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Tijs Krammer

Playing Piano Chords, part 1

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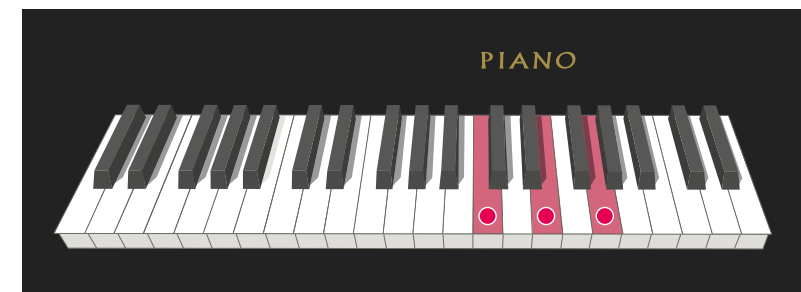
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App



Introduction

With this book you can learn to accompany songs on the piano in a smooth way. You don't need to be able to read music for this book. Instead, you learn the chords with images that are easy to understand, like this one:



With the pictures you quickly master the chords. You can accompany a first song after half an hour.

Each lesson will take about 15-30 minutes (depending on your skills of course). There are four blocks and there are nine lessons in each block. So in total there are 36 lessons. In each block you will learn new chords and new songs to play.

Instrument

It's unwise to play the chords using a piano app on a smart phone or a tablet, because with that you can't really hear what you play and you can't feel the keys. Thus, make sure you have a real instrument to play on, preferably a piano or else a keyboard.

Songs

This book features countless songs from artists such as Ed Sheeran, The Beatles, Alicia Keys, Queen and The Black Eyed Peas. The songs are from different styles and periods. These songs have all been hits, so you're probably familiar with most of them.



Block 1

Of all the songs only a part is treated, in order to keep the lessons concise. Mostly the chorus is shown, because that it is the most recognizable part of the song. However, in some occasions another part is chosen.

Whenever you like to play a song in full, you have to look up the chords on the internet yourself. In lesson three you learn how to do so. The songs in this app are chosen in such a way that you won't encounter chords you don't know in the remaining of the song.

Listening

There are references to short sound fragments in the lessons. These can be found on the website www.playingpianochords.com/book.

Theory

To be able to play chords, you have to know what keys to use. But apart from that, it is necessary to know how chords are built up in general and to know a little about scales and keys. To prevent the lessons from getting tough and boring, the theoretic subjects are dealt with in small portions mingled through the remaining subjects. Whenever you encounter a word you don't understand, you can look it up in the Glossary.

You may tend to skip the text in the lessons and only look at the pictures. However, it is better to read the explanations as well. With that you will get to know how chords are built up. After some time, you will be able to build chords yourself and you will learn to be creative on the piano.

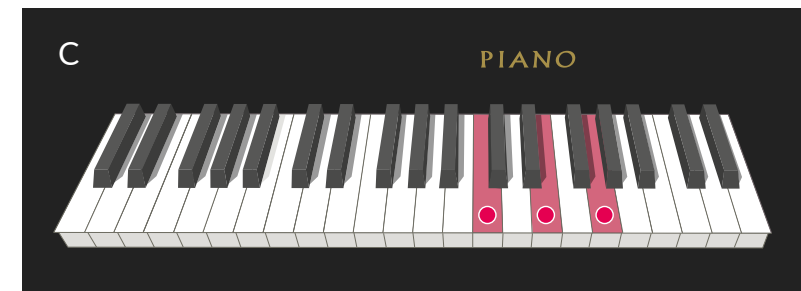
I sincerely hope you will enjoy these lessons!

Tijs Krammer

Lesson 1

A first chord: C

Let us start with a simple chord using only white keys:



This chord is called C. You play three keys for this chord. The leftmost key is also called C. (In these lessons keys are indicated in italics, to distinguish them from chords.) To find this white key, pay attention to the black keys. There are groups of two and of three black keys on the keyboard. The key C lies directly left of a group of two black keys.

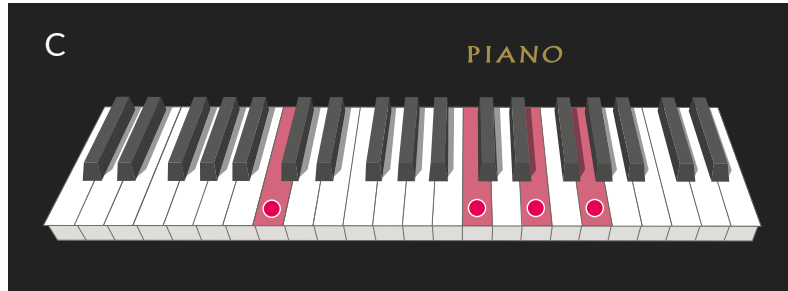
Play the key C that lies at the centre of the keyboard. You can find this because the brand of the piano is immediately above it. (Therefore, we put the word 'piano' in the images.)

