



Bluegrass Learning Jam at Harry's Guitar Shop

Handouts for October 2016 through April 2017

- Standard Structure of Bluegrass Songs
- Bluegrass Practice Tips
- The Four T's
- Introduction to "Chord Numbers" (Part 1)
- Introduction to "Chord Numbers" (Part 2)

Songs:

- Amazing Grace (key of A, or "key of G" with capo on second fret)
- I'll Fly Away (key of G)
- In the Pines (key of G)
- My Home's Across the Blue Ridge Mountains (key of G)
- Nine Pound Hammer (key of A, or "key of G" with capo on second fret)
- Roll in my Sweet Baby's Arms (key of A, or "key of G" with capo on second fret)
- Will the Circle Be Unbroken (key of A, or "key of G" with capo on second fret)

• ***Instrumentals:***

- Angeline the Baker (key of D, or "key of C" with capo on second fret)
- Ashokan Farewell (key of D, or "key of C" with capo on second fret)
- Billy in the Lowground (key of C)
- Blackberry Blossom (key of G)
- Old Joe Clark (key of A, or "key of G" with capo on second fret)
- Salt Creek (key of A, or "key of G" with capo on second fret)
- Soldier's Joy (key of D, or "key of C" with capo on second fret)
- Whiskey Before Breakfast (key of D, or "key of C" with capo on second fret)

Standard Structure of Bluegrass Songs (Vocals and Instrumentals)

<p>Vocal Songs (with lyrics) Verse/Chorus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Instrumental kick-off) • First verse • Chorus • Instrumental solo • Second verse • Chorus • Instrumental solo • Third verse • Chorus • Instrumental solo • Chorus • (Tag) 	<p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banjo kick-off • First verse (lead singer) • Chorus (harmony/group singing) • Mandolin solo • Second verse • Chorus (harmony/group singing) • Guitar solo • Third verse • Chorus (harmony/group singing) • Fiddle solo • Chorus (harmony/group singing) • (Tag)
<p>Instrumentals (or “tunes”) AABB (A part twice, then B part twice)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off—AABB • Next solo—AABB • Next solo—AABB • Next solo—AABB • Next solo—AABB • Final solo—AABB • (Tag) 	<p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiddle kick-off (AABB) • Mandolin solo (AABB) • Banjo solo (AABB) • Guitar solo (AABB) • Dobro solo (AABB) • Fiddle solo (AABB) • (Tag: fiddle or other instrument)

BLUEGRASS PRACTICE TIPS

1. It's better to practice *often* than to practice *long*.
2. You can master anything you practice, but you'll never master anything you don't practice!
3. Don't practice mistakes!
4. As often as possible, play with a metronome, with recordings, or with other musicians.
5. As often as possible, listen to bluegrass recordings and go to see bluegrass bands perform.
6. Ask questions! Other bluegrass musicians are happy to show you what they're doing—that's how we all learned, by asking someone else.
7. Keep a written journal or log with practice notes, song lyrics, chords, reminders for yourself, etc.
8. Remember to relax, breathe, and maybe even smile! Practice hard, but not so hard that you forget to have fun.
9. Anything you learn, try and pass along to someone else—there are players out there more experienced than you, and ones less experienced than you. Be a student *and* a teacher!

Always think about **The Four T's**:

- **Tuning:** Are you in tune with the group?
- **Timing:** Are you in time and in rhythm with everyone?
- **Tone:** Is the sound and volume of your playing good?
- **Taste:** Does your playing support the song, the singer, and the band?



Introduction to “Chord Numbers”

(Part 1)

In bluegrass and other types of music, we often use Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) to refer to notes within a chord or scale, and **Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV, etc.) to refer to chord changes within a song.** This “chord number” shorthand allows us to describe chord changes regardless of what key the song’s in, and regardless of capo placement and other factors.

The vast majority of bluegrass, folk, country, and blues songs use the I (one), IV (four), and V (five) chords. When we describe something as a “three-chord song,” those are the three chords we mean: I, IV, and V. Some of our jam songs only use two chords: “My Home’s Across the Blue Ridge Mountains” uses only the I and V chords, and “Angeline the Baker” uses only the I and IV chords.

The most common keys for bluegrass jamming are G, A, C, and D. The chart on the next page shows you the I-IV-V chords in each of those keys. For example, in the key of G (the top row), the I chord is G, the IV chord is C, and the V chord is D. We’ll continue to add to this chart by including other keys, and additional chord changes/chord numbers.

