

TRIADS

Chapter 7

CHORDS AND TRIADS

- **A chord is a group of pitches that form a single harmonic idea.**
 - **May happen simultaneously or in "broken" form**
- **A triad is a 3 note chord that can be shown as 2 thirds, one above the other.**
 - **Either line-line-line or space-space-space**
- **A chord with a 4th note which is simply an octave doubling is still considered a triad.**

PARTS AND POSITION OF A TRIAD

- **When spelled in thirds, the interval between the lowest pitch, or root, and the highest pitch (called the fifth) is a fifth.**
- **The middle note, the third, is a third above the root**
- **When the root is the lowest note in the chord, it's called "root position"**
- **When a chord is NOT in root position, the same notes are still the root, third, and fifth of the chord**
- **Look at Ex. 7.2 and do Try It #1**

TRIADS ABOVE A SCALE

- **The type of triad (major, minor, or diminished) are known as its quality**
- **Major Triads**
 - **The bottom third is major**
 - **The top third is minor**
- **Minor Triads**
 - **The bottom 3rd is minor**
 - **The top 3rd is major**
- **Diminished Triad**
 - **Both 3rds are minor**
 - **The interval between root and 5th is a diminished 5th**

TRIADS ABOVE A SCALE

- **In a major key:**
 - **Triads above scale degrees 1, 4, and 5 are major (M)**
 - **Triads above scale degrees 2, 3, and 6 are minor(m)**
 - **Triad above the 7th scale degree is diminished (d)**
- **Triads built on the 1st, 4th, and 5th scale degrees are the most common in all music (view YouTube clips)**

TRIADS ABOVE A SCALE

- **In a minor key:**
 - **Triads above scale degrees 1, 4, and 5 are minor (m)**
 - **Triads above scale degrees 3, 6, and 7 are major(M)**
 - **Triad above the 2nd scale degree is diminished (d)**
- **When the 7th scale degree is raised to create a leading tone:**
 - **The triad on the 5th scale degree becomes major**
 - **The triad on the 7th scale degree becomes diminished**
 - **The triad on the 3rd degree becomes augmented (both 3rds are major)**

SPELLING TRIADS—METHOD 1 COMPARE TO C MAJOR

- **All triads on C, F, and G are also major as long as all their accidentals match, i.e. G#, B#, D#**
 - **To change a major chord to minor, lower the 3rd one half step, i.e. G B D → G B \flat D**
 - **To change to a major triad to an augmented triad, raise the fifth one half step**
- **Triads on D, E, and A stay minor if all the accidentals match, i.e. A \flat , C \flat , E \flat**
 - **To change a minor triad to a major triad, raise the third one half step, i.e. A \flat C \flat E \flat → A \flat C E \flat**
 - **To change from a minor triad to a diminished triad, lower the fifth one half step**
 - **Triads on B stay diminished if all the accidentals match (i.e. B#, D#, and F#)**

SPELLING TRIADS—METHOD 2A

SPELLING TRIADS BY QUALITY OF 5^{THS} & 3^{RDS}

- **Write the root of the triad.**
- **Write a 5th above the root.**
 - **For a major or minor triad, write a P5 above the root.**
 - **For a diminished triad, write a d5.**
 - **For an augmented triad, write an A5.**
- **Write a 3rd above the root.**
 - **For a major or augmented triad, make it a M3.**
 - **For a minor or diminished triad, make it a m3.**



SPELLING TRIADS—METHOD 2A

SPELLING TRIADS BY QUALITY OF 3RDS

- **A major triad is a major third beneath a minor third.**
- **A minor triad is a minor third beneath a major third.**
- **A diminished third is 2 minor thirds.**
- **An augmented third is 2 major thirds.**

