# guitar TECHNIQUE 3

By Angus Clark and Stig Mathisen

Instructional Design: Stig Mathisen, Guitar Program Chair, Musicians Institute

Ken Rosser: Contributing Consultant

Edited by Joe Bergamini

Digital book design and cover by Mike Hoff

Layout by Rick Gratton

Music engraving by Willie Rose

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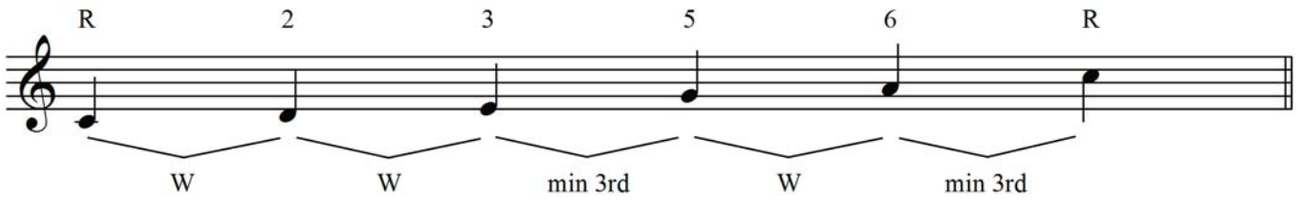
# GUITAR TECHNIQUE 3

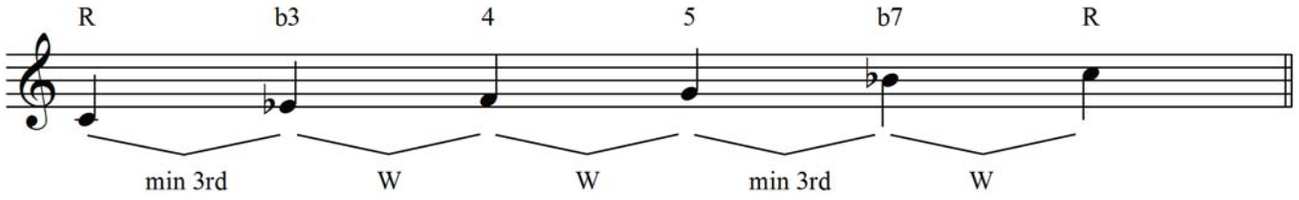
# Chapter 1: Introducing the Pentatonic Scale

A pentatonic scale is a musical scale that consists of five notes per octave. There are numerous pentatonic scales, in this Unit we will be focusing on two of them: The *major pentatonic scale* (R 2 3 5 6) (Example 1.1); and the *minor pentatonic scale* (R b3 4 5 b7) (Example 1.2).

Ex. 1.1 **Major Pent**




Ex. 1.2 **Minor Pent**

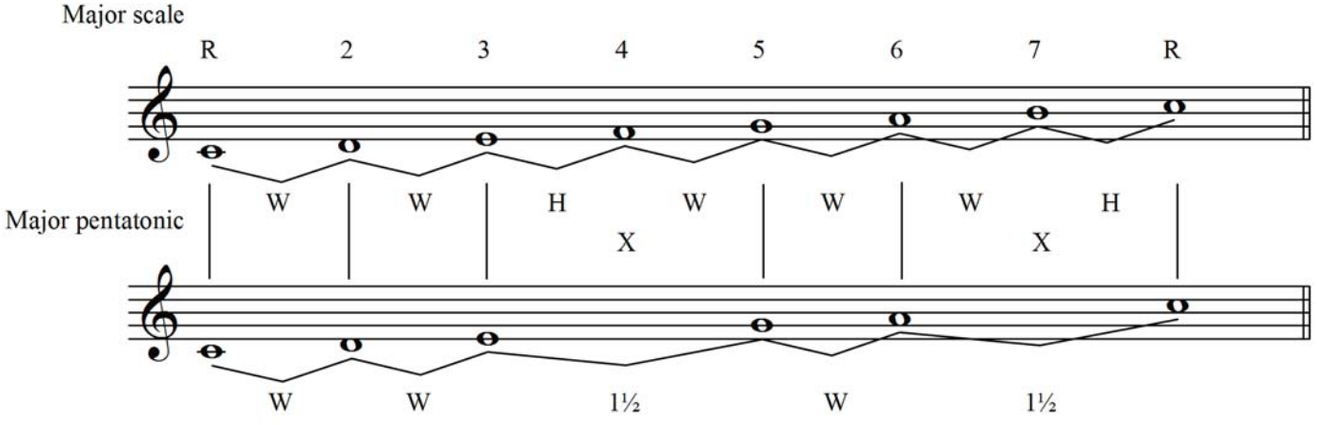



The history of the pentatonic scale spans the world. Both the major and minor pentatonic scales appear in various ancient styles of folk music, including Celtic music and music from the Far East. It is fair to say that some version of what we know as the pentatonic scale pre-dates the contemporary European/Western scale system that most of the examples in this text are based on.

