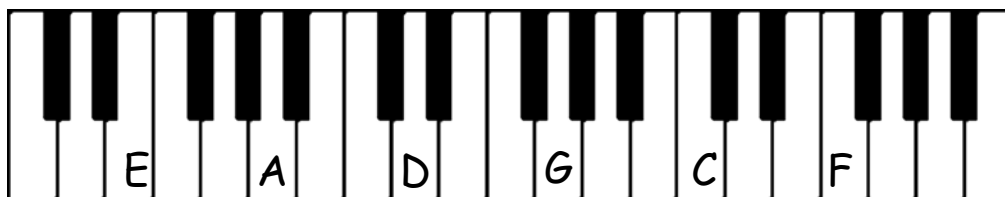


## Fourths

*The interval you'll use most in the system is the 4th.*

Nate's Three Finger Piano Method uses the interval of the fourth a lot – so we're going to take this chapter to get to know this very important interval.

Look at the diagram below. Each of these notes is a fourth away from the next.



Can you figure out the pattern between them? Try counting the *white* keys between them. Do you see how there are two white keys between of these keys with a letter written on it?

This is going to be our rule for finding fourths between white keys.

**Rule:** To find fourths between white keys, go up three white keys, or down three white keys.

Now to show you a little of how the system works. I want you to play the first note on this chart, the note E.



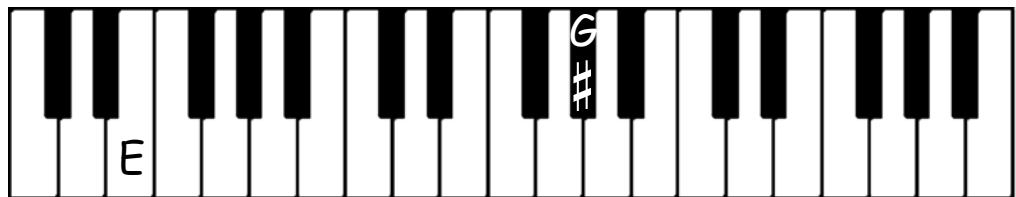
Now play both E and A.



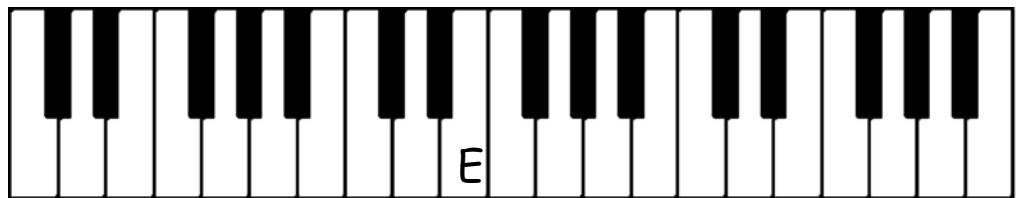
Now I want you to play the black key just to the left of A. This note is called G sharp.



Now play both E and G#. Since the note A is a **fourth** above E, the note just to the left is called the **major 3<sup>rd</sup>**. So G# is the major 3<sup>rd</sup> of E. They sound nice together, don't they? A major chord can be made simply from a note and its major 3<sup>rd</sup>. Of course in music, the third will probably be an octave higher than the root note – like this:



Now let's go back and find E again, only this time, let's find the note E higher on the keyboard.

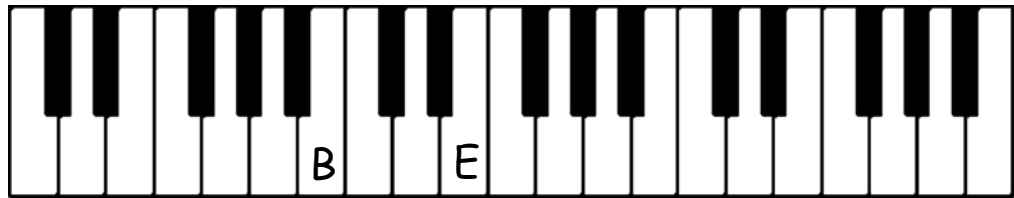


Now find the note a fourth down from E. Remember it's the third *white* key down (skip two white keys).

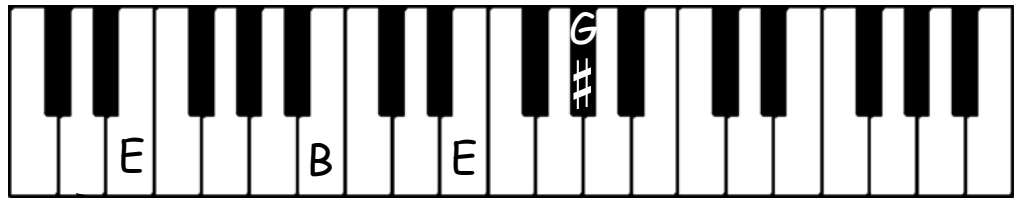
You should get this note:



Now play them together:



Now add back in your note G#:



Play the bottom note here in the left hand.

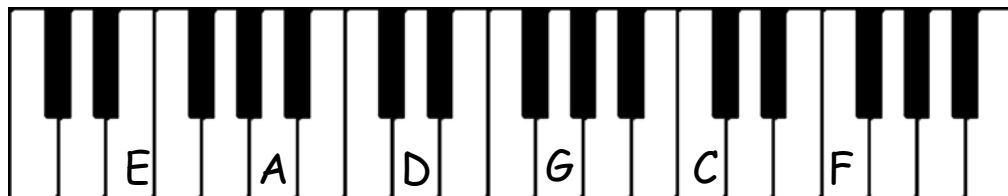
So the note E is the root of the chord. The note G# is the major 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the note B? The note B is the fifth.

It maybe a little confusing at first, but the 5<sup>th</sup> of a chord is down a fourth from the root!

**Rule:** The 5<sup>th</sup> of a chord is down a fourth from the root.

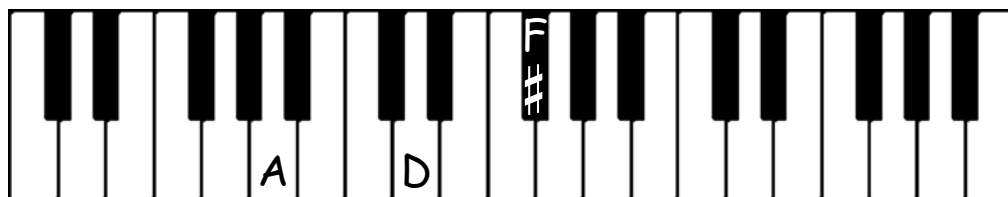
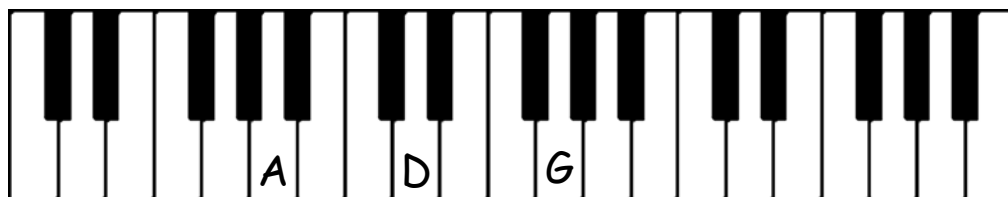


Now this principle will work for all of these chords. Say you want to form a D chord, look at the fourths chart again.



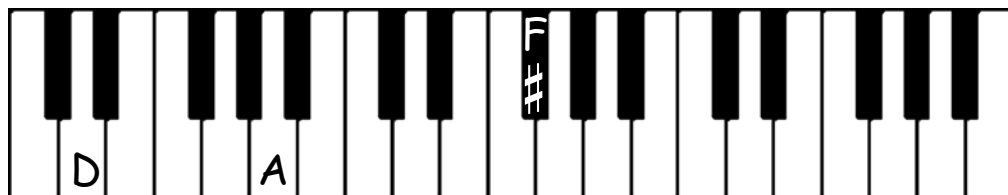
The fifth will be the note a fourth to the left (A).

