

P12

Introduction

All music is made up of notes. Notes are defined by their pitch — which key to press, their duration — how long to hold it, and their loudness — how strongly to press it. They are also arranged in a specific order over time. In other words, playing music means pressing, holding, and releasing the right keys at the right time and with the right amount of force.

In Play12, notes are represented by the symbols 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, X, Y and by rainbow colors. The notation is designed so that you can immediately see which key to press, how long to hold it, and when to play it.

Sounds easy? Don't be fooled. In practice, it takes time for your movements to become accurate and confident. Every lesson happens at the piano. Every repetition improves your playing skill, and results appear faster because you are making music from the very beginning. Play12 is for people who want to learn piano by playing piano.

The Play12 learning material is divided into two parts:

Manual — explains the rules of playing.

Practice — a collection of exercises for building playing skills.

They are connected through a shared chapter structure: each chapter in Play12 Practice corresponds to a chapter in the Play12 Manual.

At the beginning, you will need the cards. They help you quickly locate the correct keys. Below you will find a link to the cards and instructions on how to prepare them before you begin.

(Figure 1 — QR code linking to the cards.)

The material is arranged in sequence: each Block builds on the previous one. Some things may seem obvious. You can read the text quickly or slowly, return to specific sections, and review them whenever needed.

First, read Block 1 of the **Play12 Manual** to get a general understanding of the system. Then move on to Block 1 of **Play12 Practice**. During your training, return to the relevant sections of the Manual and review the material as needed. Then continue with Block 2 of the **Play12 Manual** and Block 2 of **Play12 Practice**, and so on.

And yes — read the **Play12 Manual** at your instrument.

Let's play.
How many notes are there?

Block 1. Getting Started

Chapter 1. There Are Only 12 Notes in Music

Here's a Little Trick.

Choose any key and place the little finger of your left hand on it. Using that key as the first one, count 12 keys to the right and place the little finger of your right hand on the twelfth key. Between your two little fingers, you will find 7 white keys and 5 black keys.

Did you guess correctly? If not, check that you counted properly. Now choose a different key, count 12 again and... 7 white keys and 5 black keys.

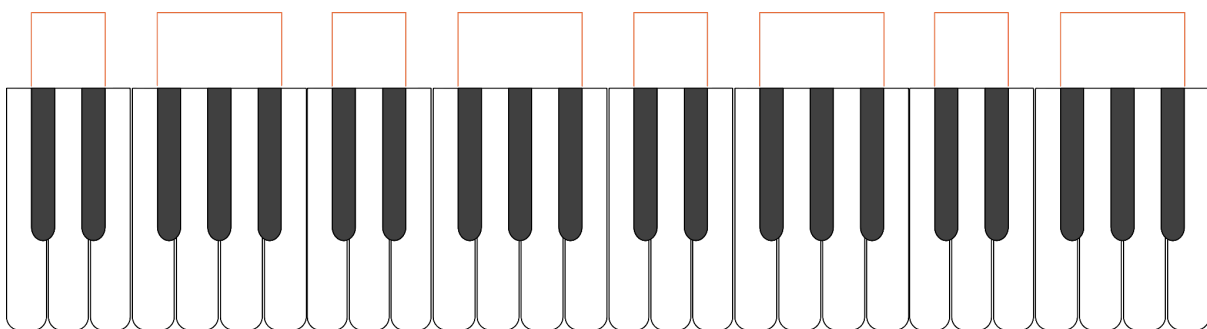
The same result.

Now I'll reveal the main secret right away: **There are only 12 notes in music.**

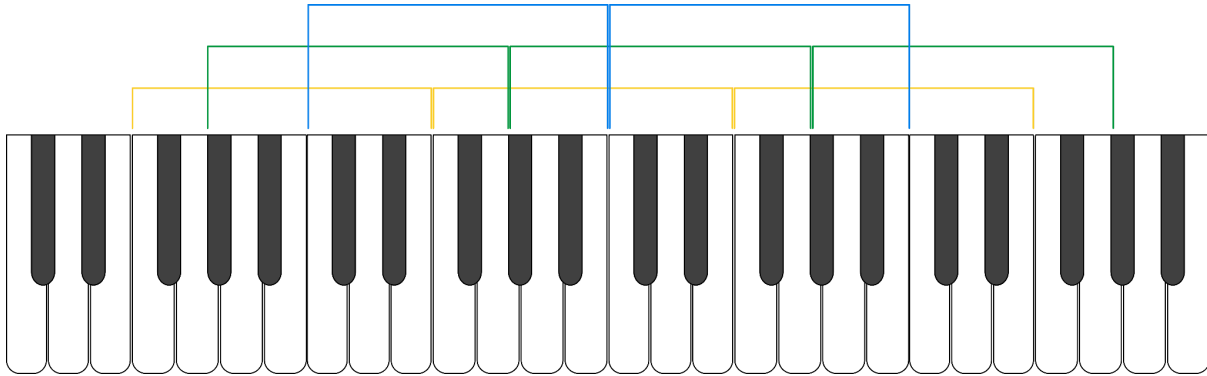
And the piano is one of the easiest places to see it. A piano is a keyboard instrument. Its keyboard is made up of white and black keys arranged in a specific pattern. Each key represents a note. Try your instrument. Press some keys. Feel how they respond under your fingers. Don't be afraid to experiment. Play single keys, several keys together, use either hand, play in any order you like. Take a close look at the keyboard.

There are many keys, but they are organized into repeating groups. Look at the black keys. Do you see the pattern?

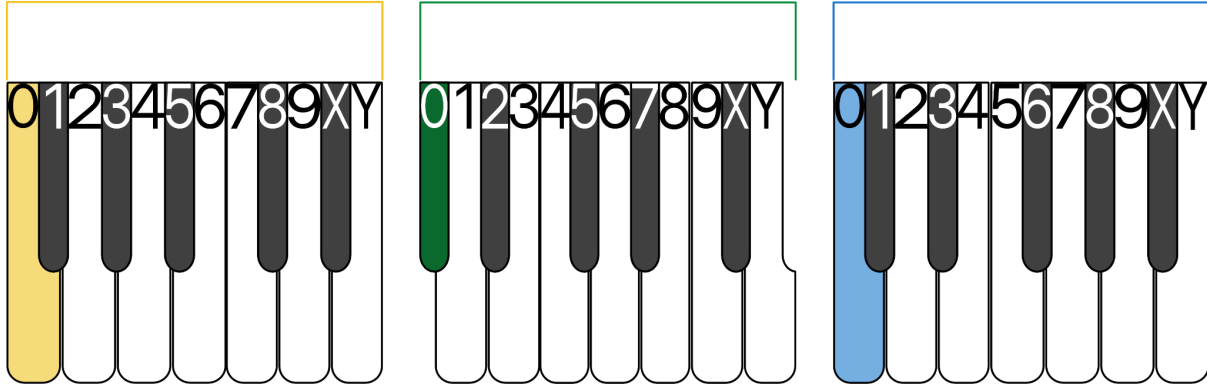
They are arranged in groups of two and three, and this pattern repeats across the entire keyboard. Every group of 12 consecutive keys contains 7 white keys and 5 black keys.



Before it and after it, you will find exactly the same pattern again, with the same arrangement of white and black keys. We will call this repeating group a **Cycle**.

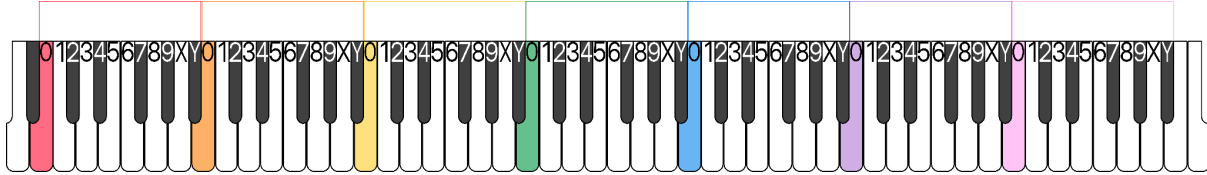


You do not need to learn note names. In Play12, we work with the Cycle.
 You only need to count from zero to eleven. Each key in the Cycle has its own symbol. The symbols are arranged in order from 0 to Y:



I do not use the numbers 10 and 11 because they can be easily confused when reading quickly. 10 can be mistaken for 1 and 0. 11 can be mistaken for 1 and 1. That is why I use X instead of 10 and Y instead of 11. After Y, the sequence starts again from 0. This is simply a way of identifying which key we are talking about.

Once you understand that there are only 12 notes and that they repeat continuously, the keyboard stops feeling chaotic. It becomes predictable. And when something becomes predictable, it becomes easier to play.



But a natural question appears:
 Where should the counting begin?

Which key should be 0?

Chapter 2. You Decide Which Key Is 0

It's time to play your first melody.

