

# Composing Tips: Chords in C major

In C major there are no sharps or flats, so none of the chords will contain any sharps or flats either.

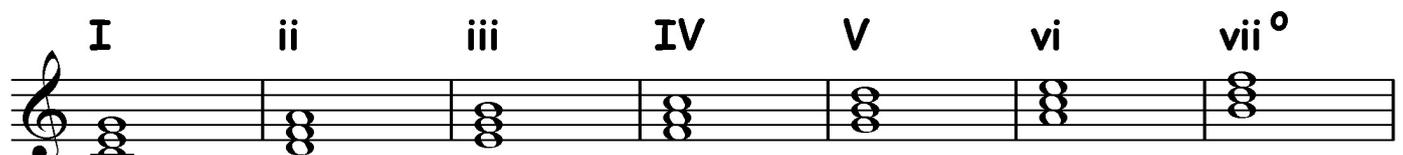
Normal chords or 'triads' are made of 3 notes (like the first 3 notes in an arpeggio). You can start to work them out like this:



C major    D minor    E minor    F major    G major    A minor    B diminished

The B chord is 'diminished' because in a B major or a B minor chord there would be an F# not an F natural. You might have noticed it sounds a bit odd compared to the others!

**Chords** are written as notes stacked on top of each other. The notes you've just worked out (from arpeggios) are the notes that normally sound good (not clashy!) when played at the same time. When you're composing for piano, these notes could give you some inspiration for what the second hand could play.



I    ii    iii    IV    V    vi    vii<sup>o</sup>

C    Dm    Em    F    G    Am    Bdim

Take note:

- The chords are all numbered from 1 to 7, but we normally write these in **Roman Numerals**. The capital letters indicate **major** chords, the lower case letters are for **minor** chords, and the small circle shows that a chord is **diminished**.
- These chords are all written out here in **root position**, but you don't have to compose your music in root position! Any note from a chord can be written in any octave, and any of them could be the lowest-sounding note in your piece.
- In a major key, chords iii (3) and vii (7) are not used very often, as it takes a lot of skill to use them in a way that sounds right! I recommend avoiding them for now.
- Many pieces start with chord I (1), and end with V (5) and I (1) as the last 2 chords. I recommend sticking to this rule for now!