

User Manual for Chord Change 1.0.0 and later

Last updated on 3 October 2025

Links to video tutorials

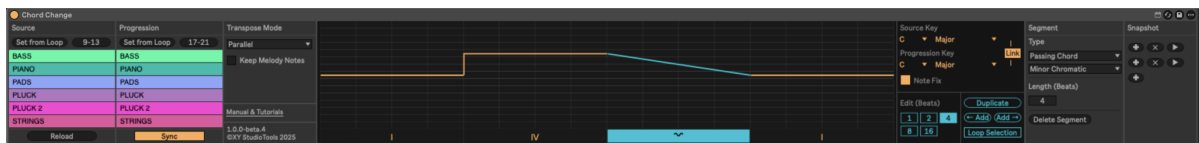
[Chord Change Tutorial](#)

[Chord Change Demo](#)

Device Description

Overview

Chord Change is a Max For Live device for exploring chord progressions in Ableton Live. Load a short loop with one or multiple MIDI tracks and create progressions in real-time using the progression graph interface.



How It Works

Chord Change lets you work on all tracks simultaneously. Dragging the progression graph up or down moves all notes in the clips by scale degrees, not chromatic steps. This means the harmonic relationships stay intact while creating chord progressions that sound musical. Beyond basic scale steps, Chord Change includes passing chords based on music theory - letting you experiment with out-of-scale harmonies that create interesting chord movements in real-time.

Installation

- Download and unzip the downloaded file.
- Place the file anywhere you like in your Ableton Live user library
 - (The “official” location is User Library / Presets / MIDI Effects / Mx MIDI Effect)
- To open Chord Change drag the device to a new track

Quick Start

- Make sure you have 1 or more midi clips composed in the same key, like C minor. These are your “source clips”
- Enable “Scale Mode” on your source clips. This will tell the Chord Change device what source Key to use
- Your clips should be placed within the same loop in the Arrangement View
- Drag the device to a new track
- Click “Sync” to get an initial progression based on your source clips
- In the Progression panel, click the progression span button (the button label displays the current progression loop) to move the Live loop to your progression
- Start Live playback and click and drag to create segments and change the scale degree. Notes are directly moved in your progression and you can hear the result in real time as you play your progression as a loop.

Source material

As a starting point, you need to have 1 or more midi clips in the arrangement view. These are your source clips - the material Chord Change will transpose to create chord progressions. You can use up to 8 clips, which can have different loop lengths.

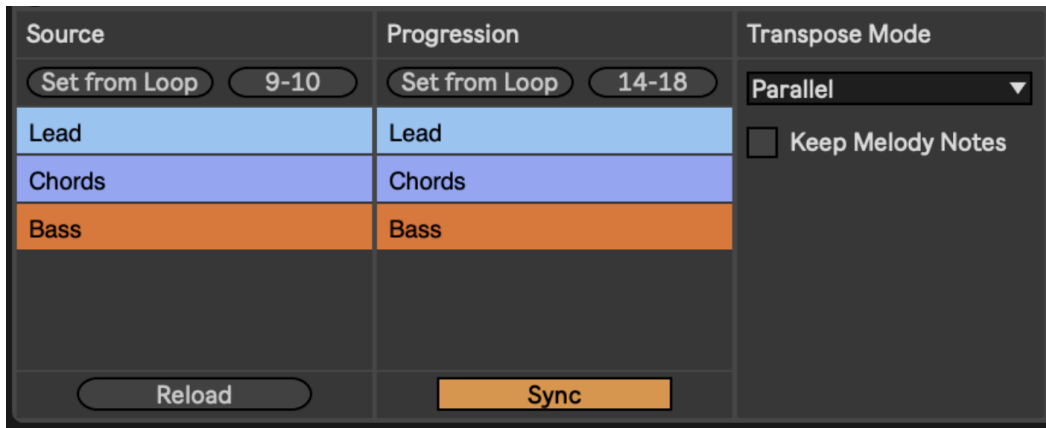
The clips should be composed in the same key and placed within the same loop in the arrangement view.

