



The **5** Step *Visual* Guide To
Learn How To Play Piano &
Keyboards With Chords



Learning to play the piano was once considered one of the most desirable social skills a person could have. Having a piano in your home used to be as common as having an iPad today.

Times have changed and technology has certainly been responsible for a lot of that change. Media devices of all kinds have redefined what is entertainment in our lives.

One thing that has remained constant has been the approach to learning how to play the piano. Musical styles and genres continue to evolve but the traditional approach has dominated piano instruction for a majority of aspiring piano players.

Why is that? I believe that the nature of the piano as an instrument has always been tied to classical repertoire. That in turn has always influenced the way that we are taught how to *properly* play the piano.



Traditional piano lessons top the list of young and older people who desire to make music on their own at the keyboard. The biggest challenge piano students of all ages have is maintaining consistent instruction.

The number one reason that an overwhelming majority of piano students quit before they get to an intermediate level is the challenge of reading music.

I started taking piano lessons at age nine and called it quits by age twelve. I remember getting bored and completely disinterested. I never lost my desire to sit down and play real music. I just wanted to quit playing nursery rhymes that littered the pages of beginner method books.

As a young adult, I finally gained the courage to sign up with a piano teacher and start taking lessons again. My reasoning was that I am an adult and I should have more “*sticktoitiveness*” now than I did as a child.



Wrong. After a couple of years of piano lessons as an adult, I remembered how much work it was with such little reward. I understood it would take effort. I was willing to provide that.

But what was frustrating me was that fact that after almost two years of lessons, I was hardly gaining any progress. I then fired my piano teacher (in a nice way) and took on the challenge of self instruction.

I learned a few things the hard way. That's what I want to share with you first. I realized I was taking traditional piano lessons from a piano teacher that was instructed the exact same way.

My goal was to play popular music: Jazz, pop, blues, etc., but with traditional piano lessons, that's not an effective approach. Traditional piano lessons are all about reading music, playing notes, following the rules of written music and strictly adhering to them.



That's fine for aspiring piano players who desire to play classical repertoire. That was not my goal. I wanted to play music that I heard on the radio when I was growing up. Records, tapes and even songs that I made up in my own head.

The traditional approach doesn't support that. And the older you are, that approach makes it more difficult than it does for a child. Yes, it's actually easier for a child to learn how to read traditional music than an adult. The time and technique possibilities just aren't available to most adults.

So what path did I take to become a musician at the keyboard? I made a discovery that was contrary to my former traditional piano lessons. This discovery allowed me to sit down at my piano and make real music that didn't sound as though it was being played by a computer.

This discovery was *not* an instant fix or a magic solution that allowed me to start playing music right away effortlessly.



It took time and effort but most of all, it was actually fun getting from one level to the next. That hasn't stopped for me after all of these years.

So what's the discovery?

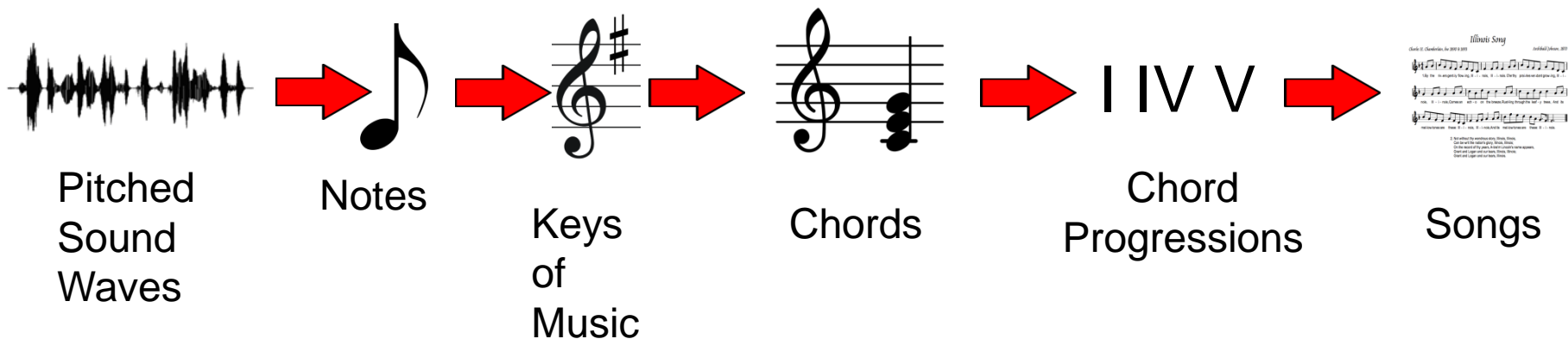
First of all, You don't have to be a proficient sight reader to play songs on your piano. In fact, it's contrary to sounding and playing like a professional when you're translating every single dot on the page. That's not real music. That's a written record of music. Playing with feeling and emotion is what makes music sound like real *music*.

