

Tenor Banjo Chords *(collected and arranged by Douglas McClure)*

INTRODUCTION:

The chord list on pages 2 and 3 is for the tenor banjo (CGDA tuning). It is much **simpler to use than it looks**. 😊 Just try it out and you'll find it's easy!

For example, let's suppose you're playing chord melody from a lead sheet and you come across this A \flat m7 chord with a melody note of G \flat :



Maybe you're not sure how to play it, or maybe you'd like to see if there is another version besides the one you know (for example, one with a different voicing or bass note). Follow these steps:

1. Find the **m7** chords.
2. Since the melody note (G \flat) is the **seventh** of the chord, go to the line labeled **(7)**.
3. Try out the first chord. You will probably have to **transpose** it (move it up or down) to the appropriate fret. (The chords printed in **blue** have open strings and therefore cannot be moved, but all the other chords can.)

In this example, the first **m7(7)** chord listed is **1122**:



But you need a G \flat on the top string, so move the chord up to frets **8899** (because G \flat is on the 9th fret):

Play it and see how it sounds and feels.



4. Then try the all the other **m7(7)** chords until you find the one that best suits your needs.

Pages 2 and 3 of this document are the most important pages, and if you find them useful you might want to print them out (in color, if possible) to have at hand. Pages 4 to 7 are for those who want a more detailed explanation.

Enjoy!

CAN ALSO USE:
any m7(3),
any major triad (1)

(9)=(2)	1446	Rb749	
	3133	4b759	
	1141	4Rb79	
	7507	4b7R9	(D)
	0757	b7R49	(D)
	0007	b74R9	(D)
	7530	R4b79	(G)
	5550	b74R9	(G)

CAN ALSO USE:
any m7(5),
any major triad (3)

(11)=(4)	4142	b79R4	
	1122	59b74	
	0788	R9b74	(C)
	3730	Rb794	(E)
	5011	R9b74	(F)
	5073	b7R94	(G)
	0366	9Rb74	(Bb)

CAN ALSO USE:
any m7(7),
any major triad (5)

+ 11
9sus+4 9sus#4
(see also 9-5 and 7sus+4 chords)

(1)	1232	9b7#4R	
(2)	see (9)		
(3)	(the third is not included in eleventh chords)		
(4)	see (11)		
(5)	1231	b7#495	
(7)	2123	R4#9b7	
	2041	95#4b7	(C)
(9)=(2)	4133	#4b759	(C)
	0345	Rb7#49	(C)
(11)=(4)	1123	59b7#4	

13
7/6 7add6 9add6
(some thirteenth chords include the ninth and some do not, but virtually all include the seventh)

(1)	2151	3b76R	
	7640	b736R	(A)
(2)	see (9)		
(3)	3121	69b73	
(5)	4314	b7365	
(6)	see (13)		
(7)	1145	639b7	
(9)=(2)	6531	b7369	
(11)	(the eleventh is not normally included in thirteenth chords)		
(13)=(6)	2124	b73R6	n
	1431	Rb736	a
	2144	b7396	
	5411	3b796	
	4104	R3b76	(E)
	431	b736	aj
	215	3b76	a2j
	124	3R6	nj

13-9
13b9

(1)	6350	6b9b7R	(A)
(2)	see (9)		
(3)	4132	6b9b73	
(5)	4014	b7b965	(F#)
(6)	see (13)		
(7)	1135	63b9b7	
(9)=(2)	6530	b736b9	(Ab)
(11)	(the eleventh is not normally included in thirteenth chords)		
(13)=(6)	2134	b73b96	
	2431	b9b736	
	2134	b73b96	

5401 3b7b96 (Ab)

