

A Quick and Easy Guide to Transposing (Changing a Song to a Different Key)

As an aspiring guitarist, at some point, you will likely find yourself needing to transpose a song. For instance, you might find guitar chords for a song you love online, but discover that it is in F# major, using chords like g#, a#, and d# - ouch! Or you might find a song in D major and realize it's too high for you to sing, but you can't find it anywhere in the key that you want!

The good news is, transposing is easy! And transposing children's songs is REALLY easy. Here is a step-by-step guide with an example. Scroll down for transposition tables in all major and minor keys.

Step 1: Identify the key of the song. If you are not sure what key a song is in, you can USUALLY tell by looking at the last chord of the song. If the last chord is G, the song is probably in G major. If the last chord is C, the song is probably in C major. Note: Most songs are in a major or a minor key. Upper-case letters or "MAJ" represent major chords. Lower-case letters or "min" represent minor chords.

Example: If You're Happy and You Know It

CG
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

C
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

FC
If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it.

GC <- Last chord = C major
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

Ah ha! C major.

Step 2: Convert the letter names of the chords to roman numerals. If the song is in a major key, use the transposition table for major keys. If it's in minor, use the minor keys transposition table. Find the key of the song in the far left column. Write down the roman numeral that corresponds with each chord.

Example:

Major Key	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii°
C	C	d	e	F	G	a	b°

For the key of C major, C = I, d = ii, e = iii, etc...

C = IG = V
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

C = I
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

F = IVC = I
If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it.

G = VC = I
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

Step 3: Choose your new key. Think about why you are transposing. Do you need a lower or higher key? Do you need a key with chords that are easier to play?

A few hints to help you choose a new key:

- Most children’s songs (and many popular songs) use the I, IV, and V chord most often so look for keys with I, IV, and V that are easy to play.
- The keys that tend to be “easy” are the first four in the transposition table (C Major, G Major, D Major, and A Major).
- If you need to find a higher or lower key, choose one that is at least two letters (alphabetically) away from your current key. If the original key is C and it feels way to low, switching to D probably wont make enough of a difference.

Example: Let’s choose G Major.

Step 4: Find your new key on the transposition table and write in the letters that correspond to the roman numerals.

Example:

Major Key	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii°
C	C	d	e	F	G	a	b°
G	G	a	b	C	D	e	f#°

In the key of G Major, I = G, ii = a, iii = b, etc...

I = G
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

V = D

I = G
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

IV = C
If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it.

I = G

V = D
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

I = G

And voilà! You’re done! Once you get the hang of transposing, you can skip step 2 and use the table to convert straight from one key to another.

Here are a few additional pieces of information that might be useful:

- Uppercase letters and roman numerals denote Major keys.
- Lowercase letters and roman numerals denote minor keys.
- Transposing should not change whether a chord is major or minor. If a chord is minor in the original key, it will be minor in the new key. If a chord is major in the original key, it will be major in the new key.

Transposition Table for all major keys.

Major Key	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii°
C	C	d	e	F	G	a	b°
G	G	a	b	C	D	e	f#°
D	D	e	f#	G	A	b	c#°
A	A	b	c#	D	E	f#	g#°
E	E	f#	g#	A	B	c#	d#°
B	B	c#	d#	E	F#	g#	a#°
F#	F#	g#	a#	B	C#	d#	e#°
C#	C#	d#	e#	F#	G#	a#	b#°
F	F	g	a	Bb	C	d	e°
Bb	Bb	c	d	Eb	F	g	a°
Eb	Eb	f	g	Ab	Bb	c	d°
Ab	Ab	bb	c	Db	Eb	f	g°
Db	Db	eb	f	Gb	Ab	bb	c°
Gb	Gb	ab	bb	Cb	Db	eb	f°
Cb	Cb	db	eb	Fb	Gb	ab	bb°

www.storytimesongs.com

Free lyrics and guitar chords for children's songs, music games and activities, and homemade musical instrument ideas. Also the home of Fairy Tale Favorites: Storytime Songs for Children by Shauna Tominey, including The Three Little Pigs, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Cinderella, and more! Your favorite fairy tales told through songs are now available on itunes!

Transposition Table for all minor keys.

Minor Key	i	ii°	III	iv	v	VI	VII
a	a	b°	C	d	e	F	G
e	e	f#°	G	a	b	C	D
b	b	c#°	D	e	f#	G	A
f#	f#	g#°	A	b	c#	D	E
c#	c#	d#°	E	f#	g#	A	B
g#	g#	a#°	B	c#	d#	E	F#
d#	d#	e#°	F#	g#	a#	B	C#
a#	a#	b#°	C#	d#	e#	F#	G#
d	d	e°	F	g	a	Bb	C
g	g	a°	Bb	c	d	Eb	F
c	c	d°	Eb	f	g	Ab	Bb
f	f	g°	Ab	bb	c	Db	Eb
bb	bb	c°	Db	eb	f	Gb	Ab
eb	eb	f°	Gb	ab	bb	Cb	Db
ab	ab	bb°	Cb	db	eb	Fb	Gb

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