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so accessible as how it plays in a drop D tuning, offering plenty of heavy and emotional chorus swells.D, A, Bm, and G chord progression in power chord form and drop D tuningExample: Lives I Alone - Key of E (E)Nothing says 90s like a band who you couldnt search for on Google became the way to listen. Still, this chord progression came down just right on I Alone making for a powerful chorus and progression in power chord form.D, A, Bm, and G chord progression in power chord form and drop D tuningExample: Hank Williams Jr.s Country Boy Can Survive - Key of D(Though the Am7 gets a little drowned out and could pass as a raw A major chord, the folksy, down-on-the-bayou appeal of this progression can be re-purposed to a number of different styles and genres.D, Am7, and G chord progressionKey played in: DChord form: OpenCritical chord extensions: Minor 7thMost used in: Folk, country, blues, and rockOpen form tab of the D, Am7, and G chord progressionExample: Our Lady Peace Innocent - Key of C (capo 1)Adding the Am to the end of this progression really boosts the emotional power of the songs chorus. Additionally, guitarist Steve Mazur arpeggiates the chord and slows things down to give the song a more driving and contemplative feel. This chord progression is extremely common, though it finds a uniquely cozy home in the post-grunge era and most of its resulting sub genres.C, G, F, and Am chord progressionKey played in: CChord form: Open and powerCritical chord extensions: Am chordMost used in: Post-grunge, rock, country, folk, alternative, and popOpen form tab of the C, G, F, and AmPower form tab of the C, G, F, and Am chord progressionExample: Bruce Hornsbyg Gonna Be Some Changes Made - Key of GBruce Hornsby is masterful at taking simple chord progressions and layering them with expansive vocal melodies, which is perhaps a little easier to do on the piano than the guitar. The progression he uses here is one of the most common in existence, and presents numerous melodic and rhythmic possibilities. Its a good one to memorize early in your playing career.G, C, D, and Em chord progressionKey played in: GChord form: OpenCritical chord extensions: NoneMost used in: Bluegrass, rock, pop, blues, and jazzOpen form tab of the G, C, D, and Em chord progressionExample: Incubus Warning - Key of B(Its chromatic walk-down sounds great with the added minor 15th interval (minor second one octave higher). Making it work in other contexts could prove challenging, so props to Mike Einziger for getting a great rock sound out of an otherwise jazz-heavy progression.B, A, G and F# chord progressionKey played in: BChord form: Power and triadicCritical chord extensions: Minor 15th (minor second)Most used in: Jazz, blues, and rockPower form tab of the B, A, G and F# chord progressionExample: Smashing Pumpkins Cherub Rock - Key of G (chorus)Billy Corgan wasnt reinventing the wheel here, but he did push the Cherub Rock track into a kind of power-mode that felt like you were being swept into each chord and lyric line. Particularly in a power form, the progression he implemented is highly reusable.D, A, C, and G chord progressionKey played in: GChord form: PowerCritical chord extensions: NoneMost used in: Rock, blues, country, post-grunge, and popPower form of the D, A, C and G chord progressionExample: Everlasts What Its Like - Key of FErik Francis Shrodys most popular song is a bluesy arpeggio highlighted by a prominent Dm chord at the beginning of the progression. Note that the progression on the track resolves with a second Dm chord at the end.Dm, F, and C chord progressionKey played in: FChord form: OpenCritical chord extensions: Dm intervalMost used in: Folks, blues, country, rock, alternative, and pop Open version of the Dm, F, and C chord progressionArpeggiated version of the Dm, F, and C chord progressionExample: KornHater - Key of D(Though James Shaffer and Brian Welch handle this song in a drop A tuning, the power and open variation are easily replicated in a standard tuning.D, C, B and F chord progressionKey played in: DChord form: Power and openCritical chord extensions: NoneMost used in: Metal, rock, folk, and pop Open form of the D, C, B and F chord progressionPower form of the D, C, B and F chord progressionExample: Creeds Higher - Key of DNothing says late 90s rock like Creeds radio hit (and Human Clay spearhead) Higher. The song is played in drop D and uses what is possibly the most common chord progression for that tuning. Playing it in drop D is incredibly easy with the open D and the other two root notes on the seventh and fifth frets respectively.D, A and G (drop D version) chord progressionKey played in: DChord form: Open and powerCritical chord extensions: NoneMost used in: Folks, blues, country, rock, alternative, and pop Open version of the Dm, F, and C chord progressionArpeggiated version of the Dm, F, and C chord progressionExample: Lynyrd SkynyrdS Sweet Home Alabama - Key of DSaying this song is overplayed is an understatement.But, considering its popularity, wed be remiss not to mention it when citing the D, C and G chord progression.This grouping of chords is thought by many to be the most dynamic and useful in existence, prompting many to insist that you can learn a lot of music on the guitar using D, C and G alone.D, C, and G chord progressionKey played in: