

A **major** triad (C or CM) uses the first (root), 3rd, and 5th of a major scale. **1-3-5**

A **minor** triad (Cm) can be formed from a major triad by flattening the 3rd (the middle tone) a half step. **1-3b-5**

A **dominant 7th** chord (C7) is made up of a major triad and a minor 7th (the lowered, or flattened 7th tone of a major scale). **1-3-5-7b**

The triad part of a dominant seventh chord is normally a major triad. Sometimes the 5th of the chord is raised by adding "+" (or "+5", as in C7+5) to the chord symbol. This changes the major triad to an augmented triad within the 7th chord. Less frequently, the 5th of a dominant 7th chord is lowered by adding "-5" (as in C7-5, or b5) to the chord symbol.

A **major 7th** chord (CM7) is made up of a major triad and a major 7th (the 7th tone of a major scale). The major 7th can easily be thought of as one half-step down from the octave (chord name) note. The chord symbol which indicates a major 7th chord consists of the alphabet letter plus "maj 7". (Cmaj7. Bbmaj7. Fmaj7. etc.) **1-3-5-7**

An **augmented** (or augmented 5th) triad (Caug, C+, or C⁺) is formed from a major triad by raising the fifth (the top tone) a half step. **1-3-5#**

A **diminished** triad (Cdim, C-, or C⁰) can be formed from a minor triad (lowered 3rd) by lowering the fifth (the top tone) a half step. **1-3b-5b**

Suspended chords, labeled "**sus 4**" or "**sus 2**" usually follow either a major chord symbol or a 7th chord symbol, and indicates that the 3rd is to be omitted and replaced with the 4th or the 2nd. Major suspended **1-4-5** or **1-2-5**, 7th suspended **1-4-5-7b** or **1-2-5-7b**

A **minor 7th** chord (Cm7) is made up of a minor triad and a minor 7th (the lowered 7th tone of the major scale). The chord symbol indicating a minor 7th chord consists of the alphabet letter plus "min 7" (or "m7"). (For example: Cm7. Gm7. Bbm7. etc.) Notice the difference between the minor 7th chord (Cm7) and the previously learned dominant 7th chord (C7). Only the 3rd is different; the 7th is the same. **1-3b-5-7b**

The **minor 7 flattened 5** chord (Cm7-5) is made up of a diminished triad (lowered 3rd and 5th) and a minor 7th (lowered 7th). (An easy way to remember the chord spelling is to think of lowering the 3rd, 5th, and 7th tones of a major scale.) This chord is also called a "half diminished" chord. The chord symbol indicating a minor 7 flat 5 chord consists of the alphabet letter and "m7-5" or "m7b5". **1-3b-5b-7b**

A **diminished 7th** chord (Cdim7, not C7dim!) is made up of a diminished triad and a diminished 7th. A diminished 7th is the 7th tone of the major scale which has been lowered twice (making it 3 half-steps below the octave). **1-3b-b5-bb7** (where bb7 is the same as 6)

A **major 6th** chord (C6) is made up of a major triad and a major 6th (the 6th tone of a major scale). The major 6th will always be one whole step above the 5th. **1-3-5-6**

A **major 9th** chord (C9) is made up of a major 7th chord plus the interval of a 9th. The 9th tone is one whole step above the octave and is the same as the 2nd scale degree. (In the C major scale, the 9th is D.) Note: the root is often not played in a Major 9th chord. **(1)-3-5-7-9**

A **minor 9th** chord (Cm9) is made up of a minor 7th chord plus the interval of a 9th. The 9th is the same tone as that used in the major 9th chord and the dominant 9th chord. Only the basic triad within the chord is minor - not the 9th interval. **1-3b-5-7b-9**

A **dominant 9th** chord is made up of a dominant 7th chord plus the interval of a 9th. The 9th is the same tone as that used in the major 9th chord. Note: the root is often not played in a Major 9th chord. **1-3-5-7b-9**

The minor 6th scales like **1-3b-5-6**

The flat 9th interval is often added to the dominant 7th chord. The symbol consists of the alphabet letter plus "7b9" (or 7-9).

The 9th chord is an extension of the 7th chord. To extend the 9th chord an 11th may be added (C11). To extend the 11th chord a 13th may be added (C13). In each case, the new pitches are added at intervals of a 3rd above the chord. The 9th is the second scale degree. (same pitch name) The 11th is the fourth scale degree. The 13th is the sixth scale degree.

The 11th chord is formed by adding one more third to a ninth chord. The 7th tone is present and the 9th tone may or may not appear. The 3rd is often omitted. The symbol is often simplified to indicate a minor 7 chord with a slash bass. (C11 becomes Gm7/C) This symbol insures that the 3rd is omitted.

The 13th chord is formed by adding the 6th scale degree to the 11th chord. Often, the 13th chord is simply a 9th chord with an added 6th (13th). The 6/9 chord is sometimes confused with the 13th chord. The 6/9 chord contains no 7th tone; the 13th chord includes the lowered 7th. In a 13th chord, it is the 9th and 11th which may often be omitted.)

THE MATHEMATICS OF CHORD SYMBOLS - Simple!

There are other altered chords that can be formed by altering one of the chord tones. You will easily know the spelling of these chords since the symbol indicates which tone (by number) is to be raised or lowered. To raise a chord tone, a sharp or plus sign is placed to its left; to lower a chord tone, a flat or minus is placed to its left.

Separate the triad portion of the symbol from the rest and then determine which of the extended tones you will play. Simply raise or lower one half step the tone that is marked. Sometimes the symbol simply calls for the addition of an unaltered scale tone. (Learn to distinguish between "add" and "+". "Add 9" means to add the 9th scale tone; "+5" means to add the raised 5th tone. In chord symbols, "+" means "sharp" (or raised).