



The Ultimate Chord STARTER KIT

The formulas and progressions behind every song you have ever loved.

Every song you have ever loved is built on chords. The Beatles, Beethoven, Taylor Swift, the hymns you grew up with. All of it. Chords are the foundation.

Most people try to learn chords one at a time from a giant chord book and give up before they get anywhere. There is a much faster way. You only need two things: a formula for building any chord, and an understanding of why certain chords belong together. That is what this guide gives you.

Work through it once, and you will understand more about how music is actually built than most people who have been playing for years.

What is in this guide:

- Section 1 -- The Counting Formula: how to build any chord from any note in seconds
- Section 2 -- Why Chords Go Together: keys, scales, and the chord family explained simply
- Section 3 -- The Most Common Progressions: the patterns behind thousands of your favorite songs

Tip: Print this out and keep it on your piano. Every formula you need is here.

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SECTION 1 The Counting Formula

If you can count, you can build any chord on the piano.

Before anything else, you need to know one thing: what a half step is.

A half step is simply the very next key on the piano -- black or white, it does not matter.

From C, one half step up is C#. From E, one half step up is F.

That is it. That is all you need to know to use the formulas below.

Every chord has a formula. A formula tells you exactly how many half steps to count between each note. Pick any starting note -- called the root -- and count. The chord appears.

Here is what that looks like for C major using the formula 4 + 3: start on C, count up 4 half steps to reach E, then count up 3 more half steps to reach G. C, E, G -- that is C major. The same formula works from any note on the piano.

Chord Type	Formula	What It Sounds Like
Major	4 + 3	Bright, happy, strong
Minor	3 + 4	Sad, moody, emotional
Diminished	3 + 3	Tense, suspenseful, unresolved
Sus2	2 + 5	Open, airy, floating
Sus4	5 + 2	Anticipation, unresolved pull
Dominant 7th	4 + 3 + 3	Bluesy, soulful, needs resolution
Major 7th	4 + 3 + 4	Lush, jazzy, dreamy
Minor 7th	3 + 4 + 3	Mellow, sophisticated, soulful

How to use these formulas:

- Pick your starting note (the root). This is the name of your chord.
- Count the first number of half steps up from the root. That is your second note.
- Count the second number of half steps up from there. That is your third note.
- Play all three notes at the same time. That is your chord.
- Example: G minor using 3 + 4. Start on G, count 3 half steps to Bb, count 4 more to D. G minor = G, Bb, D.

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SECTION 2 Why Chords Go Together

This is what most piano teachers never explain -- and it changes everything.

Once you have chords, the next question is: why do certain chords sound right together in a song, and others sound wrong? The answer is keys and scales.

Every song lives in a key. A key is just a home base -- a specific note that the song revolves around. And from that key, a specific family of seven chords is born. Songs sound good because they use chords from the same family.

The Major Scale

Every major scale follows the same pattern of whole steps and half steps. Once you know this pattern, you can build a scale starting on any note.

The Major Scale Pattern: W W H W W W H

W = Whole step (skip one key). H = Half step (next key).

C major using this pattern: C D E F G A B C

Every major scale on the piano follows this exact pattern. Change the starting note, the pattern stays the same.

From the scale, you build the chord family. Each note in the scale becomes the root of a chord. Stack every other note of the scale on top of it and you get a triad -- a three-note chord.

Whether those stacked notes land on black keys or white keys determines if the chord is major, minor, or diminished. You do not have to calculate this every time. The pattern is always the same in every major key.

The Chord Family of C Major

These are the only seven chords that naturally belong together in the key of C major.

Roman Numeral	Chord	Type	Notes
I	C	Major	C, E, G Home base. Feels resolved and complete.
ii	Dm	Minor	D, F, A Gentle tension. Leads naturally to V.
iii	Em	Minor	E, G, B Adds color and emotion to progressions.
IV	F	Major	F, A, C Warm and supportive. Works with almost anything.
V	G	Major	G, B, D The tension chord. Always wants to go home to I.

vi	Am	Minor	A, C, E Emotional and reflective. The most used minor chord.
vii	B	Diminished	B, D, F Tense and unstable. Rare but powerful.

Notice that uppercase Roman numerals (I, IV, V) are major chords and lowercase (ii, iii, vi) are minor. The little circle on vii means diminished. This system works in every key -- just move the same pattern to a different starting note.

Why this matters:

When you see a song uses C, Am, F, and G -- you now know that is I, vi, IV, V in the key of C major.

All four chords belong to the same family. That is why they sound right together.

Once you understand keys, you stop seeing every song as a new puzzle.

You start seeing the same patterns appearing in song after song after song.

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SECTION 3 The Most Common Progressions

Most songs you love use one of these four progressions -- in any key.

A chord progression is just the order you play your chords in. The remarkable thing is that most popular music -- across genres and across decades -- uses the same handful of progressions over and over. Once you know these four, you will recognize them everywhere.

These progressions are written in Roman numerals so they work in any key. Plug in the chord family from Section 2 for whatever key your song is in.

THE ROCK AND BLUES STANDARD I IV V

In C major: C F G

Feel: Driving and direct. Three of the strongest chords in the key. The V chord creates tension that resolves powerfully back to I.

You hear it in: *Twist and Shout, La Bamba, Johnny B. Goode, hundreds of blues standards*

THE POP PROGRESSION I V vi IV

In C major: C G Am F

Feel: The most used progression in modern pop music. Uplifting but with emotional depth from the minor chord.

You hear it in: *Let It Be, Someone Like You, No Woman No Cry, I'm Yours, With or Without You*

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THE EMOTIONAL PROGRESSION vi IV I V

In C major: Am F C G

Feel: Same four chords as the pop progression -- just starting on the minor chord. Immediately more reflective and emotional.

You hear it in: *Apologize by OneRepublic, Demons by Imagine Dragons, Jar of Hearts*

THE CLASSIC PROGRESSION I vi IV V

In C major: C Am F G

Feel: Timeless. The smoothest of all four progressions. The move from F to G at the end creates a satisfying loop that keeps listeners coming back.

You hear it in: *Stand By Me, Every Breath You Take, Blue Moon, countless doo-wop and classic pop songs*

The key insight:

These four progressions use the exact same four chords in the key of C: C, F, G, and Am.

The order is everything. Change the order and you change the entire feel of the music.

To play these in a different key, just find the I, IV, V, and vi chords in that key using the chord family from Section 2.

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A quick note before you go:

You're not behind. You're not too old.

The reason piano hasn't felt joyful in the past isn't you. It's that nobody handed you the right tools. These five patterns are some of those tools.

Every PIANOLY student started right where you are now.

Ready to See the Full Roadmap?

These five patterns are just one piece of the puzzle. If you want to see exactly how we take students from zero (no experience, no music background) to playing the songs they've always loved, I put together a [free training](#) that walks you through the whole path.

You'll see the exact method, the order we teach everything, and why it works so much faster than traditional lessons.

Felix watched it in retirement and decided to join. He now plays every Sunday and Wednesday for his church prayer group and performs with the worship team once a month.

Marc had tried traditional lessons for years and gotten nowhere. After going through the training and joining the program, he surprised his wife by playing their wedding song.

Results vary depending on time invested and starting experience. But what these stories show is that with the right system, progress happens faster than most people expect.

[→ Click here to access the free training and see the full roadmap. ←](#)



Learn the songs you've always loved. Finally.

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