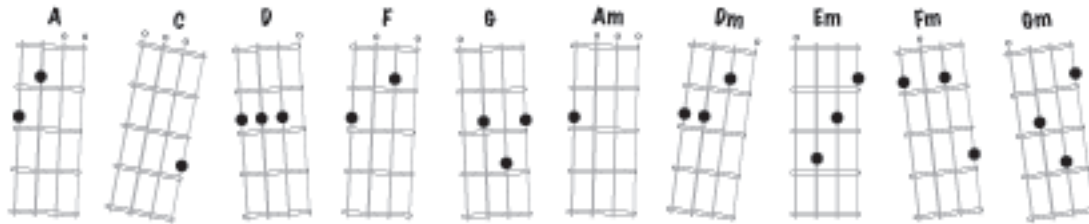


# Chord Shapes and Learning Chords



**It's the notes that make the chord shape.**

And, there is no way one can memorize "ALL" chord shapes. Even memorizing a few hundred is time consuming.

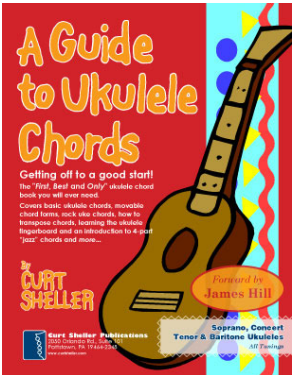
A chord "shape" is a function of a particular instrument and its tuning. Knowing how chords are built and their individual notes can help you on any instrument.

Beyond the basic open position chords and basic movable form chords (major, minor and seventh), one needs to learn how chords are constructed. Then you can build ANY chord you will ever need by moving or displacing a note or notes from these basic "core" chords.

It's the notes that make the chord shape.

A chord "shape" is a function of a particular instrument and tuning. Know how they are build and the notes can work on any instrument.

## A Guide to Ukulele Chords



### Getting Started...

This book is designed as a guide to ukulele (pronounced "oo-koo-lele") chords. Covering basic ukulele chords that ALL uke players MUST know, movable chord forms, rock uke chords, how to transpose chords, learning the ukulele fingerboard and an introduction to 4-part "jazz" chords and more...

From a few basic chord shapes and a understanding of how chords are constructed your chord vocabulary can be dramatically increased without memorizing countless more chord shapes. There are too many chord shapes to memorize.

This book will take the mystery out playing and understanding chords on the ukulele, whether it is a standard, concert, tenor or baritone ukulele in "C", "D" or "G" tuning, low or high string four.

**For More Information visit • [www.CurtSheller.com](http://www.CurtSheller.com)**



## Chord Symbols

A chord symbol contains the instructions to build chords. It contains a chord name and chord type.

Examples: take ANY seventh chord, major, major, augmented or diminished chord type and raise the root two frets and you have that many ninth chords. Now if you don't know where the root of a chord is you need to work on that.

Take a dominant seventh chord (mis-named and another topic all its own) and raise the root one fret for a seven flat nine chords (7b9 or 7-9). Three frets for 7#9. Move the fifth up one fret for 9#5 or 7b9#5, etc...

## What the Pros Do

Pro players build their chords on the fly when needed for chords they do not use all the time. They can build ANY chords that is called for. If it is used a lot it just get memorized without any additional effort by simply playing it a lot. Or becomes part of an arrangement or voice leading situation.

A C chord is "C E G" - not this shape that shape. This is the smallest bit of information that is needed to memorize the chord.

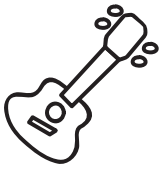
Pick up any chord dictionary and one thought that should go through your mind is. There is now way to memorize all those shapes. It would be better off learning how they came up with all those shapes. Most chord dictionaries are also just like pages transposed to all possible keys.

## Managing Your Chords

Chords can be categorized in to four groups; 1) open position chords, 2) basic movable form chords, 3) 4-part advanced chords sometimes called "jazz" chords and 4) Free Form chords that do not fall into the other three categories.

Most chords books, mine included can be simplified down to the basic build block chords. My "A Guide to Ukulele Chords" books does do that for the first three categories.

Only open position chords and basic movable form chords shapes and the four starting chords for 4-part chords need to be memorized. Beyond that it is the notes and how chords work and create when needed. For Free Form chords you need to know the note spelling of a chord and the ukulele fingerboard. Then create the chords as needed.



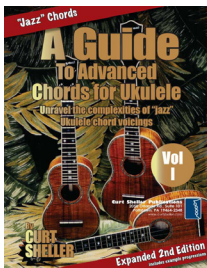
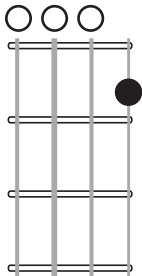
This is not easy. Teaching guitar, bass and ukulele for many years has helped this process. I've had hundreds of students and a few have expressed an interest in learning advanced chords and most bail when they see how hard it is on guitar. On ukulele it is a lot easier but still a little effort is involved – but well worth it.