The third will be down a half-step from the note a fourth to the right (F#)

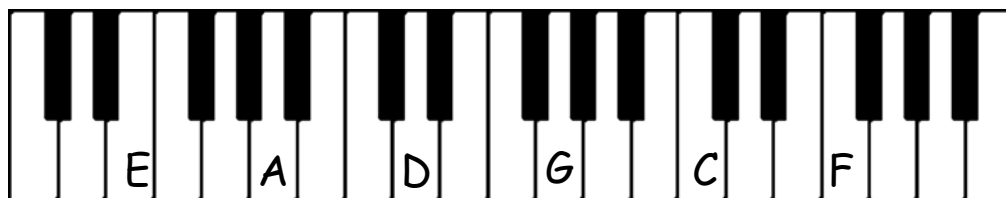


So this is a D chord. Very easy to find when you know fourths!

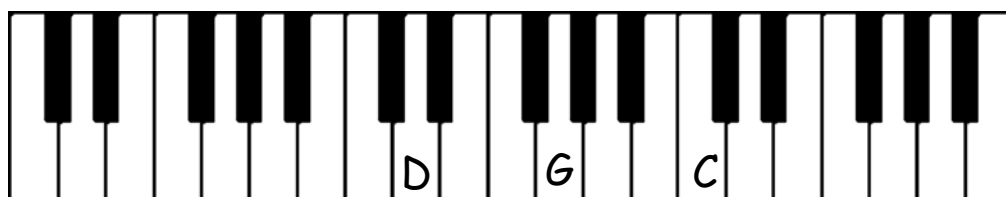
Of course, the root will usually be played down an octave or two.



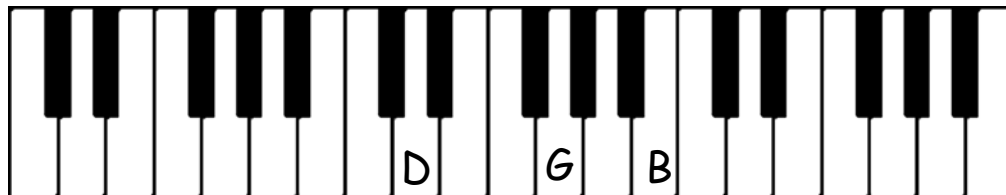
How about a G chord? Again, look at the fourths chart.



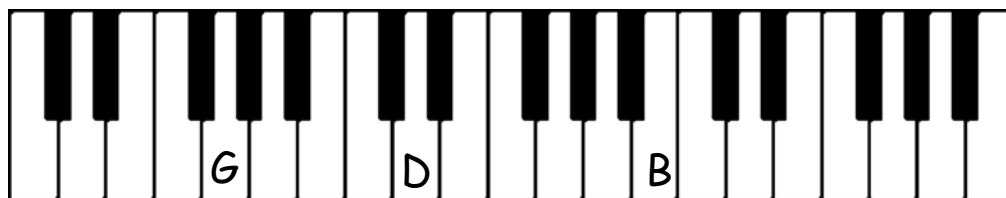
Now take the notes a fourth up and a fourth down.



Now find the note down a half-step from the highest note. This time it won't be a black key, because there isn't a black key to the left of the top note.

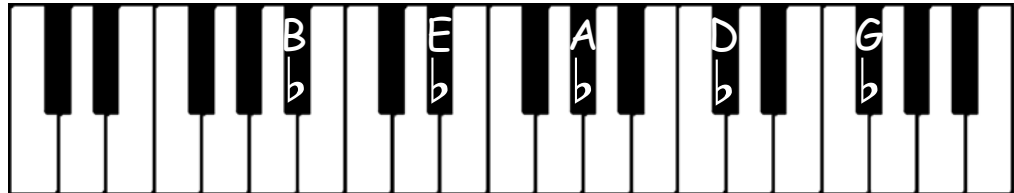


And there you go, the G chord. Now try it with the middle note down an octave (and in the left hand)