MINOR CHORDS

minor triad
m mi min -

(1)	1124	R5b3R	n
	1331	b3R5R	a
	4124	b35b3R	a2
	5631	5b35R	
	5205	b35RR	(D)
	6402	5b35R	(B)
	124	5b3R	nj
	631	b35R	
	13	b3R	njj
	31	5R	ajj
(3)	1334	b3R5b3	n
	3112	5R5b3	a
	2351	5b3Rb3	a2
	0016	R5b3b3	(C)
	0056	R55b3	(C)
	6640	R5Rb3	(F#)
	112	R5b3	nj
	640	5Rb3	(B, F#)
	12	5b3	njj
	51	Rb3	
(5)	1244	5b3R5	n
	3341	R5b35	a
	6311	b35R5	
	5133	Rb3R5	
	5730	b3Rb35	(D)
	133	b3R5	nj
	730	Rb35	(G, D)
	41	b35	ajj
	11	R5	

m6
mi6 min6 -6

(1)	2142	b365R	n
	6520	6b35R	(A)
	4540	5b36R	(A)
	213	6b3R	aj
	142	65R	nj
(3)	3132	5R6b3	n
	5112	6R5b3	a
	3640	65Rb3	(F#)
	132	R6b3	nj
(5)	2133	6b3R5	n
	3541	R6b35	a
	6511	b36R5	a2
	1214	5b365	a3
	214	b365	a3j
	541	6b35	aj
	511	6R5	a2j
(6)	1121	R5b36	n
	0135	5b3R6	(F)
	121	5b36	nj
	135	b3R6	aj

m+7
m#7 min/maj7 mM7

(1)	1231	b375R	
(3)	3152	517b3	
	CAN ALSO USE:		
	any +		
(5)	4133	7b315	
	CAN ALSO USE:		
	any +		
(7)	1123	R5b37	
	CAN ALSO USE:		
	any +		

m7
mi7 min7 -7

(1)	1131	b3b75R	n
	1424	Rb7b3R	a
	313	b7b3R	aj
	131	b75R	nj

(3)

3142	5Rb7b3	n
1134	b3b75b3	a
6620	R5b7b3	(F#)
5001	b7R5b3	(G)
142	Rb7b3	nj

SAME AS: 6(1)
CAN ALSO USE:
any major triad (1)

(5)

3133	b7b3R5	n
5113	Rb3b75	a
3641	Rb7b35	a2
5500	b3b7R5	(D)
113	b3b75	aj
641	b7b35	a2j

SAME AS: 6(3)
CAN ALSO USE:
any major triad (3)

(7)

1122	R5b3b7	n
3551	b3R5b7	a
6400	5Rb3b7	(B)
122	5b3b7	nj
511	Rb3b7	
551	R5b7	

SAME AS: 6(5)
CAN ALSO USE:
any major triad (5)

m7-5
m7b5 ø7 ø

(1)	1121	b3b7b5R	n
	0135	5b3R6	(D)
	121	b7b5R	nj
(3)	2142	b5Rb7b3	n
	6520	Rb5b7b3	(F#)
	4540	b7b5Rb3	(F#)
	142	Rb7b3	nj

SAME AS: m6(6)
CAN ALSO USE:
any minor triad (1)

(5)	3132	b7b3Rb5	n
	5112	Rb3b7b5	a
	3640	Rb7b3b5	(Eb)
	112	b3b7b5	aj

SAME AS: m6(3)
CAN ALSO USE:
any minor triad (3)

(7)	2133	Rb5b3b7	n
	3541	b3Rb5b7	a
	6511	b5bRb3b7	a2
	214	b5Rb7	a3j
	541	Rb5b7	aj
	511	bRb3b7	a2j

SAME AS: m6(5)
CAN ALSO USE:
any minor triad (5)

m9
mi9 -9 -7(9)

(1)	2313	9b7b3R	
(3)	2231	59b7b3	
	CAN ALSO USE:		
	any ma7(1)		
(5)	3153	b7b395	
	5520	b3b795	(D)

CAN ALSO USE:
any ma7(3),
any minor triad (1)

(7)	3122	95b3b7	
	1112	R59b7	
	CAN ALSO USE:		
	any ma7(5), any minor triad (3)		
(9)=(2)	1133	b3b759	
	1333	b3R59	
	1426	Rb7b39	
	3441	5b3b79	
	3141	5Rb79	

