

Default Chords

These are all considered "dominant chords." They are naturally formed by starting on a major scale's 5th note (the dominant) and skipping notes in the scale.

C7 — 1 3 5 \flat 7

C9 — 1 3 5 \flat 7 9

C11 — 1 3 5 \flat 7 9 11

C13 — 1 3 5 \flat 7 9 11 13

"maj" or \triangle

This symbol raises a chord's 7th, which by default, is a \flat 7. These chords can naturally be formed by starting on the 1st note of a major scale and skipping over diatonic notes.

Cmaj7 — 1 3 5 7

Cmaj9 — 1 3 5 7 9

Cmaj11 — 1 3 5 7 9 11

Cmaj13 — 1 3 5 7 9 11 13

"m" or "min" or "-"

This symbol lowers a chord's 3rd, which by default, is a major 3rd. These chords are naturally formed by starting on the 2nd note of a major scale and skipping diatonic notes.

Cm7 — 1 \flat 3 5 \flat 7

Cm9 — 1 \flat 3 5 \flat 7 9

Cm11 — 1 \flat 3 5 \flat 7 9 11

Cm13 — 1 \flat 3 5 \flat 7 9 11 13

Extensions

Extensions are notes beyond the 7th, like the following. They can be added in high or low.

9th: This is equal to the 2nd, which is a major 2nd away from the chord's root.

11th: This equal to the 4th, which is a perfect 4th away from the chord's root.

13th: This is equal to the 6th, which is a major 6th away from the chord's root.

"aug" or "+" or (#5)

These symbols raise a chord's 5th to create types of "altered chords." When using the "aug" or "+" sign, place it right after the chord's root. When using the "(#5)" sign, place it the very end of the chord label. Shown below are two ways to write the same chords.

Caug7 **C+7**

Caug9 **C+9** **or**

Caug11 **C+11** **or**

Caug13 **C+13**

C7(#5) — 1 3 #5 \flat 7

C9(#5) — 1 3 #5 \flat 7 9

C11(#5) — 1 3 #5 \flat 7 9 11

C13(#5) — 1 3 #5 \flat 7 9 11 13

(\flat 5)

This symbol lowers a chord's 5th. It is frequently combined with other symbols to create more types of altered chords.

C7(\flat 5) — 1 3 \flat 5 \flat 7

C9(\flat 5) — 1 3 \flat 5 \flat 7 9

C11(\flat 5) — 1 3 \flat 5 \flat 7 9 11

C13(\flat 5) — 1 3 \flat 5 \flat 7 9 11 13

"Jazz" 6th Chords

Add a major 6th to either triad by writing "6" next to the chord name.

C6 — 1 3 5 6

Cm6 — 1 \flat 3 5 6

Add a minor 6th to either triad by writing (\flat 6) next to the chord name.

C(\flat 6) — 1 3 5 \flat 6

Cm(\flat 6) — 1 \flat 3 5 \flat 6

Combine multiple extensions alongside the 6th by using the / sign. If a 7th is present, do not use this notation, and instead write the 6th as a 13th.

C6/9 — 1 3 5 6 9

Cm6/9 — 1 \flat 3 5 6 9

"Classical" 6th Chords

These chords get their name due to the interval of a 6th that is formed between some of their notes.

C63

This symbol means the chord is played in first inversion, with its 3rd on the bass.

C64

This symbol means the chord is played in 2nd inversion, with its 5th on the bass.

Augmented Sixth Chord

A dominant 7th chord built on scale degree \flat 6. Not an "augmented chord."

Neopolitan Sixth Chord

The \flat 11 chord played in first inversion.

"dim" or $^\circ$

This symbol lowers a chord's 3rd, 5th, and 7th if it's present. Since the default 7th is already \flat 7, lowering it further turns it into a $\flat\flat$ 7.

Cdim7 — 1 \flat 3 \flat 5 $\flat\flat$ 7

Cdim9 — 1 \flat 3 \flat 5 $\flat\flat$ 7 9

Cdim11 — 1 \flat 3 \flat 5 $\flat\flat$ 7 9 11

Since $\flat\flat$ 7 is equal to the 13th/6th, a dim13 chord is not plausible.

Popular Alterations: (\flat 9), (#9), (#11), and (\flat 13)

These appear at the end of a chord label to alter a chord tone up or down a semitone if it's present. Or, if the chord tone is not present, these symbols will add in an altered version.

(\flat 9) — If the chord contains a 9th, lower it. If not, add in \flat 9. **C7(\flat 9)**: C7 has no 9th, so we add in \flat 9. **Cm11(\flat 9)**: Cm11 already contains a 9th, so we lower it.

(#9) — If the chord contains a 9th, raise it. If not, add in #9. **C7(#9)**: C7 has no 9th, so we add in #9. **Cm13(#9)**: Cm13 already contains a 9th, so we raise it.

(#11) — If the chord contains a 11th, raise it. If not, add in #11. **Cmaj9(#11)**: Cmaj9 has no 11th, so we add in #11. **C13(#11)**: Already contains an 11th, so raise it.

(\flat 13) — Add \flat 13 to the chord. **C11(\flat 13)**: C11 has no 13th, so we add in \flat 13. If no 7th is present, might be called \flat 6 instead.

"sus" Chords

The "sus" sign means the chord's 3rd will be completely removed and replaced with the following number (most commonly, 2 or 4).

Csus2 — 1 2 5

Csus4 — 1 4 5

It is common to see dominant 7th chords and major 7th chords get suspended using these symbols, as shown below.

C7sus4: A C7 chord whose 3rd has been replaced with a 4th

Cmaj7sus2: A Cmaj7 chord whose 3rd has been replaced with a 2nd.

Sometimes, the 2nd is lowered a halfstep, or the 4th is raised, creating the following chords:

Csus(\flat 2) — 1 \flat 2 5

Csus(#4) — 1 #4 5

"(add)" Chords

The (add) sign is used when skipping an extension, or when adding in a note that is not part of the chord. This can be used to add any of the popular alterations listed above, without including any of the implied lower extension.

Sometimes, the word "add" is omitted, and only parentheses are used as shown below.

C(add 9): A C chord with an added 9th. The 7th has been skipped over.

Cmaj7(add 11): A Cmaj7 chord with an added 11th. Same as a Cmaj11 with no 9th. Might be written as simply Cmaj7(11)

C7(add #11): A C7 chord with a #11 added to it. Might be written as C7(#11)

Combinations

"m" with "maj": Lower the chord's 3rd and raise its 7th to create a minMaj chord. Ex: CmMaj9.

"maj" with (#5): Raise the chord's 5th and also its 7th. Ex: Cmaj7(#5). Since #5 is also written as Aug or +, the same chord can be written as C+Maj7 or Cmaj7(+5).

"m" with (\flat 5): Lower a chord's 3rd and also its 5th. Ex: Cm9(\flat 5). The m7 \flat 5 chord is also called "half-diminished" and is represented by a \flat sign in classical notation.

"maj" with (\flat 5): Lower a chord's 5th, and raise its 7th. Ex: Cmaj7(\flat 5).

"sus" with (\flat 5) or (#5): The 5th in a sus2 or sus4 chord can be raised or lowered.

Illegal Combinations

"m" with "dim"

"m" with "aug"

"m" with "sus"

"dim" with "aug"