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are many more examples of songs in minor that you can easily play with just 4 piano chords. Look for these chord progressions in your favorite songs - I promise that you'll be amazed! Further Reading To find out more about music theory and piano chords, check out these excellent books! This article was originally published in German on bonedie.de. * This post contains affiliate links and/or widgets. When you buy a product via our affiliate partner, we receive a small commission that helps support what we do. Don't worry, you pay the same price. Thanks for your support! How do you like this post? You only need four chords. And with those four easy piano chords, you can instantly play hundreds of popular songs! In this lesson, we'll teach you how to play the Big Four chords (C, F, G, and Am). Then, we'll share some tips on how to practice and what chords to learn next. Finally, we've compiled a list of 20 popular songs that use only four chords. Get exclusive interviews, fascinating articles, and inspiring lessons delivered straight to your inbox. Unsubscribe at any time. The 4 piano chords that unlock hundreds of popular songs are C major (C-E-G), G major (G-B-D), F major (F-A-C), and A minor (A-C-E). These chords form the foundation of many songs because they are the I, V, IV, and vi chords in the key of C major. Mastering these simple chords allows beginners to quickly play a wide variety of songs across genres. These four chords are by far the most popular chords in music. Once you know them, you'll have unlocked hundreds of pop songs. And we're not exaggerating! Chord SymbolNotesChord NameCC-E-GC majorGG-B-DG majorFF-A-CF majorAmA-C-EA minorThat's because these four chords are the I, the V, the IV, and the vi (respectively) chords in C Major. This means they are built on the first, fifth, fourth, and sixth notes of the C major scale. These chords are essential to harmony. Here are diagrams for all four chords with fingering underneath. If you're just starting out on piano, you can play just the root and top note using fingers 1 and 5 for now. This is called a shell chord. Practice moving between these chords on the keyboard. Keep your hand in the same shape. We like to call this fingering shape (1-3-5) "the Claw." A great way to practice is by playing four C chords in a steady rhythm, followed by four F chords and so on. You can gradually progress your way through the sequence and speed up until your muscle memory starts to kick in. Experiment with the order of things. These four chords are going to sound great no matter how you choose to play them, so switch things up and see what you can create. If you struggle with reading music, you're not alone! Did you know you can play hundreds of songs without standard notation? We'll show you the secrets traditional lessons won't teach in a 100% free webinar. It's open to all ages and ability levels. Just show up and have fun! CHECK IT OUT Now that you know your Big Four chords, it's time to apply that knowledge. To play popular songs using chords, musicians use chord charts. Knowing how to read chord charts is a useful skill because chord charts are widely available and often free. Chord charts help you quickly learn the foundations of a song, so you can add your own riffs, fills, ornamentations, and solos later. Reading chord charts is easy! You'll see the lyrics of the song and bold letters above them. These are your chords. The chords are positioned above the lyrics in such a way that you will play them when you reach that portion of the song. When you are singing along and see a "G" above the word, switch to the G chord. When you see an "F," switch to the F chord. That's it! Once you master the Big Four chords, it's time to expand your chord knowledge! Some good chords to learn include the I, IV, V, and vi chords of neighboring keys, such as: G Major: G, C, D, Em F Major: F, Bb, C, Dm E Major is a common key in guitar music. The I, IV, V, and vi chords in E Major are E, A, B, and C#m. These are handy to learn too. But if you want to dive deeper into chords, here is a detailed breakdown of the types of chords you'll commonly find on chord charts, including the theory behind the chords. The Piano Chords & Scales book is one of our top-selling products of all time. Now, you can get it electronically for free. That means you can instantly look up scales and chords on your phone, tablet, or laptop without hunting for WiFi. The book contains major, blues, pentatonic, and all three minor scales. Plus major, minor, and 7th chords in all inversions, and sus chords. GET IT NOW Here are 20 popular songs that only use four chords. We've included links to chord charts and even step-by-step tutorials where available. You'll only have to worry about four chords for each song, though some songs use more elaborate chord variations. Even then, you should be able to play these songs using basic versions of each chord. (In cases where the songs are in a different key, we've included a transposition to C major or A minor so you can use your Big Four chords!) Main Chords: F, G, AmChord Variations: Fmaj7, G6Ultimate Guitar Chord Chart Calm and moderately paced, "Dreams" is an iconic song with a drama-filled backstory; the band was going through break-ups and divorces and the rough emotions are evident throughout their Rumors album. "Dreams" has three core chords—F, G, and Am—along with Fmaj7 and G6. To play Fmaj7, just add an E to your F major triad. To play G6, add an E above your G major triad. How to Make a Maj7 Chord: You can make a major 7 chord by adding a major third on top of your existing major triad stack. So, Fmaj7 will contain the notes F-A-C-E. How to Make a "6" Chord: To play a G6 chord, add the 6th note from the chord's root to your G major triad. For G6, your notes would be G-B-D-E. Chords: C, F, G, AmUltimate Guitar Chord ChartTutorial This song is further proof that sophisticated music can be written with elementary chords, because it's the rhythm that makes this song so interesting. A great exercise in hand independence, your right hand will play a 4/4 pulse while your left hand plays a 3/4 pulse. "Great Balls of Fire" is a song you can have a lot of fun with. Because the harmony is so simple, you can focus on fun by adding glissandos, slides, and tremolos. Check out Kevin's tutorial on how to master this song with a walking bass and rock shuffle. How to Make a Dominant 7th Chord: Dominant 7th chords are indicated by a "7." To build a dominant 7th chord, add a minor third on top of your major triad stack. So, F7 will have the notes F-A-C-Eb. Chords: C, Am, F, G, E7 (E-G#-B-D)TutorialUltimate Guitar Chord Chart "Hallelujah" technically has five chords, but we'll include it here because the E7 only makes an appearance once in the verse. "Hallelujah" is one of those timeless songs, and curious enough, the song's lyrics literally describe the chord progression ("the minor fall, the major lift"). Main Chords: A, Bm, F#m, DChords in C Major: C, Dm (D-F-A), Am, FUltimate Guitar Chord ChartTutorial With Beyoncé's Pianist! To create a sound more similar to the original recording, try playing your four chords in second inversion. See if you can play the main theme and ornamentations by ear, or check out Victoria Theodore's tutorial for a detailed breakdown. Chords: Gm, Eb, D7Chords in A Minor: Am, F, E7 (E-G#-B-D)Ultimate Guitar Chord Chart Sometimes, the sparest songs hit the hardest. "Havana" only has three chords, played over and over in more or less the same order, but there's no doubt this song is a banger. Try improvising on top of the simple progression with some G Minor pentatonic and blues scales. Chords: E, B, C#m, AChords in C Major: C, G, Am, FUltimate Guitar Chord Chart It's been more than a decade since "Hey Soul Sister" ruled the airwaves, but the hit is still instantly recognizable. Pianists may want to learn the I, V, vi, and IV chords from E Major, which is the chords in this song. E Major is a popular key because it's conveniently situated on the guitar's layout. Ultimate Guitar Pro-Tip Ultimate-Guitar.com is one of the most useful websites for musicians—and it's not just for guitarists. The website provides keyboard diagrams for each chord that will appear in a song, which is super handy for when you see an unfamiliar chord. To get these diagrams, toggle the chart to "piano" under CHORDS. Screenshot of Ultimate-Guitar.com Chords: C#m, E, B, G#mChords in C Major: Am, C, G, Em (E-G-B)Ultimate Guitar Chord Chart For nearly 50 years, "Jolene" has dominated the repertoire of cover musicians and throwback radio stations. The song is poetic, emotional, and beautifully written, and it only has four chords! Chords: F, Dm7, BbChords in C Major: C, Am7 (A-C-E-G), FUltimate Guitar Chord Chart With only three chords, "Just the Way You Are" is another fun banger that can be learned (and had fun with) quickly. Sweet and romantic, this is a perfect song to perform for someone you care about on Valentine's Day. See if you can figure out the opening riff by ear. Chords: G, D, Am, CChords in C Major: C, G, Dm (D-F-A), FUltimate Guitar Chord Chart The masters don't always use super complicated chords. In fact, some of the