

Every Major & Minor Chord

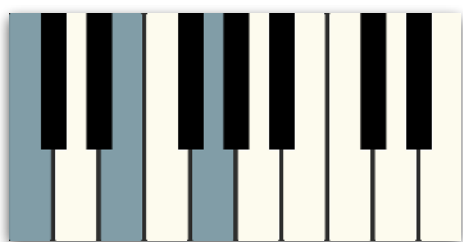
Major and minor **triads** are the 2 most common and most useful types of chord to begin learning. These are their original **root position** forms which must be learned first. In actual music, the notes from a chord can then be spread out or broken up in different ways as well as played like this.

- A helpful method to learn them is to **memorise a major chord first**, and then you can adjust it to **create a minor chord by lowering the middle note a half step**.
- I have organised them into 4 groups so it may be helpful to **learn 1 group at a time**. You can focus on memorising the major chords and they will help you find the minor chords.

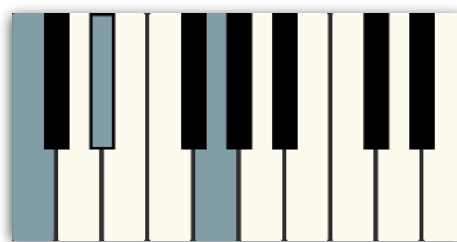
Group 1

In the first group, the major chords are only made up of **white keys**.
The minors then all have a black key in the middle.

C Major C E G



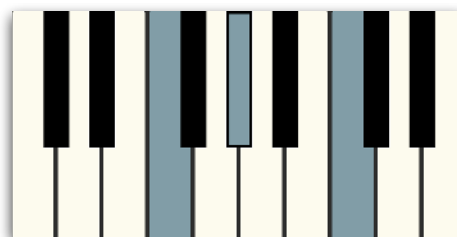
C Minor C E \flat G



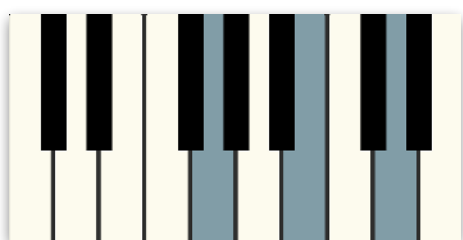
F Major F A C



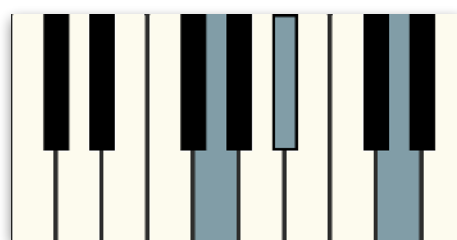
F Minor F A \flat C



G Major G B D



G Minor G B \flat D



A Few Theory Basics

- The 3 notes in each major and minor chord are called a **root**, **3rd** and **5th**.
- The 1st note in a chord is the **root**.
- The middle note in a root position **major chord** is called a **major 3rd** - 4 half steps from the root.
- The middle note in a root position **minor chord** is called a **minor 3rd** - 3 half steps from the root.

Both types of 3rd must span 3 letters of the musical alphabet from the root. When a 3rd is a black key, this rule will tell us which note name to use, the flat (b) name or the sharp (#) name.

Example 1

The major 3rd (middle note) in a C major chord is E and E spans 3 letter from C (C D E).

The minor 3rd in a C minor chord must use the same letter so it's an E^b not D[#].

Example 2

The minor 3rd (middle note) in a D minor chord is F and F spans 3 letter from D (D E F).

The major 3rd in a D major chord must use the same letter so it's F[#] not G^b.

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- The highest note in both chords is called a **perfect 5th** - 7 half steps from the root.

A 5th must span 5 letters of the musical alphabet from the root.

Example 1

The perfect 5th in a C major or minor chord is G and G spans 5 letter from C (C D E F G).

The perfect 5th in a C[#] major or minor chord is G[#] not A^b as it still needs to span 5 letters.

Example 2

The perfect 5th in a B^b major or minor chord is F which spans 5 letters from B (B C D E F).

The perfect 5th in a B major or minor chord is F[#] not G^b as it still needs to span 5 letters.

To spell the notes in each of these chords correctly, we essentially use every other letter in the musical alphabet A-G, beginning from the 1st note of the chord (the root). Major and minor chords which begin from the same note will always use the same letters, but then we just need the appropriate flats or sharps.

