

Tenths

So, what is a Tenth?

A **tenth** is a distance between a pair of notes.

The distance between a pair of notes is known in music as an **interval**.
Compound intervals are larger than an octave.

A **tenth** is also known as a “compound major 3rd”, because it’s the same pitch as the major 3rd, but an octave higher.

As you can see below, C to E is a third (3), and also a tenth (10).

R	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C

As we’ll see, in the same way that we have major and minor 3rds, we also have major and minor 10ths.

What are they used for?

A pair of notes a 10th apart can suggest either a major or minor chord sound, where one is the root, and the other is the major or minor 3rd an octave higher (ie a major or minor 10th).

What’s so great about Tenths?!

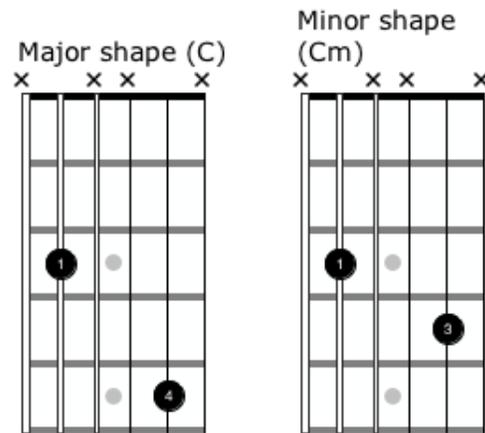
Tenths (10ths) are a wonderfully clear-sounding way to play chords and harmonise a melody.

They’re very commonly used in guitar playing – in fact, you’ve probably already played a number of songs featuring tenths without realising. And if you haven’t you soon will! 😊

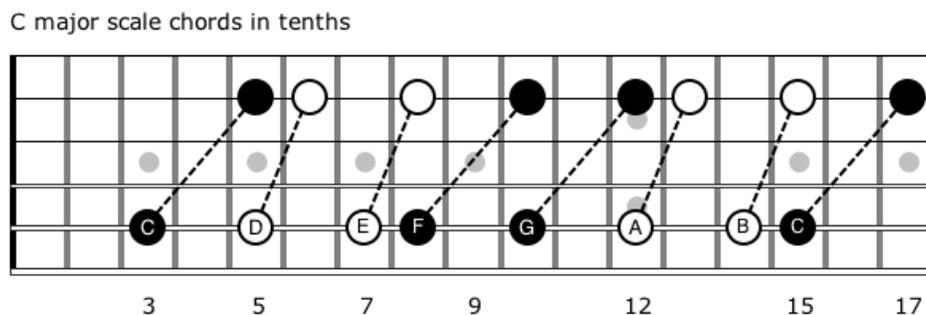
We’re now going to look at some shapes for these chords, starting from both 5th and 6th string root notes.

5th string root chord voicings

These are 10th shapes with the root on the 5th string - one major and one minor (note the fingering):



The following diagram shows the notes of the C major scale harmonised in 10ths – pairs of notes in black (major 10ths) for the major chords in the key, pairs of notes in white (minor 10ths) for the minor chords:

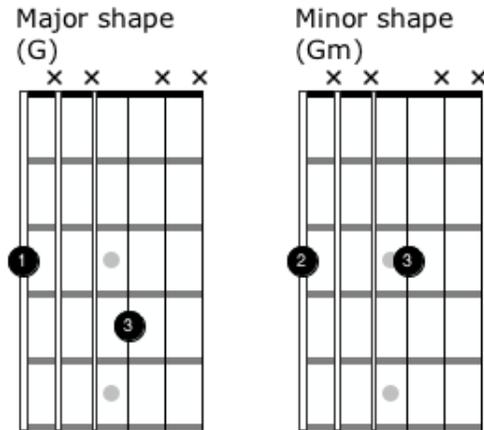


Play up and back down through these shapes

(Don't worry if you can't get up to the 17th fret on your guitar, just go as high as you can).

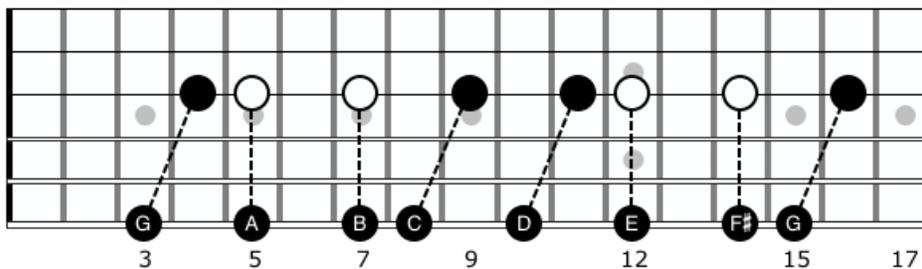
6th string root chord voicings

These are 10ths with 6th string root shapes – one major, one minor – (*note the fingering*):



The following diagram shows the G major scale harmonised in 10ths – pairs of notes in black (major 10ths) for the major chords in the key, pairs of notes in white (minor 10ths) for the minor chords:

G major scale in tenths



Play up and back down through these shapes

(Don't worry if you can't get up to the 16th fret on your guitar, just go as high as you can).

