

Triads — 1st Inversion

Any root position triad may be changed by moving the root (bottom note) of the chord to another position. This is called an **INVERSION**—it means the notes are rearranged and a tone other than the root is the bottom note of the chord.

The first inversion can be made from a C triad by moving the root (C) to the top of the chord.

All letter names are the same, but the 3rd (E) is now on the bottom, and the root (C) is now on top. This is called **1st INVERSION**.

1st Inversion Triads in C major
(3rd is on the bottom).

In 1st inversion, the 3rd is *always* the bottom note.

OPEN and CLOSE POSITIONS

When the notes of a chord are spaced within an octave, it is in **CLOSE POSITION**.
When the notes of a chord are spaced larger than an octave, it is in **OPEN POSITION**.

Close Position

Open Position

Close Position

Open Position

Triads — 2nd Inversion

Any 1st inversion triad may be inverted again by moving the lowest note (3rd) to the top.

The second inversion can be made from a 1st inversion C triad by moving the 3rd (E) to the top of the chord.

All letter names are the same, but the 5th (G) is now on the bottom, and the root (C) is now in the middle. This is called **2nd INVERSION**.

2nd Inversion Triads in C Major
(5th is on the bottom).

In 2nd inversion, the 5th is *always* the bottom note.

Close Position

Open Position

Triads in all Positions (close).

Root position: **root** is on the bottom.
1st inversion: **3rd** is on the bottom.
2nd inversion: **5th** is on the bottom.

Both inversions: In close position, the root is always the upper note of the interval of a 4th.

V7 Chord—1st, 2nd and 3rd Inversions

The V7 chord can also be inverted. Since the V7 chord is a 4-note chord, it can be written in four different positions: root, 1st inversion, 2nd inversion and 3rd inversion (7th at the bottom).

Close Position

Root Position (root on bottom)

1st Inversion (3rd on bottom)

2nd Inversion (5th on bottom)

3rd Inversion (7th on bottom)

In 1st, 2nd and 3rd inversions in close position, the root is always the upper note of the interval of a 2nd.

Exercises

1 Write the 1st, 2nd and 3rd inversions for the following V7 chords in close position.

a. D7

b. A7

c. C7

d. F7

2 Indicate the inversion of the following V7 chords.

C7 A7 F7 D7 A7 F7 D7

1st _____

3 Write the following V7 chords in the given inversions. The bottom note is given. Add accidentals where needed

F7 3rd C7 1st A7 2nd D7 1st C7 3rd F7 2nd D7 3rd

The V7 (Dominant 7th) Chord

In many pieces, a V7 (dominant 7th) chord is used instead of a V (dominant) triad. To build a V7 chord, add a minor 7th above the root of the V triad (or a minor 3rd above the 5th). The V7 is a chord and not a triad because it has 4 notes rather than 3.

Dominant + minor 7th = Dominant 7th

V V7

Dominant + minor 3rd = Dominant 7th

V V7

Often, the 5th of the V7 chord is omitted. The V7 chord then would have the same number of tones as the I and IV chords while still retaining the quality of a 7th chord. This also allows the music to be sung or performed by as few as three singers or instrumentalists.

The three primary chords are now I, IV and V7.

I IV V7

Exercises

- 1** Write the V7 chord for each key. Write the key name and letter name of each chord.

Key of: C Major

G7 _____

- 2** Fill in the missing notes in the following V7 chords. Which interval did you add? _____

G7 D7 A7 C7 F7

- 3** Write the following V7 chords with the 5th omitted—include the accidentals.

F7 C7 G7 D7 A7

