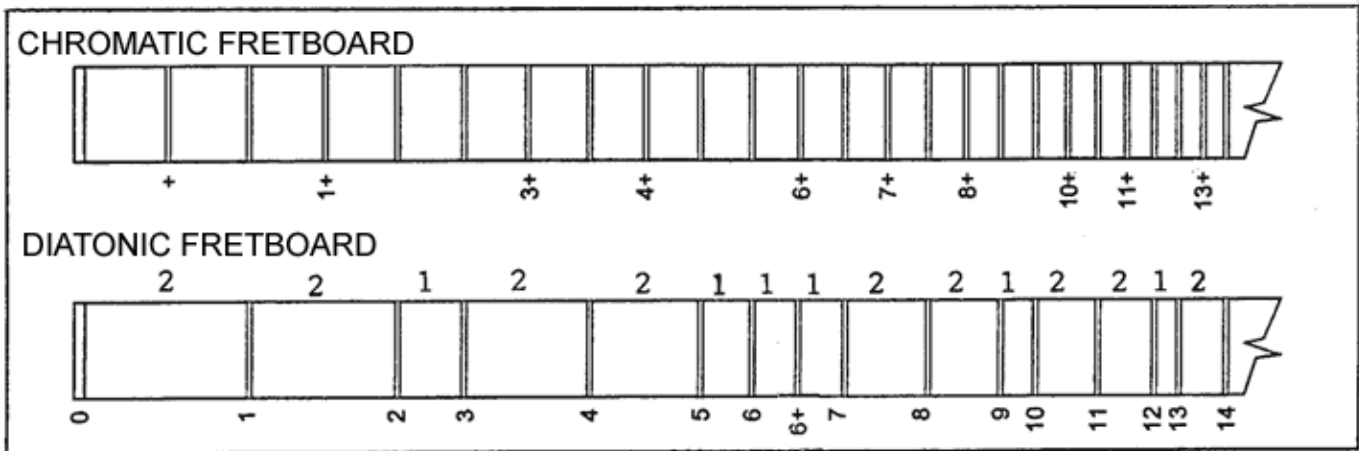


GENERIC CHORD FINDER FOR THE MOUNTAIN DULCIMER 1-3-5 TUNINGS

Many folks today own mountain dulcimers that are designed for playing in higher or lower keys than those provided by the D, E or F tunings shown in our chord charts. These instruments can also be played using 1-3-5 tunings by selecting one to suit the voice range of the instrument. Rather than list all possible chord charts here, we felt it might be easier to provide information showing how a chart for a particular key could be prepared. As an example, let's show how we could make a chord chart for a G-B-D tuning.

Without getting into chord theory about why certain note combinations form particular chords, let's just say that it depends on the relative pitches of the notes that are selected. The difference in pitch between any two notes can be thought of in terms of half-tone separations. To explain that, we must look at the dulcimer fretboard. The illustration below shows two fretboards; the first is for a typical chromatic instrument like a guitar, having 12 notes per octave. By comparison, the second is an ordinary dulcimer fretboard with its diatonic, 7-note scale. Here, a 6+ fret has been added since that is a feature of most of today's dulcimers (and required for the 1-3-5 tuning.)



The chromatic fretboard shows a continuously decreasing spacing between frets from left to right as we move upscale, with no sudden, wide gaps like those that appear on the dulcimer. On the chromatic fretboard, the note produced on each and every fret is one half-tone higher or lower than the one on its neighboring fret. By contrast, the dulcimer fretboard shows a varying pattern of narrow and wide spacings between frets. The wide spacings (five per octave) represent the five missing chromatic notes. If we ignore the 6+ fret for the moment, we see that there are five "wide" gaps and two "narrow" gaps in each octave. As shown here the narrow gaps appear only between frets 2 & 3, 5 & 6, 9 & 10 and 12 & 13. The insertion of the 6+ divides the space between 6 and 7 into two more narrow gaps. These are all half-tones, corresponding to what we see on the chromatic fretboard. The wide gaps represent what are called whole-tones. By definition, one whole-tone equals two half-tones. To make this clear, the numbers "2" and "1" are shown along the top of the dulcimer fretboard to indicate half-tone spacings. These are the numbers we will be using in the calculation examples which are shown in the Generic Chord Finder .PDF file