

## Guitar accompaniment

Irish Traditional Music (ITM) is very much a melody-based music and traditionally this combination of melody with rhythm did not incorporate harmonic accompaniment. The position of the guitar or indeed any other accompanying instrument is still evolving. Some will say they prefer bouzouki or piano accompaniment and some will say they prefer no accompaniment at all. There really should be a place for all tastes. Anyway understand that some would argue that it should not be there. You don't have to agree with them, and obviously I don't, but understanding their point of view probably helps the guitarist to do a better job.

It is easy to argue that guitar accompaniment has been around for about 70 years and so has become Traditional. It probably only really came to the fore in the 60's when sessions became popular. There was usually a singer present who would accompany himself on guitar. When he wasn't singing it would have seemed natural for the singer to accompany the tunes. In the early days this was not always very successful, as the singer may not have known the tunes nor had the experience to know how to accompany, especially as this was really an evolving art anyway.

**Harmony:** There is harmony in Irish music even if the tradition emphasises melody, because melodies are not built randomly, but rather around groups of notes. In fact melody may be described as harmony stretched out in a line, or harmony as melody stacked up on itself. Nevertheless because of the melodic basis of this music the harmonies need to be restrained and tasteful. To achieve that requires a fair amount of understanding of the music itself.

### **What Guitar** to use: Nylon or Steel String?

Both are used extensively and this is largely a matter of preference, but the nylon string guitar played acoustically in session will not be quite as powerful as the steel string. Within the steel string world there are many different body shapes and all can work well as accompanying instruments. Once amplification is introduced it doesn't make much difference apart from the very different sound quality.

### **What Tuning:**

The second choice to be made is what **tuning** to use. Standard, Dropped D, Double Dropped D or DADGAD. They do all work, and all have styles of their own. DADGAD probably is the most popular in the Irish music world and Standard a little more with the Scottish, but that is a generalisation.

DADGAD has great advantages especially in D major tunes but unless you are very adept in this tuning you will need to use a capo to survive in other keys. Chords in D, G & A can still use the open strings as drones but you have 3xD, 2xA and only one G, which sort of says it all. Quick-draw capos (see below) make it possible to have very rapid key changes with a capo shift. There are a few guitarists that can play in any key with DADGAD and never need to use a capo. With some of these their use of the DADGAD tuning is such that it is hard to pick by ear on a recording. The downside of using the capo to get the key changes is that the accompaniment can tend to end up sounding all the same (read 'monotonous').

Standard: EADGBE

Dropped D: DADGBE

Double dropped D: DADGBD

DADGAD = DADGAD

But first of all it is important to make sure you are in tune especially with the fixed pitch instruments. Some whistles can be tuned but not all, and accordions are fixed (even if they are out of tune!). Electronic tuners are good but you may need to tune to an out of tune fixed pitch instrument, so don't get too reliant on those devices.

**<http://www.quickdrawcapo.com/order.htm>**

### **Music Theory:**

You really don't need music theory to accompany well but it is useful to have some understanding which you will promptly forget when you actually start playing. Ultimately the accompaniment must become quite an instinctive thing but a little education along the way can help to speed the process of learning that skill. First remember that the Tonic is not something you drink but the root note of any scale and when we talk about a third it refers to a note two steps up. A minor third is flattened by a half tone and is associated with that sad sound. Further in depth Harmony Theory is to be found at the back of these notes.

### **Tune and Set Structure:**

Most tunes have two 8 bar phrases or parts (A&B). Each is played twice so the full tune is AABB. Some tunes have many more parts but generally the full tune is repeated twice or three times. Try and establish what is generally done at your local session and this will help you to work out where the tune changes occur in the set. In general a set will be made up of 2-3 tunes but every session has been known to do the occasional six (or more) tune set if they are really getting into it. If you hear someone shout "D" it may be that the next tune in the set is in D major. If someone shouts "A" it could also mean that they are going to play the tune again one more time i.e. back to the start of the A-section. Following all of this closely will mean that you should know when the set is going to finish if there has been an agreed number of tunes played. At least you will have a better idea when it will finish or break into a new tune.