DChord form: OpenCritical chord extensions: NoneMost used in: Country, blues, Christian contemporary, rock, and pop Open form tab of the D, C, and G chord progressionExample: U2s Where the Streets Have no Name - Key of D(One of musics most infamous riffs overshadows what is a brilliantly constructed chord progression. This pattern, played by a synthesizer on the Joshua Tree track, is soulful and can be easily restructured or reapplied to other melodies and rhythms.Key played in: DChord form: OpenCritical chord extensions: Minor 3rd (in the II chord)Most used in: Rock, folk, country, and pop Open form tab of the D, G, Bm and A chord progressionExample: Red Hot Chili Peppers Under the Bridge - Key of E(ve always thought John Frusciante was one of the more overrated guitar players coming out of the post-grunge era, but the progression he employs in Under the Bridge (Im not sure whether he actually wrote it or not) is nothing short of brilliant. Played slowly it sounds just as good.E, B, Cm, Gm and A chord progressionKey played in: EChord form: Open or powerCritical chord extensions: Two minor 3rdsMost used in: Rock, jazz, blues Open form tab of the E, B, Cm, Gm and A chord progressionPower form tab of the E, B, Cm, Gm and A chord progressionExample: Audisioaves Gasoline - Key of B(Tom Morello plays this progression in a drop B tuning, which means the chords come out differently. However, weve transposed it to drop D for an easier read and to make the chords more transferable to other situations. Well do a single note and power version (tabbed below), both in a drop D tuning.D, F, G, C and G chord progressionKey played in: DChord form: PowerCritical chord extensions: NoneMost used in: Rock, metal, post-grunge, alternative, pop Tab of the D, F, G, C and G power chord progressionExample: Our Lady Peaces Somewhere Out There - Key of D(OLPs first single coming off the Gravity album is still its most recognizable track. The forceful lyrical performance is propped up by this chord sequence which varies between the verse and chorus. The one we have listed here is the chorus progression.D, A, G and Em chord progression diagramKey played in: DChord form: OpenCritical chord extensions: NoneMost used in: Jazz, blues, and pop Guitar tab for the Fm7, B7, E and A chord progressionKey played in: EChord form: OpenCritical chord extensions: Major and minor 7thMost used in: Jazz, blues, and pop Guitar tab for the Fm7, B7, E and A chord progressionExample: Frank Sinatras Come Fly With Me - Key of C(Its difficult to discern on the actual track, largely due to the emphasis on horns and vocals, which is typical of jazz compositions. However, if you remove the raw chords, this progression has a fantastic feel to it and is great for blues or jazz improvisation.G7, C, C9, Dm7 and C chord progressionKey played in: CChord form: OpenCritical chord extensions: 9th and 7th intervalsMost used in: Jazz and blues Guitar tab for the G7, C, C9, Dm7 and C chord progressionExample: R.E.M.s Losing my Religion - Key of Am(There are a lot of chord changes in this song and plenty of progressions to pick from. But Im highlighting the progression played during the last two lines since it has a full sound and resolves on an A minor chord, which is the actual key of the song.F, Em, Am, G and Am chord progression diagramKey played in: AmChord form: Open and powerCritical chord extensions: NoneMost used in: Rock, metal, alternative, and pop Open form guitar tab for F, Em, Am, G and Am chord progressionWhat if you wanted to come up with more chord progressions? There is actually a theoretical formula for doing this, which you can tap into in the event you need some structure to get going. First, settle on a key, then find the major scale in that key. Lets take the key of C for example.Heres your scale:C - D - E - F - G - A - BChord progressions can be built from scales because each note in the scale is a scale degree. Thus, you could also write the major scale like this:I - ii - iii - IV - V - vi - viiEach degree then holds the following titles respectively:Tonic (i)Supertonic (ii)Mediant (iii)Subdominant (IV)Dominant (V)Submediant (vi)Leading tone (vii)You can then use the following diagram to plan out your progression:Chord progression formula diagramIt might look confusing, but lets go through it step by step.Creating your own chord progressions one step at a timeHeres how you'd follow the chord progression diagram:Start with your root note, in this case C which would be the tonic, thus I.From there you can go to any scale degree, so lets try IV.From there we can go to either V or vii. Lets go with V.Notice that the tonic could go to any chord which means you could have followed it with a different note than IV. If we had chosen iii instead, it would have then moved to vi and then had a choice between ii or IV.You would continue to follow the diagram until it resolved back to the tonic chord. From our three steps above we end up with the following progression:I - IV - V or Tonic - Subdominant - DominantNow, if we plug that back into the C major scale, we get the following chord progression: C - F - GAnd this can be easily transposed to any scale. Take the E major scale for example: E - F - G - A - B - CIf you apply the progression I - IV - V you get the following: E - A - B.This way you can start to see how we get some of these more common and oft-used