

Chord Progressions

Everything Ukulele Players Need to Know



Tenthumbspro.com
For educational purposes only

What is a chord progression? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZq2KoQU1jg>

progression noun

pro-gres-sion (prə-'gre-shən ▶)

- 1 : a sequence of numbers in which each term is related to its predecessor by a uniform law
- 2 a : the action or process of **progressing** : **ADVANCE**
b : a continuous and connected series : **SEQUENCE**
- 3 a : succession of musical tones or chords
b : the movement of musical parts in harmony
c : **SEQUENCE sense 2c**

progressional (prə-'gresh-nəl ▶) -'gre-shə-nəl adjective

- The 3rd definition refers to our musical definition of a chord progression.

diatonic adjective

dia-ton-ic (dī-ə-'tä-nik ▶)

: of, relating to, or being a musical scale (such as a major or minor scale) comprising intervals of five whole steps and two half steps

diatonically (dī-ə-'tä-ni-k(ə-)lē ▶) adverb

- Today we are only going to be working with diatonic chord progressions, meaning we are only going to work with chords that come from the scale. When you use chords from a different scale, or key, it is known non-diatonic harmony.

Introducing the key chart

Chords In All Major Keys

| Major Keys | I | ii | iii | IV | V | vi | vii° |
|------------|----|-----|-----|----|----|-----|------|
| C | C | Dm | Em | F | G | Am | B° |
| C# | C# | D#m | E#m | F# | G# | A#m | B#° |
| D♭ | D♭ | E♭m | Fm | G♭ | A♭ | B♭m | C° |
| D | D | Em | F#m | G | A | Bm | C#° |
| E♭ | E♭ | Fm | Gm | A♭ | B♭ | Cm | D° |
| E | E | F#m | G#m | A | B | C#m | D#° |
| F | F | Gm | Am | B♭ | C | Dm | E° |
| F# | F# | G#m | A#m | B | C# | D#m | E#° |
| G♭ | G♭ | A♭m | B♭m | C♭ | D♭ | E♭m | F° |
| G | G | Am | Bm | C | D | Em | F#° |
| A♭ | A♭ | B♭m | Cm | D♭ | E♭ | Fm | G° |
| A | A | Bm | C#m | D | E | F#m | G#° |
| B♭ | B♭ | Cm | Dm | E♭ | F | Gm | A° |
| B | B | C#m | D#m | E | F# | G#m | A#° |

- In this chart we have all the major keys in the rows, and all the roman numerals in the columns.
- For example, you can see the key of E major has
 - E
 - F#m
 - G#m
 - A
 - B
 - C#m
 - D#° chords $D\#^\circ = D\#$ diminished chord, the ° means diminished chord
- The first column, the yellow one, tells use the key, the rest of the columns give us roman numeral
 - I, IV, V are major chords that is why they are capital
 - ii, iii, vi are minor chords, that is why they are lower case
 - vii° is a diminished chord, it will be lower case with the small circle.
- The chart doesn't have the 7th extensions, and if this feels really confusing just skip it for now, return to it after you feel confident with the lesson. 7ths aren't fundamental to understanding the lesson and it is probably best to review this information after you feel confident with the rest of the lesson.
 - IMaj7 and IVmaj7
 - The I and IV chords can become Maj7 chords by adding the 7th interval to the triad
 - ii7, iii7, vi7
 - All minor chords can become minor7 chords, simply add a b7

- V7
 - The V chord becomes the only dominant chord, or 7 chord, by adding a b7th interval to the triad
- Vii7b5
 - This one is really cool, when the diminished gets extended it becomes a minor7b5

How to breakdown and understand a chord progression.

The example chord progression is G Em C D

- Step 1 - Find the key
 - To do this we look for the row that has all four chords
 - C is close, but it as a Dm not a D
 - D is close... but it doesn't have a C
 - G is... the winner! It has all four chords
- Step 2 - Apply the Roman Numerals
 - Here you look at each chord and go up the column to see its roman numeral
 - G is I
 - Em is vi
 - C is IV
 - D is V

That means that this song is a I-vi-IV-V in the key of G. You should repeat that process with as many chord progressions as you know. Additionally, now that you understand how this works, you should apply this knowledge to every new song you learn.

TenThumbsTip Now that you know the key, you also know what scale that is used to improvise a solo. If the song is in A minor, you use the A minor Pentatonic. If the song is in D major, you use the D major pentatonic, etc.

Finding YOUR key

- You should know your vocal range, meaning the lowest to highest note that you can sing. That will help you know what key you should be singing in.
- I like Wagon Wheel, but it is too high for me. So let's use the information from today's class to help me find a key that works.
- The song has two chord progression that alternate between each other, the first one is A-E-F#m-D
 - Look through the rows and you'll see the key that contains all these chords is the key of A.
 - Checking the roman numerals we get
 - A -> I
 - E -> V

- F#m -> vi
 - D -> IV
- That would mean the progression is I-V-vi-IV in the key of A
- The second progression goes A-E-D-D
 - Songs can change key, but they don't do it frequently and in modern music it has actually become extremely rare. If they do, then it will be clearly noted. I say that to explain why we don't need to find the key again, we already know it.
 - We also know all the roman numerals for these chords already too, so we can simply look at it at a glance and say it is I-V-IV
 - If you routinely do this in your playing you will very quickly be able to look at a song and do this process in your head in seconds. You don't need to write I-V-IV-IV as it is not about how long a chord is played, simply just the order in which they are played and what roman numeral they are.
- I want to bring the key down for me because it is too high. The highest note is 2 frets higher than I can sing. So, I want to lower it 4 semi-tones, that way I am not singing at the extreme end of my range, but rather something that is more comfortable. Once you know your vocal range it is wise to choose keys for songs that are not only in your range, but comfortably in your range, so you don't have to push you voice all night ****you will want to push it from time to time though, that is where growth happens****.
- What is A, transposed 4 semitones, equal to 4 frets, down in pitch?
 - A down one step is Ab
 - A down two steps is G
 - A down 3 steps is Gb
 - A down 4 steps is F
- So I want to find out how to play a I-V-vi-IV followed by a I-V-IV in the key of F, time to go to the columns in the chart.
 - F-C-Dm-Bb
 - F-C-Bb
- And just like that I have it in a key that sits more much more comfortably in the vocal range, making it easier for me to sing, making it sound better, furthering the originality of the piece so I can put my own stamp on it.

This is just scratching the surface of what you can do with this information. We also played a listening game in the online tutorial that you can play to compliment "Major-Minor" or "Major-Minor-Dominant" it is called "Roman Numerals"

1. Tell your friend the key that you are playing in.
 2. Play a progression for them and let them tell you what it is in roman numerals.
- If it is just too hard like that you can let your friend use an ukulele too, so they can strum and find the chords, that is a great confidence builder.