

Guitar Basics

September 2026 Rhythm Section Workshop

Mike Dana

- **Electric guitars explained:**
 - Body: Solid, hollow (arch top), semi hollow
 - Pickups: humbucker (wider), single coil (narrow)
 - Strings: thin good for rock, thicker better for jazz. (.011" set to start, .012" for serious kid)
 - Stuff: heavier pick = better jazz tone. Clip-on tuner, quality cables, guitar stand a MUST.
- **Guitar amps explained:** basic vs. modelling (bells & whistles) Using Katana 100 as example here.
 - Big 3: volume, tone, effects. Sound “moves” from left to right.
 - Amp type (aka voicing): for jazz, always start with clean. Gain/Volume low, Master high.
 - Equalizer (EQ): basically tone controls. Start at 12:00, adjust from there. Presence = highest highs.
 - Effects (FX): Always start all off. Rarely use for jazz band.



- **My jazz guitar recommendations for a MS/HS Jazz Band:**
 - Guitar: semi-hollow body (Ibanez Artcore AS-73, \$500, or Artcore Expressionist, \$1000). Get a hard shell case too. Start with .001" set of strings.
 - Amp: Boss Katana 100 Gen 3, \$450; or Quilter Aviator Cub, \$750.
- **Getting a good jazz tone** (no twang, no crunch): The guitar, the amp, the “stuff”
 - On guitar, select neck pickup
 - Start with guitar volume and tone knobs up full
 - On amp, Gain/Volume (on the left) down all the way, Master (on the right) almost full on, FX off
 - All EQ/tone controls at 12:00 (flat)
 - Bring up Gain/Volume knob on a to a good level for general playing
 - Adjust EQ until it sounds right
 - **Pro tip:** turn guitar volume down about ¼ of the way, turn up amp gain a bit to compensate (now you have some “head room” on the guitar for lines, solos etc.)
 - Go for a “round” sound, blend with rhythm section.
 - Rock/blues “isms” (string bends, vibrato, slides) usually not appropriate here

- **Comping**

- NEVER play barre (“bar”) chords!
- Essential Jazz Guitar Chords (major, minor, dominant 7, diminished.) (*See handout.*)
- Freddie Green style (Basie etc.) Start with shell voicings. (*See handout.*)
 - Freddie Green rhythm: short quarter notes, acoustic sound, let LH “push” fingers fingers off neck. Blend into ride cymbal/bass sound.
- Essential Comping Rhythms. (*See handout.*)
 - Right hand: no busy “campfire” strumming!
 - Pick is good, 3 or 4 fingers good.
- Careful when comping with piano and/or vibes. I mostly avoid it, unless I’m playing a repeating rhythm pattern.

- **Soloing**

- Guitarists overuse the blues scale (not alone here!) Begin working on major scales (reach out to me, I can send you PDFs.)
- Start listening to great jazz guitarists. Here’s a good beginning:
 - Wes Montgomery “Willow Weep For Me”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RX2m8coZiCQ&list=PL0q2VleZJVEmhGT8b7NQBIRHVjI-jDBBc&index=6>
 - Kenny Burrell “Midnight Blue”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNWDwOsQqlw>
 - Kenny Burrell “Chitlins Con Carne”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mP0flneNfaQ>
 - Grant Green “Django”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bA9qpIB8xQM>
 - Grant Green “Gooden’s Corner”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bif6MKu8vAs>

- **Pro tips**

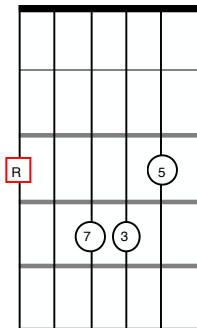
- Guitar “hygiene”: ALWAYS start with amp volume OFF, plug cable into guitar first, then amp. When done, turn amp volume off, unplug from amp first, then unplug guitar.
- ALWAYS run amp through your PA if there are guitar solos
- NEVER have an amp in front of the player.
- Amp on guitarist’s left = less chance of feedback
- Careful when comping with piano and/or vibes. I avoid, unless I’m playing a repeating rhythm pattern.
- “What’s in your case?” Mine = extra strings, picks, and cable, a strap, tuner, extra batteries, pencils, microfiber cloth, screwdriver, nail clippers, Advil ☺

- **Contact info:** Visit mikedanamusic.com for LOTS more info for jazz educators, students, guitarists, and composer. And, feel free to contact me with questions at mike@mikedanamusic.com.