### **Chords: - overview**

I tend to think in terms of *Chord Scales*. So if we are talking about a tune in D major, start at the bottom on the D chord with the Big D bass ringing out (assuming you have a dropped D tuning on the 6<sup>th</sup> string), then E minor with an E on the bottom, then a D chord with the 3rd (F#) on the bottom; then G major etc. This same principal is transferable to all the keys that usually are used for Irish tunes and it is a useful exercise looking for the chords/inversions to give you those moving bass lines. Of course you don't have to go straight up and/or down when you are accompanying but knowing the chord scales gives you the full range of possibilities and an occasional run up or down, can sound good especially at the end of a tune or section of tune. Sometimes a bass run is done as part of a full sequence of chords or alternatively you might just play the bass notes on their own resolving into a chord at the end.

Try to avoid doing the same bass run every time the melody repeats itself. You can find that same chord scale without going up the neck to give the run a very different contrasting sound.

Next step is to pull in the open strings where appropriate and/or to add 6ths, 9ths or 11ths here and there. 7ths can be used but need to be more avoided than sought after with most people's taste in Irish accompaniment. Generally it is better to avoid the augmented or diminished chords in ITM but some interesting chords are used in the Shetland accompaniment style.

Leaving out the thirds in chords is a useful trick as some tunes have raised/flattened 3rds that can be very hard to predict. If you don't have a 3rd in your chord then you aren't going to clash. In some pieces the third will be flattened on the way up and sharp on the way down all in the one phrase. Other tunes just avoid/skip the third note of the scale, so playing a major or minor chord takes away the ambiguity, mood and tension in the tune. There are basically two ways to leave out the 3rds: one is to make the chord out of tonics and 5ths. The other is to use another note such as the 4<sup>th</sup> of the scale (In D major this would be a G instead of an F# /Fnat).

Try creating a second alternative flow of chord scales that rely more on the top 3-4 strings, giving your accompaniment a less bassy feel.

Finally try throwing in little bits of the melody or counter-melody where you have the fingers to spare on top of the chord can be a nice addition. People using more open style tuning such as DADGAD will find this a little easier.

**Triads:** This is the basis for all chords using the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> notes of the scale

**Add-on notes:** 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>. 11<sup>th</sup> is also used to denote a 4<sup>th</sup> one octave up and the 9<sup>th</sup> is really the same thing as the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Obviously 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> are the actual Tonic.

**Voicing:** this is the selection and order of notes from the triad with or without some of the add-on notes.

**Inversion:** the note on the bottom governs this, or if playing with a Bass, the bass player will end up determining the inversion. The inversions are usually on the tonic, 3<sup>rd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>.

### **Droning:**

Irish melodies are often referred to as being 'Modal'. This may be taken to mean many things but I see it as referring to the fact that these tunes are rooted in one 7-note scale without modulations such as are found in classical music. The most common shift would be only to the relative minor key, which has the same sharps and flats. This modal quality is what makes droning so appropriate. The best recording to listen to that will demonstrate this so well is "Kitty Lie Over" - Caoimhín O'Raghallaigh & Mick O'Brien. Of course Modes also refer to the Key and every tune is in some key or mode at any given point in time.

Ideally a drone is just a low base tonic note but often it can be combined with the 5<sup>th</sup>. This idea comes from the pipes so it is a good idea to listen to some pipe music to get a feel for this. An interesting exercise for a guitarist starting off in ITM is to see how long they can hold onto the same chord resisting the impulse to follow the usual progressions and then make only the smallest of changes. Starting from here is likely to make the harmonic exploration better rooted in the ITM idiom.

The Kesh and Roaring Barmaid ( called 'Butlers of Glen Avenue' on Lunasa – Otherworld) are two jigs that can hold the Tonic G Chord right through the A section of the melody.

Bear in mind that a drone chord of two notes, D-A, could be functioning as any of the following:

- I & V of D major
- I & V of D minor.
- III & VII of Bmin7
- IV & I of A4
- VI & III of F6
- V & II of G9 (=G2)
- III & ^VII of B9maj7

Not that these chords would all appear in the same tune but it gives you the idea of ambiguity in this Diad (two note chord). All notes of the D major scale will sit comfortably on top of the D-A Diad.