Practice exercise: take a simple three-chord song you already know, and try **transposing** that song into other keys using this chart (and your ears!). Moving a vocal song around in different keys is a good way to find a key that best suits your singing voice for that song.

Introduction to “Chord Numbers” (Part 2)

In Part 1, we talked about using Roman numerals to refer to the I (one), IV (four), and V (five) chord changes we frequently encounter in bluegrass and other types of music. Now, we’ll add a new chord change to the chart on the next page—the **minor six, also called the relative minor chord**.

In the chord number system, lowercase Roman numerals denote minor chords, so we’ll use “vi” for the minor six (or relative minor) chord. We have two instrumentals this month that feature the vi chord—Blackberry Blossom, in the key of G (where the vi chord is Em); and Billy in the Lowground, in the key of C (where the vi chord is Am).

One thing you’ll notice about the vi chord is that it shares two notes in common with the I chord. For example, Em and G both contain the notes G and B; and Am and C both contain the notes C and E. This relationship is one reason that the I and vi chords “go together well,” and can even be substituted for one another in many situations.

Other popular bluegrass songs that include a vi chord change include “Down the Road,” “Wagon Wheel,” “Ashokan Farewell,” and “Foggy Mountain Breakdown.”

Amazing Grace

(Key of A)

Gospel

Verse only (no Chorus)

Verse:

A	●	D	A
A	●	E	●
A	●	D	A
A	E	A	●

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved,
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Then when we first begun.

Amazing Grace

(Key of A, **capo 2**)

Gospel

Verse only (no Chorus)

Verse:

G	●	C	G
G	●	D	●
G	●	C	G
G	D	G	●

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved,
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Then when we first begun.

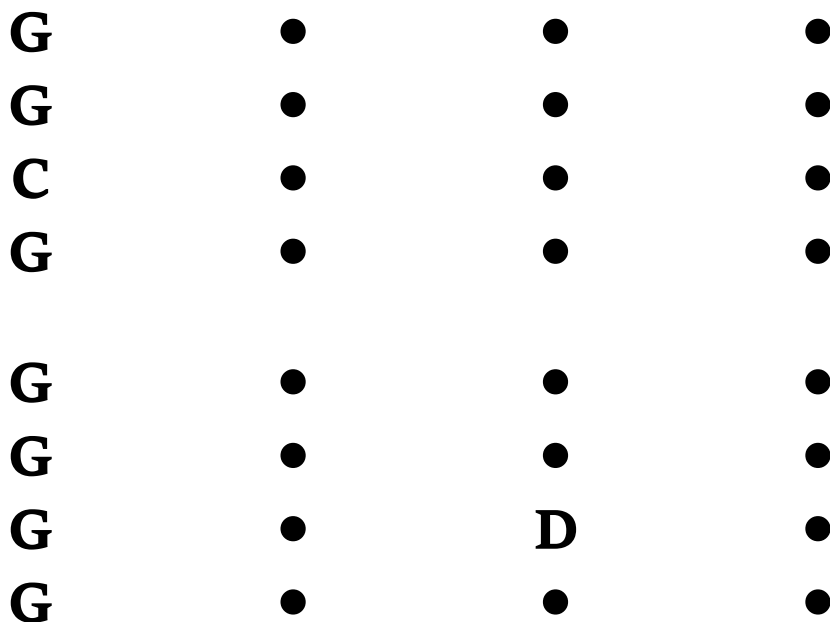
I'll Fly Away

(Key of G)

A. E. Brumley/Public Domain

Verse-Chorus

Verse and Chorus (same chords for both):



Chorus:

I'll fly away, oh glory,

I'll fly away.

When I die, Hallelujah by and by,

I'll fly away.

Verses:

Some bright morning, when this life is o'er, I'll fly away.

To that home on God's celestial shore, I'll fly away.

When the shadows of this life have gone, I'll fly away.

Like a bird, from these prison walls I'll fly, I'll fly away.

Oh how glad and happy when we meet, I'll fly away.

No more cold iron shackles on my feet, I'll fly away.

Just a few more weary days and then, I'll fly away.

To a land where joys will never end, I'll fly away.

In the Pines

(Key of G)

Traditional

Verse-Chorus

Verse and Chorus (same chords for both):

G	(G7)	C	G
G	D	G	●
G	(G7)	C	G
G	D	G	●

Chorus:

**In the pines, in the pines,
Where the sun never shines,
And we shiver when the cold winds blow.**

(Optional after chorus):

Wooo-hooooo-hooooooo, etc.

