

- A **capo** can both raise/lower the key *and/or* expand voicing possibilities (chord shapes) for solo or ensemble playing
 - i.e. Raising the key you're playing in using the same chord shapes – or – Playing in the same key as you were before, but with different chord shapes
- A **partial capo** expands voicing possibilities (chord shapes) *and* allows different strings to ring behind the capo, creating new and fuller sounds to your chords

RULE OF THUMB

When you want to transpose/change the chord shapes you're using, without changing the actual key, remember:

*As you move the capo **UP** the neck (1 whole step, 3 half steps, etc.), use the chord shape that is the same interval **DOWN** from its previous shape*

– OR –

*As you move the capo **DOWN** the neck (1 whole step, 3 half steps, etc.), use the chord shape that is the same interval **UP** from its previous shape*

Example 1: Play an E chord with no capo. Then put any capo (Standard, Drop-D or Shortcut) on the 2nd fret (1 whole step UP). When you do this, you will need play the chord shape that is 1 whole step DOWN from E, which would be D, in order to stay in the same key. The note value you are hearing is still E because you have essentially raised the D chord one whole step to E. If you're using the Drop-D or Shortcut capo on the 2nd fret, then the low E string is still open and is the new root to the D chord "shape." With the shortcut capo, you have the option to not fret the top two high strings so you can utilize them as droning open strings. The same would apply for any other chord that you're playing in that key.

- E, A, B with no capo would then become D, G, A, if the capo is on the 2nd fret (each chord shape is one whole step down from the previous chord shape)

The frets you'll typically put the partial capos on for the most convenient chord voicings are 2, 4, 5, 7 or 9 frets *above the nut*. However, this means that if you put a standard capo on 3, then that is the new "nut" and your low open bass string would be a G. So, use the partial capos in those fret increments (+2, 4, 5, 7, 9) above the standard capo to when determining how to transpose your chord shapes.

Thinking in terms of specific Keys

If you know all your chord shapes in different keys, then there's another way to think of this is. If you're in the *Key of E* with no capo, then you add a capo one whole step up (2nd fret), you will play the *Key of D* chord shapes (one whole step down from E). The same will apply if you move the capo to the 4th fret (another whole step up). Then use the *Key of C* chord shapes (one whole step down from D), and so on.

1. Partial capo: Drop-D™ / Short-Cut™ in Root position

Drop-D™ capo (or upside down standard capo) covering strings 1-5

- leaves low 6th string open

Short-Cut™ capo covering strings 3-5

- leaves low 6th string, as well as 1st & 2nd strings open

For starters, for all of these positions, you will remain in the key of E major because we're keeping the open low 6th string as the root of our I chord. To raise the key for your voice, if you put a standard capo on the 1st fret (raising the open low 6th string to F) then add a partial capo two frets up (+2) on the 3rd fret, the same shapes will work from the table, but now you'll be in F major. As you move the standard capo up the neck, it will continue to raise the actual key you're in, as long as you keep the partial capo +2 above the standard capo.

Playing behind the capo

You can also play behind the capo, on the strings not covered by the capo, to play individual melodies on the 1st and 2nd strings, or bass lines on the 6th string.

CAPO FRET	CHORD SHAPES		
	I	IV	V
0 - none	E	A	B
+2	D	G	A
+4	C	F	G
+5	B	F#	E

2. Changing the scale degree of the bass note – Partial Capo on 2nd fret (Drop D or Shortcut)

So far when using only one partial capo, we have worked with the low 6th string being the tonic/root of the key we're playing in (the I chord). What if we wanted the low string bass note to be the root of a different chord within a key besides the I chord?

Example 2: When you have a partial capo on the 2nd fret (+2), what if the D shape wasn't the I chord, but the V chord instead? What's a fifth down from D? It would be G. G is now your I chord. Going up the G major scale, C is your IV and D is now your V chord, using the low open 6th string. The top two droning strings (if you're using the Shortcut capo) are still in the key that you are playing in, but the character that they add to the chords underneath will change as you move further and further away from using the open low 6th string as the root of your I chord. This will work with the Drop-D capo as well, but it will only affect the placement of the low bass note instead of changing the color of the high droning strings.

The table below shows the chord shapes you can use within each key as you change which scale degree uses the open low 6th string (i.e. I, ii, iii, IV, V or vi chord). I've listed them in descending order in terms of how open the top droning strings sound over the chords beneath them (if you're using the Shortcut capo; Drop-D will not have top droning strings). The further down the list you go, the more dissonant/jazzy the chords start to sound because the suspended notes of the top two droning strings have a more distant relationship to the chords beneath them.

CHORD SHAPES							Actual key you are in	Where to place standard capo (0) below partial (+2) to play in more convenient keys
Partial Capo +2, Drop D or Shortcut (open low 6 th string)								
I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii ^o		
D	Em	F#m	G	A	Bm	C# ^o	E	3 (G)
G	Am	Bm	C	D	Em	F# ^o	A	3 (C)
A	Bm	C#m	D	E	F#m	G# ^o	B	1 (C), 3 (D)
C	Dm	Em	F	G	Am	B ^o	D	2 (E)
F	Gm	Am	Bb	C	Dm	E ^o	G	2 (A)
Bb	Cm	Dm	Eb	F	Gm	A ^o	C	2 (D)

Note: Notice that when the open low E string is used as the root of the ii, iii and vi chord, the D shape is minor instead of major.

If your song already has a standard capo on the 2nd fret or above:

You're in luck! You can replace your standard capo with either partial capo and move your standard capo DOWN two frets. Then you can play it the way you always have, but listen for new sounds! If you know what key shapes you are playing in, use the table above to find which chord uses the low open string as its root.

3. Multilevel capos - Using two partial capos at the same time (Drop D on 2nd fret & Shortcut on 4th fret)

The table below shows chords within three different keys. Depending which position the C chord shape is in, (i.e. I, IV, or V), the rest of the chords will change within each key will change accordingly.

Example: Playing with the key of G shapes, the open 6th string will be the root of the IV chord shape (C) instead of the I (G). The open 1st & 2nd strings will drone over the rest of the chords in the key adding rich extensions to your chords.

CHORD SHAPES							Actual key you are in	Where to place standard capo (0) below partials (+2, +4) to play in more convenient keys
Drop D capo +2 and Shortcut capo +4								
I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii ^o		
G	Am	Bm	C	D	Em	F# ^o	B	1 (C), 3 (D)
C	Dm	Em	F	G	Am	B ^o	E	3 (G), 5 (A)
F	Gm	Am	Bb	C	Dm	E ^o	A	3 (C), 5 (D)