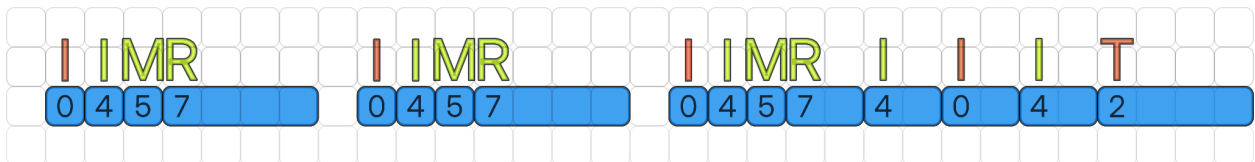
Take any Cycle card marked from 0 to Y and place it somewhere in the middle of the keyboard where both hands can play comfortably. The 0 on your card is marked in black. You can place it above any key.



Great.

Now place the index finger of your left hand (I) on key 0 and your thumb (T) on key 1. Position the fingers of your right hand like this: Index finger (I) — 4, Middle finger (M) — 5, Ring finger (R) — 7.

You are about to play the main theme of **When the Saints Go Marching In**. Press the keys in the following order and try to make the first three notes the same length. Let note 7 ring a little longer.



Try it. Play it a few times. Let the melody become louder and more confident. Don't worry if it doesn't work perfectly right away. With every practice session, it will get better. Once you feel comfortable, move the Cycle card 7 keys to the right.

Now play the same melody again.

Diagram 1: I I M R (0 4 5 7)

Diagram 2: I I M R (0 4 5 7)

Diagram 3: I I M R I I I T (4 0 4 2)

When you can play it without mistakes, move the Cycle one more key to the right. Play with this new 0 for a while. Now play the melody using only your right hand. Use your little finger for note 7.

Diagram 1: T M R L (0 4 5 7)

Diagram 2: T M R L (0 4 5 7)

Diagram 3: T M R L M T M I (4 0 4 2)

And one more variation. Move the Cycle 5 keys to the left. You already know what to do. This time, play it with your left hand only.

Diagram 1: L M I T (0 4 5 7)

Diagram 2: L M I T (0 4 5 7)

Diagram 3: L M I T M L M R (4 0 4 2)

0 is your home note. It is the starting point of a melody.
 0 is often the note where music begins and the note it wants to return to.
 And most importantly:
 0 is the note you choose. **You can change it whenever you want.**

Choose any key within the first 12 keys of the keyboard. Place the card so that the symbol 0 sits above that key. If your instrument has more than 61 keys, start with the red Cycle. If it has 61 keys or fewer, start with the orange Cycle. Then place the remaining cards in rainbow order, one after another, for as long as they fit on the keyboard.

Once 0 is known, every key can be identified by a color and a symbol. And you immediately know which key you are looking at. Now it's time to learn how long a key should be held and when it should be released.

Chapter 3. Block Length = Note Duration

Turn on some music you enjoy. Stand up and move with the rhythm. Dancing makes this easier to do naturally. Add claps. Now sit down at your instrument. Keep clapping and count out loud:

ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR

Now clap your left hand on your leg without the music. Read the count from bottom to top. One clap equals one count.

:>CLAP<:	FOUR				
:>CLAP<:	THREE				
:>CLAP<:	TWO				
:>CLAP<:	ONE				

L R M I T COUNT T I M R L

Keep counting out loud. With every clap of your left hand, press any key with the middle finger of your right hand.

:>CLAP<:	FOUR		0		
:>CLAP<:	THREE		0		
:>CLAP<:	TWO		0		
:>CLAP<:	ONE		0		

L R M I T COUNT T I M R L

You are playing notes that last for one Step. In Play12, a Step is the smallest unit of time. It corresponds to the shortest note or rest used in a piece of music.

Switch hands.

Your right hand now keeps the Count with claps.

This time, play a note that lasts for two Steps:

press on ONE
 hold through TWO
 release before THREE
 press on THREE
 hold through FOUR
 release before ONE

				AND				
:	:	CLAP	:	FOUR				
				AND				
:	:	CLAP	:	THREE				
				AND				
:	:	CLAP	:	TWO				
				AND				
:	:	CLAP	:	ONE				

L R M I T COUNT T I M R L

Try playing a melody. Place the Cycle card in a comfortable position. Position the fingers of your right hand above these keys:

- (T) Thumb — 0
- (I) Index — 2
- (M) Middle — 4
- (R) Ring — 5
- (L) Little — 7

Set a comfortable tempo by clapping with your left hand. Now play:

				AND		2		
:	:	CLAP	:	FOUR			4	
				AND				5
:	:	CLAP	:	THREE				7
				AND				5
:	:	CLAP	:	TWO			4	
				AND		2		
:	:	CLAP	:	ONE	0			

L R M I T COUNT T I M R L

A Count can have different lengths:

- ONE, TWO
- ONE, TWO, THREE
- ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR
- ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE
- ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SIX (Count out loud and clap only on ONE.)

A group of Steps from one ONE to the next ONE is called a Round.
Rounds can have different lengths depending on the Count:

ONE, TWO

ONE, TWO, THREE

ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR

Music always moves in Steps.Count them.

Then you will always know which keys to press, when to press them, and how long to hold them.

Next, let's learn how to write and read them.

Notes are written as Blocks. There is a field for the left hand and a field for the right hand. Each field is divided:

vertically into columns (fingers)

horizontally into Steps

We count and read notes from bottom to top. A Step is the smallest unit of time.

A group of Steps from one ONE to the next ONE is called a Round.

Every new ONE marks the beginning of a new Round.

A Block has three properties:

1. Color and symbol (0–Y) — which key to press
2. Position — when to play it and which finger to use
3. Length — how long to hold it

If multiple Blocks appear in the same Step, press them at the same time. If a Step contains no Block, play nothing. That is a rest.

How to Read the Notation

This is the central Play12 algorithm.

1. Read from bottom to top.
2. Move Step by Step.

At each Step:

P — Find the Blocks

L — Look at the colors and symbols

A — Press the correct keys

Y — Hold them for the length of the Blocks

Then move to the next Step. If a Block is long, keep holding the key until the Block ends. If new Blocks appear, add them without releasing the previous ones.

Congratulations.

You have completed the first Block. You already know enough to play your favorite music in Play12 and continue developing your piano skills.

The following chapters will show you how music is built, introduce the principles of improvisation, and explain how rhythm affects sound.

Before moving on to Block 2, complete the practical exercises in Block 1 Practice.

Block 2. Note Combinations

Introduction

Congratulations! You have completed Block 1.

If something does not work out, go back to Block 1 and work through it again. It is the foundation on which all the following chapters are built.

If you already know all 12 notes, can count them from any 0, find your way around the keyboard, understand note duration, and read Play12 notation, then you have done more than just spend your whole life wanting to learn piano.

You are already playing.

The next part will be more challenging, and that is completely normal.

You will no longer just press individual keys — you will combine them into patterns. Little by little, you will begin to understand why different groups of notes create different sounds and how music is built from them.

Sometimes you will need to stop, slow down, and work through the material step by step, repeating it many times until the skill settles into your hands.

That is the process.

The more you practice, the better the result.

Now it gets more interesting.

Yes, all music is made of notes. Notes can sound one at a time, flow from one to another, or sound together — in pairs, in groups of three, or sometimes in larger groups called chords.

In this Block, you will learn what creates the difference between these combinations and how to use them in your playing.

Chapter 5. Distances Between Notes

Task:

Place a Cycle card in a comfortable position on the keyboard. Play the melody
When the Saints Go Marching In.

Diagram showing the first variation of the melody 'When the Saints Go Marching In' on a keyboard. The notes are TMRL (0-4-5-7) followed by M-T-M-I (4-0-4-2).

Without moving the card, play the same melody again, but shift each note +2 keys to the right,

Diagram showing the second variation of the melody, shifted +2 keys to the right. The notes are TMRL (2-6-7-9) followed by M-T-M-I (6-2-6-4).

and then +1 key further to the right.

Diagram showing the third variation of the melody, shifted +1 key further to the right. The notes are TMRL (3-7-8-X) followed by M-T-M-I (7-3-7-5).

Play all three variations slowly and carefully. Listen closely.

What changed? What stayed the same?

The melody remains the same.

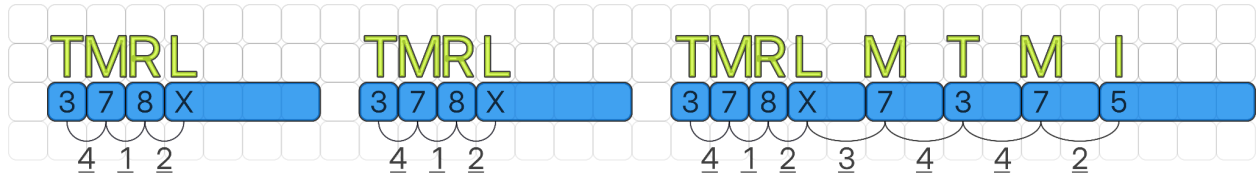
Question:

What stays constant in these four notes (0-4-5-7 or 3-7-8-X) that makes us hear the same melody?

