

Modulation

Music

Four ways to change key without it sounding like an accident.

Ordered from most seamless to most abrupt.

Method	How	Effect
Pivot chord	Use a chord common to both keys	Almost invisible
Dominant preparation	Play the new key's V7	Clear, conventional
Chromatic	Slide a voice by semitone	Smooth but coloured
Direct (phrase)	Just start the new key	Abrupt — the key change in a final chorus

Up a semitone at the last chorus is the most-used direct modulation in popular music, and the most noticeable.