Now that we're familiar with how triads work, it's time to put them into the context of a key.

Chords which use notes from a particular key signature are said to be diatonic to that key. Diatonic means "from the key." That means no accidentals!

We can quickly show all the diatonic triads in a particular key by writing a scale in that key and building triads on each note, using only the notes in that key.

Since writing music in a particular key means using the notes in that key signature, it stands to reason that most of the chords will be built from those same notes!

This pattern of major, minor and diminished triads is the same in every major key! The subdominant triad is always major, and the leading note triad is always diminished, whether you're in C major or F# major!

Why is the sixth chord called the submediant? Well, just as the mediant chord is halfway between the tonic and dominant chords, the submediant chord is halfway between the tonic... and the subdominant a fifth below!

Because the dominant and leading note triads both have a strong tendency to resolve to tonic, we say they have a "dominant function." The subdominant and supertonic chords both tend to resolve to the dominant, so we say they both have a "subdominant function."

The diatonic triads in minor work the same way... since we're dealing with chords, we use the harmonic minor scale. However, it's important to note that common practice period composers raised the leading note only over dominant function harmony: the dominant and leading note triads!

Same names and roman numerals... different capitalization!