The least comfortable is the 7<sup>th</sup> note of the scale, which in the major key is only a semi-tone or half step below the tonic. Even that note sits ok for a brief period as long as it quickly resolves to the tonic.

### **Chord substitution:**

Any chord that shares two of its triad with another may be a candidate for substitution but it won't always sound quite right. This will usually be the relative minor but there are other options. Gmaj has B&D as III & V, but Bmin has those same notes as I & III. More rarely again a substitution may be done with a triad that has only one note in common such as C =>F or G =>C

**Relative Minor:** The main form of chord substitution comes from using the 'relative minor' chord. Now here's a bit more theory to understand why they are linked. A simple D chord will consist of the Triad which is the Tonic, Third and Fifth. The D major triad is made up of D, F# & A. The B minor triad is made of B, D & F#. Now if you change the D to a D6 chord, you raise the 5<sup>th</sup> (A) to a 6<sup>th</sup> (B), which gives you the same triad as the B minor triad. Because the feel of the chord is still

different this form of substitution will not always be suitable but may warrant trying some of the time. The relative minor gives a match of two out of three notes of the triad but there are other ways of doing this when you jumble the sequence around. G major triad (G, B&D) also has a 2/3 match with B minor.

There are other unusual substitution ideas that can work if used sparingly such as a tune where you are in Am and the tune feels like it needs to go down to G. Just swap to A7 to get the G note. It may raise a few eyebrows (hopefully the right ones) but can sound good if done infrequently and in the right places.

What is clever once becomes rapidly boring on repetition, and this applies to any unusual harmony or different sequence of chords. If a particular phrase demands a certain sequence of chords then make sure you vary how you play them e.g. different inversion, just play up the neck of the guitar or just drone the first time through that phrase.

### The Three-Chord Trick:

See the definition of “Leading Tone” (More Theory - page 9). The V chord contains the leading tone as the 3<sup>rd</sup> in its triad. In the key of D (major) the 5<sup>th</sup> chord (V) is A major, and that contains a C# as the 3<sup>rd</sup> in its triad. This gives us the typical three-chord trick in major keys where you get the following sequences:

Key:	I	IV	V
D:	D	G	A
G:	G	C	D
A:	A	D	E

In the *Mixolydian Mode* there is no leading tone or it could be considered flattened to a full whole tone down from the tonic. Some people prefer to think of this as a double tonic rather than a flattened leading tone. Anyway this gives us the following pattern of chords:

Key	Main Chords	Alternate Chords
Dmix	D – C	Am G
Gmix	G – F	Dm C
Amix	A – G	Em D

In the *Dorian Mode* the Root Chord is minor and the main alternate chord is again a shift down one whole tone/step from the Tonic.

Key	Main Chords
Edor	Em D
Gdor	Gm F
Ador	Am G

Most minor sounding (ITM) tunes are in fact in Dorian mode not Aeolian. Both have the flattened third note but the difference is in the 6<sup>th</sup> note of the scale: In Dorian the 6<sup>th</sup> is a whole step up from the 5<sup>th</sup> and in Aeolian it is only a half-step up. So E Dorian has a C# whereas E Aeolian has the C natural.

### Passing Chords:

These are chords that are played briefly between two more obvious chords:

G – E7 – Am, where the E7 chord might be played with a G# on the bottom. So the Bass is moving up by a semitone twice. The 7<sup>th</sup> part of the chord is not essential and can be left out such as:

C – A/c# – D.

### **Sliding into chords:**

This is usually only done from below up. Imagine the fingers of the left hand in the right shape for the next chord but as the pick strikes the strings you position the fingers 1-2 frets below the desired position and as soon as you have struck the strings you slide into the right position.

### **Hammer-on Bass notes:**

These don't actually have to be on the 6<sup>th</sup> string but are probably a bit easier there. They can be used to provide the middle beat of the jig where DUD becomes DHD (the 'H' being the hammer-on). Alternatively in a reel they can be used to create a type of triplet but at speed this is not heard very clearly.

### **Damping:** (see also under the Rhythm section)

This creates a more rhythmic sound and less emphasis on the harmonic aspect. The damping may be either left or right hand or both together. It might be well used at times when the blatant harmony statement is best made a bit more subtle. The opposite to this is to play a full G major chord in standard tuning where all strings are struck and there is very full harmonically full sound with nearly two full triads stacked on top of each other. Not much ambiguity there!