Verses:

The longest train I ever saw
Went down that Georgia line.
The engine passed at six o'clock
And the cab passed by at nine.

I asked my captain for the time of day,
He said he threwed his watch away.
A long steel rail and a short cross tie,
I'm on my way back home.

My girl, my girl, what have I done
To make you treat me so?
You caused me to weep, you caused me to mourn,
You caused me to leave my home.

My Home's Across the Blue Ridge Mountains

(Key of G)

Traditional

Verse-Chorus

Verse and Chorus (same chords for both):

G	●	●	●
G	●	●	●
D	●	●	●
G	●	●	●
G	●	●	●
G	●	●	●
D	●	●	●
G	●	●	●

Chorus:

**My home's across the Blue Ridge Mountains,
My home's across the Blue Ridge Mountains,
My home's across the Blue Ridge Mountains,
Oh I never expect to see you anymore.**

Verses:

How can I keep from crying?
How can I keep from crying?
How can I keep from crying?
Oh I never expect to see you anymore.

I'm gonna miss my mother and father,
I'm gonna miss my mother and father,
I'm gonna miss my mother and father,
Oh I never expect to see you anymore.

I'm gonna leave here Monday morning,
I'm gonna leave here Monday morning,
I'm gonna leave here Monday morning,
Oh I never expect to see you anymore.

Rock my baby, feed her candy,
Rock my baby, feed her candy,
Rock my baby, feed her candy,
Oh I never expect to see you anymore.

Nine Pound Hammer

(Key of A)

Traditional

Verse-Chorus

Verse and Chorus (same chords for both):

A	●	●	●
D	●	●	●
A	●	E	●
A	●	●	●
A	●	●	●
D	●	●	●
A	●	E	●
A	●	●	●

Chorus:

**Roll on buddy,
Don't you roll so slow,
How can I roll
If the wheels won't go?**

Verses:

Oh a nine pound hammer
Is just a little too heavy
Buddy for my size,
Buddy for my size.

There ain't another hammer
On this old mountain
That can ring like mine,
That can ring like mine.

It's a long way to Harlan,
It's a long way to Hazzard,
Just to get a little brew,
Just to get a little brew.

Somebody stole
My nine pound hammer,
Oh they took it and gone,
Oh they took it and gone.

Nine Pound Hammer

(Key of A, **capo 2**)

Traditional

Verse-Chorus

Verse and Chorus (same chords for both):

G	●	●	●
C	●	●	●
G	●	D	●
G	●	●	●
G	●	●	●
C	●	●	●
G	●	D	●
G	●	●	●

Chorus:

**Roll on buddy,
Don't you roll so slow,
How can I roll
If the wheels won't go?**

Verses:

Oh a nine pound hammer
Is just a little too heavy
Buddy for my size,
Buddy for my size.

There ain't another hammer
On this old mountain
That can ring like mine,
That can ring like mine.

It's a long way to Harlan,
It's a long way to Hazzard,
Just to get a little brew,
Just to get a little brew.

Somebody stole
My nine pound hammer,
Oh they took it and gone,
Oh they took it and gone.

Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms

(Key of A)

Traditional

Verse-Chorus

Verse and Chorus (same chords for both):

A	●	●	●
A	●	●	●
A	●	●	●
E	●	●	●
A	●	(A7)	●
D	●	●	●
E	●	●	●
A	●	●	●

Chorus:

**Roll in my sweet baby's arms,
Roll in my sweet bay's arms,
Lay around the shack 'til the mail train comes back,
And roll in my sweet baby's arms.**

Verses:

I ain't gonna work on the railroad,
I ain't gonna work on the farm,
Lay around the shack 'til the mail train comes back,
And roll in my sweet baby's arms.

Now where was you last Friday night,
While I was lying in jail?
Walking the streets with another man,
Wouldn't even go my bail.

I know your parents don't like me,
Drove me away from your door,
If I had my life to live over,
I'd never go there anymore.

Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms

(Key of A, capo 2)

Traditional

Verse-Chorus

Verse and Chorus (same chords for both):

G	●	●	●
G	●	●	●
G	●	●	●
D	●	●	●
G	●	(G7)	●
C	●	●	●
D	●	●	●
G	●	●	●

Chorus:

**Roll in my sweet baby's arms,
Roll in my sweet bay's arms,
Lay around the shack 'til the mail train comes back,
And roll in my sweet baby's arms.**

Verses:

I ain't gonna work on the railroad,
I ain't gonna work on the farm,
Lay around the shack 'til the mail train comes back,
And roll in my sweet baby's arms.

