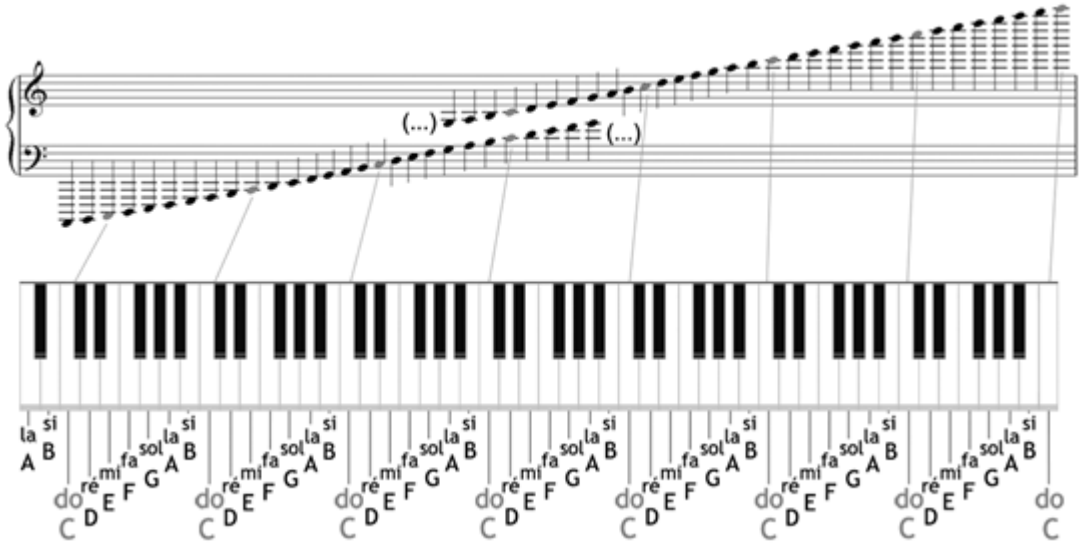
Ah, the piano, what a great instrument… But to know how to play it, you would have to know which key corresponds to which note, why there are black keys and white keys, and this is what we saw in course 11 !
In this course, you will really learn to play the piano.

1. The pitch of the notes

The best way to know the pitch of notes on a keyboard is to compare it to the score. In addition, the more you get used to hearing the sounds of the keyboard and relating this to the score.

Here is the correspondence:



2. Use of the pedals

On a piano, if you look at your feet, there are 3 pedals. These pedals are not there by chance, they are useful, and we will see that right away.

- The left pedal

The left pedal is said to be soft. It is used to attenuate the sound to give a softer timbre when you play a passage where the nuance is “piano” (when the sound must be discreet, not very sound, contrary to the strong nuance).

It is of course operated with the left foot, and the pianist leaves it pressed for several measures in general, see several lines or pages. But you may find it hard to hear its effect if you only play one note. To really hear how it helps the piano nuance, play an entire passage of the song if you can with the pedal depressed, then without. It is indicated on the score to press it most often by two letters: UC.

These are the initials of Una Corda, which means a rope in Italian. They evoke the mechanical means which allows the softening of the sound. Indeed, on current grand pianos, this pedal shifts all the mechanics slightly to the right so that there are only two strings instead of three struck. At the time of the appearance of the first pianos called "strong

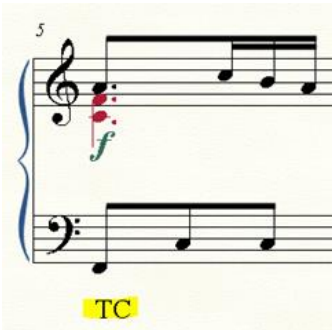
piano", there were only two strings and the soft pedal made it possible to strike only one string.

On upright pianos, however, the mechanics do not shift to the right, but get closer to the strings, which decreases the acceleration of hammer striking on strings. These strike from less distance, so they have less power.

Before depressing the pedal

Soft pedal depressed

To indicate that it must be removed, it is usually written on the Tre Corda or TC score, which means three strings.



But not everyone uses this pedal, because the muffled sound it produces is not appreciated by everyone.

