

Useful Chords for Songwriting

Chords used in a song aren't combined by accident. They usually belong to the same key. Your version of "Love is all around" uses the c-major key. The chords from the c-major key use only notes from the c-major scale, written here over two octaves.

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef. The top staff contains the C major scale: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Below this, a second staff shows the chords for each note of the scale: C (I), Dm (II), Em (III), F (IV), G (V), Am (VI), Bdim (VII), and C (VIII). Each chord is represented by a vertical box containing its letter name and Roman numeral. The notes of each chord are shown as black dots on the staff lines. Arrows point from the Roman numerals I, IV, and V to the text below.

Chords I, IV and V are the most important chords of the key, I being the "home" key, on which the song should end. "Happy Birthday" for example, uses chords I, IV and V only.

Happy Birthday

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is: C4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter). Above the staff, chord symbols are placed: C above the first note, G above the second, G above the third, C above the fourth, C above the fifth, F above the sixth, C above the seventh, G above the eighth, and C above the ninth.

To make a song more interesting, these chords can be substituted with the chords shown above.

To find the chords of other keys you first need to check which accidentals are needed in the "Circle of Fifth" below. Then proceed as above.

