

FRETBOARD TOOLBOX 
ESSENTIAL
MANDOLIN
E-BOOK 2nd Ed.

**The “Music Theory
that Matters Most”
in the Five Most
Common Major Keys!**

**FREE
PREVIEW
PAGES!**

by Scott Sharp



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Essential Mandolin ~ E-Book 2nd Ed.



ABOUT FRETBOARD TOOLBOXES- Over halfway through my 20+ year musical journey I discovered that the big secret I was missing was that *specific chords & notes make up each key*. Once I figured that out, it changed everything! When I knew what those chords & notes were in each key, then with practice I could easily find a song's key which made the chords, melody, and soloing notes of songs start to seem obvious- I just needed a way to **SEE IT**. This led me to write "Complete Edition" Fretboard Toolboxes, which show the chords & scales that make up all 14 Major, minor, and blues keys. With the all-black-and-white Complete Editions, sometimes it can be hard to quickly see the notes of each chord, so to make the six main chords of these common keys "pop out", I created the full-color "Essential Editions" for the five most common keys that lots of us play in. Hope you find this to be as helpful as I have! -*Scott*



Making music with my friend Paul while on family vacation in Yellowstone National Park.

Five of the Most Common Major Keys	Page #'s
Essential Edition Instructions	1-2
Key of G Major (I-vi chords)	3-6
Key of A Major (I-vi chords)	7-10
Key of C Major (I-vi chords)	Purchase this edition to access all of these keys.
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WHAT I HOPE BEGINNER/INTERMEDIATE PLAYERS LEARN FROM THIS BOOK-

1. The six main chords that make up the keys of G, A, C, D, & E Major (they're called diatonic chords). When you know these, then you'll be able to recognize when chords are in the key (diatonic), and when chords are outside of the key (*shown in italics in my books*).
2. The notes that make up the 3 Major and 3 minor chords in each key (the chord notes in the colored circles), which helps chord shapes make more sense.
3. The common chord progressions in each key (shown in the "Some Major Chord Progressions" boxes), so your ear recognizes them, which helps you get much better at figuring out songs "on the fly".
4. The Roman numerals for each chord in each key, so you can change the key of songs with ease. This is called "transposing"- see how it works on page 23.
5. How Major scales are built. To learn more about building Major scales, check out the free "Building Major Keys Worksheet" and accompanying video at the "Free Tools" link at: www.fretboard-toolbox.com.

WHAT I HOPE INTERMEDIATE/MORE ADVANCED PLAYERS LEARN FROM THIS BOOK-

1. The notes of the Major, natural minor, and pentatonic scales for each key, AND how they relate to the chords of each key- Note: ALL of the notes in white boxes in this book are diatonic (in the key), and ALL diatonic chords are built using only diatonic notes.
2. All of the chord progressions & Roman numerals- remember that anything in *italics* is outside of the key.
3. The "bluesy" flat-3 (b3) & flat-7 (b7) notes for each of the Major chords (especially for Bluegrass & country players). If you only play the root (I) chord's Major or Major pentatonic scale for solos, even if you add the bluesy b3 & b7 notes, then you're missing out on the great sounds of the bluesy notes of each Major chord!

FOR MORE THOROUGH INSTRUCTIONS-
The instructions of this book are decidedly short, so for more detail you can download the free instructions and Key of G Major pages for your instrument's Fretboard Toolbox "Complete Edition" by going to the "Pick Your Instrument" link at: www.fretboard-toolbox.com.



Essential Edition Instructions

Essential Mandolin ~ E-Book 2nd Ed.



Overview- Each key in this book has four pages. The 1st two cover the 3 Major diatonic chords & the 2nd two cover the 3 minor diatonic chords. *Just focus on the location of each section to the right, not the tiny print. :-)*

1. This part shows the six main (diatonic) chords that make up the key and their Major key Roman numerals (in **bold**). The 2nd Roman numeral is for the relative minor key. It also includes the *bVII (flat-7)* chord, which is shown in *italics* because all Fretboard Toolbox books show common “rule-breaking” chords & notes in italics.

2. This section includes colored circles around the 3 notes of the 3 Major triads (or the 3 minor triads on the minor pages). Triads are 3-note chords. This is also the section used to build both chords AND scales using formulas from the “Chords & Scales” box to the right.

