

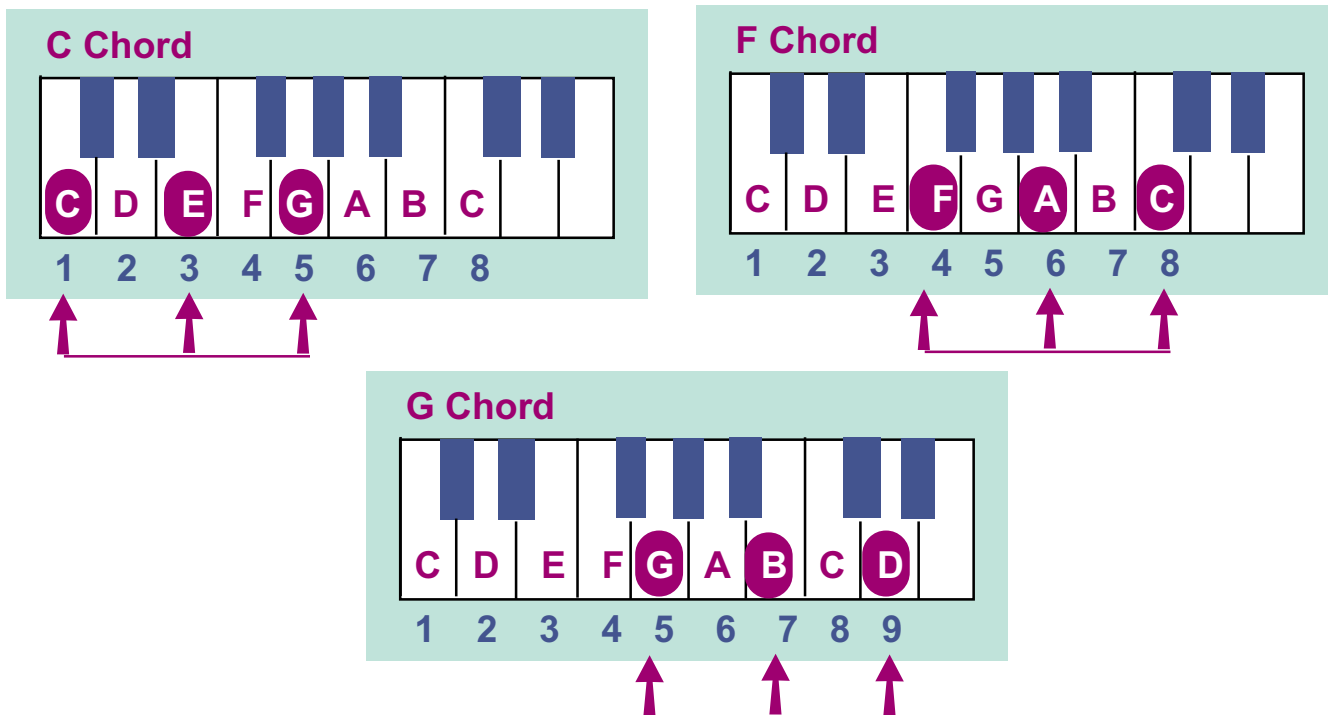


Music Musings No.4: Playing by Ear

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Figuring out songs by ear using just 3 chords

In Music Musings No. 3, we learned how to play songs with the C, F and G chords.



Can you figure where to play the C, F and G chords in the songs on the next page? This is called **PLAYING BY EAR** -- where you “figure out” how the song goes based on knowing where to play the 3 chords. Here are a few hints:

- 1) Each song will **USUALLY** begin and end with the C chord
- 2) Most of the time, the G chord is the last one played before returning to the final C chord at the end of the song.
- 3) The F chord (also know as the “amen” chord), often gives the song a feeling of “moving forward”, while the G chord often feels like the end of a sentence or the “turnaround” that leads back to C.
- 4) **BONUS HINT:** How can you know which chord to use? Answer: most of the melody notes are notes of the chord. For example, the first 2 notes of “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” are C and G, which are also the bottom and top notes of the C chord. This is why the C chord sound “right” with those notes! So to figure out which chord to play with a melody, look at the 3 notes in the chord, and the single melody notes. Put together the ones that best match.

- C chord -- goes with melody notes C, E and G
- F chord - goes with melody notes F, A and C
- G chord -- goes with melody notes G, B and D

Note: some melodies will have passing tones (notes not in the chord). For example, if the melody is C-D-E, you can still figure out that a C chord will best accompany that melody, because the C and E are 2 notes from the C chord.

NOTE that some chords have common notes: For example, C chords and F chords each have a C note in them. To figure out which chord will work best with a C note melody, look at other notes that will help define the chord (for example, a C and E note together point to a C chord, while an F and C note indicate an F chord).

continued . . .

See if you can figure out where the C, F and G chords go in these songs:

Sing the songs and play C, F and G chords where you think they fit with the melody. Hold the chords down for 4 beats (or 3 if the song has 3 beat waltz patterns). Hint: The songs all start and end on the C chord (unless otherwise noted).

- 1) Ode to Joy
- 2) You Are My Sunshine
- 3) Swing Low, Sweet Chariot
- 4) Good Lovin'
- 5) Do Wah Diddy Diddy
- 6) I'll Fly Away
- 7) Banana Boat Song (Day-o, Day-o, Daylight come and me want go home)
- 8) Sentimental Journey
- 9) Route 66
- 10) This Land is Your Land (starts on F chord on the word "your")
- 11) On top of Old Smokey (starts on F chord on the word "Smokey")
- 12) Three Blind Mice
- 13) Your Cheatin' Heart
- 14) Yellow Submarine
- 15) Doe a Deer
- 16) Stand By Me
- 17) My Heart Will Go on (Titanic Theme)
- 18) Purple People Eater
- 19) Rock Around the Clock
- 20) Clementine
- 21) This Little Light of Mine
- 22) Down in the Valley
- 23) Kansas City
- 24) Chantilly Lace
- 25) See you later, alligator
- 26) Camptown Races
- 28) Blue Suede Shoes
- 29) Blowin' in the Wind
- 30) Simple Gifts ('tis the gift to be simple . . .)
- 31) King of the Road
- 32) Good Night, Irene
- 33) Kumbaya
- 34) La Bamba
- 35) At the Hop