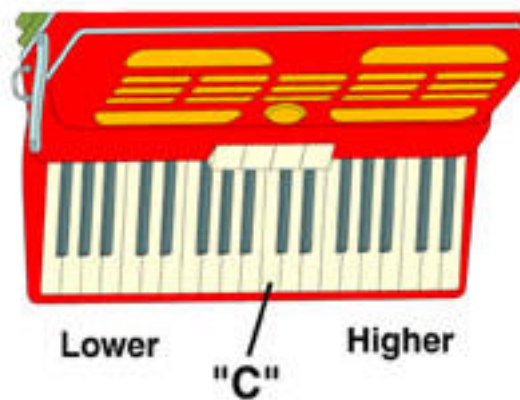


# Learn To Play Accordion



## Getting Started

### Fundamentals of Accordion

Sit Down On A Chair

Set Accordion On Left Knee

Right Hand Operates Keyboard

Left Hand Pumps Bellows

Put Straps Over Shoulders

Adjust Straps As Necessary

Slip Left Hand Under Strap On Button Side

Adjust Strap As Necessary (knurly near top of strap)

Play Keyboard With Right Hand

Pump Bellows With Left Hand

# Quick Overview of How To Do It

## About The Keyboard

The white keys are named from A through G, while the black keys are named after the white keys depending on whether they are a half step higher (sharp) or lower (flat) than the adjacent white key. Flat if lower, Sharp if higher. Each black key thus has two names. A sharp is the same as B flat.

There are groups of three black keys, and groups of two black keys.

There are a total of 12 black and white keys in each repeating group. Each repeating group has the same name for each key (note). They are an octave apart.

C is the white key just to the left of the lower of the two black keys in a group.

There are multiple C notes on the accordion, spaced an octave apart.

Similarly there are multiple A's and F's, etc.

Adjacent keys are a half note apart. The C Major scale does not use any black keys. It is the easiest scale to use.

Play the C Major scale. Start on a C near the low side of the keyboard (towards your chin) and play adjacent white keys until you get to the next C an octave higher (towards the bottom of the keyboard - towards your feet).

The names of the notes in the C Major scale are: C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C

## Play The Melody On The Keyboard

The song - Lady of Spain - starts on (any) C. It is probably best to start on a C near the middle of the keyboard.

Use the music (the first one you downloaded and printed, the one with the melody line) and follow the fingering. Listen to the song on the web site so you will recognize it as you play.

A Bar is the space between the vertical lines. There are 3 counts in each bar. That is what the 3/4 at the beginning of the first staff means.

In the first bar, play the C with the 4th finger of your right hand (thumb is 1, pinkie is 5), the B with your 3rd finger, the A with your 2nd finger.

Depending on how the music goes, move your right hand to play different notes with different fingers. The fingering shown makes the song easy to play.

You have just played Lady of Spain!

## About The Buttons on The Bass Side

The buttons do the "Oom Pah" part of the music, while the keyboard does the melody.

For the Guinness record and the parade we won't use the buttons. With that many accordions the sound would get very muddled. But, by all means experiment.

The description of what the buttons are, what they do, how they are arranged, and how to use them, is well beyond a simple web page. We'll give you a very quick rundown, but don't expect too much. You won't need any of this for the Guinness record.

The buttons are usually arranged in a pattern of 20 buttons wide by 6 buttons deep, for a total of 120 buttons. Some accordions have 140 buttons (120 x 7). Some accordions have 180 buttons, and lots of accordions have many fewer buttons.

I'm not going to explain all of it, but briefly:

### **The Rows of 6 Buttons**

Near the middle of the second row is a marked button (dimple, cross hatch, rind stone, etc.) It is C.

The button above it on the first row is E, a major third higher. (E is the third note in the C Major scale).

The button on the third row is the C Major chord.

The button on the fourth row is the C minor chord.

The button on the fifth row is the C Seventh chord.

The button on the sixth row is the C diminished chord.

Each row of 6 buttons has this identical relationship to the button on the second row.

If you use your 4<sup>th</sup> finger to give a pop with the C button (the Oom), and then your 3<sup>rd</sup> finger to give two pops on the C Major button on the third row (Pah - Pah), then you have just played Oom - Pah - Pah.