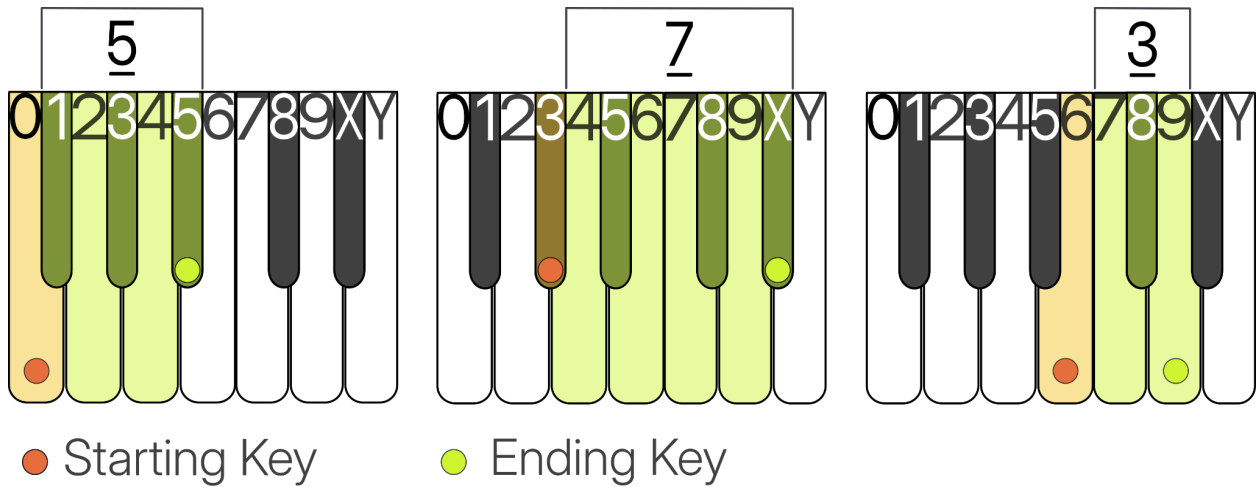
Answer:

The Distances between notes.

Diagram showing the distances between notes for the three variations. For TMRL (0-4-5-7), distances are 4, 1, 2. For TMRL (2-6-7-9), distances are 4, 1, 2. For M-T-M-I (4-0-4-2), distances are 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, 4, 2.



A **Distance** is the number of keys from the starting key to the ending key, not counting the starting key.



Examples:

Distance from key 0 to key 5 → 5

Distance from key 3 to key X → 7

Distance from key 6 to key 9 → 3

A note by itself marks a single point of sound. Musical meaning emerges when you move from one note to another or when multiple notes sound simultaneously.

Distance has **direction and character**. It creates the flow of a melody and differs in tension and stability. Alternating and combining distances defines the musical idea and mood.

There are 12 **Distances** in total, represented by symbols with an underscore:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, X, Y, 0

Distances vary by length:

Short Distances: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

6 — boundary, middle of the Cycle

Long Distances: 7, 8, 9, X, Y

Distances also have direction:

ascending — counted to the right from the starting key

descending — counted to the left

Recognizing **Distances** is a **key skill**. It helps you analyze music and improvise. If you give each Distance a mental association, recognizing them becomes much easier.

Fill out the association table for all Distances in **Play12 Practice**.


With experience, recognizing **Distances** will become effortless. You will start noticing them in familiar melodies and distinguishing them by ear. Over time, you will develop “favorite” **Distances** — those that appear often and are easiest to identify.

Most importantly, you will start to hear them not only individually, but also in **combinations**.

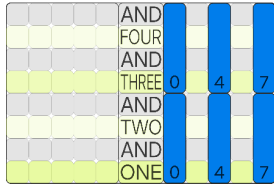
The next step is **Chords**.

Chapter 6. Chords

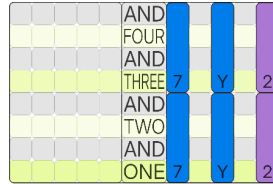
A chord is a combination of two or more Distances.
Simply watch:

 4 Chords | Music Videos | The Axis Of Awesome

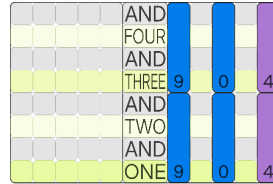
These are the four chords from the video.



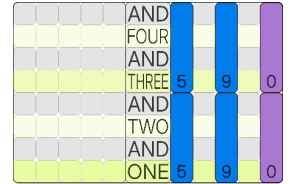
CHORD 1



CHORD 2



CHORD 3



CHORD 4

Play them. Try singing one of the songs. Look at them carefully and listen to how they sound.

Task:

One chord is different from the others. Which one is it, and why?

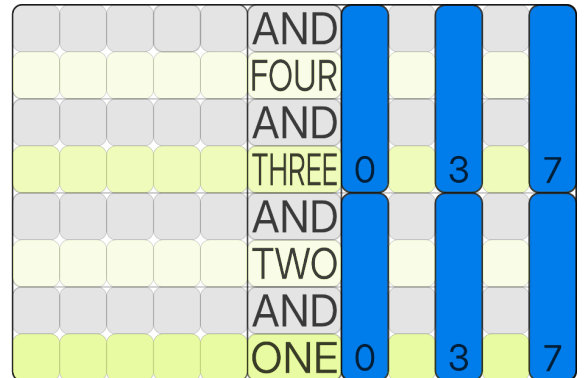
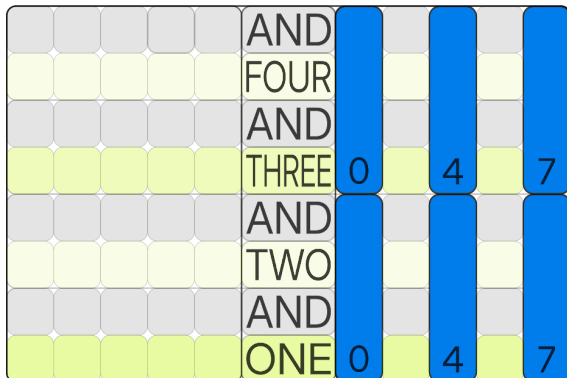
Hint:

Pay attention to the Distances.

Answer:

In the first, second, and fourth chords, the Distances from the first key are 4 and 7.
In the third chord, they are 3 and 7.

Play these chords one after another. Listen to the difference.



Think back to the difference between Distances 3 and 4 from Chapter 5. That single change is what alters the sound of the chord.

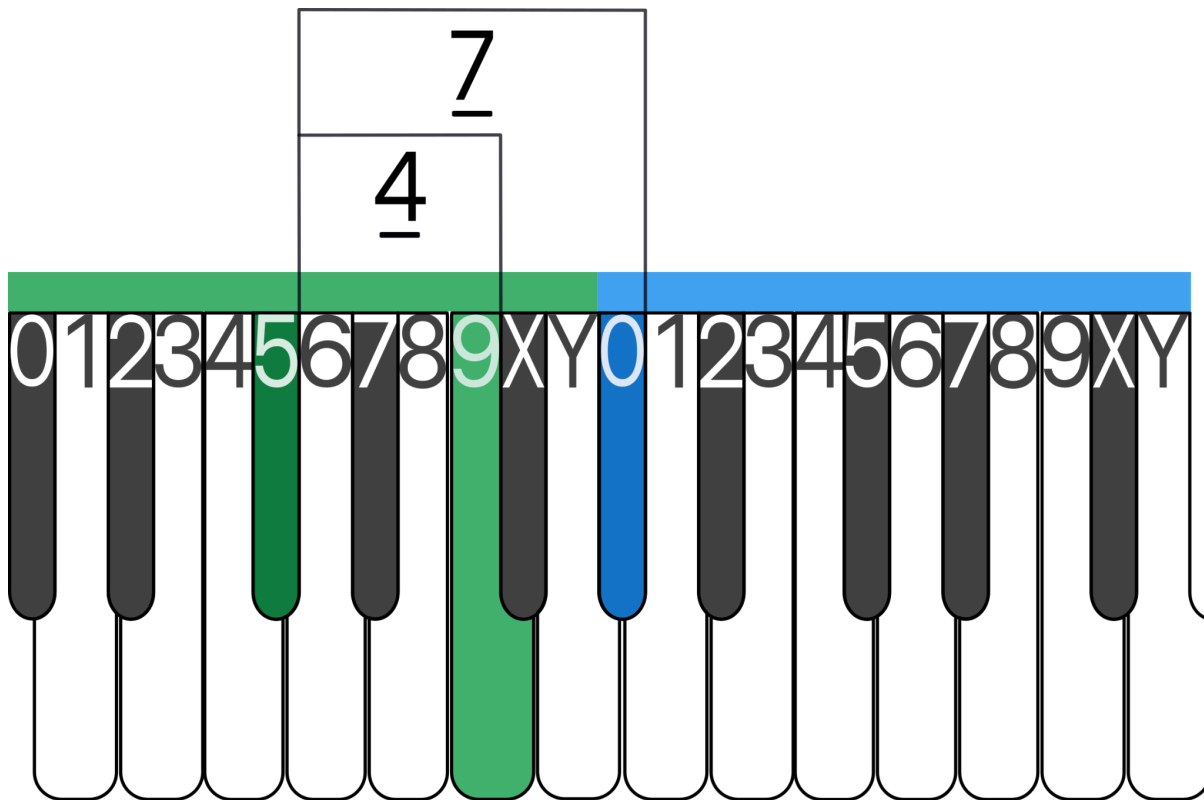
In music, there are two basic chord forms. In Play12, they are written like this:

[0]37 and [0]47

The key inside the square brackets is the Starting Key from which all Distances are measured.

