

If we build a triad on each note of a major scale, we get a series of diatonic chords. In the key of C major, this means that we have only the notes of the C major scale to work with. The chords are given Roman numerals to indicate the notes they're built on. The I Chord is built on the first note of the scale, the ii Chord on the second note, and so on. Roman numerals are capital if the chord is major, and lower case if the chord is minor or diminished. Below are all the triads that can be made from the C major scale, and which are therefore *diatonic* to the key of C major.

The diagram illustrates the seven diatonic triads in the key of C major. Each chord is shown with a piano keyboard diagram and its corresponding Roman numeral:

- d minor (ii):** Notes D, F, A.
- F Major (IV):** Notes F, A, C.
- a minor (vi):** Notes A, C, E.
- C Major (I):** Notes C, E, G.
- C Major (I):** Notes C, E, G.
- e minor (iii):** Notes E, G, B.
- G Major (V):** Notes G, B, D.
- b diminished (vii):** Notes B, D, F.

A musical staff in treble clef shows the notes of the C major scale (C, D, E, F, G, A, B) with the corresponding triads placed above each note.

Notice that in a major key, the I, IV, and V chords are major, the ii, iii, and vi chords are minor, and the vii chord is diminished. This holds true for every major key.

Diatonic chords create a harmonic vocabulary that entire pieces can be built from. By selecting a handful of these chords, we can create a *chord progression*:

The diagram illustrates a chord progression in the key of C major. Each chord is shown with a piano keyboard diagram and its corresponding Roman numeral:

- e minor (iii):** Notes E, G, B.
- F Major (IV):** Notes F, A, C.
- G Major (V):** Notes G, B, D.
- a minor (vi):** Notes A, C, E.
- C Major (I):** Notes C, E, G.

A musical staff in treble clef shows the notes of the C major scale (C, D, E, F, G, A, B) with the corresponding triads placed above each note.

Pachelbel's Canon famously uses these five chords in the following progression:

I — V — vi — iii — IV — I — IV — V