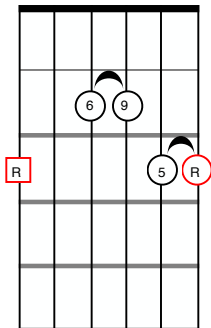
Basic Essential Jazz Guitar Chords

Mike Dana

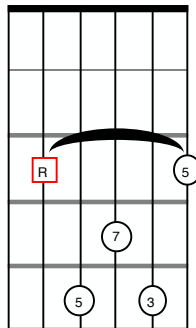
Maj 7



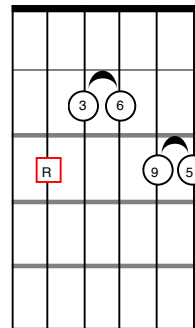
Maj 6/9



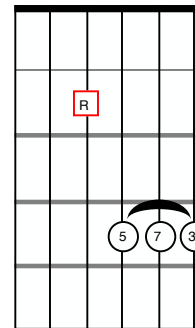
Maj 7



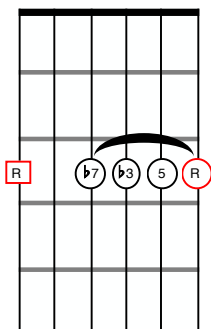
Maj 6/9



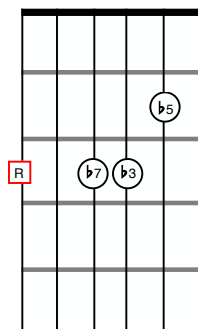
Maj 7



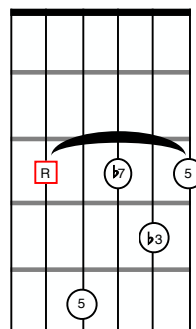
min 7



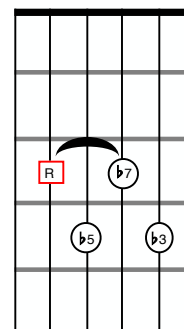
min 7 (b5)



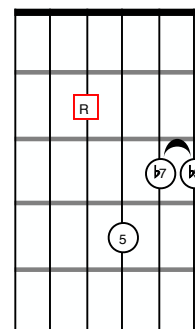
min 7



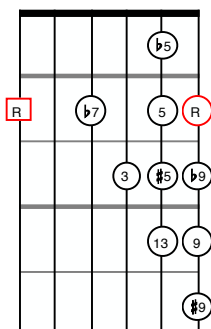
min 7 (b5)



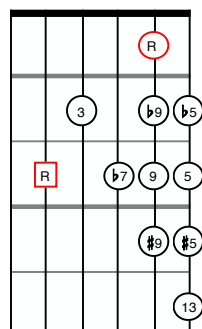
min 7



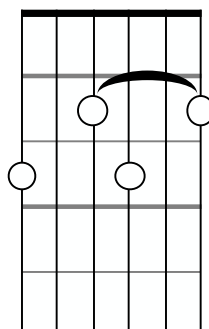
Dom 7 rt. 6



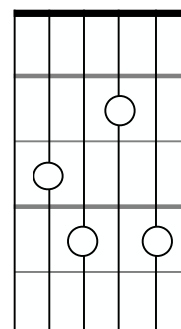
Dom 7 rt. 5



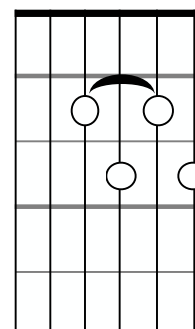
Dim rt. 6



Dim rt. 5



Dim rt.4



These are dom. 7 "master" voicings. Root is optional. Always include the 3 and b7. On the top 2 strings, add the chord notes called for, OR the one(s) that sound right. Pros like 3 note voicings on D-G-B strings. :)

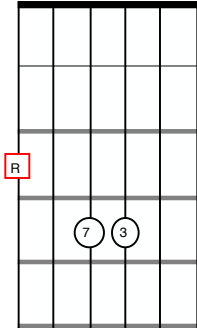
For diminished chords, any note can be the root. And, they repeat every 3 frets.