Make sure that "Scale Mode" is enabled. In Live 12, also check that the global scale corresponds to the key of your source material

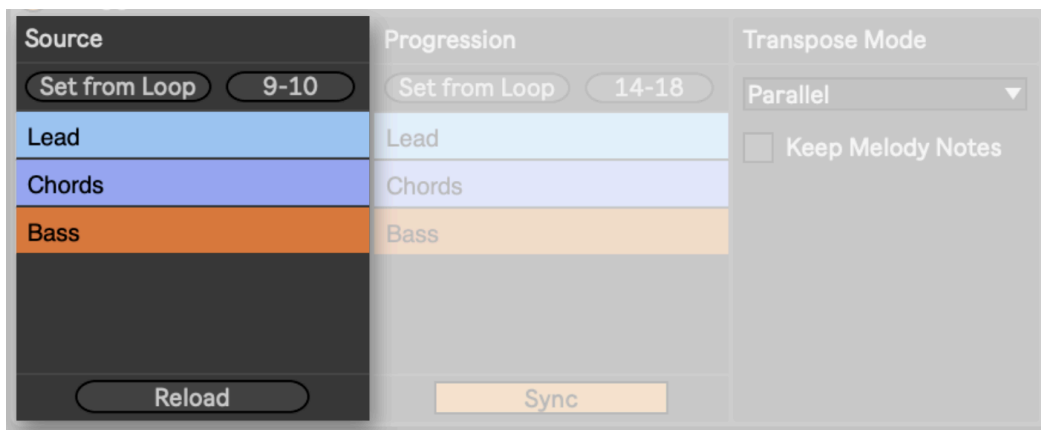
The device will use the notes that are within the clip loop, so make sure that the clip loop is set around the notes that you want to use. For example, if you have a long sequence of notes inside the clip, set the clip loop to the notes you want to include.

Functionality

Source and Progression panel



Source

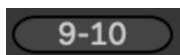


Set from Loop (Source)

The Set From Loop button will set the source clip span to the current Arrangement View loop in the Live set.

You need to click Reload after changing the source loop before you see any effect.

Source Span Button (the button label displays the current source loop)



The button next to “Set From Loop” displays the start and end of the current source loop (for example 9-10) and clicking it will set the Live arrangement loop to match this value.

This button functions as a shortcut to set the Live loop to match your source clip loop.

Source Track List

Below the Set From Loop and Source Span buttons there is a list of currently active source tracks.

Reload

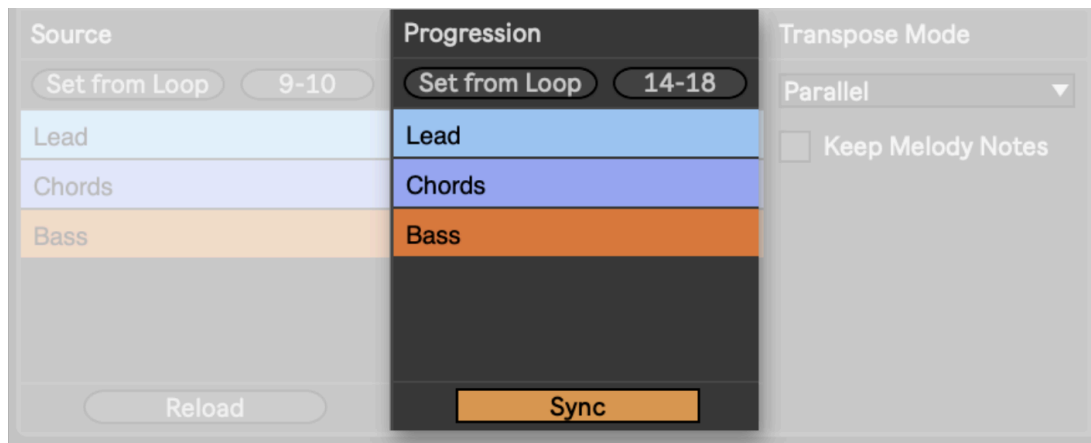
The Reload button under the source track list will reload the source tracks and notes.

