Workshop on How to Pick a Key – How to Post a Song

We'll cover the following topics:

1. How to scope out your own vocal range.
2. How to determine in what key a song may have been recorded.
3. How to find the highest and lowest notes in a song.
4. How to transpose a song to a higher or lower key to match your vocal range.
5. How to effectively use a capo.
6. How to put together a lyric sheet with chords.
7. How to use some of the great resources on the web to help you make this happen.
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What’s Your Vocal Range?

Jim’s Vocal Range

Lowest Note:
B on the 5th string

Lowest Comfortable Note:
D on the 4th string

Highest Note:
G on the 1st String

Highest Comfortable Note:
E on the 1st string

Break to Falsetto:
A on the 1st string

Your Own Vocal Range

Lowest Note:

Lowest Comfortable Note:

Highest Note:

Highest Comfortable Note:

Break to Falsetto:
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Determine the key in which the song was recorded.
1. Watch a performance video of the song.
   See if you can spot what chords are being used.
2. Determine what note the verse and/or chorus ends on.
   About 75-80% of the time this will be the tonic chord for the song’s key.
3. Determine what chord the verse and/or chorus ends on.
   About 75-80% of the time this will be the tonic note for the song’s key.
4. Look on the web for video tutorials showing how to play the song.
   These will normally be taught in the original key or it will usually be noted if they’re teaching the song in a different key.

Determine the highest and lowest notes used in a song.
1. Sing along and sing the highest note while you match it on the guitar.
2. Sing along and sing the lowest note while you match it on the guitar.
4. Search on the web for tablature of the song

How to move a song to a higher or lower key to match your vocal range.
1. Compare your vocal range to the highest and lowest notes in the song to determine if the song is correctly pitched, or if it needs to go up or down in pitch.
2. If the song needs to go up in pitch, try using a capo to raise the pitch to a comfortable range for your voice.
3. If the song needs to go up in pitch, you can also try transposing the song to a higher key (see next topic to understand how to do that).
4. If it needs to go down in pitch, try transposing the song to a lower key.
5. If it needs to go down in pitch, try using a combination of transposing the song to a lower key and using a capo to get the most convenient chord shapes when playing the song.
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How to transpose a song to a higher or lower key to match your vocal range.

1. Determine if the song needs to go up or down in pitch.
2. Estimate the number of half or whole steps in the scale that the key will need to change.
3. Make a chord matrix (see below) to calculate the chord relationships between the original key and the transposed key.
4. If you already have a lyric sheet with the original chords use the “Key Converter” found at http://www.logue.net/xp/

Chromatic Scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>C</th>
<th>C#</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>Eb</th>
<th>E</th>
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<th>F#</th>
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<th>Ab</th>
<th>A</th>
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<td>C</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bm</td>
<td>Cm</td>
<td>C#m</td>
<td>Abm</td>
<td>Am</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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Chord Matrix for Key Conversion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Chords in the Original Key of C</th>
<th>Up 1 Half Step</th>
<th>Up 2 Half Steps</th>
<th>Up 3 Half Steps</th>
<th>Up 4 Half Steps</th>
<th>Up 5 Half Steps</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>C#</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>F#</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Bb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Ab</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bm</td>
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<td>C#m</td>
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<td>Gm</td>
<td>Abm</td>
<td>Am</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Ebm</td>
<td>Em</td>
<td>Fm</td>
<td>F#m</td>
<td>Gm</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Chords in the Original Key of C</th>
<th>Down 1 Half Step</th>
<th>Down 2 Half Steps</th>
<th>Down 3 Half Steps</th>
<th>Down 4 Half Steps</th>
<th>Down 5 Half Steps</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
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<td>Bb</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>G</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C#</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
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<td>F#</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<td>Gm</td>
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Common Chords in Various Keys

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Minor</th>
<th>Major</th>
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<th>Other chords</th>
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<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 3 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Am</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Dm Em Bdim (G/B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C#</td>
<td>A#m</td>
<td>F#</td>
<td>G#</td>
<td>D#m E#m B#dim (G#/B#)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Bm</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Em F#m C#dim (A/C#)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>Cm</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>Fm Gm Ddim (Bb/D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>C#m</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>F#m G#m D#dim (B/D#)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F#</td>
<td>D#m</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C#</td>
<td>G#m A#m E#dim (C#/E#)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Em</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Am Bm F#dim (D/F#)</td>
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<tr>
<td>G#</td>
<td>Fm</td>
<td>C#</td>
<td>D#</td>
<td>A#m B#m F#dim (D#/F###)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>F#m</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Bm C#m Gdim (E/G#)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>Gm</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Cm Dm Adim (F/A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>G#m</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F#</td>
<td>C#m D#m A#dim (F#/A#)</td>
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How to effectively use a capo