- The middle pedal

It is not used for the same thing depending on whether you are on an upright piano or a grand piano.

- On upright piano, it's a mute. It has no musical utility. It was designed to allow your neighbors to maintain a balanced mental health by hearing you play your song for three weeks with the same fault in the same place. A strip of felt descends between the ropes and the hammers. To activate it, depending on the model, you must either press it fully once to block it and another time to unlock it, or press it fully and slide it to the left to block it, and vice versa to unlock it. Do not overuse this pedal as well, because in the long run you will lose all musical pleasure, as well as the habit of the sound level of the piano. She just needs to help out to work at night from time to time.


Felt mute from an upright piano

- On grand piano, this is the tonal pedal. It is also called a support pedal or Sostenuto (Italian always). It keeps the resonance of certain keys selectively, allowing you to free your hand to play other parts on the keyboard. To use it, you have to play keys, then press this pedal. You can now play other notes, the sound of the previous ones will be maintained until you lift your foot. It is also operated with the left foot so that the right foot is free to use the right pedal, the most used and essential.

- The right pedal

Called strong pedal, it is, as I just said, the most used. It is operated with the right foot. It allows to amplify the resonance of the sound and to maintain all the sounds played while it is pressed. Unlike the tonal pedal, you will not be able to play its staccato, stitched or loose while it is activated.

 *The dampers of an upright piano*

In mechanics, you always have small felt pieces placed on the strings so that they cannot come into resonance if a sound vibration touches them. These small parts are called dampers.

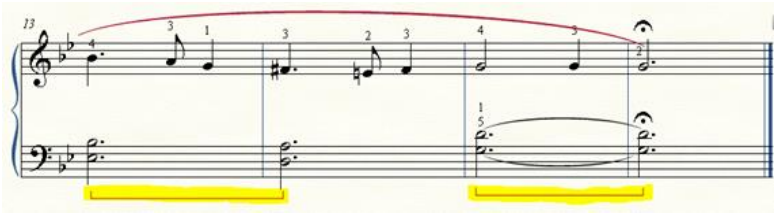
 *Dampers of a grand piano*

Indeed a sound is propagated by the vibration of the air and if it encounters a cord free to vibrate, it will also emit a sound that is also quite weak but noticeable. We call it vibrate by “sympathy”.
The strong pedal releases all the strings of the dampers. All the sounds you play after pressing this pedal will be kept even after the finger leaves, but more will vibrate the other strings, creating a very pleasant sound halo.

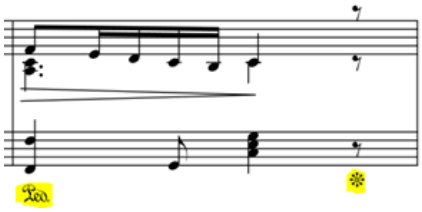
There are two common ways to use this heavy pedal.

- When you press it sporadically, it's the rhythm pedal.
- When you press it continuously, lifting the foot very briefly and regularly, it is the syncopated pedal or the harmony link. The resonances are in this way regularly cleaned so that the song does not become a real cacophony.

The rhythmic pedal is indicated on the scores in several ways: either by hooks as in the image below, it must be pressed at the start of the hook and lifted at the end:



either by the three letters Ped to indicate to press it and a star to raise it:



The chained pedal is generally indicated by hooks joining with the sign ----^----- to indicate the moment of brief change. The pedal should be fully raised when the continuous line of hooks ends.

For digital keyboards :

If you have a digital keyboard that does not have pedals, know that it is often possible to add one with a connecting wire. Just be careful to provide a non-slippery surface for the crankset or that your model presents it itself, because otherwise the pleasure you will take in playing with this crankset will be lessened.

