

TRANSPOSING

To transpose a song just means to put it into a different key, usually to accommodate the singer's voice or to use easier chords.

We posted *E Ku'u Morning Dew* in three different keys. Place them side by side and notice the differences. The key of F uses pretty friendly chord shapes except for the few moments when you use the Bb (B-flat) chord. The key of G uses easier chords overall, but some singers might find this key to be too high or too low for a comfortable voice range, depending on the melody notes.

You can transpose a song into any of the seven keys (A thru G), and even into the sharp or flat keys that are halfway between the letters (A#, Bb, C#, Db, Eb, etc). Again, the key just declares the starting point. All of the notes and chords will be relative to that point, no matter what key you are playing in.

Take the following chord progression, with four beats on each chord:

G D Em C G

What are the "usual suspects" again for the key of G? They are G – C – D -- Em. And look -- there they appear.

Let's say that G is too low for you to sing the melody of this song. We would like to move it up to A, one whole pitch higher. We simply add one letter to each, keeping the flavors (minors, sevenths, etc) as original.

becomes: **G** **D** **Em** **C** **G**
 A E F#m D A

Why F#m? Because we have to keep the same relationship of half-steps and whole steps to maintain a major "do re mi" scale. Unlike every other note, there is only a half-step between B-C and E-F. So whenever we cross one of those, we end up needing sharps or flats. (See the handout on scales for more discussion). So if we changed the Em to an Fm, it would not sound right. F#m keeps the relationship intact.

Let's transpose to some other common keys:

G	D	Em	C	G
A	---	---	---	---
C	---	---	---	---
D	---	---	---	---
E	---	---	---	---
F	---	---	---	---

Let's do "C" together. The key of C is three whole pitches above the key of G. Count them off: **G** – A – B – C. So you would add three letters to each chord in the progression. The D chord becomes a G chord, right? You can also go down too, if that is easier, but you need to move four steps to get all the way there. **G** -- F – E -- D – C.

You can check your work, since some of these are already listed on the previous page. Hope you didn't peak.

Do you recognize this chord progression? It is "Let It Be" by Paul McCartney. Try playing the first part of it in all of the keys that you just transposed.