GUITARSHELF · FREE PDF GUIDE

BARRE CHORDS: GETTING PAST THE HURDLE WITH F, Bm AND F#m

From the isolated barre to the barre in a real progression, in 10 sheets

A 10-sheet path to tame the barre chord: first on its own, then among open chords, then in its minor forms Bm and F#m.

10 sheets · level 1 to 3 · at your own pace

Layout optimised for 7-inch e-readers (Kobo, Kindle, Boox…), also easy to read on phones and tablets.

Created by Guitarshelf, a guitar exercise sheet generator and catalogue — https://guitarshelf.com

WHY THIS PACK

The barre chord is the first serious obstacle for the fretting hand: the index finger has to press flat across six strings at once, standing in for the nut. Beating it takes less strength than precision, and a repeated movement. This guide therefore works in three stages: isolating it (sheets 1 and 2), placing it among open chords you already know (3 to 7), then meeting it again in other shapes, Bm and F#m (8 to 10). The common thread is the index finger: on Am it already sits on fret 1 and simply flattens to form F; working on F is mostly about learning to change the other fingers while the index stays engaged. The classic trap is squeezing harder, when the pressure actually comes from the pinch between thumb and index and from staying close to the fret, not from arm strength.

THE 10-SHEET PATH

01 **Barre — F blues vamp**
LEVEL 1 · BLUES
Hold the barre shape without letting it degrade: a single chord, eight times.

02 **Barre — isolating the F chord**
LEVEL 2 · POP
Repeat the movement: place, ring, release, start again.

03 **Pop in C (with barre) — strumming pattern**
LEVEL 1 · POP
Put F in a progression with three open chords, in steady strumming.

04 **Pop in C (with barre) — chord change**
LEVEL 2 · POP
Link F with Am and C: the barre in context, more demanding than holding it alone.

05 **Pop in C (with barre) — muted strums**
LEVEL 2 · POP
Muting F: the palm does the work, the barre stays firm.

06 **Barre — F to A minor transition**
LEVEL 3 · ROCK
Isolate the F-Am transition, where the index finger stays engaged.

07 **Barre — F within a IV-V-vi-iii progression**
LEVEL 3 · POP
F as the first link of a complete progression: F-G-Am-Em.

08 **Barre — isolating the B minor chord**
LEVEL 2 · ROCK
The same isolation work, on a minor barre chord higher up the neck: Bm.

09 **Barre — B minor within a D progression**
LEVEL 3 · POP
Bm in a real progression: Bm, D, G, A.

10 **Barre — F sharp minor within an A major progression**
LEVEL 3 · POP
F#m in a progression in A: A, E, F#m, D.

SUGGESTED PRACTICE PLAN

Week 1 — Isolating the barre: F (sheets 1 and 2)

Place the barre, make it ring, release it, start again. Rest your hand as soon as the grip degrades: fatigue builds up quickly the first few times.

Week 2 — F among open chords (sheets 3 to 5)
The C-G-Am-F progression as strumming, as chord changes, then as muted strums. Slow down only on the bars that contain F.

Week 3 — F in other contexts (sheets 6 and 7)
F-Am, where the index stays engaged, then the F-G-Am-Em loop: the barre becomes the first link in a complete sequence.

Week 4 — Bm and F#m (sheets 8 to 10)
The same approach with two other barre chords: Bm on its own, Bm in a progression in D, then F#m in a progression in A.

01 · BARRE — F BLUES VAMP

Level 1 Blues

Online sheet: https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/barre-f-blues-vamp

ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

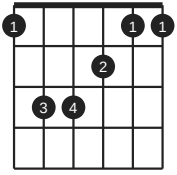
Hold the barre shape without letting it degrade: a single chord, eight times.

GUIDE TIP

Note at each attempt how many bars you hold before the sound degrades: it is your progress indicator, more telling than the feeling of fatigue.

CHORDS

F



CHORD PROGRESSION

F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F

A vamp on a single barre chord (F, repeated eight times), which follows the same principle as the catalogue's very first sheet (a single E7 chord repeated in blues initiation) but applied here to a barred shape. The goal isn't to change chords but to hold the barre shape without it degrading over time: a sliding index finger, other fingers losing their place, or the sound progressively muting are the three signs that the grip isn't stable yet.

