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The Shins New Slang Chords

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Unlocking the Magic of The Shins New Slang Chords

There are songs that define a generation, and then there are songs that seem to exist outside of time altogether. For fans of indie rock and acoustic-driven folk, **The Shins New Slang chords** represent a gateway into a world of delicate melancholy and raw, unfiltered emotion. Released in 2001 on the landmark album *Oh, Inverted World*, "New Slang" is far more than just a collection of notes and lyrics. It is a cultural touchstone, a song that filmmaker Zach Braff famously used to define a key moment in his film *Garden State*, and a piece of music that every aspiring guitarist eventually wants to learn.

If you are here, you likely want to understand the anatomy of this beautiful track. You want to know the exact finger placements, the strumming nuances, and the tuning secrets that make this song sound so ethereal. This guide will serve as your complete resource for mastering **The Shins New Slang chords**, breaking down the song section by section. We will explore the unique open tuning, the chord shapes that drive the song, and the specific techniques used by lead singer James Mercer to create that signature, shimmering sound. Whether you are a beginner looking for your first complex fingerpicking song or an experienced player seeking to nail the subtleties, this article is for you.

The Secret Ingredient: Open D Tuning

Before you can even think about placing your fingers on the fretboard, you need to understand that "New Slang" is not played in standard tuning. The very first step to playing this song correctly is altering your guitar tuning. James Mercer and the band famously utilize an **Open D Tuning** (often spelled out as D-A-D-F#-A-D, from low string to high string). This is a major departure from the standard E-A-D-G-B-E tuning most players are accustomed to.

Why is this tuning so important for **The Shins New Slang chords**? The answer lies in resonance. When you strum all six strings open in an Open D tuning, you are playing a full, rich D major chord. This fundamental shift allows the guitar to ring out with a sustained, chime-like quality that is almost impossible to replicate in standard tuning. The open strings create sympathetic vibrations that add a layer of depth and atmosphere to the chord progression. If you attempt to play the song in standard tuning, it will sound thin and inaccurate. The unique, open, and slightly melancholy voice of "New Slang" is entirely dependent on this alternate tuning.

To tune your guitar, start with your low E string and tune it down to D. Leave the A string as is. Bring the D string down to D (an octave higher than the low D). Tune the G string down to F#. Leave the B string as is. Finally, tune the high E string down to D. It is highly recommended to use a chromatic tuner for this, as it can be easy to over-tighten or loosen strings incorrectly. Once you are in Open D, you will be ready to unlock the song.

Breaking Down the Verse Chord Progressions

The verse of "New Slang" is deceptively simple. Once you are in Open D, the chord shapes become almost like puzzles. James Mercer rarely uses full barre chords or standard shapes. Instead, he uses partial voicings that focus on the middle and higher strings, allowing the open bass notes to drone underneath the melody.

The Identifying Phrase (Intro and Verse)

The song begins with a picking pattern that immediately sets the tone. The first chord shape you need to learn for the verse is essentially a **G major shape** played in Open D. Place your index finger on the 5th fret of the high E string (which is now tuned to D). Place your middle finger on the 6th fret of the B string, and your ring finger on the 7th fret of the G string. This creates a lush, high-register chord. The A and low D strings are played open, creating a drone beneath the melody. This shape is often referred to as a partial G chord.

The second chord of the verse shifts down the neck. You will use what is essentially an **A major shape** in Open D. First, place your index finger across the 7th fret of the high E and B strings (a small barre). Your ring finger goes on the 9th fret of the G string. Again, the lower strings remain open or are muted. This drone effect is the core of the song's sonic identity.

The progression for the verse typically moves back and forth between these two primary shapes. The magic of **The Shins New Slang chords** is that the melodic movement happens on the top three strings, while the bass provides a constant, grounding foundation. This creates a feeling of floating or drifting, perfectly matching the song's lyrical themes of confusion and fleeting beauty.

- Chord 1 (G shape): e (5th fret), B (6th fret), G (7th fret) – Open strings: A, D, D.
- Chord 2 (A shape): e (7th fret), B (7th fret), G (9th fret) – Open strings: A, D, D.
- Transition: Occasionally, you will hear a brief walk down or a passing chord that involves sliding the shape down by two frets before returning to the main progression.

Mastering the Chorus: The Climax of the Song

The chorus of "New Slang" is where the song opens up emotionally and harmonically. The chord shapes become slightly larger, and the strumming intensity increases. This section relies on the same Open D tuning, but the finger placements change to create a more resolved and powerful sound.