Example:

[5]47



1. Find key [5]
2. Count 4 from it
3. Count 7 from it
4. Play all three keys together

Build [8]37 using the same principle.

The basic forms 37 and 47 can be built from any of the 12 notes. The Starting Key changes, but the structure remains the same.

Play these short progressions:

[0]47 → [7]47 → [5]47
[0]37 → [5]37 → [8]37

Count out loud and listen to how the sound changes.
Now play the chord progression from the video:

[0]47 → [7]47 → [9]37 → [5]47

When chords are played one after another, they create a musical foundation that can support a voice and become a song. Play the progression and try singing along. The melody is already familiar.

When the Saints go Marching

[0]47
O when the saints go marchin' in,
[0]47 [7]47
O when the saints go marchin' in,
[0]47 [0]479 [5]47 [5]479
Lord, I want to be in that number
[0]47 [7]479 [0]47
When the saints go marchin' in.

In Play12, chords can be written not only in the notation fields but also in a short form. This short form helps you read and play the accompaniment quickly.

To read and build chords freely, you need to understand how they are constructed. In Play12, a chord can be thought of as a building block.

Chapter 7. The Chord Builder in Play12

Building chords in Play12 is very simple. To build a chord, you need four elements:

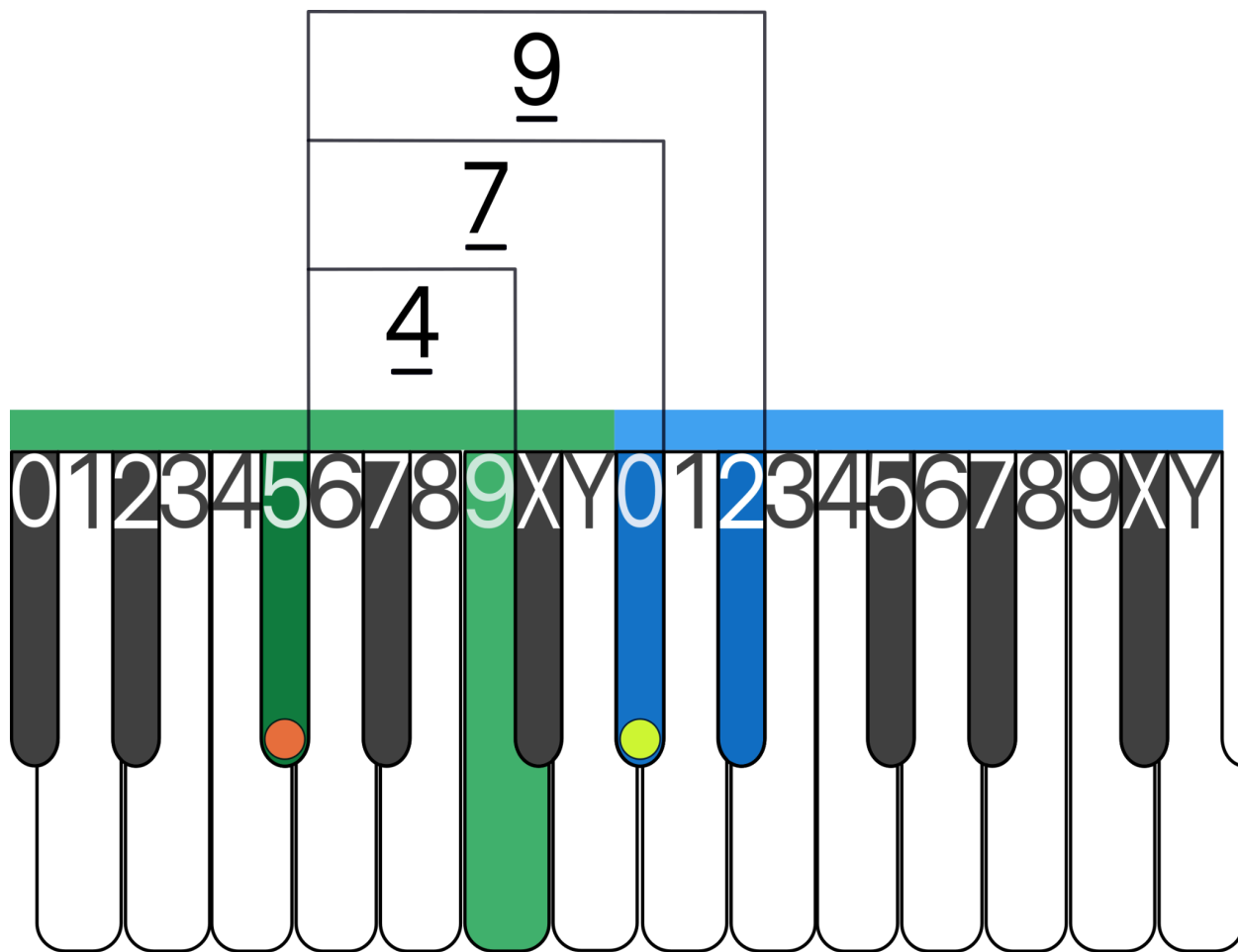
- Starting Key
- Foundation
- Inner Distance
- Outer Distance

Each element affects the shape and sound of the chord. When an element changes or is added, the chord changes as well. You can hear it. Play and listen to these progressions. Pay attention to how the sound changes as elements are added or replaced.

[0]27 → [0]37 → [0]47 → [0]57

[0]479 → [0]47X → [0]47Y

Let's look at each element of the builder using the chord [5]479 as an example:



● Starting Key

● Foundation

[5]479

[5] — Starting Key

4 — Inner Distance

7 — Foundation

9 — Outer Distance

Starting Key

This is the key from which all **Distances** are measured.
It is written as a key symbol inside square brackets.

Foundation

This is the **Distance** that, together with the Starting Key, forms the framework of the chord. Depending on the Foundation, chords can be narrow, standard, or wide.

6 — Narrow Foundation

7 — Standard Foundation

8 — Wide Foundation

Inner Distances

These are the shape-forming element. They are located between the Starting Key and the Foundation. Inner Distances determine the basic shape of the chord. If there are no Inner Distances, the basic shape does not exist.

3, 4 — basic shapes

2, 5 — additional variations

1, 6 — rare variations

Outer Distances

These are located outside the chord framework and add additional shades to the sound.

How to Read a Chord Code

When you see a chord code, break it down into its elements.

Example: [5]479

Step 1. Find the Starting Key

This is the key from which the chord is built. **Key 5.**

Step 2. Find the Foundation

Look for the Foundation in the code. It will be 7, 6, or 8.

If there is a 7, it is the Standard Foundation.

If there is no 7, look for 6 or 8.

In this chord:

7 — Foundation

$5 + \underline{7} = 0 \rightarrow \text{key } 0$

Step 3. Find the Inner Distances

Values smaller than the Foundation are Inner Distances.

In this chord:

4 — Inner Distance

$5 + \underline{4} = 9 \rightarrow \text{key } 9$

Step 4. Find the Outer Distances

Values larger than the Foundation are Outer Distances.

In this chord:

9 — Outer Distance

5 + 9 = 2 → key 2

As a result, for chord [5]479 you need the keys:

5, 0, 9, 2

Important!

The code shows which key the chord is built from and which Distances must be built.

When you calculate those Distances, you get the keys that make up the chord.

You can play the keys in any order:

5 0 9 2

0 9 2 5

9 2 5 0

2 5 0 9

These are all the same chord: **[5]479**

The code does not define the order of the keys.

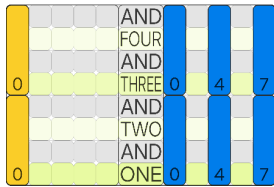
We will look in detail at how to choose the order of keys in the next chapter.

