

# 6. Chords: choosing which notes fit together

Chords are created by playing two or more notes together. When you write them down, they must line up vertically on the staff. You can play chords on instruments such as the piano and guitar, because these instruments can play more than one note at a time.

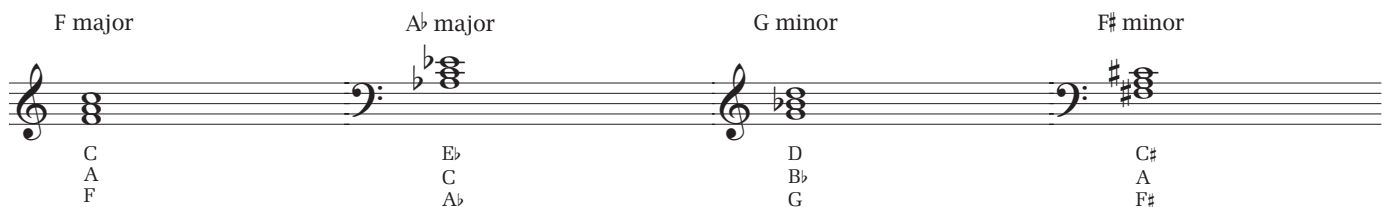


However, to play a chord using single-line instruments, such as the flute or trombone, or voices, you need a group of performers to play or sing one note each (see left).

The combination of different chords that composers use in their music is called harmony. It is **harmony** that makes music sound interesting. We use harmony to make melodies, accompaniments and backing tracks, and also to create certain moods and atmospheres.

## Triads

The triad is one of the most useful chords available to us in music. The two most common types of triad are major and minor. A major or minor triad is a chord with three different notes:



### Major and minor triads

A major 3rd is an interval of four semitones.

To create a major triad, we use notes 1, 3 and 5 of a major scale, and name the triad after note 1. So, a D major triad uses notes 1, 3 and 5 of a D major scale (D F# A). In a major triad, the interval between notes 1 and 3 (D and F#, marked below) is a **major 3rd**:



Each note in the triad is given a special name. The lowest note (D, note 1 of the scale) is called the **root**, the middle note (F#, note 3 of the scale) is called the **3rd**, and the top note (A, note 5 of the scale) is called the **5th**:

