

Barres: How to Collapse or Lean the First Finger to Move Smoothly to or from a Barre, Part 2 of 2

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1. The ability to alternately collapse and bend the tip joint of the 1st finger can smooth out chord changes.

2. Plus: It can serve as an anchor finger.

3. Or: It can serve as a guide finger.

Or: IT CAN DO ALL THREE AT THE SAME TIME!

In *Sounds of the Bells* (João Pernambuco), we can use the technique of collapsing the 1st finger to provide us with THREE benefits. It provides us with a smooth chord change into a barre chord, an anchor finger between the two chords, plus a guide finger to a third chord after the barre chord. In this passage, the technique of bending/collapsing the tip joint is a powerful tool. Example #7:

Example 7.

Sounds of the Bells (João Pernambuco)
measures 18-21

(The 6th string is tuned to D)

18

Anchor finger

Smooth chord change

Fingertip joint collapses

Fingertip joint bent

Fingertip joint bent

1+4 are guide fingers

TAB

3 3 3 4 4 7 5 5 7 8 7 8 8 8 8 8 10 8 8 8 10 7 12 10

5 5 5 5 5 0 7 5 7 0 0 0 0 0 0 9 7 7 7

Watch me demonstrate in Video #8.

Video #8-Sounds of the Bells, measures 18-21



At an earlier spot in the *Pavana No. 3* by Luis Milán, the tip joint of the 1st finger collapses to provide a smooth transition from the C to the F chords. PLUS, it functions as a guide finger sliding from the 2nd-string Cs at the 1st fret up to the 1st-string F#s at the 2nd fret and back. Example #8:

Example 8.

Pavana No. 3 (Luis Milan)
measures 25-32

The musical notation for measures 25-32 of *Pavana No. 3* by Luis Milán is shown. The notation includes a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The measures are numbered 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, and 32. The notation shows a sequence of chords: C, F, C, F, C. The first finger (I) is used as an anchor finger for the C chords and a guide finger for the F chord. The notation includes fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and fret numbers (0, 1, 2, 3). Red arrows indicate 'Fingertip joint bent' and 'Fingertip joint collapses' at various points. A purple box highlights the transition from C to F and back to C, showing the first finger's role as an anchor and guide finger.

Watch me demonstrate in Video #9.

Video #9-Milán Pavana No. 3, measures 25-32



Other Variations of Collapsing the 1st finger

Moving into a full barre chord does not require us to collapse the tip joint of the 1st finger. Instead, we keep the fingertip anchored firmly on the 6th string and lean it over to fall across all six strings. Here is an example from Mauro Giuliani's *Theme and Variations, Op. 71, No. 1*. Example #9.

Example 9.

Theme and Variations, Op. 71, No. 1 (Mauro Giuliani)
measures 27-28

It is essential not to place the 1st finger on the 6th string on its fingertip. If you do, as the finger leans over onto the barre, it will fall off the 6th string, and the low F will not ring for two beats. Instead, place the 1st finger on the side of its fingertip.

When the 1st finger falls onto the barre, *the barre only must hold the 1st and 6th strings*. Do not hold the barre flat on the fretboard and exert pressure across all six strings.

Watch me demonstrate in Video #10.

Video #10-Giuliani Theme and Variations



Here is an example from an advanced piece, the *Allegro* from *Prelude, Fugue, and Allegro (BWV 998)* by J.S. Bach. Example #10:

Example 10.

Allegro from *Prelude Fugue and Allegro (BWV 998)* (J.S. Bach)
measures 53-56

Lean the finger over to fall across all 6 strings to form a full bar.

Keep the tip of the 1st finger firmly on the 6th string.

Hinge bar

(The 6th string is tuned to D)

53

54

55

56

T

A

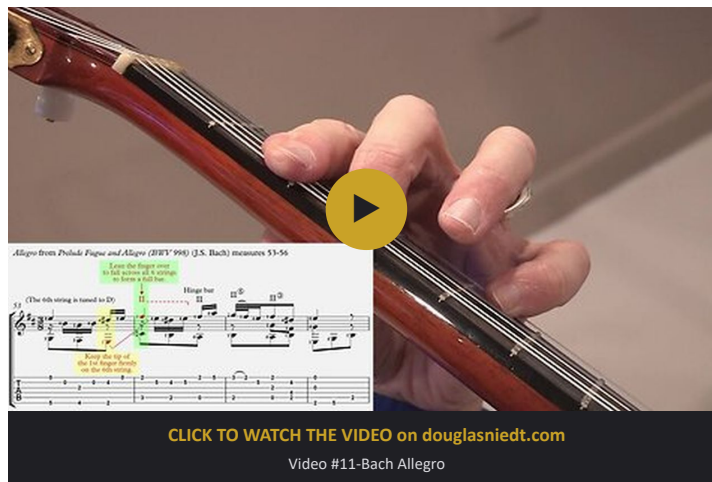
B

Here again, it is essential not to place the 1st finger on the 6th string on its fingertip. If you do, as the finger leans over into the barre, it will fall off the 6th string. Instead, place the 1st finger on the side of its fingertip. Although we could do a 5-string barre, a full barre makes the following hinge barre easier to execute for most players.

And again, apply pressure on the barre judiciously. The barre must hold only the 1st and 5th strings securely.

Watch me demonstrate in Video #11.