The chord C sounds like this:



Bass note

The chord you just played will sound warmer and more complete if you add a key more to the left:

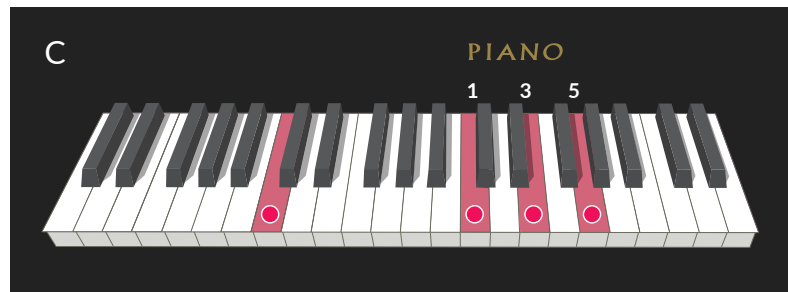


This key on the left side is also called C. Notice that it lies directly to the left of a group of two black keys as well.

The low sounds at the left side of the keyboard are called bass notes. In a rock band, these notes would be played on bass guitar.

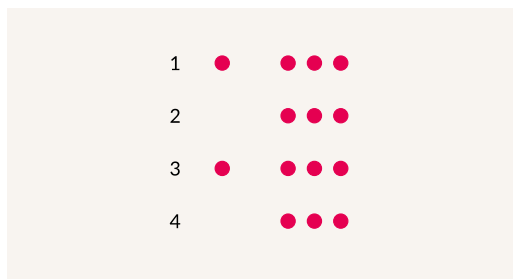
Play the low key with the left hand and the three high keys with the right. With the right hand, play the three keys using your thumb, middle finger and little finger. At first, this may feel a little awkward. But if you get used to this way of playing now, switching between chords will be easier later on.

So that you know which fingers are used for the chords we've added numbers to the diagrams, in which 1 denotes the thumb and 5 the little finger:



Rhythms

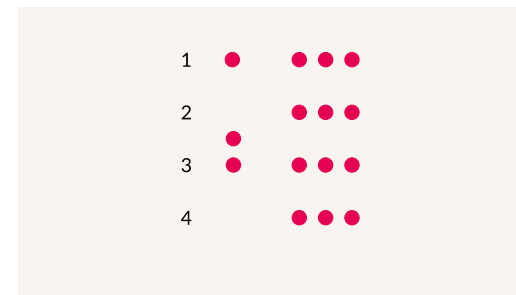
You can create different kind of rhythms with the left and right hand. To start, let's play the right hand on each count and the bass note in the left hand on the first and third count only:



This scheme should be read from top to bottom. In this instance, there are four counts. (In music, these are called beats.) To the right of the beats the keys that should be played on that particular beat are indicated. The group of three dots close to one another indicate the keys in the right hand and the single dot indicates the left hand. For example, on the first beat all four keys are played and on the second beat only those of the right hand are played. The rhythm shown here sounds like this:



Below is a simple rhythm that is often used:

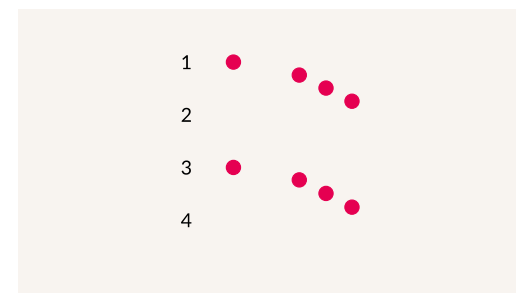


This scheme shows that the bass note is played on the first and third beat as well as in between the second and third beat. This rhythm sounds like this:

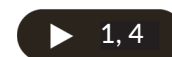


One after the other

A different, sweeter sound arises when you play the keys in a sequence from left to right:



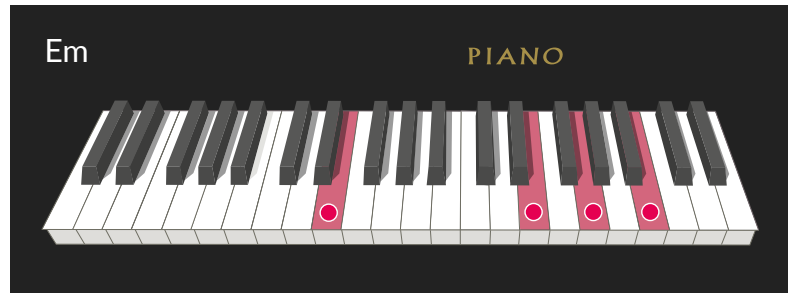
This way of playing creates the following sound:



Lesson 2

A second chord: Em

The next chord you'll learn is Em. Like C you'll only use white keys to play it:



The letter “m” in its name is short for: “minor”. So the chord is “E minor”.