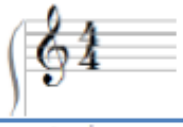
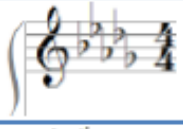
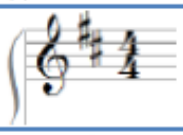
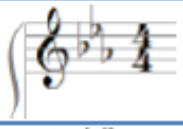
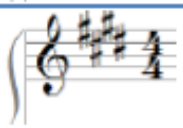
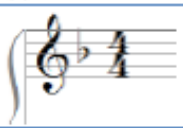
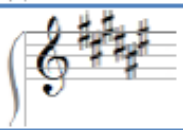
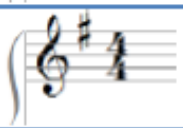
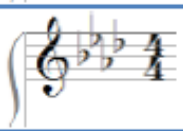
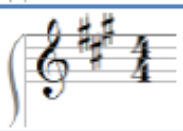
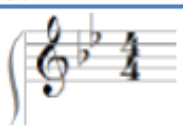
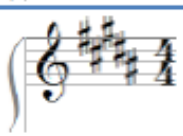
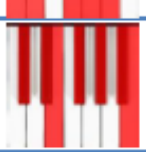
There are different types of digital pedals, of which the 2 main ones are: There are different types of digital pedals, of which the 2 main ones are:

Single pedal, strong pedal

Triple crankset with soft, tonal and strong pedal

3. Transposing chords on a piano

First you have to know the range of the song. To do this, look at the score header next to the treble clef, and see in the table below which scale corresponds to your song.

	Gamme	En-tête de la partition	Touchesautorisées	Schéma
0	Do		do, ré, mi, fa, sol, la, si	
+1	Do#/Réb		do, réb, mib, fa, solb, lab, sib	
+2	Ré		do#, ré, mi, fa#, sol, la, si	
+3	Ré#/Mib		do, ré, mib, fa, sol, lab, sib	
+4	Mi		do#, ré#, mi, fa#, sol#, la, si	
+5	Fa		do, ré, mi, fa, sol, la, sib	
+6	Fa#/Solb		do#, ré#, mi#, fa#, sol#, la#, si	
+7	Sol		do, ré, mi, fa#, sol, la, si	
+8	Sol#/Lab		do, réb, mib, fa, sol, lab, sib	
+9	La		do#, ré, mi, fa#, sol#, la, si	
+10	La#/Sib		do, ré, mib, fa, sol, la, sib	
+11	Si		do#, ré#, mi, fa#, sol#, la#, si	

Second, you have to transpose the song. Transpose means to shift the notes of a song by a certain number of keys. Look in the table for a range that seems simple to you. I recommend the range of do, or fa.

Once you have chosen the destination scale for your song, count the gap between the two scales. Help yourself with the numbers in the first column of the table. You may have already guessed: it only remains to decrease or increase the notes of the gap that you counted.

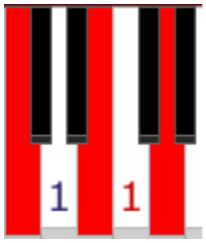
4. Last things to know

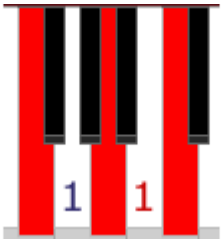
THE TREE FAMILIES OF CHORDS

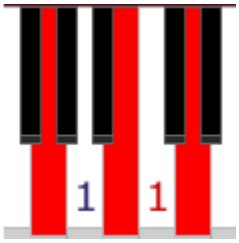
Reminder: A chord is made up of three notes which are played at the same time. It is possible to see a two-note chord or even a four-note chord, but these are always obtained from a true three-note chord.

It is interesting to see that the three notes that make up a chord are very often separated from each other by one or two notes. Attention, we only count the notes included in the scale in which the song is played! In reality, there are three possibilities:

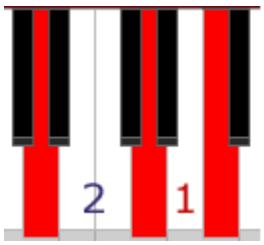
Either the three notes of the chord are separated by **one note**. This family of chords will be called the **1**-**1** family. Here are some examples (range of C):

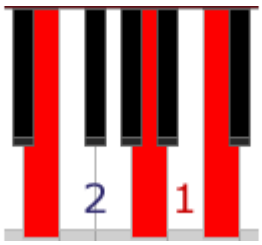


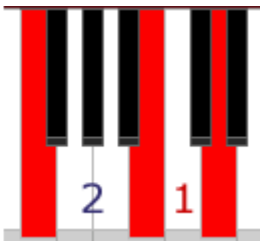




Either the first note is separated from one note from the second, and the second note separated of two notes from the third. This family of chords will therefore be called the family **2**-**1**. Here are a few examples:

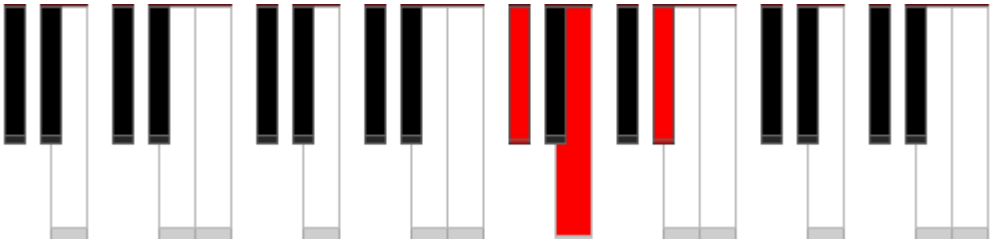




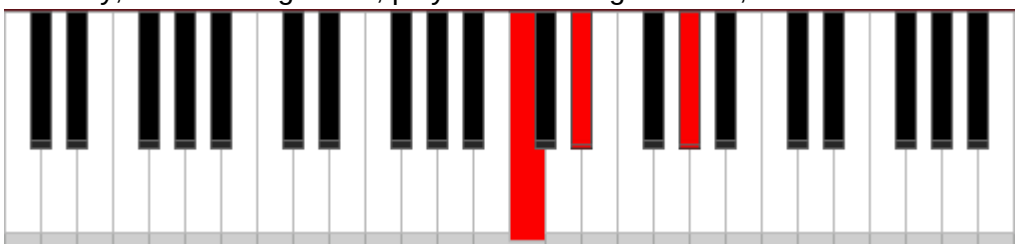


So in the end we have three main families of chords: chords 1-1, 1-2, and 2-1. Knowing how to recognize these families is important for the future because each family has their own characteristics. Note that the examples given here are all in the range of do, but the existence of these families is also valid for all other ranges.
Here are a few examples:

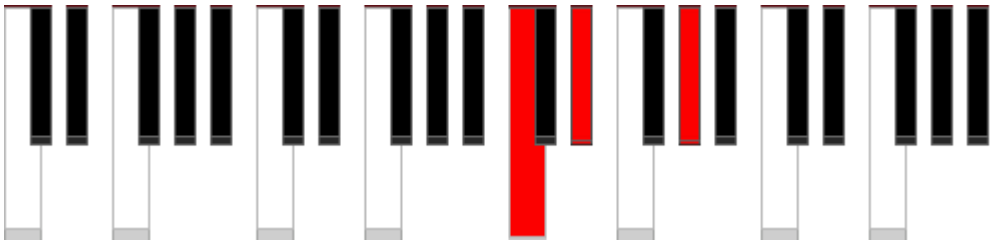
This chord of the E scale is a 1-1 chord, because if we only keep the authorized notes of the scale, this gives us the following keyboard:



Thus, it is clear that all the notes that make up the chord are well separated from a note. It's a 1-1 chord.
Similarly, the following chord, played in the range of do #, is a 1-2 chord:



By keeping only the authorized keys, we can see that there is first a key between the first two notes of the chord, then two keys between the last two notes of the chord. It is indeed a 1-2 chord:



How to know what to play with the left hand ?

Now that you know how to assign which family an agreement belongs to, let's see what you can do with it.

The trick is as follows:
The most important characteristic that differentiates chord families is the bass. That is, the main note that you will play with your left hand.

Simply put, if you are facing a 1-1 chord, then you know directly which notes to play with the left hand, you don't even have to read the score.

But then which notes to play with the left hand?

Let's go through the chord families:

The 1-1 chord

When this chord is present, the note you should play is the first note of the chord. For example, if you are facing the do-mi-sol chord, which is family 1-1, you will have to play the first note of the chord with your left hand, so C.

