

Stripped Down Power Chords in A

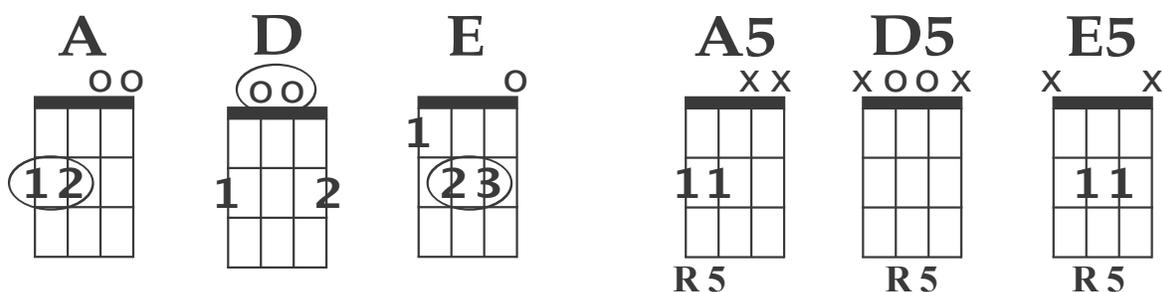
Frankly, it's rare that we play these full-blown chords when comping the blues; we prefer to strip them down to 2-note **Power Chords** that occupy adjacent strings. A Power Chord, for my fellow theory nerds, is defined as the **Root Note** of a chord (and for the **A** chord, that is the A note) plus the note that is an interval of a **Fifth** (**5th**) above the **Root**---which would be, let's see, **A - B - C# - D - E**.

(If you play the 4th string *twice*, then the 3rd string *twice*, you'll produce the "twin-kle - twin-kle" of "Twinkle, twinkle, little star" fame. That's a **5th**. And since the mandolin is tuned in **5ths**, any two notes that are at the same fret on adjacent strings are an interval of a **5th** apart.)

So the **D** Power Chord (**4 chord**) is the D note plus (**D - E - F# - G# -**) **A**.
And the **E** Power Chord (**5 chord**) is the E note plus (**E - F# - G# - A -**) **B**.

*[Still not worried about explaining those sharps to you.
Want to give you just enough theory to get you playing.]*

A picture with an associated sound is worth a thousand words. Let me show you the Power Chord regions of the first three Major chord forms we looked at (circled), and how the actual Power Chords are fingered (or *un*fingered, as in the case of **D**), with the **Root** and the **5th** labeled:



So, Power Chords are designated as "5" chords; you sound only the **Root** and the **5th**, either muting or just avoiding the 2 strings not involved; and you use a partial 1st-finger barre to hold down the 2 notes when they are *not* open strings, as in the case of **A5** and **E5**.

Play the **A5** chord. Press down the 3rd and 4th strings firmly enough to get them to ring, but try to mute the 2nd string by lifting your 1st finger ever so slightly; you don't want that note, the one on the open 2nd string, to ring when you strike the strings.