

Learning more about chords

Chords can be built on all seven notes of any major or minor scale. These seven chords then provide a **chord bank** to choose from when backing a melody. To choose from the correct chord bank you need to know the

scale, or **key**, in which the melody has been composed.

Below are the seven chords built on the notes of the C major scale.

Triads in the key of C major

							
number:	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	(VII)
name:	C	Dm	Em	F	G	Am	(Bdim)

Notice that each of these seven chords is named in two different ways:

- a by its **root** note (the note of the scale upon which the chord is built) and its type, i.e. whether or not it is:
- major:** a chord in which the interval between the root and the middle note of the triad is four semitones (called a **major third**)
 - or **minor:** a chord in which the interval between the root and the middle note of the triad is three semitones (called a **minor third**)

Primary chords

In any major or minor scale, three chords are used more often than the others. These are chords I, IV and V. They are known as the **primary chords**.

In the scale of C major shown above, the primary chords are C (I), F (IV) and G (V). These three chords between them contain every note of the major scale. This means that every note of a melody composed in a major scale can be **harmonized** by at least one of the three primary chords.

Play the three primary chords in the key of C major (C, F, G). Now practise changing between them, using the chord changes, known as **chord progressions**, below. Practise these until they are fluent as you will need them later on.

Chord glossary

Writing chords down

C = C major

Cm = C minor

$\frac{C}{E}$ = C with E bass

C^6 = C with added 6th (A)

Constructing chords

C **E $\flat$** **G** = C Minor

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

C **E** **G** = C Major

The middle note drops by a semitone to make the chord minor.

Commonly used chords

 C CEG	 G GBD	 D DF#A	 A AC#E	 E EG#B	 B BD#F#	 F FAC	 B $\flat$ B $\flat$ DF
 Cm CE $\flat$ G	 Gm GB $\flat$ D	 Dm DFA	 Am ACE	 Em EGB	 Bm BDF#	 Fm FA $\flat$ C	 B $\flat$ m B $\flat$ D $\flat$ F

Triads (three note chords) in C

 C I (1)	 Dm II (2)	 Em III (3)	 F IV (4)	 G V (5)	 Am VI (6)
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 I (1)	 V (5)	 IV (4)
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Cadences

Plagal		Perfect	
 F C	 G C		
IV (4)	I (1)	V (5)	I (1)

Suspensions and added notes

Csus4	C6	Cmaj7	C7
 G F C	 A G C	 B B $\flat$ C	 B $\flat$ B C