The real essence of all music is chords. Not notes! When you learn to play the piano by reading music, you're focused on notes. Notes are individuals. They're random. They're not relative to anything. Chords on the other hand are related groups. They're easier to remember. They're easier to play. They're easier to understand! They're structural and have logical movements most of the time.



We could delve deep into the recesses of music theory and complicate things, but let me make music simple (as it should be) by showing you a simple chain of musical elements that *create music*.

Pitched sound waves create notes. Notes create keys of music. Keys of music create chords. Chords create chord progressions. Chord progressions create songs.





Now that we've defined music the simplest way possible, what's the best way to learn how to make music at the keyboard?

Written music is visual information and that isn't a bad thing, but visual information is much better interpreted as a general guide rather than being dictated by. I've found that whether I'm learning a song, chord progression or any piece of music, I'm far more successful getting the concept rather than trying to play something note for note the "right way".

I've found that a visual approach is the fastest and easiest way to learn how to play popular music on the piano. But first I want to share with you five steps to learn how to play the piano. *Visually!*

Take the time to learn these fundamentals and they will reward you for the rest of your musical life. That's what this instructional guide is all about.

Let's get started.

1

Learn your keyboard notes



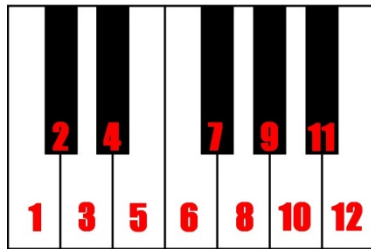
I'll have to admit that the first step to learning how to play the piano is the most fundamental. But it's one that I've made the mistake of thinking is so basic that it's not worth mentioning because anyone who wants to learn how to be a musician at any keyboard will learn the notes. *Right?* Wrong. I've learned that there are scores of people who never actually learn the notes.

Instead, they make the mistake of writing note names on the keys or using stickers. Don't make this mistake. This will keep you frustrated and cause you to quit. Here's the fastest way to learn notes on any keyboard. First, music notes are named after the first 7 letters of the alphabet.

A B C D E F G

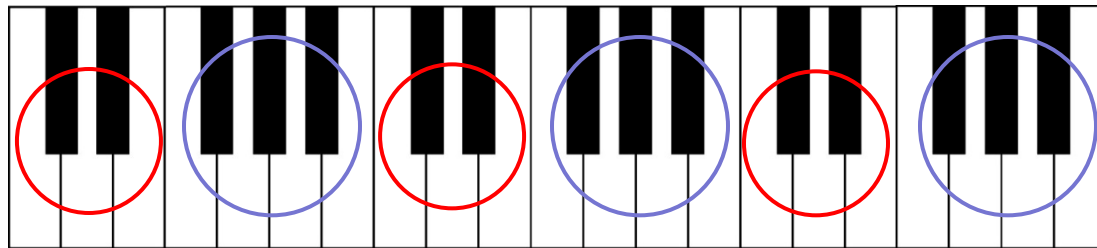


The keyboard is simply a pattern of 12 different keys.



Did you know that there's only 12 different notes on the piano?

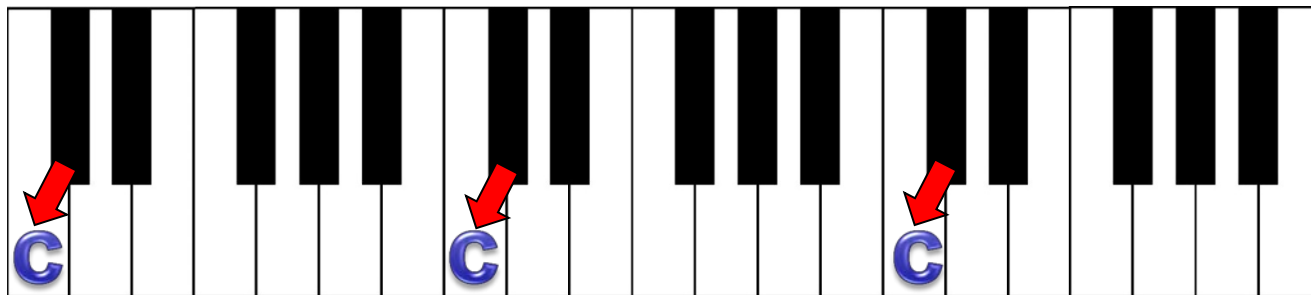
They're distinguished by a series of black keys that are recessed from the white keys in patterns of two and three. These are reference points that indicate where you are on the piano.



