

## EASY CLASSIC SONGS

Here is a compact songbook with classic favorites that work in bluegrass style. Words and rhythm markings are provided. The chords are given in the number system, allowing you to choose the key.

A song can be sung and played in any key. The choice is based on what is comfortable for both singing and playing. Being able to play three-chord songs in different keys gives more choices for singing. The keys of G and D use easy chords on all instruments, and one key or the other will generally work for singing. Also, guitars and banjos may raise keys by using a capo.

Most bluegrass, American and British folk and country songs use three-chord structures, often referred to as 1 4 5. These numbers are like placeholders for notes of the scale of whatever key you're in.

In the key of G, for instance, the first note of the scale is a G. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> notes are C and D.

So G, C, and D are the 1, 4, and 5 of the key of G. The chords based on these notes are also called 1, 4, and 5, and sometimes the chords are given as Roman numerals (I, IV, V).

Here are the 1, 4, and 5 chords (one, four and five) for common singing and playing keys.

Key of	1 (I)	4 (IV)	5 (V)*
G	G	C	D
A	A	D	E
C	C	F	G
D	D	G	A
E	E	A	B

\* A 5 chord may be played as a 7<sup>th</sup> chord, a slightly embellished chord that in some cases is easier to play than the plain 5 chord. Examples: Banjo players in the key of G will sometimes play a D7 (rather than D) or guitar players in the key of E will play B7 (rather than B). Many songbooks routinely show 5 chords as 7<sup>th</sup> chords, but in bluegrass, 5 chords are *not* normally made as 7<sup>th</sup> chords.

Songbooks generally give chords by name but not by number. That is, they pick the key for each song

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with no option indicated of what to do if you can't play or sing the song easily in that key. Sometimes a problem with singing or playing a song in a certain key leads a person to avoid doing the song, but the problem can be solved by *transposing*, that is, switching a song from one key to another. Transposing can be done quickly with a little experience. The chart above provides a guide for transposing, or for "plugging in" the chords to the 1, 4, 5 numbers given with the songs.

Pick a song you know. Try a key (I suggest G or D) and see if it works for singing by plugging in the proper chords, and singing along. If the chords and your voice don't match up easily, try translating the 1, 4, and 5 chords into the other key and see if it works better. Do whatever comes naturally with the right hand. Have a good time.

If you are not certain of the timing, try tapping your foot or strumming exactly where the markings are under the words. Marks under blank spots indicate that the rhythm continues through pauses in the singing.

Aim to play a song: without stopping from start to finish without having to look at your instrument without looking at the chord changes in the book or from another person without looking at the words in the book.

The more easily you can do all of the above on a song, the easier it is to lead it in a jam.

Memorizing the chords to songs will help your ability to hear *when* chord changes are supposed to happen, an important ear skill. Soon you will start to get a sense of when it sounds like the chord is going from 1 to 4, or to 5, and back to 1. These are fundamental ear skills for bluegrass musicians.

If you want to learn the chords to a song you can't find in a songbook, try experimenting. Most songs start on 1, and nearly all end by going to 5 and then 1. Trial and error is the traditional way bluegrass musicians find chord changes. A chord tends to sound correct when it includes the main notes of that part of the melody. Give it a try. Even if coming up with the right chords doesn't come easily at first, be ready to cultivate this skill in time. It's important.

## Hot Corn Cold Corn

Chorus:

(1) Hot corn cold corn bring along a demijohn,

(5) Hot corn cold corn bring along a demijohn

(1) Hot corn cold corn bring along a demijohn,

(5) Fare thee well Uncle Bill see you in the morning - Yes (1)Sir\*

Well it's upstairs downstairs out in the kitchen (3x)

See Uncle Bill he's a-raring and a-pitching, yes - Sir

Old Aunt Peggy won't you fill 'em up again (3x)

Ain't had a drink since I don't know when, yes - Sir

Yonder comes the preacher & the children are a-crying (3x)

Chickens all around and the toenails a-flying, Yes - Sir.

[\*Note: "Yes - Sir" is a 1/2 measure, leaves out a beat]

## Worried Man Blues

Chorus

(1) It takes a worried man to sing a worried song.

It (4) takes a worried man to sing a worried (1) song

It takes a worried man to sing a worried song.

I'm worried (5) now, but I won't be worried (1)long.

I went across the river and I laid down to sleep, (3x) When I woke up - I had shackles on my feet.

Twenty one links of chain around my leg, (3x) And on each link, the initials of my name.

I asked the judge, what's going to be my fine, (3x) Twenty-one years, on the Rocky Mountain line.

If anyone should ask you, who made up this song (3x) Tell them it was I - and I sing it all day long.

## Mountain Dew

Chorus:

Oh they (1) call it that good old mountain dew  
And (4) them that refuse it are (1) few  
I'll hush up my mug if you fill up my jug  
With that good old (5) mountain (1) dew

My uncle Mort, he's sawed off and short,  
Measures 'bout four foot two,  
But he thinks he's a giant if you give him a pint  
Of that good old mountain dew.

The preacher came by with a tear in his eye,  
Said his wife had been down with the flu.  
We said that he ought to give her a quart  
Of that good old mountain dew.

My Auntie June has a brand new perfume,  
It has such a sweet-smelling phue  
Imagine her surprise when she had it analyzed.  
It was nothing but that good old mountain dew.