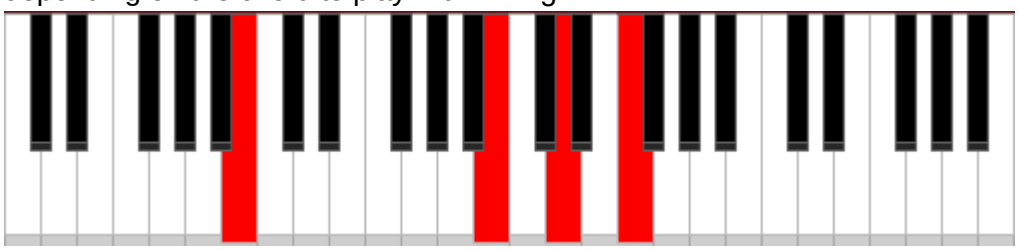
The 1-2 chord

When this chord is present, the note you will have to play is the last note of the chord. For example, if you are facing the do-mi-la chord, which is from family 1-2, you will have to play the last note of the chord with your left hand, so A.
This is not all, this chord family has a small character: indeed, it is a bit the equivalent of a point in a sentence. Generally, the use of a 1-2 chord slows, or stops the song. If you compose a song, it will be absolutely necessary to end with this family of chord so that it sounds like an end.

The 2-1 chord

When this chord is present, the note that you should play is the note in the middle of the chord. For example, if you are facing the do-fa-la chord, which is from the family 2-1, you will have to play the middle note of the chord with your left hand, so fa.
This chord is the equivalent of a comma. When played, it boosts your song, gives it new life.

Let's see some examples to determine a little more concretely what to play with the left hand depending on the chord to play with the right hand …



This chord is a 1-1 chord (played in the C range). So as the theory just said says, the main note to be played with the left hand is the first note of the chord. Here it is a B. So we will play a B with the left hand. So you will play the chord if-re-fa with the right hand, and the note if with the left hand. Take the test on a real piano, you will see that it sounds very good!

Here is a second example:

This time we are in front of a 1-2 chord. As the theory says, the note to be played with the left hand is the last note of the chord (far right). In our example, the last note is an E. So this note is played with the left hand. Again, I invite you to play this chord on a piano (G-B-E in the right hand, and E in the left hand). You will also see that it sounds great.

And hop, a last example for fun:

For this last example, we have a 2-1 chord, so the middle note must be chosen to be played with the left hand. In our case, it is an mi.

NB: The spacing between the two hands does not matter, you can freely choose the position of the notes with your left hand on the keyboard.

The melody and the piano chords

We are now going to dwell on a notion which is fundamental when we try to reproduce a song without partition or to compose.

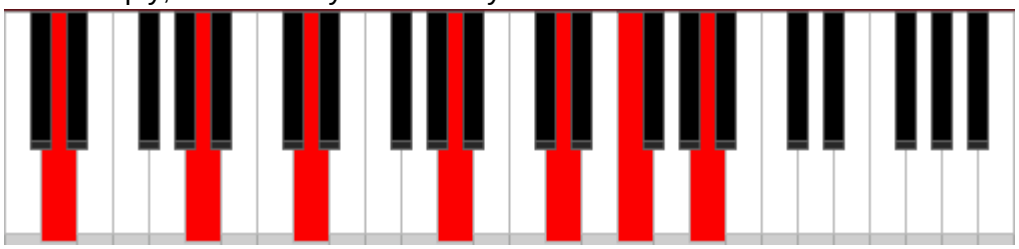
You certainly know that the human voice cannot produce two different sounds at the same time. So how do you go about singing a song you heard on the radio?

Indeed, a song most of the time includes several instruments at the same time which themselves emit several sounds. But despite that you still manage to select the very small part of the song it takes so that it is recognizable when you sing it ...