TIPS

Rest the hand between bars if needed rather than forcing through a barre that's already degrading: fatigue builds up fast the first few times.
Check each string one by one by playing slowly note by note, not just the strummed chord as a block: it's the only way to pinpoint exactly which string is muting.
Once the eight bars hold without the sound degrading, try fully releasing the hand between repeats and reforming the barre each time: that's the next step, closer to a real chord change.

02 · BARRE — ISOLATING THE F CHORD

Level 2 Pop

Online sheet: https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/barre-isolating-f

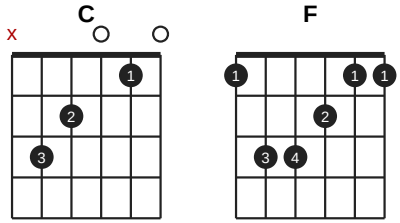
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Repeat the movement: place, ring, release, start again.

GUIDE TIP

After each release, note the position of your index finger before barring again: the movement should be identical every time.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

IV	IV	I	I
F	F	C	C

The F barre chord is the first serious fretting-hand obstacle: the index finger has to press flat across six strings at once, standing in for the nut. Rather than tackling it straight in a song, this sheet isolates it, alternating with an already-familiar open chord, C. The F-F-C-C progression has no musical value in itself - it's a pretext for repeating the move: place the barre, make it sound, release it, start again. That cycle, more than holding it for a long time, builds barre strength and accuracy.

TIPS

Barre on the side of the index finger (toward the thumb), not on the pad: the skin there is harder and flatter.
The pressure comes from the thumb-and-index pinch, thumb behind the neck roughly opposite the index - not from arm strength.
Move the barre close to the fret: the closer you are, the less you press. The F at fret 1 is the hardest on the neck, that's normal.

03 · POP IN C (WITH BARRE) — STRUMMING PATTERN

Level 1 Pop

Online sheet: https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/c-barre-pop-rhythm

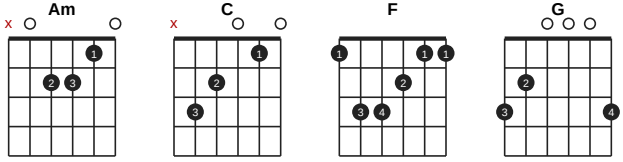
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Put F in a progression with three open chords, in steady strumming.

GUIDE TIP

Record yourself for thirty seconds and listen back: find which strings of F do not ring clearly, then correct the position of your thumb and index finger.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	V	VI	IV
C	G	Am	F

Unlike the catalogue's grid in G (G, D, Em, C), entirely in open position, this one in C includes a barre chord: F. Three chords out of four stay open, but that F forces the left hand to hold steady pressure across several strings at the same time as the right hand strums in rhythm — a real difference in difficulty despite the same displayed level.

TIPS

Isolate F on its own before tackling the grid: make sure it rings cleanly on every string before adding the rhythm.
If the strumming only slows down at the move to F, that's a sign the barre isn't reliable yet, not a rhythm problem.
Once F is under control, this grid plays with the same ease as one entirely in open chords.

04 · POP IN C (WITH BARRE) — CHORD CHANGE

Level 2 Pop

Online sheet: https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/c-barre-pop-chord-change

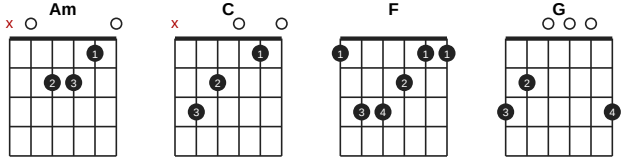
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Link F with Am and C: the barre in context, more demanding than holding it alone.

