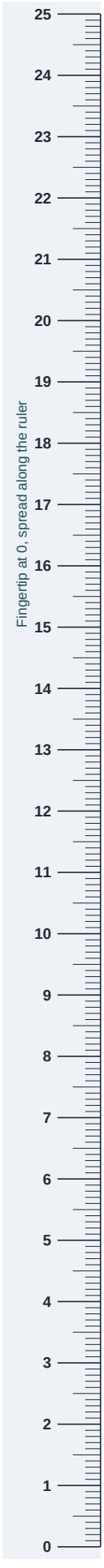
# Hand Span Card and Easier Chords Sheet

Page 1: measure your span and check your reach. Print at 100% (Actual size), not Fit to page.




## 1. Check your print first

This line should be exactly 10 cm.

If it is not 10 cm, reprint at 100% or Actual size. The ruler on the left runs from 0 to 25 cm.

## 2. Measure your fretting hand

Lay your hand flat on the page beside the ruler and spread it as wide as is comfortable (no forcing). **Full span:** outside tip of the thumb on 0, read where the outside tip of the little finger reaches. **Fretting span:** outside tip of the index finger on 0, read the little finger. These are the two spans used in the Australian study by Boyle, Boyle and Booker (2015).

| Date | Hand | Full span (thumb to little finger) | Fretting span (index to little finger) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | cm | cm |
| | | cm | cm |

**For comparison** (473 adult pianists, Boyle and colleagues, 2015): full span averaged 22.6 cm for men and 20.1 cm for women, range 16.3 to 27.4 cm. Fretting span averaged 17.0 cm for men and 15.7 cm for women, range 11.9 to 21.9 cm. No study links these numbers to a guitar size, so use the reach check below to decide.

## 3. Real fret distances (maker scale lengths)

| Guitar | Scale | Nut | Fret 1 to 4 | Fret 5 to 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yamaha C40 (classical) | 650 mm | 52 mm | 9.8 cm | 7.7 cm |
| Fender Player II Stratocaster | 648 mm | 42 mm | 9.7 cm | 7.7 cm |
| Fender Player II Mustang | 610 mm | 42 mm | 9.2 cm | 7.3 cm |
| Taylor GS Mini | 597 mm | 42.9 mm | 9.0 cm | 7.1 cm |
| Martin LX1 Little Martin | 584 mm | 42.9 mm | 8.8 cm | 7.0 cm |
| Yamaha CS40 (3/4 classical) | 580 mm | 48 mm | 8.7 cm | 6.9 cm |
| Squier Mini Stratocaster | 578 mm | 40.6 mm | 8.7 cm | 6.9 cm |
| Yamaha JR1 | 540 mm | 43 mm | 8.1 cm | 6.4 cm |

Distances are between fret wires, calculated by us from each published scale length with the standard fret formula. Note how moving up to fret 5 shortens the stretch more than a smaller guitar does.

## 4. Reach check on a real guitar

Thickest string, fingers curved, one finger per fret: index behind the first fret listed, little finger three frets higher. Tick where all four notes ring cleanly without strain.

| Guitar tried | Frets 1 to 4 | Frets 3 to 6 | Frets 5 to 8 | Comfortable? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

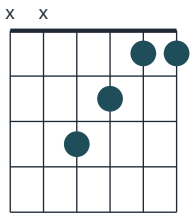
**Reading it:** if frets 1 to 4 are fine, scale length is not your problem: work on setup and technique. If only frets 5 to 8 work, use a capo and easier shapes, and try a shorter scale guitar in a shop.

# Hand Span Card and Easier Chords Sheet

Page 2: easier swaps for hard chords, capo shapes and a comfort setup checklist.

## 5. Hard chord, easier swap

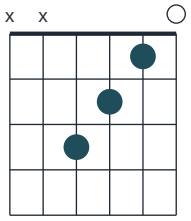
**Small F**




x x 3 2 1 1

instead of F barre

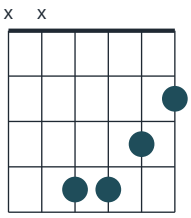
**Fmaj7**




x x 3 2 1 0

instead of F barre

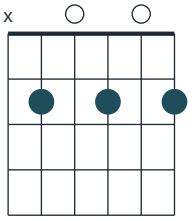
**Small Bm**




x x 4 4 3 2

instead of Bm barre

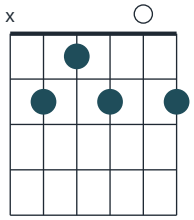
**Bm7**




x 2 0 2 0 2

instead of Bm barre

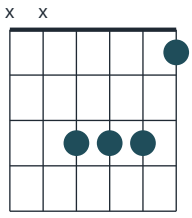
**B7**




x 2 1 2 0 2

instead of B (where it resolves to E)

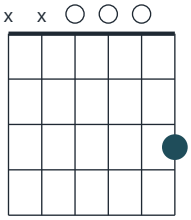
**Small Bb**




x x 3 3 3 1

instead of Bb barre

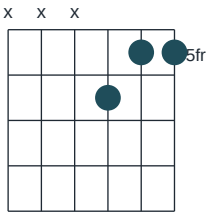
**Small G**




x x 0 0 0 3

instead of the wide G

**A triad**




x x x 6 5 5

instead of A barre at fret 5

Shapes run from the thickest string to the thinnest. x means do not play the string, 0 means open. Some swaps change the colour of the chord slightly, so check them by ear in the song.

## 6. Let the capo do the barre

| Song key or chord | Capo | Play these shapes | They sound as |
|---|---|---|---|
| Song in F | Fret 3 | D, G, A | F, Bb, C |
| Song in Bb | Fret 3 | G, C, D | Bb, Eb, F |
| F#m | Fret 2 | Em | F#m |
| C#m | Fret 4 | Am | C#m |
| B major | Fret 2 | A | B |

## 7. Comfort setup checklist

| Check | Done |
|---|---|
| Action and nut slots checked and lowered by a guitar tech | |
| Lighter strings fitted (for example 9s on electric, extra light on acoustic) | |
| Scale length that passes the reach check on page 1 | |
| Nut width and neck shape that let your thumb sit behind the neck | |
| Body size you can hold with a relaxed arm; neck angled up a little | |
| Strap or footstool set so the guitar sits at the same height seated and standing | |
| Capo in the case | |
| Warm up and gentle stretches before practice; stop at sharp pain, numbness or tingling | |