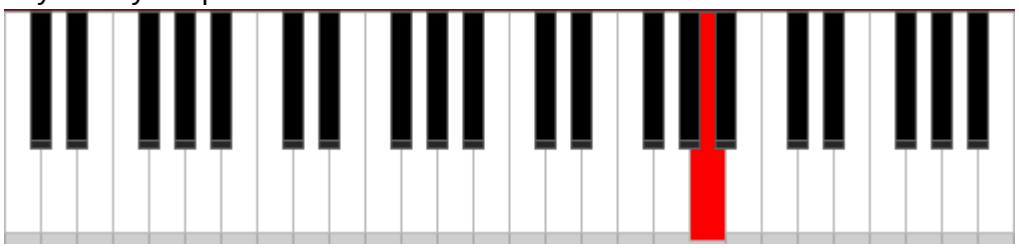
How are you doing ? What notes do you choose from the ten that are played every second?

This is now very important:

When you sing, you keep in mind only the highest note for each step of the melody. Put more simply, that is to say that when you hear that:



... you only keep in mind this:



But why is it so important? It is however not a question of singing you will say to me…
The answer is simple: when one seeks to play a melody starting from a piece which one heard, one must make the opposite way. That is to say find all the part that we have not retained, so the entire song except the rightmost note of each chord.

So, when playing a song "by ear", once you have found the melody, you will have to add chords. In order not to destroy the melody, it will be necessary to add a chord whose highest note is contained in the melody. This must therefore be absorbed in the agreements. To satisfy this condition, knowing the melody, you will therefore have three chords to choose from, one from each family.
For example, for a melody note which would be a G, then the possible chords will be (for the range of C):

- C-E-**G** (1-1)
- B-E-**G** (2-1)

- B-D-**G** (1-2)

That is to say the three possible chords which include a G as the last note. This means that from a note (of the melody), you can reduce your choice of chord to only 3.

The left hand, the bass

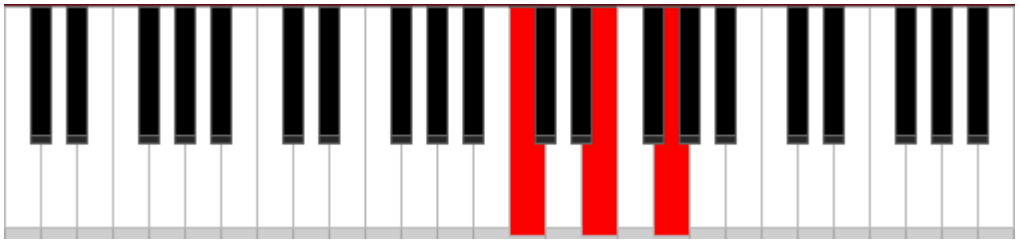
We'll take a closer look at the part dedicated to the left hand. This part is called the bass. These are several notes to be played at the same time as a chord is played with the right hand, in order to bring more depth to it.
The bass only depends on a single note. Once this note is known, all the notes to be played with the left hand are determined, grafted around the single starting note.

How is the main bass note determined?

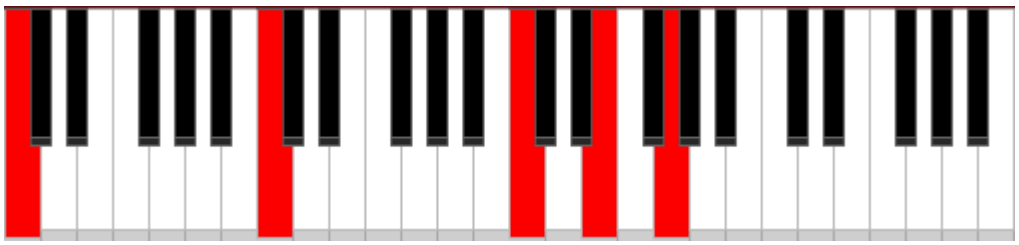
As we have seen previously, each chord is assigned a note to play for the bass (depending on the chord family to which it belongs). If we have a 1-1 chord, the bass note will be the first note in the chord, the one on the left. This note is the main note of the bass, the one around which everything is built.

Once the main note of the bass is determined, how to coat it?

There are several steps to follow. Let's illustrate this with an example, let's take the case where we have to play a 1-1 chord in C. The main note of the bass will be the leftmost note, the C.