Chapter 8. Key Order in Chords

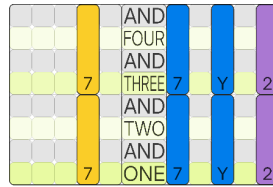
Return to the first four chords from Chapter 6:

[0]47 → [7]47 → [9]37 → [5]47

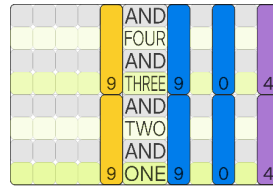
Add the bass in your left hand. Play this sequence.



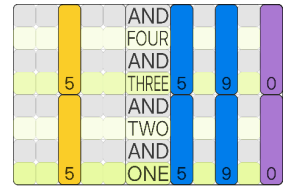
CHORD 1



CHORD 2



CHORD 3

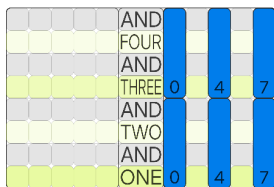


CHORD 4

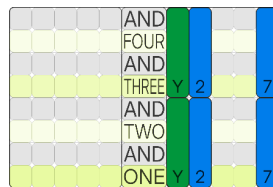
Focus on the sensations and notice:

- what receives the main attention
- which action requires the most concentration
- what feels the most difficult

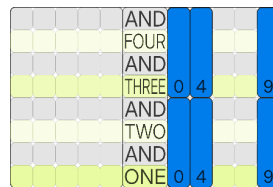
Now play the same chords again, but try changing the order of keys inside each chord.



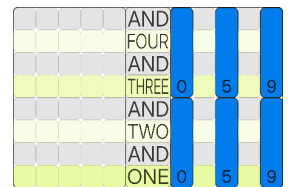
CHORD 1



CHORD 2



CHORD 3



CHORD 4

Play it. Let your hand get used to it.

When you can play consecutively without stopping, ask yourself:

What has changed?

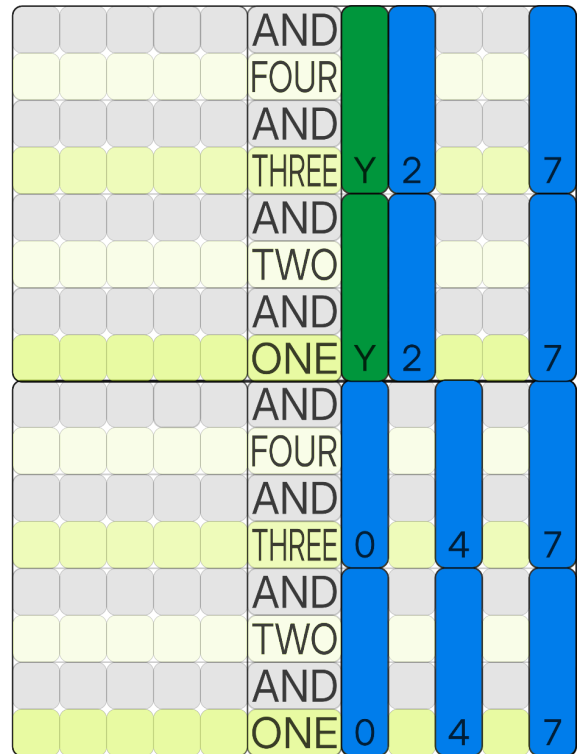
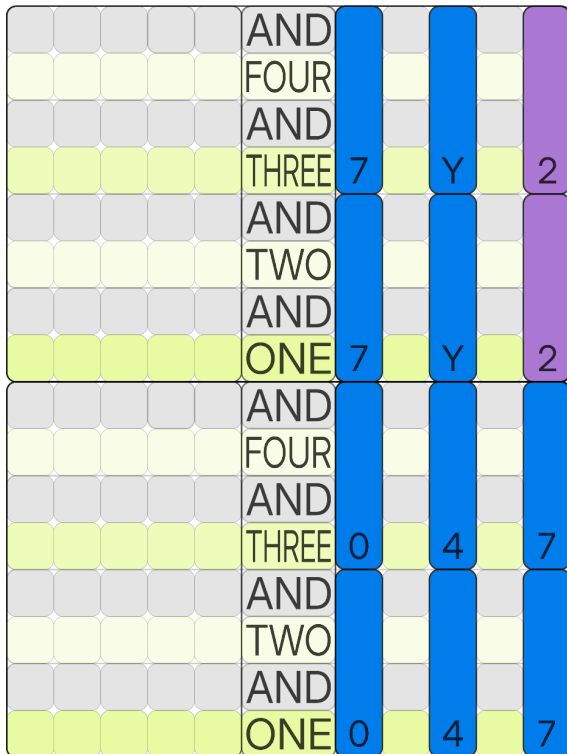
Take chord [7]47 as an example. It consists of keys 7 Y 2. These keys can be played in different orders:

- Y 2 7
- 2 7 Y
- 7 Y 2

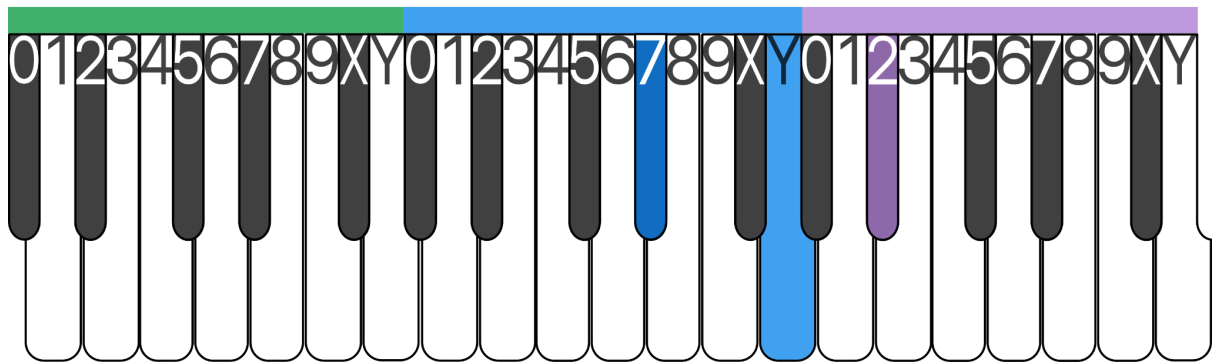
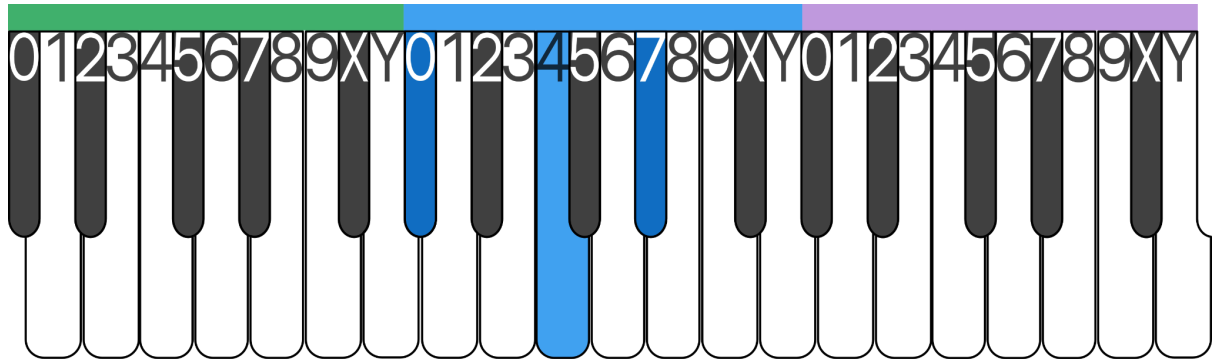
The ability to change the order of keys lets you manage the transition between chords. You can choose the order that:

- minimizes hand movement
- reduces mistakes
- allows you to play faster
- decreases tension

Consider the transition $[0]47 \rightarrow [7]47$.

