

Keyboard Skills II

Week 3 : Triads: Major, Minor, Diminished & Augmented in all keys.

MAJOR TRIADS

A **triad** consists of three tones—the root, so called because it is the tone on which the triad is constructed; the *third*; and the *fifth*. A triad is also called a **chord**.

Major triads are formed by taking the first (root), third, and fifth tones of the major five-finger patterns and sounding them together.

C major chord (I chord)

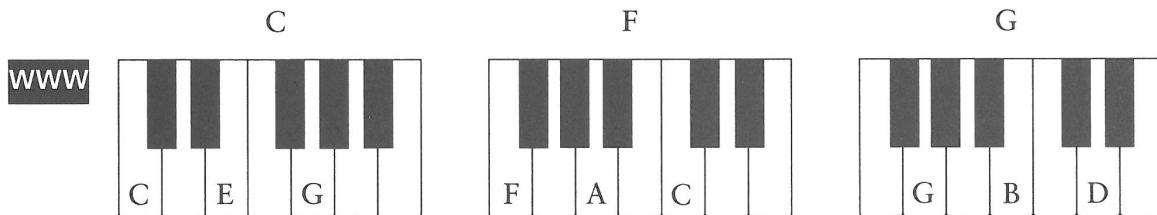
5
3
1

1
3
5

Major Triad Groups

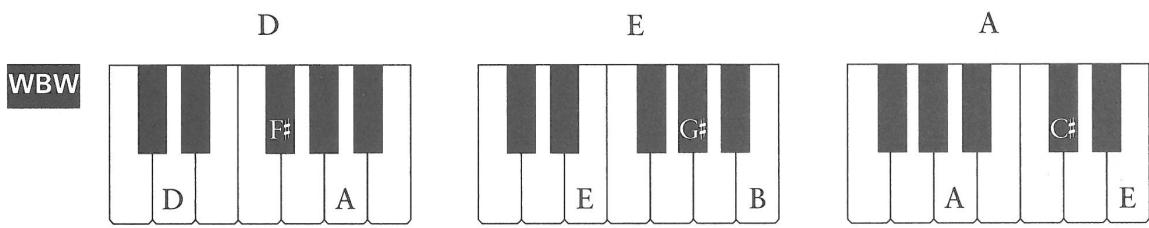
An easy way of learning the major triads and their spellings is to categorize them in like groups.

The chord group of C, F, and G triads uses only the white keys. (In the following diagrams, W = White Keys, and B = Black Keys.)

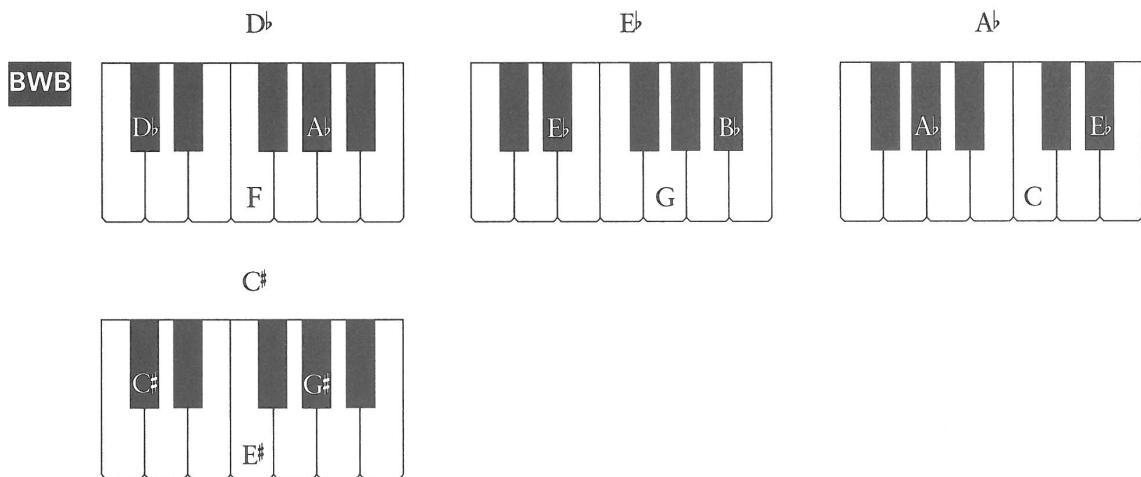


Practice this three-chord grouping, first with the right hand, then with the left, and then with both hands. Learn to develop a “feel” for each chord and the movement from one chord to the next. Look for tones that repeat—common tones—to help you when moving from one chord to another.

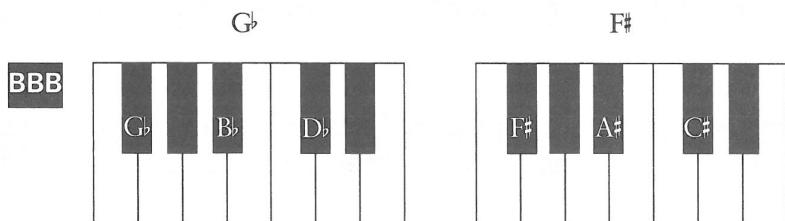
The chord group of D, E, and A uses only white keys in the open fifth with the third a sharped black key.



