

The 1 - 4 - 5 System: Key of A

This is Really BIG. Getting a handle on the 1 - 4 - 5 System will guide you through all the bass playing you will ever do, and the nice thing is that it's not so complicated that you can't put it directly to use.

I should point out that that there should be some sharp symbols (#) in that sequence of chords.....And they're right, but that's for later. It's just not critical for our current porpoises. You don't need to be floundering around just for the halibut.

Again, we'll define a **KEY** as a group of chords that is centered around one particular chord, which we call the **1 chord**. In the **Key of A**, also known as the **A Chord Family**, the **A chord** plays a **commanding** role when all these chords get together in a song. The **A chord** exudes what is known as a **Key Feeling** among these chords. It is the **Home Chord**. It is **Restful**.

When you are playing in the **Key of A**, the **A chord** is usually the first, last and most frequently-played chord. The **4** and the **5 chords** are subsidiary to the **1 chord**, in the way that Spock and McCoy are subsidiary to Kirk.

The rest of the bridge crew play **minor** roles, and I'm trying to be cute here: Most of the other 4 chords in the Chord Family do, in fact, display what is called a **Minor Chord Quality**, the sad sound of the Minor chord in contrast to the happy sound of the 1 - 4 - 5 Major chords. The **1 chord** is magnetic, the **4 chord** is friendly and the **5 chord** has an expectant, edgy presence (it's known as the **Dominant Chord**).

So let's play, for the **Key of A**, the simplest 1 - 4 - 5 chord progression there is. You know where the **A** note is, and from knowing how the bass is tuned, you might further remember that the open 2nd string bears a **D** note and the the open 4th string bears an **E** note, so there are your three **Chordal Root Notes**. (The **Root Note** of the **Key of A** is **A**, but each chord is said to have its own **Root Note** as well.)

Here are the **Root Notes** of the **A**, **D** and **E** chords in the **CRG** (gray notes optional):

A	Please MUTE!	D	E	A
0	0 0 0	0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0	0 0 0
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +		1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +	1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +	1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

And here's another way to do it, using the higher octave E note on the 2nd string:

A	D	E	A
0	0 0 0 0	2 2 2 2	0 0 0
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +	1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +	1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +	1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +