

# Diatonic Major Chords

Brian Oberlin

Most Western music is based on the harmony that a major or minor scale produces. In order to generate chords from a scale, take each scale degree and stack every other scale degree afterwards. These are called thirds. The results are "diatonic chords" built from a scale, hence, diatonic major or minor chords. One must stack at least three notes (called a triad) in order to make a chord. When one stacks yet another third on top of a triad, the result is a 7th chord (four note chord). This theory is the foundation of Western music harmony and can be heard in Baroque, Romantic, bluegrass, swing, jazz, folk, hip-hop, rap, blues, rock, country, reggae, etc.... On the following charts, the uppercase Roman numeral indicates a major chord while the lowercase numeral indicates a minor chord.

## Triads:

Chords in C Major

I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii <sup>o</sup>	I
C	D m	E m	F	G	A m	B dim	C

Chords in G Major

G	A m	B m	C	D	E m	F#dim	G
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## 7th Chords:

Chords in C Major

I <sup>Δ7</sup>	ii <sup>7</sup>	iii <sup>7</sup>	IV <sup>Δ7</sup>	V <sup>7</sup>	vi <sup>7</sup>	vii <sup>ø7</sup>	I <sup>Δ7</sup>
CMaj7	Dm7	Em7	FMaj7	G7	Am7	Bm7(b5)	CMaj7

Chords in G Major

GMaj7	Am7	Bm7	CMaj7	D7	Em7	F#m7(b5)	GMaj7
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# Diatonic Minor Chords

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There are several schools of thought on minor scale harmony. It can be cautiously generalized that most music in a minor key harmonizes its chords from the natural or pure minor scale (1, 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, b7) while borrowing melody and/or improvisational notes from various minor scales. For this chord theory, which is expressed in the charts below, there are exceptions that must take place in order for the minor music to sound "correct" or "thoroughly minor." The V and the vii chords borrow their harmonies from the harmonic minor scale. (1, 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, 7) This deviation from the harmonized pure minor scale must be done in order to achieve a V chord (as opposed to v) that resolves to the i, and to alleviate a mirror image of the harmonized major scale. A classic example of almost perfect minor scale harmony is the song *Autumn Leaves*. Its progression in the first 8 measures ( iv, VII, III, VI, ii, V, i) follows the 7th chord chart below with one exception, the VII chord. In fact, the VII chord in *Autumn Leaves* is borrowed from the pure minor scale harmony. Keep in mind that the charts below express the most common chords in a minor key.

## Triads:

i      ii<sup>o</sup>      III      iv      V      VI      vii<sup>o</sup>      i  
 C m      D dim      E<sup>b</sup>      F m      G      A<sup>b</sup>      B dim      C m

Chords in C minor

Chords in G minor

G m      A dim      B<sup>b</sup>      C m      D      E<sup>b</sup>      F<sup>#</sup>dim      G m

## 7th Chords:

i<sup>7</sup>      ii<sup>7</sup>      III<sup>Δ7</sup>      iv<sup>7</sup>      V<sup>7</sup>      VI<sup>Δ7</sup>      vii<sup>7</sup>      i<sup>7</sup>  
 C m7      D m7(b5)      E<sup>b</sup>Maj7      F m7      G7      A<sup>b</sup>Maj7      B dim7      C m7

Chords in C minor

Chords in G minor

G m7      A m7(b5)      B<sup>b</sup>Maj7      C m7      D7      E<sup>b</sup>Maj7      F<sup>#</sup>dim7      G m7