

VisiChord Chord Visualizer User's Manual

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1 What is VisiChord?

VisiChord is a program that a user can use to simultaneously interact with musical chords in multiple ways. It allows chords to be displayed in several ways, manipulated, and played back. Developed for use as an instructional aide, it can also be used by individuals to increase their understanding of chords.

2 Running VisiChord

VisiChord requires Java 1.4 to run. You can download Java 1.4 from the Java website, <http://java.sun.com>. Once VisiChord has been unzipped, it is run simply by opening the Visichord.jar file. VisiChord works best with a screen resolution of 1024x768 or higher.

3 Chord manipulation

3.1 Adding notes with the onscreen staff

When you click on the staff on the screen, a note is added or removed on that line based on whether or not it is already there. If the note being added is already present but on the other clef, it is removed from that clef it is on and added to the spot you clicked. Similarly, if an alternate representation of a note is present, i.e., A \flat when you clicked G \sharp , the alternate representation is removed and is replaced with the representation indicated. To add or remove sharps, hold down the shift key when clicking. To add or remove flats, hold down the control key (command on Macs) when clicking.

3.2 Adding notes with the onscreen keyboard

Notes are added and removed with the onscreen keyboard by clicking on the keys of the keyboard. A dot on the key indicates that that note is in the chord; clicking on a key with a dot will remove that note, and clicking on a key without a dot will add that note. Non-natural notes are added as sharps by default, though they may be changed to flats to avoid having multiple notes on the same line.

3.3 Adding notes with the tty entry box

Below the piano keyboard, there is a text entry box. Typing text into this box can add notes to a chord, but it cannot remove them. Notes are added by typing them in standard designation, e.g., "C \sharp 4". ' \sharp ' indicates a sharp, 'b' indicates a flat. A note must contain no spaces, and each note must be separated by a space. When all notes are input, hit the enter key to add them to the current chord. If there is incorrectly formatted text, notes will be added up until the text and the text will be highlighted from the incorrect text onward.

3.4 Transposing a chord

The currently selected chord can be transposed up or down half steps. This is done by clicking on the transpose arrows found on the right side of the display.



3.5 Changing the breakpoint

The breakpoint determines whether notes input using the piano display or the tty entry box are added on the treble or bass clef. Notes below the breakpoint are added on the bass clef. The breakpoint and notes above it are added to the treble clef. The breakpoint can be changed by clicking on the change breakpoint button at the bottom of the window.



Once the change breakpoint dialog box has come up, it will display a staff with the notes that are on both staves removed. Clicking on the staff (using the same modifier keys for sharps and flats) will select a new breakpoint. It will be set as the new breakpoint once you hit OK.

3.6 Changing the highlight color

It may be desirable at times to change the highlight color of the current chord. This can be done by clicking on the color palette button at the bottom of the window.



Once the color change dialog box has come up, choose the new highlight color using one of the color choosing methods. The black sample text on the bottom will give you some idea of what the notes will actually look like on the color you choose.

4 Sound

4.1 Playing a chord

The currently selected chord can be played by clicking on the play arrow on the right side of the window. Pressing this button will make the chord play whether the playback option is on or off.



4.2 Other times a chord plays

If the playback option is on, a chord will play when it is transposed or when it is selected (either by clicking on it directly or scrolling to it).



To disable this behavior, click on the toggle sound button on the bottom of the window. Once it is disabled, it should look like this.



5 Getting around the chord set

5.1 Getting to the next or previous chord

To get to the chord to the left or the right of the current chord, you can use the left and right arrows on the keyboard, or you can click on the left and right scroll arrows on the right side of the window.



5.2 Getting to the chord just off the edge of the display

If the currently selected chord is not already the first one, the chord just to the left of those displayed will become selected by clicking on the clefs. If the currently selected chord is not already the last one, the chord just to the right of those displayed will become selected by clicking on the partial staff at the right end of the display.

5.3 Getting to the beginning or end

To get to the first chord in the chord set, click on the beginning arrow on the right side of the window or hit ctrl-left arrow (cmd-left arrow on Mac) on the keyboard. To get to the last chord, click on the end arrow or hit ctrl-right arrow (cmd-right arrow on Mac) on the keyboard.



6 Manipulating the chord set

6.1 Adding chords

When you open VisiChord there is one chord on the staves. To add a new chord directly after the current chord, hit enter or press the insert chord button in the toolbar at the bottom of the window.



To add a chord at the end of the chord set, scroll to the end of the chord set and click on the partial staff on the right side of the staves. To add a chord at the beginning of the chord set, scroll to the beginning of the chord set and click on the clefs on the left side of the staves.

6.2 Clearing all chords

To clear all the chords and their titles and make it so that there is only one chord in the chord set, click on the clear everything button on the bottom of the window or hit ctrl-e (cmd-e on the Mac) on the keyboard. This action cannot be undone and clears the undelete buffer and the clipboard.



6.3 Copying chords

To put the contents of a chord and its title onto the clipboard without clearing or deleting the chord, click on the copy button on the bottom of the window or hit ctrl-c (cmd-c on the Mac) on the keyboard.



6.4 Clearing chords

To clear the contents of a chord and its title and put it on the clipboard without removing the space it was in, click on the clear button on the bottom of the window or hit ctrl-l (cmd-l on the Mac) on the keyboard.



6.5 Deleting chords

To clear the contents of a chord and its title and remove the space it was in, click on the delete button on the bottom of the window or hit ctrl-x (cmd-x on the Mac) on the keyboard. The chord is put onto the clipboard.



6.6 Undeleting chords

If a chord has been deleted, it can be added back into the chord set by clicking the undelete button at the bottom of the window or hitting ctrl-z (cmd-z on the Mac) on the keyboard.



6.7 Pasting chords

The chord that is currently on the clipboard can be pasted over the currently selected chord by clicking on the paste button or hitting ctrl-v (cmd-v on the Mac) on the keyboard.



7 Loading and saving files

7.1 Saving files

To save the current chord set as a VisiChord file (.vc) click on the save button or hit ctrl-s (cmd-s on the Mac) on the keyboard.



7.2 Loading files

To load a VisiChord file (.vc) click on the load file button or hit ctrl-o (cmd-o on the Mac) on the keyboard. These chords will overwrite those currently present, so you are prompted to save the chords that are currently displayed before loading a new file. If the file is improperly formatted, as many chords as possible will be added and an error message will be displayed.



7.3 Creating a VisiChord file

The following is a sample VisiChord file.

```
TITLE: C major progression
BREAKPOINT: B3
CHORDS:
Chord 1 ( | C4 E4 G4)
Chord 2 ( | E4 G4 C5)
Chord 3 ( | G4 C5 E5)
Chord 4 (C5 E5 G5)
```

The **TITLE:** tag must be first, the text following it will become the chord set title.

The next line contains the **BREAKPOINT:** tag. This is used to indicate the default breakpoint for this chord set. In Chord 3, it will be used to place the notes on the bass or treble clef.

The third line contains the **CHORDS:** tag. Everything following this is considered a chord. Text encountered up until a right parenthesis becomes the chord title. A right parenthesis indicates the beginning of the notes in a chord, and a left parenthesis indicates the end of the notes in the chord. Text after that is considered a new chord. The horizontal bar inside the parentheses manually indicates which clef to put the notes on. It overrides the breakpoint. Notes before the bar go on the bass clef, and notes after the bar go on the treble clef.