0. Music Theory? No Thanks!

Tune your box to GDG or GDGB, go to cbgitty and buy one of these books with scale and chord charts, $22.99 each:

3-String Cigar Box Guitar "The Ultimate Collection" How-to-Play Book for GDG tuning
https://www.cbgitty.com/books-cds-posters-more/books/3-string-cigar-box-guitar-the-ultimate-collection-how-to-play-book-by-brent-robitaille/

4-String Cigar Box Guitar "The Ultimate Collection" How-to-Play Book for GDGB tuning
https://www.cbgitty.com/books-cds-posters-more/books/4-string-cigar-box-guitar-the-ultimate-collection-how-to-play-book-by-brent-robitaille/

Otherwise the following informations will help you to get started with elementary music theory:

You know the key and you have a chord sheet of a song but you don't know how to play it...

Let's start: our tuning is GDG, key is G major, scale is G-A-B-C-D-E-F#-G, and the chord sheet looks as follows:

A: / G G / D^7 D^7 / D^7 D^7 / G G / G G / C C / D^7 D^7 / G G /
B: / D D / A^7 A^7 / A^7 A^7 / D D^7 /
A: / ...

Definition: diatonic chord means a chord be built up exclusively from the notes which are part of the scale of some key, in our case exclusively from G-A-B-C-D-E-F# of the G major scale.

G, C, D are diatonic triads, built up from root, flat or sharp 3rd (3 or 4 semitones), and diminished or perfect 5th (6 or mostly 7 semitones).

D^7, A^7 are diatonic 7th chords, built up from diatonic triads, with a flat or sharp 7th (10 or 11 semitones) added.

By the way: as we will learn, we yet know even more about these chords: G, C, D are triads with root, sharp 3rd and perfect 5th, D^7, A^7 are 7th chords with root, sharp 3rd, perfect 5th, and flat 7th.

Let's start with a neck diagram drawn on a strip of paper where you mark the semitones for each string of your box: for GDG tuning:

G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G ★	G#	A	A#
D#	E	F ★	F#	G ★	G#	A ★	A#	B ★	C	C#	D	D#	E	F ★
G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G ★	G#	A	A#

By the way: if you have a chord sheet for key of E, but your box is tuned to GDG, you can just draw a neck diagram as if the box would be tuned to EBE: above the 15th fret most boxes sound rather tiny, and so you can get an idea of how the song proceeds.

G Chord

G chord: 3rd is A# or B, 5th is D: A# is not part of the scale, so the triad with root on G is GBD, with the inversions BDG and DGB: swapping the notes of top and bottom string you get variants which are not proper triads:

GBD	DGB	BDG	GDB	DGB	BGD
root position	swapped	1st inversion	swapped	2nd inversion	swapped
7	12	0	4	4	7
9	9	0	0	5	5
0	7	4	0	7	4

Why all these variants sound different? Let's have a look at their internal intervals: try them out all three proper dyads of the triad:

root position	G	sharp 3rd			B	flat 3rd		D									
	G	perfect 5th						D									
1st inversion					B	flat 3rd		D	4th				G				
					B	flat 6th							G				
2nd inversion								D	4th				G	sharp 3rd			B
								D	sharp 6th								B

Which variant sounds best? Which one sounds best with the following D^7 chord? I favour the variant where the root of the chord equals the root of the scale and 3rd and 5th are in their natural order: GBD, especially for the first chord which anchors the song to key G major.

D^7 Chord

D^7 chord: 3rd is F or F#, 5th is A, 7th is C or C#; F and C# are not part of the scale, so the full 7th chord is DF#AC. With three strings only, we have three possibilites: omit the root, omit the 5th, or omit the 3rd:

Omit the root:

F#AC	CAF#	ACF#	F#CA	CF#A	AF#C
1st inversion	swapped	2nd inversion	swapped	3rd inversion	swapped
5	11	11	14	2	5
7	7	10	10	4	4
11	5	14	11	5	2

Omit the 5th:

DF#C	CF#D	F#CD	DCF#	CDF#	F#DC
root position	swapped	1st inversion	swapped	3rd inversion	swapped
5	7	7	11	11	5
4	4	10	10	0	0
7	5	11	7	5	11

Omit the 3rd:

DAC	CAD	ACD	DCA	CDA	ADC
root position	swapped	2nd inversion	swapped	3rd inversion	swapped
5	7	7	14	2	2
7	7	10	10	0	0
7	5	14	7	5	5

C Chord

Now the C chord: 3rd is D# or E, 5th F# or G: D# is not part of the scale, and G is the perfect 5th so the C chord is CEG:

CEG	GEC	EGC	CGE	GCE	ECG
root position	swapped	1st inversion	swapped	2nd inversion	swapped
0	5	5	9	9	12
2	2	5	5	10	10
5	0	9	5	12	9

As with the G chord, I favour here the variant where the root of the chord equals the root of the scale and 3rd and 5th are in their natural order: CEG.

Chords of the A Part

G	G	D^7	D^7	D^7	D^7	G	G	G	G	C	C	D^7	D^7	G	G
I	I	V^7	V^7	V^7	V^7	I	I	I	I	IV	IV	V^7	V^7	I	I
7	7	5	5	5	5	7	7	7	7	0	0	5	5	7	7
9	9	4	4	4	4	9	9	9	9	2	2	4	4	9	9
0	0	7	7	7	7	0	0	0	0	5	5	7	7	0	0

The Roman numbers refer to the steps of the chord progression: I is tonic, IV subdominant, V is dominant: I - V - I and I - IV - V - I are common chord progression in folk songs and country music.

B part

Now part B: / D / D / A^7 / A^7 / A^7 / A^7 / D / D^7 /: what we can see here: / D A^7 D / corresponds to / G D^7 G / but one 5th higher: here the key must have changed, because G major has Am^7 with ACEG, but key now is D major with scale D-E-F#-G-A B-C#-D with A^7 with AC#EG.

D Chord

Now the D chord: 3rd is F or F#, 5th is G# or A: F is not part of the scale, and A is the perfect 5th so the D chord is DF#A:

DF#A		F#AD		ADF#	
root position	swapped	1st inversion	swapped	2nd inversion	swapped
2	7	7	11	11	14
4	4	7	7	12	12
7	2	11	7	14	11

A^7 chord, with 5th omitted

3rd is C or C#, 5th is D# or E, 7th is G or G#: C, D#, G# are not part of the scale, so the full 7th chord is AC#EG, with the 5th omitted AC#G:

AC#G	GC#A	C#GA	AGC#	GAC#	C#AG
root position	swapped	1st inversion	swapped	3rd inversion	swapped
12	14	2	6	5	12
11	11	5	5	7	7
14	12	6	2	0	5

B Part Chords

D	D	A^7	A^7	A^7	A^7	D	D^7								
I	I	V7	V7	V7	V7	I	I/V^7								
11	11	12	12	12	12	11	5								
7	7	11	11	11	11	7	4								
7	7	14	14	14	14	7	7								

Here the final dominant 7th chord D^7 is ambiguous: tonic (I) in the context of part B, but dominant (V) for the following part A:

Chords of the A Part

G	G	D^7	D^7	D^7	D^7	G	G	G	G	C	C	D^7	D^7	G	G
I	I	V^7	V^7	V^7	V^7	I	I	I	I	IV	IV	V^7	V^7	I	I
7	7	5	5	5	5	7	7	7	7	0	0	5	5	7	7
9	9	4	4	4	4	9	9	9	9	2	2	4	4	9	9
0	0	7	7	7	7	0	0	0	0	5	5	7	7	0	0