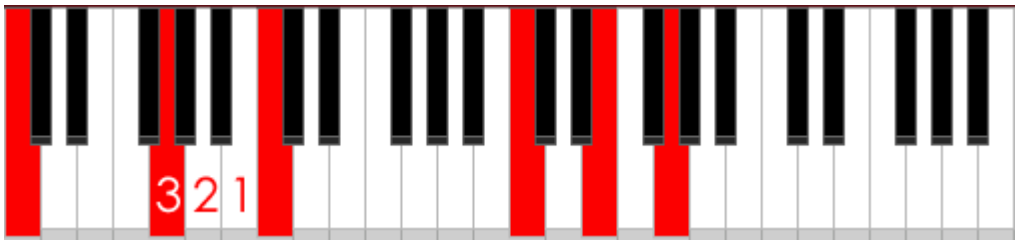


It is obvious that this note - the C - must be played with the left hand. But not only: add to this do, a more serious do. So play two neighboring C's with your left hand, as shown in the image below.

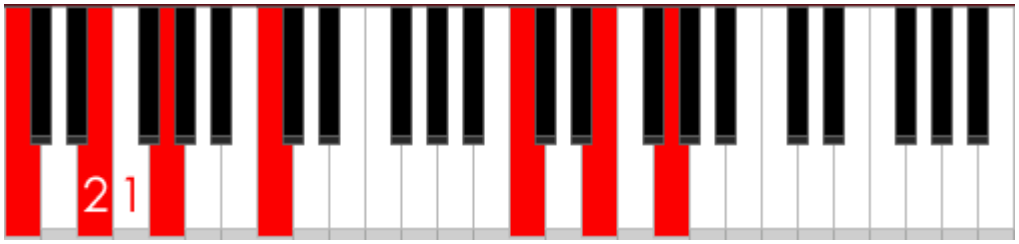


You now have two notes to play: the main note for the bass, and the same note, one octave lower.

We will now add a third note. This is located exactly three keys below the main note of the bass. Here, we only count the piano keys that are part of the scale in which the song is played. For our example, three keys below the C give us, in the case of a C scale, the G note, as shown in the image below.



We now have three notes to play: "C-G-C", but there is one last note, the fourth. This is located two keys below the third note. In the same way as before, we only count the notes that are part of the scale. Thus, in the case of our example, two keys below the ground gives us the note E, always in the case of a range of C.



TADAAAAAA. From a single note, we have determined three additional notes to fill the song. So we have in the end: C-E-G-C. However, it is difficult to quickly locate all of these notes for each chord. Rest assured, there is a faster way to play the assigned bass for a given chord: Note that the third note is located exactly below your index finger when you play the first two notes. Try it, play the two "C" and observe your index finger, it is indeed well located above the "G", which is the third note in our example. So you don't have to count the three keys to locate this one. You only need to stick your index finger in when you play the first two notes of the bass.
The fourth note is superfluous. Omit it. It's just important to be aware that you can add a fourth note to the bass, but most of the time it overloads and weighs the song down.

To summarize: once you know the main note of the bass, double it, and play the note below your index finger.
Now let's see how we should play these three notes harmoniously. Knowing the three important notes to play for your bass doesn't necessarily mean playing them all in one block when the chord is played with the right hand. Listen to the song you need to play, and create a rhythm mixing these three notes.
Then play this little melody mixing the three notes with the left hand when the chord is played with the right hand. And continue this little rhythm until the next chord forces you to change the bass. Knowing that there are an infinite number of possible melodies with the three notes of the bass, each time you play your song, depending on your mood, your inspiration, the rhythm will always be different!

Conclusion: THE TIPS TO REMEMBER

- The pitch of the notes on a keyboard is related to the pitch of the notes on the score, refer to the photo given!
- There are 3 pedals for the piano, one widely used (right), the other 2 less.
- Regarding the transposition of chords, refer to the table and the given method.
- There are 3 families of chords, these families will then allow us to define the corresponding bass (that is to say the left hand).
- To remember a song, the best way to recognize it afterwards is to remember the highest note, which leaves only 3 possible chords after: easier to find the rest of the chords in this case!
- The bass can be composed of one to four notes, it's up to you to see if you want to make it more complex or not (depending on the number of notes in the bass and the rhythm)!