Hit Maker Guitar Game Rules   ©2025 David C. Walley

No talent required. No theory aloud.

For 2 to 7 players, and 1 or more real guitars. Every game creates guitar chords and lyrics which, with work, could be a real-world hit!

A guitar is not strictly required, but adds a sound-track and fun. Chords can be demonstrated on the game guitar, but you need to hear them on a real guitar to appreciate your own creativity. Check dcwalley.com for latest news on the video game with audio.

Create music and lyrics for your band's next hit.

You are in a band, working together on a new song, but you are also trying to be the star and win one of 2 awards, and co-ownership of the song (consult a lawyer if you must - this is a game).

For **Best Lyrics:** anyone who cares to join in applauds for individual players, and most applause wins. EXCEPTION: For 2 players and no audience, there is no Best Lyrics award.

For **Best Music:** players score points for playing or changing chords. Highest score wins. Add a clip to the fretboard at a valid number, and score points by touching as many clips at once as you can. Or, spend a cam to change the numbers-in-play for a higher score.

With 2 players, turns alternate. With 3 or more, turns are randomized by the dice. The game ends when all players but one are out of cams.

Game Pieces

Magical Musical Ring - with note numbers 1 to 12 like a clock, but odd numbers are in odd places.

Key - with spindle. 7 emoji faces align with numbers.

14 **Cams** - with arms that cover emojis and point at note numbers, including: 2 Major, 2 minor, 1 suspended, 1 diminished, and 1 Augmented 3-note cams, and 2 square, 2 single step, 2 triangle step, and 1 straight 2-note cams. The ring, key, and 1 or 2 cams on the spindle, make up '**the stack**', placed in the center of the circle of players. Arms of the cams point to the valid note numbers currently in play - 'the chord'.
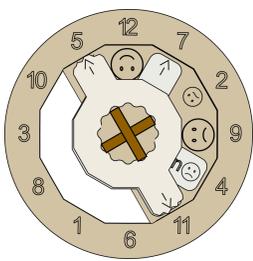
Stack with straight cam on minor cam on key. Numbers in play = 5, 7, 4 and 11

Headstock — Nut — "Higher" strings
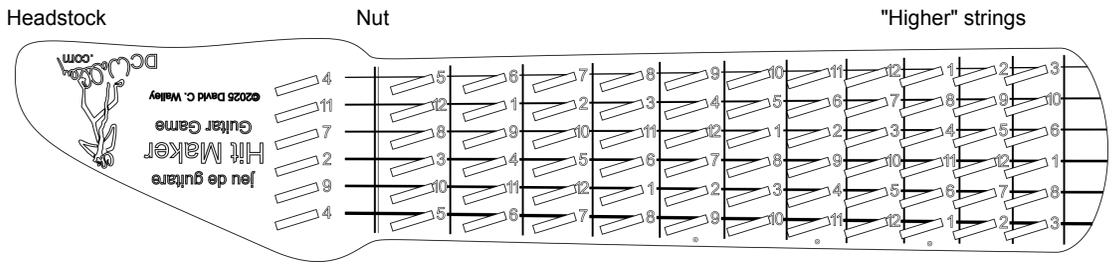
Open string slots — Neck — "Lower" strings

From guitar player's viewpoint, looking over and down at Fretboard, and upside-down from audience's view.

Fretboard - clip-slots arranged on a guitar neck. 6 'strings' of numbered slots run from the 'headstock', across the double-lined 'nut', and vertical 'frets' along the 'neck'. 6 slots in the headstock mark 'open strings'. Note: 'higher' strings, from a musical and guitar player's point of view, are upside-down from the audience point of view, that is, when played in a normal way, higher strings are closer to the ground.

12 **Clips** - shared by all. Extras are not used. Fit in slot, and slide right to grab onto and cover a numbered finger position.

1 single **Dice**.

You will need a **pen** for keeping score and recording lyrics on a **score sheet** you can download and print from dcwalley.com. The score sheet includes diagrams for optionally recording interesting chords found during a game, for later use and refinement.

Band Leader

The Band Leader is the organizer of the game and guitar player of the band. The Band Leader records the score and lyrics, and sets up the game:

- Fit the key into the ring, at any one of 12 positions.
- Choose 'happy' or 'sad' on the score sheet, and write the number aligned with that emoji.
- Place a cam, not Augmented or straight, on the stack spindle, with all arms covering emojis within the key.
- Invite others to join in a circle around the stack, and play: Accordion, Bass, Cowbell, Drums, Electronics, or Flute.
- Make up and write down a band name and song title.
- Starting with the player to the left of the Band Leader, and continuing around the circle, each player claims 1 cam at-a-time for their own stockpile. For 2 players - each claims 6 cams; 3 players - 4 each; 4 players - 3 each; 5 or more - 2 each (with 7 players, Band Leader gets only 1). EXCEPTION: short game - everyone claims 1 or 2.
- Unclaimed cams are discarded for the remainder of the game.
- Roll the dice. Count the number shown, clockwise around the circle of other players, not including the Band Leader. The player the count ends on goes first.