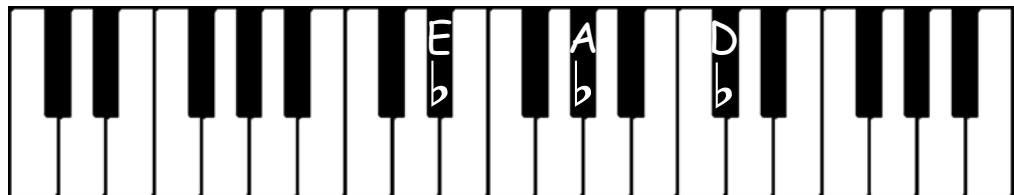
## Fourths between the black keys on the Piano

Below you see another chart of notes a fourth apart, only this time, between black keys. Do you see how there is one black key between each key with a name label on it? This is our rule for black keys.

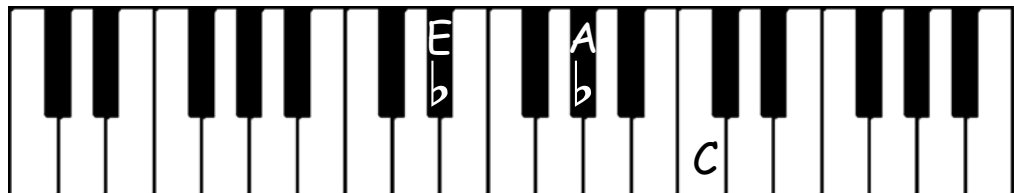


**Rule:** To find fourths between black keys go down two black keys, or up two black keys (skip one black key).

The same process I was showing you for finding major chords works with the black keys as well. For example, let's say we want to find the chord Ab Major. Simply take Ab, the note a fourth to the left on the keyboard and the note a fourth to the right on the keyboard – this will be your starting position for figuring out the chord.



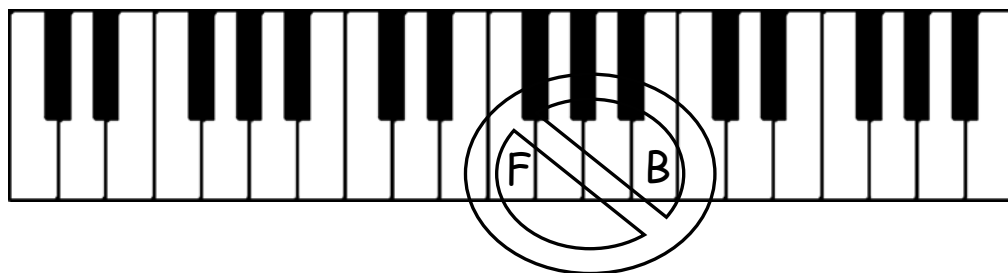
Now take the right-most key down a half-step and you'll have a major chord.



So this is an Ab Major chord. You could also take the middle note (the root) down an octave or two and play it in the left hand.

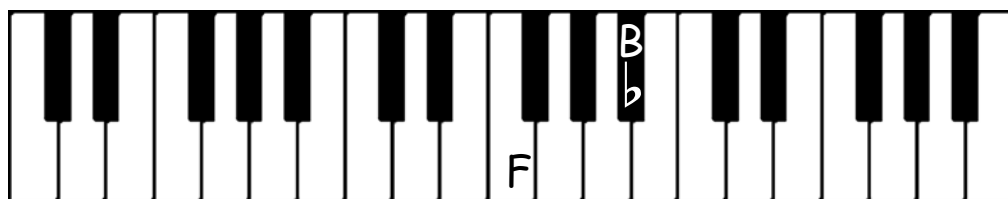
## The First Exception to the Fourths Rule.

There are two exceptions to the fourths rule. First, remember the rule for white keys, well, this doesn't work between the notes F and B. These two notes, even though they have two white keys between them, are NOT a fourth! This exception you simply have to memorize. The fourth above F is Bb.