## Lonesome Road Blues

(1)Going down that long lonesome road, Lord, Lord  
(4)Going down that long lonesome (1) road  
(4)Going down that long lonesome (1)road, Lord, Lord.  
And I (5) ain't gonna be treated this a-(1)way.

Two-dollar shoes on my feet (2x)  
Two-dollar shoes on my feet, Lord, Lord,  
And I ain't gonna be treated this a-way

(Following verses in the same way:)

Ten-dollar shoes fit me fine  
Going where the climate suits my clothes  
They feed me on cornbread and beans  
Going where the chilly winds don't blow.

## Red River Valley

From this (1) valley they say you are going  
We will miss your bright eyes and sweet (5)smile  
For they (1) say you are taking the (4)sunshine  
That has (1) brightened our (5)path for a (1)while.

Come and sit by my side if you love me  
Do not hasten to bid me adieu,  
But remember the Red River Valley,  
And the one who loved you so true.

Do you think of the valley you're leaving?  
O how lonely and sad it will be  
Do you think of the kind heart you're breaking.  
And the pain you are causing to me?

As you go to your home by the ocean,  
May you never forget those sweet hours,  
That we spent in the Red River Valley,  
And the love we exchanged mid the flowers.

## This Land is Your Land

--by Woody Guthrie, permission requested

(1)This land is (4)your land, this land is (1)my land  
From Cali (5)ifornia, to the New York(1)island.  
From the redwood (4)forest, to the Gulf Stream(1)waters  
(5)This land was made for you and (1)me.

As I was walking, that ribbon of highway,  
I saw above me, that endless skyway,  
I saw below me, that golden valley, This land was made for you and me.

I've roamed and rambled, and I followed my footsteps  
To the sparkling sands of, her diamond deserts,  
And all around me, a voice was sounding: This land was made for you  
and me.

When the sun came shining, and I was strolling,  
And the wheat fields waving & the dust clouds rolling,  
As the fog was lifting, a voice was chanting: This land was made for...

These next three songs use the same chord pattern:

| 1-1-1-1 | 1-1-1-1 | 1-1-1-1 | 5-5-5-5 |  
| 1-1-1-1 | 4-4-4-4 | 1-1-5-5 | 1-1-1-1 |

My Walkin' Shoes,  
Katy Cline,  
The Crowdad Song, and  
Will You Be Loving Another Man.

### **She'll Be Coming Round the Mountain**

(1) She'll be coming round the mountain when she comes,  
She'll be coming round the mountain when she (5) comes,  
She'll be (1) coming round the mountain,  
She'll be (4) coming round the mountain,  
She'll be (1) coming round the (5) mountain when she (1) comes.

(Following verses in the same way:)  
She'll be riding six white horses when she comes  
Oh we'll all go out to meet her when she comes  
Oh we'll kill the old red rooster when she comes  
We'll all have chicken & dumplings when she comes  
\_\_(make up your own)

### **When the Saints Go Marching In**

Oh when the (1) saints, go marching in  
Oh when the saints go marching (5)  
Oh! (1) want to be in that (4) number  
When the (1) saints go (5) marching (1) in.  
(Following verses in the same way:)

Oh when the band begins to play  
Oh when the sun begins to shine  
Oh when the banjo sounds the call  
(make up your own)

## Rollin' My Sweet Baby's Arms

Chorus:

(1) Roll in my sweet baby's arms,  
Roll in my sweet baby's (5) arms  
(1) Lay 'round the shack 'till the (4) mail train come back  
(1) Roll in my 5 sweet baby's (1) arms

(Verses:)

Where was you last Friday night  
When I was locked up in jail  
Walking the streets with another man  
You wouldn't even go my bail

I know your parents don't like me  
They throw me away from your door  
If I had my life to live over  
I wouldn't go there any more

Sometimes there's a change in the ocean  
Sometimes there's a change in the sea  
Sometimes there's a change in my own true love  
But there's never a change in me.

## Catfish John

Chorus

Momma said don't go near that river,  
Don't be hanging 'round old Catfish John  
In the morning I'd always be there  
Walking in his footsteps in the sweet delta dawn.

Born a slave in the town of Pittsburgh  
Traded for a chestnut mare  
He never spoke a word in anger  
Though his load was hard to bear.

Catfish John was a river hobo  
He lived and died on the river bend  
Looking back I still remember  
I was proud to be his friend

## Katy Daley

(2 chord song using 1 and 5 chords)

(1) Well her old man she came from Tipperary  
In the pioneering days of '42(5)  
Her old man was shot in Tombstone City  
For the making of his good old mountain (1) dew

Chorus

Oh come on down the mountain Katy Daley  
Come on down the mountain Katy do (2)  
Can't you hear us calling Katy Daley  
We want to drink your good old mountain (1) dew

(1) Wake up and pay attention Katy Daley  
For I'm the judge that's gonna sentence you (2)  
All the boys in court have drunk your whiskey  
To tell the truth I like a little (1) too

Chorus

(1) So to the jail they took poor Katy Daley  
And pretty soon the gates were open wide (2)  
Angels came for poor old Katy Daley  
Took her far across the great (1) divide

Chorus

## Mama Don't 'Low

(1) Mama don't allow no music playing here  
Mama don't allow no music playing (5) here  
(1) We don't care what mama don't allow,  
Gonna (4) play our music any ol' how  
(1) Mama don't allow no (5) music playing (1) 'round here

Mama don't allow no banjo pickin' 'round here...  
Mama don't allow no guitar playin' 'round here...  
Mama don't like no bluegrass music round here...  
(make up your own)