

Lesson 15

# Broken Chords

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<b>Course</b>	<b>Read &amp; Play Music</b>
<b>Book 2</b>	<b>Read and Play Simple Tunes with Two Hands</b>
<b>Lesson 15</b>	<b>Broken Chords</b>

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## LESSON 15: BROKEN CHORDS

**Reminder:** a **chord** is a set of 2 or more notes played or sung together.

Sometimes we play the notes of a chord, but play them one at a time instead of all at the same time. This is called a 'broken chord'.

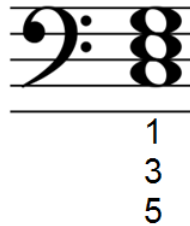
**Definition:** a **broken chord** or **arpeggio** is a chord played one note at a time, instead of all the notes being played at the same time.

Let's explore that now.

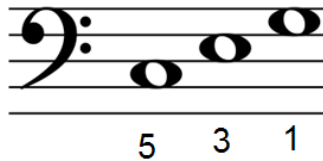
# MUSIC THEORY

## BUILD YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Here is a chord. Play it now. Make sure you start and end all 3 notes at the same time.



Here are the same 3 notes played as a broken chord:



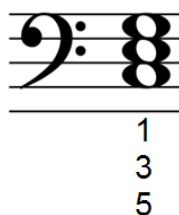
Mozart used broken chords in much of his piano music. He would have the right hand play a tune, while the left hand plays broken chords to accompany the tune. An accompaniment of broken chords has a more fluid character than an accompaniment of chords. You'll hear that in a tune that's coming up shortly.

## Creating harmony with broken chords

We saw earlier how harmony is created by playing *chords*.

**Reminder:** **harmony** is the effect created by playing or singing a chord.

Play this chord again, and listen to the quality of the harmony it creates:



Now play those 3 notes again as a broken chord.



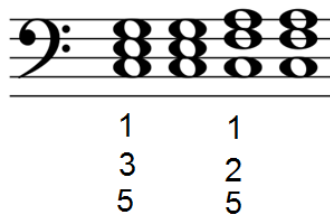
Do you hear the same quality of harmony?

Harmony can be created by broken chords as well as chords.

## Creating harmonic progressions with broken chords

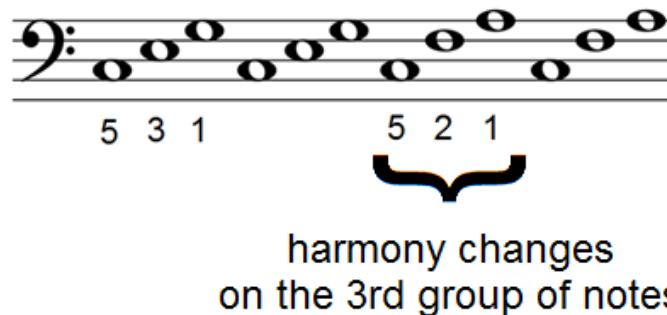
**Reminder:** a **harmonic progression** is the effect created when different harmonies are played one after another.

You played these 4 chords earlier and heard the harmonic progression they create. Play them again now:



The 3rd chord is different, and that creates a harmonic progression.

Now play the same thing, but as broken chords:



Do you hear the same change of harmony when you play the 3rd group of notes?

Harmonic progression can be created by broken chords as well as chords.

There's a famous example of this: the Moonlight Sonata by Beethoven. You'll play the beginning of it shortly. Beethoven will show us how broken chords can be used very effectively to create a harmonic progression.



# PRACTICAL

## BUILD YOUR SKILL

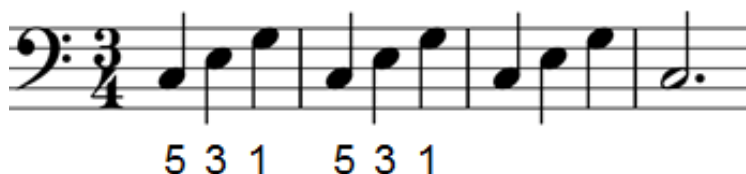
Let's practise playing some broken chords in the left hand. Then you'll play a tune with your right hand while your left hand plays broken chords to provide the harmony.

### Exercise 1:

## Broken chords, left hand

### 1 Play

1. **Play** the music below.

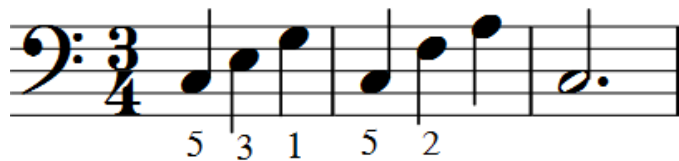


2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

## Exercise 2: Varying broken chords

### 1 Play

1. Play the music below.



2. Repeat as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

## Exercise 3: Hand moving around more

### 1 Play

1. Play the music below.



2. Repeat as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

## Exercise 4: Varying patterns

### 1 Play

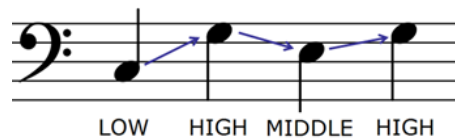
1. **Play** the music below.