GUIDE TIP

Repeat only Am ? F in a loop: the index finger does not change fret, it flattens; the other three fingers do all the moving.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	V	VI	IV
C	G	Am	F

The same family of progression as the C-G-Am-Em version (here a I-V-vi-IV instead of a I-V-vi-iii), with F as the one real difficulty: it's the first barre chord in several of the catalog's C-based progressions, and moving into or out of it from Am or C decides how smooth the whole grid feels. Unlike an isolated barre-chord drill, this one tests it in context, chained with open chords — noticeably harder than just holding it still.

TIPS

Find the index finger: on Am it's already resting on the B string, fret 1 — moving to F, it doesn't move, it just flattens to bar all six strings at that same fret.

If F breaks the rhythm, play a simplified version first (just the three treble strings) to keep the flow, then add the rest back in.

Loop the grid, slowing down only on the bars containing F, at full speed on the rest.

05 · POP IN C (WITH BARRE) — MUTED STRUMS

Level 2 Pop

Online sheet: https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/c-barre-pop-muted-strums

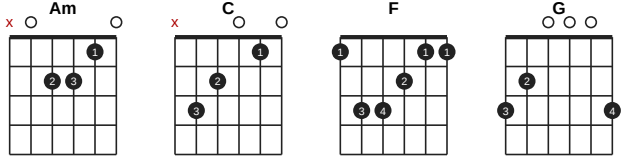
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Muting F: the palm does the work, the barre stays firm.

GUIDE TIP

Alternate one bar of muted F and one bar of F ringing freely: you hear straight away whether the barre holds when the palm mutes.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	V	VI	IV
C	G	Am	F

Muting F is trickier than muting the Drop D barre chords already met in the catalogue: this F covers all 6 strings with the same finger that frets them, versus only 3 strings for a Drop D barre. Easing the pressure slightly to help with the muting, the way that works in Drop D, becomes much riskier here: the finger frets six different strings, and the smallest pressure variation can make one ring out by mistake.

TIPS

Mute F on its own first, without the other three chords: it's the only one of the four that demands real barre control.
Don't try to ease the barre's pressure here the way you would on a Drop D chord: keep the finger firmly in place instead and let the palm do all the muting work.
Check each string one at a time on muted F: with six strings under a single finger, just one ringing out is enough to break the percussive effect.

06 · BARRE — F TO A MINOR TRANSITION

Level 3 Rock

Online sheet: https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/barre-f-a-minor-transition

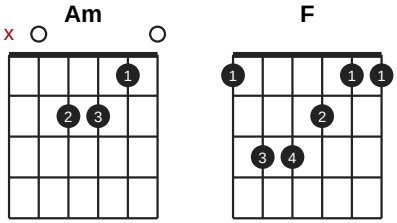
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Isolate the F-Am transition, where the index finger stays engaged.

GUIDE TIP

Count the fingers that move: only three change place. Concentrate on them rather than rethinking the whole hand.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

IV	VI	IV	VI
F	**Am**	**F**	**Am**

The F-Am alternation is one of the most common transitions involving the F barre chord: the index finger stays engaged on the first fret while the other fingers reorganise.

TIPS

Notice that the index finger barely moves between F and Am: focus the work on the other three fingers rather than rethinking the whole hand shape on every change.

07 · BARRE — F WITHIN A IV-V-VI-III PROGRESSION

Level 3 Pop

Online sheet: https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/barre-f-progression-iv-v-vi-iii

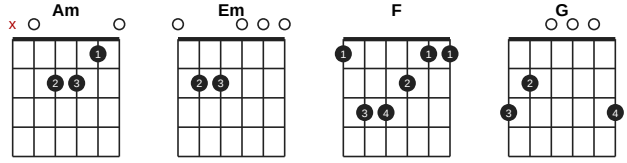
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

F as the first link of a complete progression: F-G-Am-Em.

GUIDE TIP

Once F-G is fluent, make it your checkpoint before moving to the next barre: if this transition holds, the rest of the loop will follow.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

IV	V	VI	III
F	**G**	**Am**	**Em**

A full pop progression in C major (F-G-Am-Em) that places the F barre chord as the first link of a four-chord sequence, to practice it in a richer context than a simple two-chord alternation.

TIPS

F is the only barre chord in this grid: once it flows well into the following G, the rest of the progression generally introduces no new difficulty.