*NOT A  
FOURTH*

A Fourth Above F is Bb. A Fourth Below Bb is F.



*An "Exceptional" Fourth*

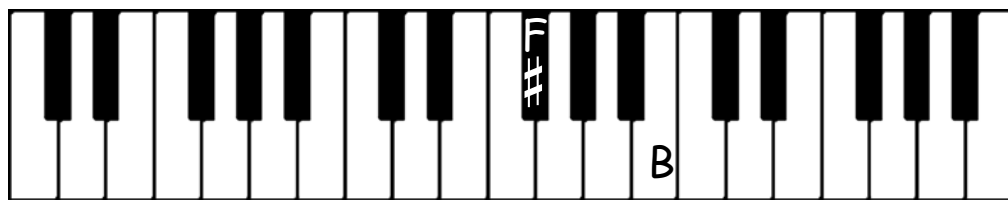
## The Second Exception to the Fourths Rule.

The interval between F# and A#, while it skips one black key is *NOT* a fourth. But F# to B is!



*NOT A  
FOURTH*

A Fourth Above F# is B. A Fourth Below B is F#.



*An "Exceptional" Fourth*



## Practice Finding Chords Around the Exceptional Fourths

To find an F chord, you'll need a fourth above, Bb, and a fourth below, C.

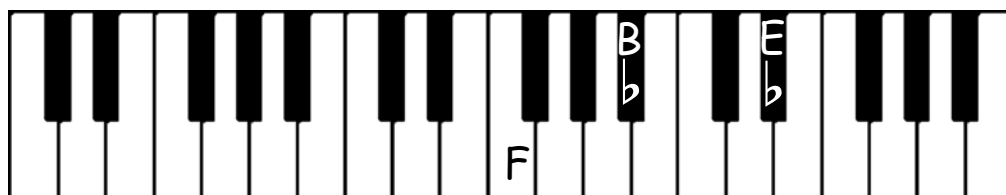


Then take the top note down a half-step, so Bb will go to A.

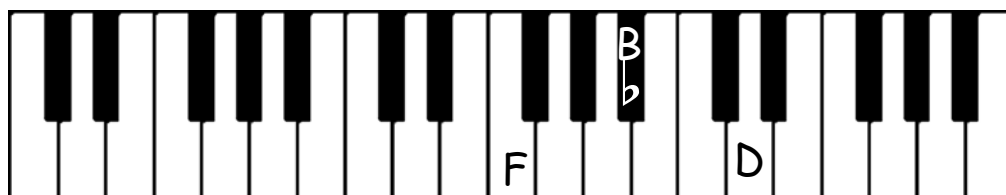


This is an F chord. The note C is the fifth, the note A is the major 3<sup>rd</sup>.

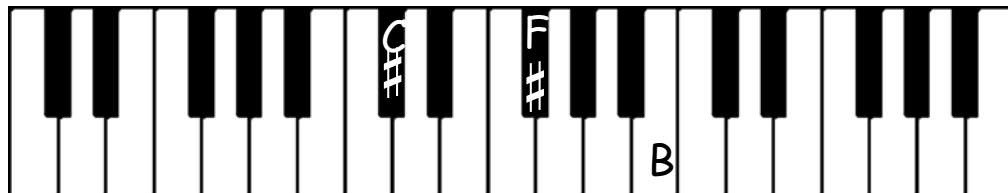
How about an Bb chord? You can use the rule for black keys to find the note above (Eb), but the fourth below is one of the exceptions, so you just have to know that a fourth below Bb is F.



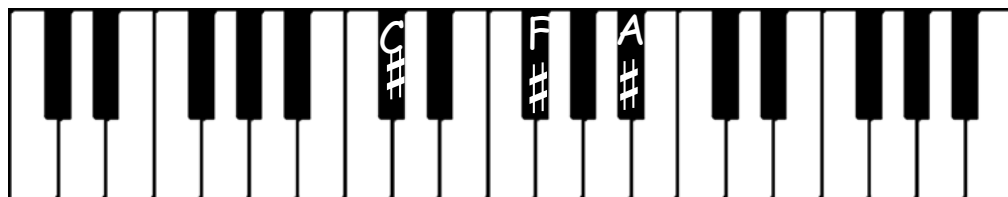
OK, now take the top note down a half-step and you'll have a Bb chord.