Use Reload when you have:

- Changed the notes in any of the source clips
- Added or removed tracks from the source loop

Reloading source will detect changes in the source and apply the changes to any active progression

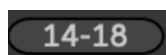
Progression



Set from Loop (Progression)

The Set From Loop button will set the progression clip span to the current Arrangement View loop in the Live set.

Progression Span Button (the button label displays the current progression loop)



The button next to "Set From Loop" displays the start and end of the current progression loop (for example 14-18), and clicking it will set the Live arrangement loop to match this value.

This button functions as a shortcut to set the Live loop to match your destination.

Progression Track List

Below the Set From Loop and Progression Span buttons there is a list of currently active progression tracks.

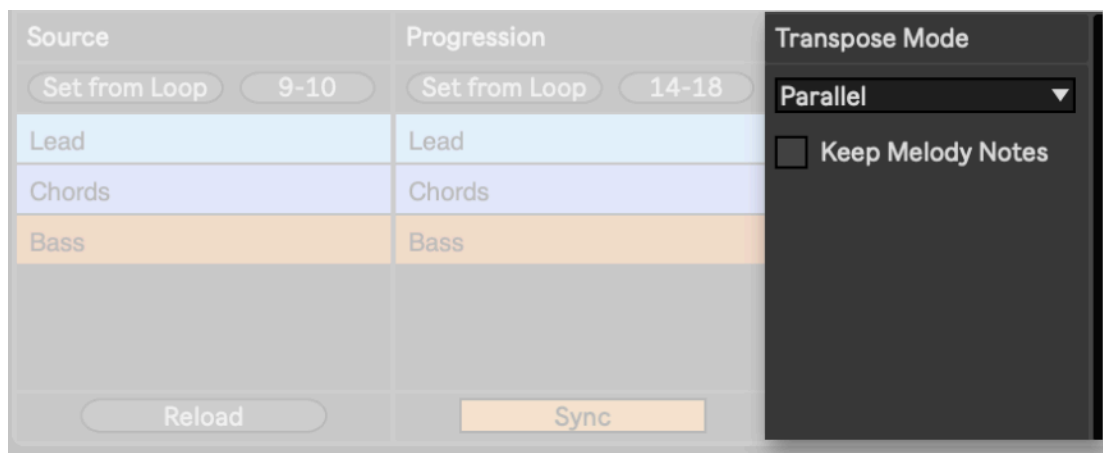
The tracks in the progression track list can be selected, and selecting them will display their Transpose Mode (See Transpose Mode below)

Sync

When Sync is on, notes in your progression clips will be updated in real time when you make edits in the progression.

If you click Sync before you have defined any source loop or progression loop, the device will auto setup source and progression by scanning your tracks, automatically selecting the first midi clips on the Arrangement View. (See Quick Start above for more info)

Transpose Mode



Transpose Mode drop-down

Transpose Mode settings apply to a specific track in the progression. Select a track to see or edit the track's Transpose Mode.

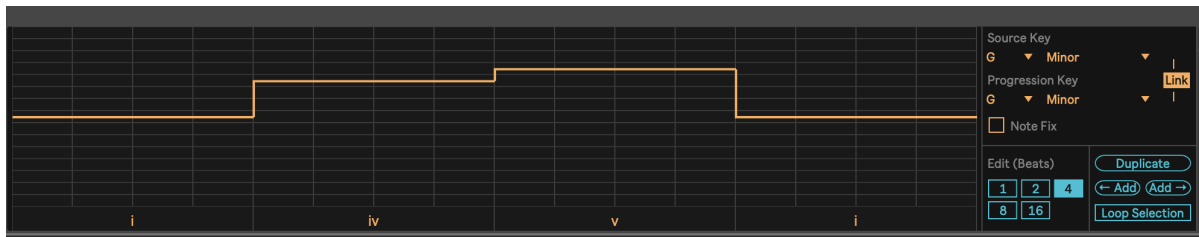
- **Parallel** (default setting): Moves notes up or down the scale.
- **Parallel Min Movement**: Same as parallel but find the closest octave to other segments in the progression.
- **Voice Lead**: Finds chord voicing closest to the other segments in the progression.
- **Fixed**: means that notes aren't moved at all, and can be used to make a melody stay the same over the progression.

