

Major and Minor Chords Root position

The simplest chords are made up of three notes – from the bottom of a chord, each note is a third away from the next. We call these parts of the chord the root, third and fifth. The C major chord uses the notes C E G. C is the root of the chord. E is the third of the chord and G is the fifth of the chord. In major chords, the third is a major third from the root. The C minor chord uses the notes C E \flat and G. In minor chords the third is a minor third from the root.

On the viola we can't play chords with the third in its regular position (sometimes called "closed" position because the notes are as close to each other as they can be). Instead, we put the third up an octave. So we play the chord with root on the bottom, then fifth, then third (now actually a "tenth").

Here are the major chords on the viola in root position. That means the name (or letter) of the chord is the lowest note. Notice that except for the C and the G chords, all of the chords in this position are played with the fingers placed with the lower finger (1,2 or 3) covering two strings and the next finger (high 2, high 3, high 4) on the third string.

For pizzicato chords, hold the viola like a guitar. If you're sitting, hold the viola in your lap. If you are standing cradle the body of the viola with your right elbow draped over the chin-piece. Your left hand holds the neck of the instrument while you are placing your fingers into chords.

Major Chords

Play pizzicato guitar style: Strum with your index finger or your thumb downwards from the lowest note to the highest note of the chord.

Musical notation for Major Chords on the viola in root position. The chords are arranged in two rows. The first row contains C, D \flat , D, E \flat , E, F, F \sharp , and G. The second row contains A \flat , A, B \flat , B, and C. Each chord is shown with its name above the staff and its fingering below the notes. The C and G chords are played with the index finger (1) on the third string and the thumb (0) on the first and second strings. The other chords are played with the lower finger (1, 2, or 3) covering two strings and the next finger (high 2, high 3, or high 4) on the third string.

Minor Chords

Here are the minor chords on the viola in root position. Notice that except for the C and G minor chords, all of the chords in this position are played with the fingers placed 1 1 close 2, 2 2 close 3 or 3 3 close 4.

Musical notation for Minor Chords on the viola in root position. The chords are arranged in two rows. The first row contains C \flat m, C \sharp m, D \flat m, D \sharp m, E \flat m, F \flat m, F \sharp m, and G \flat m. The second row contains G \sharp m, A \flat m, B \flat m, B \sharp m, and C \flat m. Each chord is shown with its name above the staff and its fingering below the notes. The C \flat m and G \flat m chords are played with the index finger (1) on the third string and the thumb (0) on the first and second strings. The other chords are played with the lower finger (1, 2, or 3) covering two strings and the next finger (high 2, high 3, or high 4) on the third string.