

# Theory and Application



## Chords 6: Chord Families

**K**NOWING A LITTLE ABOUT *Chord Families* can help when you want to join in but don't know the tune. It can help with predicting which chords to use because you

know a set of chords for each key.

This sheet is for finding chord families for tunes or songs in a major key (minor and modal keys have different properties).

### Back to the Scale

The following formula is how to work out the chord family for any key:

1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>I</b>	<b>ii</b>	<b>iii</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>vi</b>

Once again, it's based upon the major scale, and in the case of Chord Families, the first six steps of the scale (we are dealing with tunes or songs in a major key, rather than minor or modal keys). The *first*, *fourth* and *fifth* steps of the scale (represented by upper case letters)

are major chords, and the second, third and sixth steps are minor chords (represented by lower case letters). That means when you have a tune or a song in the key of D you start with the first 6 notes of the scale: **D, E, F#, G, A** and **B** and apply the formula. This gives you:

D scale:

<b>D</b>	<b>Em</b>	<b>F#m</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Bm</b>
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The three most likely chords that would be used are *D*, *G* and *A*; this is very often called "the three chord trick" because with the three chords you can play thousands of tunes /

songs. Any other chords used are probably going to be *E minor*, *F sharp minor*, and *B minor*.

Now apply the formula to the G scale:

G scale:

<b>G</b>	<b>Am</b>	<b>Bm</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Em</b>
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So the three main chords the key of G would be *G*, *C* and *D*; the subsidiary chords would be *A minor*, *B minor* and *E minor*.

in theory, you can find the chords you need. Below is a list of the chord families in a few common keys

The formula works for all major keys so,

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	<b>I</b>	<b>ii</b>	<b>iii</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>vi</b>
A scale:	<b>A</b>	<b>Bm</b>	<b>C#m</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F#m</b>
C scale:	<b>C</b>	<b>Dm</b>	<b>Em</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>Am</b>
D scale:	<b>D</b>	<b>Em</b>	<b>F#m</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Bm</b>
F scale:	<b>F</b>	<b>Gm</b>	<b>Am</b>	<b>Bb</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>Dm</b>
G scale:	<b>G</b>	<b>Am</b>	<b>Bm</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Em</b>