

Chord Spelling

Learning What the Chord Tones of Chords Are

Although this Chord Spelling lesson is being presented under the **Ukulele Lessons** by *Curt Sheller* banner. It is generic music information that you can relate to any instrument, whether it can play chords or not. Even single note instruments like trumpet and saxophone can play the individual notes or chord tones as an arpeggio.

What is a Chord?

A **Chord** is three or more notes sounded simultaneously. The minimum number of notes required for a chord are three. These three note chords are called triads. Two notes are usually referred to as an interval or dyad. Each note of a chord is called a chord tone.

(From Wikipedia) - Chord A group of three or more different notes sounded together or almost together. These three note chords are called triads. Two notes are called an interval or dyad. Chords with four notes are called a tetra-chord or 4-part chord, six a hexachord, etc. Every chord can be given a specific name, based on the notes that constitute the chord and the distances, or intervals, between them and its harmonic function within a tonality or chord progression.

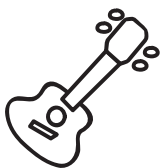
A chord is a chord, regardless of what instrument it is being played on or whether all the notes are played together, as single notes or even on the same instruments.

(From Wikipedia) - Power Chord In music, a power chord is an interval which serves the diatonic function of a major or minor chord. It consists of two pitches or three pitches with one doubled at the octave, and thus only two pitch classes. The pitch classes are separated by a perfect fifth, or its inversion, the perfect fourth. It is sometimes notated 5, as in C5 (C power chord).

For new guitarists, power chords are often the quickest route to playing popular music on the guitar without a lot of training or practicing.

Chord Building and Spelling?

By memorizing one sequence of notes from the major scales (key signatures) and a few chord building rules we can learn to spell **ANY** chord. This is a beneficial skill to have for harmonizing a melody with a chord and for improvisation or soloing.




Step One

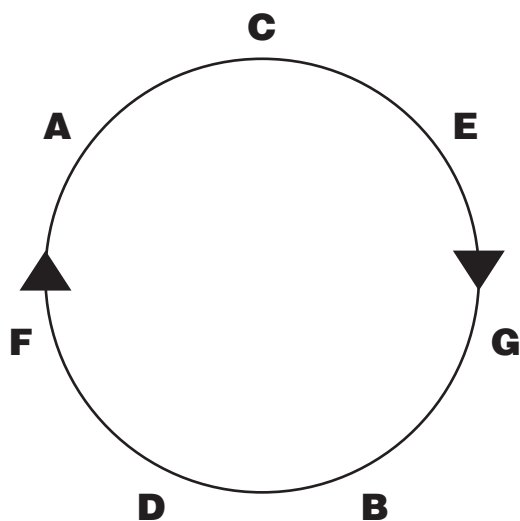
Chords Built in Thirds

Chords built using the intervals of thirds ARE the most common chords you will encounter.

(From Wikipedia) - Interval In music theory, an interval is the distance in pitch between two notes, the lower and higher members of the interval. It often refers to those two notes themselves (otherwise known as a dyad). Larger intervals are described as wide and smaller ones as narrow, but these are only relative terms. Intervals may be vertical (or harmonic) if the two notes sound simultaneously or linear (or melodic), if the notes sound successively.

Chords built in thirds are created using a combination of major and minor third intervals. A third is the distance from one line to the next on the five line music staff or the distance from one space to the next space.

 The interval of a *Third*, can be referred to in generic terms as a third or specifically as a major or minor third.



C E G B D F A C E G B...





At one time in your life, if you had a music class in grade school and you learned the names of the lines and spaces of the music staff using a phrase like. “**Every Good Boy Does Fine**”, (E G B D F) for the lines and **FACE**, “Face” for the spaces. E G B is Em, G B D is G major, B D F is B diminished. F A C is F major, A C E is A minor.

Combining the lines and spaces into a sequence we get E G B D F A C E, a sequence of major and minor thirds.

Memorize this sequence of thirds starting on any letter:

C	E	G	B	D	F	A	C
E	G	B	D	F	A	C	E
G	B	D	F	A	C	E	G
B	D	F	A	C	E	G	B
D	F	A	C	E	G	B	D
F	A	C	E	G	B	D	F
A	C	E	G	B	D	F	A

The words *face* and *ace* show up in each sequence.

Taking the first three letters of each sequence and memorize those as words.

C	E	G	B	D	F	A	C
E	G	B	D	F	A	C	E
G	B	D	F	A	C	E	G
B	D	F	A	C	E	G	B
D	F	A	C	E	G	B	D
F	A	C	E	G	B	D	F
A	C	E	G	B	D	F	A

You are getting a jump on memorizing triads as the first three notes of the above list form the chords: **C Dm Em F G Am Bdim**.

These are the seven triads of the C major scale or key of C.

C	C	C	E
Dm	D	F	A
Em	E	G	B
F	F	A	C
G	G	B	D
Am	A	C	E
Bdim	B	D	F





Step Two

The Notes and Chords of Major Scales

What are the notes of a C major scale? What are the notes of a G major scale? What are the notes of a F major scale?

We have been using the notes of the C major scale up to this point.