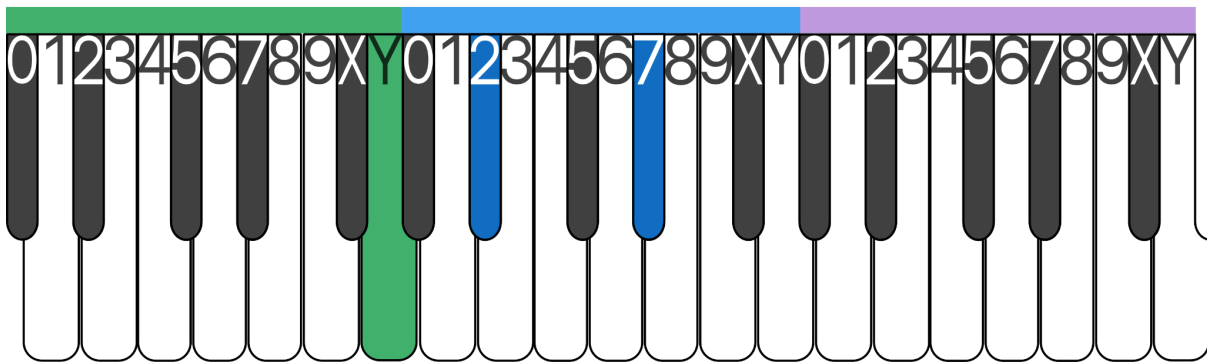
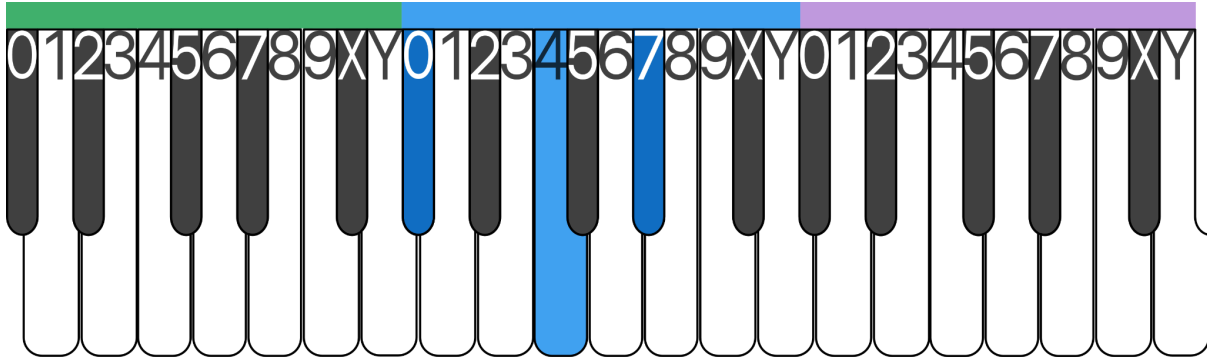


Play both variations.



In the first case:

- you need to move your whole hand by +7
- there is a large gap between chords
- the movement is abrupt



In the second transition:

- the hand barely moves
- the largest movement is only 2 steps
- the transition becomes smooth

Compare these two options and choose the one that is easier for you to play consecutively without stopping.

Tip:

While you are still mastering this skill, you can use a visual guide: [7]4Z.

The color highlights the Distance from the key from which it is convenient to start the chord. If all the symbols are the same color — build the chord from the Starting Key.

And this is how your favorite chords look:

[0]4Z → [7]4Z → [9]3Z → [5]4Z

In the song *Let It Be* by The Beatles:

[0]47

[7]47

[9]37

When I find myself in times of trouble

[5]47

Mother Mary comes to me

In most cases, chords are played with the right hand, and the left hand plays the bass. If the bass is not specified separately, the left hand plays the same keys as the Starting Key, but one Cycle lower.

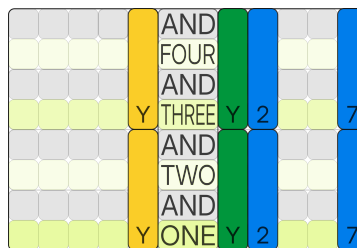
Example:

If chord Starting Keys are [0] and [7], the bass is also keys 0 and 7, one Cycle lower.



Sometimes the bass differs from the Starting Key. In this case, the bass is indicated separately:

(Y)[7]47



And in the song *You're Beautiful* by James Blunt:

Instrumental: [0]47 | (Y)[7]57 | [9]37X | [5]47 [5]247*

*Horizontal lines show chord duration. Details in Block 3.

[0]47

My life is brilliant,

(Y)[7]257

My love is pure.

[9]37X

I saw an angel,

[5]47 [5]247

Of that I'm sure.

Once you master chords, you will stop “repeating music” and start controlling it. The same song will no longer sound exactly the same. You can play it gently or sharply, simply or richly, calmly or with tension. Music stops being a fixed recording — it becomes material that you work with. You will develop “favorite” Starting Keys — the keys that are easier to sing from or to build complex chords. Later, many chord sequences will start memorizing themselves, and a special “vision” will appear — you will start to anticipate the next chord and feel its direction.

Chords are not about memorization. They are about freedom of choice: which keys to play, in what order, how to transition to the next chord, where to simplify, and where to enhance the sound — this is where your style emerges.

But this does not happen immediately.

It is the result of practice. Many repetitions. A lot of repetitions. Behind every confident performance are countless mistakes and even more attempts.

Each time you play chords:

- the hand starts memorizing convenient options
- movements become more confident
- transitions become more accurate
- the sound becomes more connected

You gradually stop thinking about the keys and start hearing the result.

At first, a simple tool will help you — the chord table.

You can print it or open it on your phone.

There is a QR code linking to the chord table.

Chord Table

Basic Chords

<u>Play12 Code</u>	<u>Classical Symbol</u>	<u>Classical Name</u>
[0]37	m	Minor
[0]47	M	Major

Chords with a Standard Foundation

<u>Play12 Code</u>	<u>Classical Symbol</u>	<u>Classical Name</u>
[0]27	sus2	Suspended Second
[0]57	sus4	Suspended Fourth
[0]47X	7	Dominant Seventh
[0]37X	m7	Minor Seventh
[0]47Y	maj7/M7	Major Seventh
[0]57X	7sus4	Dominant Suspended Fourth
[0]247	add9	Major Add 9
[0]237	madd9	Minor Add 9
[0]2479	69	Major 6/9
[0]479	6	Major Sixth
[0]379	m6	Major Sixth

Chords with a Diminished Foundation

<u>Play12 Code</u>	<u>Classical Symbol</u>	<u>Classical Name</u>
[0]36	dim	Diminished
[0]36X	m7 ^b 5	Half-Diminished
[0]46X	7 ^b 5	Dominant Flat Five
[0]369	dim7	Diminished Seventh

Chords with a Diminished Foundation

<u>Play12 Code</u>	<u>Classical Symbol</u>	<u>Classical Name</u>
[0]48	Aug	Augmented
[0]48X	7 [#] 5	Dominant Augmented Fifth
[0]48Y	maj7 [#] 5	Major Augmented Fifth
[0]489	6 [#] 5/Aug6	Augmented Sixth

Block 3. Rhythm

Introduction

Music = Key Combinations + Rhythm.

Rhythm is the way you manage time in music. It is how you use Key Combinations:
when you press them
how long you hold them
when you release them
and where you leave silence

In this Block, you will:
learn what Pulse is
learn different ways to Count it
discover how to divide the Count into Steps
understand how accents work
learn Count Division into 2 and 3 Steps

It will not be easy.

There will be many new concepts, and at first some of them may seem similar to one another. **Rhythm** is something you need not only to understand, but also to feel. **Rhythm** is learned through practice: through counting, movement, repetition, repetition, and repetition.

To do that, follow four rules:

Count Out Loud

Counting out loud gives you control over time and helps you feel rhythm accurately. It is not a sign of inexperience. It is a professional tool.

Make the Complex Simple

Break complex movements and rhythms into short, understandable actions.

Start Slowly

First accurate, then fast.

A slow tempo helps you feel and remember the correct movements.

Use a Metronome

A metronome provides a steady Pulse and helps you maintain a consistent tempo without speeding up or slowing down.

Let's begin.

Chapter 9. Pulse

Pulse is a steady sequence of repeating beats. First, just listen to the Pulse — turn on a metronome.

<https://share.google/qHpl2K7FYoDgGxjrx>

A metronome is a tool that produces a steady Pulse at a selected tempo. The speed of the Pulse is called the tempo of the music. It is measured in BPM (Beats Per Minute).

BPM = 60 means 60 beats per minute — one beat per second.

BPM = 120 means two beats per second.

The higher the BPM, the faster the tempo.

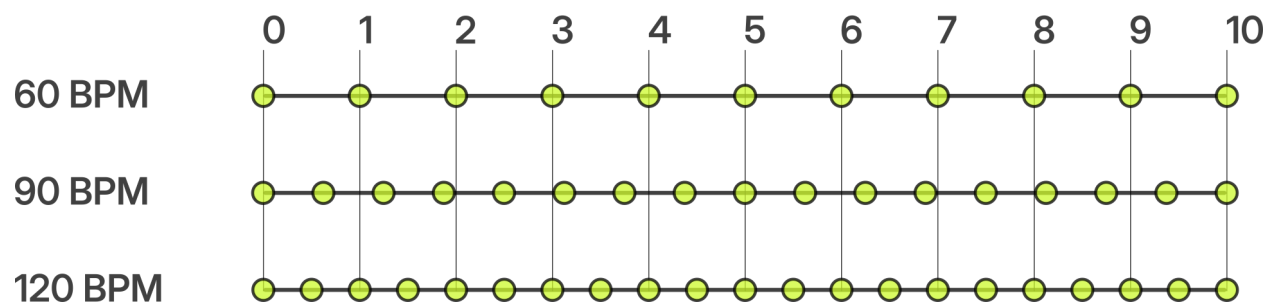
Set the metronome to BPM = 60.

Clap on every metronome click and count out loud:

ONE
ONE
ONE
ONE

Repeat the exercise at BPM = 90 and BPM = 120. Practice for 1 minute at each BPM.

