

### 3. Learn to Play Chords with Common Chord Progressions

You want to play a song, but you don't have a tablature nor a chord sheet? Before you start to think about the chords used in the song, try to identify the chord progression often just based on the few possible different combinations of the degrees I, IV, V, and VI.

There's only a really small number of commonly used chord progressions, and most of them are used in hundreds if not thousands of folk, gospel, rock and pop songs.

You don't believe? The Australian comedy group «Axis Of Awesome» arranged a hilarious «Four Chord Song» medley with 47 fragments of pop songs which are all based on a same basic chord progressions I–V–VI–IV or VI–IV–I–V, colloquially called «15-64» and «64-15» progressions, known as «Ice Cream Changes» or the «50s Progression», but its popularity isn't at all limited to the fifties as proved by their medley. Some more variants of four chord progressions presents their keyboarder Benny the Jukebox on another «Six Chords» medley:

Axis of Awesome, Four Chord Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pidokakU4I>  
 Benny the Jukebox (: Six Chords: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8hHMx5CaSI>

There's even another chord progression which got it's own comedy show by the US music comedian Rob Paravonian, with 16 fragments using this chord progression I–V–VI–III–IV–I–IV–V, named after a canon of a 17th century composer which found its way even to punk songs:

Rob Paravonian: Pachelbel Rant: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0c\\_fh\\_ETM0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0c_fh_ETM0)

Now let's get serious: you learned to play a scale with triads and dominant 7th chords up and down, didn't you? So there's nothing in the way to exercise a dozen or two of the most common chord progressions. Most of them are just based on the degrees I, IV, V, and VI. Listening to a song intuitively you will identify the tonic and dominant, its first and fifth degree, so look further whether the other ones are IV or VI: rarely V is replaced with II or III, or VI with II. Check in which order they follow each other, listen to the bassist or keyboarder, and try with this one:

Tracy Chapman, Stand By Me: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SNiezOBWPs>  
 Jim Morris, Stand By Me: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=51&v=Hpqyyx6U1iQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=51&v=Hpqyyx6U1iQ)  
 Ben E. King, Stand By Me, with lyrics: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTCfQ6Bb8QE>

**Exercise:** You learned to play a scale with triads up and down, didn't you? So try to play the four chords of «Stand By Me» with key of G.

Except for jazz and blues the most commonly used chords are just triads. For major keys triads on I, IV, V are major and on VI minor, and for minor keys triads on I, IV, V are minor and on VI major.

falling bass line				
	I	VI <sup>m</sup>	IV	V
	G	E	C	D
G	16	12	9	11
D	12	9	5	7
G	12	9	5	7

D as power chord				
	I	VI <sup>m</sup>	IV	V
	G	E	C	D
G	4	0	0	9
D	0	2	2	9
G	0	4	5	9

D replaced with D <sup>7</sup>				
	I	VI <sup>m</sup>	IV	V <sup>7</sup>
	G	E	C	D <sup>7</sup>
G	4	0	0	5
D	0	2	2	4
G	0	4	5	7

## Elementary chord progressions

major chord progression				
	I	IV	V	I
	G	C	D	G
G	7	9	11	7
D	9	5	7	9
G	0	5	7	0

jazz chord progression				
	I	IIIm	V	I
	G	A	D	G
G	7	5	11	7
D	9	2	7	9
G	0	2	7	0



## Major/Minor chord progressions

major progression				
	I	IV	V	I
	G	C	D	G
G	7	9	11	7
D	9	5	7	9
G	0	5	7	0

minor progression with Vm				
	Im	IVm	Vm	Im
	G	C	D	G
G	7	8	10	7
D	8	5	7	8
G	0	5	7	0

minor progression with V				
	Im	IVm	V	Im
	G	C	D	G
G	7	8	11	7
D	8	5	7	8
G	0	5	7	0

## Minor chord progressions, with major chord on dominant, leading tone to be explained

chords for minor chord progressions							
	Im		III	IVm	V	VI	VII
	G	A	Bb	C	D	Eb	F
G	7		7	8	11	12	14
D	8		3	5	7	8	10
G	0		3	5	7	8	10

chords for andalusian chord progressions							
	I			IVm	V	VI	VII
	G	A	Bb	C	D	Eb	F
G	7			8	11	12	14
D	8			5	7	8	10
G	0			5	7	8	10

example: minor				
	Im	VI	IVm	V
	G	Eb	C	D
G	7	12	8	11
D	8	8	5	7
G	0	8	5	7

G				
D				
G				

example: andalusian				
	Im	VII	VI	V
	G	F	Eb	D
G	7	14	12	11
D	8	10	8	7
G	0	10	8	7

## Ice Cream progressions

16-25				
	I	VIm	IIIm	V
	G	E	A	D
G	7	12	5	11
D	9	9	7	7
G	0	9	9	7







## Pachelbel chord progression

basic								
	I	V	VIm	IIIm	IV	I	IV	V
	G	D	E	B	C	G	C	D
G	4	11	12	7	9	4	9	11
D	0	7	9	4	5	0	5	7

narrow								
	I	V	VIm	IIIm	IV	I	IV	V
	G	D	E	B	C	G	C	D
G	7	11	12	7	9	7	9	11
D	9	7	9	9	5	9	5	7

G	0	7	9	4	5	0	5	7
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G	0	7	9	11	5	0	5	7
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Johann Pachelbel: Canon in D, piano version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNsgHMkIBW0>

Beatles: Let It Be: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ih-8K1a\\_SsA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ih-8K1a_SsA)

Descending fifths progression, circle of fifths progression

Eric Clapton: Autumn Leaves: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQIFOX0YKIQ>

Miles Davis: Autumn Leaves: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsz6TE6t7-A>

1245: Examples: 12-45, 15-24 / 24-15

12-54: Wet Wet Wet: Love Is All Around: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3gEkwhdXUE>

1246: 12-64

1256: 16-25

1346: 13-64

1456: Examples: 15-64 / 64-15, 16-45 / 45-16, 41-56 / 56-41, 61-45, 61-54

15-64: Bruce Springsteen: I'm Goin' Down, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vO5kEqJdRxA>

64-15: Cheb Khaled: Aïcha: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvK19xgAxSU>

16-45: Hearth And Soul, piano version: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibfJsyx6N\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibfJsyx6N_U)

45-16: Marc Cohn: Walking in Memphis: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cU82naWcLg>

3456 65-43: Stray Cats: Stray Cat Strut: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07BVrP5DbQA>

### Three Chord Songs:

124 12-41: Four Non Blondes: What's Up: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fz2OUoJpR7k>

145 54-11: Lynyrd Skynyrd: Sweet Home Alabama: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GxWmSVv-cY>

14-15: R.E.M.: The Lion Sleeps Tonight: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNZT7ff3cQY>

456 64-56: Neil Young: Words: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HN53WZjCL\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HN53WZjCL_g)

66-45: Michael Jackson: Give In To Me: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJ7qXHjxj\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJ7qXHjxj_0)

64-55: 3 Doors Down: Kryptonite: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3ISLLklu7Q>

### Two Chord Songs:

12 21 ??

14 14: Neil Young: Oh Lonesome Me: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDuu\\_Jc7pAA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDuu_Jc7pAA)

56 65: America: A horse with no name: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tm4BrZjY\\_Sg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tm4BrZjY_Sg)