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Introducing Minor Triads

Minor Triads – Chords

The keyboard player is often required to play more than one note at a time and quite often several together. A triad as we have learned before, is the name given to playing three notes together.

Playing more than one note at a time is called a chord.

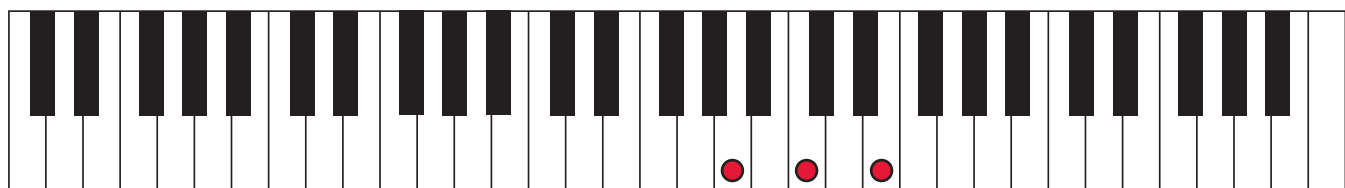
Lesson 1 introduced playing major triads – the chords of A and G. Each triad contains three notes.

This lesson will concentrate on playing a **minor triad**. Each triad contains three notes – only one of them is different from the major triad – the middle one, or **third**, as it is called musically.

Introducing Minor Triads

The notes of the A minor triad are A, C and E. Using your right hand on the keyboard place the thumb on the A note. This is the **root** of the chord. Place the middle finger on the C note and the little finger on the E note, as shown in *Figure 1* below.

Figure 1: A minor triad



C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C D E F G **A** B **C** D **E** F G A B C D E F G A B C

Make sure that you play all three notes of the A minor Triad at exactly the same time, creating one sound from the three notes being played together.

Lesson Objectives

- Introduce **minor triads**.
- Play minor triads in both the right and left hands using whole, half and quarter notes.
- Compare major and minor triads in terms of their sound and construction.
- Develop two hand co-ordination by playing right hand minor triads and left hand root notes together.
- Introduce right hand minor arpeggios using quarter notes.

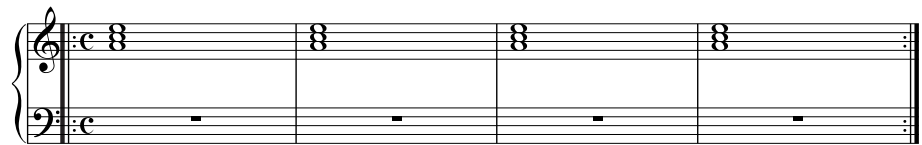


To develop your ability to play the A minor chord play *Exercise 1*. This exercise uses whole notes and we have written the chord on the musical stave. As always use the multimedia files to help you know you are playing it correctly.

Remember the names of the notes that make up A minor, so that when you come to play this chord in the future you know how it is formed.

Exercise 1

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Playing A minor triad using half notes

Now play the A minor chord using half notes. Remember to use your rhythm and counting skills.

Exercise 2

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Comparing minor with major using A triads

We are now going to look at A minor and A major, listening closely to the sound and the differences between the chords. So to start with, we are going to look at the next exercise which is asking you to play a bar of A major and then a bar of A minor.

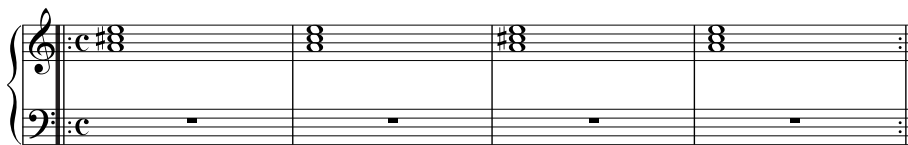
Specifically you need to be aware of:

1. The different notes in each chord
2. The sound
3. The feel, or emotion the sound creates.

Use the multimedia files as always, paying great attention to the sound that is created by major and minor in turn.

Exercise 3

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Comparing Minor and Major Study 2

Playing each of the notes individually helps us to hear even more clearly the difference between minor and major.

Using our next exercise, play a bar of quarter and half notes to 'spell out' the triad and follow it with the chord in the second bar. We will do the same for both A major and then A minor.

Look at the exercise carefully and use all the reading, counting and playing skills you have developed through the course to help you understand the exercise and how it sounds. Remember that you have the multimedia files as always to support you.

Exercise 4

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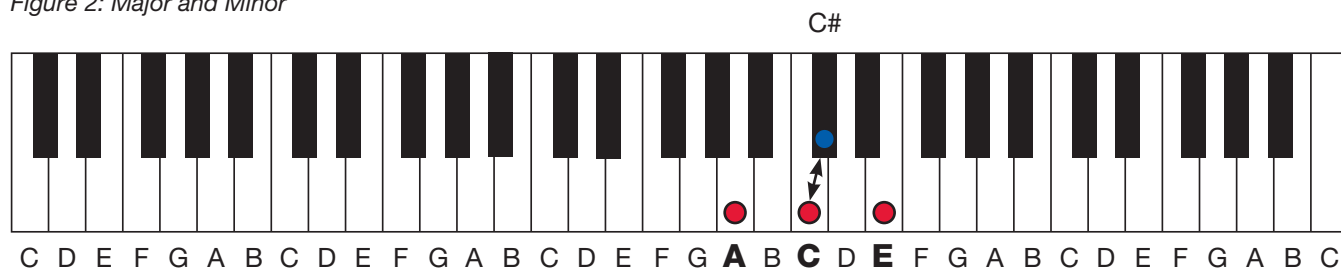


Major/Minor Sound – Flattening the Third

How would you describe the sound of A minor?
 How would you describe the sound of A major?
 How would you describe the difference between them?

