

Read Me – Instructions

“Yours To Play It!” is a songwriting and music education tool which allows you to explore chords on a Windows computer by pointing and clicking with a mouse.

How to Play It

When you download and unzip the file, a folder will be created. Inside the folder are a number of files. When you double-click on the “Mouse with Conductor’s Baton” icon, the program opens and the screen displays a musical map.

When you click on one of the chord locations on the screen, the program plays the chord using the MIDI sound capabilities of your computer. (Holding the mouse button down causes the notes to play longer just like they would on a piano keyboard.)

If you don’t hear anything after clicking a few boxes, check to make sure your computer’s audio is on, and that the control panel settings allow MIDI to be played.

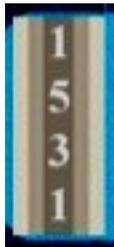
Selecting the Key

At the bottom of the screen is a row of buttons labeled...

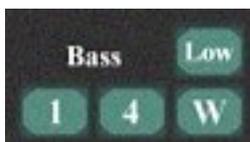


This is where you select the key. You can select only one at a time, but you may change the key at any time by making another choice.

The Bass Note Zone



The brown and tan band of vertical stripes, at the left edge of some of the boxes, is a bass note zone. When playing in the brown and tan area, only the bass note for that chord will sound.



The Bass Zone has some options associated with it. These options are displayed in the lower right corner of the screen. The options are 1, 4, W, and Low.

The “1” option is the default option. When “1” is selected, the chord root is assigned to the entire brown and tan area.

When “4” is selected, the numbered sections in the brown area correspond to different notes from the chord (i.e. – the root, the third, the fifth, and the octave). This allows the bass note to jump around a little.

The “W” option (which stands for “walking bass”) allows the middle brown area to play the four notes just mentioned, while the side lanes, the lighter tan areas, play notes one half step and two half steps away on the right and on the left. This allows a bass line to be played which includes non-chord tones.

The “Low” option – Some bass notes can climb up the scale until they are not as low as you might like. The “Low” option keeps the bass notes playing in a low register.

The Power Chord Mini-Map



In the middle of the screen is a tan-colored Mini-Map. This map is for playing power chords. A power chord is made up of a root and its fifth, leaving out the third. (For example, in the key of C, the I chord would be just C’s and G’s.)

In songwriting, power chords can be a quick way to experiment with basic progressions.

The Solo Keyboard

At the far left edge is the Solo Keyboard. It’s like the very front edge of a piano keyboard, tilted vertically. The blue spaces represent white notes on a piano, and the green spaces represent black notes. Here you may use the mouse to play individual notes. Playing lower in the space causes the note to play more softly. Playing higher in the space causes the note to play louder.

When you choose a key, the notes that make up that major scale are indicated with a slightly different color on the edge, and note “one” in the scale is highlighted with a red edge. This allows you to see the scale notes, and also which note is “note one” for that particular scale.

The Solo Keyboard



When the Solo Layer button is “on,” a second Solo sound will be layered with the first Solo sound. This allows the Solo Keyboard to play two sounds at once (for example, piano and strings).

Drums and Arpeggios



The Drum and Arpeggio options are found at the lower left corner of the screen.

When the Drum button is “on,” the QWERTY keyboard can be used to play MIDI drum sounds. For example, “A” plays a kick drum and “D” plays a snare. Some of the sounds are duplicated above and below with slightly different volumes. Q and Z play the same sound as A, but Q is a little louder and Z a little softer.

The numbered keys play various Tom sounds.

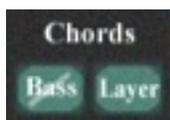
Cymbals and hi-hats are on the right side of the QWERTY keyboard. Other percussion instruments (like bongos and congas) are played when the “Shift” button is held down while playing the QWERTY keys.

When the Arp option is “on,” the Drum option is automatically turned off. In this mode, specific regions of the QWERTY keyboard are used to play individual notes in the chord. The keys A, S, D, F, and G will trigger the bass note and each of the individual notes in the chord. This same functionality is duplicated on the keys T, Y, U, I, and O.

The arrow keys (up, down, left and right) have a similar function. Up plays the bass note, and left, down and right play notes from the chord.

The LB button stands for “Left Bass”, or “the left mouse button plays only bass notes.” This has an interesting function. For example, you could use the left mouse button to play a chord with Arp and LB both “on.” Because LB is “on,” you would hear only the bass note. But if you then played the keys S, D, and F, you would hear each of the individual notes in the chord, played one at a time.

Chord Sound Options



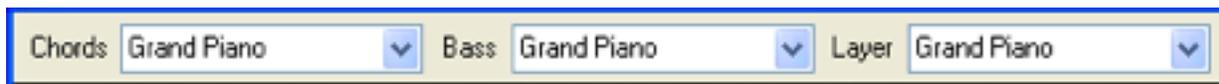
Just like the Solo Keyboard sounds, Chord sounds can also be layered. When the Layer button is selected, a second sound is added

to the chords being played.

When the “No Bass” option is “on,” the chords play without the bass note. This would be useful if you were playing bass notes in the brown and tan section, and answering each bass note with a chord played from the blue or green portion of the same box.

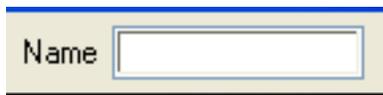
Choosing the MIDI Sounds for Each Part

At the top of the screen are several drop-down boxes which allow you to select which MIDI sound you would like to hear for each of the parts. There are 128 choices for each. This means you can assign which instrument sound you would like to hear for the Chord, the Bass, the (Chord) Layer, the Solo notes, and the Solo Layer. This picture shows three of the drop-down boxes.