Now look at how Pulse can be represented. Imagine time as a straight line and the metronome clicks as points placed on that line.



At 60 BPM, the metronome produces one click per second. At 120 BPM, it produces two.

But Pulse is not only something you hear and see — you need to feel it in your body.

Feeling Pulse is a natural human ability. The brain automatically recognizes rhythm, begins to predict it, and starts waiting for the next beat.

Think about how your fingers naturally start moving in time with the click of a turn signal. Or how your steps gradually sync with your favorite song during a walk or a run. **Your body does this automatically.**

Set to BPM = 60.

Walk around the room, or simply march in place.

First, spend one minute taking one step on every metronome click.

Then speed up and take two steps on every click.

Continue for at least one minute.

After a while, your body will begin to lock into the Pulse automatically.

Being able to hear, see, and feel the Pulse is necessary before you can learn to Count it.

So where should **Counting** begin? Of course — with **ONE**.

Chapter 10. Count

You can hear, see, and feel the Pulse. Now you will learn how to **Count** it.

Pulse is a series of identical beats occurring at equal intervals of time.

But **Pulse** can be counted in different ways: by grouping beats into small repeating patterns. In Play12, these patterns are called **Rounds**.

Let's begin with the simplest option — a **Round** of two beats.

Turn on the metronome.

BPM = 60

Stand up. **Count** out loud and take a step on every **ONE**.

Do not step on two.

ONE two
ONE two
ONE two
ONE two

Pulse

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
ONE two ONE two ONE two ONE two ONE two ONE two

Counting in 2

● ● | ● ● | ● ● | ● ● | ● ● | ● ●
● ● | ● ● | ● ● | ● ● | ● ● | ● ●

Continue the exercise for 1 minute. Now stop and think: Which beat felt stronger? Every **Round** begins with **ONE**. **ONE** is a natural accent. The brain highlights the beginning of the **Round** and helps you keep track of the **Count**. Just as chords have a **Starting Key** — the key from which the chord is built — rhythm has **ONE** as its reference point.

You have just counted the **Pulse** in **Rounds** of two beats. This type of **Count** feels natural: walking, marching, moving forward. It is no coincidence that marching rhythms are built on this **Count**.

But **Pulse** can be counted in more than groups of two. Let's try counting the same **Pulse** in groups of three. Now each **Round** will contain three beats.

Counting in 3

Turn on the metronome.

BPM = 60

Stand up. **Count** out loud.

Take a step on every ONE. Do not step on two or three.

ONE two three
ONE two three
ONE two three
ONE two three

Pulse

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
ONE two three ONE two three ONE two three ONE two three

Counting in 3

● ● ● | ● ● ● | ● ● ● | ● ● ●

Continue for at least 1 minute.

Does it feel different? This Count usually feels less like a march and more fluid.
It is no coincidence that many waltzes are built on groups of three.

The most important thing:

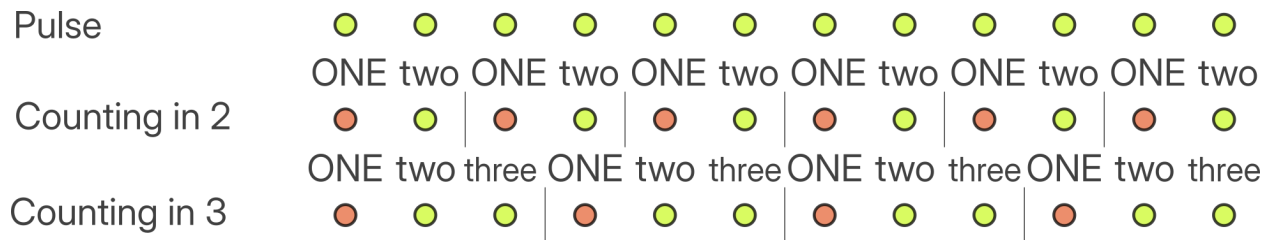
- The beats are the same.
- The Count is different.
- The music changes.

Turn on the metronome.

BPM = 60

Count 6 Rounds of TWO, then immediately 4 Rounds of THREE:

ONE two
ONE two
ONE two
ONE two
ONE two
ONE two
ONE two three
ONE two three
ONE two three
ONE two three



Try counting along with real music. Do not rush.
Listen.
Give yourself time to feel the rhythm.

Counting in groups of 2:

- The White Stripes — Seven Nation Army
- Miley Cyrus — Flowers
- Felix Mendelssohn — Wedding March from A Midsummer Night's Dream

Counting in groups of 3:

- R.E.M. — Everybody Hurts
- Ed Sheeran — Perfect
- Pyotr Tchaikovsky — Waltz of the Flowers

Counting in 2 and 3 is the foundation of rhythm.

Just as you learned two basic chord forms in Block 2 — 37 and 47 — rhythm also has two basic counting forms:

2 and 3

Most rhythms can be built from twos and threes:

4 = 2 + 2

5 = 3 + 2 or 2 + 3

6 = 3 + 3 or 2 + 2 + 2

7 = 3 + 2 + 2 or 2 + 2 + 3

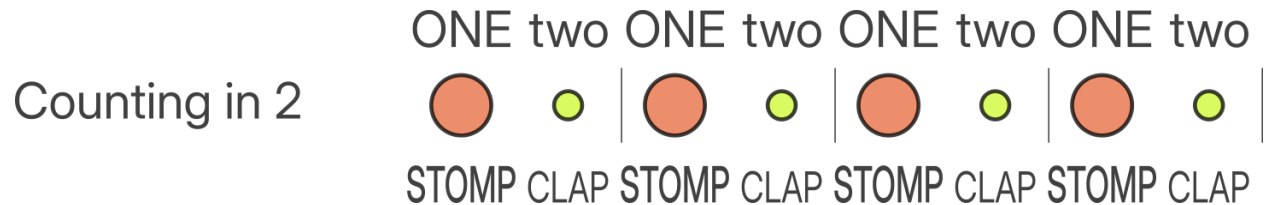
But there is one important detail.

Inside a longer **Round**, another accent appears. Not as strong as the first **ONE**. A weaker one. This is what turns simple counting into real rhythm. In the next chapter, you will learn how it works.

Chapter 11. Internal Accents

Turn on "Truly Madly Deeply" by Savage Garden.
It has a comfortable tempo. Let's begin by Counting in 2.
Stand up. Count out loud.

On every ONE, take a step (STOMP).
On every two, clap your hands (CLAP).



Do this through the verse and the chorus. Try to make your STOMP and CLAP line up with the drums. If it feels easy, you can sing along. Now you will Count in 4. This is simply 2 + 2, and you already know how to do that. The only thing being added is one more movement — SLAP, a hand slap on your thigh.

Stand up.

Count out loud.

On every ONE, take a step (STOMP).
On every two, clap your hands (CLAP).
On every THREE, slap your thigh (SLAP).
On every four, clap your hands (CLAP).



Play the rhythm through another verse and chorus. Do not think about the music.
Just move with it:

STOMP — CLAP — SLAP — CLAP — STOMP — CLAP — SLAP — CLAP

Which beat after ONE feels stronger? Most likely THREE. When Counting in 4, two Counts of 2 fit inside one Round:

ONE two | ONE two

becomes:

ONE two THREE four

ONE remains the main accent of the entire Round. THREE becomes an Internal Accent. It is weaker than ONE, but stronger than two and four.

Internal Accents help you feel longer Rounds and avoid getting lost inside them.

Before you begin Counting in 5, let's define three levels of accents:

Strong — ONE — at the beginning of the Round — STOMP

Medium — inside the Round — SLAP

Weak — a regular beat — CLAP

There are many more accents in music, but for understanding rhythm, these three are enough for now.

Counting in 5

A Count of 5 can be organized in two ways:

3 + 2 or 2 + 3.

Let's begin with 3 + 2.

Turn on the metronome.

BPM = 60

Try to feel the shift from a flowing group of three to a straight group of two.

Stand up.Count out loud.

On every ONE — Strong — take a step (STOMP).

On every two — Weak — clap your hands (CLAP).

On every three — Weak — clap your hands (CLAP).

On every FOUR — Medium — slap your thigh (SLAP).

On every five — Weak — clap your hands (CLAP).

STOMP — CLAP — CLAP — SLAP — CLAP

Counting in 5

ONE	two	three	FOUR	five	ONE	two	three	FOUR	five
									
STOMP	CLAP	CLAP	SLAP	CLAP	STOMP	CLAP	CLAP	SLAP	CLAP

Count like this for 2 minutes. Do not rush. Make sure your body remembers the rhythm. This is 3 + 2. Waltz + March.

Turn on "Take Five" by The Dave Brubeck Quartet. Listen to this Count of 5. Try Counting 3 + 2. It may not work right away. The instruments can distract you. That happens. With practice, the ability to Count over music will come.