To make it more fun, use your 2<sup>nd</sup> finger to pop the G button (next to the C button on the second row, but one row towards your chin), and then another two pops on the C Major chord button with your 3<sup>rd</sup> finger then repeat that pattern. You can now play Oom-Pah-Pah - Oom-Pah-Pah with "alternating bass". That is what the C-G-C-G (Oom) sequence is called. The first few bars in Lady of Spain use this sequence.

The next few bars in Lady of Spain use the second most common bass and chord sequence. Use your 3<sup>rd</sup> finger to pop the D button, (two buttons above C) then your 2<sup>nd</sup> finger for two pops on the G seventh button, then 4<sup>th</sup> finger on the G button (one button above C), another two pops with your 2<sup>nd</sup> finger on the G button. Repeat that sequence.

The trickiest reach in Lady of Spain is the F-D minor reach. You play F with your 5<sup>th</sup> finger (the button just below C) and the D minor chord with your 2<sup>nd</sup> finger. It is a nasty reach until you get used to it. You can "cheat" and use the D button in stead of the F button (D with 4<sup>th</sup> finger and D minor with 3<sup>rd</sup> finger), but using F, the minor third, sure sounds better!

### **The Rows of 20 Buttons**

The twenty button rows are also cleverly organized. They are laid out in the order of sharps and flats, or rather, they are spaced in fifths (whatever that means). Going from the marked C button up (towards your chin) you get C, G, D, A, E, B, F, C sharp, etc., while going down (towards you shoes) you get C, F, B flat, E flat, A flat, D flat, G flat, C flat, etc. It seems a bit odd to not follow the C scale, but as soon as you begin to get used to it a little bit you'll see how tremendously clever the layout of the buttons is. For example, the alternating bass pattern is played on adjacent buttons!

## Reading the Music

The melody is on the upper staff of the printed music, and the bass line is on the lower staff. Download and print it now. The melody is shown in the treble clef, while the bass part is shown in the Bass Clef. In the Treble clef the curl winds around the fourth line down from the top. That is the G line. The Treble clef is also called the G-Clef. Wherever that curl centers is G. Similarly the bass part is in the Bass clef. (the backwards C) The two dots straddle the second line from the top down. That is F. The Bass clef is also called the F-Clef. Whatever the two dots straddle, is F. Because of this, in the bass clef C is in the space between the third and fourth lines down from the top. Note that this is different from the Treble clef, where c is in the space between the second and third lines down from the top. I know it is confusing, but that is how music works. I didn't invent it, I just suffer along with it like all musicians do. Surprisingly, after a while it almost makes some sense - maybe that is when a musician gets sufficiently senile so he/she doesn't demand reality.

The melody is relatively straightforward to play. Locate C, the first note and follow the music.

Music is divided into bars. The space between two vertical lines is a bar. The  $\frac{3}{4}$  at the beginning of the first staff tells you that there are three quarter notes to the bar. One count is a quarter note.

The duration of notes is quite simple: a solid note with a stem on it is one count (a  $\frac{1}{4}$  note). An open note with a stem on it is two counts (a  $\frac{1}{2}$  note). A note with a dot behind it has half its duration added, thus a half note (two counts) with a dot is three counts. (An open note with no stem is four counts, or a whole note. A quarter note with a flag on it is a half count, or  $\frac{1}{8}$  note. Any flag added divides the count value by two.) The funny squigles and small solid blocks are rests. They are place holders for notes you don't play. The squiggle is a quarter rest (one count), and the small block sitting on the middle line is a half rest (two counts). A half note tied over a bar line to a quarter note is three counts.

The bass line is divided into an upper part (the chords, or the Pah, using button rows 3, 4, 5, 6) and a lower part (the Oom, using button rows 2, and 1). The Oom is a single note, while the Pah is a chord. A chord is a multiple of notes played together

You should use your 4th finger to anchor your left hand to the marked C button (not your 3rd finger). That gives you extended freedom to make the difficult reaches that some of the amazingly talented accordionists perform. It is more popular to anchor with the 3rd finger, but you are much better off habitually anchoring with your 4th finger. Almost all the really good players do.

So much for your accordion lesson. I hope you will learn to play the accordion, and that you'll learn to play it well. We've all seen the signs, which say "Play An Accordion - Go To Jail". We've all laughed about it. I keep one of those stickers in my accordion case. Most often you hear an accordion played poorly, and then it is awful.

However, when you hear an accordion played well, it is something very special. It is rare, but it is something one doesn't forget.

I hope you will have lots of fun learning to play the accordion, and that you will learn to play the accordion well.