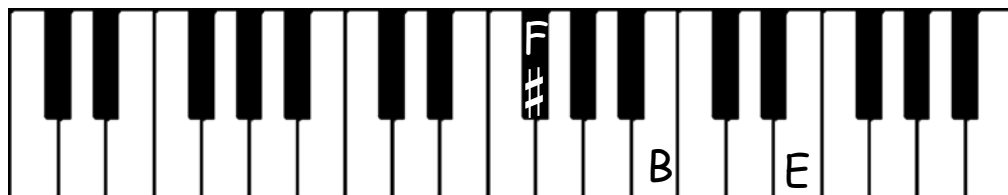
OK, now let's look at chords that are built using the fourth between F# and B. The first such a chord is the chord F# major. Here's F# and the notes a fourth down and a fourth up from F#.



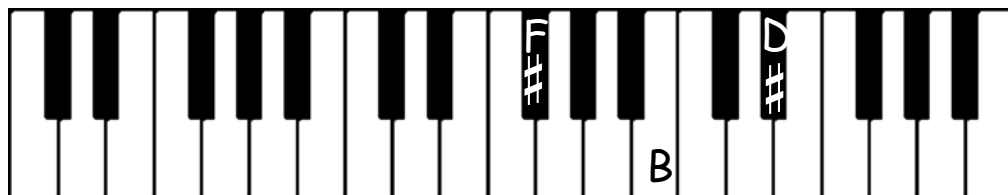
OK, now bring the top note down a half-step. This is an F# Major chord.



How about a B chord? The fourth down from B is F# and the fourth above B is E.



Now take the top note down a half-step and you'll have a B chord.



Now practice finding fourths on the keyboard, from this notation. In this first example, you see two measures of music. In the first measure are the notes A and E played simultaneously. In the second measure, you will take the A down a half-step to G# (to the black key just to the left of A). Above these two notes, you'll see the chord symbol for the chord E, which is simply the letter E.

E

A                      G#  
E                      E

Here's another example. The D, the fourth above it (G) – and then the note a half-step down from G, F#. F# is the major 3<sup>rd</sup> of a D chord.

D

G                      F#  
D                      D

## Fourths Study One

5

F Bb Bb A Eb Ab Ab G

F F Eb Eb

5

Db Gb Gb F C F E F# B

Db Db C C C C

10

B A# E A A G# D G G F#

F# F# E E D D

15

C# F# E#(F) G C C B F Bb

C# C# G G

20

F Eb Ab Ab G D G F#

F F Eb Eb D D

## Fourths Study Two

A<sup>b</sup>

Ab Eb Ab Db C G D

Ab  
Eb

G F<sup>#</sup>

5

G C B F# C# F# B A#

G  
D F#  
C#

F

10

F C F Bb A E B E A

F  
C

E E<sup>b</sup>

15

G# Eb Bb Eb Ab G D A

E  
B Eb  
Bb

D D<sup>b</sup>

20

D G F# Db Ab Db Gb F

D  
A Db  
Ab

## Fourths Study Three

1 C

C F G C F E F Bb  
C C G C G

5 F

C F Bb A Bb Eb F Bb  
F C F C

9 Bb Eb

Eb D Eb Ab Bb Eb Ab G  
Bb Bb Eb Eb  
F F Bb Bb

13 Ab Ab

Ab Db Eb Ab Db C Db Gb  
Ab Ab Eb Eb

17 Db

Ab Db Gb F F# B C# F#  
Db Db Ab Ab

21 F# B

B A# B E F# B E D#  
F# F# B B B  
C# C# F# F#

If you feel you know your fourths and would like to test yourself, visit the online quiz:

<http://www.patternpiano.com/fourths/>