

Capos



A capo is a small tool that clamps a barre across the strings of the guitar (the actual fret clamped is up to the guitarist) effectively raising the pitch of the instrument.

Why Use a Capo?

Capos are often used by guitarists to play songs in different keys. In situations where singers prefer to sing in G^b or E^b, a guitarist can use a capo to allow for this, while still playing basic chords in open position.

Do I Need a Capo?

Yes. If you play guitar, you should own a capo, no matter what style of music you play. Capos aren't just for beginner acoustic guitarists - blues legend Albert Collins routinely used a capo on his Telecaster.

How to Use a Capo

- attach the capo as close to the metal fret as possible without causing buzzes when you hit the strings
- make sure the capo is tight enough that all open strings ring clearly
- the capoed fret becomes your new nut

Capo Cautions

- make sure capo doesn't bend your strings when you clamp it on, as this will make your guitar sound out of tune
- capos can get in the way of your fretting hand - check to be sure whatever capo you choose doesn't interfere with your technique
- pay close attention to the points of contact between the capo and the guitar - you don't want your fretboard scratched



There are several types of capos, each of which have relative strengths and weaknesses. The following pages provide a critical look at each type of guitar capo.

The Spring Loaded Capo

The spring loaded capo utilizes a spring-controlled handle that enables you to add or remove the capo quickly.

Pros of the spring loaded capo:

- can add or remove capo quickly - often mid-song
- capo can be clamped or unclamped with one hand
- not expensive

Cons of the spring loaded capo:

- amount of pressure applied to strings is not adjustable
- more prone to string bending
- bulky.



The C-Clamp Capo

A c-clamp capo requires manually turning a screw which causes the capo to apply pressure to the guitar strings.

Pros of the c-clamp capo:

- probably the most sturdy and reliable type of capo
- less tendency to put guitar out of tune
- more compact - less likely to interfere with guitarist technique

Cons of the c-clamp capo:

- more finicky to clamp/unclamp than the spring loaded capos
- medium cost.



The Toggle Capo

A toggle capo is a very lightweight piece of hardware, which uses a notched mechanism for tightening the capo onto the guitar strings. The toggle capos are cheap enough that you can afford to buy a few in case you lose one.

Pros of the toggle capo:

- very cheap to buy
- small size won't impede your fretting hand

Cons of the toggle capo:

- many are flimsy
- tightening mechanism has tendency to pull strings out of tune.