SPELLING TRIADS—METHOD 3

SPELLING TRIADS BY KEY SIGNATURE

- **When spelling a triad, think of a major or minor triad in a key. The root is tonic and the upper notes lie in the scale.**
- **For a major triad, think of the major key signature of the root and write 1, 3, 5**
- **For a minor triad, think of the minor key signature of the root and write 1, b3, and 5**
- **For a diminished triad, write a minor triad and lower the fifth one half step.**
- **For an augmented triad, write a major triad and raise the fifth one half step.**

SCALE DEGREE TRIADS IN A TONAL CONTEXT

- **The harmonic function of a triad is associated with the scale degree on which the triad is built. For instance, a triad built on the tonic serves as the harmonic home base for that key.**
- **Not all triads are created equal. For instance, the I, IV, and V chords are much more common (and generally more important) than a iii chord.**
- **When labeling scale degree triads, we use Roman numerals.**
 - **Uppercase is used for major triads and lowercase for minor**
 - **A diminished triad uses lowercase with a superscript o (degree sign)**
 - **For augmented triads, use an uppercase Roman numeral with a superscript plus sign**
- **When analyzing with Roman numerals, show the key at the beginning (uppercase for major and lowercase for minor)—see ex. 7.9**

TRIAD INVERSION

- **When a triad is stacked with something other than the root on the bottom (no tin root position)**
- **If the third is in the bass, the triad is in first inversion.**
- **If the fifth is in the bass, the triad is in second inversion.**
 - **This inversion is “weaker” than root position or first inversion because of the harmonic fourth between the bass and upper voice**
- **Look at Ex. 7.11**

TRIAD INVERSION

- **To identify the root of an inverted chord, you can look for the interval of a fourth. The upper note of the fourth is the root.**
- **To notate an inverted triad, write the triad type followed by a slash then the note that appears in the bass. For example, a chord notated as F/A would be an F chord in first inversion (with A in the bass)**

