



Bite size Composition

THEME - Chords available in a Major key

By writing out the scale of the key we have chosen to work in, putting numbers underneath and then stacking the tonic triads on top we can see the chords we have available within our key and in number order.

G	A	B	C	D	E	F
E	F	G	A	B	C	D
C	D	E	F	G	A	B
I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII

Thinking of the chords as numbers is important when it comes to creating/recognising a chord sequence.

When building chords from a Major scale the pattern of chords will always go like this:

1 = Major, 2 = minor, 3 = minor, 4 = Major, 5 Major, 6 = minor, 7 = diminished (squished)

Play up the Major scale with the root position triad chord shape and you'll hear them. You can use upper case numerals for Major and lower for minor.

Chord 1 (tonic) is the strongest safest chord, it establishes the key. Pieces will often start on chord 1, go through a sequence of chords and come back to 1 to sound complete and resolved.

The next strongest chords are **5 (The dominant)** and **4 (The subdominant)** you might notice that they are the only other chords in the scale that major too. Lots of music is composed with just these 3 chords. A well known example = happy birthday.

You will often see V - I at the end of a piece of music as it gives a definite "The End" sound. IV - I is similar but perhaps a bit more gentle.

Happy birthday to you, Happy birthday to you, Happy birthday to Geraldine, Happy birthday to you.

I V I IV I V I

Common chord progressions are sequences of chords which appear in lots of different pieces of music, (thankfully you can copyright a melody but not a chord sequence)

One approach to composing is to start with a chord sequence you like and build from there.

1. Pick a Major Key, write out the scale and number each note, write out the triads on top.
2. Play up the scale in these root position triads, thinking of each as a number.
3. Playing the chords in whatever way you are comfortable with, e.g both hands same shape root position triad, RH triad LH bottom note of the chord, or any other combination, move around from chord to chord.
4. Here are some common chord progressions to try, then have a go at creating your own, you can also have a look at your favourite tunes and see if you can work out the chord sequences.

I - V - I, I - vi - IV - V, I - IV - V - I, ii - V - I, I - IV - vi - V, iii - vi - ii - v - I