Video #11-Bach Allegro



In the next example, the *Andante* from *Twenty-Four Little Progressive Pieces, Op. 44, No. 11*, when we lean the 1st finger over to fall onto a 5-string barre, we have two options.

Option #1:

Keep the tip of the 1st finger anchored firmly on the 5th string and lean it over to fall across five strings to form the 5-string string barre at the 2nd fret. Remember, it is essential not to place the 1st finger on the 5th string on its fingertip. If you do, as the finger leans over into the barre, it will fall off the 5th string, cutting the B bass note short. The B should ring for two counts. Instead, place the finger on the side of its tip. Example #11a:

Example 11a.

Andante from *Twenty-Four Little Progressive Pieces, Op. 44, No. 11* (Fernando Sor)
measures 13-16

Lean the 1st finger over to fall across 5 strings to form a 5-string bar.

Keep the tip of the 1st finger firmly on the 5th string.

The low B must keep sounding until the E.

II ⑤

Option B:

Once again, keep the tip of the 1st finger anchored firmly on the 5th string. But this time, as you place the barre, allow the tip joint to collapse (hyperextend) so that it falls across only the 3rd, 4th, and 5th strings. Example #11b:

Example 11b.

Andante from *Twenty-Four Little Progressive Pieces, Op. 44, No. 11* (Fernando Sor)
measures 13-16

Fingertip joint collapses

The fingertip joint is bent

The fingertip Bar ③ ④ ⑤ only

Keep the tip of the 1st finger firmly on the 5th string.

The low B must keep sounding.

II

As always, it is essential not to place the 1st finger on the 5th string on its fingertip. If you do, as the finger collapses into the barre, it will fall off the 5th string, cutting the B bass note short. The B should ring for two counts. Instead, place the finger on the side of its tip.

Note that even if you can collapse the tip joint of your finger, this method of barring only three strings may not work for people with short fingers or a short tip joint. If that is the case, use option #1.

Watch me demonstrate in Video #12.

Video #12-Sor Andante, measures 13-16



Intentionally fall off a string to collapse into a barre

Sometimes, we need to have the 1st finger *intentionally fall off a string* to make a smooth transition to a smaller barre. Here is a passage from the *Moderato* from *Twenty-Four Progressive Lessons, Op. 31, No. 11* by Fernando Sor. Example #12:

Example 12.

Moderato from *Twenty-Four Little Progressive Pieces, Op. 31, No. 11* (Fernando Sor)
measures 18-20

Drag the tip of the 1st finger off of the 3rd string and collapse the tip of the finger or lean the finger over to fall across 2 strings to form the 2-string barre.

Keep the tip of the 1st finger firmly on the 2nd string and bend the tip or raise it up so that it only holds the 2nd string with no bar.

The tip of the 1st finger is on the 3rd string

The 1st finger is an anchor finger

B diminished chord

F chord

C chord

String	Measure 18	Measure 19	Measure 20
T	0	1	1
A	0	2	2
B	1	3	3

I have repeated several times how important it is to place a finger on the side of the tip. That is essential when a finger must collapse or lean over to form a barre, and the note on the lowest-pitched string of the barre must keep ringing.

In measure 18, we place the 1st finger on the 3rd-string G# of the B diminished chord. But this time, we want to carefully place the finger on its fingertip, close to the fingernail. Then, when we collapse the fingertip joint (or lean the finger) over to form the 2-string barre for the F chord, the finger gets dragged off the 3rd string onto the 2nd string. Now that it is on the 2nd string, it can conveniently serve as an anchor finger to help us move smoothly to the C chord in measure 19.

Watch me demonstrate this very handy-dandy technique in Video #13.

Video #13-Sor Moderato, measures 18-20



Intentionally drag a finger off a barre to a single string

In the preceding measure of the same *Moderato* from *Twenty-Four Progressive Lessons, Op. 31, No. 11* by Fernando Sor, we have a potentially choppy chord change. Example #13:

Example 13.

Moderato from *Twenty-Four Little Progressive Pieces, Op. 31, No. 11* (Fernando Sor)
measures 17-18

Potentially choppy chord change.

There will be a gap between the F's if we lift the bar and reset the 1st finger to play the 2nd F.

To get from the first to the second chord, most beginning players would play the 2-string barre chord, lift the barre, and reset the fingertip on the 1st-string F to play the second chord. That would produce a very choppy gap between the two F's, which are melody notes.

Instead, we can drag the tip of the 1st finger seamlessly off the 2nd string of the barre onto the 1st-string F. The two melody F's will sound beautiful. Example #14:

Example 14.

Moderato from *Twenty-Four Little Progressive Pieces, Op. 31, No. 11* (Fernando Sor)
measures 17-18

Drag the tip of the 1st finger off the 2nd string onto the 1st string.

The chord change is seamless. The F rings without interruption.

Watch me demonstrate this common technique in Video #14.

Video #14-Sor Moderato, measures 17-18



Moderato Op. 11, No. 11 (Fernando Sor) measures 18-20

Drag the tip of the 1st finger
all of the 1st string and
collapse the 1st finger
to touch the 2nd string
so both strings vibrate
to form the C major triad

Keep the tip of the
1st finger steady on the 2nd
string and bend the tip
up more & up so that it
only touches the 2nd string
with the hair

The tip of the
1st finger is on
the 2nd string

If diminished
chord

The 1st finger
is on the
2nd string

chord

chord

chord

[CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com](#)

Video #14-Sor Moderato, measures 17-18