As you will see when we apply the scale to the guitar, the pentatonic scale appears tailor-made for being played on the guitar, or vice-versa. The sound of the pentatonic scale is a staple of the blues, and the guitar is one of the primary instruments in blues music.

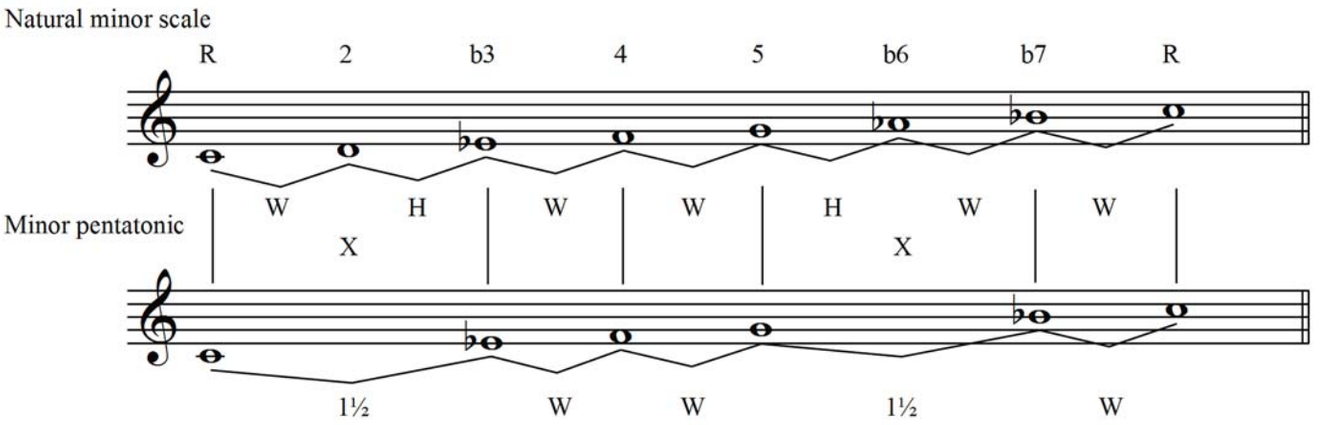
The pentatonic scale is very often explained as a diatonic major or minor scale with the half-steps removed. The major pentatonic scale is created by omitting the fourth and the seventh degrees of the major scale (Example 1.3).

Ex.1.3



Similarly, the minor pentatonic scale is derived from the natural minor scale (Example 1.4), by omitting the second and b6th degrees.

Ex. 1.4




In either pentatonic scale, the interval between any two consecutive notes is either a major second (a whole step), or a minor third (1-½ steps). This structure leads to a more "open" sound. The lack of half steps removes any leading-tone motion that creates a sense of resolution when landing on the tonic. This element of ambiguity is inherent to the sound of the scale and its popularity.

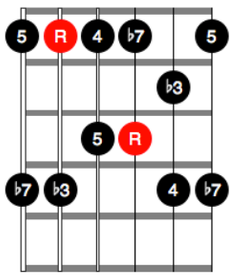
You will recognize the sound of the pentatonic scale in blues, rock, and country music. And, as mentioned before, you can hear it widely used in Celtic music, and in traditional Chinese and Japanese music. These folk styles have influenced many contemporary artists. The major pentatonic is particularly prevalent in country music. Blues and rock styles favor the minor pentatonic scale more heavily, particularly when used against a major or dominant 7 chord where the b3 in the minor pentatonic scale is analyzed as a #9.

# Chapter 2: The Pentatonice Scale in CAGED Patterns

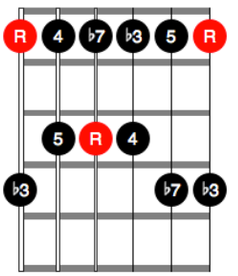
## What to Practice:

We will learn minor pentatonic scale in all of the patterns in the five-pattern system, beginning with patterns 2 and 4: (Example 1.5, 1.6).