It sounds like this:



Notice that this chord is played in a similar way to C. There is one white key in between each of the keys that you play with your right hand. The whole chord lies two white keys to the right of C. Your left hand also moves two keys to the right.

Your left hand and your right thumb are both playing the key that is called *E*.

Up and down

In the previous lesson we mentioned that the bass notes lie on the left side of the keyboard. In general, as you go left the sounds get lower. The highest note is therefore the note on the right end of the keyboard. So we'll call moving left on the keyboard “going down” and moving right “going up”. This reflects the change in sound.

Two chords

Now that you know two chords, you can alternate between them, so that it starts to sound like a genuine song. You can listen to it here:



Now try playing the chord C for eight beats and the chord Em for eight beats, and repeat.

The Beatles

Most songs demand more than two chords. However, the song *Eleanor Rigby* by The Beatles only uses the chords Em and C:

Em
Eleanor Rigby picks up the rice
Em C
In the church where a wedding has been
Em
Lives in a dream

The notation tells you that from the lyrics “Eleanor Rigby” on, you should play the chord Em and from the lyrics “has been” in the second line you should switch to the chord C, and so on.

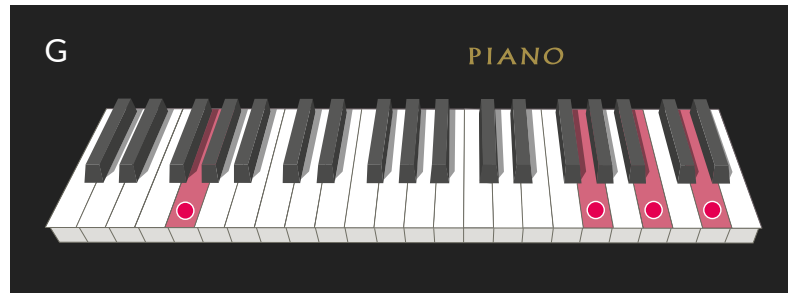
This is how the chords should sound:



Lesson 3

A third chord: G

It's time to learn the next chord:



In this chord, you use your right hand in the same way as in the previous two chords. Starting from Em you just move the hand two white keys to the right. In the left hand however you don't go to the right, but rather five white keys to the left:



The key you play in the left hand is called: G. This key lies within the group of three black keys, and it's the left one of two white keys. In the right hand you play a G with your thumb as well.

A song with three chords

Occasionally you'll meet a song that only uses three chords. You could now play along with *I Gotta Feelin'* by The Black Eyed Peas because it uses the three chords that you have learned so far: C, Em and G. Have a look at the lyrics and the chords of the chorus:

G
I gotta feelin'

C
That to night's gonna be a good night

Em
That to night's gonna be a good night

C
That to night's gonna be a good, good night

The chords sound more or less like this:



Looking up chords

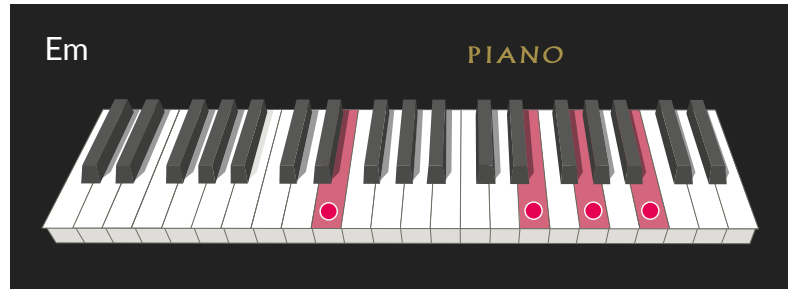
You can often find the chords to songs on the internet. Just search for the artist, title of the song and the word "chords". So you might search for "Black Eyed Peas I Gotta Feelin' Chords". This combination will send you to sites that notate it and other songs in the same way that this book does.

A great website for this is www.ultimateguitar.com. Don't be put off by the name, the chords apply to piano as well as guitar.