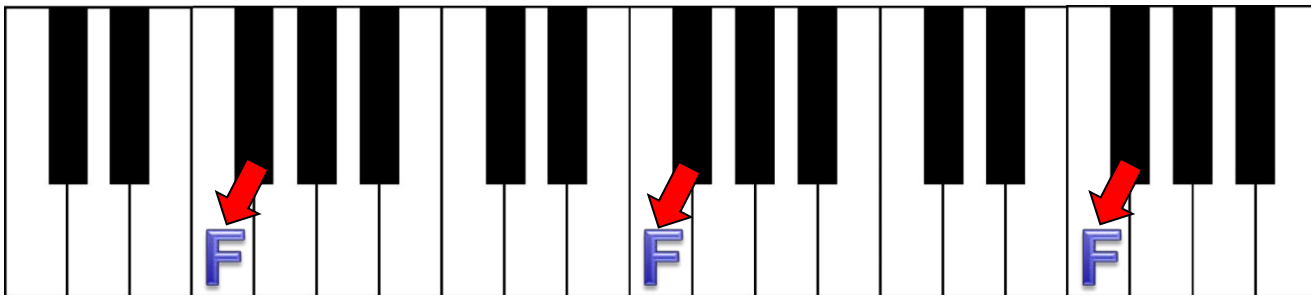
It makes it easy to see any size keyboard as 1 simple pattern.



The simplest way to start learning your keyboard notes is to locate the two black key pattern and find the note that is to the immediate left of it. This note is a C. There's a C with every two black key pattern.

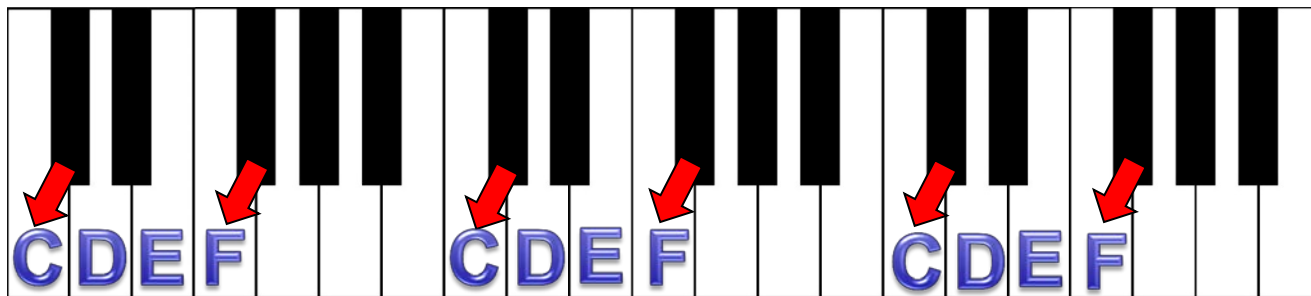


Now use the same concept to locate the note immediately to the left of the three black keys. This note is an F. There's an F with every three of these.

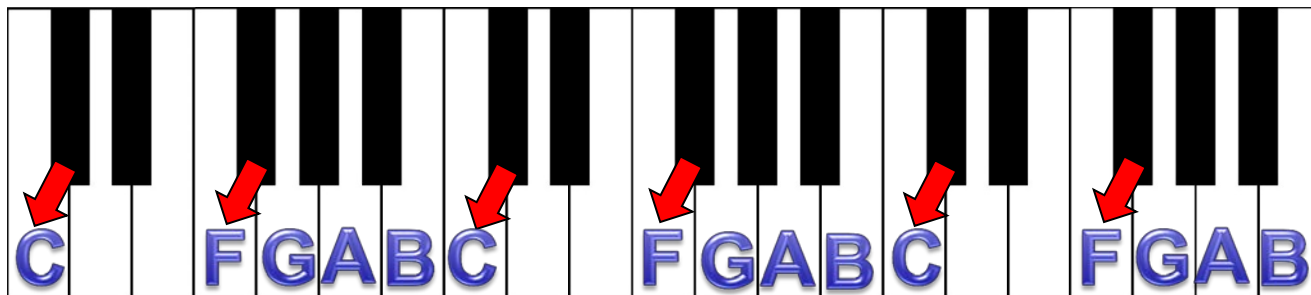




Now you can alphabetically fill in the gaps between C and F.



You can also alphabetically fill in the gaps between F and C. Notice you'll start over alphabetically after G.





Learning the notes on the keyboard is a simple but critical skill. Take the time to learn them. Download [this instructional guide](#) on learning your keyboard notes here. It's free and will take you [directly to the download page](#). Complete it as many times as you need to cement the keyboard notes in your head.