Minor Pentatonic
Pattern 2

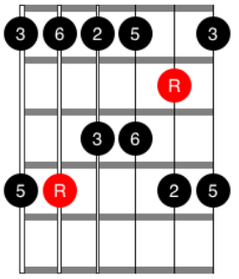



Minor Pentatonic
Pattern 4

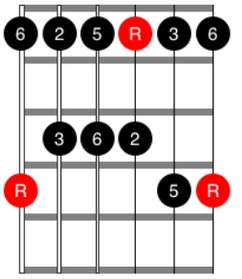



We will also learn all of the patterns of the major pentatonic scale, beginning with patterns 1 and 3: (Examples 1.7, 1.8)

Major Pentatonic
Pattern 1




Major Pentatonic
Pattern3

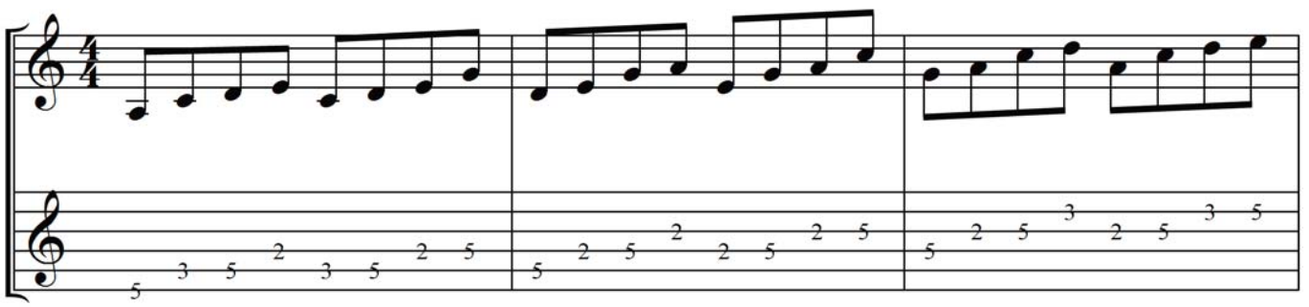


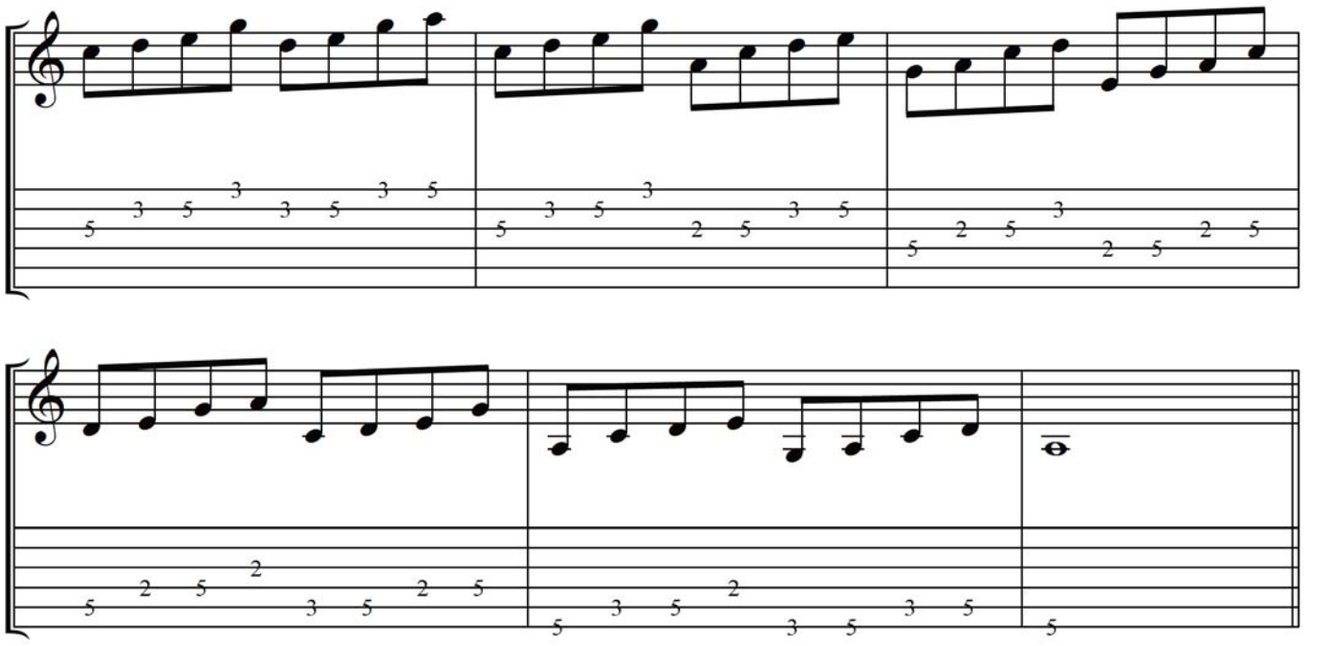

## How to Practice:

In order to refine your ability to pick accurately when playing the pentatonic scale, you should apply the sequencing techniques demonstrated in Technique 1. Remember to practice these sequences with a metronome in all fingerings indicated here, across all twelve keys.

To expand on the idea of practicing sequences, here is another sequence you can use for practicing scales. It is a 1-2-3-4 (Example 1.9).

Ex. 1.9





# Chapter 3: Understanding Voicings

The term *voicing* is derived from arranging music for singers. Each note in a chord is considered a separate voice. The exact arrangement of the chord tones is then referred to as the voicing.

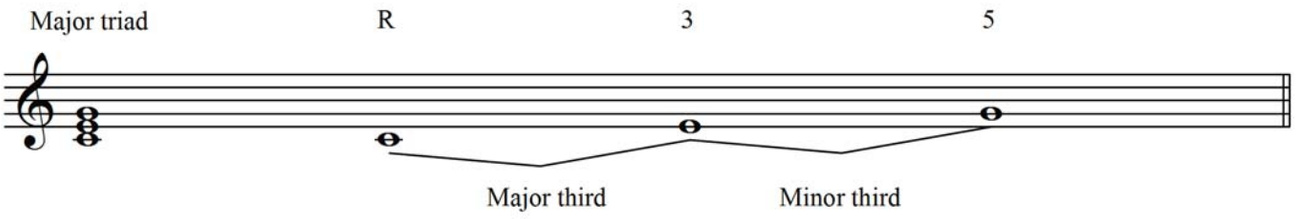
As a guitarist you will spend the bulk of your time in performance playing chords. This may be done as solo accompaniment to a melodic instrument or singer. It may also be done as part of a rhythm section, which will feature other instruments such as the bass (either stand up or electric), drums or other percussion, and keyboard (piano, organ, or synthesizer). In any scenario, you may have been given a specific guitar arrangement either in written or recorded form, or you may have to make your own choices regarding how to best arrange the piece for the guitar. In this section we will be looking at how to expand your vocabulary of chord voicings so that you can choose the right ones for any setting.

There are a myriad of choices when it comes to playing chords. Depending on the style of music you are playing, some will be appropriate and others will not. Modern pop and rock music rely mostly on major and minor triad-based chords. Hard rock and metal very often use chords with no third, sometimes referred to as "power chords". Jazz, blues, and jazz-influenced styles, like R&B, primarily use seventh chords. What follows is an overview of the many different types of chords and chord voicings and how you will learn and organize the voicings available to you.

## The Major Triad

The fundamentals of chord construction were introduced in Technique 1, but we will review them here and how they affect your choices on the instrument. The basic chords for Western music are built in thirds. The chord we are going to use for this set of examples is a major triad, which is comprised of the root, the major third, and the perfect fifth (R 3 5). There is a major third between the root and the third, and a minor third between the third and the fifth. When played in this manner (R 3 5) this chord voicing is called the *root-position closed voicing* (Example 1.10).

