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The Only Exception Paramore Chords

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Mastering "The Only Exception" by Paramore: A Complete Guide to the Chords

Paramore's "The Only Exception" remains one of the most beloved ballads of the 2000s. Its gentle melody, heartfelt lyrics, and relatable theme of learning to trust love again have made it a staple for acoustic covers, campfire singalongs, and beginner guitar practice. At the heart of this song lies a chord progression that is both simple and emotionally powerful. Whether you are picking up a guitar for the first time or looking to refine your performance, understanding **The Only Exception Paramore chords**is the key to unlocking its beauty. In this guide, we will break down the chords, strumming patterns, and practical tips so you can play the song with confidence and expression.

Basic Chords for "The Only Exception"

The song is originally recorded in the key of B-flat major, but many guitarists prefer to play it using a simpler set of open chords with a capo. This makes the chord shapes easier while preserving the original pitch. The most common approach is to place a capo on the 3rd fret and use the following chord shapes:

- G major – 320003
- D major – xx0232
- Em7 – 022033 (or Em – 022000)
- C major – x32010

If you prefer to play without a capo, you can use the following open chord shapes in the key of A major (which sounds a step lower than the original):

- A major – x02220
- E major – 022100
- F#m – 244222 (barre) or 2x220x (easier version)
- D major – xx0232

Both progressions follow the same pattern and capture the song's gentle, lilting feel. For the purpose of this guide, we will focus on the capo-on-3rd version using G, D, Em7, and C, as it is the most beginner-friendly and widely taught.

Understanding the Chord Progression

The entire song is built around a repeating four-chord cycle: **G – D – Em7 – C**. However, the order and rhythm shift slightly between sections to create dynamics.

Verse Progression

The verses follow a steady pattern that supports the narrative vocals. Play each chord for two beats (or one

count if you are strumming slowly):

- G (2 beats)
- D (2 beats)
- Em7 (2 beats)
- C (2 beats)

This pattern repeats throughout the verses. Listen to the original recording to feel the relaxed tempo. For example, the opening lines “And I’m on my way to believing” sit right over the G chord.

Chorus Progression

The chorus intensifies emotionally but keeps the same chord set. The main difference is that the chords are held a little longer, and the strumming becomes fuller. A typical chorus progression looks like this:

- G (4 beats)
- D (4 beats)
- Em7 (4 beats)
- C (4 beats)

Some versions of the chorus add a slight variation by repeating the Em7-C pair twice. For the line “You are the only exception,” you will land firmly on the G chord, then resolve through D and Em7 before returning to C.

Bridge Section

The bridge introduces a new chord to build tension. Instead of returning to G, the bridge moves from **Em7** to **Bm7** (or Bm if using basic shapes). With a capo on 3, Bm7 is played as x24232 or simply as a barre Bm shape on the 2nd fret (which becomes Dm with capo? Wait: careful). Actually, with capo on 3, the Bm chord shape (barre on 2nd fret) becomes a Dm sound. The original bridge uses a chord that functions as a minor iv. In the key of G (with capo 3 = Bb), that chord is Ebm. But for simplicity, many tutorials substitute it with an Em shape (which actually sounds like Gm). Let me clarify: The bridge in the original recording goes from the relative minor (Em in key of G, but actually it’s Eb minor in Bb). The easiest way to play the bridge with the capo 3 approach is to use the **Em** shape (022000) and then add a **Bm** shape (x24432) but that requires shifting. A more straightforward approach: keep the capo on and play an **Am**shape (x02210) for the bridge's "And I've always lived like this" section, then back to D and G. Experiment with the feeling rather than aiming for perfect chord-for-chord replication. Most casual performances simply stay on the core four chords throughout the bridge, and it still sounds lovely.

Strumming Pattern and Rhythm

“The Only Exception” is played with a steady, gentle 4/4 time. The strumming pattern is predominantly down-up-down-up, but you can adapt it to your comfort level. Here is a simple pattern for beginners:

- Verse: D – D U – U D (where D = downstroke, U = upstroke). Play each stroke evenly, focusing on the 1st and 3rd beats.
- Chorus: Double the strumming speed for a fuller sound. Use D D U U D U or a simple all-downstroke with accent on beats 1 and 3.

A useful tip: listen to the original recording and notice the subtle palm muting on the verses. Lightly place the edge of your picking hand on the strings near the bridge to dampen the sound slightly, then release for the chorus to create dynamic contrast.

Tips for Beginners Playing the Chords

If you are new to guitar, **The Only Exception Paramore chords**provide an excellent practice piece. Here are

some suggestions to help you master the song:

1. Use a capo. This avoids barre chords and lets you focus on smooth transitions between open chords. Practice moving from G to D to Em7 to C until you can do it without pausing.
2. Keep your strumming hand relaxed. The song is soft and introspective – heavy strumming will ruin the mood. Use your wrist, not your whole arm.
3. Count aloud. Tap your foot to the beat and say “1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and” while changing chords. This trains your internal timing.
4. Learn the Em7 shape. It sounds richer than plain Em and fits the song perfectly. Place your middle finger on the 2nd fret of the A string, ring finger on 2nd fret of D string, and index on 1st fret of high E? Actually Em7: 022033 – index on 2nd fret A string, middle on 2nd fret D, ring on 3rd fret B? Wait, Em7 is 022033: index on 2nd fret A, middle on 2nd fret D, ring on 3rd fret B (or use 022030 for easier). Practice it separately.
5. Play along with the track. YouTube has instrumental versions or the original song. Put the capo on 3 and strum along. Your ears will guide you on timing.

Emotional Resonance and Musicality

Beyond the mechanics, the magic of this song lies in its emotional delivery. The chord progression itself is a classic I – V – vi – IV in the key of Bb (or G with capo). This progression is known for its bittersweet, hopeful quality – perfect for a song about finally letting someone in. When you play the chords, think about the lyrics. The **G** chord feels like a resolution, the **D** builds anticipation, the **Em7** adds a touch of sadness, and the **C** brings warmth. Try to vary your dynamics: play softer during the verses and gradually increase volume as you approach the chorus. Pause slightly before the final “You are the only exception” for dramatic effect.

Advanced players can add embellishments: walk up to the G chord with a bass note run (e.g., F# to G), or use sus chords (Dsus2, Csus2) to add colour. But the beauty of the song is that it works perfectly with simplicity.

Conclusion

Learning **The Only Exception Paramore chords**is a rewarding experience for any guitarist, from beginner to intermediate. The gentle G-D-Em7-C progression, paired with a steady strum and heartfelt delivery, captures the essence of the song. With a capo on the 3rd fret, you can play along with the original recording in no time. Focus on smooth chord changes, consistent rhythm, and emotional expression. Whether you are playing for yourself or an audience, this song will always strike a chord. So pick up your guitar, place the capo, and let the music speak.

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