All the details about [Color Score](#) is a click away. Visit [here](#) to find out more.

2

Learn your 12 Major & minor Chords



As someone who has learned how to play the piano in the context of chords, I'll attribute my knowledge of the 12 Major Chords as being the most valuable. Why? Because the 12 Major Chords are the king of all chords and in my opinion they're so important and useful, I recommend that you learn them even before you learn all 12 Major Keys! That right. I said it.

Don't dare start playing scales up and down your piano like you did as a traditional piano student. It's time to learn something useful. If you know all 12 Major chords, you're on the springboard to learning all minor, diminished, suspended, 7th, extended, and altered chords. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

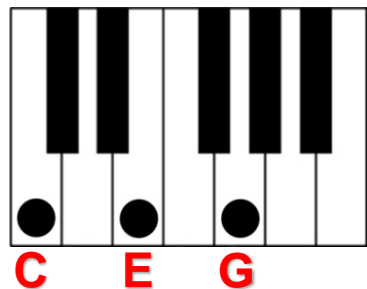
I like to teach the 12 Major Chords in a sequence that I call "Visual Order". This simply means that they're in a logical, visual sequence that make them very easy to learn. So let's learn them!



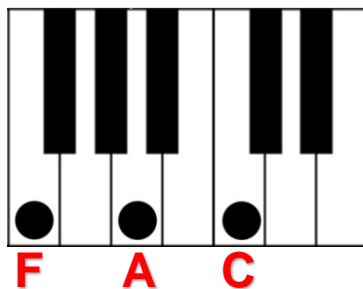
Visual order consists of four groups of three that add up to twelve major chords. Each one of these four groups has a silly name. But that's so you can remember them.

The first group is called the "Marshmallow Chords". That's because they're white on the inside and white on the outside. These are the only Major Chords that have all white notes.

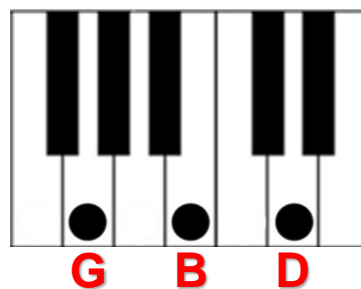
C Major



F Major



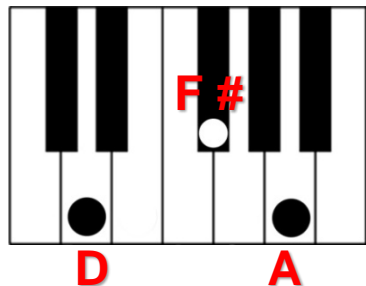
G Major



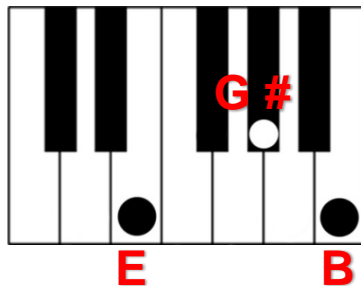


The second group is called the “Blackberry Jam Sandwich Chords”. That’s because they’re white on the outside and black on the inside. You can also think of these chords as a pyramid because of their unique triangle looking shape.

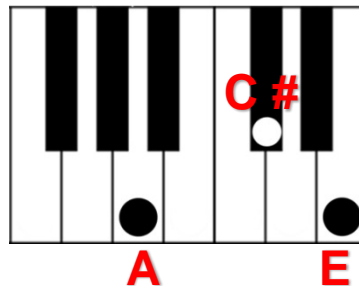
D Major



E Major



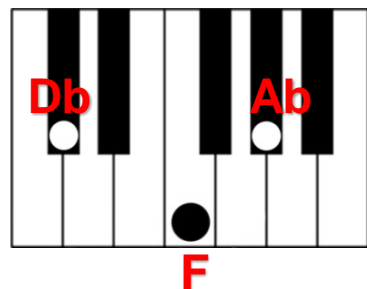
A Major



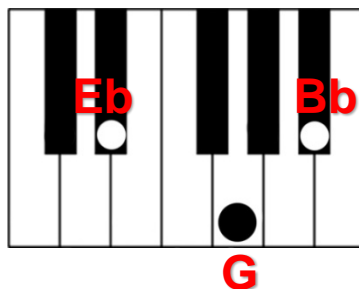


The third group is called the “Oreo Cookie Chords”. That’s because they’re black on the outside and white on the inside. You can also recognize these chords as a “V” because of their shape.