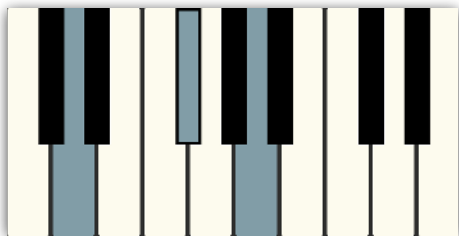
You can watch this [video](#) or download this in depth chord building [PDF](#) to learn more



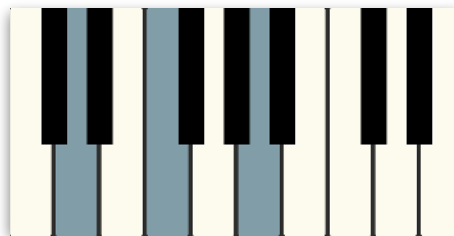
Group 2

In this group, the major chords are all **white black white**.
The minor chords only use white notes.

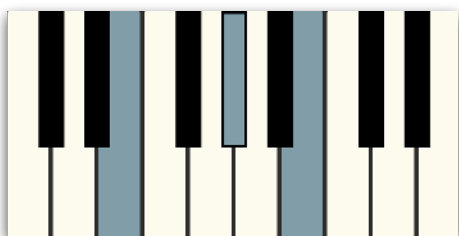
D Major D F# A



D Minor D F A



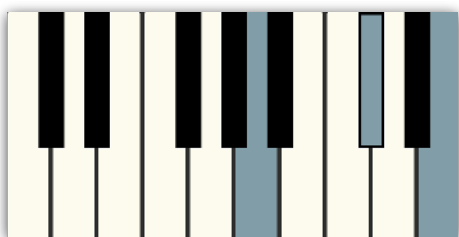
E Major E G# B



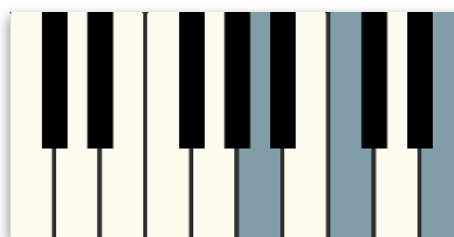
E Minor E G B



A Major A C# E



A Minor A C E



- The major chords here create a shape similar to a triangle (if you connected the notes) and that may help you recognise them.
- It might be useful to notice that the shapes here are the other way around to group 1. Now it's the minors which only contain white keys and the majors which have a black key in the middle.
- If you compare this group to the next group 3, you'll see that Db, Eb and Ab major (black white black) look upside down compared to D, E, and A major (white black white)

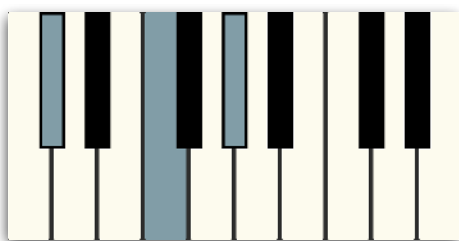
Remember, the aim is to eventually be able to find & play all these basic chords easily, without thinking!

In this group, the major chords are all **black white black**.

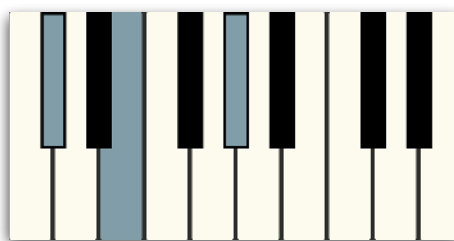
When chords begin from a black key, there's 2 possible note names we could use and this can create some more complicated alternative spellings. I have included them in case you need them but luckily, **the simplest spellings** are the most common and I suggest just learning those for now.

E \flat /D \sharp minor are both used often but otherwise, the common spelling is on top.

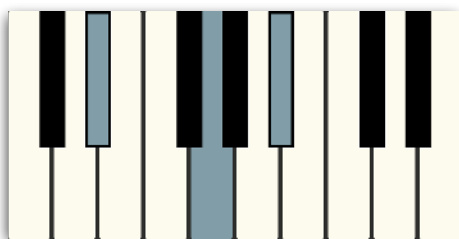
D \flat Major D \flat F A \flat
C \sharp Major C \sharp E \sharp G \sharp (less common)



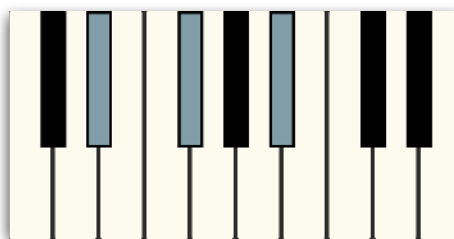
C \sharp Minor C \sharp E G \sharp
D \flat Minor D \flat F \flat A \flat (less common)



E \flat Major E \flat G B \flat
D \sharp Major D \sharp F \times A \sharp (less common)



E \flat Minor E \flat G \flat B \flat
D \sharp Minor D \sharp F \sharp A \sharp (Both common)



A \flat Major A \flat C E \flat
G \sharp Major G \sharp B \sharp D \sharp (less common)



G \sharp Minor G \sharp B D \sharp
A \flat Minor A \flat C \flat E \flat (less common)