Looking closely at the notes on the keyboard illustrates the difference between A major and A minor. Look at *Figure 2* below.

Figure 2: Major and Minor



A major has the notes of A, C# and E.

A minor has the notes of A, C and E.

Only one note has changed but the effect is dramatic. In *lesson three* we established that a major triad was made up of the 1st (the root), 3rd and 5th note in a scale. The same applies to minor, save for the fact that the 3rd is flattened by a **semitone** creating the sound and feel of what makes minor more melancholy and perhaps darker than the sound of major chords. In minor scales we refer to the third as **flattened 3rd**.

Play the A minor triad using the left hand

It is possible of course to play the A minor triad using the left hand. We are going to play firstly in the treble clef and then play an octave lower in the bass clef.

Practise the A minor triad using your left hand with the next two exercises.

Exercise 5

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Musical notation for Exercise 5. It consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The time signature is common time (c). The upper staff contains four measures of a chord, each represented by a vertical line with a vertical bar through it, indicating a whole note chord. The lower staff contains four measures of a whole rest, represented by a horizontal line with a vertical bar through it.

Exercise 6

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Musical notation for Exercise 6. It consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The time signature is common time (c). The upper staff contains four measures of a whole rest, represented by a horizontal line with a vertical bar through it. The lower staff contains four measures of a chord, each represented by a vertical line with a vertical bar through it, indicating a whole note chord.

Two Way Co-ordination

The keyboard player often plays using both hands at the same time. Also, the left hand and right hands are playing related, but different things. A common example might be where we are playing the root note with our left hand in the bass, whilst playing the chord in the right hand.

In the next short series of exercises we are going to play the root note down an octave from our last exercise and play the right hand chord in the treble clef as learned. Read the exercises carefully and make good use of the multimedia files.

Exercise 7

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Use half notes in this exercise.



Musical notation for Exercise 7, showing a piano accompaniment in C major, 4/4 time. The right hand (treble clef) plays chords: C4 (C-E-G), F4 (F-A-C), G4 (G-B-D), and C5 (C-E-G). The left hand (bass clef) plays half notes: C3, F2, G2, and C3.

Exercise 8

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Use half notes for your right hand chord and quarter notes for your root note.

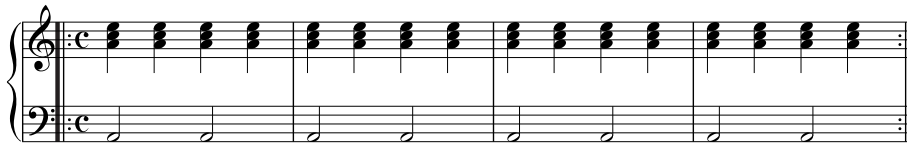


Musical notation for Exercise 8, showing a piano accompaniment in C major, 4/4 time. The right hand (treble clef) plays chords: C4 (C-E-G), F4 (F-A-C), G4 (G-B-D), and C5 (C-E-G). The left hand (bass clef) plays quarter notes: C3, F2, G2, and C3.

Exercise 9

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Use quarter notes for your right hand and half notes for your Root note.



These exercises will have really tested your ability to form the chords correctly.

Furthermore, you will have been challenged to play in time, whilst using different rhythms in each hand. Repeat these exercises until comfortable and remember to revisit them to ensure you keep on top of the co-ordination challenge.

Right hand A Minor Arpeggios

It is possible to play the notes of the A minor triad separately using the right hand. The notes and fingering remain the same. The only difference is the timing and rhythm.

Use all your reading and counting skills and play the following exercise with your right hand only.

Exercise 10

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In the next exercise we are simply adding the root note in the left hand.

Exercise 11

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Left Hand Minor Arpeggios

To complete this lessons studies we are going to play the A minor arpeggio with the left hand helping to develop your understanding of the left hand minor triad together with a greater level of left hand control.

We have two exercises, the second being played an octave lower than the first exercise.

Exercise 12

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Exercise 13

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Practise

This lesson has taught you a number of things:

- The A minor triad
- The notes contained therein (A, C and E)
- A minor arpeggios
- Two way co-ordination (left and right hand playing together)
- To distinguish between the sound of major and minor.

Your job now is to practise all the exercises in this lesson, developing your keyboard playing skills. Use the KeyboardXtractor to play along with, remembering that you can slow down the tempo of the exercises you find difficult and speed up the easier ones as you require.

You can also record your performance into the KeyboardXtractor and compare your performance to that of the lesson file, to see how you are getting on.