

# **“HOW TO USE A CAPO”**

**BY: ERICH ANDREAS**



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# How To Use a Capo

A *capo* (pronounced “cape-o”) is a movable bar attached to the fingerboard of a fretted instrument to uniformly raise the pitch of all the strings. Capos allow us to play songs in different keys, without altering our fingering.

The musical alphabet is as follows:

**A A# B C C# D D# E F F# G G#**

Let’s say we have a song that is in G (Major), and the chords are G, C, A- and D. If we want to transpose (change keys) that song up a half step (1 fret), then we would place the capo at the 1<sup>st</sup> fret and move our chords up 1 fret as well. Doing this allows us to play in our new key of G#, but still allows us to play in a “feel” of G. If we did NOT use the capo, we would have to play four bar chords (G#, C#, A#- and D#), which is no fun ☹. With our capo at the 1<sup>st</sup> fret, we will have transposed to G#, without having to play all those pesky bar chords. This will also allow us to free up some fingers to add ornamental parts to a once basic chord progression.

When I chart a song, I will notate at the top of the page if and where you should put the capo, and what “feel” the song will be in. For the song example above, I would put Capo 1(G feel).

G, C and D are the easier “feels” to play songs in. You will often find songs that are in another key, but use a capo and follow the chord structures of those easier keys. It’s easy to transpose, using the number system chart that I have created. However, you don’t need to use this chart, if you can work a little basic math. If you use the musical alphabet above, you could capo 1(G feel) to play in G#. To play in A, with a “G feel”, capo at the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret. To play in B, with a G feel, capo at the 4th fret. Similarly, you can do this for keys C and D. If you want to play in the key of D, but with a “C feel”, capo at the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret.

**What type of capo should you buy?** My favorite brands are Shubb, Kyser and G7th. The Shubb and G7th are adjustable, whereas the Kyser is clamp-styled. The Kyser will easily clamp to your headstock when not in use, whereas the Shubb and G7th don’t clamp on so easily. The adjustable Shubb and G7th are better for electric guitars because they allow for the least amount of needed pressure on the strings, which keeps them from going out of tune. The Kyser, in my opinion, tends to put electric guitars out of tune a bit. So the Kyser is great for the quick “on and off” of live acoustic gigs. I use the G7th and Shubb in the studio a lot on both electric and acoustic. I use the Kyser when playing live acoustic guitar. I use the Shubb and G7th when playing live electric, if needed.

## Capo Key Chart

Capo on fret number

No capo/ Feel of->	<u>C</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>D</u>
1	C#	A#	G#	F	D#
2	D	B	A	F#	E
3	D#	C	A#	G	F
4	E	C#	B	G#	F#
5	F	D	C	A	G
6	F#	D#	C#	A#	G#
7	G	E	D	B	A
8	G#	F	D#	C	A#
9	A	F#	E	C#	B
10	A#	G	F	D	C
11	B	G#	F#	D#	C#