boxes of the Pentatonic Jig. You'll quickly hear whether or not those notes fit with your song. Once you know the key, you'll be figuring out the chords and building solos in no time! These ideas let you figure out songs on the fly, which is fun that never gets old!

**What if some notes are not found on the Pentatonic Jig?** Lots of 7 chords, and other extensions, contain notes that are not found in that song's key, and therefore don't appear on the Pentatonic Jig. For example, if you're playing in the key of G Major, and want to play a C7, you need to know where at least one Bb note is found to add it to your C chord- just use the Fretboard Layout to find that note. Also, lots of songs contain chords that are not directly part of the Major or minor key you're playing in. For example, if a song is in G Major, it could contain a chord such as B Major, instead of B minor. In this case, since a B minor is made of the notes B, D, and F#, you will need to be able to find where you can change the "D" notes into "D#'s" to make the chord a B Major chord. Just use the Fretboard Layout to see where those D# notes are found, since they're not in the Pentatonic Jig of the G Major page. The best part is, once you know the chords/notes outside the key of a certain song that give it its particular sound, you can get that sound in any key!





# Pentatonic Jig Explained

(Pentatonic Jig shown is from the G Major/E minor page)



**Pentatonic Jig:** The Pentatonic Jig is the place where you'll probably be spending most of your time, since it works helps unlock both chords and soloing! See my YouTube channel to see this section in action: [www.youtube.com/user/fretboardtoolbox](http://www.youtube.com/user/fretboardtoolbox)

### The Basics-

**How does the Pentatonic Jig help me build chords?** Just pick the notes for the chord you want using the Chord Jig, and then find those notes grouped close enough to play on the Pentatonic Jig. e.g. G Major chords are played with the notes G, B, and D. The simplest G Major chord can be played by strumming without any strings, since the notes, from string "5" to string "1" are G, D, G, B, and D. You can also play another G Major by playing string #5 open, since it's a G, a "G" note on the fifth fret on the "4" string, a "B" note on the fourth fret on the "3" string, a "D" note played on the third fret on the "2" string, and another "G" note on the fifth fret on the "1" string. To play a simple A minor (ii) chord, made of A, C, and E notes, skip the "5" string, then just play the "E" note on the second fret on the "4" string, a "A" note on the second fret of the "3" string, a "C" note on the first fret of the "2" string, and another "E" note on the second fret of the "1" string. You can build any chord you want in this same way! Chords are much easier to memorize when you know *why* you're using certain frets, and not just trying to remember where you were told to put your fingers.

**How do I play up the neck?** Use the Chord Jig to find the chord notes you need, and then use the Pentatonic Jig to find them grouped close enough to play, all over the fretboard. Find some chord charts online, and you can use the Pentatonic Jig to see why the charts show so many positions for each chord. Listen to how each different position for a chord has its own unique sound!

### Beyond Basics-

**How do I play up the neck?** Use the Chord Jig to find the chord notes you need, and then use the Pentatonic Jig to find them grouped close enough to play, anywhere on the fretboard. Find some chord charts online, and you can use the Pentatonic Jig to see why the charts show so many positions for each chord. Listen to how each different position for a chord has its own unique sound!

**How do I add more flavor to the pentatonic scales?** For Major keys, add the underlined notes to the notes in the white boxes and you're playing the whole Major scale. The melodies of countless songs use the seven notes of the Major key, and knowing those notes lets you solo to countless songs. In minor keys, try playing all the notes from the Pentatonic Jig, except change all the D's to D#'s. In E minor, play E, F#, G, A, B, C, **D#**, then back to "E". The "D#" leads back to the "E", and it will be a sound you instantly recognize (called the harmonic minor scale). The more you study the Pentatonic Jig, the more cool things you'll discover!