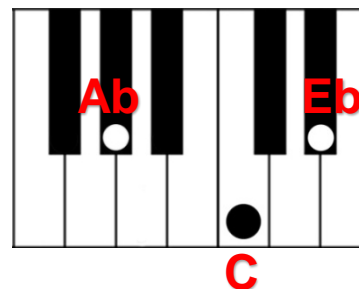
D flat Major



E flat Major



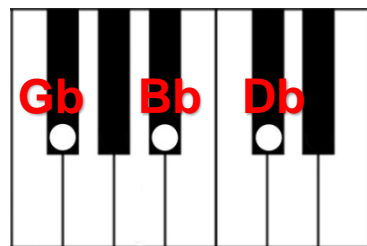
A flat Major



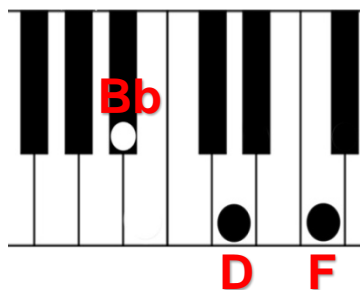


The fourth group is called the “Chocolate & Vanilla Chunk Chords”. This group is known as the visual oddball of the Major Chords. No two of these chords look the same. For that reason, they fit well together in this last group.

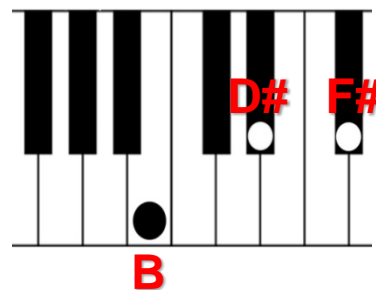
G flat Major



B flat Major



B Major



Don't underestimate the power of these 12 Major Chords. This is where all other chords come from.



You also have 12 minor Chords to work with. It seems as though this would be twice as many chords to learn but you're literally a half step away from learning them.

To find a minor chord, all you have to do is take any Major chord and lower the middle note (the third) $\frac{1}{2}$ step which is a single key. *That's it! It's that easy.*

From C Major to C minor



From D Major to D minor



Additional Free
Resources here!

Take this concept of going from Major to minor to all of the 12 Major chords you learned in the last section. Get the [instructional guide](#) to help you master all 12 Major chords [here](#) and the [instructional guide](#) to master all minor chords [here](#).

3

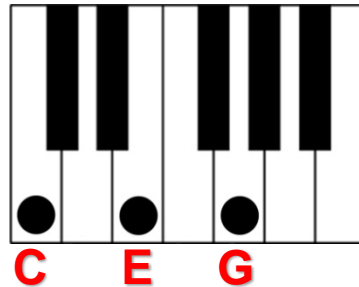
Learn How To Play Chord Inversions



As great as I think the Major and minor chords are, I don't think they would have any life in them without the concept of chord inversions. A chord inversion is simply the way the notes are arranged in the chord. You can invert Major *and* minor chords. Inversions give chords a new sound and new life. So Let's take a look at them.

A chord with the root (note it's named after) on the bottom is defined as being in root position.

C Major Root Position

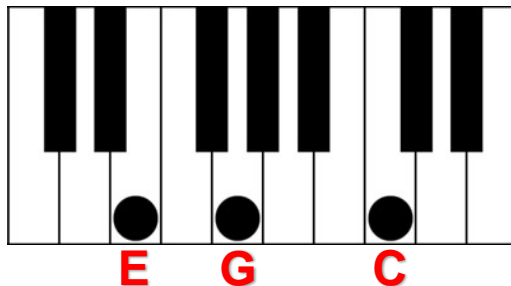


The different positions that chords can be played in allows them to accommodate melodies and have different sound characteristics.



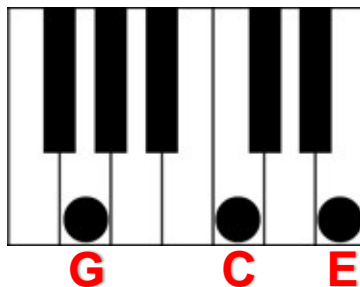
A chord with the root (note it's named after) on top of the chord is defined as being in 1st inversion.

C Major 1st Inversion



A chord with the root (note it's named after) in the middle of the chord is defined as being in 2nd inversion.

C Major 2nd Inversion

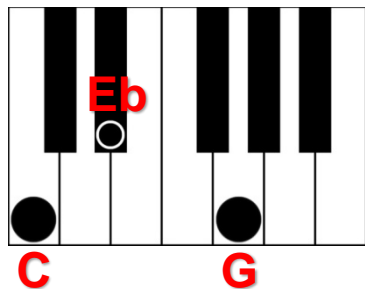


When you can develop your piano skills to play chord inversions smoothly and without hesitation, it opens up the possibilities to play more professional sounding chords.