CAN ALSO USE:
any ma7(7),
any minor triad (5)

DIMINISHED CHORDS

all the diminished chords together
(assuming you're not interested in the details of each chord)
° °7
o o7 dim dim7 -
(this section lists both triads and seventh chords)

(1/3/5/7)	2132 (n), 1324 (a), 4651 (a2), 1321 (a3), 2135 (a4), 3213, 1351, 1354, 4351 0246, 0840, 0510, 3510 132 (nj), 213 (aj), 135 (a4j), 651 (a2j), 321 (a3j) 510, 840 21 (njj), 13 (ajj), 51 (a2jj)		
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diminished triads
(classified according to top note)

° ° triad
o dim -
(this section lists only triads)

(1)	1321	b3Rb5R	a3
	2135	Rb5b3R	a4
	135	b5b3R	a4j
	0510	b3b3b5R	(A)
	3510	b5b3b5R	(A)
	321	Rb5R	a3j
	510	b3b5R	(D, A)
	21	b5R	njj
	13	b3R	ajj
(3)	1324	b3Rb5b3	a
	3213	b5Rb5b3	
	1351	b5b3Rb3	
	213	Rb5b3	aj
	651	b5Rb3	a2j
	13	b5b3	ajj
	51	Rb3	a2jj
(5)	1354	b5b3Rb5	
	4351	Rb5b3b5	
	132	b3Rb5	nj
	6840	b3Rb3b5	(D#)
	321	b5Rb5	a3j
	840	Rb3b5	(G#, D#)
	21	Rb5	njj
	51	b3b5	a2jj

diminished sevenths
(classified according to top note)

° °7
o o7 dim dim7 -
(this section lists only chords which include the seventh)

(1)	2132	b3b7b5R	n
	1324	Rb7b3R	a
	4651	b5b3b7R	a2
	0246	b7b5b3R	(D#)
	0840	b3b5b7R	(A)
	132	b7b5R	nj
	213	b7b3R	aj
	651	b3b7R	a2j
	51	b7R	a2jj
(3)	2132	b5Rb7b3	n
	4651	b7b5Rb3	a2
	1321	b5b3b7b3	a3
	0246	Rb7b5b3	(C)
	0840	b5b7Rb3	(F#)
	132	Rb7b3	nj
	135	b7b5b3	a4j

321	b3b7b3	a3j	
21	b7b3	njj	
(5)	2132	bb7b3Rb5	n
	1324	b5b3b7b5	a
	4651	Rb7b3b5	a2
	1321	bb7b5Rb5	a3
	0246	b3Rb7b5	(A)
	0840	bb7Rb3b5	(D#)
	213	b3b7b5	aj
	135	Rb7b5	a4j
	651	bb7b3b5	a2j
	13	bb7b5	ajj

CAN ALSO USE:
any °(5) triad

(7)	2132	Rb5b3b7	n
	1324	bb7b5Rb7	a
	4651	b3Rb5b7	a2
	1321	Rb7b3b7	a3
	0246	b5b3Rb7	(F#)
	0840	Rb3b5b7	(C)
	132	b5b3b7	nj
	213	b5Rb7	aj
	135	b3Rb7	a4j
	651	Rb5b7	a2j
	321	bb7b3b7	a3j
	21	b3b7	njj
	13	Rb7	ajj
	51	b5b7	a2jj

AUGMENTED CHORDS

all the augmented chords together
(assuming you're not interested in the details of each chord)
+
aug
(see also 7+5 chords)

(1/3/5)	1234 (n), 2341 (a), 4123 (a2) 5630, 6305 123 (nj), 341 (aj), 412 (a3j) 630		
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augmented triads
(classified according to top note)