Ex. 1.10

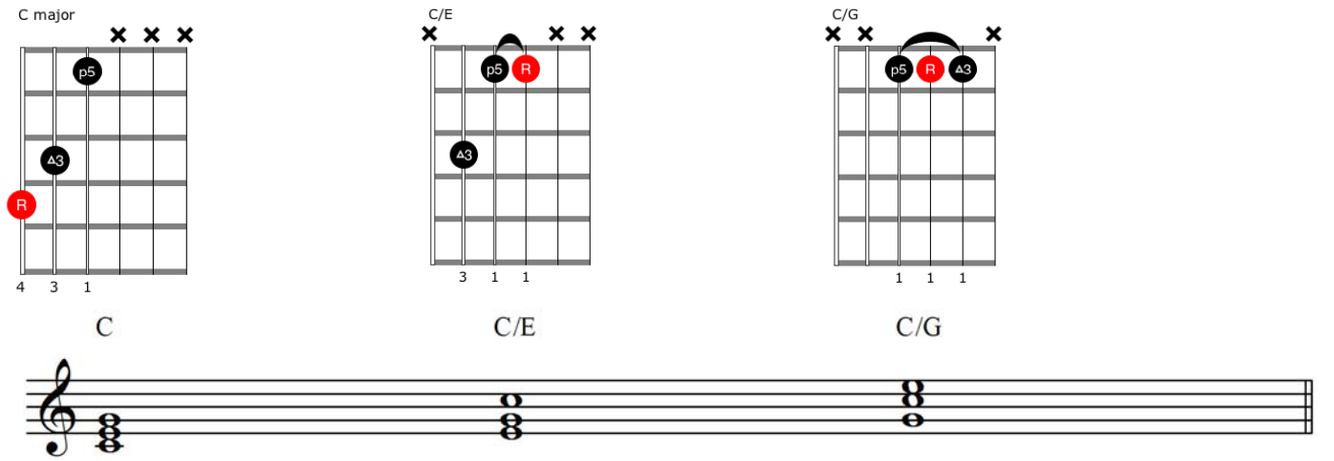



"Root position" means that the note for which the chord is named is the bottom note of the voicing. "Closed" means that the voices are played as close together as possible.

## Inversions

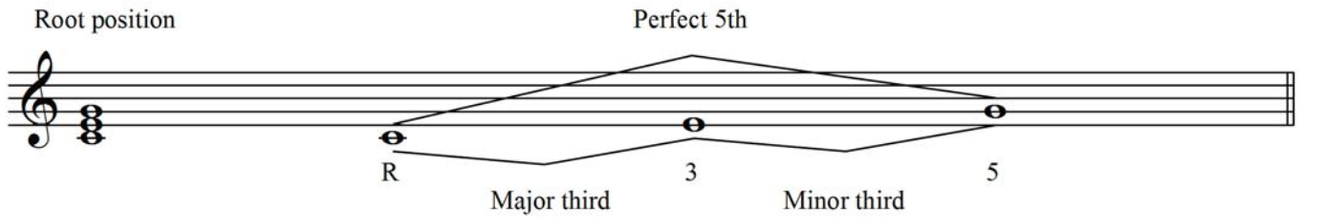
An inversion of a chord is a voicing that uses a note other than the root as the bottom note. For a major triad there are two inversions. The *first inversion* has the third at the bottom and the closed voicing is spelled 3 5 R. The *second inversion* has the fifth at the bottom and is spelled 5 R 3. The common terminology for this is to have the "third on the bottom" or the "fifth in the bass." When the inversion is dictated in a score it is indicated with a slash (/). So a C chord in the first inversion would be "C/E," second inversion would be "C/G."

Ex. 1.11

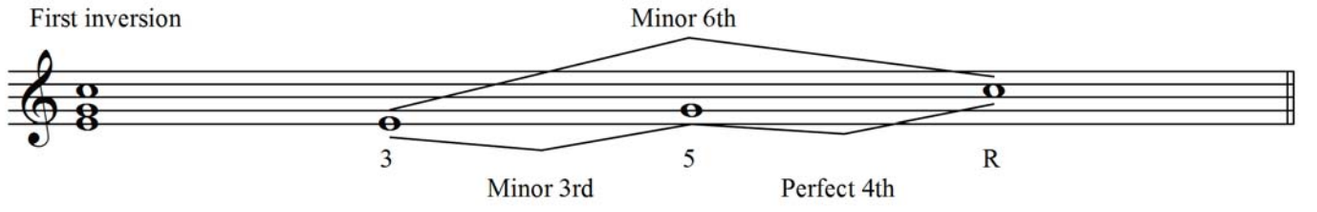



When you play the above example, listen to how changing the inversion of the chord changes the sound. While it is still a major triad, the fact that the root is no longer the bottom voice creates a significant change, as does the change in the top voice. Also, the "internal intervals" of the chord have changed significantly as shown in the example below:

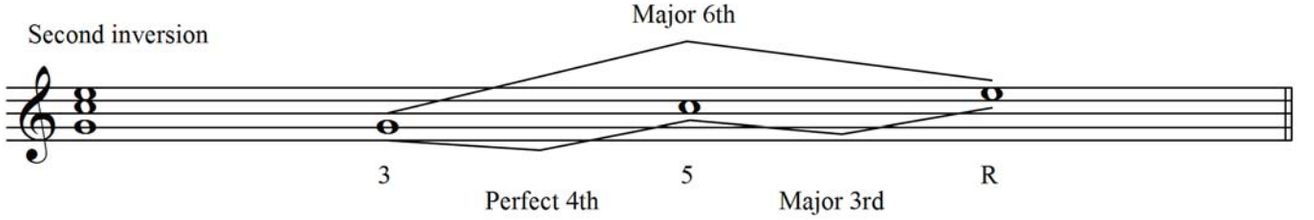
Ex. 1.12




Ex. 1.13



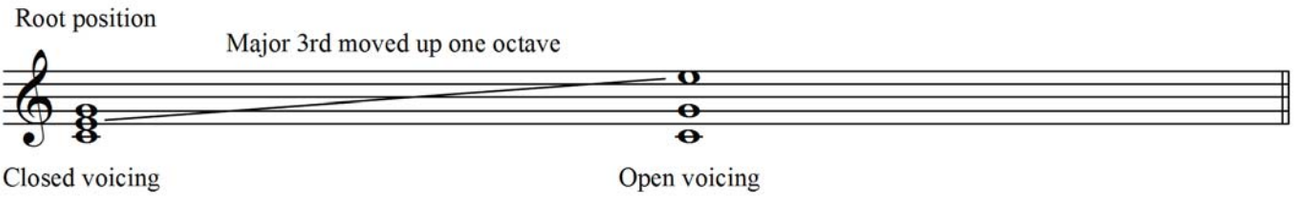

Ex. 1.14



## Open Voicings

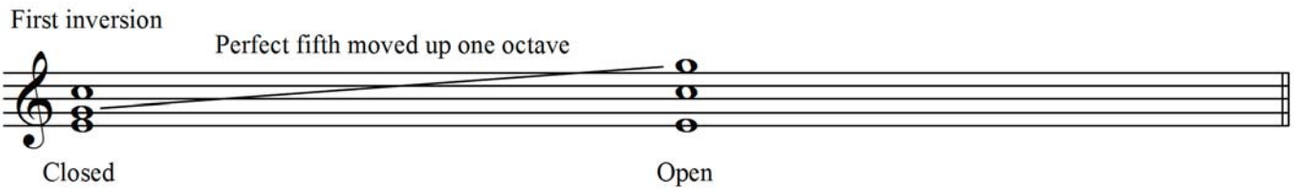
An open voicing is one where the notes of the chord are not as close together as possible. This is accomplished by moving one or more of the voices by an octave. So a root position open voicing major triad (Example 1.15) could be spelled R 5 3, where the third is shifted up an octave from its position in the closed voicing:

Ex. 1.15

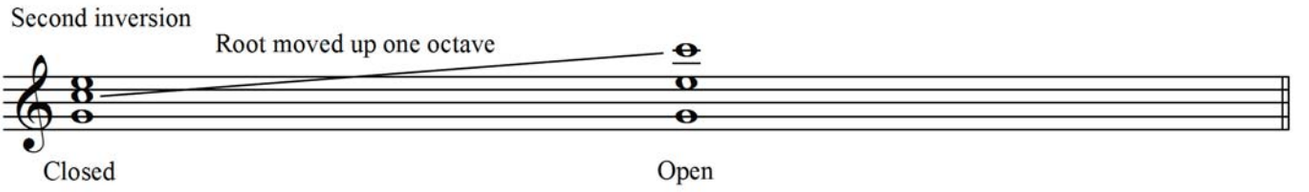



A first inversion open voiced major triad (Ex. 1.16) could be spelled 3 R 5, and the second inversion could be spelled 5 3 R (Ex. 1.17):

Ex. 1.16




Ex. 1.17




Using the word "open" doesn't tell you much about the voicing other than that it is not a closed voicing. Here are some examples of open voice triads and their inversions played on the guitar (Example 1.18). Eric Johnson is a guitar player that makes excellent use of these types of voicings.

Ex. 1.18