

CHAPTER 15

CHORD SYMBOLS

Vertical combinations of tones that create the harmonic framework of a piece may be indicated by chord symbols. Chord symbols are a shorthand expression for those combinations. Although a chord symbol indicates which tones are included in the combination, it does not indicate how the tones in the combination are used.

CHORD SYMBOL INTERPRETATION

The Root

The letter name of a chord symbol is the root of the chord.

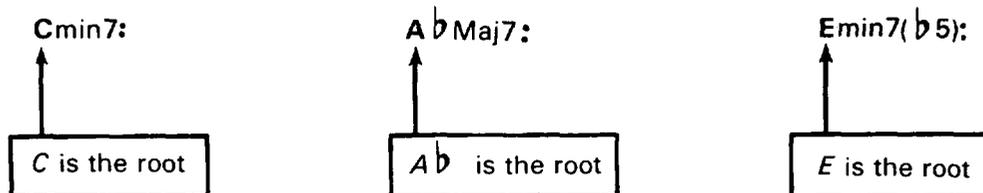


Figure 15.1: Determining the Root of a Chord from a Chord Symbol.

The Third

The chord includes the pitch a major third above the root of the chord unless the third is qualified by the chord symbol. Qualifiers that affect the third always lower it a half step (minor third). *Minor*, *diminished* and *half diminished* are the qualifiers that lower the third. The preferred abbreviations are *min* and *dim* but may be expressed in other ways.

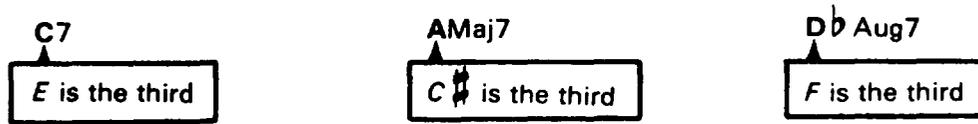
Indicators for Minor _____ min, -, m, mi, minor

Indicators for Diminished _____ dim, °

Indicator for Half Diminished _____ ♭

Figure 15.2: Indicators for Qualified Thirds.

Third not qualified:



Third qualified (lowered):

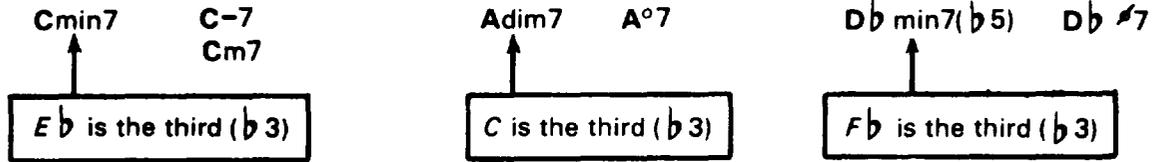


Figure 15.3: Determining the Third of a Chord from a Chord Symbol.

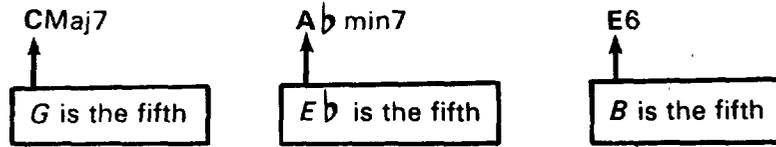
The Fifth

The chord includes the pitch a perfect fifth above the root of the chord unless the fifth is qualified by the chord symbol. Qualifiers that affect the fifth raise the fifth a half step (augmented fifth) or lower the fifth a half step (diminished fifth). *Augmented* is the qualifier that raises the fifth. *Diminished*, *half diminished* and *flat five* are qualifiers that lower the fifth. The preferred abbreviations are (*Aug*, *dim* and *b5*) but may be expressed in other ways.

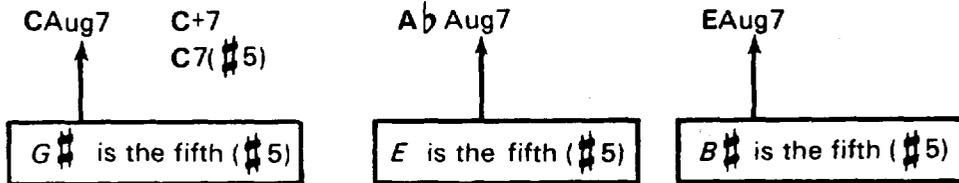
Indicators for Raised Fifth _____ Aug, +, (+5), (#5)
 Indicators for Lowered Fifth _____ dim, °, #, (b5) (-5)

Figure 15.4: Indicators for Qualified Fifths.