Your Turn

Choose an option: play the chord; or, change the chord.

If you have no cams and no clips remain, then remove 4 clips of your choosing from the fretboard, return them to the shared supply, and continue with option 1. Otherwise...

You must choose option 1 if you need or might need a cam for option 2, but have none. You must choose option 2 if no clips remain in the shared supply but you have a cam.

Numbers in play = 7, 2, and 11
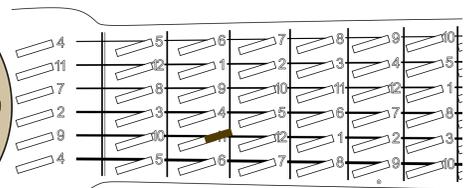
Clip in slot labelled 11 - a valid number in play

## Option 1) Add a Clip and Play the Chord

The cam or cams on the stack should be pointing to 2, 3 or 4 note numbers around the ring. These are the valid numbers in play. Take a clip from the shared supply, place it in an open clip-slot, and slide it to cover a valid number on the fretboard.

To score points, demonstrate how to play the chord (in this case - just one note) while physically holding the fretboard as if playing a real guitar. Numbers look right-side-up to you, looking down, while the headstock title is right-side-up for the audience. Announce which clips you intend to use, then touch all simultaneously.

EXCEPTION: clips in the headstock are 'open-strings' that score points without a touch.

Touch tops of scoring clips, with left-hand fingers, and thumb holding from the back (for 3 seconds, if challenged). You may grip and support the fretboard with your right hand.

If a real guitar is available, then players should use it to demonstrate the chord. Each scoring string must ring clear when plucked. The spirit of play is not to take too long, or you risk getting booed. It's a show people!
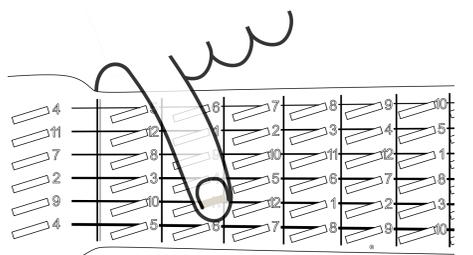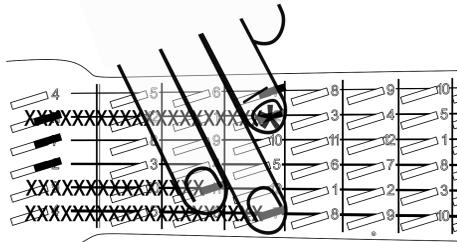

First turn: 1 touched clip = 1 point

Subject to the following:

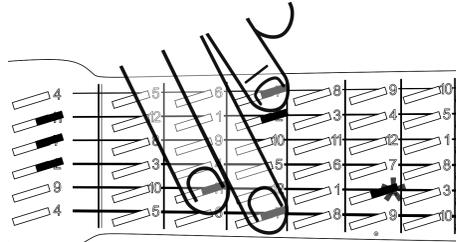- The newly placed clip must be a scoring clip - valid, and touched or open-string.

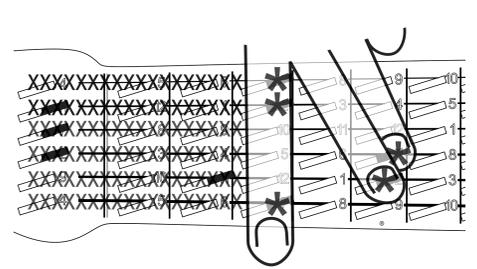Later: 3 open strings, 2 touched clips = 5 points

- Only one clip per string can be a scoring clip. A touched clip 'blocks' from scoring, all other clips on the string closer to the headstock.

New clip* blocks an open clip. 5 points
(could have used 6th string)

New clip* is not touched. 0 points

Barre finger touching all strings, blocking on all
strings. 5 points*

- One finger may touch more than one clip. In musical terms - 'barre chords' are okay. A finger, usually the index finger, may be placed straight across 2 or more strings at one fret, touching multiple clips at once, leaving other fingers free to touch other clips.
- A barre finger blocks all strings it crosses. On a string touched or crossed, clips closer to the headstock are blocked and are not scoring clips.