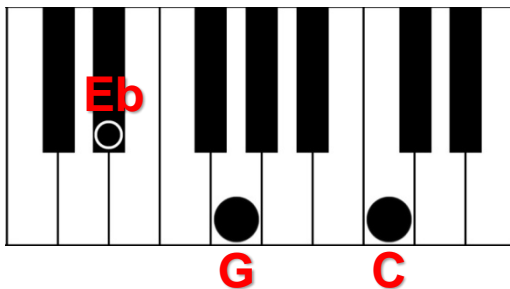


Minor chord inversions are structured the same way. But instead of having a Major 3rd, they have a minor 3rd.

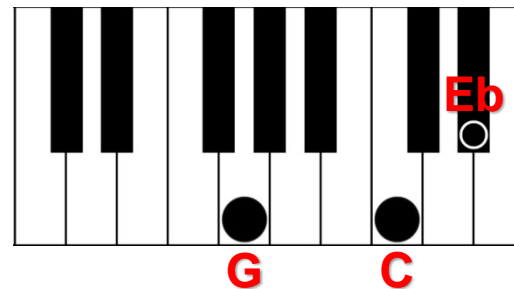
C minor Root Position



C minor 1st Inversion



C minor 2nd Inversion



Apply chord inversions to all of the Major and minor chords you learned earlier. You'll quickly find that 12 Major chords turn into 24 chords when converted to minor and then turn into 72 chords when played in the different inversions.

Download the [free instructional guide](#) for specifics on how to master chord inversions here.

4

Learn Chord Progressions



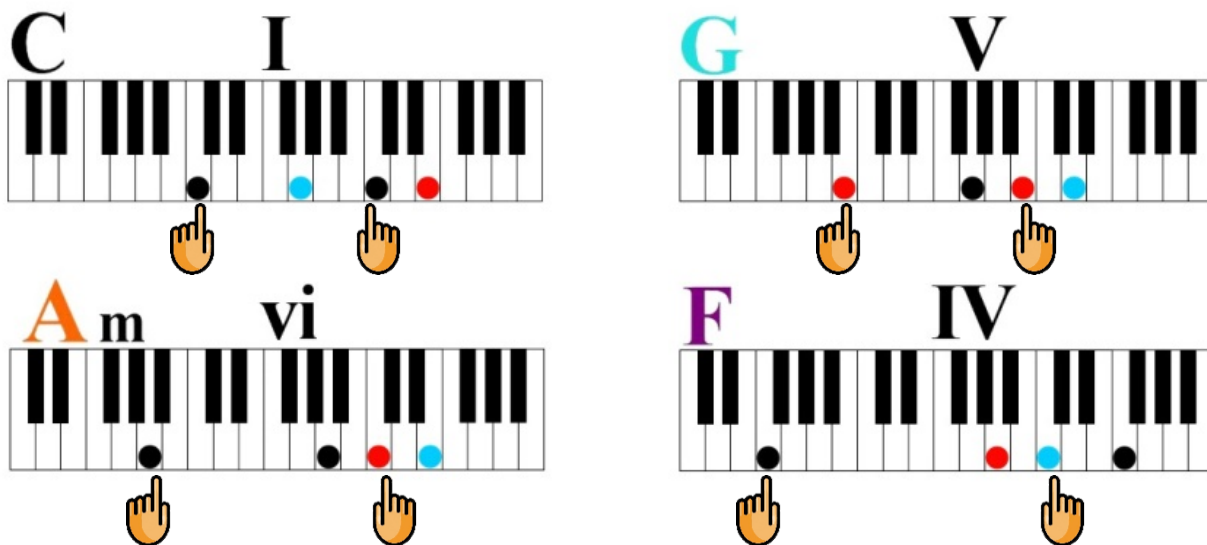
Now it's time to start adding another musical dimension to your piano playing. Chord progressions are an essential element of music that segues into songs. I want to show you one of the most used chord progressions in popular music.

It's the 1 5 6 4 chord progression. I'm presenting it to you in C Major. Chord progressions can be played in different variations. I'm going to share this one with you in this particular sequence. You'll notice that the keyboard diagrams in this section has dots that are different colors.

These are called Keyshots. The different colors represent the numbered tones in a key of music. It's a tool that we use in the [Color Score Learning System](#). You can find out more by visiting this page at learncolorpiano.com.



This chord progression combines the different elements of music at the keyboard that we've covered so far: The notes of the keyboard, Major & minor chords and chord inversions. Colored chord symbols are also used along with roman numerals. In the 5 chord (G Major), I used an alternate bass note (B) to add interest. This chord progression sounds best in the middle register of the keyboard.