Examples

LOVE YOURSELF

JUSTIN BIEBER

VERSE

E B/D# C#m F#m E B/D# 4xs

7-9-9 7-7 5-5 10-10 9-9 7-7
0 6 4 9 7 6

HOLD BACK THE RIVER

JAMES BAY

6-8 10-8 10-8 10-8
5-7 8-7 8-7 8-7

10-8 10-(10)-(10) 8-10-9 9-8
8-7 8-(8)-(8) 8

SCAR TISSUE

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

INTRO

Chord shapes and fingering for Scar Tissue shown here:

Examples

Paul McCartney's "Blackbird" is a fantastic example of 10ths in action – it works so well because it's in the key of G, and just adding in the open G string to the 10ths makes for a very effective guitar part.

Here's the verse (written just in 10ths – you can fill in the open string yourself once you have the shapes down).

VERSE

	G	Am7	G/B	G
T	0	1	3	12
A				
B	3	0	2	10

	C	A7/C#	D	B7/D#	Em	Em(maj7)/D#
T	5	3	7	5	8	8
A						
B	3	4	5	6	7	6

	D	A7/C#	C	Cm
T	7	3	5	4
A				
B	5	4	3	3

	G/B	A7	D7	G
T	3	2	1	0
A				
B	2	0	0	3

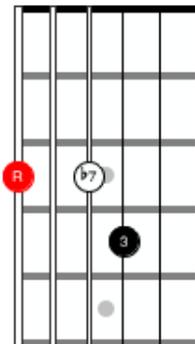
	C	G/B	A7	D7	G
T	5	3	2	1	0
A					
B	3	2	0	0	3

Open Triads example

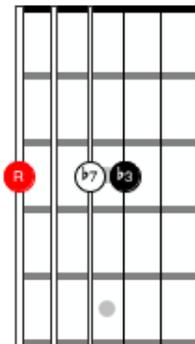
What about 7th chords?

Adding the 7th to the root and 10th gives you a great way to play 7th chords, because it excludes the 5th (which can sound muddy low down in the chord).

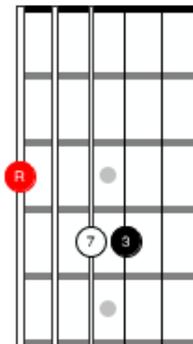
Dominant 7th
(G7)



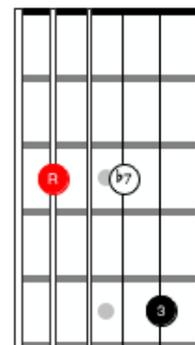
Minor 7th
(Gm7)



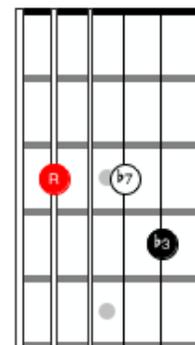
Major 7th
(Gmaj7)



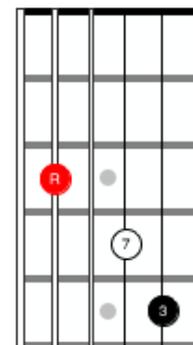
Dominant 7th
(C7)



Minor 7th
(Cm7)



Major 7th
(Cmaj7)



Assignments

1. Choose one or more of the examples and learn to play the whole song.
2. Take an existing chord progression and work out how to play it using tenths. Reduce the chords down to major and minor (eg C7 = C major, Fm7 = F minor). A good one to try would be Hotel California.
3. Write a short (or long!) piece of music using tenths.
4. Record the following chord progression using 10ths and improvise over it:

GOSPEL FEEL

The first system of musical notation is for the piece 'GOSPEL FEEL'. It is written in 3/4 time and consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff shows a sequence of chords: G, Am, Bm, C, and Bm. The bass staff shows the corresponding fret numbers for the left hand: 4, 5, 7, 9, and 7. The notation includes a repeat sign after the C chord.

The second system of musical notation continues the piece 'GOSPEL FEEL'. It also consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff shows a sequence of chords: Am, G, G, Am, and Bm. The bass staff shows the corresponding fret numbers for the left hand: 5, 4, 4, 3, 5, 7. The notation includes a repeat sign at the end of the system.