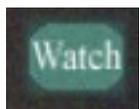


Chord Names are Displayed

The name of the chord is shown at the top right corner of the screen.

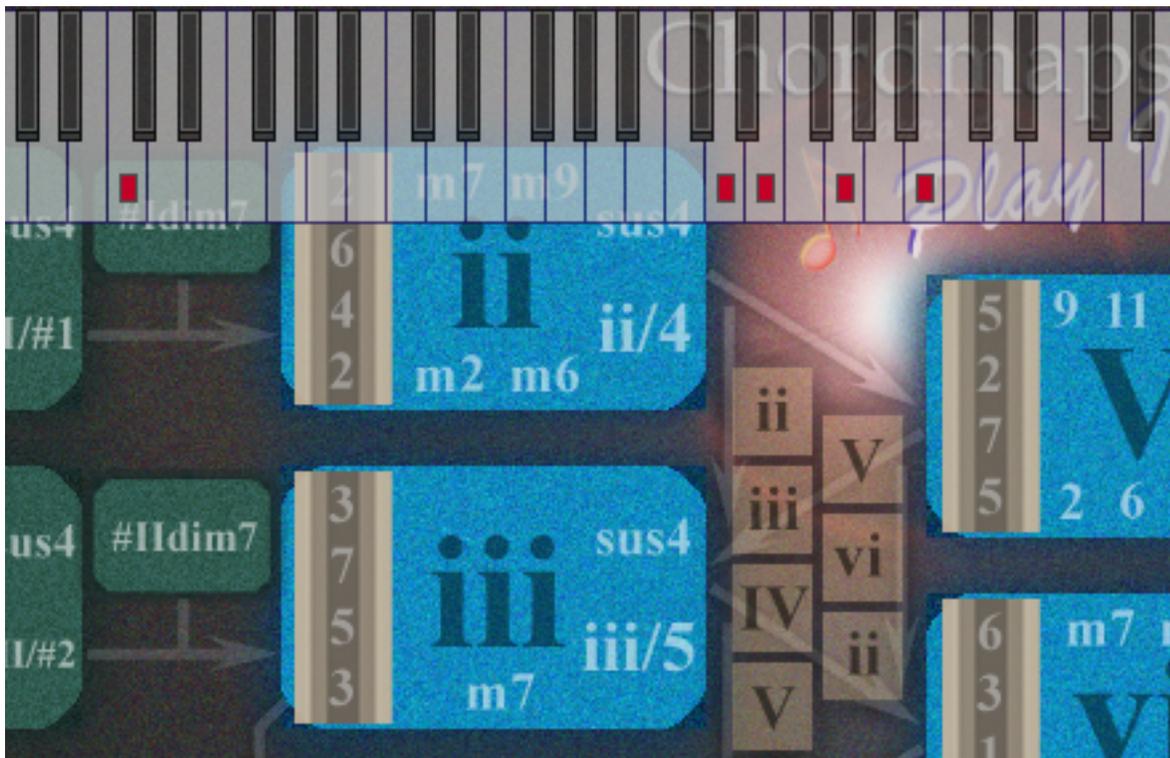


The Notes Are Displayed on a Virtual Keyboard



When the Watch button is “on,” a virtual keyboard appears at the top of the Map, and the notes that make up the chord are indicated.

(See picture at top of next page.)



Setting Double-Click Speed

The computer distinguishes between a single click with the mouse and a double-click. So if you play a chord twice, the computer might think you were intending a double-click, and the second click may not sound. To help with this, it's best to set the double-click speed so that most clicks are interpreted as single clicks and only very fast double-clicks actually register as double-clicks. In the control panel for the keyboard there is a place where you can adjust the speed needed to create a double-click. You can set this parameter so that most clicks will register as single clicks.

Also, the QWERTY keys, which we are using to trigger notes or drum sounds, will do a series of rapid repetitions if held down for more than about half a second. When playing the QWERTY keys, it's better in most cases to let go of the keys after playing them.

Advanced MIDI Options

While experimenting with "Yours To Play It!" I was able to trigger sounds from VST instruments. To do this, I had to download a MIDI jack utility (like LoopBe1, for example). Using the computer's Control Panel, I assigned the MIDI routing from the Windows MIDI stream output to the MIDI jack input. The MIDI jack then passed the MIDI information to the VST. (Important Note: "Yours To Play It"

doesn't have any special MIDI ports of its own. It uses the Windows MIDI outputs. So if you are routing the MIDI stream to another program, don't look for the name "Yours To Play It." Instead find and connect to the MIDI stream coming from Windows.)

Another possibility would be to play sounds in another MIDI keyboard or module. The MIDI assignments are...

Chords are played on MIDI channel 1.

Bass notes are played on MIDI channel 2.

Chord Layer notes are played on MIDI channel 3.

Arpeggio notes for Chords are played on MIDI channel 4.

Arpeggio notes for Bass are played on MIDI channel 5.

Arpeggio notes for Chord Layer sounds are played on MIDI channel 6.

Solo notes are played on MIDI channel 7.

Solo Layer notes are played on MIDI channel 8.

Drum sounds are triggered on MIDI channel 10.

Music Theory Information on the Web

"Yours To Play It!" is an application that grew out of the music theory lessons at Music Theory for Songwriters. If you are interested in learning basic principles of chord flow, you may read these lessons by visiting chordmaps.com.

Contact Information

If you would like to contact us, our email address is... info@mugglinworks.com.

We hope you enjoy working with the program.