Keep Melody Notes

This option is only relevant to use when you have a clip with both melodic notes and chords, and you intend to switch to the Transpose Mode "voice lead".

Activate "Keep Melody Notes" if you would like the melodic notes to continue to move up or down as they would in "parallel" transpose mode, even after you have switched to "voice lead" Transpose Mode.

Progression Editor



Progression Graph

The Progression Graph illustrates the chord progression. You can change the progression by dragging the segments of the graph up or down. The default progression is 16 beats long. When editing the progression you will create segments that are 4 beats long as default. The maximum total progression length is 64 beats.

More options for editing the progression are described below.

Options

Source Key

Source Key should always be set to match the key of your source material. For example, if your source notes are in A minor, your source key should always be A minor.

- In Ableton 12, the device will detect the global key of your Live project and set the source accordingly.
- In Ableton 11 you may have to set the Source Key manually.

Progression Key

Progression Key is by default set to the same as the Source Key. You may transpose the progression to a different key by changing the progression key.

Link

When Link is activated, any changes to the Source Key also changes the Progression Key.

Changing the Progression Key when Link is on will automatically unlink the Source and Progression Keys.

Note Fix

You may use this option when you are using material which includes non-triad chord notes in a melody/arpeggio. When you edit a progression (by moving a segment up or down), the Note Fix option will change some notes that may sound awkward into chord notes.

Edit (Beats)

Edit (Beats) allows you to select how many beats that you move up or down when you edit a progression. The default is set to 4 beats.

Duplicate

Duplicates a selected segment. Select a segment by clicking the bottom area of the segment, then click Duplicate.

Add (left and right)

Adds a segment before or after a selected segment. Select a segment by clicking the bottom area of the segment, then click Add left or right.

Loop Selection

Click Loop Selection to hear only the selected segments. To select multiple segments, click and drag over the segments' bottom area.

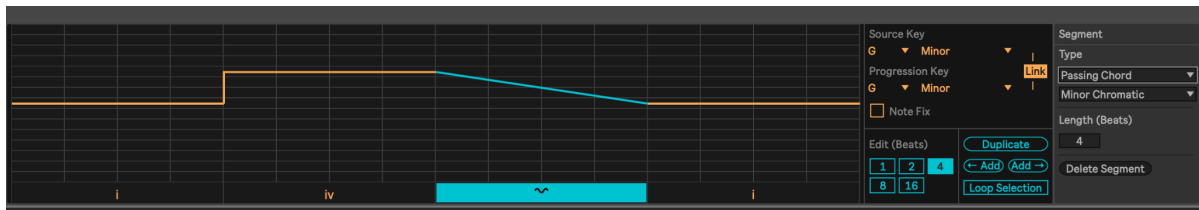
Segment Settings



Type

Segment Type can be set to Scale Degree or Passing Chord.

- Scale Degree: Notes will move within the scale when editing the progression.
- Passing Chord: Changes the selected segment to a passing segment and changes the notes in that segment to a passing chord. The passing chord is automatically adapted to the segments before and after. Passing chords typically include notes outside of the progression scale.
 - After setting a segment to Passing Chords, you can choose between various options of Passing Chord using the sub-menu.
 - The Passing Chord options are: Minor Chromatic, Diminished Chromatic, Secondary Dominant, Chromatic Dominant, Altered Dominant, Backdoor Dominant, Subdominant Minor, Double Dominant, Whole Tone Dominant, Common Tone Diminished
 - Two segments next to each other cannot both be set to Passing Chord



Length (beats)

Set the length of a selected segment. To change the length of a segment: select the segment, click the number input box, type the new number (number of beats), then press enter.

Delete Segment

Deletes selected segment(s).

Snapshot



Snapshot lets you save and recall progressions while working.

- Click the + icon to save the current progression.
- Click x to delete the saved snapshot.
- Click play to recall a saved snapshot.
- To overwrite an existing snapshot, click the + icon.