

Rob's Piano Room - Module 1 - PDF Introduction, and Basic Chords of the Major Scale

Welcome to Rob's piano room!

This series of videos is designed to introduce theoretical musical concepts in a way to make it as easy as possible for you to learn to improvise at the piano.

The examples here are not in a particular style, but are closer to classical music than anything else. The goal is just to understand the musical elements involved, to learn the ways harmony and melody are related, and to put those into practice directly on the keyboard. You can then take these elements into your own favourite styles of music.

Each module introduces one or two concepts in an understandable way, and includes a pdf worksheet with ideas of how to practice each concept before moving on.

I am assuming that you have at least some musical literacy, such as at least some ability to read music and at least some knowledge of triads, key signatures, etc. I have tried to make it so that those with less experience will still be able to continue through the series.

We will begin with very simple material, so feel free to skip anything that you are already familiar with, although you may find that, as we may be trying out some things you haven't tried before, it might be worth starting simply, even if you do have more extensive musical experience.

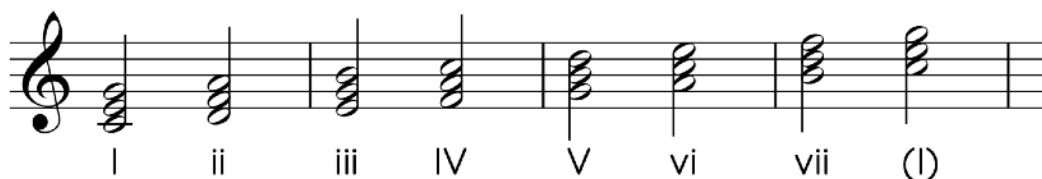
Each person can work through the modules at their own pace. We learn everything in the key of C first. You may decide to stay there for a while, or move on more quickly. It's up to you. You can simply add more keys, textures, etc when you feel ready.

As well as learning how to improvise, I believe that practicing your way through these modules will enable you to understand written music better, possibly even allowing you to modify the music you are reading, if you so choose.

So let's get started

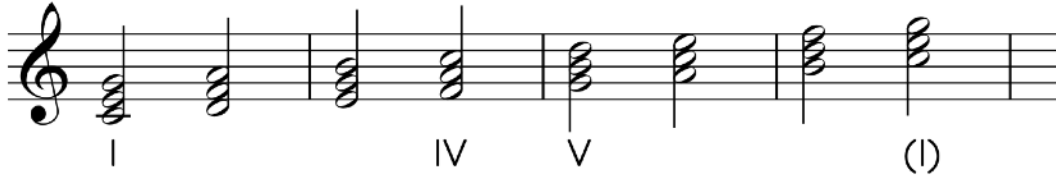
Main Points

Let's look at the triads built off of each degree of the C major scale. Note we use Roman numerals to denote chords of the scale.



Play through these chords. Notice that the I, IV and V are in upper case, and the others are in lower case. This is to show that the I, IV and V chords are major triads. The ii,iii, and vi are minor, and the vii is a diminished triad - both of these are written in lower case.

Let's first take a look at the 3 major chords



As it turns out, these chords have a lot of importance in our harmonic system. The I chord is our home base chord. Almost all pieces in traditional classical harmony will end on this chord, and many, but not all, start on it. It's the chord all the other chords are trying to get back to.

The V chord is perhaps the next most important. It is the chord most likely to move to the I chord. The V-I chord progression is a very strong declaration of the I as home base. It is the strongest 'away' chord that pulls us back home to the I.

The IV chord can work in a similar way (with a IV-I progression) but it does not have as strong a feeling. It is also often used as a preparation to the V, so we end up with a IV-V-I progression or a I-IV-V-I progression.

These chord movements are fundamental to how harmony works, to the point that other less common chords are often classified as replacements for these basic chords. So knowing the I-IV-V-I works is the basis of all other harmony.

Let's look at our other chords -



As stated, the ii, iii, and vi are minor triads. We will be discussing some ways they are used in a later module. The vii chord is a diminished triad, which is less stable because of the lack of a perfect fifth as its outer notes, so we will not be using this chord very often.

You may be wondering why we are using numbers rather than actual note names to describe these chords. This is because we will eventually want to be able to work in other keys. The chords above have all been given in C major, and we will be staying in C for several modules so that the changing of keys does not confuse the clarity of the concepts we will be looking at. However, if we want to make G our home base note, and G our home base chord, for example, we could make G our I and all the concepts we will be learning will apply in the new key