3. This shows the columns (scale degrees) used to make Major, minor, dominant 7, and minor 7 chords.

4. This shows the columns (scale degrees) used to make scales. Top yellow box is Major, bottom is minor.

5. The left-hand and middle boxes here show common chord progressions in the key of G Major, and the right-hand box shows common chord progressions in the key of E minor (the relative minor key of G Major). Any chords in *italics* here signify chords from outside of the key, so you’ll hear tension in their sounds. Pay special attention to these “rule-breaking” chords because they often add a lot of flavor to songs!

Play along or solo with these chord progressions in all of the keys in this book on the Free Jam Tracks page!
www.fretboard-toolbox.com/200-free-jam-tracks.html

6. The “Fretboard Jigs”, shown on **6, 9**, and **10**, show the note locations of the G Major (I) chord in green circles, the C Major (IV) chord in purple circles, and the D Major (V) chord in orange circles, respectively. These 3 Fretboard Jigs also show the “bluesy” flat-3 (*b3*) and flat-7 (*b7*) notes for each of those chords.

7. The Fretboard Jigs of each key show Major scale notes in **white boxes**, and the Major pentatonic notes are **underlined**. Use these scales for solos & melodies with songs in the key of G Major. They also show the *b3 (flat-3)* & *b7 (flat-7)* notes for each Major chord.

8. Root notes of the Major and relative minor keys are in these special boxes in all Fretboard Toolbox books.

NOTE- Minor key pages (not shown above) are set up just like this, except they highlight the minor triads, and show the notes you need to change minor chords into **Major chords** - a common “rule-breaking” idea!

Key of G Major (and E minor)

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CHORD & SCALE JIG

Chord Names and Roman Numerals below:
Major / relative minor key

G MAJOR I / III	G A Bb B C D E F F#
A minor ii / vi	A C D E F G
B minor iii / v	B D E F# G A
C MAJOR IV / I	C D E F G A Bb B
D MAJOR V / II	D E F F# G A B C
E minor vi / iii	E F# G A B C D
F MAJOR bVII / b5	F G A B C D E

Notes in white boxes show the diatonic chords and scales.
 Notes in italics are commonly used notes outside of the key.

Chords & Scales

Chord Type: Use notes in columns:
 Major: 1, 3, 5
 7, dom 7: 1, 3, 5, 7
 minor: 1, b3, 5
 min 7, m7: 1, b3, 5, b7

Scale Type: Use notes in columns:
 Major: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
 Major pentatonic: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7
 nat. min: 1, 2, b3, 4, 5, 6, b7
 min. pentatonic: 1, b3, 4, 5, b7

Some G Major Chord Progressions

I-V-I	G-D-G
I-IV-V	G-C-D
I-IV-I	G-D-C
I-iv-I-v	G-Em-C-D
I-iv-I-V	G-Em-Am-D
I-ii-I-v	G-Am-C-D
V-I-V-I	D-C-G

More G Major Chord Progressions

I-ii-I-v	G-Bm-Am-D
I-iv-I	Am-D-G
I-bVII-IV-V	G-F-C-D
I-ii-IV-V	G-A-C-D
I-ii-IV-iv	G-B-C-Cm
I-bVII-VII-VII-V7	G-B7-E7-A7-D7

Some E minor Chord Progressions

i-v-i	Em-Bm-Em
i-VII-v	Em-D-Bm
i-ii-I	Em-D-Em
i-iv-i	Em-B-Em
i-v-i	Em-Am-B
i-VII-vi-v	Em-D-C-B
i-iv-vi-v	Em-Am-C-B

Fretboard Jig ~ G Major (I) Chord Notes (green circles)

Fret #:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1	E	F	F#	G	A	Bb	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A	Bb	B	C
2	A	Bb	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A	Bb	B	C	D	E	F	F#
3	D	E	F	F#	G	A	Bb	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A	Bb	B
4	G	A	Bb	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A	Bb	B	C	D	E	F

G Major (& E natural minor) scales: White boxes
 G Major (& E minor) pentatonic: Underlined
 b3 (Bb) & b7 (F) notes for G MAJOR: Italicized

Key of G Major Root Notes: **G**

Key of E minor Root Notes: **E**

Key of G Major (and E minor)

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Fretboard Jig ~ C Major (IV) Chord Notes (purple circles)

Fret #:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1	E	F	F#	G	A	Bb	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A	Bb	B	C
2	A	Bb	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A	Bb	B	C	D	E	F	F#
3	D	E	F	F#	G	A	Bb	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A	Bb	B
4	G	A	Bb	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A	Bb	B	C	D	E	F

G Major (& E natural minor) scales: White boxes
 G Major (& E minor) pentatonic: Underlined
 b3 (Eb) & b7 (Bb) notes for C MAJOR: Italicized