best songs are incredible because of their simplicity. Even a Nobel-winning songwriter like Bob Dylan writes songs with no more than four simple chords. Chords: C, F, Em (E-G-B), GChord Variations: G9, G7Ultimate Guitar Chord Chart "Lean On Me" is a classic and the perfect sing-along song to bond over. To play a G7, add an F over your G major triad to make G-B-D-F. To play a G9, add an A to your stack to create G-B-D-F-A. We have more tips on this song here. "Let It Be" is one of those songs nearly everyone knows, and it makes for a perfect spur-of-the-moment sing-along. While "Let It Be" only has four core chords, they undergo several variations. So, brush up on slash chords and seventh chords. Or, just toggle the instrument to "piano" on the Ultimate Guitar chord chart page and you'll find keyboard diagrams for all chords. Handy! What are slash chords? When you see a slash chord, play the chord to the left of the slash with your right hand and the note to the right of the slash with your left hand. So, for C/E, you're essentially playing a C major chord over E in the bass. Main Chords: Fm, Bb, Ab, EbChords in A Minor: Am, D (D-F#-A), C, GUltimate Guitar Chord Chart "Haunting" is perhaps the best word to describe Gary Jules and Michael Andrews' "Mad World." To transpose the song into a key with more common chords, you can use the transpose feature on Ultimate Guitar to lower the chords a half-step to the simpler key of E Minor. Lush, ethereal, and beautiful, "Ocean Eyes" is a quintessential Billie Eilish song with beautiful chords arranged in a simple, repetitive harmonic pattern. It's a super simple song...but you can do so much with it. Experiment with playing the chords broken, in arpeggios, or throw in some passing tones and trills. What are sus chords? If you see a "sus" chord, substitute the middle note of that triad with the number indicated by the chord symbol. The second note from D is E, so Dsus2 will include the notes D-E-A. Main Chords: Ab, Fm, Db, EbChord Variations: Eb/G, Ab/C, Ebsus4Chords in C Major: C, Am, F, G, G/b, C/E, Gsus4Ultimate Guitar Chord ChartTutorial (in G Major) "Perfect" is one of the top pop hits of the last 10 years, and it's only four chords! Now, these chords will feel a little advanced if you're unfamiliar with a key like A-Flat Major. But beginners can simplify the song by lowering all chords by a half-step, playing G, Em, C, and D instead. Chords: G, D, C, EmChords in C Major: C, G, F, AmTutorialSheet Music & Chords Our arrangement of "Silent Night" is set in G Major, so it's accessible for most singers and the pianist only has to worry about one sharp. You'll see that the famous Christmas tune is based on the I, V, IV, and vi chords—just like many pop songs. Chords: Ebm, Db, B, GbChord Variations: Gb/FChords in A Minor: Am, G, F, C, C/EUltimate Guitar Chord Chart "Sound of Silence" isn't just a beautiful song, it's a meaningful one too, rich with metaphor and imagery. The E-Flat Minor key isn't the easiest, but you can use the transpose feature on Ultimate Guitar to transpose the chords up one half-step to E Minor. Chords: Dm (D-F-A), G7 (G-B-D-F), CUltimate Guitar Chord ChartTutorial "Sunday Morning" is a catchy tune that conveniently introduces you to the essential ii-V-I progression. This progression is foundational to jazz, but you can find it in other genres too, from classical to pop. Chords: C, C, D, EmChord Variations: Cadd9Chords in C Major: C, F, G, Am, Fadd9 (F-A-C-G)Ultimate Guitar Chord Chart "Time of Your Life" (otherwise known as "Good Riddance") is one of Green Day's most popular anthems. Because of its nostalgic tone and lyrics, this song is popular at high school graduations. But it was originally written out of spite about a leaving girlfriend, hence the alternative title "Good Riddance." What are "add" chords? To play a Cadd9 chord, count up nine steps from C and add that note on top of your C major triad. (Psst: that note is D.) Chords: B, F#, E, G#m7Chord Variations: Bsus4, F#m7, Emaj7Chords in C Major: C, G, F, Am7 (A-C-E-G), Csus4 (C-F-G), Gm7 (G-Bb-D-F), Fmaj7Ultimate Guitar Chord Chart "Yellow" is one of Coldplay's most popular hits, and this song uses chords quite cleverly. The F# chord appears as a major chord for the majority of the song, but it's altered to F#m7 at the very end. This sudden change from major to minor makes the song extra memorable when it ends. Master the Piano YOUR WayLearn wherever you want, whenever you want, whatever you want. Join Pianote today and learn to play pop, classical, jazz, and more with real teachers.

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