2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

## Exercise 5: Alberti bass

Mozart and other composers of his day made much use of a particular form of broken chord in the left hand of their piano music. It goes like this:



Alberti bass.

This style of broken chord played by the left hand is called an ‘Alberti bass’, named after the composer Domenico Alberti who used it a lot in his compositions.

Here’s an exercise in playing an Alberti bass.

### 1 Play

1. Play the music below.



2. Repeat as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

## Exercise 6: Broken chords, right hand

### 1 Play

1. Play the music below.



2. Repeat as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

## Exercise 7: Varying broken chords

### 1 Play

1. Play the music below.



2. Repeat as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

## Exercise 8: Hand moving around more

### 1 Play

1. Play the music below.



2. Repeat as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

## Exercise 9: Varying patterns

### 1 Play

1. Play the music below.



2. Repeat as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

## Exercise 10:

### Two hands, broken chords in left hand

#### 1 Play the notes, disregarding timing

1. Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands.



1. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily while disregarding the timing.

#### 2 Play with correct timing

1. Start very slowly. Find a speed at which you can play with correct timing.
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

## Exercise 11:

### Two hands, varying broken chords in left hand

#### 1 Play the notes, disregarding timing

1. Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands.



2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily while disregarding the timing.

#### 2 Play with correct timing

1. Start very slowly. Find a speed at which you can play with correct timing.
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.



## Tune 1:

### A Christmas carol, with broken chords in the left hand

#### 1 Play the notes, disregarding timing

1. Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands. You may find this quite tricky. Take it very slowly. In fact, take it very very very slowly.

*It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*

The image shows a musical score for the Christmas carol 'It Came Upon a Midnight Clear'. It is written in 3/4 time. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melody of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4. The left hand (bass clef) plays broken chords: G2, B1, D2; A2, C3, E3; B2, D3, F3; G3, B2, D3. Fingerings are indicated: 1 for G4, 4 for B4, 2 for A4 in the right hand; 5 for G2, 2 for B2 in the left hand.

2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily while disregarding the timing.

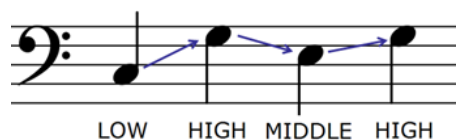
#### 2 Play with correct timing

1. Start very slowly. Find a speed at which you can play with correct timing.
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

## Tune 2:

# A piece by Mozart, with broken chords in the left hand

**Reminder:** You learned earlier about the Alberti bass that goes like this:



Alberti bass.

Here is an example of an Alberti bass from a piano sonata by Mozart. A piano sonata is a piece of music for a piano on its own (not combined with other instruments).

# 1 Play the notes, disregarding timing

1. Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands.

**Mozart: Piano Sonata**

The image shows a musical score for a piano exercise. It is in 4/4 time. The right hand (treble clef) plays a whole note chord consisting of C4, E4, and G4, with a '1' above the first measure. The left hand (bass clef) plays a descending eighth-note scale: C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3. The first two notes of the left hand are marked with '5' and '4' below them respectively.

2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily while disregarding the timing.

# 2 Play with correct timing

1. Start very slowly. Find a speed at which you can play with correct timing.
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

This is the real music by Mozart with only a couple of minor simplifications. You are actually playing Mozart!!

## Exercise 12:

### Two hands, varying broken chords in right hand

#### 1 Play the notes, disregarding timing

1. Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands.



2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily while disregarding the timing.

#### 2 Play with correct timing

1. Start very slowly. Find a speed at which you can play with correct timing.
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

## Exercise 13: More complex

### 1 Play the notes, disregarding timing

1. Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands.



2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily while disregarding the timing.

### 2 Play with correct timing

1. Start very slowly. Find a speed at which you can play with correct timing.
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

## Tune 3: Use of broken chords by Beethoven

Now here's the piece of music I mentioned earlier in this lesson. Let's see how Beethoven uses broken chords to good effect.

# 1 Play the notes, disregarding timing

1. Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands.

## *Moonlight Sonata, by Beethoven*

The image shows the first system of musical notation for the 'Moonlight Sonata' by Beethoven. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff for the right hand and a bass clef staff for the left hand. The time signature is 3/4. The right hand plays a sequence of eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The left hand plays a sequence of eighth notes: C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2. The first measure of the right hand has a finger number '1' above the first note. The first measure of the left hand has a finger number '1' below the first note.

2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily while disregarding the timing.

# 2 Play with correct timing

1. Start very slowly. Find a speed at which you can play with correct timing.
2. **Repeat** as needed until you can do it accurately and easily.

That's as far as we can take the Moonlight Sonata for now. The next measure needs black notes on your keyboard, and you'll learn about that in **Book 4: Read and Play the Music You Want to Play**.

## What's next?

You've done a lot of good work and learned a lot of stuff.

It's time to play tunes.

To find Lesson 16, click the green box:

**Go on to your next lesson**



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