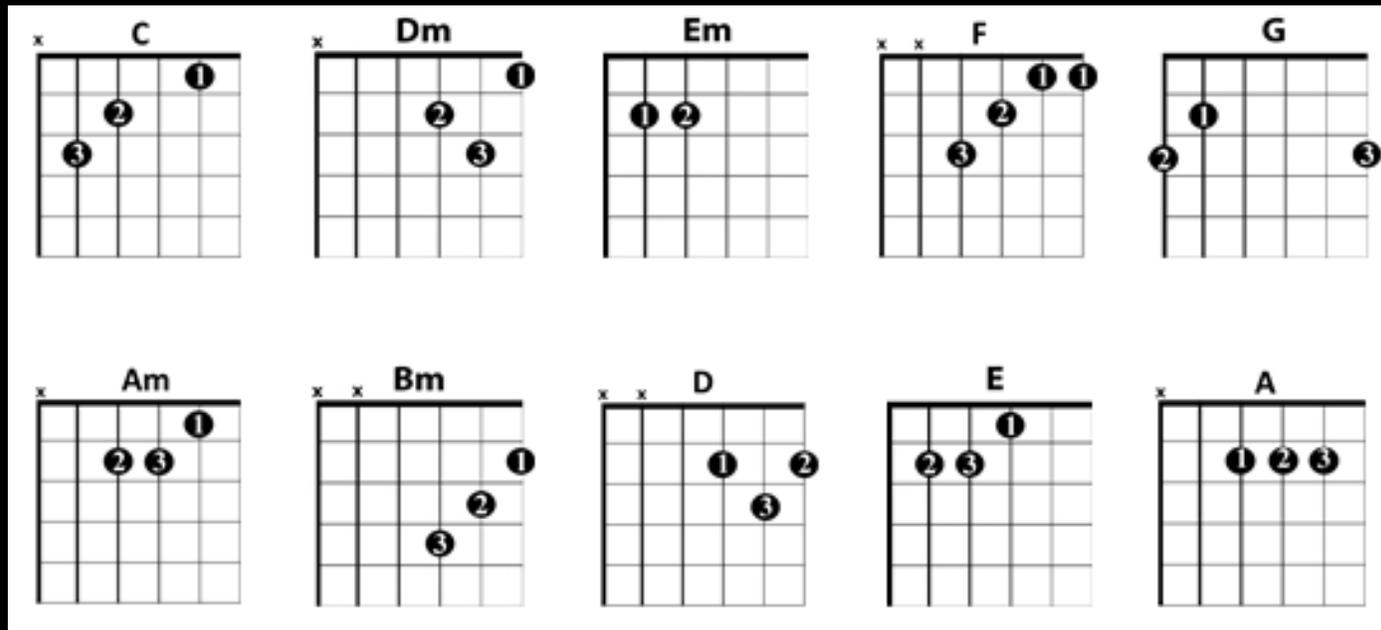
TRIADS IN POPULAR MUSIC NOTATION

- **Lead sheet notation—harmonies are notated with chord symbols above the melody line**
 - **Capital letter name of the root is used for all triad types**
 - **Added symbols or abbreviations are used for other qualities**

| Chord Type | Formula | Chord Symbols (off root C) | Notes |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| Major 7 | 1 3 5 7 | Cmaj7 | C E G B |
| Major 7 (#5) | 1 3 #5 7 | Cmaj7 (#5), Cmaj7aug, Cmaj7+ | C E G# B |
| Major 7 (b5) | 1 3 b5 7 | Cmaj7 (b5) | C E Gb B |
| Dominant 7 | 1 3 5 b7 | C7 | C E G Bb |
| Dominant 7 (#5) | 1 3 #5 b7 | C7 (#5), C7aug, C7+ | C E G# Bb |
| Dominant 7 (b5) | 1 3 b5 b7 | C7 (b5) | C E Gb Bb |
| Minor 7 | 1 b3 5 b7 | Cm7, Cmin7, C-7 | C Eb G Bb |
| Minor 7 (b5) | 1 b3 b5 b7 | Cmin (b5), C half-dim, Cø | C Eb Gb Bb |
| Minor major 7 | 1 b3 5 7 | Cm maj7, Cmin maj7 | C Eb G B |
| Diminished 7 | 1 b3 b5 bb7 | Cdim7, C°7 | C Eb Gb Bbb |

TABLATURE

- In addition to chord symbols, a diagram showing the strings of a guitar shows where to place fingers to produce each chord.



FIGURED BASS

- **Consists of a bass line with numbers written under it or over it. The numbers represent the intervals to be played above the bass to make the chords (Ex. 7.14)**
- **Chords in root position are shown with the numbers 5 and 3 written one over the other below the bass note (7.15a)**
 - **The fifth and third may be spaced as compound intervals (in various octaves)**
 - **One of the pitches may be doubled to create four parts (see 7.15b)**
 - **The basic label for the chord doesn't designate anything except the other 2 pitches to be played or sung**

FIGURED BASS

- **When a triad is in first inversion, the intervals above the bass are a 3rd and a 6th, so a 6 and 3 are written below the bass note (see 7.15a)**
- **When a triad is in second inversion, the intervals above the bass note are a 4th and a 6th, so a 6 and a 4 are written below the bass note (see 7.15a)**
 - **Less common and less stable than 1st inversion because harmonically a 4th is more dissonant than a 3rd**
- **Figured bass was used in the Baroque era much like lead sheet notation is today.**
- **To make reading quicker:**
 - **Since the 5/3 is the most common figure, it is often left out because it's implied**
 - **The figure 6/3 is frequently shortened to just 6, with the remaining 3rd understood**

FIGURED BASS

- **When reading a figured bass, play or write chord tones that are diatonic in the key unless an accidental is given**
- **Accidentals may appear in figured bass alone or next to a number**
 - **By itself, an accidental always refers to the note a 3rd above the bass (not necessarily the 3rd of the chord)**
 - **Next to a number, an accidental tells you to alter the note lying that interval above the bass, i.e. #6 means raise the note a 6th above the bass note**
 - **A slash through a number means the same thing as a sharp next to it**
- **Figured bass numbers with Roman numerals tell a chord's scale degree, quality, and inversion**