Key of G Major Root Notes: **G**

Key of E minor Root Notes: **E**

Fretboard Jig ~ D Major (V) Chord Notes (orange circles)

Fret #:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1	E	F	F#	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A	B	C	D	E
2	A	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A
3	D	E	F	F#	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A	B	C	D
4	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G

G Major (& E natural minor) scales: White boxes
 G Major (& E minor) pentatonic: Underlined
 b3 (F) & b7 (C) notes for D MAJOR: Italicized

Key of G Major Root Notes: **G**

Key of E minor Root Notes: **E**



Key of G Major (and E minor)

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CHORD & SCALE JIG		- Notes in white boxes show the diatonic chords and scales. - Notes in <i>italics</i> are commonly used notes outside of the key.									
Chord Names and Roman Numerals below: Major / relative minor key		1	2	<i>b3</i>	3	4	5	<i>b6</i>	6	<i>b7</i>	7
G MAJOR	I / III	G	A	<i>Bb</i>	B	C	D	E	F	F#	
A minor	ii / iv	A		C	<i>C#</i>		E		G		
B minor	iii / v	B		D	<i>D#</i>		F#		A		
C MAJOR	IV / VI	C		<i>Eb</i>	E		G		<i>Bb</i>		
D MAJOR	V / VII	D		F	F#		A		C		
E minor	vi / i	E	F#	G	<i>G#</i>	A	B	C	D		
F MAJOR	bVII / bII	F		<i>Ab</i>	A		C		<i>Eb</i>		

Chords & Scales	
Chord Type:	Use notes in columns:
Major	1, 3, 5
7, dom 7	1, 3, 5, b7
minor	1, b3, 5
min 7, m7	1, b3, 5, b7
Scale Type:	Use notes in columns:
Major	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Major pentatonic	1, 2, 3, 5, 6
nat. min.	1, 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, b7
min. pentatonic	1, b3, 4, 5, b7

Some G Major Chord Progressions	
I-V-I	G-D-G
I-IV-V	G-C-D
I-V-IV	G-D-C
I-vi-IV-V	G-Em-C-D
I-vi-ii-V	G-Em-Am-D
I-ii-IV-V	G-Am-C-D
V-IV-I	D-C-G

More G Major Chord Progressions	
I-iii-ii-V	G-Bm-Am-D
ii-V-I	Am-D-G
I-bVII-IV-V	G-F-C-D
I-II-IV-V	G-A-C-D
I-III-IV-iv	G-B-C-Cm
I-III7-VI7-II7-V7	
G-B7-E7-A7-D7	

Some E minor Chord Progressions	
i-v-i	Em-Bm-Em
i-VII-v	Em-D-Bm
i-VII-i	Em-D-Em
i-V-i	Em-B-Em
i-iv-V	Em-Am-B
i-VII-VI-V	Em-D-C-B
i-iv-VI-V	Em-Am-C-B

Fretboard Jig ~ G Major (I) Chord Notes (green circles)

Fret #:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1	E	F	F#	G	A	<i>Bb</i>	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A			
2	A	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A	<i>Bb</i>	B	C	D				
3	D	E	F	F#	G	A	<i>Bb</i>	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G			
4	G	A	<i>Bb</i>	B	C	D	E	F	F#	G	A	<i>Bb</i>	B	C			

G Major (& E natural minor) scales: White boxes
 G Major (& E minor) pentatonic: Underlined
b3 (Bb) & b7 (F) notes for G MAJOR: Italicized

Key of G Major Root Notes **G**
 Key of E minor Root Notes **E**



Key of G Major (and E minor)

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Fretboard Jig ~ C Major (IV) Chord Notes (purple circles)

Fret #:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
1	<u>E</u>		F#	<u>G</u>		A	<i>Bb</i>	B	<u>C</u>		D	<i>Eb</i>	E		F#	<u>G</u>		A
2	A	<i>Bb</i>	B	<u>C</u>		D	<i>Eb</i>	E		F#	<u>G</u>		A	<i>Bb</i>	B	<u>C</u>		D
3	D	<i>Eb</i>	<u>E</u>		F#	<u>G</u>		A	<i>Bb</i>	B	<u>C</u>		D	<i>Eb</i>	E		F#	<u>G</u>
4	<u>G</u>		A	<i>Bb</i>	B	<u>C</u>		D	<i>Eb</i>	E		F#	<u>G</u>		A	<i>Bb</i>	B	<u>C</u>

G Major (& E natural minor) scales: White boxes
 G Major (& E minor) pentatonic: Underlined
b3 (Eb) & b7 (Bb) notes for C MAJOR: Italicized

