



How To Know What Keys Your Guitar Players Need To Use A Capo

You show up to rehearsal, all pumped and ready. And then you hand your guitar player a chord chart in Bb. The look on his face tells you how flat this rehearsal is really going to be!

There are a handful of guitar players out there that can either transpose in their heads (well) or can actually play barre chords (well). And your team might be conversant in the Nashville number system, in which case you don't need this Fertilizer.

But the majority of us might be saying "there's gotta be a better way to do this!" Outside of taking the time to scratch off the printed chords and write in the new ones (only to have them squinting to read them as they hack through the song), here's the solution:

Provide "capo charts" for them. When guitar players use a capo, it changes the key. So for instance, they can play in the guitar friendly key of G, but using a capo on the third fret makes them sound like the aforementioned key of Bb. Genius!

But you can't just make charts in the key of G for every key...the guitar player will run out of neck and it'll sound terrible.

So here's how to do it. Using this chart, find the key your song is in ("desired key") and then move across to see what key they will need and what fret to capo in. So for Ab, A, Bb, B, and C, give them a chart in G. For Db give them a chart in C. For Eb, F, and Gb give them a chart in D. Easy major keys for guitar players are: G, D, C, A, and E (in that order)

Desired Key	Capo 1	Capo 2	Capo 3	Capo 4	Capo 5
C			A		G
C#/Db	C			A	
D		C			A
D#/Eb	D		C		
E		D		C	
F	E		D		C
F#/Gb		E		D	
G			E		D
G#/Ab	G			E	
A		G			E
A#/Bb	A		G		
B		A		G	

Common uses for guitar players:

Capo 3 and play in the G shape for the key of Bb
 Capo 2 and play in the G shape for the key of A
 Capo 5 and play in the G shape for the key of C
 Capo 1 and play in the D shape for the key of Eb
 Capo 2 and play in the D shape for the key of E
 Capo 3 and play in the D shape for the key of F

-Dave

ps. Bonus points if you notice that going down the first column 4 spaces and then to the right 4 spaces lands you on the same key – that's because every fret is a half-step higher.

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