chord progressions.Another easy way to continue building chord progressions is to do so with dyads, which are two-note chords that can be quickly and easily strung together. Well highlight two different types of dyads, which are distinguished by the interval of each chord.If you arent familiar with the interval concept, its quite easy. An interval is simply the distance between two notes on the fretboard. In the case of a dyad (or any guitar chord) the distance youre measuring from is the root note.The distance between the root and the second note in the chord will determine what type of interval it is.Major fifth dyadA major fifth is the term used to designate one such interval, which is seven frets away from the root note. Heres a tabbed example:Major fifth dyad guitar tabIve chosen to put my root note on the fourth string at the fifth fret, but you can start this root note on any fret on the sixth, fifth, fourth or second string and play the same shape. The note at the seventh fret is a perfect fifth and the only note that accompanies the root.This is your first, basic dyadic chord.Octave dyadAn octave dyad looks almost the same, except our interval is (predictably) one octave higher than the root, which means its the same note at a higher pitch, 12 semitones (frets) above the root.Heres the tabbed example.Guitar tab of an octave dyad shapeThe major sound you get from the basic shape of a D chord is also a moveable dyad.Guitar tab of a D major dyadWe omit the root D, assuming it as a ghost note. If we move the note at the third fret (D) up to the fifth (E) we have another usable dyad, since that E note is the fifth of the root A.Guitar tab of a second D major dyadOnce we get a handle on basic dyadic shapes, we can use them to easily build chord progressions that are a little thicker and more involved than playing only root notes.To build off of the dyads we just learned, we can apply the same principles and technique to triads, which are three note chords that formally include the following intervals:Note: If you need some help with the concept of intervals, checkout our full guitar intervals lesson.However, it's widely accepted that any three note chord that resolves to its key can be treated as a dyad. For the purpose of building and understanding chord progressions, that's how we'll view triads in this context. For example, if you take the D major dyad shape we just covered and add the root note, you get a fairly common triadic chord with a D root, fifth and octave D:Triadic chord with a D root noteWell focus on a few triads that are movable and that you'll be able to use most frequently. Ill give you most of these chords in the key of C, though keep in mind they can be moved to any fret.In many cases, a triadic chord can be a stripped down version of a more commonly known open chord:Take the open C major for example:Open C major guitar chord tabWe have four notes here, but we can omit the highest one on the first fret (C) since were already getting a C from the root note on the third fret.Now our triadic shape looks like the following diagram, and we can more easily move it to other frets.Note: This is an instance where the formal definition of a triad, a root, third and fifth, is fulfilled.Triadic C major chord shapeThus, if we transpose the root of the chord to the fifth fret, wed get the following shape:D major triad chord(If you pick through each shape one after another.Arpeggiated triadic chord progression (C to D)Lets look at a few more triadic chords.The triadic power chordOne of the most frequently used chords would be a power chord made up of three notes. The first, is the root note, followed by a fifth and an octave of the original root note.For example:Triadic power chord diagram (root C)This chord can be easily fretted, moved and can work with a root note on either the sixth or fifth string.You can move the fifth if you want to give the chord a different tone. For example, instead of adding a perfect fifth, add a major third, which will fall on the seventh fret.Using movement of both the root note and the interval, you can easily develop chord progressions made up entirely of triadic power chords.The major barre chord triadic shapeIf you start a barre chord with the root note on the fifth string, a typical major shape will look like this:Typical C major barre chord shapeIf we omit the root note and the high G on the first string, we get a nice triadic chord where the lower root C is assumed.Triad where the root C is assumedThis chord can be easily barred with one finger. You can also move the notes on the second and third strings to come up with a few other useable triadic chords.Here are a few options that dont change the key:Second triadic form in the key of CThird triadic form in the key of CFourth triadic form in the key of CMaking this chord minor is quite easy. Simply move the note at the fifth fret on the second string down one semitone to the fourth fret.Triadic shape in the key of C minorIn a similar manner, we can use the D minor shape to find another useful triadic chord.Triadic chord shape in the key of D minorOften its the simple shapes and patterns that end up being the most useful when it comes to building chord progressions and layering bass lines. Practice these, memorize them and make them a part of your chord vocabulary.In this section, we'll focus specifically on