Key of G Major Root Notes G

Key of E minor Root Notes E

Fretboard Jig ~ D Major (V) Chord Notes (orange circles)

Fret #:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
1	<u>E</u>	F	<u>F#</u>	<u>G</u>		A		B	C		D		E	F	<u>F#</u>	<u>G</u>		A
2	<u>A</u>		B	C		D		E	F	<u>F#</u>	<u>G</u>		A		B	C		D
3	<u>D</u>		<u>E</u>	F	<u>F#</u>	<u>G</u>		A		B	C		D		E	F	<u>F#</u>	<u>G</u>
4	<u>G</u>		<u>A</u>		B	C		D		E	F	<u>F#</u>	<u>G</u>		A		B	C

G Major (& E natural minor) scales: White boxes
 G Major (& E minor) pentatonic: Underlined
b3 (F) & b7 (C) notes for D MAJOR: Italicized

Key of G Major Root Notes G

Key of E minor Root Notes E



Key of G Major (and E minor)

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CHORD & SCALE JIG		- Notes in white boxes show the diatonic chords and scales. - Notes in <i>italics</i> are commonly used notes outside of the key.									
Chord Names and Roman Numerals below: Major / relative minor key		1	2	<i>b3</i>	3	4	5	<i>b6</i>	6	<i>b7</i>	7
G MAJOR I / III	G	A	<i>Bb</i>	B	C	D	<i>E</i>	F	F#		
A minor ii / iv	A	C	<i>C#</i>			E	<i>G</i>				
B minor iii / v	B	D	<i>D#</i>			F#	<i>A</i>				
C MAJOR IV / VI	C	<i>Eb</i>	E			G	<i>Bb</i>				
D MAJOR V / VII	D	F	F#			A	<i>C</i>				
E minor vi / i	E	F#	G	<i>G#</i>	A	B	<i>C</i>	D			
F MAJOR <i>bVII / bII</i>	F		<i>Ab</i>	A		C	<i>Eb</i>				

Chords & Scales	
Chord Type:	Use notes in columns:
Major-----	1, 3, 5
7, dom 7-----	1, 3, 5, b7
minor-----	1, b3, 5
min 7, m7-----	1, b3, 5, b7
Scale Type:	Use notes in columns:
Major-----	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Major pentatonic--	1, 2, 3, 5, 6
nat. min.---	1, 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, b7
min. pentatonic-	1, b3, 4, 5, b7

Some G Major Chord Progressions	
I-V-I	G-D-G
I-IV-V	G-C-D
I-V-IV	G-D-C
I-vi-IV-V	G-Em-C-D
I-vi-ii-V	G-Em-Am-D
I-ii-IV-V	G-Am-C-D
V-IV-I	D-C-G

More G Major Chord Progressions	
I-iii-ii-V	G-Bm-Am-D
ii-V-I	Am-D-G
I-bVII-IV-V	G-F-C-D
I-II-IV-V	G-A-C-D
I-III-IV-iv	G-B-C-Cm
I-III7-VI7-II7-V7	
G-B7-E7-A7-D7	

Some E minor Chord Progressions	
i-v-i	Em-Bm-Em
i-VII-v	Em-D-Bm
i-VII-i	Em-D-Em
i-V-i	Em-B-Em
i-iv-V	Em-Am-B
i-VII-VI-V	Em-D-C-B
i-iv-VI-V	Em-Am-C-B

Fretboard Jig ~ A minor (ii) Chord Notes (red circles)

Fret #:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1	E	<i>F#</i>	G		A		B	C	<i>C#</i>	D		E	<i>F#</i>	G		A	
2	A	B	C	<i>C#</i>	D		E		F#	G		A	B	C	<i>C#</i>	D	
3	D	E		F#	G		A		B	C	<i>C#</i>	D		E	F#	G	
4	G	A		B	C	<i>C#</i>	D		E		F#	G		A	B	C	

G Major (& E natural minor) scales: White boxes
 G Major (& E minor) pentatonic: Underlined
 (C#) notes for A MAJOR (II) chords: *Italicized*

Key of G Major Root Notes	G
Key of E minor Root Notes	E



Key of G Major (and E minor)

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Fretboard Jig ~ B minor (iii) Chord Notes (yellow circles)

Fret #:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1	E	F#	G	A	B	C	D	D#	E	F#	G	A	B	C	D		
2	A	B	C	D	D#	E	F#	G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G	A	
3	D	D#	E	F#	G	A	B	C	D	D#	E	F#	G	A	B	C	
4	G	A	B	C	D	D#	E	F#	G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G	

