Paper Plate Education

"Serving the Universe on a Paper Plate"

Activity: Capo Dial

Construct a dial to determine on which fret to place a capo for various musical transpositions.









A capo is basically a moving nut. The nut of your guitar is the plastic piece that the strings run through at the top of your guitar. It could be thought of as fret "zero." For example, if someone were to play a note on the fourth fret of a string, it actually means four frets away from the nut.

What the capo enables a player to do is essentially move the "nut" to any fret they like. This allows players to transpose music. A capo becomes very useful in situations where you may know an entire song in one key, but no one you are playing with can sing it that low. Using a capo you could raise the key without having to play any different chord progressions.



The capo dial is a quick way to figure out which fret to place your capo at for various transpositions. The chords and numbers are color coded and it is very easy to use. The outside letters represent the starting key or

chord. The inside circle of letters represent the key or chord to which you transpose.

There is then a set of the numbers 1-12 beneath each one of these letters. They represent the frets where you place your capo. Simply match up the color of your starting key with the color of the number under the key you wish to transpose to and that will be the fret at which you place the capo.


1a

For example, in picture 1a, a C chord is being played, but suppose using the same chord shape I wanted it to be an F chord instead.


1b

Picture 1b shows the original chord, C, being lined up with the new chord, F. The color of the original chord, C, is black and the number that is also black is 5.


1c

Therefore, one could place the capo at the 5th fret, play the C chord shape, and have it now be an F chord. (picture 1c)

Contributed by Matthew Rumley.