Where you need to dampen just the 6<sup>th</sup> string rather than trying to miss it with the pick, use your thumb around the neck to dampen the string. If it's long enough you might even be able to dampen the 5<sup>th</sup> string as well.

### **Chord Choices:**

So now when the playing starts what chord are you actually going to play? Well this is a personal choice but work out the Tonic (Home note) first and start with a simple chord that consists of only the Tonic and 5<sup>th</sup>. Play this and develop the rhythm part of the accompaniment looking for those notes where your ear is asking you to change chord. Now you can use a simple two or three chord trick to add that bit of colour to your accompaniment.

The Triads that you pick should generally include some of the notes emphasised in the phrase to be accompanied i.e. the notes on the beat. There is some leeway here but do try to avoid clashes of a half step (semi-tone).

As an example, in a **D major tune** the possible chords for each melody note are as follows:

D	-	D, Bm or G
E	-	A, Em
F#	-	D, Bm, F#m
G	-	G, Em
A	-	D, A, F#m
B	-	G, Bm, Em
C#	-	A, F#m

Knowing when to change chords is probably more of a pitfall than working out what chord to play.

### **Volume:**

Remember to keep the volume of your accompaniment proportional to the volume of melody instruments. If one player starts a tune and it is a slightly different setting that others are not finding familiar, they may be struggling to hear every note to see if they can join in or not. If you come crashing over the top you will not be popular even if your chords are perfect but they can't hear the melody. If there are 6 fiddles and a button accordion belting out the tune you can strum pretty much to your heart's content.

<b>Right Hand: - <i>the rhythm machine.</i></b>
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Now you have to work out how you keep up a steady beat with the right hand whilst creating interesting patterns of emphasis. For the most part it is this rhythmic role, which is considered the guitar's main function over and above its harmony role. So, interesting chords are great but if the timing is off, it is all a waste of time!

The plectrum is an essential part of this and it's good to experiment with different thicknesses to get the best sound. The softer pick will give more of that slapping sound but moves easily across all strings. Ideally a compromise is a medium thickness pick – about .60. The great thing is that they are cheap – so try lots of them. For flat-picking not much of the pick should protrude but for strumming a little more is needed. The more pick (especially if it is soft) protruding the more 'slapping' the sound, and this becomes even more audible on the dampened strokes.

A loose/relaxed wrist is a good idea but many guitarists generate the volume from the elbow with little movement in the wrist.

In Reels the basic strumming pattern is - |DUDU DUDU|

Whereas Jigs are normally done - |DUD DUD|

Patterns are created by:

- Varying the emphasis or weight of stroke
- Varying the angle of the stroke and/or the pick
- Varying how close to the bridge you strike the strings
- Hitting bottom, top or all 6 strings ('thrum' sound). Maybe even just one/two strings
- Damping with left or right hand
- Triplets – see below.
- 'Fresh air' stroke – keep the down-up movement going but intentionally miss the strings.

Chords can change on or off the beat depending on your taste and the movement of the melody. It is quite a current fad to change offbeat sometimes ahead of what the melody is actually going to do. Personally I dislike this as it detracts from what the melody is doing by announcing it in advance. It's a bit like telling the punch line of a story just before the person telling the story gets to the end. Nevertheless like everything else if it used sparingly and at well-chosen moments it may make the whole effect more acceptable.

### **Basic rhythmic patterns:**

In the *reel* the simplest pattern is like a metronome where each downstroke gets a little more emphasis than the upstroke:

(DUDU DUDU = chuka-chuka chuka-chuka) or

Every second downbeat (DUDU DUDU = chukka-luka chuka-luka) or

Only the 5<sup>th</sup> beat (DUDU DUDU = luka-luka chuka-luka)

For something different try: |DUD UDU DU| which still gives 8 beats but divides them into 3,3 &2.

The basic *Jig* pattern is |DUD DUD| where D>d>U in terms of strength; but I like to think of it in terms of dDU as in: d|DU dDU d|DU etc. This can be mixed with a simpler jig rhythm where you have a long downstroke lasting two beats followed by a shorter upstroke for one beat:

|D2 U D2 U| or |D2 d D2 d| but this gives a somewhat weaker beat to the accompaniment.

