

C. EXTENDED ROMAN CHORD NUMERALS

Jazz/guitar symbols (like **F**, **Dm**, **C aug**) are good at showing what sorts of chords are used, but they do not show which keys the chords are used in. For example, the **C** chord may appear in pieces in G major, F major, or E minor. It has a different function in each key. In C major it is the tonic chord, so sets the "tone" (key) at the beginning and end of the piece. In F major it is the dominant chord, so, apart from the tonic chord, will "dominate" the music as the most common chord. To understand harmony, we need to recognise the function that a chord has in any key. A set of chord symbols was devised to set out that function. These chord symbols use Roman numerals (I, II, III, etc). They build a triad (3 note chord) on each note of the scale. Each triad has a different numeral.

1 Here are the chords in C major. All can be played on a keyboard with the same 135 fingering.

A musical staff in bass clef showing seven triads in C major. The notes are: I (C-E-G), ii (D-F-A), iii (E-G-B), IV (F-A-C), V (G-B-D), vi (A-C-E), and vii° (B-D-F). Below each triad is its corresponding Roman numeral label.

Each triad has the same basic shape - the 5/3 shape we met in figured basses. If the bottom note is on a line, the other two notes will be on lines. If the bottom note is on a space, so will the other two.

In "extended" Roman numerals, major chords have capital letters (e.g. I or V); minor chords have small letters (e.g. ii, vi); diminished chords have small letters and a circle (vii°).

2 Here are the chords in G major. Add the missing chords and symbols. (Notice that because of the key signature some chords will have F sharps.)

A musical staff in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It shows the following chords: I (G-B-D), a missing chord (represented by a box), iii (B-D-F#), IV (a box), V (G-B-D), vi (B-D-F#), and a missing chord (represented by a box). Below the staff are labels: I, a box, iii, IV, a box, vi, and a box.

As mentioned above, some chords appear in both keys. For example the **G** chord (GBD) is chord V in C major and chord I in G major. In G major it is the tonic or key chord. In C major it is the dominant, chord V. If we end a piece in C major with the G chord, it will not sound finished.

3 Which other chords appear in both keys?

Chord in C major = Chord in G major

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4 As with jazz chords, the notes in the chords do not need to be arranged in the same way. The chords in the first four bars are all chord IV in G major. In the last four bars write different layouts of Chord V in G major. Remember to use the correct accidentals. At this stage, make the lowest note the root (bottom note) of the chord. (e.g. G in the G major chord, A in the A minor chord.)

A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first four bars show the chord IV (C-E-G) in G major with different voicings: (C-E-G), (E-G-C), (G-C-E), and (C-E-G). The last four bars are empty for the student to write different voicings of the chord V (G-B-D) in G major.