Score

If successful: Score **1 point** FOR EACH STRING with a touched or open-string clip.

If unsuccessful: because of a mistake, inability to demonstrate the chord when challenged, or any other reason, score zero for the turn, but the new clip remains. Retries are not allowed (but give beginners some slack. We're a band, people).

Option 2) Change the Stack (and Numbers in Play)
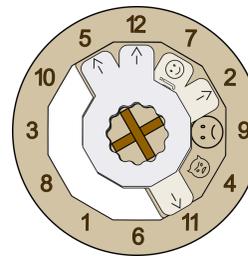
Make one of the following changes:
- **Add** 1 cam to the stack, taken from your stockpile.
- **Remove** and discard 1 of the 2 cams on the stack. This is the only change allowed if you have no cams.
- **Replace** a cam on the stack (discarding it), with a cam taken from your stockpile.
- **Turn** 1 cam on the stack to another position, or both cams by the same amount. Roll the dice and discard a cam from your stockpile if rolling an odd number.

Subject to the following:

- There must be exactly 1 or 2 cams on the stack.

- The straight cam must not be alone on the stack.

- The arms of the cams must point at exactly 2, 3 or 4 note numbers - which become the new numbers in play. A cam on top of another must overlap carefully, because together the cams must not point at 5 or more numbers.

- All numbers must be within the key, so all cam arms are on top of an emoji on the key. EXCEPTION: This is not possible with the Augmented cam, so 1 of its arms may be outside of the key, but not 2. Subsequent cams may overlap with this arm (and may remain and be overlapped, if the Augmented cam is removed or replaced).

- If no legal play is possible, discard a cam and score zero points.

- Cogs are usually placed right-side-up on the stack. EXCEPTION: If writing a sad song, you may place a Major cam upside-down and treat it as a Minor cam pointing at 3 numbers. If writing a happy song, you may place a Minor cam upside-down and treat it as a Major cam.

- You may bring the bottom cam to the top with no effect on play, if nothing else changes.

4 numbers in play - 12, 7, 2, 11

5 numbers selected - NOT ALLOWED.

Placing cam with arm outside of key is NOT ALLOWED.

Aug cam is exception to the rule. 5, 9, 1 in play.

Second cog may overlap arm of Aug cam. 5, 9, 4, 1 in play.
10 points for adding cam.

If Aug cam is removed, other cam can now stay. 9, 4, 1 in play.
5 points for removing cam.

Score

Remove clips that are no longer valid, returning them to the shared supply.
- **Add** a cam - score **10 points**.
- **Remove** a cam - **5 points**.
- **Replace** - If at least 1 clip removed, **10 points** plus number of valid clips REMAINING in fretboard. **0 points** if no clips removed.
- **Turn** - If at least 1 clip removed, **10 points** plus number of valid clips REMAINING in fretboard. **0 points** if no clips removed.
Demonstrating on guitar is not required.

End of Turn

Declare points scored, and allow others to challenge. The Band Leader adds this to your total on the score sheet.

If an error is noticed by any player AFTER this turn, corrections are made immediately to the stack or clips only, not scores.

Add Creative Lyrics

If scoring points, you must add to the end of the lyrics, building on the title and existing lyrics. Add at least one word, and at most the number of points scored. If scoring zero, you may repeat 1 line or 1 word from the title or existing lyrics.

You are encouraged to sing or rap the lyrics, especially if playing a guitar. Quality of contributions, creativity, and enthusiasm should be noted, and applauded when determining the Best Lyrics award.

If at least 2 players still have cams, then...

Roll the dice

Count the number shown, clockwise around the circle of players not including yourself. The player the count ends on, is next.

BUT, if only 1 player still has cams, then the game ends...

End of Game

The player with the highest score wins the **Best Music Award**. In case of a tie, the last of the tied players to have scored is the winner.

The player who gets the most applause from other players and anyone nearby, wins the **Best Lyrics Award**. The Band Leader names each player in turn, starting with themself, and everyone applauds for outstanding contributions. Most applause, according to the Band Leader, wins.

In case of a tie, or 2 or more boos, the Band Leader names the tied players a second time for applause, and makes a final decision. If you don't like the Band Leader's decision, welcome to the music industry.

Solitaire

The game pieces and rules can be used to explore chords, chord progressions, keys and harmony, with or without other players or score-keeping. The objective is to write a song using new discoveries and inspirations. Don't ruin the fun by telling students, but learning the rules of the game means learning rules about music. Learning strategies of the game means learning strategies of song-writing.

In any case, no theory aloud. Them's the rules.