(1)	1234	R#53R	n
	2341	3R#5R	a
	4123	3#53R	a2
	5630	#53#5R	(A)
	6305	3#5RR	(D)
	123	#53R	nj
	341	R#5R	aj
	412	R3R	a3j
	630	3#5R	(D, A)
(3)	1234	3R#53	n
	2341	#53R3	a
	4123	#5R#53	a2
	5630	R#5R3	(F)
	6305	#5R33	(Bb)
	123	R#53	nj
	341	3R3	aj
	412	3#53	a3j
	630	#5R3	(Bb, F)
(5)	1234	#53R#5	n
	2341	R#5#5	a
	4123	R3R#5	a2
	5630	3R3#5	(Db)
	6305	R3#5#5	(Gb)
	123	3R#5	nj
	341	#53#5	aj
	412	#5R#5	a3j
	630	R3#5	(Gb, Db)

NON-CHORDAL TONES:

We often need to play a melody note over a chord which does not contain that note. These notes are called **non-chordal tones**, and they are very important in chord-melody playing. For example, here is a phrase from *Bye Bye Blues* in which fully half of the notes (the ones with asterisks below them) are non-chordal:

A musical staff in treble clef showing a sequence of chords: D7, G7, C, C°, G7, G+. Notes are placed on the staff. Asterisks are placed below notes that are non-chordal for the current chord: the 2nd note of D7, the 2nd note of G7, the 2nd note of C, the 2nd note of C°, the 2nd note of G7, and the 2nd note of G+.

NOTE: Sometimes a composer or arranger will choose to give a chord a different, more complicated name with the express aim of including the melody note. For example, the first chord above could also be called a D9, which includes the E as a chordal tone. In this discussion of non-chordal tones, however, we will restrict ourselves to the most basic chords: major, dominant seventh, and minor.

MAJOR: The most common non-chordal tones used over a major chord are the major 2nd, the perfect and augmented 4ths, the major 6th, and the major 7th:

A musical staff in treble clef for a C major chord (CΔ). Notes are placed on the staff. Asterisks are placed below non-chordal tones: 2nd, 4th, aug 4th, maj 6th, and maj 7th.

DOMINANT SEVENTH: The most common non-chordal tones used over a dominant-seventh chord are the minor and major 2nds, the perfect 4th, and the minor and major 6ths:

A musical staff in treble clef for a G7 chord. Notes are placed on the staff. Asterisks are placed below non-chordal tones: min 2nd, maj 2nd, 4th, min 6th, and maj 6th.

MINOR: The most common non-chordal tones used over a minor chord are the major 2nd, the perfect 4th, the minor and major 6ths, and the minor and major 7ths:

A musical staff in treble clef for an Am chord. Notes are placed on the staff. Asterisks are placed below non-chordal tones: 2nd, 4th, min 6th, maj 6th, min 7th, and maj 7th.

Other non-chordal tones are also possible, but here we will concentrate on the most common ones, as listed in the above three staves.

When you encounter a non-chordal tone, you always have the option of simply playing the note without any harmony, but it is often preferable to play a full chord under it. In that case, **choose a chord whose top note is near the (non-chordal) melody note you need, and change the top note as required.** (This will typically require a change in fingering.) There is often more than one possibility. For example, if you need to play a high A melody note over a C major chord, you can either raise the top note of a C(5) chord or lower the top note of a C(1) chord:

A diagram showing guitar fretboard positions. On the left, a C(5) chord is shown with fingers 1, 3, 4, 4 on frets 7, 9, 10, 10. An arrow points to a C(6) chord with fingers 1, 2, 3, 4 on frets 7, 9, 10, 12. In the middle, the word "or" is written. On the right, a C(1) chord is shown with fingers 1, 1, 3, 4 on frets 12, 12, 14, 15. An arrow points to a C(6) chord with fingers 1, 1, 1, 3 on frets 12, 12, 12, 15.

Below are some suggestions for playing non-chordal melody notes over major, dominant-seventh, and minor chords:

Melody Note	Frets	Tones	Nickname	Comments
major triad ma maj M Δ (or no symbol)				
(2)	1222 1136	3R52 R532	n a	Can only be used at the nut (C major, frets 0025) and in high positions (starting at about G♭ major, frets 66811). Best fingered 1134. Especially useful before or after the Δ(3a), which uses frets 3113.
(4)	3114 1225 1342 5531	5R54 3R54 53R4 R5R4	n a a aa	
(#4)	3115 1226	5R5#4 3R5#4	n a	
(6)	1131 1346	R5R#4 R536 53R6	n a a	
(Δ7)	1133	R537	n	Can only be used at the nut (F major, frets 0235) and in high positions (starting at about A major, frets 4679).
7				
(b2)	2132 1435	3b75b2 Rb73b2	n a	Can only be used at the nut (C7, frets 0325) and in high positions (starting at about E7, frets 4769).
(Δ2)	2133 1436 3541	3b752 Rb732 53b79	n a a	
(4)	3141 3144	5Rb79 5Rb74	n n	
(b6)	2123 2541	b73Rb6 Rb73b6	n a	
(Δ6)	2124 1431	b73R6 Rb736	n a	
minor triad m mi min -				
(2)	1333 1126	b3R52 R5b32	n a	Can only be used at the nut (C minor, frets 0015) and in high positions (starting at about F minor, frets 55610). Especially useful before or after the m(3a), which uses frets 3112.
(4)	3114 1336 1242	5R54 b3R54 5b324	n a aa	
(b6)	5531 2231	R5R4 R5b3b6	n n	Can only be used at the nut (A minor, frets 0225) and in high positions (starting at about D# minor, frets 68811). Can be fingered 1243 or 1242.
(Δ6)	1121 1246	R5R4 5b3Rb6 R5b36	n a n	
(b7)	1122	R5b3b7	n	Can only be used at the nut (F minor, frets 0134) and in high positions (starting at about A minor, frets 4578). Otherwise, use the top three strings only (x134).
(Δ7)	1123	R5b37	n	
Can only be used at the nut (F minor, frets 0135) and in high positions (starting at about C# minor, frets 891113).				

The chart above shows simple chords, each one with a single added non-chordal tone. Many of these — though not all of them — are equivalent to more complicated chords, and they could be notated as such. For example, a **C major chord** with an added **non-chordal sixth** is the same as a **C major sixth chord** with the sixth on the top string. Here is a list of equivalent chords:

Simple chord (with non-chordal tone)	=	Advanced chord name
C(6)	=	C6
C(Δ7)	=	CΔ7
C7(b2) or C7(b9)	=	C7b9
C7(Δ2) or C7(Δ9)	=	C9
C7(4)	=	C7sus4
C7(#4)	=	C7sus+4
C7(b6)	=	C7+5
C7(Δ6)	=	C13
Cm(Δ6)	=	Cm6
Cm(b7)	=	Cm7
Cm(Δ7)	=	CmΔ7

Remember, *any* non-chordal tone can appear over *any* type of chord, not just major, dominant-seventh, and minor as presented here. Nonetheless, once you've understood how they are used over these chords, you will certainly be able to deal with more complicated chords on your own, using your ear, your common sense, and a little trial and error.

DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THIS DOCUMENT:

When I set out to make my own chord sheet for the tenor banjo, I first used traditional chord diagrams. (At www.neckdiagrams.com I found a good computer program for creating them.) However, I soon discovered that formatting the diagrams on the printed page was a complicated job, and the resulting document was difficult to update when I needed to add new chords. Besides, I had to find a more space-efficient format because I wanted several hundred chords to fit on one double-sided sheet of paper. So I switched to this text-only system, which has proved quite satisfactory.

As well as the usual **four-note chords**, this list also contains a number of **three-note chords** (sometimes called “junior” or “inside” chords) and **two-note chords**. These are useful when the melody notes are too low to be played on the top strings or when the performer desires a lighter, less dense sound or an easier fingering.

The chords are listed in four columns. The **FIRST COLUMN** lists, in parentheses, the **MELODY NOTE** (the highest note of the chord). This is essential for chord-melody playing.