1. First, determine if the pitch of the song needs to be raised or lowered, and approximately by how much.
2. If the key of the song needs to be raised, determine the vocal range of the song and capo the appropriate number of frets to raise the key to a comfortable range. This is the “no-brainer” easy way to use a capo.
3. If the song needs to be lowered, transpose the song down (usually by 5 or 7 half steps) and then use the capo to raise the key to the appropriate range. You’ll often end up with more convenient chord shapes if you use this technique.

Example 1: The song is too high in the key of G and you want to get it down to the next convenient key (key of E). Transpose the song to the key of C and capo up 4 frets to the “effective key” of E. You’ll be using familiar chord shapes in the key of C.

Example 2: The song is too high in the key of G and you want to get it down to the next convenient key (key of E). Transpose the song to the key of D and capo up 2 frets to the “effective key” of E. You’ll be using familiar chord shapes in the key of D.

Example 3: The song is too high in the key of C and you want to get it down to the next convenient key (key of A). Transpose the song to the key of G and capo up 2 frets to the “effective key” of A. You’ll be using familiar chord shapes in the key of G.

Note: When using this technique, you may have to try a couple of different combinations. Transpose the song to a lower key and then raise the pitch with a capo until you get the most convenient chord shapes and the best vocal range.
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How to locate lyrics and chords for a song

Search the web to see if someone has written up a version of the song with what “appears” to be an accurate combination of chords. You can use a Google search or go to one of the following sites and search directly from within that site.

**ultimate-guitar.com**

This is probably one of the best all-around sites for chords and lyrics. Has a “transpose” feature available for most songs. Usually requires that you “copy and paste” to a text file and then recopy to a full featured word processor. Usually has several versions of a song.

**guitaretab.com**

Another good all-around site for chords and lyrics. Usually has several versions of a song. Chords are sometimes displayed in different layouts, depending on the song version.

**911tabs.com**

A site that searches multiple other sites for chords and lyrics. Very useful.

**cowboylyrics.com**

A site that contains a lot of “country”, “folk”, “bluegrass”, and other traditional style songs with chords and lyrics.

**traditionalmusic.co.uk**

An English site that contains a lot of “folk”, “bluegrass”, “Celtic”, and other traditional style songs with lyrics and chords. They often make a PDF copy of the file available.

**chordie.com**

Lots of songs, chords, and lyrics. Not always in the easiest format to “copy and paste”.

**e-chords.com**

Lots of songs, chords, and lyrics. Not always in the easiest format to “copy and paste”. Has some additional “instructional” features available.

**songster.com**

Lots of songs, chords, and lyrics. Not always in the easiest format to “copy and paste”. Has some additional “instructional” features available. A good source for song tabs and arrangements too.

There are many more web sites where you can find chords and lyrics. This is just a sample of some of the best that I’ve discovered. Some sites focus on certain musical styles. Some sites have more accurate chord transcriptions. Some sites display the chords in an easier to read layout. So, do just rely on only one site for all your needs.
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How to put together a lyric sheet with chords

1. Once you have located a set of lyrics and chords from the Internet, “copy and paste” them into a word processor (usually Microsoft Word or possibly another application - depending on your computer platform, I.E. Windows, Mac, etc.). In some cases, you may have to first copy the song’s chords and lyrics into a “text editor” in order to strip off font formatting. Also, before pasting the content into your word processor, you should set the word processor’s font style to a “mono-type” font (examples would be: Courier, Lucida Console, Lucida Typewriter, etc.). Mono-type font characters and punctuation all have the same width, which usually keeps text and chord symbols in the correct position within the file.

2. Check the results. Sometimes errors creep into the “copy and paste” process due to font style and formatting discrepancies. These errors can skew the placement of the words and the chord symbols. If that happens, you can try getting the lyrics from another site. You also have the options to play around with formatting and font selection after you’ve pasted the content into the word processor or manually make adjustments to the placement of the words and chord.