The magic of chord progressions allow you to play a multitude of songs. This is because they are the underlying structure of music. Meaning that they're recycled over and over again.

When you start learning songs in the context of chord progressions, you start to notice patterns. These patterns will become more familiar to you and make songs easier to learn.

Download [this instructional guide](#) for one of the most used chord progressions in music. It's free and will take you directly to the [download page](#).

5

Learn How to Read Chord Charts & Lead Sheets



Written music has evolved beyond the grand staff. In fact, it's very hard to get by playing popular music without the ability to read chord charts and lead sheets. I'm going to cover both of these mediums so you'll benefit from understanding them.

A chord chart is a simple chart of chord symbols that follow a series of chord progressions. You'll often find that they have slash marks to indicate rhythm or time signature. They may also have lyrics, time signature and tempo information.

You have a certain amount of freedom with a chord chart that you don't have with a lead sheet because the arrangement of voicings and other musical elements are up to you. You just need to know how to approach them and use them to your benefit.



Chord charts can also be very basic with chord symbols and slash marks only, like the one below. They're just intended to show the basic structure of a song or piece of music. Beyond that, the piano player fills in the rest of the song arrangement themselves.



Chord charts can be made rather quickly and easily. They're also indispensable when you need visual information to guide you through a song.



Lead sheets are similar to chord charts but they have the melody notated and chord symbols. They're based on traditional sheet music but only have the treble clef. This is probably a song players greatest tool because you have all of the essential information to make a song recognizable and at the same time, all of the freedom to play your own personal arrangement.

sum mer's in the mea__ dow_____ or when the val

Publications of lead sheets are referred to as fake books. They were once illegal to publish but now are available everywhere in all styles of music.

Find out how you can learn how to play songs visually with colored chord symbols like these at learncolorpiano.com.

Bonus

Learn The Number System



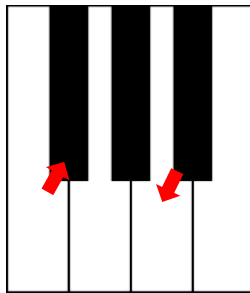
I believe that learning the number system has to be one of the greatest skills that a chord playing musician can have. With a full understanding of the number system, you can play melodies, chord voicings, chord progressions and songs in any key.

So let's get to the specifics of what the number system is, how it works and how to use it.

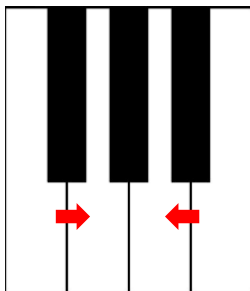
A key of music consists of 7 different notes. It's from those 7 different notes that melodies, chords and chord progressions are derived from. Let's look at the key of C Major as an example.

I'm going to present the following examples to you in Keyshots. These are keyboard diagrams that color code the notes in a key of music according to their specific number. The actual notes have different colors in every key.

The underlying structure of a Major key of music is a pattern of whole steps and half steps. A half step is the distance from one key (or note) to the very next without skipping a key.



A whole step is the distance from one key (or note) to the next by skipping a key.



It doesn't matter if the key you're on or the one you're moving to is black or white when you're counting half or whole steps.

The pattern for a Major key of music is 2 whole steps, 1 half step and 3 whole steps.



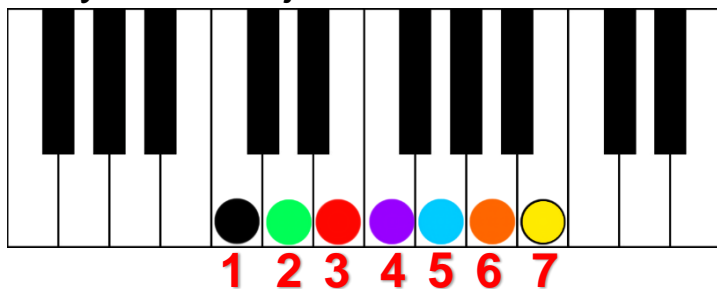
W-W-H-W-W-W

You can remember this pattern with a mnemonic device such as an acronym:

Windy Weather Has Worsened While Walking

The 7 different notes in the key of C Major are C D E F G A and B. They're also numbered in that same sequence. The colors we're using are tools that we use in the Color Score Visual Chord System.

Key of C Major



You can find all Major keys of music just by using this pattern. Remember that the 7 different notes/numbers are going to fall on different combinations black and white keys.



Another name for a key of music is a scale. If you ever had traditional piano lessons, you more than likely were taught to play your scales with both hands simultaneously. The problem with learning your keys this way, is that it does not put any emphasis on learning the number system.

