

# Common Chord Progressions Practice Sheet

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**Resource Type:** Practice Guide

**Level:** Beginner to Intermediate

**Time Required:** 15-30 minutes per session

## Introduction

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Chord progressions are the backbone of countless songs across all genres. Mastering these fundamental progressions will give you the tools to understand, play, and write music more effectively. This practice sheet provides the most common chord progressions used in popular music, along with exercises to help you internalize them.

## The Most Essential Chord Progressions

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### 1. The I-IV-V Progression

**In C Major:** C - F - G

**In G Major:** G - C - D

**In D Major:** D - G - A

This is the foundation of rock and roll, blues, and countless pop songs. The I-IV-V progression creates a sense of movement and resolution that feels natural to the ear.

#### Famous Examples:

- “La Bamba” by Ritchie Valens
- “Twist and Shout” by The Beatles
- “Wild Thing” by The Troggs

#### Practice Exercise:

1. Play each chord for 4 beats in a steady rhythm
2. Practice transitioning smoothly between chords
3. Try different strumming patterns
4. Experiment with different keys

## 2. The I-V-vi-IV Progression

**In C Major:** C - G - Am - F

**In G Major:** G - D - Em - C

**In D Major:** D - A - Bm - G

Often called the “pop-punk progression” or the “sensitive female chord progression,” this is one of the most popular progressions in modern music.

### Famous Examples:

- “Let It Be” by The Beatles
- “No Woman No Cry” by Bob Marley
- “With or Without You” by U2
- “Someone Like You” by Adele

### Practice Exercise:

1. Play through the progression slowly, focusing on clean chord changes
2. Increase tempo gradually
3. Add fingerpicking patterns
4. Try singing melodies over the progression

## 3. The ii-V-I Progression

**In C Major:** Dm - G - C

**In G Major:** Am - D - G

**In D Major:** Em - A - D

This is the cornerstone of jazz harmony and appears frequently in standards and sophisticated pop music.

### Famous Examples:

- “Autumn Leaves”
- “Fly Me to the Moon”
- “Girl from Ipanema”

### **Practice Exercise:**

1. Play with jazz voicings (7th chords)
2. Practice in all 12 keys
3. Add walking bass lines
4. Experiment with different rhythmic feels (swing, bossa nova)

## **4. The I-vi-IV-V Progression (50s Progression)**

**In C Major:** C - Am - F - G

**In G Major:** G - Em - C - D

**In D Major:** D - Bm - G - A

This progression dominated the 1950s and early 1960s and continues to appear in contemporary music.

### **Famous Examples:**

- “Stand By Me” by Ben E. King
- “Every Breath You Take” by The Police
- “Blue Moon” by The Marcels

### **Practice Exercise:**

1. Play with a doo-wop rhythm
2. Add seventh chords for color
3. Practice arpeggios instead of strumming
4. Create your own melody over the progression

## **5. The I-IV-vi-V Progression**

**In C Major:** C - F - Am - G

**In G Major:** G - C - Em - D

**In D Major:** D - G - Bm - A

A slight variation on the I-V-vi-IV that creates a different emotional arc.

**Famous Examples:**

- “Self Esteem” by The Offspring
- “Torn” by Natalie Imbruglia

**Practice Exercise:**

1. Compare this to the I-V-vi-IV progression
2. Notice how the different order changes the feel
3. Write two different melodies—one for each variation

## Practice Routine

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### Week 1: Foundation

- Day 1-2: I-IV-V in three different keys
- Day 3-4: I-V-vi-IV in three different keys
- Day 5-7: Combine both progressions, practice transitions

### Week 2: Expansion

- Day 1-2: ii-V-I with basic triads
- Day 3-4: ii-V-I with seventh chords
- Day 5-7: I-vi-IV-V and I-IV-vi-V progressions

### Week 3: Integration

- Day 1-3: Practice all progressions in random order
- Day 4-5: Create melodies over each progression
- Day 6-7: Write a simple song using one progression

# Tips for Effective Practice

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**Metronome Work:** Always practice with a metronome to develop solid timing. Start slow and gradually increase tempo.

**Voice Leading:** Pay attention to how individual notes move from chord to chord. Smooth voice leading makes progressions sound more professional.

**Rhythm Variations:** Don't just strum quarter notes. Experiment with different rhythmic patterns to bring progressions to life.

**Ear Training:** Try to recognize these progressions when listening to music. This will deepen your understanding and help you learn songs faster.

## Chord Voicing Reference

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### Basic Triads (Guitar)

- **C Major:** x32010
- **F Major:** 133211
- **G Major:** 320003
- **Am:** x02210
- **Dm:** xx0231

### Seventh Chords (Guitar)

- **Cmaj7:** x32000
- **Fmaj7:** 1x2210
- **G7:** 320001
- **Am7:** x02010
- **Dm7:** xx0211

### Piano Voicings

- **C Major:** C-E-G

- **F Major:** F-A-C
- **G Major:** G-B-D
- **Am:** A-C-E
- **Dm:** D-F-A

## Challenge Exercises

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### Exercise 1: Progression Mashup

Combine two different progressions in a single song structure (verse and chorus).

### Exercise 2: Key Modulation

Practice moving from one key to another using these progressions as bridges.

### Exercise 3: Reharmonization

Take a simple melody and try harmonizing it with different progressions from this sheet.

### Exercise 4: Genre Exploration

Play the same progression in different styles: rock, jazz, country, reggae, etc.

## Conclusion

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Mastering these chord progressions will give you a strong foundation for understanding and creating music. Remember that these are starting points—the real magic happens when you use them as a springboard for your own creativity. Practice regularly, listen actively, and don't be afraid to experiment.

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### Next Steps:

- Download our “Advanced Chord Substitutions” guide
- Explore our “Melody Writing Over Chord Progressions” resource
- Check out our article on “The Art of Songwriting: Structure and Composition”