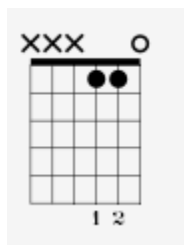


The Augmented Chord

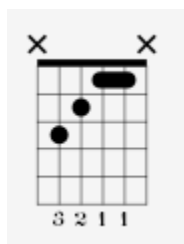
by Dennis Winge

Augmented Triads

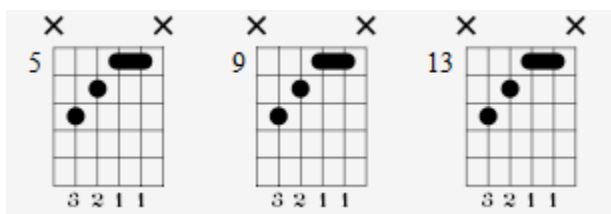
The augmented chord is a root, 3rd and raised (or augmented) 5th. In the key of C this is c, e, and g#. A typical place to play this triad on the guitar would be:



But when all your other chords are 4 strings or more, just playing 3 strings as in the voicing above can sound a little thin. The notes above, from bottom to top (meaning 3rd string to 1st string) are g#, c and e. Suppose we double the e and c notes. Then we can play it like this:



This is the most common form of an augmented chord. And it is symmetrical. This means that every 4 frets the chord 'repeats.' In other words, all these voicings can interchange for the 4-string chord above:



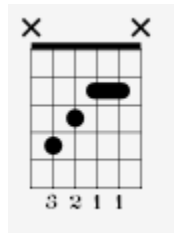
In order to see why, play the notes e, g#, c, and e on the 1st string of your guitar at frets 0, 4, 8, and 12. Each note is a note in the Caug chord (also written as C+) above (and we also played the e an octave above where we started), and each note is evenly spaced, four frets apart from each other. That is why the augmented chord is called 'symmetrical.'

Going further with this, you could play any of the chords above a Caug, and you could call them Eaug, and you could call them G#aug. All 3 have the same notes, so any one of the notes could be considered the root.

Thus there are 4 'families' of augmented chords, and each family has 3 members. The augmented families are:

C – E – G#	F – A – C#	G – B – D#	D – F# – A#
or	or	or	or
C – E – Ab	F – A – Db	G – B – Eb	D – Gb – Bb

Knowing these families can help because if you see an F augmented and your fretting hand is down by the nut because you're playing open strings, it would take you way out of the way to put find the F on fret 8 of string 5 and play the voicing above where the root is on this note. It would be a lot closer to play it here:



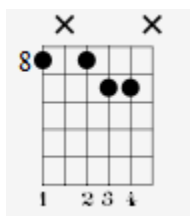
This voicing puts C# (or Db) in the bass (at the 4th fret of the 5th sting) and because it's in the same family as F, it works great. Can you see that as long as the note of the root being asked for (in this case the note f) is in the chord (in this case at 3rd fret of the 4th string) then it's a good choice?

Can you also see that there are only 4 augmented chords in the musical universe? What I mean by that is, if you played the chord above at fret 1, then 2, then 3, then 4, they would all be separate chords, but when you move it to fret 5, it will be the same chord as the one on fret 1 (as show in the earlier diagrams.)

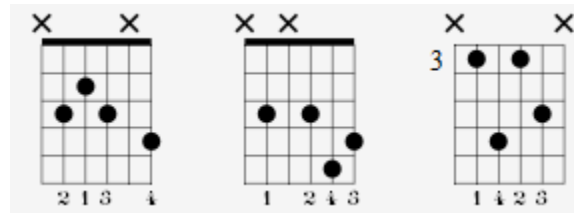
Augmented 7th chords

If you are reading a chord chart on the fly and you see "C7+5" or "C+7" or "Caug7" (all of which mean the same thing) and you don't have time to grab a full augmented 7th chord, then you can play the 4-string voicing we have been talking about above. In other words, you can ignore the 7th and just play C+. I present this simply to save you potential headache. If you leave out the 7th, it won't be a big deal.

Having said that, it will be useful to get at least two aug 7th chords under your belt. I say "two" because you should have one whose root is on the 6th string and one whose root is on the 5th string, just as you do with regular barre chords. For the one whose root is on the 6th string, I personally find this one the easiest:



When it comes to the 5th string roots, none of these may strike you as being particularly easy, but pick just one of them and stick with that for any time you need a 5th-string root aug 7th chord. (Or, as I mentioned, simply ignore the 7th and play the original 4-string triad voicing presented.)



Common Uses

The augmented 7th chord is a type of dominant chord because it has a root, major 3rd and flat 7th, the same as a regular 7th chord. The only difference, for example, between C7 and C+7 is that the fifth is raised. Typically, the augmented chord adds more tension to resolve back to the tonic chord than a regular dominant chord. In other words, play C7 to F. Then play C+7 to F. The latter is a bit more dramatic, don't you think?

Some famous songs start with augmented chords which are a great way to pull you into the song's tonic (or root chord) as in the Beatles' "Oh, Darling!" or Chuck Berry's "No Particular Place to Go."

Pop/ rock songs that use the augmented chord

All My Loving – Beatles; Anybody Who is Anybody - Fat Sam's Grandslam; Break Free - Ariana Grande; Dogs - Pink Floyd; From Me to You – Beatles; Goodbye Stranger – Supertramp; I'm So Tired – Beatles; It Won't Be Long – Beatles; Life on Mars – Bowie; Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds – Beatles; Modjo - Saviour Eyes; Muffin Man – Zappa; Out of Time – Blur; Stormy Monday - T-Bone Walker; The Impossible Year - Panic at the Disco; Zanzibar - Billy Joel