08 · BARRE — ISOLATING THE B MINOR CHORD

Level 2 Rock

Online sheet: https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/barre-isolating-b-minor

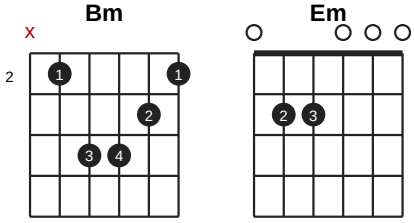
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

The same isolation work, on a minor barre chord higher up the neck: Bm.

GUIDE TIP

Compare the feeling with F (sheet 2): the position is higher up the neck and the frets are narrower. Let your hand adapt rather than force it.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

Bm	Bm	Em	Em

The Bm barre chord, alternated with the open Em chord: the same isolation principle as F, applied to the most common minor barre shape.

> **TIPS**
>
> Bm is often harder than F since it sits further up the neck: check that your thumb stays behind the neck, not wrapped over the top.

09 · BARRE — B MINOR WITHIN A D PROGRESSION

Level 3 Pop

Online sheet: https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/barre-b-minor-progression-d

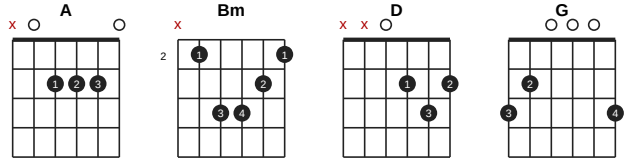
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Bm in a real progression: Bm, D, G, A.

GUIDE TIP

Hum a tune over the loop: if the tempo warps when Bm arrives, the barre is not yet automatic.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

VI	I	IV	V
Bm	**D**	**G**	**A**

A real pop progression D-G-A with Bm as the vi degree, rather than a simple alternation drill: a chance to play the barre chord in a full musical context, not just as an isolated technique exercise.

> **TIPS**
>
> If the move into Bm is still the weak link, isolate just the transition leading to it (D to Bm) before playing the full loop again.

10 · BARRE — F SHARP MINOR WITHIN AN A MAJOR PROGRESSION

Level 3 | Pop

Online sheet: https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/barre-f-sharp-minor-progression-a

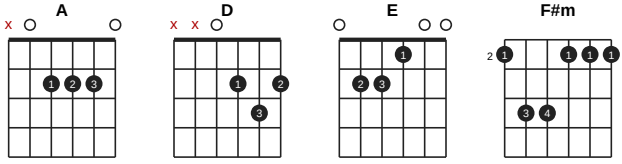
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

F#m in a progression in A: A, E, F#m, D.

GUIDE TIP

Finish the guide by replaying the three barre chords (F, Bm, F#m) in a row, two bars each: it shows you what is still left to automate.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	V	VI	IV
A	**E**	**F#m**	**D**

A highly recognisable pop progression (A-E-F#m-D, degrees I-V-vi-IV) where the F#m barre chord is the only non-open link: as with F or Bm in context, the goal is to weave the barre chord in among chords you already know rather than drilling it in isolation.

TIPS

The move from the open E to the barred F#m is the hardest part of the loop: slow down just that transition before playing the whole progression back up to tempo.

HOW TO USE IT

1. Print the sheets in order, or keep them as a PDF on a tablet near your guitar.
2. One sheet per session is enough: better to replay it for several days than run through all ten at once.
3. Note the date and the tempo reached on the back of each sheet: playing is refined by ear, but progress is measured with a metronome.
4. Once you've gone through all the sheets, the same path exists in other keys on the site to transpose what you've learned.

WHAT IS GUITARSHELF

Guitarshelf is a guitar exercise sheet site, free and with no account to create:

- A catalogue of sheets sorted by style, level (1 to 6) and exercise type (grid, riff, scale, technique...).
- A generator that creates a brand-new exercise sheet on demand, based on chosen criteria.
- A glossary and gear guides to understand the vocabulary and upkeep of the instrument.
- A personal songbook: build your own selection of sheets and export it as a PDF, like this one.

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