

UNDERSTANDING AND USING CHORDS IN THE CLASSROOM

What are chords?

- Chords are two or more different notes played together.
- Chords are a form of harmony
- They usually sound best when the notes are spaced in 3rds i.e. play a note / miss a note / play a note

What is a good way to introduce chords?

- This is probably best organised at the beginning by splitting your class into three and getting each sub-group to play a different note.
- Get them to play a chord to a rhythm e.g. **C / E / G**
- Keep a steady beat as you play:



Why is it useful to understand and play chords?

- Western European music has been based on the harmony of chords for several hundred years, which is why chords sound 'familiar': most music is built around them.
- This includes most forms of popular music.
- So, by understanding and playing a few simple chords, many songs can be easily accompanied and created.
- In 'professional' music accompaniment or composition is often on piano, guitar or other instruments.
- But here is a simple method for using tuned percussion classroom instruments instead.

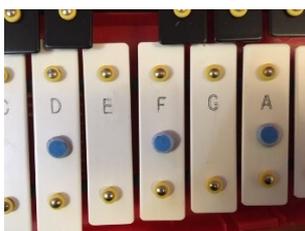
Six chords

- Begin by building the 3 note chords explained above on each step of the scale:

C major chord = **C / E / G**



D minor chord = **D / F / A**



E minor chord = **E / G / B**



'FIREWORK' (Katie Perry)



chords:

G
Am

D C B A
A
G
B
D C B A

Em
C
G

A
G
B
D C B A
A
A
A

Am
Em
C

A
A
D C B A
A
A
G

'PRICETAG' (Jessy J)



Chords: C

Em

E C
E C
E C
C C
D B
D B
D B
B B

Am
F

C
A
B B
C
A
C C

Composing classroom music using chords

- Use any 4 chords from the 6 steps of the scale C-D-E-F-G-A
- Here's a simple 4-chord sequence that works well (based on steps):
C / E / G D / F / A E / G / B F / A / C
- You can then repeat this sequence as many times as you like to make a longer piece.

- Make cards or small sheets with a chord on each one.
- Get the children to choose 4 chords from the 6 possibilities.
- Ask the children to lay-out the 4 chords in front of their instruments in the order they would like to play them.

- Once the chord sequence is agreed experiment with rhythms, textures (layers), speed and improvised melodies.
- Use untuned percussion to create rhythmic accompaniment to the chord sequence

Useful vocabulary

Chord: 2 or more notes played together	Bar: a group of beats
Beat: the underlying pulse of the music	Duration: length of notes
Rhythm: note values (duration) & patterns	Dynamics: volume (loud / soft)
Tuned percussion: pitched (with note names)	Note value: how long the note is
Chord sequence: repeated set of chords	Time-signature: beats in the bar
Pitch: how high or low a note is	Texture: layers of music