

THE CHORD WHEEL or CIRCLE OF FIFTHS (clockwise) and FOURTHS (counterclockwise) with chord spellings, relative minors and the Universal Key

Chord wheel and circle of fourths and fifths: This a learning aid every fiddler should have in their fiddle case or notebook (see also *Diatonic chord progressions*, 19). In addition to using the alphabet chord names, in the *Universal Key*, major chords are also commonly written using Arabic numbers or Roman numeral capitals, with minor chords in lower-case Roman numerals or indicated with a minus sign. These three chords, **I, IV** and **V**, and their relative minors, **ii, iii**, and **vi**, make up the *diatonic family of chords* in any key. In this example, using D major as the tonic, home, **I** or **I chord**, look to the immediate left on the wheel (which moves in fourths counterclockwise) and find the subdominant, G, **4** or **IV chord**. Look to the immediate right (moving in fifths or clockwise) and find the dominant, A, **5** or **V chord**. This is the *major chord progression I-IV- V* or **I-4-5**. Each major chord also has a *relative minor* that shares the same scale notes as the major scale, beginning on the relative minor note, so *Bm* minor has the same two-sharp key signature as *D major*; *Em* shares one sharp with *G*, and *F#m* shares three sharps with *A major*.

Use the *Universal Key* as a template. Move the home or tonic (*I*) a step to the left. Now *G* is *I*, *C* becomes *IV*, *D* is *V*. Move to the right and *A* becomes *I*, *D* the *IV* and *E* the new *V*. Minors move the same way. It's universal *because* it's a template. See *Universal Key* (22) for sample chord charts of *diatonic major, minor* and *modal progressions* (20).

DIATONIC CHORD FAMILY:

I, IV, V and

minor chord substitutions:

ii for *IV*

iii for *V*

vi for *I*