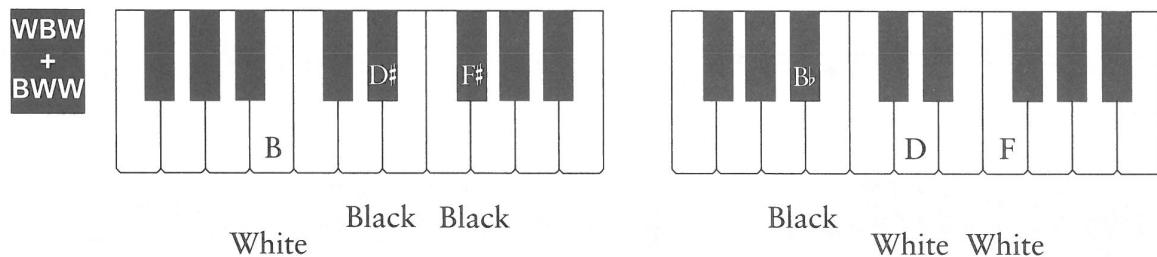
The chord group of D \flat (C \sharp), E \flat , and A \flat uses only black keys in the open fifth with the third a white key.



The G \flat (F \sharp) triad uses only black keys.



The B and B \flat major triads use these arrangements:



Open Fifths

PRACTICE STRATEGIES



Triads without their thirds are called **open fifths**. Playing open fifths in half-step progressions is good preparation for playing major and later the minor triads which are introduced on p. 155. Using both hands, construct open fifths starting on C and play them both upward and downward as illustrated next.

Notice that if the lower tone of the fifth is a white key, the upper tone will also be a white key. If the lower tone is black, the upper tone will also be black. The only two exceptions are the fifths B \flat -F (black-white) and B-F \sharp (white-black).

A musical staff with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The staff shows a half-step progression of open fifths from C to G. Fingerings 1, 5, and 5 are indicated above the staff.

Play the following major triads with each hand separately, then with both hands, first upward, then downward.

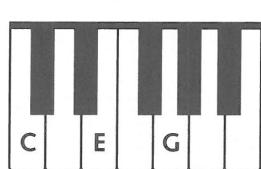
A musical staff with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The staff shows major triads for C, D, E, and F. Fingerings 1, 3, 5 and 3, 1 are indicated above the staff.

A musical staff with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The staff shows major triads for F \sharp , G, A, B, and B \flat . Fingerings 1, 3, 5 and 3, 1 are indicated above the staff.

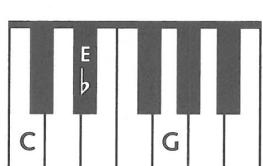
Minor Chords

Major chords become minor chords when the third (middle note) is lowered a half step.

Major Chord



Minor Chord



Major-Minor-Major Chord Progression

PRACTICE STRATEGIES



Play the major-minor-major progression below chromatically upward and downward starting with C. Practice playing these chords in various registers.

Musical notation for a major-minor-major chord progression. The progression consists of three chords: C major, D flat minor, and D major. The notation is in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The first measure (C) has a staff with a 'C' key signature. The second measure (D flat minor) has a staff with a 'D flat' key signature. The third measure (D major) has a staff with a 'D' key signature. Below each staff are fingerings indicating the root position of each chord. The progression is shown in three measures: C, D flat, D. The notation is repeated in a cycle, indicated by 'etc.' at the end.

C D^b D

5 5 5
3 3 3
1 1 1

1 1 1
3 3 3
5 5 5

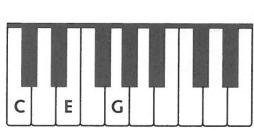
M m M

etc.

Augmented Chords

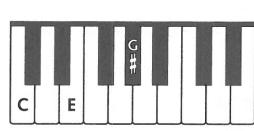
A major chord becomes **augmented** when the fifth is raised a half step. A plus sign (+) indicates an augmented chord.

C Major Chord



C

C Augmented Chord



C+

Playing Major and Augmented Chords

Play the following exercise that uses major (M) and augmented (A) chords.

4-1

M A M A M

Continue upward by half steps until...

Chord Qualities ■ Unit 7 97

AUGMENTED AND DIMINISHED TRIADS

An **augmented triad** is formed by raising the fifth tone of a major triad one half step.

A **diminished triad** is formed by lowering the third and fifth tones of a major triad one half step.

G major chord symbol: G

G augmented G⁺ or G aug.

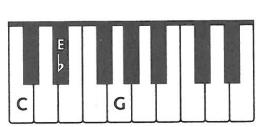
G major

G diminished G° or G dim.

Diminished Chords

A minor chord becomes **diminished** when the fifth is lowered a half step. A small circle (\circ) indicates a diminished chord.

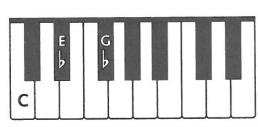
C Minor Chord



Cm



C Diminished Chord



C dim. or C \circ



Playing Minor and Diminished Chords

Play the following exercise that uses minor (m) and diminished (d) chords.

A **double flat** (bb) lowers a flatted note another half step, or a natural note one whole step.

4-2

Musical exercise 4-2 consists of two staves of music. The top staff shows a sequence of chords: m, d, m, d, m. The bottom staff shows the harmonic progression 1 3 5. The right side of the exercise shows a continuation of the pattern upwards by half steps, with the instruction "Continue upward by half steps until...".

Playing Major, Augmented, Minor and Diminished Chords

Play the following exercise that uses major (M), augmented (A), minor (m) and diminished (d) chords.

A **double sharp** (x) raises a sharped note another half step, or a natural note one whole step.

4-3

Musical exercise 4-3 consists of two staves of music. The top staff shows a sequence of chords: M, A, M, m, d. The bottom staff shows the harmonic progression 1 3 5. The right side of the exercise shows a continuation of the pattern downwards by half steps, with the instruction "Continue downward by half steps until...".