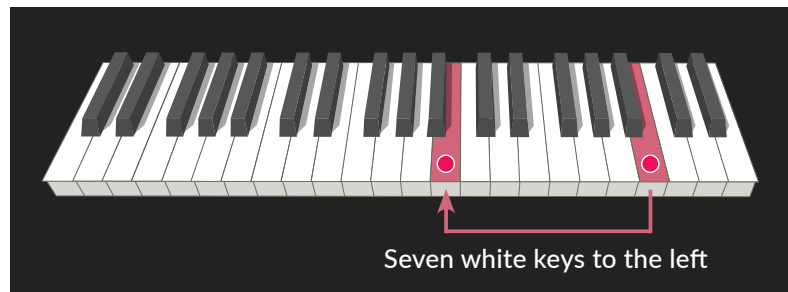
Lesson 4

Playing Em differently

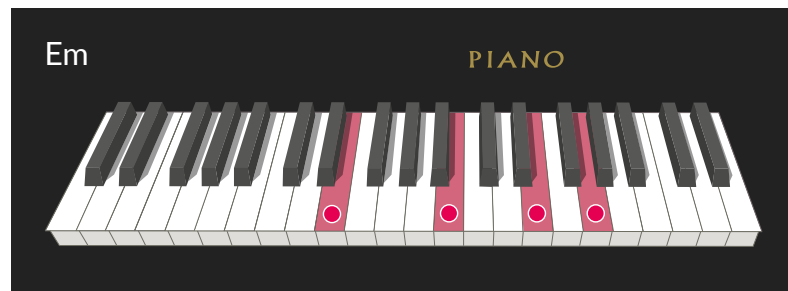
The chords from the previous lessons can be played on the piano in other ways as well. Let's have a look at Em. You have learned this chord like this:



However, the rightmost key may be shifted seven white keys to the left:

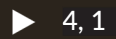


If you play the other keys as before, the resulting chord is this:

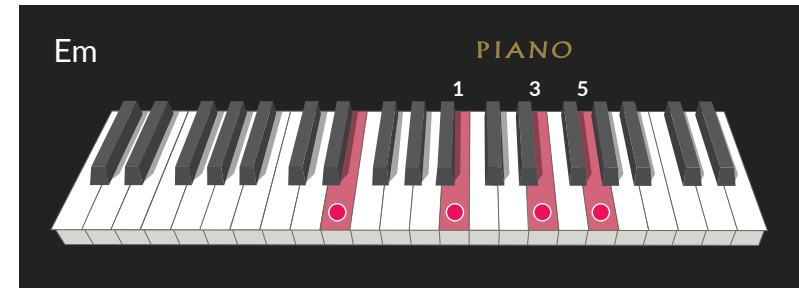


The key you played in the little finger of your right hand has now become the lowest key in the right hand.

The two versions of the chord Em sound similar. The second version is just a little darker:



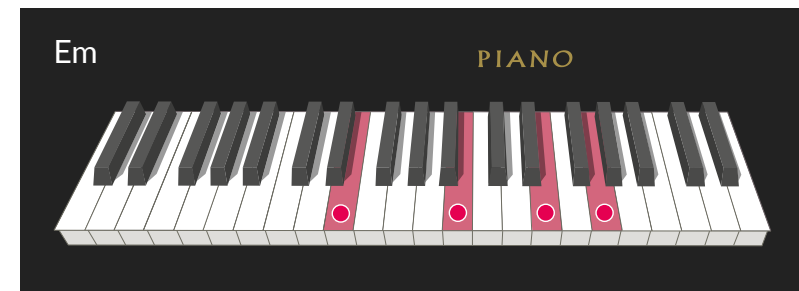
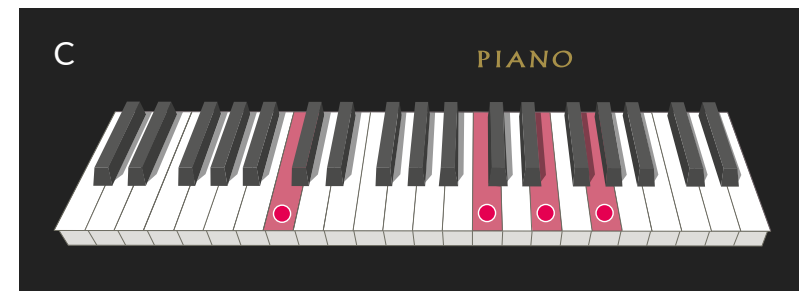
Both versions are suited if you need to play the chord in a song. Make sure that with the right hand you still play the lowest note using your thumb and the highest using your little finger:



Transitions between chords

If you play the chord Em in this new manner, switching between C and Em becomes a lot easier. This is because the two upper notes are the same. In the right hand, you don't need to move three fingers, but just one.

Below, both chords are shown once more:



In order to switch between the chords, in the right hand you only need to move your thumb a single key. The transition between chords now sounds as follows:

