

Whether you learn music by ear or from the written page, I suggest learning chords (any combination of three notes or more played together), and music theory (how chords are used in the different music traditions).

Any piece of written music can be analyzed in terms of its chord structure. The individual notes are like the letters in the alphabet, and chords are like words. The **Major** and **minor** chords are the building blocks for all other chords. Becoming familiar with chord structures can aid in memorization.

Suggested order for learning chords:

1. **Major** chords, which have the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> notes of the Major scale of a key.
2. **minor** chords, which have the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowered a half step (down one note).
3. **Dominant** 7<sup>th</sup> chords, the **minor** 7<sup>th</sup> chords, and the **Major** 7<sup>th</sup> chords.
4. **Ninth** chords (adding the 9<sup>th</sup> note with those three types of 7<sup>th</sup> chords mentioned just above in #3).
5. **diminished** chords (and the diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chords), and the augmented chords.
6. **Major** 6<sup>th</sup> and the **minor** 6<sup>th</sup> chords.
7. Then you may want to learn the jazz chords – **13<sup>th</sup>** chords, **flat 9<sup>th</sup>** chords, augmented 9<sup>th</sup> chords, **flat 5** chords (sometimes called **augmented 11<sup>th</sup>** chords), **11<sup>th</sup>** chords, and more.
8. and then you could study scales and modes that are associated with the different chords (if you know the chords, then you already know 3, 4, or 5 of the notes of the seven note associated scale).

Again, any combination of three notes or more can be called a chord (and actually any chord could be interpreted in twelve different ways, interpreting the chord in the twelve keys.

### CHORD STRUCTURE

Key	Major	Minor
<b>C</b>	<b>C-E-G</b>	<b>C-Eb-G</b>
<b>D flat</b> (aka C#)	<b>Db-F-Ab</b> (aka C#-F-G#)	<b>Db-E-Ab</b> (aka C#-E-G#)
<b>D</b>	<b>D-F#-A</b>	<b>D-F-A</b>
<b>E flat</b>	<b>Eb-G-Bb</b>	<b>Eb-Gb-Bb</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>E-G#-B</b>	<b>E-G-B</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>F-A-C</b>	<b>F-Ab-C</b>
<b>G flat</b> (aka F#)	<b>Gb-Bb-Db</b> (aka F#-Bb-C#)	<b>Gb-A-Db</b> (aka F#-A-C#)
<b>G</b>	<b>G-B-D</b>	<b>G-Bb-D</b>
<b>A flat</b>	<b>Ab-C-Eb</b>	<b>Ab-B-Eb</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>A-C#-E</b>	<b>A-C-E</b>
<b>B flat</b>	<b>Bb-D-F</b>	<b>Bb-Db-F</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>B-D#-F#</b>	<b>B-D-F#</b>

## PRACTICE PRIORITIES

When working out the chord and/or techniques, licks, etc. to practice on the piano, these are the suggested priority order of keys (Major and minor):

1	<b>C, F, G, Eb, &amp; Bb</b>	by far the most commonly used keys in the R&B and Jazz traditions; and 99% of Boogie-Woogie piano songs are in the keys of C, F, G
2	<b>Ab</b>	sometimes used in the R&B and Jazz traditions
3	<b>A</b>	commonly used key in Blues when playing with guitarists
4	<b>E &amp; D</b>	also commonly used keys in the Blues when playing with guitarists
5	<b>Db (C#) &amp; Gb (F#)</b>	rarely used
6	<b>B</b>	the key of B Major is the most rarely used key; B minor is used a bit more

A great book for exploring more about chords is *Picture Chord Encyclopedia for Keyboard* (HL.310978). This book has photos, diagrams, and music notation for over 1,600 keyboard chords. See [www.halleonard.com](http://www.halleonard.com).

For more information about how George plays the piano, guitar, and/or harmonica, go to [www.georgewinston.com](http://www.georgewinston.com), click on "ABOUT", then "Q & A", then select the appropriate section: "Piano Related Questions", "Guitar Related Questions" or "Harmonica Related Questions".

To see the ***Complete Workshop Document*** (with information on chords, ear training, modes, solo guitar, solo harmonica, and more) go to [www.georgewinston.com](http://www.georgewinston.com), then to "ABOUT", then "Q & A", then "Piano Related Questions", then "Question #3"- Do You Give Workshops? What materials do you make available at workshops?" -- various workshop documents are here to download.