

The Nashville Numbering System



This method was developed by Nashville session musicians as an easy way to communicate chords that can be used in any key. It's an invaluable tool for any jammer. Here's how it works: Each major key is based on a scale that has 7 notes –DO– RE– ME– FA– SO– LA– TI (and DO) In addition to the letter assigned each note, each one also has a number, 1 through 7. The G major scale would look like this:

DO	RE	ME	FA	SO	LA	TI	DO
G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1

Now, think of a simple song that you're familiar with, in the key of G. Chances are the song contains the chords G, C and D, so that the chord progression would be 1 – 4 – 5.

The transposition chart below expands the number system to other common keys and shows when possible minor chords can be used in each key.

	1	2 (or 2m)	3 (or 3m)	4	5	6 (or 6m)	7
Key	A	B (Bm)	C# (C#m)	D	E	F# (F#m)	G#
	B	C# (C#m)	D# (D#m)	E	F#	G# (G#m)	A#
	C	D (Dm)	E (Em)	F	G	A (Am)	B
	D	E (Em)	F# (F#m)	G	A	B (Bm)	C#
	E	F# (F#m)	G# (G#m)	A	B	C# (C#m)	D#
	F	G (Gm)	A (Am)	Bb	C	D (Dm)	E
	G	A (Am)	B (Bm)	C	D	E (Em)	F#

M = minor # = sharp b = flat

You can use this chart to determine the chords in any key. The more you listen and play along, the easier you'll find it to automatically hear the chord changes.

USING A CAPO

If you need to raise or lower the key of a song to suit your vocal range, you can transpose to a different key using the chart above. Or, you can use a **CAPO**, a useful tool for guitar and banjo players that allows you to play easily in many different keys. The chart below shows how to convert the chords in G and D to any other key using your capo.

CHORDS

ACTUAL KEY

	Off	On 1st Fret	2nd Fret	3rd Fret	4th Fret	5th Fret
G	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C
D	D	Eb	E	F	Gb	G