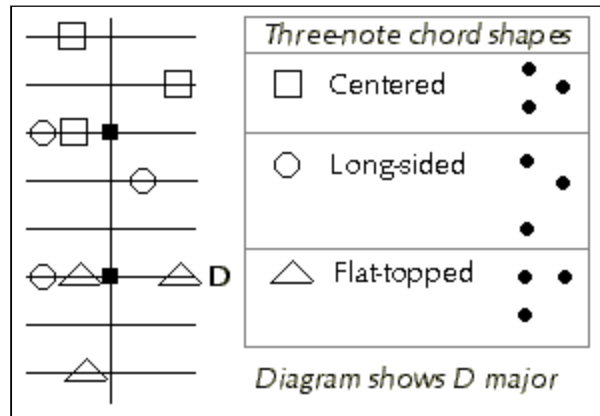


Three-Note Chord Patterns

by [Marcy Prochaska](#)

In my first article, I suggested some exercises you can do to explore chords on your hammered dulcimer, starting with triads built from the 4x4 major scale, then exploring where else those chords can be found. One of the explorations I suggested is to look for shapes or patterns that have just three notes.



This diagram shows three different ways to play a D Major chord.

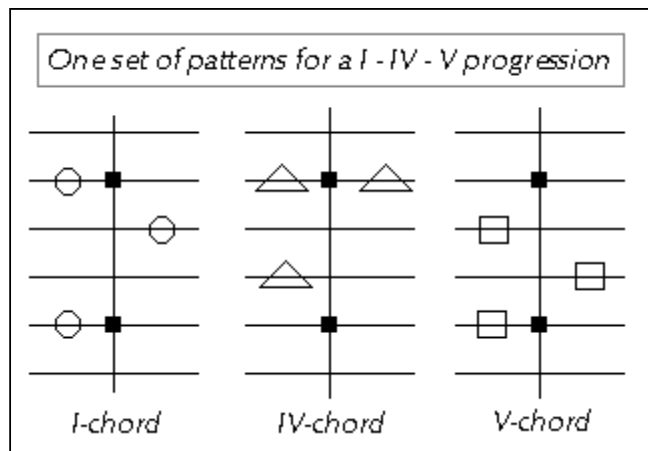
The bottom shape, which looks like a flat-topped triangle, has the notes in triad order: 1-3-5. When the first note is on or above a marked course, the chord is major. When it is below a marked course, it's minor.

The middle shape, which is a tall or long-sided triangle, has the root as the last note: 3-5-1. When its first note is on a marked course, it's minor. Above a marked course is diminished. Below a marked course, it's major.

The top shape is an equilateral triangle with the point centered on the right. The root is the second note: 5-1-3. When its first note is on a marked course, it's diminished. Above a marked course, it's major. Below a marked course, it's minor.

You can play these chords in any rhythmic pattern you like. For boom-chuck chords, for example, I play the right note with my right hand on beats 1 and 3, and the left two notes with my left hand on beats 2 and 4.

By moving these different shapes around, you can find ways to play different chords close together. This next diagram shows one way to play a I - IV - V chord progression. You can also play the three minor chords, ii, iii, and vi in the same area. For the ii chord, move the long-sided triangle up one course. For the iii chord, move the flat-topped shape down one course. For the vi chord, move the centered shape up one course.



You can also put two or more shapes together to make a longer chord. For example, if you start a long-sided chord on the bass bridge, the last note is the first note of a flat-topped chord on the treble bridge.