If you can answer questions such as: What is 3rd? What is the 6th? What is the 4th? etc. without having to count or look at the keyboard. Then you're in a position to play the piano the way professionals do. The bottom line with the number system is that it's structural and you can apply a chordal concept to any key once you've learned it and trained your hands how use it.

We're going to use some Color Score tools now, so let me give some insight into how these colors are used to teach the number system.

We use these 7 different colors because it's helps you to instantly recognize the numbers without having to read.

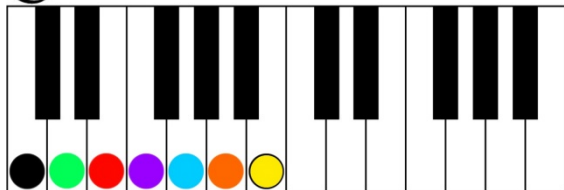


Here are the numbers that these seven different colors represent.

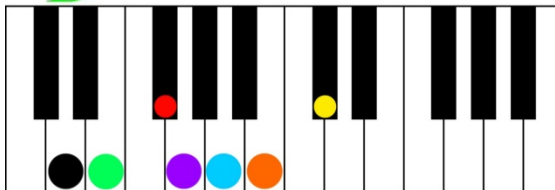


Different Keys Same Colors

C Key of C Major



D Key of D Major

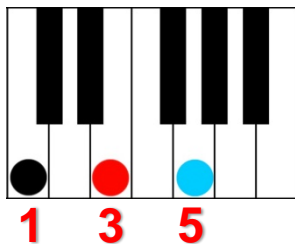


All 12 Major keys are represented exactly as you see them here. The number sequence and the colors are in the same order.

Now let's look at how chords are created in relationship to the numbering system. All Major chords consist of the root, third and the fifth. Even if you play them in different inversions, they're defined by all three of these elements.

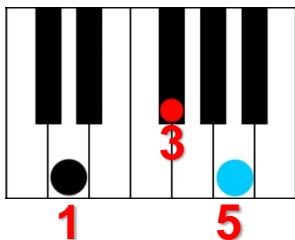


C Major

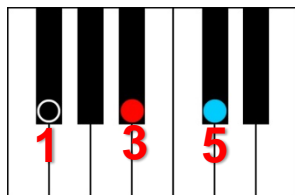


By understanding this concept, you can learn all 12 Major chords and the notes that they're built from.

D Major



G flat Major

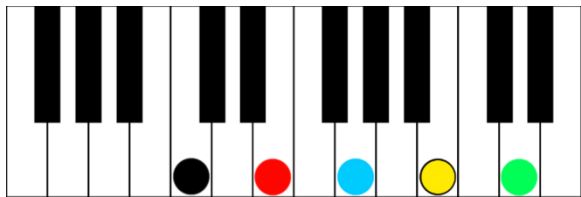


The 1 tone is also referred to as the root. This is because it's the bottom note of the chord (or key). Think of the root of a tree.

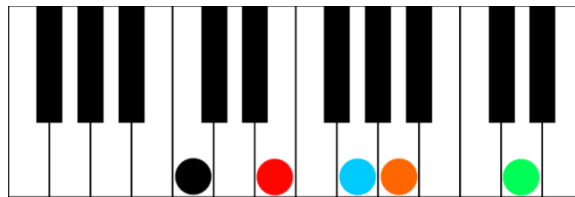


It also allows you to add other tones in the key to move beyond basic chords.

C Major 9

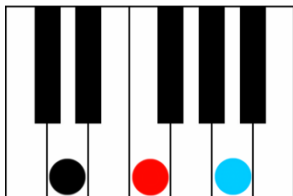


C 6/9

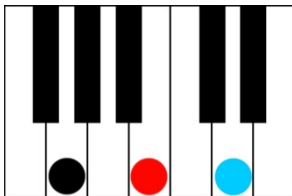


Understanding the numbering system gives you the tools to understand chord progressions by number as well.

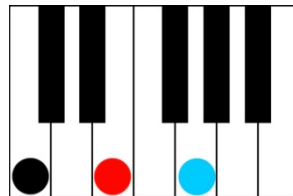
2-5-1 chord progression in C Major



ii



V



I

Chord progressions are often notated with Roman numerals as you see here.



The best approach to learning all Major keys of music and their corresponding numbers is to play them with 1 finger. That's right. I said 1 (one) finger. As you ascend and descend through the key, you should say the number out loud. Using 1 finger causes you to consciously find every note in the key.



Find out how you can learn more about the numbering system and how to play your piano or keyboard like a professional!



Click here to Visit learncolorpiano.com

LEARN HOW TO PLAY VISUALLY

With **Color**



There's a real shortcut to learning how to play the piano the way that professionals do without years of traditional lessons!