

## Adding chords to music

It can be both a useful and enjoyable exercise to add chords to a piece of music. This can be helpful for several different reasons. First, it will help a sound knowledge of music theory and chords. This kind of exercise can also help our aural awareness (we need to use our ears to hear what sounds good). It can also help in gaining a working knowledge of where our hands are likely to need to move.

There are a few little pointers that can help in this kind of exercise:

1. Remember that chords I, IV, and V of the key will be used most frequently.
2. Songs most often start and end with chord I (though not absolutely always).
3. You are likely to find either chord I or chord V at the end of a phrase—chord I if it needs to sound finished and chord V if it needs to sound like it's carrying on.
4. The next most common chords are chords ii and vi (chord iii can also be added to this list although it is less frequent than the others). In a major key these are minor chords and are often played with a seventh. E.g. chord ii7 in C major is Dm7.
5. You will often find a chord ii (or ii7) before chord V.
6. When adding chords to a melody line start by putting one chord in each bar (you may find that you need more or less than that!). Be aware that chords often speed up around a cadence (the end of a phrase).
7. Look at all the notes in a bar before deciding on which chords may be options. You may not find a chord that fits every note in the bar but there could be a choice of chords to fit some of them.
8. **USE YOUR EARS TO DISCOVER THE BEST CHORD**
9. Be prepared to change previous chords if they sound wrong as a result of a chord that you add to your piece.

It's best to try these things out rather than just reading them. You could even try writing a melody and then harmonising it with chords. Good luck!