

Tuesday Piano Lessons with Lucy

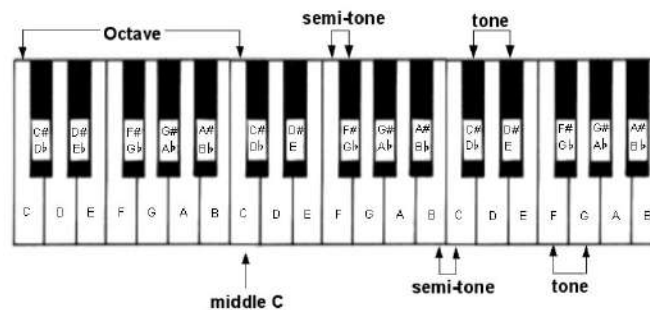
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Hello everyone. Hope you are safe and well.

Today we will be looking at chords. Before we do this we need to understand how they are formed and we will start by looking at Tones and Semitones.

A semitone is the distance in pitch between a note and its nearest neighbour on a piano keyboard. So, the distance or interval between C and C sharp/D flat is a semitone.

A tone is an interval of 2 semitones added together. For example, the interval between C and D is a tone because the note C sharp/D flat is between them.



What is a chord?

Chords are the building blocks of songs. They are played by pressing two or more harmonic notes down at the same time. Most basic chords are built using three notes.

There are many different types of chords but we'll start by learning how to play a major and minor chord.

What is a Major Chord?

Commonly known as the '*happy*' chord.

The major chords comprise the core of countless songs. A major chord is a triad, which means it is a chord made up of three notes. Major chords are often described as happy sounding chords.

Let's take a look at how to build them.

The major chord contains the 1st, 3rd, and 5th notes of a major scale. For example, below is a C major scale. The notes of a C major chord are the 1st (the root note), 3rd, and 5th notes, which are C (the root note), E and G.

C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Octave

C major =	1	3	5
	C	E	G

Notice that the octave (the 8th note) is also part of the chord. In fact, either of the notes C, E and G can be played in any octave on the piano and it will still be called a C major chord.

Now let's play a major chord on the piano.

Place your right hand on the piano with your thumb on middle C. Your 3rd finger should fall on E and your 5th finger should fall on G. Press down these three notes, here you have a C major chord. Now do the same in the left hand, 1 octave below. Starting with your 5th finger on C, your 3rd finger on E and your thumb on G. Now play both hands together.

In order to find notes of other major chords learn the notes in those scales and apply the formula to the 1st, 3rd and 5th notes of those major scales. For example, we know how to play G major (G A B C D E F G) so we need to find the 1st, the 3rd and the 5th notes of this scale. So count up from G. So G, B & D will be your chord using the same fingers as before.

So we know how to play a C major scale, it's the easiest scale with no sharps or flats, but most scales do have sharps or flats so you'll need to watch out for these.

What is a minor chord?

A minor chord sounds slightly darker, sad or pensive.

Now let's play a minor chord on the piano.

Follow the same steps as above, but simply move the third note / finger down a semitone.

Place your right hand on the piano with your thumb on middle C. Your 3rd finger should fall on E \flat and your 5th finger should fall on G. Press down these three notes, here you have a C minor chord. Now try the left hand.

So when playing a C minor chord, instead of playing the E (like you would with C major), you will move the finger a semitone down to play the E \flat .

See if you can work out G minor following this pattern.

..... Now that you've tried this, check and you should be holding down the notes G, B \flat & D.

An alternative technique to work out a chord:

(This helps if you don't know the scale / key)

You will notice with a **major chord** (I'll demonstrate with C again) we start with C, which will be our root note. Then, we'll count up **4** semitones (i.e. four notes) to find the major 3rd. This is an E. Then, we'll count up **7** semitones from C (or 3 semitones from E) to G, which will be our 5th. This is a C major chord: C – E – G.

You will also notice with a **minor chord** (again demonstrating with C minor). Start with C, which will be our root note. Then, we'll count up **3** semitones (i.e. three notes) to find the minor 3rd. This is an Eb/D#. Then, we'll count up **7** semitones from C (or 4 semitones from Eb/D#) to G, which will be our 5th. This is a C Minor chord: C – Eb – G.

Now see how many chords you can play following this technique.

and notice how the chords sound when played along side each other.