



Common Chord Progressions

The patterns that songs are built from

A chord progression is a series of chords played one after another. Most songs use a small set of proven patterns. Once you recognise these patterns, you can play hundreds of songs and write your own.

Six progressions every beginner should know

Name	Roman numerals	In C major	Feel / common use
I – V – vi – IV	I V vi IV	C G Am F	Pop anthem, very common
I – IV – V	I IV V	C F G	Classic rock & blues
I – vi – IV – V	I vi IV V	C Am F G	1950s doo-wop / ballads
ii – V – I	ii V I	Dm G C	Jazz & strong resolution
I – V – IV	I V IV	C G F	Folk & straightforward
vi – IV – I – V	vi IV I V	Am F C G	Emotional / reflective

Quick function reminder

I (tonic) = home · stable
IV (subdominant) = away from home · gentle movement
V (dominant) = tension · wants to return to I
vi (relative minor) = emotional colour of the home key

Practice tip

Play each progression slowly in C major, then try the same Roman numerals in G major (G – D – Em – C) and F major (F – C – Dm – Bb). The numbers stay the same — only the letter names change. This is the power of the number system.

These patterns appear in thousands of songs. Learn them by number and you can play them in any key.