Chord symbols in lead sheets sometimes specify the bass note (for example, A7/C#). But they practically never specify the top note, and there seems to be no standard method for doing so. However, this is sometimes necessary, especially in pedagogical works. There are various notational possibilities. For example, to specify a minor seventh chord with the third in the soprano, you might write:

m7(3) **m7(3 mel)** **m7\3** **llm7** **m7 (form 2)** **m7 (form 3)**
Dm7(F) **Dm7(F mel)** **Dm7\F** **Dllm7** **Dm7 (form 2)** **Dm7 (form 3)**

In this document I have chosen to use the first notation system, i.e., **m7(3)** and **Dm7(F)**.

In the **SECOND COLUMN**, the **FRET NUMBERS** are listed, from lowest string to highest:

- Chords in this list which are printed in **blue** have at least one open string (i.e., a fret number of 0). They are considered **non-movable** because they are normally only playable at the position indicated. For example, it is not very practical to move the chord form 6500 (the D7(A) chord) to, say, 7611 (for the Eb7(Bb) chord) because the latter would require a very long stretch.
- Nonetheless, many chords listed as non-movable can in fact be moved, particularly to very high positions, where the frets are closer together. The aforementioned example of 6500 (D7(A)) is indeed usable in a high position like 14 13 8 8 (Bb7(F)).
- All other chords, printed in **black**, are **movable**. Although the movable chords listed here are all at the first fret, they can easily be transposed up to any other position on the neck. For example, the 3143 chord — form (3) of the dominant-seventh chord — will give you Ab7(C). You can move it up one fret to 4254 and you will get A7(C#). Continue up another fret to 5365 and you get Bb7(D). You can transpose it as high as you want; for example, you can move it to 16 14 17 16 to get a high A7(C#) chord.
- All the movable chords can also be moved one fret LOWER, i.e. closer to the nut. Any strings that had been fingered on the first fret will now be open. For example, the aforementioned 3143 Ab7(C) chord can also be played 2032 to give a G7(B) chord. Of course, since this lowered version will have at least one open string, it will require a change in fingering.

Also in the second column, I reference other possible chords which are either exactly the SAME except for the inversion (e.g. Dm7 = F6) or similar enough that you CAN ALSO USE them (e.g. Em = Cma7 without the root).

In the **THIRD COLUMN**, you can find the individual **CHORD TONES**. For example, 5Rb73 means that the fifth of the chord is on the lowest string, the root is on the next string, the minor seventh is on the next, and the third is on the top string.

In the **FOURTH COLUMN**, printed in **red**, are informal **“NICK-NAMES”** which I use for some of the movable chords (“**7(3n)**”, “**m7(1aj)**”, etc.), based on the following considerations:

n	“normal” chord: the chord to use if there is no reason to use a different one. (I only specify the letter “n” when it is needed to avoid ambiguity.)
a	first “ alternative ” chord
a2 or aa	second “ alternative ” chord
j	three-note “ junior ” chord
jj	two-note chord

(Junior chords are frequently the same as the top two or three strings of a corresponding four-note chord; if this is the case, the junior chord uses the same nickname: “nj”, “aj”, “a2j”, “njj”, “ajj”, or “a2jj”.)

In this column I have also included, in **blue ink** and in parentheses, the **ROOT NOTES** of all non-movable chords. Two- and three-note non-movable chords have more than one possible root, depending on which strings they are played on.

Under each chord name, the chords are listed in the following order (in each case, starting with the chord forms I consider the best):

- four-note movable chords
- four-note non-movable chords
- three-note movable chords
- three-note non-movable chords
- two-note movable chords
- two-note non-movable chords

This list does not include re-entrant chords (i.e., where the notes do not all go from lowest to highest), chords with unison strings, or chords above the ninth fret. (At <http://chordlist.brian-amberg.de/en/tenor-banjo/jazz> you can check out Brian Amberg’s incredibly complete list, which seems to include just about every possible chord.) Nor have I included **fingerings**, as they are usually quite easy to figure out (besides the fact that more than one fingering is often possible).