3. Play through the song several times to see if you’re happy with the results. You may need to make adjustments to words, chords, chord placement, and formatting as needed.

4. Convert or the word processor file to a PDF file format. Microsoft Word has this capability built in to the application. Some other word processors do to, or you can use a PDF conversion application.

5. Upload the file to the Meetup “Files” list or the Dropbox file storage location.

www.meetup.com/Not-Ready-for-Tour-Alaska-Acoustic-Practice-Group/files
www.dropbox.com/home/Not%20Ready%20for%20Tour

The preferred file format for posting songs is PDF, but if you don’t have the ability to convert to this format, forward the file to Carl or Jim and they’ll convert it for you.
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Internet tools and computer applications to help you learn and play music

- **YouTube**: A great place to get videos of songs and performers. Also, it hosts a wealth of video tutorials. See info about YTD (YouTube Downloader below)

- **Dropbox/GoodReader**: Dropbox is an Internet-based file storage platform. It can be accessed through a browser on your desktop or laptop computer, or by using the Dropbox app or GoodReader app on your mobile devices. GoodReader is a mobile app that has file search capability and some sorting capability that the basic Dropbox app doesn’t have.

- **VLC Media Player**: This is a free media player application that has some additional features which you won’t find in the Windows Media Player or Apple’s QuickTime media player. You can download and install VLC Player on a PC or Mac computer, and it gives you ability to loop, slow down, and manipulate audio or video files. It’s capable of playing almost any audio or video file format in use.

- **Windows Media Player**: This is Microsoft’s built-in media player that comes with Windows. It can play audio and video files, and it can also be used to manage your audio and video files as “libraries”.

- **QuickTime**: This is Apple’s media player. It also comes in a version that can be downloaded and run on a Windows PC.

- **iTunes**: This is another Apple media player that has built-in capability to interact with the Apple Store as well as play audio and video files. It can also manage your audio and video files as “libraries”.

- **YTD (YouTube Downloader)**: This computer application allows you to easily download and save copies of the files available on YouTube. The files can be stored locally on your computer, so you don’t have to search for them or be connected to the Internet to play them. You can also play these files with a media player and do things like slow down the content or loop it to help you analyze and learn from the YouTube videos. In addition, you can use this application to convert video files to audio. There is a free version of YTD available and they also sell a for-purchase version. The free version has all of the commonly used features, so it’s not really necessary to purchase the commercial version. It can be easily downloaded and installed on your computer. It requires the latest version of Adobe Flashplayer, which is available from Adobe’s website.

  Continued on the next page
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Internet tools and computer applications to help you learn and play music

- **Audacity**: This is a free audio editing program for your desktop or laptop computer. It can be used for a variety of editing tasks, including changing the speed of a song or changing the pitch of a song, as well as a variety of other editing changes to an MP3 audio file.

- **RiffStation**: This is a computer application that allows you to change the pitch of a song, filter out certain portions of the mix, and calculate capo settings and key changes. Unfortunately, there isn’t a free version of this application for your computer, but there is a free web version that is available at: play.riffstation.com

- **Guitar Pro**: This is an application for writing, editing, and playing tablature for a variety of instruments. It also can work with music notation. It is a for-purchase product, but they have a free “demo” version that allows you to play and edit tablature and music notation, – you just can’t save your changes. It uses a .pdf file format, and there are a lot of tabs that have been written up and circulated in this format. It’s available for download at: www.guitar-pro.com

There are a number of additional computer applications and mobile apps that are available to use for playing and editing audio and video files. Many of these applications provide learning techniques for playing guitar and other instruments, as well as helping you to learn how to improve your singing. Explore the web for more info on these tools. Remember, you’ll also find a number of YouTube videos that demonstrate how to use many of these Internet tools and applications.
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Will The Circle Be Unbroken

Medium Tempo

Will the circle be unbroken, bye and bye, Lord in the sky, waiting in the sky, G

Rocky Top

Up Tempo

Wish that I was on old Rocky Top, down the Tennessee hills on a sunny day, ain't no smoggy smoke on Rocky Top, ain't no telephone good old Rocky Top, Top, Top, Tennessee

This Land is Your Land

This land is your land, This land is my land. From California, To the New York islands, From the redwood forests, To the Gulf Stream waters, This land was made for you and me.