

Chord Chart

a list of naturally occurring
chords in commonly used keys

Barbara Ann Fackler

Key of C major

C Dm Em F G Am Bdim C

Musical notation for the key of C major, showing chords C, Dm, Em, F, G, Am, Bdim, and C on a grand staff. The chords are represented by black dots on the piano keyboard.

Key of G major

G Am Bm C D Em F#dim G

Musical notation for the key of G major, showing chords G, Am, Bm, C, D, Em, F#dim, and G on a grand staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

Key of D major

D Em F#m G A Bm C#dim D

Musical notation for the key of D major, showing chords D, Em, F#m, G, A, Bm, C#dim, and D on a grand staff. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

Key of F major

F Gm Am Bb C Dm Edim F

Musical notation for the key of F major, showing chords F, Gm, Am, Bb, C, Dm, Edim, and F on a grand staff. The key signature has one flat (Bb).

Key of Eb major

Eb Fm Gm Ab Bb Cm Ddim Eb

Musical notation for the key of Eb major, showing chords Eb, Fm, Gm, Ab, Bb, Cm, Ddim, and Eb on a grand staff. The key signature has three flats (Bb, Eb, and Ab).

Key of A minor

Musical notation for the key of A minor. The piece is written in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The chords are: Am, Bdim, C, Dm, Em, F, G, and Am. Each chord is represented by a vertical line with dots indicating the notes on the staff.

Key of E minor

Musical notation for the key of E minor. The piece is written in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The chords are: Em, F#dim, G, Am, Bm, C, D, and Em. Each chord is represented by a vertical line with dots indicating the notes on the staff.

Key of D minor

Musical notation for the key of D minor. The piece is written in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The key signature has two flats (Bb, Fb). The chords are: Dm, Edim, F, Gm, Am, Bb, C, and Dm. Each chord is represented by a vertical line with dots indicating the notes on the staff.

Notes that do not occur naturally in a key are called accidentals.

Major chords are the default in lead sheet notation. Unless otherwise indicated, all chords are assumed to be major chords. Minor chords have a small case "m" following the letter name. Diminished chords (two minor thirds) have "dim" following the letter name.

Every major key has a relative minor. Relative keys share the same key signature in the same way that most families share a last name. Note that the chords occurring naturally in the key of C major are the same as the chords occurring naturally in the key of A minor.

Chords whose altered note (note outside the key signature) is the third of the chord (the inside note), can often stand to have the altered note omitted. For the lever harpist this is sometimes necessary, sometimes just easier. Most listeners' ears will fill in the missing note and they'll never realize it wasn't there.

When care is taken to play each occurrence of a given accidental in the same octave, it is often possible to perform a piece that has accidentals with only lever presets (no lever changes within the piece). For example, if you are playing in the key of C and find a D major chord, you could set the F# above middle C and leave the rest of the D strings natural. All your d minor chords would be played below middle C and all D major chords would be played in the octave immediately above middle C. The trick is to remember where your harp is in the key and where you've altered it. With practice, like anything else, this becomes second nature. The lead sheets in the Short Cuts series assume this tactic in dealing with chromaticism.

For accompanimental ideas, study music written in the same time signature and key signature as the lead sheet with which you are working. You'll learn a lot by looking at music you already know well and adapting patterns you learned there to this process. The accompaniment should reflect the period and style of the music as well as your tastes and skill level. When a choice must be made, musicality is always preferable over complexity.