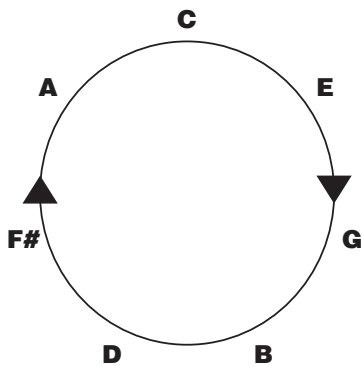
The difference between a C major and G major scale is only one sharp. The F is F# in the G major scale and a F natural in the C major scale.

The difference between C major and F major scale is only one flat. The B is a Bb in the F major scale and a B natural in the C major scale.

These are the sharps and flats that would make up their respective key signatures.

A **key signature** is a summary of the natural, sharp and flat notes that make up a key or tonality.

For **G Major** take the Sequence of Thirds: C E G B D F A and make the F an F sharp (F#). So now all your memorized sequences and words have an F# in their spelling.



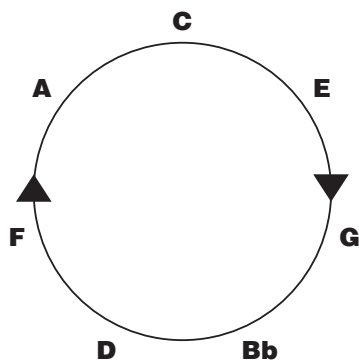
G B D F# A C E G B D F#...

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



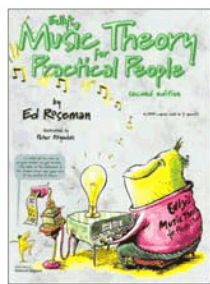


For **F Major** take the Sequence of Thirds: C E G B D F A and make the B an B flat (Bb).
C E G Bb D F A.



F A C E G Bb D F A C E...

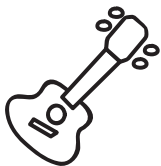
C	E	G	Bb	D	F	A	C
E	G	Bb	D	F	A	C	E
G	Bb	D	F	A	C	E	G
Bb	D	F	A	C	E	G	B
D	F	A	C	E	G	Bb	D
F	A	C	E	G	Bb	D	F
A	C	E	G	Bb	D	F	A



The book **Edly's Music Theory for Practical People** is probably one of the best books with great tips in memorizing the major scales. www.edly.com

Next Step - The thirds sequence backwards is a sixth sequence: C A F D B G E C, containing major and minor sixth intervals.





The Harmonized Major Scale?

From the harmonized major chord scale we can spell the following chords: major, major seven, seventh, minor, minor seventh, diminished and minor seven flat five.

C Major Scale

No Sharps or Flats

C Major Scale:	C	D	E	F	G	A	B
Triads:	Cmaj	Dm	Em	Fmaj	Gmaj	Am	Bdim
4-Part Chords:	Cmaj7	Dm7	Em7	Fmaj7	G7	Am7	Bm7b5
Scale Degrees:	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII

G Major Scale

One Sharp - F#

G Major Scale:	G	A	B	C	D	E	F#
Triads:	Gmaj	Am	Bm	Cmaj	Dmaj	Em	F#dim
4-Part Chords:	Gmaj7	Am7	Bm7	Cmaj7	D7	Em7	F#m7b5
Scale Degrees:	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII

F Major Scale

One Flat - Bb

F Major Scale:	F	G	A	Bb	C	D	E
Triads:	Fmaj	Gm	Am	Bbmaj	Cmaj	Dm	Edim
4-Part Chords:	Fmaj7	Gm7	Am7	Bbmaj7	C7	Dm7	Em7b5
Scale Degrees:	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII

All 15 harmonized major scales can be found online at:

www.ukulelechords.net/lessons/uke/chordSpelling.html





Observations

- Generically the triads in sequence are: **maj, min, min, maj, maj, min, dim**
- Generically the 4-part chords are: **maj7, m7, m7, maj7, 7, m7, m7b5**
- There are three **MAJOR** triads and two major seventh (maj7) 4-part chords in all harmonized major scales.

Using the sequence of thirds a C major triad is spelled C E G. F major is F A C and G major is G B D.

It doesn't matter whether the C major chord came from the key of C, G or F. The spelling is the same: C E G. The F and G chords are in three different major scales and the spelling would be the same regardless of which scale you select as the basis for spelling the chord.

- There are three **MINOR** triads and three minor seventh (m7) 4-part chords in all harmonized major scales.

Using the sequence of thirds a Dm minor triad is spelled D F A. Em is E G B and Am is A C E.

It doesn't matter whether the Am chord came from the key of C, G or F. The spelling is the same: A C E. In fact all A, Ab or A# chords use the letter A C E with various natural, sharp or flat notes.

Chord Building Rule: A minor triad can be created by lowering the third of a major triad one half step. So we can convert the three major triads to minor triads by lowering the third one half step (1 fret on the uke).

Cm is C Eb G. Fm is F Ab C and Gm is G Bb D.

We can do the same from the three minor chords and create major triads by raising the third one half step:

D major is D F# A. E major is E G# B and A major is A C# E.

Note the letter name of the chord tone can NOT change. F# can not be Gb and G# is not Ab, etc.

- A **SEVENTH** chord shows up only once as a 4-part chord on the fifth (V) scale degree. This will be very useful information for determining the key of a song or progression.



