

Keys, Numbers, and Transposing

Welcome to your first deep music theory!

What is a key?

- A key is a group of notes, like a scale.
- There are 12 keys. C, G, D, A, and E are the most common guitar keys.
- Each key will have a unique set of 7 different notes. For example, the key of C has the notes C, D, E, F, G, A, and B. Most keys have some sharp or flat notes.
- Each of the notes has a chord based on it. In the key of C, the chords are: C, Dm, Em, F, G, Am, and Bm7b5. For the rest of this sheet we will ignore the Bm7b5 chord.

Whats this number thing all about?

- To simply things, musicians often talk about songs and chords using numbers instead of letters.
- Instead of saying C, Dm, Em, F, G and Am, you might say 1, 2m, 3m, 4, 5, and 6m.
- C is the key, so it is the 1 chord, the other chords in the key are numbered in the order they fall in the scale.
- Here is the Key of C major, written in letters and the corresponding numbers.

C	Dm	Em	F	G	Am
1	2m	3m	4	5	6m

- A song that goes C F G C also goes 1 4 5 1.
- Here is the Key of G:

G	Am	Bm	C	D	Em
1	2m	3m	4	5	6m

What is transposing, how do you do it, and why do you want to?

- Transposing means changing the key.
- You can transpose with a capo. You simply put the capo on and play the song as you would otherwise.
- You can transpose without a capo!
- **C F G C = 1 4 5 1 = G C D G**
- The chord shapes change, but the song sounds the same!
- Transposing can make the song fit your voice much better.
- Each key/group of chord shapes has advantages and disadvantages. You may love the F chord and want to use it all the time, you might love the sound of alternating bass in E.
- You can use different guitar strums and picking patterns in each key.

12 Bar Blues

1⁷

1⁷

1⁷

1⁷

T				
A				
B				

4⁷

4⁷

1⁷

1⁷

T				
A				
B				

5⁷

4⁷

1⁷

(5⁷)

T				
A				
B				

12 Bar Minor Blues

1_m⁽⁷⁾

1_m⁽⁷⁾

1_m⁽⁷⁾

1_m⁽⁷⁾

T				
A				
B				

4_m⁽⁷⁾

4_m⁽⁷⁾

1_m⁽⁷⁾

1_m⁽⁷⁾

T				
A				
B				

#5⁷

5⁷

1_m⁽⁷⁾

5⁷

T				
A				
B				