Now where was you last Friday night,
While I was lying in jail?
Walking the streets with another man,
Wouldn't even go my bail.

I know your parents don't like me,
Drove me away from your door,
If I had my life to live over,
I'd never go there anymore.

Will the Circle Be Unbroken

(Key of A)

Traditional/Carter Family

Verse-Chorus

Verse and Chorus (same chords for both):

A	●	●	●
A	●	●	●
D	●	●	●
A	●	●	●
A	●	●	●
A	●	●	●
A	●	E	●
A	●	●	●

Chorus:

**Will the circle be unbroken,
By and by, Lord, by and by,
There's a better home a-waiting
In the sky, Lord, in the sky**

Verses:

I was standing by my window
On a cold and cloudy day,
When I saw that hearse come rolling
For to carry my mother away.

Well I followed close behind her,
Tried to hold up and be brave.
But I could not hide my sorrow
When they laid her in the grave.

Oh I told that undertaker,
Undertaker please drive slow.
For that body you are hauling,
Lord I hate to see her go.

I went back home, Lord, my home
was lonesome
Since my mother, she was gone.
All my brothers and sisters crying,
What a home so sad and alone.

Will the Circle Be Unbroken

(Key of A, capo 2)

Traditional/Carter Family

Verse-Chorus

Verse and Chorus (same chords for both):

G	●	●	●
G	●	●	●
C	●	●	●
G	●	●	●
G	●	●	●
G	●	●	●
G	●	D	●
G	●	●	●

Chorus:

**Will the circle be unbroken,
By and by, Lord, by and by,
There's a better home a-waiting
In the sky, Lord, in the sky**

Verses:

I was standing by my window
On a cold and cloudy day,
When I saw that hearse come rolling
For to carry my mother away.

Oh I told that undertaker,
Undertaker please drive slow.
For that body you are hauling,
Lord I hate to see her go.

Well I followed close behind her,
Tried to hold up and be brave.
But I could not hide my sorrow
When they laid her in the grave.

I went back home, Lord, my home
was lonesome
Since my mother, she was gone.
All my brothers and sisters crying,
What a home so sad and alone.

Angeline the Baker

(Key of D)

Traditional

AABB

Angeline the Baker is usually played with just two chords (D and G), but you may find some versions that include a quick A chord. The chords are the same for both the A and B parts of this tune. Many guitar and banjo players play this tune with no capo (key of D), and many put a capo on the second fret (to play it using “key of C” positions). Try both ways and see which you prefer!

A part:

D	●	●	●
D	●	G	●
D	●	●	●
D	G	D	●

B part:

D	●	●	●
D	●	G	●
D	●	●	●
D	G	D	●

Angeline the Baker

(Key of D, capo 2)

Traditional

AABB

Angeline the Baker is usually played with just two chords (C and F shapes, with your capo on the second fret), but you may find some versions that include a quick G chord. The chords are the same for both the A and B parts of this tune. Many guitar and banjo players play this tune with no capo (key of D), and many put a capo on the second fret (to play it using “key of C” positions). Try both ways and see which you prefer!

A part:

C	●	●	●
C	●	F	●
C	●	●	●
C	F	C	●

B part:

C	●	●	●
C	●	F	●
C	●	●	●
C	F	C	●

Ashokan Farewell

(Key of D)

by Jay Ungar

AB

Ashokan Farewell is a waltz composed by Jay Ungar that many people know from the 1990 Ken Burns documentary series “The Civil War.” This tune includes a few minor chords, which give it a “haunting” or “nostalgic” feel. Many versions of this tune slow down near the end of the B part (on the C chord) and hold on that note a little longer than normal (and then resume the regular tempo to finish out the B part).

Many guitar and banjo players play this tune with no capo (key of D), and many put a capo on the second fret (to play it using “key of C” positions). Try both ways and see which you prefer!

A part:

D	●	G	Em
D	Bm	G	A
D	●	G	Em
D	Bm	A	D

B part:

D	●	G	D
D	Bm	A	●
D	C	G	D
D	Bm	A	D

Ashokan Farewell

(Key of D, **capo 2**)

by Jay Ungar

AB

Ashokan Farewell is a waltz composed by Jay Ungar that many people know from the 1990 Ken Burns documentary series “The Civil War.” This tune includes a few minor chords, which give it a “haunting” or “nostalgic” feel. Many versions of this tune slow down near the end of the B part (on the B-flat (Bb) chord) and hold on that note a little longer than normal (and then resume the regular tempo to finish out the B part).