In either jig or reel it is possible to play a very steady metronome type beat which carries on independent of whether the melody is all short notes or some long notes. Or alternatively vary the beat in the accompaniment to match the melody. Both methods are effective in their own way.

The Slip Jig is in 9/8 with three groups of 1/8<sup>th</sup> notes: |DUD DUD DUD| or if it is being played fast then just: |D2U D2U D2U|. The hornpipe is similar to the reel but slower and more syncopated. The Polka is in 2/4 and sometimes is like a very fast version of a reel from the accompaniment point of view.

Listen to a good Bodhrán player to get more ideas about rhythmic patterns.

### **Triplets:**

Most triplets are played in such a way that the three notes/strokes are not equal duration. The first two are quicker. In ABC letter notation a triplet is written as (3AAA, meaning three notes are played in the place of two 1/8 notes. A/ A/ A, means that the first two notes are played at twice the speed but the third remains as a 1/8 note. Usually Celtic Triplets lie somewhere in between these two representations.

In reels - |DU (3DUD DUDU| - the difficulty is in the last down-stroke of the triplet followed immediately by another down-stroke in close succession. It can be done alternatively as:

|DU (3DUD U~DU| Where “U~” is an upward stroke pulling through each string slightly slower giving that “up-thrum” that rings out for a bit longer.

In the Jig you can get a cheap triplet by hitting the strings on the way back up after the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> downstroke: DUdu, where the “d&u” last each about half as long. This triplet crosses over the beat. The normal Jig triplets are easier than in the reel because they leave your plectrum heading in the right direction for the next strike:

|DUD (3dud -U| or |DUD D (3udu|

### **Swing:**

The idea of swing is to slightly syncopate the chords. This can be done even if the melody is being played straight and can provide what is sometimes described as a bit of a “lift” to the music. To many people’s ears the swing makes music sound livelier and therefore faster than it actually is really being played.

### **Groove:**

Jazz players talk a lot about this and if you are accompanying someone and really ‘find the groove’ it is a surreal experience to be treasured. If you imagine the beat as a fence there are some accompanists who like to sit in front of or just behind the fence and others who sit right on it. All are playing perfectly in time i.e. equal time between the beats; the difference is where they place their chords in relation to the fence in the middle. The danger in being ahead of the beat is that everyone (melody players) may want to speed up and conversely the slowing effect if playing just after the beat. The danger of playing too far after the beat is that it ends up sounding too tentative – like you are only reacting to what the melody player is doing, and not doing it together. I think it is only really possible to sit right on the wire when you are in that magical groove. But always try and stay as close as you can to it.

### **Accompaniment Style:**

In order to develop your own style you need to listen to a lot of other accompanists. They vary from the minimalist offerings of Dennis Cahill to the full sound of Jim Murray with a lot in between. Other guitarists that are worth listening to include, Daithí Sproule, Artie McGlynn, John Doyle, Paul McSherry, Tony McManus, John Blake & Donogh Hennessy.

### **Multiple Accompanists:**

Because there is more than one right way to interpret the harmony in Celtic Traditional Music, it is very difficult to have two accompanists in the same group or session situation. It can work out if both are used to playing together. They must agree the chords beforehand and stick quite rigidly to these. Alternatively there are things you can do that make it more likely to work out:

- ❖ Watch the other guitarist very carefully and follow
- ❖ Keep your chord changes simple and few, if someone is following you
- ❖ Play the same chords up the neck of the guitar if the other is not
- ❖ Drone
- ❖ Countermelody – a bit more difficult but often works with second accompanist when this is a bouzouki but it can be done to some extent on the guitar.

### **Keeping good time:**

This is so very important that it might be a good idea to practice with a *metronome*.

**Technique:** if you keep a steady even right hand movement up and down that should ensure that your timing does not vary too much. This doesn't mean that every stroke is hit equally or indeed that the plectrum need actually strike the strings at all.

**Listen** very carefully so that if you have set a pace that is faster than the melody player you won't gradually get further and further ahead, and can make quick early adjustments before anyone else notices.