the G C D chord progression which is one of the easiest and most widely used arrangements. However, when playing each chord in its most conventional form, all three of the pointer, middle and ring fingers would at one point be fretting the root note of a chord. Thats not easy, especially for someone just starting out.But, why play each chord in its most conventional form? You certainly dont have to play a formal G, C and D all the time. In fact, it behooves you not to.Making the Progression EasierWhen I first started learning these three chords, I learned the forms that were probably familiar to most people.A conventional G, C, and D chord progressionThese are what I would call the formal or proper versions of an open G, C and D major chord.They arent terribly difficult, but when it comes to progressing from one to another, they arent the most functional shapes. I eventually learned new forms of each chord which made for easier transitions.What I wanted to do was find a way to move my fingers as little as possible, which kind of sounds like cheating, but it smoothed out the transitions and really tightened up the progression.This is how Ive played it ever since.How to seamlessly transition through G, C and DWere going to focus on the following three basic elements for the entire progression:The D note on the second stringThe root note of each chordOctaves and intervalsThe D note that Im referring to falls on the third fret and the second string.Were going to hold that note with our ring finger through the entire progression, without ever moving our hand from that one spot.So, to prepare, put your ring finger in position to play that note.Position note for the G, C, and D chord progressionOur second step is to add the root note of each chord, then rock back and forth between that root note and our D.Adding the root notes for each chordBy now you can start to see the progression come together. Well add one more step before strumming through the entire thing.For the G chord, well use the open-note octave on the third string, which is an open G. For the C and D chords, well use two intervals, a perfect fifth for the C and a perfect fourth for the D.Here's how the arpeggio tabs out:The resulting arpeggio for the G, C, and D chord progressionLets go ahead and strum straight through the chords, then well discuss the practical beauty of this method (if you havent already picked up on it).Modded chords for the G, C, D chord progressionIn addition to the D note on the second string, youre only fretting one other note for each chord.That means you can use one finger to grab each root note. Thus your hand doesnt have to move from that spot and you can switch through each chord with simple, brief movements.Thus, changing between these chords becomes incredibly quick and easy. Whats even more important, is that it sounds better and cleaner than the formal version of the progression.The power variation (standard and drop D versions)The second step of locking down the G, C and D chord progression is learning the simplest power chord form. To do that, well cover two versions of the progression that account for two different tunings: Standard and drop D.Lets begin with the standard variation.For our power chord we only need two notes.Root notePerfect fifth intervalSince were playing power chords, our root note will be the G at the third fret on the sixth string.Root G positioned at the third fretOur fifth will be up on the fifth fret and string (a D in this case).Adding the fifth interval to the root G noteYou'll use this form for the C and D power chords as well. There are also two different ways to play the full progression in a standard tuning.First, you can simply slide up to the root notes on the sixth string without moving your fingers off the frets.Sliding power chords through the G, C, and D progressionThe second method is to take advantage of the root notes on the fifth string, which show up right beneath our initial G chord on the sixth string. Heres what the tab looks like:Moving root notes up to the fifth stringYou can either slide to each chord or switch strings for a closer chord change. Theyre both fairly quick and are by far the two most typically-occurring power versions of this chord progression.The drop D version is the same concept, though you only need one finger to play each chord.Dropping the sixth string one whole step means your G will now fall on the fifth fret, moving the other two chords up two frets as well.Playing the G, C, and D chord progression in the drop D tuningThe last chord is just the top three open strings since weve dropped the sixth string down to D, making the progression even easier to play.Less fingers and less movement(There isnt anything in this method that requires you to use more than two fingers at a time.Some might view that as a bit cheap, but I think its better to anchor your progressions and lock them down with the easier methods before moving along to the more complex, even if they are considered more formal and proper.The less fingers you use and the less you need to move when you change chords, the better off youll be.There are a lot of chord progressions for guitar players worth noting.If you think we missed some or if you have additional questions, let us know in the comments section below.We'll see you there.

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