Basic Shell Voicings

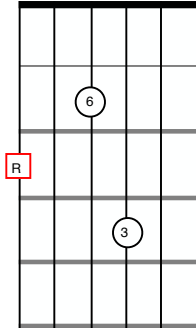
Freddie Green Style

Mike Dana

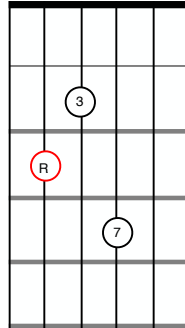
Maj 7



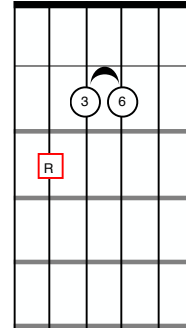
Maj 6/9



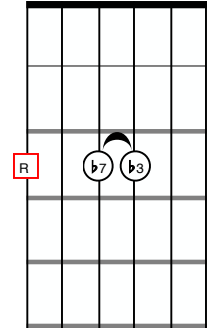
Maj 7



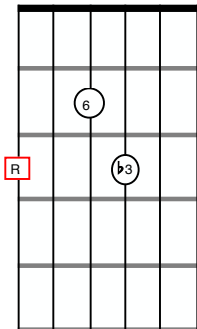
Maj 6/9



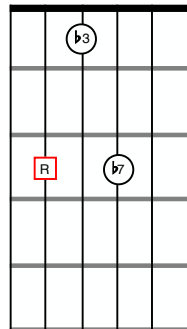
min 7
min 7 (b5)



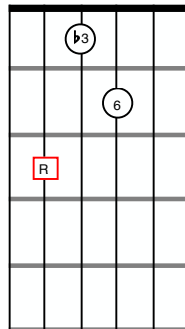
min 6



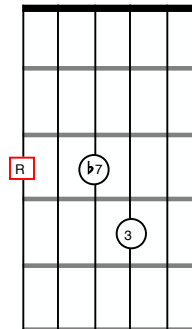
min 7
min. 7 (b5)



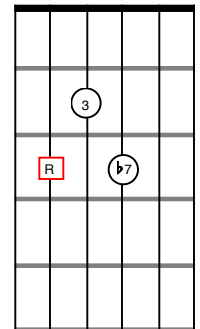
min 6



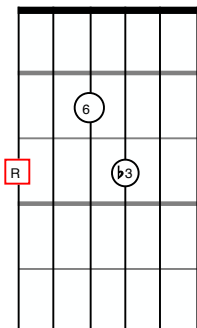
Dom 7



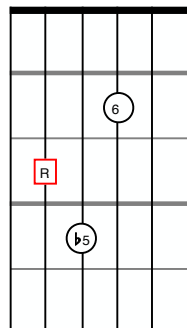
Dom 7



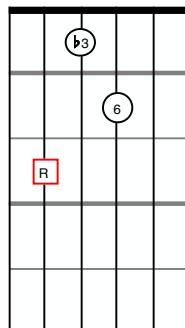
Dim rt. 6



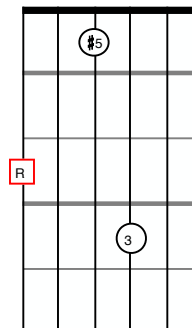
Dim rt. 5



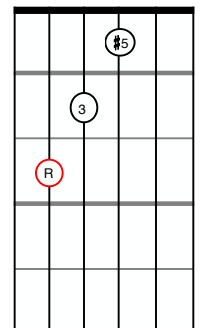
Dim rt. 5



Augmented



Augmented



Jazz Guitar Comping Rhythms

The Charleston



The Reverse Charleston



The Duh-dut



The Push



The Bounce



The "Long Notes Are Cool Too"



The Everything Bagel



Basic Bossa

