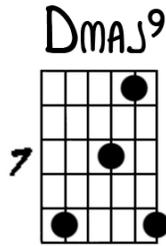


The Natural String Sets

By James Hober

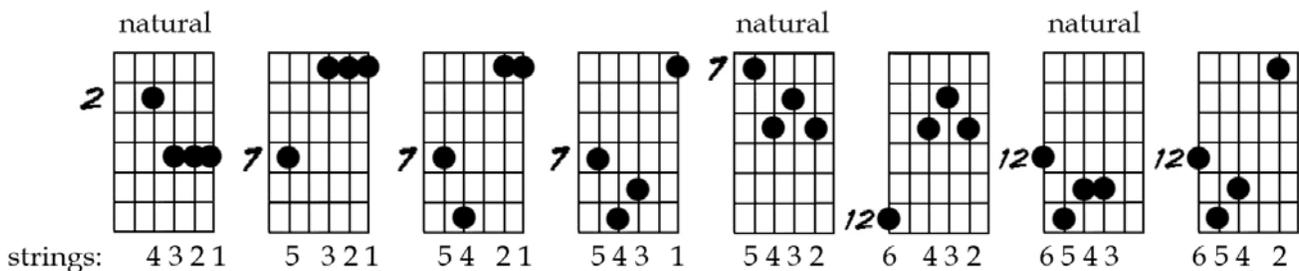
Before we get into building chords, let's take a short timeout to discuss string sets more deeply. Then when we build, we'll have an idea about which strings to use for each voicing group. As far as I know, Ted didn't use the term "natural string sets" as I am. But he certainly noticed that many, perhaps most, chords in a particular voicing group *naturally* fall on certain string sets. By "naturally" I mean relatively comfortably for the left hand. Hence, he organized his Seven Basic Qualities sheets and some of the other V-System sheets by string set.

Ted was also definitely interested in anomalies like:



This Dmaj9 chord is a V-2. Most V-2s find a comfortable home on four adjacent strings: 4-3-2-1, 5-4-3-2, or 6-5-4-3. But this Dmaj9 sits **more** comfortably on strings 5-3-2-1. I remember Ted pointing out this unusual V-2 to me in a lesson. He also mentions it in his personal notes. So certain exceptional chords, more easily played on strings other than a natural string set, were intriguing to him.

Since the V-System is a way to organize four note chords, each V-System chord uses exactly four of the six strings. How do you decide which four? One approach might be to try to find as many different string sets as possible on which to play a given voicing. "Look, Mom! I can play a root position V-2 Emaj7 chord all these ways":



Some of these chord fingerings are practical and some less so because they involve unnecessary stretching or contorting. The ones labeled "natural" are all comfortable and practical. These are the natural string sets for V-2.

Sometimes another string set is also reasonable: e.g., in the case above, the 5-3-2-1. It's not one of the natural string sets for V-2 because most other V-2 chords don't work out well on this set of strings. But it's a good example of a useful string set for the particular V-2 voicing shown above.

When you build your own chords, use a natural string set as a guideline. Then, in certain situations, you may find that things finger better with a variant, probably a slight variant. You'll generally want to avoid fingerings like the ones shown above on 5-4-2-1, 5-4-3-1, 6-4-3-2, and 6-5-4-2. Save your stretching capabilities for those situations where it's the **only** way to get a particular voicing. Believe me, Ted's material will offer you plenty of those!

(Actually, sometimes Ted would prefer a more difficult fingering, either for tone or smooth connection to surrounding chords.)

The following chart can be helpful to have on hand when you're building a voicing.

The Natural String Sets

For each voicing group, the most important, and generally the most used, set of strings is listed first!

- V-1:** middle four 5-4-3-2, top four 4-3-2-1, and bottom four 6-5-4-3
- V-2:** top four 4-3-2-1, middle four 5-4-3-2, and bottom four 6-5-4-3
- V-3:** top set 5-4-3-1 and bottom set 6-5-4-2
- V-4:** bottom set 6-4-3-2 and top set 5-3-2-1
- V-5:** top set 5-4-2-1 and bottom set 6-5-3-2
- V-6:** 6-3-2-1
- V-7:** 6-3-2-1
- V-8:** 6-4-2-1, 6-4-3-1, 6-5-3-1, or 6-5-2-1
- V-9:** 6-5-4-1
- V-10:** 6-5-2-1
- V-11:** 6-4-3-1, 6-5-4-1, or 6-5-3-1
- V-12:** 6-3-2-1, 6-4-3-1, or 6-4-2-1
- V-13:** 6-5-2-1, 6-5-3-2, or 5-4-2-1
- V-14:** 6-5-4-1, 6-5-4-2, or 5-4-3-1

—James