**Watch** the melody player's foot or even their hands and follow them.

As an accompanist it always you who is out of step and never the melody player. As Tony McManus said: "*The guitar accompaniment is a Service Industry – we are the fiddlers' doormat*" – or words to that effect.

It can be quite difficult in a session to keep time when two melody players are going out of step with each other. Pick the strongest player if you can and reinforce their beat, hoping that the other will eventually hear that they are out. If this fails just stop playing otherwise other people might blame you for the cacophony!

## **Theory To Practice**

### ***Listen***

To go from theory to practice it is essential to ***do a lot of listening***. Through this you can learn the tunes and learn the harmonic possibilities as used by others.

If you can flat pick or play another melody instrument then this is a good way to learn the tunes that you will be accompanying.

Try playing along to recordings to work out what is going on. This is one of the best ways to train your ears without inflicting your experiments on others.

Then find a session suited to your level. If this doesn't exist try and create one by inviting some friends over to play together. If a session is above your level of capabilities then use it as a listening/learning/watching experience.

### ***Learn some Session Etiquette.***

Don't expect that the melody player leading a set of tunes will tell you what tunes are to be played in a session. He/she may tell the melody players close by but may not think that the tune names would mean anything to you. He/she is also unlikely to tell you the keys of these tunes but that may be partly because they don't actually know. Come to think of it they may not even know the name of the tune. Let the tune begin and see if you can quickly pick the 'home' note. Don't get any more adventurous unless you actually are sure you know the tune. Maybe wait until the second time through before joining in. Don't be afraid to stay right out if the tune seems to be a bit 'alien' to your ears. Chord intros are for concerts and recordings but maybe someone will count in "3,4" or "1,2" or even "1,2,3,4"

### ***Listen some more***

### ***Note for the Melody instrument players:***

Ideally it would be good if all melody players attended a workshop on accompaniment for two reasons: firstly to know more about, and maybe appreciate what is going on in the accompaniment and secondly through this maybe learn how to ask for what they want especially in a performance or recording setting.

**Definitions:**

- Sharps # = raised half-tone
- Flats ♭ = lowered half-tone
- The Home Note or Ending/finalising note: this is the note that the tune seems to want to settle back towards and it may not be the actual last note. This concept is useful for using the Key/Mode chart (see over).
- Leading Tone: this is the note that leads back to the tonic or home note, and it is a half-step or semitone below the tonic. Because this note is in the V chord that usually leads us back to the Tonic chord.
- The Drone Note: you feel you could play this note repeatedly in the background. It may be the same as the Home Note above.

**What Mode:**

It is probably not essential to know but good to understand the theory whilst learning to make it instinctive.

All music is in a sense modal in that it must be in some mode even if that keeps changing. But the term 'Modal' sometimes refers to those tunes that are Mixolydian or seem to flit between major and minor. As said earlier Modal also can be taken to refer to the fact that the music tends to be rooted in one 7-note scale. In conversation sometimes the word modal may be wrongly used to equate with saying it's a little weird or confusing in terms of the key.

But the term "Mode" is a bit more specific.

If you start with the major scale and then build another scale using the same notes but starting on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> notes etc you then get the scales of the other modes. The modes/scales based on the 1<sup>st</sup> (Ionian), 2<sup>nd</sup> (Dorian), 5<sup>th</sup> (Mixolydian) & 6<sup>th</sup> (Aeolian) are the ones that predominate in Irish Music. Each mode has its own colour or feel. The *Dorian* mode tends to have a "minor" feel, but not quite as "minor" as the minor (*Aeolian*) mode. The *Mixolydian* mode feels "major", but not quite as "major" as the major (*Ionian*) mode, but it is more "major" than the *Dorian* mode.

So the spectrum from happy to sad is:

☺ *Ionian* – *Mixolydian* – *Dorian* – *Aeolian* ☹

Ionian: no notes flattened

Mixolydian: 'double tonic' with flattened 7<sup>th</sup> only.