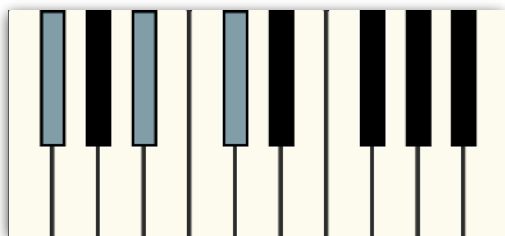
- Sometimes white keys are labelled as flats or sharps, for example, E \sharp is the same key as F because there is no black key above E. Likewise, the E could be called an F \flat
- We may need to use a **double flat** ($\flat\flat$) - flatten the note twice/move down a whole step
- Or we may need a **double sharp** (\times) - sharpen the note twice/move up a whole step



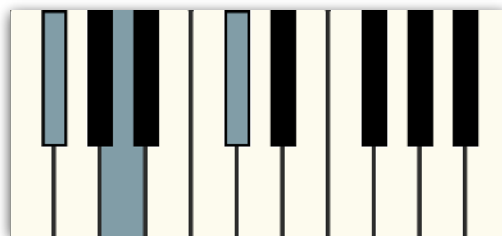
The last group of chords are all **unique shapes**.

G \flat /F \sharp major are both used often but otherwise, the common spelling is on top.

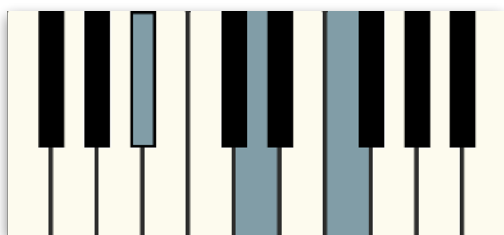
G \flat Major G \flat B \flat D \flat
 F \sharp Major F \sharp A \sharp C \sharp (Both common)



F \sharp Minor F \sharp A C \sharp
 G \flat Minor G \flat B $\flat\flat$ D \flat (less common)



B \flat Major B \flat D F
 A \sharp Major A \sharp C \sharp E \sharp (less common)



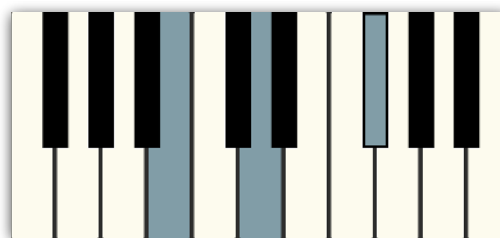
B \flat Minor B \flat D \flat F
 A \sharp Minor A \sharp C \sharp E \sharp (less common)



B Major B D \sharp F \sharp



B Minor B D F \sharp



What to do next:

Chord Inversions - Other
ways to play these chords

[YouTube](#)
[PDF](#)

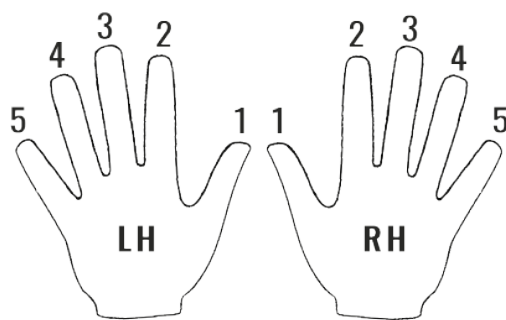
Building Different
types of chord

[YouTube](#)
[PDF](#)

Chords Inside a Major
& Minor key

[YouTube](#)
[PDF](#)





There are no set fingerings you should use for each chord but rather different finger combinations that will be useful in different situations depending on what else you need to play, what you played before and what you need to play after. We often mix finger positions to help us flow smoothly between chords so it's helpful to practice a few different ways to become more comfortable playing them.

Remember, these are fingerings for root position major and minor chords but the best fingerings for other types of chord and chord inversions won't be exactly the same when the notes are spaced out differently.

Easiest to try first

RH 1 2 3
LH 3 2 1

Most people find this easiest and less awkward to begin with. You will need to use this sometimes but perhaps less often than the next group.

Most important to practice

RH 1 3 5 RH 1 2 4
LH 5 3 1 LH 4 2 1

A little harder to get used to at first but these 2 finger positions are very important to learn and you will need to use them most often.

You may sometimes need these

RH 2 3 5 RH 2 4 5
LH 5 3 2 LH 5 4 2

You may have to use these sometimes when you need your thumb free to play another note but when you're just starting out, it's probably more useful to focus on the positions above instead.

Avoid these

RH 1 2 5 RH 1 3 4
LH 5 2 1 LH 4 3 1

These fingerings can put your hand in an awkward position and beginners may often use them by mistake (particularly the first one). Unless there's a very specific reason to use these fingers for root position chords, avoid them and check you're not using them by mistake.