The Core Chorus Chords

The first chord of the chorus is an **Em (or E minor) shape** in Open D. To play this, you will create a small barre with your index finger across the 7th fret of the high E, B, and G strings. This shape creates a dark, moody sound that contrasts beautifully with the brighter verse chords.

From there, the song moves to a **G shape** that is similar to the verse, but often played with a more aggressive strum. You might use the same shape as the verse (5th fret, 6th fret, 7th fret) but you will focus on hitting all six strings to get a fuller sound. The low open D string rings out, giving this G shape a unique flavor that is different from a standard G major.

The chorus culminates with a shift to an **A shape** (7th fret, 7th fret, 9th fret) and then resolves back to the verse structure. The key to playing the chorus effectively is dynamics. During the verses, you should be fingerpicking or lightly strumming. When the chorus hits, your strumming hand should become more aggressive, strumming across the strings with authority. This dynamic shift is what makes the chorus feel like a release of tension.

1. Em shape: Barre at 7th fret (top three strings).
2. G shape: Index 5th fret (e), Middle 6th fret (B), Ring 7th fret (G).
3. A shape: Index barre 7th fret (e & B), Ring 9th fret (G).

Strumming Patterns and Picking Techniques

The Shins New Slang chords, you must master the rhythm. The song is based on a 4/4 time signature, but it has a swung, lazy feel to it. It is not rigid; it breathes.

Fingerpicking vs. Strumming

In the verses, James Mercer primarily uses a fingerpicking style. He alternates between his thumb and index finger, plucking the bass notes with his thumb and the melody notes with his index finger. The typical pattern involves playing the open A string or D string with the thumb, followed by plucking the high strings (the chord shape) with the fingers. This creates a syncopated, rolling effect. If you are a beginner, start by simply plucking the bass string once and then strumming the top three strings gently. As you become more comfortable, try to separate the bass and melody completely.

The Strumming Feel

For the chorus and the more energetic sections, a strumming pattern is required. The pattern is generally down, down-up, up-down-up. This is a classic folk-rock strumming pattern. The key is to keep your wrist loose and to emphasize the "off" beats. The song has a very specific pulse that is driven by the rhythm guitar. You do not want to rush the chord changes. Hold the chord for its full value before moving to the next one. This sense of space is crucial for the song to breathe.

- Verse Technique: Thumb on bass (A or D string), fingers on treble (chord shape).
- Chorus Technique: Full, aggressive strumming with a swing feel.
- Rhythm Tip: Count "1, 2, and, 3, and, 4" to capture the syncopation.

A Complete Section-by-Section Walkthrough

Let's put it all together. Here is a structured walkthrough of the entire song using **The Shins New Slang chords** in Open D tuning.

Intro

The intro consists of a repeating two-chord pattern. Use the G shape (5,6,7) and the A shape (7,7,9). Fingerpick these gently. The pattern repeats twice before the vocals come in. Focus on a clean, ringing tone. Let the open strings sustain.

Verse 1

The verse follows the same chord structure as the intro but with a slight rhythmic variation. The vocals sit perfectly in the space left by the guitar. Continue using the fingerpicking pattern. The dynamic is quiet and intimate. The chords remain the same: G shape to A shape.

Chorus

"Gold teeth and a curse for this town..." This is where the song opens up. Shift to the Em shape (barre at 7th). Then back to the G shape, then to the A shape. Your strumming should become fuller here. You can switch from fingerpicking to a pick, or simply use a more aggressive downward strum with your fingers.

Bridge/Middle 8

The bridge introduces a slight variation. You will hear a slide or a walk-down effect that uses the same chord shapes but moved down the neck. For example, you might slide the G shape down to the 2nd or 3rd fret to create a different harmonic flavor. This section is short but provides a nice contrast before returning to the verse.

Outro

The outro mimics the intro. The guitar returns to the gentle fingerpicking pattern, slowly fading out. The chords are the same as the verse and intro. The goal here is to provide closure, returning to the quiet, contemplative beginning from which the song erupted.

Tips for Mastering the Song on Guitar

Learning **The Shins New Slang chords**can be challenging, especially if you are not used to alternate tunings. Here are some practical tips to help you master the song.

1. Tune Slowly and Carefully

Do not rush the tuning process. Changing to Open D puts a lot of tension on the strings, especially the G string (which goes up to F#) and the low E string (which goes down to D). If you have old strings, they might break. Tune gradually, and let the strings settle.

2. Mute Unwanted Strings

Because you are letting so many strings ring open

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