Which chord is best? As the chord list on pages 2 and 3 makes clear, most of the time you have several possible chords to choose from. Which one you will use depends on several factors:

- **Top note:** Obviously, when playing chord melody, the top note must be the melody note.
- **Bass note:** If you are playing an unaccompanied solo, the lowest notes of the successive chords form a very audible bass line, which bears taking into account when choosing your chords. Compare:
 - E9(9a2) (frets 4769), whose bass note is E (the root of the chord)
 - E9(9n) (8799), bass note G# (the third)
 - E9(9a) (11 13 12 9), bass note B (the fifth)
 - E9(9a3) (14 13 9 9), bass note D (the seventh)(The bass note is much less important if you are playing in an ensemble with a tuba, string bass, or piano.)
- **Completeness:** Does the chord include all the active tones, especially the 3rd and the 7th? If there are extended tones — 9ths, 11ths, and 13ths — are they included? (Perhaps surprisingly, the root is generally NOT very important and can be left out. The same goes for the 5th unless it is diminished or augmented.)
- **Doublings:** Generally speaking, active tones are best not doubled at the octave or unison; that is why C7(3n) (on frets 7587) sounds better balanced than C7(3a) (7987).
- **Weight:** Do you want a substantial, heavy chord or a light one? The answer will depend on the context. Heavy chords are good for the finale of a big ensemble piece, while light, three-note chords may be more appropriate for accompanying a clarinet solo.
- **Open or close voicing:** A chord which has a wide interval between the lowest note and the highest is called “open”, while a more compact chord is called “close” (rhymes with *dose*, not *doze*). Most tenor banjo chords are quite open compared to those of the guitar or plectrum banjo, but there is still quite a variety of options. Like chord weight, your choice of voicing will be a matter of personal taste and context. Listen carefully to the sound of the E9 chords listed above in the paragraph on bass notes, which are listed in order from very open to very close. All four chords sound good, but each one gives a slightly different impression because of the different voicings and bass notes.
- **Open strings** are often best avoided because they tend to be louder than fingered strings, thus unbalancing the chord: Bb(2331) vs Bb(5301). (However, the 5301 version is quite nice for checking your tuning in a band

that tunes to a B \flat .) Another disadvantage of open strings is that they are harder to damp (muffle) when you want short, staccato chords.

- **Ease of fingering.** Obviously important.
- **Other considerations:** Special effects can also determine which chord you use. You might want to leave open strings available for a left-hand pizzicato while you tremolo the top note. Or you might want a dramatic triple open octave G (7 0 5 10). The sky's the limit!
- **Finally: Don't worry too much about which chord you use!** Most people, frankly, don't listen very carefully to the specific notes that banjo plays, unless the banjo is the only instrument playing. Your **rhythm** is much more important than any chord details. If a chord sounds great but it so difficult to finger that it messes up your rhythm, use an easier fingering.

Diminished and augmented chords: In each of these two categories, the first section — labeled “all the diminished/augmented chords together” — is probably the only one most of us will use. Because of the symmetrical and ambiguous nature of these chords, it is rarely important to know which tone (root, 3rd, 5th, or 7th) is on which string. However, for those interested, the other sections — “diminished triads”, “diminished sevenths”, and “augmented triads” — give a more detailed analysis.

Non-chordal tones: As my chord list grew, I realized that it might also be a good idea to devote some space to non-chordal tones, so I have dedicated pages 4 and 5 to that subject.

Printing: Although this document is formatted for European “A4” paper (210 × 297 mm), it should also print properly at full size on American “letter” paper (8½ × 11 inches). But if you want to be absolutely sure none of the content gets cropped, or if you are using any other paper size, choose “Fit” or “Shrink oversized pages” in Adobe Reader when printing. I recommend printing **in color** if possible.

Extent and completeness of this list: At last count (in version 10j), the chord list on pages 2 and 3 contained 328 movable chords, each one transposable to about 16 different keys, and 132 non-movable ones, so you could reasonably say that there are **over 5,300 chords** here, all squeezed into just two pages! This chord list will probably always be a work in progress. I'll keep the **current version** available on-line at www.dmcclore.org/banjo. I'd love to hear your comments, corrections and suggestions, especially for good chords I've missed. Write me at banjo@dmcclore.org — I look forward to hearing from you!