Here are the minimum number of chords needed for *guitar* using C7 as an example:

- 1 Open position shape to memorize
- 2 Movable barre shapes to memorize. One with the root on string 6 and one with the root on string 5
- 20 Four 4-part C7 chords to memorize (minimum of 12 for *get by mode*). You really need 20 voicings to cover melodies on strings 1, 2 and 3 and bass notes on 4, 5, and 6. There are more beyond that, any 4 string group.

Here are the minimum number of chords needed for *ukulele* using C7 as an example:

- 1 Open position shape to memorize



## The Advanced Guide to Ukulele Chords - Volume I

If your goal is to expand your chord vocabulary, The Advanced Guide to Ukulele Chords Series is your answer.

Commonly referred to as "jazz" chords. The Advanced Guide to Ukulele Chords Volume I provides detailed information on voicing 4-part chords.

Beyond learning the basic Ukulele chords, most Ukulele players struggle with advanced chords. Commonly called "jazz" chords, these more sophisticated voicings find a wide use in all forms of music.

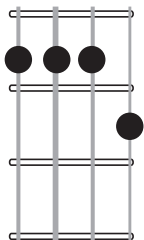
This volume of The Advanced Guide to Ukulele Chords presents a highly organized and efficient approach to the mysterious subject of advanced chords. Chord dictionaries are not the answer. Even chord theory does not offer any insight into unraveling the complexity of advanced chords.

Also available for Guitar: The Advanced Guide to Guitar Chords (3 volumes)

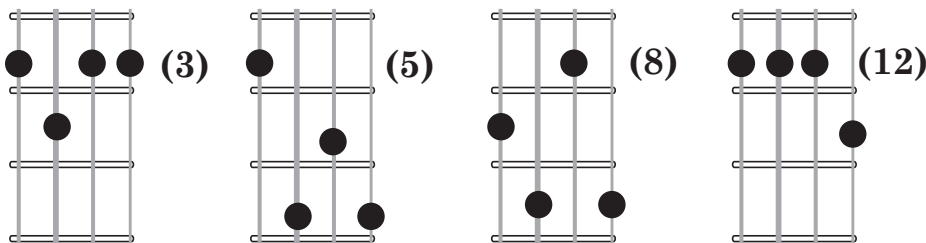
For More Information visit • [www.CurtSheller.com](http://www.CurtSheller.com)



1 Movable shape based on the previous open position chord to memorize.



4 Four part C7 chords to memorize.



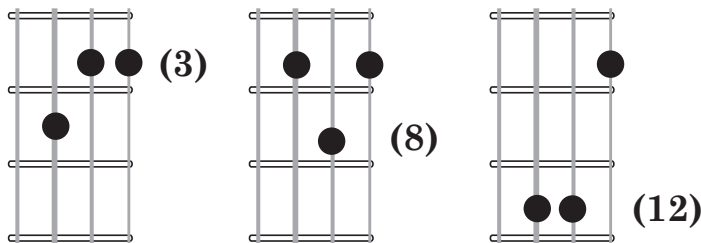
On *ukulele* it's only four, 4-part C7 chord voicings that are needed to built a solid foundation of 4-part chords. Ukulele has it easy.

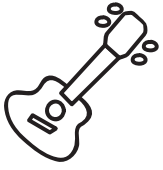
Free Form chords – for C7 it's the notes C E G Bb and knowing the notes of the neck and where to put your fingers for those notes.

As one can see it is a big jump to advanced chords from the basic chords. And it is the advanced chords that fill those chord dictionaries.

A nice bridge between the basic chords and 4-part advanced chords are triads. They are only three notes and only four basic types: major, minor, augmented and diminished.

Here are the three major triads voiced on string 1, 2 and 3.





Two scary factors always come up when students and workshop attendees tackle these advanced chords. The two pieces that are key for getting beyond the shapes are.

- 1) Knowing the notes of the neck and
- 2) The number of potential chords. People tend to think it is hard. It not, it's just not easy ;-).

The fingerboard can be memorized using a key fret concept and the advanced chord building is a system *NOT* memorizing tons of chord shapes.

There is an article, available online that I wrote a few years ago for Just Jazz Guitar magazine on “Getting Beyond Guitar Shapes” that is very appropriate for ukulele.

There is also is a ukulele version that was going to be published in the ill-fated Ukulele Occasional issue 3.

Also one on building a Solid Jazz Chord Foundation that works for uke as written.

I see people chasing that mythical chord book of shapes all the time. It does not exist. If it did you still couldn't memorize it all. The people, me included, who write those chord books do it from a system (hopefully) and not recalling shapes. Then it comes down to organization and presentation that separates one from another. I tend to try and give the principles and tools for chords and not just throw a bunch of shapes at people.

If, when drawing a chords for student in their lesson book, I think the notes. I NEVER get the chord wrong. But, if I lapse and try and recall a shape I've gotten it wrong in the past.