G Major (& E natural minor) scales: White boxes
 G Major (& E minor) pentatonic: Underlined
 (D#) notes for B MAJOR (III) chords: *Italicized*

Key of G Major Root Notes G

Key of E minor Root Notes E

Fretboard Jig ~ E minor (vi) Chord Notes (blue circles)

Fret #:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1	E	F#	G	G#	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G	G#	A	B	C	D	
2	A	B	C	D	D#	E	F#	G	G#	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G	
3	D	D#	E	F#	G	G#	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G	G#	A	B	
4	G	G#	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G	G#	A	B	C	D	E	F#	

G Major (& E natural minor) scales: White boxes
 G Major (& E minor) pentatonic: Underlined
 (G#) notes for E MAJOR (VI) chords: *Italicized*

Key of G Major Root Notes G

Key of E minor Root Notes E



Quick Major Key Decoder

Essential Mandolin ~ E-Book 2nd Ed.



14 Major Keys: I-bVII chords The chords of each key (the horizontal rows) make up TONS of popular, Major key songs. Learn the Roman numerals, and you can play them in any key!

Key (Root)

Essential Edition p.#	I MAJOR	ii minor	iii minor	IV MAJOR	V MAJOR	vi minor	bVII MAJOR	CAPO CORNER
3-6	G	Am	Bm	C	D	Em	F	E3, D5, C7
	Ab	Bbm	Cm	Db	Eb	Fm	Gb	G1, E4, D6
7-10	A	Bm	C#m	D	E	F#m	G	G2, E5, D7
	Bb	Cm	Dm	Eb	F	Gm	Ab	A1, G3, E6
11-14	B	C#m	D#m	E	F#	G#m	A	A2, G4, E7
	C	Dm	Em	F	G	Am	Bb	A3, G5
	C#	D#m	E#m	F#	G#	A#m	B	C1, A4, G6
15-18	Db	Ebm	Fm	Gb	Ab	Bbm	Cb	C1, A4, G6
	D	Em	F#m	G	A	Bm	C	C2, A5, G7
	Eb	Fm	Gm	Ab	Bb	Cm	Db	D1, C3, A6
19-22	E	F#m	G#m	A	B	C#m	D	D2, C4, A7
	F	Gm	Am	Bb	C	Dm	Eb	E1, D3, C5
	F#	G#m	A#m	B	C#	D#m	E	E2, D4, C6
	Gb	Abm	Bbm	Cb	Db	Ebm	Fb	E2, D4, C6

USING THE QUICK MAJOR KEY DECODER-

When you know the chords that make up the commonly played **Keys of G, A, C, D, & E Major** (shown in the 5 white rows above), **AND** you can think of those chords as Roman numerals (I, ii, iii, IV, etc.), then you can use this Quick Major Key Decoder to change songs from any one of those keys into another key. This is called **transposing**, and I do this all of the time to change songs into better keys for my (pretty limited) vocal range. :-)

For example, if a song is in the **Key of G Major**, and the chord progression is **G MAJOR - E minor - C MAJOR - D MAJOR**, then I can see that it's a **I-vi-IV-V** chord progression. If I want to transpose this chord progression into the **Key of D Major**, then I can see that the progression becomes **D MAJOR - B minor - G MAJOR - A MAJOR**. You can play a **I-vi-IV-V** chord progression in any key when you know the Roman numerals of the chords you're playing.

Knowing which chords make up the keys AND the Roman numerals for each chord are two big secrets to figuring out songs on the fly!

USING THE CAPO CORNER-

The "magic" of capos is that while someone plays chords & scales from one key, the capo changes the **Actual Key**. The CAPO CORNER shows the key someone is playing chords from, followed by the fret where they would put their capo. Here are a few examples:

Actual Key of Song:	Play Chords from Key of:	Put Capo on Fret #:	CAPO CORNER:
G MAJOR	E MAJOR	3	E3
G MAJOR	D MAJOR	5	D5
Ab MAJOR	G MAJOR	1	G1
A MAJOR	G MAJOR	2	G2
Bb MAJOR	A MAJOR	1	A1
B MAJOR	A MAJOR	2	A2
C#/Db MAJ.	C MAJOR	1	C1
Eb MAJOR	D MAJOR	1	D1

FINAL THOUGHTS-

I hope that many of the tools in this book help you to **SEE** musical ideas more clearly, and opens up all sorts of new, useful ideas in your playing. Best of luck on your musical journey!

Happy playing, *Scott Sharp*