Many guitar and banjo players play this tune with no capo (key of D), and many put a **capo on the second fret** (to play it using “key of C” positions). Try both ways and see which you prefer!

A part:

C	●	F	Dm
C	Am	F	G
C	●	F	Dm
C	Am	G	C

B part:

C	●	F	C
C	Am	G	●
C	Bb	F	C
C	Am	G	C

Billy in the Lowground

(Key of C)

Traditional

AABB

In the B part of this instrumental, some versions use an A minor chord instead of the F chord (in which case, the A and B parts would have the same chords). But this version (with the F chord in the B part) is probably the most common.

A part:

C	●	●	●
Am	●	●	●
C	●	●	●
Am	●	G	C

B part:

C	●	●	●
F	●	●	●
C	●	●	●
Am	●	G	C

Blackberry Blossom

(Key of G)

Traditional

AABB

In the B part of this instrumental, some players use a D chord instead of the B7 chord shown below, but this version (B7) is probably the most common.

A part:

G	D	C	G
C	G	A	D
G	D	C	G
C	G	D	G

B part:

Em	●	●	●
Em	●	B7	●
Em	●	●	●
C	G	D	G

Old Joe Clark

(Key of A)

Traditional

AABB

A part:

A	●	●	●
A	●	E	●
A	●	●	●
A	E	A	●

B part:

A	●	●	●
A	●	G	●
A	●	●	●
A	E	A	●

Old Joe Clark

(Key of A, capo 2)

Traditional

AABB

A part:

G	●	●	●
G	●	D	●
G	●	●	●
G	D	G	●

B part:

G	●	●	●
G	●	F	●
G	●	●	●
G	D	G	●

Salt Creek

(Key of A)

Traditional

AABB

Like any widely played fiddle tune, you may run into some slightly different chord changes for Salt Creek (also called Salt River) at different jams, but this version is probably the most common.

A part:

A	●	●	D
G	●	●	E
A	●	●	D
G	●	E	A

B part:

A	●	●	●
G	●	●	●
A	●	●	●
G	●	E	A

Salt Creek

(Key of A, **capo 2**)

Traditional

AABB

Like any widely played fiddle tune, you may run into some slightly different chord changes for Salt Creek (also called Salt River) at different jams, but this version is probably the most common.

A part:

G	●	●	C
F	●	●	D
G	●	●	C
F	●	D	G

B part:

G	●	●	●
F	●	●	●
G	●	●	●
F	●	D	G

Soldier's Joy

(Key of D)

Traditional

AABB

Many guitar and banjo players play this tune with no capo (key of D), and many put a capo on the second fret (to play it using "key of C" positions). Try both ways and see which you prefer!

A part:

D	●	●	●
D	●	A	●
D	●	●	●
D	A	D	●

B part:

D	●	G	●
D	●	A	●
D	●	G	●
D	A	D	●

Soldier's Joy

(Key of D, capo 2)

Traditional

AABB

Many guitar and banjo players play this tune with no capo (key of D), and many put a capo on the second fret (to play it using "key of C" positions). Try both ways and see which you prefer!

A part:

C	●	●	●
C	●	G	●
C	●	●	●
C	G	C	●

B part:

C	●	F	●
C	●	G	●
C	●	F	●
C	G	C	●

Whiskey Before Breakfast

(Key of D)

Traditional

AABB

Whiskey Before Breakfast is so widely played that you may run into some slightly different chord changes for it, but this version is probably considered the most common.

Many guitar and banjo players play this tune with no capo (key of D), and many put a capo on the second fret (to play it using “key of C” positions). Try both ways and see which you prefer!

A part:

D	●	●	●
G	D	A	●
D	●	●	●
G	D	A	D

B part:

D	●	●	●
Em	●	A	●
D	A	G	D
G	D	A	D

Whiskey Before Breakfast

(Key of D, capo 2)

Traditional

AABB

Whiskey Before Breakfast is so widely played that you may run into some slightly different chord changes for it, but this version is probably considered the most common.

Many guitar and banjo players play this tune with no capo (key of D), and many put a **capo on the second fret** (to play it using “key of C” positions). Try both ways and see which you prefer!

A part:

C	●	●	●
F	C	G	●
C	●	●	●
F	C	G	C

B part:

C	●	●	●
Dm	●	G	●
C	G	F	C
F	C	G	C