Guitar Chords

Many Kinds

When considering the overwhelming number of chord types and variations, it may be helpful to know a bit about the components of a chord. Chords basically consist of multiple notes that are played as a combined sound.

Major Chords

For a major chord there are three notes being used. For example, the C (major) chord consists of the notes c, e, and g. Even though six strings are being strummed, there are only three notes being used. The "c" note is being played on two different strings and the "e" note is being played on three different strings.

Minor Chords

Likewise for minor chords, there are only three notes being used. The difference is that the interval between two of the notes is slightly different. For example the D (major) chord and the Dm (minor) chords are only different by one fret position. The f sharp note in the major chord (high E string, second fret) is lowered to an f natural note (same string, first fret).
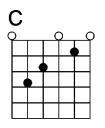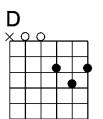
Seventh Chords

Aside from major and minor chords, it is also common to use seventh chords. Generally this involves adding another note to the three notes being used in a major or minor chord. The examples shown here have been limited to adding this extra note to a major chord.
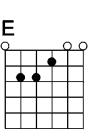
Using the D (major) chord again as an example, the "c" note needs to be added to turn this into a seventh chord. The note on the B string which was a "d" (third fret position), is now a "c" (first fret position). Note that the "d" note has not been eliminated since it is still being played by the open D string, This chord now consists of the notes d, f#, a, and c.
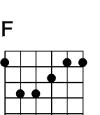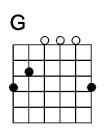
Why bother?

One advantage to knowing how chords are constructed is that rather than memorizing many chord variations, you can now build chords by adjusting or adding individual notes. As these and other common chords become more familiar to you, it will become easier to recognize the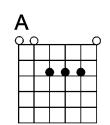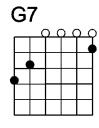ir similarities – and to learn yet more chords.