

Piano for Worship

How to read a chord chart (lead sheet).

It's best if you already know how to read music and play piano. A basic knowledge of scales (music theory) is also helpful. We'll start at the beginning here (a very good place to start)!

KEY OF C

1. In any key, a major scale goes from numbers 1 through 8 (or 1):

Major C Scale:	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1

2. A major chord in root position is numbers (scale tones) 1, 3, and 5:

C Major Chord:	C	E	G
	1	3	5

3. The number 1, (C in this example) is the *root* note of the scale. You can play this C major chord (above) as it is written, which is *root position*, or you can play inversions of the same chord. Here are the two basic inversions:

1 st Inversion (3 rd of chord on the bottom):	E	G	C
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2 nd Inversion (5 th of chord on the bottom):	G	C	E
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4. You can also play it lower, by dropping the inversions below the original root note (C):

2nd inversion (5th of chord on the bottom):

G	C	E
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1st inversion (3rd of chord on the bottom):

E	G	C
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5. You can play the chord as a *harmonic chord* or as a *melodic chord*.

Harmonic chord: All notes of the triad are played simultaneously, often with the rhythm of the song.

Melodic chord: Notes of the triad are played separately.

EXERCISE 1: Beginning at the bottom of the keyboard, play every inversion of C going up and back down the keyboard with your right hand.

1. Variations of the C chord (root position triads):

C major:	C	E	G	
C minor:	C	E ^b	G	(a minor chord is a major chord w/ a flatted 3 rd)
C sus:	C		F G	(a suspended chord has the 4 th instead of the 3 rd)
C dim:	C	E ^b	G ^b	(a diminished chord has a flatted 3 rd and 5 th)
C aug:	C	E	G [#]	(an augmented chord has a sharped 5 th)
C7:	(C)	E	G	B ^b (played with B ^b below C, try omitting the C)
C maj7:	(C)	E	G	B (played with B below C, try omitting the C)
C min7:	(C)	E ^b	G	B ^b (played with B ^b below C, try omitting the C)
C2:	C	D	(E) G	(add the 2 nd . Try omitting the E)

EXERCISE 2: Practice your inversions (same as Exercise 1) with each of the chord variations above.

2. Below are *major triads* (root position) for every key.

C	E	G	
C#	E#	G#	(Same as: Db F Ab)
D	F#	A	
D#	F##	A#	(Same as: Eb G Bb)
E	G#	B	
F	A	C	
F#	A#	C#	(Same as: Gb Bb Db)
G	B	D	
G#	B#	D#	(Same as: Ab C Eb)
A	C#	E	
A#	C##	E#	(Same as: Bb D F)
B	D#	F#	

- All of the variations (in number 1 above) of chords can be applied to any chord in number 2.

- Any chord can be played either harmonically or melodically.

EXERCISE 3: Practice inversions (as in Exercises 1 and 2) for each of the keys.

A song will be in one key, or tonality, each with its own chords. For example, the chords in the key of C are:

Key of C:	C	Dmin	Emin	F	G	Amin	Bdim
	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii

Below are the common chords for each key/tonality.

- The most common keys in modern praise music are C, D, E, G, and A – these are the easiest keys for the guitar.
- The most common chords in modern praise music are I, ii, IV, V, vi:

CHORD NUMBER:	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii
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Key of C:	C	Dmin	Emin	F	G	Amin	Bdim
Key of Db:	Db	Ebmin	Fmin	Gb	Ab	Bbmin	Cdim
Key of D:	D	Emin	F#min	G	A	Bmin	C#dim
Key of Eb:	Eb	Fmin	Gmin	Ab	Bb	Cmin	Ddim
Key of E:	E	F#min	G#min	A	B	C#min	D#dim
Key of F:	F	Gmin	Amin	Bb	C	Dmin	Edim
Key of Gb:	Gb	Abmin	Bbmin	C	Db	Ebmin	Fdim
Key of G:	G	Amin	Bmin	C	D	Emin	F#dim
Key of Ab:	Ab	Bbmin	Cmin	Db	Eb	Fmin	Gdim
Key of A:	A	Bmin	C#min	D	E	F#min	G#dim
Key of Bb:	Bb	Cmin	Dmin	Eb	F	Gmin	Adim
Key of B:	B	C#min	D#min	E	F#	G#min	A#dim

Tips for playing modern praise music for beginners:

1. Play the root note of the chord with your left hand. (*see figure A on page 4*)
2. Play the chord, either melodically or harmonically, with your right hand (*see figure A on page 4*)
3. Use inversions with your right hand, don't play each chord in root position (*see page 1*)
4. Keep your right hand in one general area. It is best if you keep it within a one octave range, so you must figure out which inversion of each chord in the song will keep your hand from moving very far. The trick is to keep as many notes the same as possible as you change from one chord to the next (*see figure B on page 4*)
5. Remember to keep the beat with your right hand as mentioned on page 1.
6. The left hand should not keep the same beat as the right hand. Either hold the left hand out as whole notes or play a simple rhythm as in *figure C on page 4*.
7. As you become more comfortable, you can play moving notes (within the key of the song!) to complement the melody. (*see example in figure D on page 5*).

EXERCISE 4: Play the following progression: I, IV, I, V, vi, IV, ii, V using the tips above, first as a fast song, then as a slow song in the keys of C, D, E, G, and A.

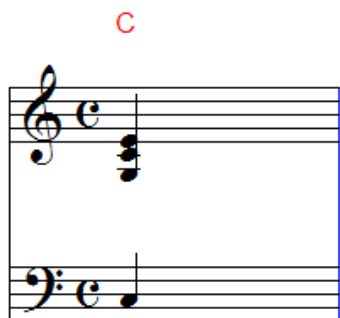


Figure A

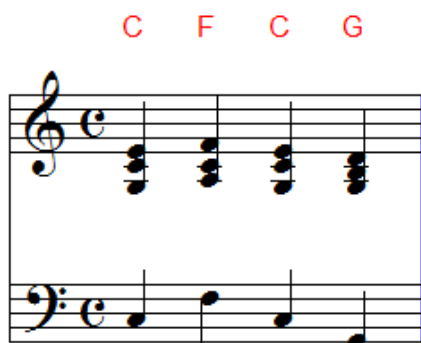


Figure B

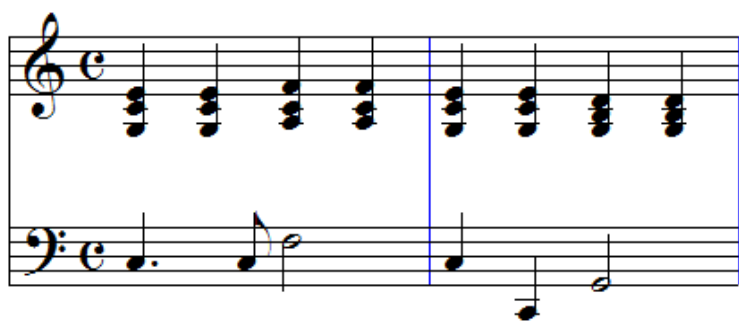


Figure C



Figure D