But a Count of 5 can also be organized differently:

2 + 3

March + Waltz

Turn on the metronome.

BPM = 60

Stand up. Count out loud.

On every **ONE** — **Strong** — take a step (**STOMP**).










On every two — **Weak** — clap your hands (**CLAP**).

On every **THREE** — **Medium** — slap your thigh (**SLAP**).

On every four — **Weak** — clap your hands (**CLAP**).

On every five — **Weak** — clap your hands (**CLAP**).

Counting in 5

ONE	two	THREE	four	five	ONE	two	THREE	four	five
									
STOMP	CLAP	SLAP	CLAP	CLAP	STOMP	CLAP	SLAP	CLAP	CLAP

Count like this for 2 minutes. See? It can be done. Listen to "Main Title Theme" (Mission: Impossible) by Artie Kane / Danny Elfman. This music uses a 2 + 3 Count — March + Waltz. Try Counting along with the music.

Now turn on the metronome.

Count several Rounds of 3 + 2, then several Rounds of 2 + 3:

ONE two three FOUR five

ONE two THREE four five

ONE two three FOUR five

ONE two THREE four five

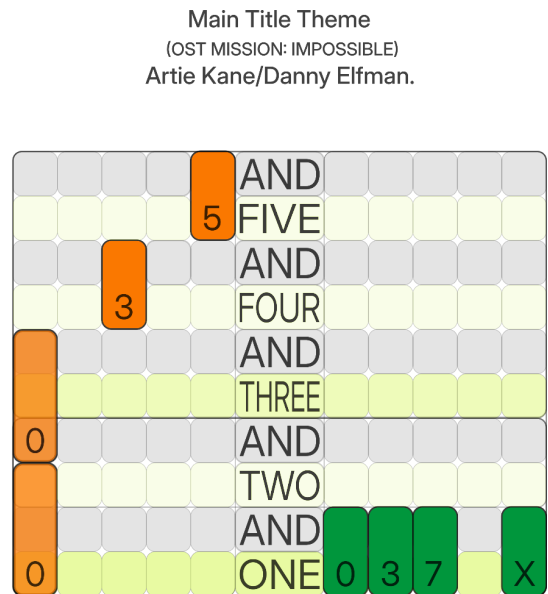
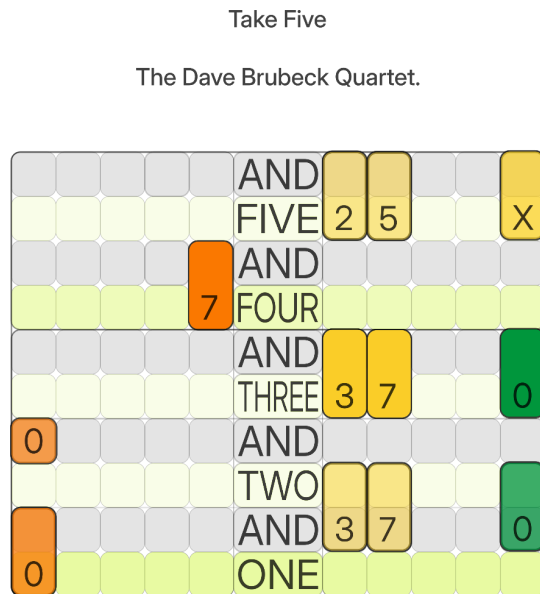
$$8 = 2 + 3 + 3$$

$$8 = 3 + 2 + 3$$

The main principle:

1. Find the main ONE.
2. Find the Internal Accents. They show you how the rhythm is organized.

In Play12 notation, the color intensity of a Step and its border will indicate an Internal Accent.



Rhythm is not just the number of beats. The same beats can be organized in different ways. The position of Internal Accents is what creates the character of musical movement.

The next step is to learn how to divide each Count into smaller parts — Steps.

ONE AND
two AND
three AND
FOUR AND
five AND
six AND

Count for 30 seconds. Now add thigh slaps on every Count and every AND. Count for another 30 seconds.

Has the Pulse changed?

No. The Pulse remains the same. We have simply divided each Count into two Steps.

A Count can be divided not only into two Steps, but also into three.
In that case, the Steps are counted like this:

ONE AND A
TWO AND A
THREE AND A
FOUR AND A

Let's try it.

BPM = 60

Count in 6. Count out loud.

On every metronome click, say the Count number.

Between the clicks, say AND and A.

ONE AND A
two AND A
three AND A
FOUR AND A
five AND A
six AND A

Count for 30 seconds. Now add thigh slaps on every Step:

ONE, AND, and A.

Count for another 30 seconds.

The Pulse is still the same. We have simply divided each Count into three Steps instead of two. But the feeling is different. Describe that difference out loud to yourself. Notice it. Remember it.

Dividing a Count into three Steps is often used when the overall rhythm remains steady and straight. Because of this, an interesting situation can appear in music: one hand plays an even division into 2, while the other plays a flowing division into 3. This is more difficult than simply counting out loud. Do not worry if it does not work right away. This feeling takes time, attention, and many repetitions.

For now, simply practice switching between the two types of **Division** while following the metronome:

ONE AND
TWO AND
THREE AND
FOUR AND

ONE AND A
TWO AND A
THREE AND A
FOUR AND A

Dividing the Count into 2 and 3 Steps takes time and practice. Do not worry if it feels slow at first, or if nothing seems to work at all. Play12 Practice contains plenty of exercises for developing this skill. The more confidently you feel the Steps inside the Count, the easier it becomes to play complex and subdivided rhythms.

In Play12 notation, you can easily recognize a Division into 3. Below is a fragment from Piano Man.

Here, a Count of 4 changes to a Count of 3 (1). There are places where one Count is divided into three equal parts and each note occupies one part (2). There are also places where one note occupies two parts of the Count, while the next note occupies only one (3). These and similar patterns are explained in detail and practiced repeatedly in Play12 Practice.

This is a complex rhythm and a memorable introduction. But by now, you already know everything you need to read it. You can Count in 3 and 4. You understand which keys to press, when to press them, and how long to hold them. You know how to use AND and A to divide the Count and determine the

position of notes within it. Now all that remains is practice. Count out loud. Play slowly. Gradually increase the tempo. You already have everything you need to master this passage.

Piano Man
Billy Joel

The diagram illustrates the piano part of 'Piano Man' by Billy Joel. It is organized into two main vertical columns of piano roll notation. The left column is divided into several sections, with a circled '0' and a bracket labeled '3 ^ 4' on the left side. The right column is a single continuous vertical sequence. The notation includes piano roll grids with notes, rests, and articulation marks. Text labels like 'AND THREE TWO ONE' are placed between the piano roll sections. Circled numbers '1' and '2' point to specific notes in the lower part of the left column. Orange vertical bars highlight specific rhythmic patterns or rests. The piano roll notation uses a grid where the vertical axis represents pitch and the horizontal axis represents time. Notes are represented by small rectangles, and rests by empty space. Text labels are placed between the piano roll sections to indicate the count of notes in each group.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Play12 Manual Basic

Congratulations. You have completed the entire Play12 Manual Basic.

Right now, it may feel like you still know very little. And that's normal.

But let's take a look at what you already have.

- ✓ You know all 12 notes of the musical Cycle.
- ✓ You can find them on the keyboard.
- ✓ You understand how notes are written in Play12 notation.
- ✓ You can build Distances and Chords.
- ✓ You can Count Pulse using different Counts and accents.
- ✓ You can divide Counts into Steps and read complex rhythmic patterns.

That is already far more than most people know when they only dream about learning to play. But the most important thing is this: Music is no longer a collection of mysterious symbols. Now you understand its logic. It has become a system that can be learned step by step.

Welcome to the most important part of learning:

Practice.

You cannot learn music by reading, understanding, or listening.
You can learn music only by playing.

- Play every day.

Even 10–15 minutes of regular practice is more valuable than several hours once a week.

- Learn songs.

Do not be afraid of difficult pieces.
Every large composition is made of smaller parts.

- Count out loud.
- Play slowly.

Do not rush to increase the tempo.
Speed comes naturally when your movements become confident.

Return to this material.

Over time, you will begin to notice things that previously escaped your attention.
That is how learning works.

Play12 Practice

Play12 Manual gave you the foundation.

Play12 Practice helps turn knowledge into skill.

It contains exercises for developing technique, rhythm, hand coordination, and confident reading of Play12 notation. Follow the instructions carefully, and everything will work out.

This is where theory becomes practice.

Play12 Manual Intermediate

Once your basic skills become confident, you can move on.

In **Play12 Manual Intermediate**, you will discover new chords and the logic behind chord progressions, more advanced rhythms, additional accompaniment techniques, and musical ideas that appear constantly in modern music.

But do not rush. Right now, the most important thing is to start playing.

Take the first step.

Then the second.

Then another.

And one day, you will realize that you are playing the music you once only dreamed about playing.

See you in Play12 Practice.
Your friend,
Roman Reshetnyak