

Understanding Musical Keys & Chord Progressions

This chart shows the 12 musical keys.

When someone says "that's the fourth chord" or "let's play a 1-4-5 progression," they're referring to the scale degrees within a key.

Chord Progression Example

For example, if we're in the key of C:

- The 1 (root) is C
- The 4 is F or F7
- The 5 is G or G7

These are the chords you'd use in a 1-4-5 progression in the key of C.

Relative Minor Keys

Every major key also has a relative minor, which is the 6th degree of the scale:

- In C major, the relative minor is A minor
 - In G major, it's E minor
 - In D major, it's B minor
- ...and so on.

Major vs. Minor Feel

This means that within any major key, you have access to both major and minor sounds. The feeling of the progression depends on where it starts and which chords are emphasized.

- A progression that starts on a major chord will usually sound major
- A progression that starts on a minor chord will usually sound minor

Progression Examples

Examples:

- C, Am, F, G -> A clear C major progression
- Am, Dm, F, G -> A clear A minor progression

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Pro Tip

Try experimenting with the chords in the key of C - let your ears guide you!

Key	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii°
C	C	Dm	Em	F	G	Am	B°
G	G	Am	Bm	C	D	Em	F#°
D	D	Em	F#m	G	A	Bm	C#°
A	A	Bm	C#m	D	E	F#m	G#°
E	E	F#m	G#m	A	B	C#m	D#°
B	B	C#m	D#m	E	F#	G#m	A#°
G ^b	G ^b	A ^b m	B ^b m	C ^b	D ^b	E ^b m	F°
D ^b	D ^b	E ^b m	Fm	G ^b	A ^b	B ^b m	C°
A ^b	A ^b	B ^b m	Cm	D ^b	E ^b	Fm	G°
E ^b	E ^b	Fm	Gm	A ^b	B ^b	Cm	D°
B ^b	B ^b	Cm	Dm	E ^b	F	Gm	A°
F	F	Gm	Am	B ^b	C	Dm	E°