

Five-Note Chord Voicings

A brief (and incomplete) explanation / overview of Ted Greene's system, definitions, and organization

Similar to his "V-System" [TedGreene.com/Teaching/V-System], Ted attempted to define and categorize all of the 5-note chord voicings on the guitar — a Herculean task, that! While he never brought it to the point of making student lesson sheets, he did write out several pages of worksheets that shows us some of the thinking behind his system.

In 1985 he began by outlining all the 5-note major 9th chords derived from the diatonic major scale, using all the notes except the 4th. This resulted in his 26-page, "**5-Note Normal Major Types Reorganized by Soprano**" series. This collection of chords has only 6 different chord types, and he grouped them according to their soprano.

Ted then moved on to use the diminished scale as the source from which to build other 5-note chords. He used the "Whole-half" Diminished scale. (Not the "Half-whole" Diminished scale – which is essentially the same symmetrical scale, but starting with a half-step instead of a whole-step.) Ted also refers to this scale as an 8-note Dominant 7 scale (Dominant 7b9#9#11 scale).

For his 19-page series, "**5-Note Voicings of the 8-Note Whole-half Scale**," Ted used a C Diminished scale (or 8-note D7 scale), and defined all the chords derived therefrom in relation to a D root. The scale notes are: C, D, Eb, F, Gb (F#), Ab (G#), A, B.

The grid chord diagrams in this series do not include their chord names (with a few exceptions), but they can be determined by matching them with their *type* number, as listed in Ted's page: "**5-Note Chords in the Diminished Scale, Names List, 1986-04-11**" This list includes all of the chords with their various "homonyms." Below is a list of the 14 *types* with D root chord name, taken from Ted's list"

- | | | |
|-----|------------------|----------------------|
| 1) | C, D, Eb, F, Gb | = D7b9#9 no5 |
| 2) | C, D, Eb, F, Ab | = Dm7b5b9 |
| 3) | C, D, Eb, F, A | = Dm7b9 |
| 4) | C, D, Eb, F, B | = Dm7/6b9 no5 |
| 5) | C, D, Eb, Gb, Ab | = D7b9b5 |
| 6) | C, D, Eb, Gb, A | = D7b9 |
| 7) | C, D, Eb, Gb, B | = D13b9 no5 |
| 8) | C, D, Eb, Ab, A | = D7b9#11 no3 |
| 9) | C, D, Eb, Ab, B | = D13b9#11 no3,5 |
| 10) | C, D, F, Gb, Ab | = D7#9b5 |
| 11) | C, D, F, Gb, A | = D7#9 |
| 12) | C, D, F, Gb, B | = D13#9 no5 |
| 13) | D, F, Gb, A, B | = D6#9 |
| 14) | D, F, Ab, A, B | = D ^o 7/A |

(Enharmonic equivalents adjustments needed for accurate chord spellings)

Ted determined that there are 44 five-note chord voicings for the guitar. He called these “F” numbers (F stands for “Five”): F-1, F-2, F-3, etc., but it’s not clear how those numbers were derived or how Ted catalogued them. In 2002 and 2003 he changed those “F” numbers to “P” numbers – meaning “Pentatonic” chords.

Please see Ted’s worksheet: “5-Note Voicings – A Review”

For the Diminished/8-note Dominant scale, Ted diagramed 38 of the 44 “F” numbers in this 19-page series. He identified 14 unique chord types that would be created from each of these F numbers, and encircled those *type* numbers on his worksheets.

He then concluded that there would be 5 different inversions of each of the 14 types (Root position plus 4 other inversions). These inversions are not identified on his diagrams, but it seems that he grouped them first with the root in the bass, followed by b9th or #9th in the bass, then b3rd or 3rd in the bass, etc.

So, 44 F numbers, times 14 chord types, times 5 inversions = 3,080 chords.

$$44 \times 14 = 616$$

$$616 \times 5 = 3,080$$

And this is only for one scale.

However, for this diminished scale series, Ted only did up to F-38, so that totals 2,660 chords.

Now, what about other scales, such as harmonic minor, melodic minor, whole-tone, etc.? !!! Ted was extremely thorough in his investigations of harmonic possibilities on the guitar, but this may have been too overwhelming even for him to try to organize, catalogue, make grid diagrams, and distill into practical use. So, I believe Ted went just so far and then said, “Enough!” Besides, many of the 5-note chords in this series are difficult to play, not very practical or useful, or don’t even sound very good. So why bother? Instead, Ted put most of his attention on his V-System of 4-note chords.

In Ted’s “5-Note Voicings - Top and Bass Notes Constant” page he wrote:

“There are between 35 and 50 useable V.G. [Voicing Group] types of 5-noters, each with its inversions (wow!). So...between 1,500 and 2,500 chords, not to mention the duplicate and alternate fingerings and forms. I’m overwhelmed, frustrated, and thrilled....so much fussy detail work remains....”

His various 5-note worksheets cover diminished chords, dominant with extensions (9, 7/6, 13), majors (Δ 9, 6/9, Δ 7/6, Δ 13), minors (m9, m9b5, m9#11), and altered dominants. He also made lists of 5-note chord homonyms, chord types, various graphs, charts, and more.

Many of the grid diagrams in these worksheets include hollow dots, instead of solid ones. These can mean one of three things:

- 1) If it is by itself, it “usually” means it is an “optional” note, which will most likely change the name of the chord.
- 2) If it is connected to another note with a solid or dotted line, then the hollow note shows an optional position to play the same note on a different string.
- 3) If it is connected by a line (or line with an arrow) pointing to one of the circled numbers of the 14 chord types, then these are not optional notes, but instead indicate variations needed to arrive at the other chord types. He did this in order to save having to write out the chord again with only the slight variation of that note. These hollow notes are almost always on the same string as a solid note, so you simply replace the solid note with the hollow one for the new circled number type.

* Some of these hollow notes are missing their circled number and arrow. Since these pages were written for himself, Ted may have left the line off intentionally because it might have been obvious to him.

The 5-note chord worksheets are not very clean, pretty, or "user-friendly" by any means. These were written mainly for himself as a step toward a larger project. We decided not to re-draw all of the chord diagrams, even though this would have made it all easier to read, digest, and reference. But that would have taken a very long time to accomplish. Instead, we chose to share these with you in their original form. And even though Ted crammed a ton of information on each page, anyone serious about reading these diagrams can benefit from the high-quality PDF files that allows you to zoom in and clearly see the details of what he wrote. For his handwritten comments, we've added a transcription of them, since many are difficult to decipher.

Other points to note:

Ted sometimes added extra fret lines in the middle of the grids to extend the height of the diagrams.

Ted added extra fret lines below or above the grids for notes that extended beyond the diagram.

Many of the fingering require the use of the George Van-Eps "5th Finger Technique."

Many of the fingerings require the use of Ted single-finger double-stop technique.

T	=	Thumb
Harm.		Harmonic or harmonics
Harp. Harm.		Play as a harp-harmonic pattern (see Ted's lessons on this).
OT	=	"Over Thumb" (thumb over the top). Instead of having the left thumb behind the neck, it frets the lowest note of the chord and is <i>in front</i> of the neck.
Rt. H. (or R.H.)	=	Right-hand used to fret the note.
Dble	=	Doubling – one of the notes of the chord is doubled.
:)	=	Smiley face, I guess that means he liked it!
Dashed hollow dot	=	"Hidden" fingering. A dashed hollow dot indicates that a barred finger extends behind another finger. The "hidden" part of the barre is not heard because it's blocked by another finger, but extending the barre across the additional string makes the chord easier to play.
No 7, 8, 9	=	Ted didn't write out grids for chord types 7, 8, 9 (for example) (These refer to the circled numbers)
/TR		The bass note is to be the Root of the Tonic of the key.
/KR		The bass note is to be the Root of the Key. (same as above, but just a different wording)
6-noter	=	An extra note that is added which retains the chord name, but changes it from a 5-note chord to a 6-note chord.

As Ted repeatedly advised: don't try to learn all of this; it's too much. Just play through some of them, find a few that sound good to you, that you love and could be useful to your playing – and concentrate on them. Put the all the others to rest. When you're interested in learning more, then dive in again – "rinse and repeat."

Good luck...and enjoy!