Dorian: flattened 3<sup>rd</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>

Aeolian: flattened 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>

**Chord Notation:** *this is just what I use, but much of it is in common usage.*

B♭ = B flat major

Dm = D minor

DΔ = D major 7<sup>th</sup> which has a raised 7<sup>th</sup>

Dm7 = D minor with a 7<sup>th</sup> that is not raised

D6 = usually the 5<sup>th</sup> is replaced with a 6<sup>th</sup>

D/f# = D major with an f# as the bottom note of the chord (this is an example of a chord inversion)

G/b: this might be played up the neck with the 'b' on the 6<sup>th</sup> string, or in the base/first position with the 'b' on the 5<sup>th</sup> string second fret (in this case the 6<sup>th</sup> string is dampened or just not struck)

Am9: the '9' refers to a note one step up from the tonic at a higher octave. This chord will have an 'A' on the bottom but somewhere up an octave there will be two notes together (one full tone apart) next to each other. Either the C (III) gets dropped to B (II) to give A-B, or the A is raised to B giving B-C.

## Some Chord Scales

♭ = flattened note; # = raised note

### Major Keys:

KeySignature	Tonic	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	Rel Minor	7 <sup>th</sup>
No #	C	Dm	Em; C/e	F	G	Am	G/b
1 #	G	Am	Bm; G/b	C	D	Em	D/f#
2 #	D	Em	F#m; D/f#	G	A	Bm	A/c#
3 #	A	Bm	C#m; A/c#	D	E	F#m	E/g#
1 ♭	F	Gm	Am; F/a	B ♭	C	Dm	C/e
2 ♭	B♭	Cm	Dm; B♭/d	E♭	F	Gm	F/a

When looking for these chord scales in the different keys, bear in mind that as you go up the base by one note there is a choice of three types of chords:

- Major/tonic
- Minor/tonic
- Major/3<sup>rd</sup>

Where the note after the ‘/’ is the base as well as the bass note.

There is no reason not to also use chords with the 5<sup>th</sup> on the bottom, or 3<sup>rd</sup> inversions of minor chords.

### Minor Keys:

Key Signature	Tonic	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>
No #	Am	G/b or Bm	C	Dm	Em or C/e	F	G
1 #	Em	D/f# or F#m	G	Am	Bm or G/b	C	D
2 #	Bm	A/f# or C#m	D	Em	F#m or D/f#	G	A
3 #	F#m	E/g# or G#m	A	Bm	C#m or A/c#	D	E
1 ♭	Dm	C/e or Em	F	Gm	Am or F/a	B♭	C
2 ♭	Gm	F/a or Am	B♭	Cm	Dm or B♭/d	E♭	F

**Mixolydian:** As Dmix has no C# it will drop down to C major. To accentuate this modal feel it is nice to play this chord change leaving the tonic (D) on the bottom of the chord inversion (C/d). In the case of Amix you would drop to G/a. This anchors the chord change to the same Tonic.

**Mode Chart:** *how to find that mode if you are so inclined!*

*For this chart, Major = Ionian, and Minor = Aeolian*

	<b>Major</b>	<b>Mixolydian</b>	<b>Dorian</b>	<b>Minor</b>
<b>4 Sharps</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>F#</b>	<b>C#</b>
<b>3 Sharps</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>F#</b>
<b>2 Sharps</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>1 Sharp</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>No Flats/Sharps</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>1 Flat</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>2 Flats</b>	<b>B♭</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>G</b>

To use this chart you first need to understand what the **home note** is – see back.

Work out how many sharps/flats there are in the tune – the first one to look for is F# then C#, G# and lastly D#.

Then move across that line in the chart to find the appropriate home note. The mode name can then be read off the top.

Example: one sharp, & D = the home note, gives Dmix. This is sort of like a D major tune that uses the C natural, not C#.

Notice that E major has 4 #, E mixolydian 3#, E dorian 2# and E minor 1#.

When creating sets of tunes to play together, the further apart on this grid the more dramatic the change of key will feel. A mixolydian to D major would be quite a small changeup.

There is a subset of tunes that are written in such a way that the C or F may vary between sharp and natural. Often going up in a phrase with a sharp and coming down with a natural. You may hear the term “*Supernatural*” used to describe some notes where the natural is being played but it is a bit above the natural and not quite up to the sharp. This can create great tension in the music when you get used to hearing this kind of microtonal colouring but can create a different kind of tension for the accompanist who doesn’t know whether to play the sharp or natural in the chord. The simple solution is to hide that note in your chord shape so you won’t clash no matter which way it is played.