

Royalty Free Chord Progressions

You may use the progressions in your own work, non-commercial and commercial. You are *not* allowed to redistribute or sell the progressions. This is Version 2 - 2012. Check for a free update at <http://composer.rowy.net/> or search the web for the keywords *Rowy* and *chords*.

Harmony and Voice Leading

If you want to write music as an amateur, you probably are looking for an easy way to make chord progressions. And so you should. All tonal music consists of a string of chord progressions. Learn some chords, put them in order, and there you have it: a harmony for your own composition.

Though you may use any chord in any order, you will notice that some combinations sound really good. These are the combinations that can be found on the web. You're allowed to write your own music (song) based on these progressions, because a chord progression always is royalty free.

However, the chord progressions you will find on the web usually are progressions that have been used in popular music. There is a difference with classical music. Another difference is voice leading. In popular music chords are being played one after another as blocks of notes. In classical harmony not only the progression is important, but also the movement of the notes that make up the chords.

Each note, for example the top note, belongs to a voice, in this case the soprano line. That doesn't mean this line should be sung by a soprano. It's just how it is called. The lowest tones belong to the bass line. And then there is the alto (lower than the soprano) and the tenor (higher than the bass).

In classical music the notes are being connected in a sophisticated manner. That may sound a bit snobbish, but all it means is that the flow of the notes (voices) is according to classical standards. Standards that were set by composers like Bach, Mozart, Chopin and Van Beethoven.

Maybe you ask yourself what you need to do to have your music sound a bit more classical. Perhaps you want to improve the quality of your music. Applying classical harmony would do the trick. Unfortunately, it takes years to study classical harmony and voice leading. And you can't just take some else's progressions. Voice lead progressions according to classical standards are very rare.

That's why I made 100 progressions available that meet the standards. All progressions come with an analysis of the harmony, just in case you studied harmony and you would like to know what is going on. I used a system that is common in North-West Europa (Germany, The Netherlands) and that is being treated in *Harmony and Voice Leading* by Aldwell and Schachter, in the book on harmony by Walter Piston, and in my free paper on chords that you can download from my website.

The progressions were written for piano, but they can be used in any arrangement, even a string quartet. All progressions are endless loops and they can be randomly combined *within the key*. It means you can take any progression and hook it up to any other progression and it will sound right.

I also included the music-xml of the progressions. If you use a music notation program, especially the commercial ones (Finale, Sibelius) you'll be able to import the music-xml in your software, so you can *transpose* the progression to another key. You can figure out for yourself how useful that can be.

Just play around with the progressions. Improvise and compose, and after a while you will get used to the classical standards. Who knows, in the end you might even want to study harmony and voice leading yourself. You will need a good teacher though. It is not going to be an easy undertaking.

2012 - Rowy van Hest
Composer