Fifth not qualified:



Fifth raised:



Fifth lowered:

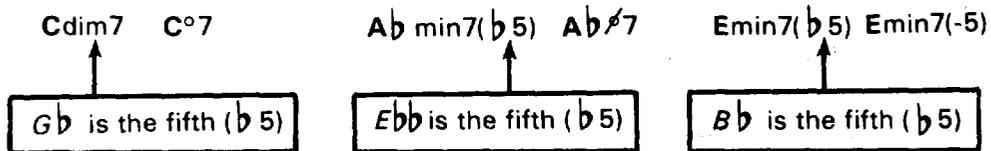


Figure 15.5: Determining the Fifth of a Chord from a Chord Symbol.

The Sixth

The chord includes the pitch a major sixth above the root of the chord when the numeral 6 is part of the chord symbol.

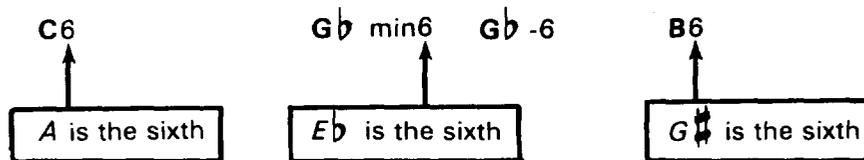


Figure 15.6: Determining the sixth of a Chord from a Chord Symbol.

The Seventh

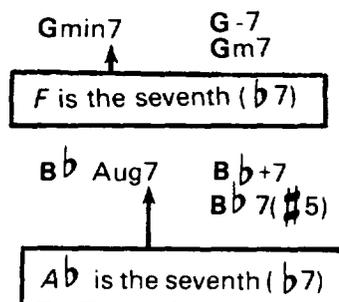
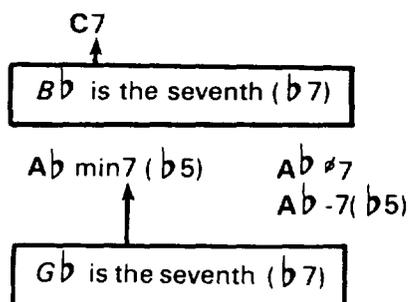
The chord includes the pitch a minor seventh above the root of the chord (subtonic) unless the seventh is qualified by the chord symbol. Qualifiers that affect the seventh raise the seventh a half step (major seventh) or lower the seventh a half step (diminished seventh or major sixth). *Major seventh* is the qualifier that raises the seventh. *Diminished seventh* is the qualifier that lowers the seventh and the tone may be spelled enharmonically as the sixth. Pitches of a diminished seventh chord may be spelled enharmonically. The preferred abbreviations are *Maj7* and *dim7* but may be expressed in other ways.

Indicators for Raised Seventh _____ Maj7, M7, Ma 7, (+7), (\sharp 7)

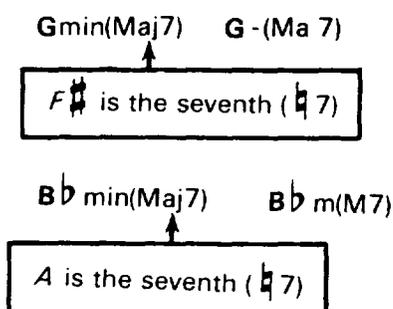
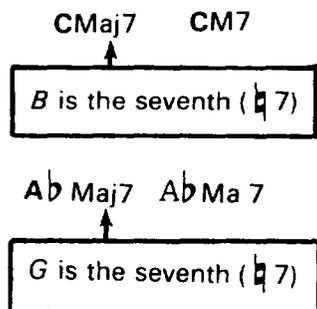
Indicators for Lowered Seventh _____ dim7, \circ 7

Figure 15.7: Indicators for Qualified Sevenths.

Seventh not qualified:



Seventh raised:



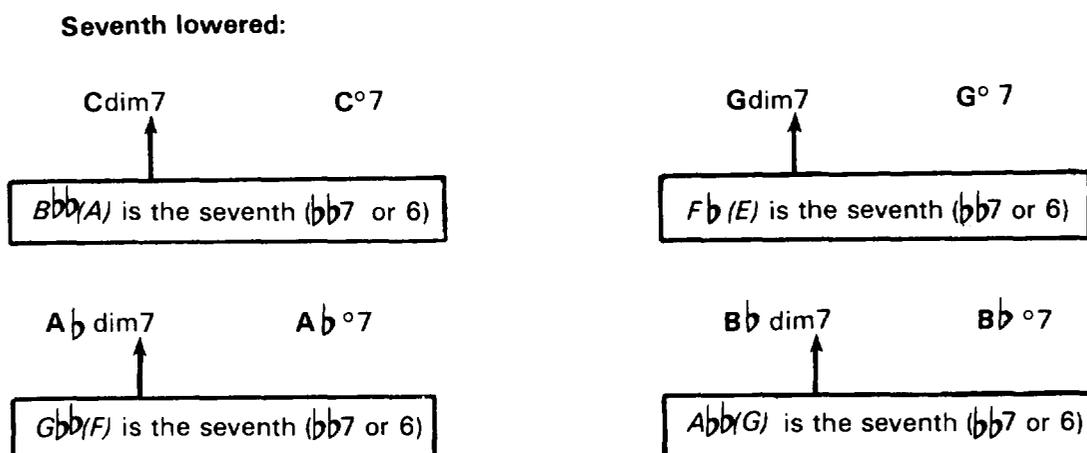


Figure 15.8: Determining the Seventh of a Chord from a Chord Symbol.

The Delta Sign

The Delta Sign (Δ) was originally used to indicate the use of a triad. Its meaning has come to include chords of the sixth and major seventh.

CHORD STRUCTURES

In addition to *major*, *minor*, *augmented* and *diminished* triads, there are nine commonly used chord structures:

- major sixth
- major seventh
- minor sixth
- minor/major seventh
- dominant seventh
- minor seventh
- minor seventh (flat five)
- augmented seventh
- diminished seventh

Major Sixth Chord

The chord formula for the major sixth chord is 1, 3, 5, 6 of a major scale. It is indicated by a root name and 6.

$\begin{array}{c} 6 \text{ A} \\ 5 \text{ G} \\ 3 \text{ E} \\ \hline 1 \text{ C} \\ \hline \text{C6} \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 6 \text{ G} \\ 5 \text{ F} \\ 3 \text{ D} \\ \hline 1 \text{ B} \\ \hline \text{B} \flat 6 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 6 \text{ B} \\ 5 \text{ A} \\ 3 \text{ F} \\ \hline 1 \text{ D} \\ \hline \text{D6} \end{array}$
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Figure 15.9: Major Sixth Chords.

Major Seventh Chords

The chord formula for the major seventh chord is 1, 3, 5, 7 of a major scale. It is indicated by a root name and Maj 7.

$\begin{array}{c} 7 \text{ B} \\ 5 \text{ G} \\ 3 \text{ E} \\ \hline 1 \text{ C} \\ \hline \text{CMaj7} \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 7 \text{ D} \\ 5 \text{ B} \\ 3 \text{ G} \\ \hline 1 \text{ E} \\ \hline \text{E} \flat \text{Maj7} \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 7 \text{ G} \\ 5 \text{ E} \\ 3 \text{ C} \\ \hline 1 \text{ A} \\ \hline \text{AMaj7} \end{array}$
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Figure 15.10: Major Seventh Chords.

Minor Sixth Chord

The chord formula for the minor sixth chord is 1, $\flat 3$, 5, 6 of a major scale. It is indicated by a root name, min, and 6.

$\begin{array}{c} 6 \text{ A} \\ 5 \text{ G} \\ \flat 3 \text{ E} \\ \hline 1 \text{ C} \\ \hline \text{Cmin6} \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 6 \text{ F} \\ 5 \text{ E} \\ \flat 3 \text{ C} \\ \hline 1 \text{ A} \\ \hline \text{A} \flat \text{min6} \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 6 \text{ C} \\ 5 \text{ B} \\ \flat 3 \text{ G} \\ \hline 1 \text{ E} \\ \hline \text{Emin6} \end{array}$
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Figure 15.11: Minor Sixth Chords.

Minor/Major Seventh Chord

The chord formula for the minor/major seventh chord is 1, \flat 3, 5, 7 of a major scale. It is indicated by a root name, min, and Maj 7.

$\begin{array}{c} 7 \text{ B} \\ 5 \text{ G} \\ \flat 3 \text{ E}\flat \\ 1 \text{ C} \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 7 \text{ C} \\ 5 \text{ A}\flat \\ \flat 3 \text{ F}\flat \\ 1 \text{ D}\flat \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 7 \text{ A}\sharp \\ 5 \text{ F}\sharp \\ \flat 3 \text{ D} \\ 1 \text{ B} \\ \hline \end{array}$
C min(Maj7)	D \flat min(Maj7)	Bmin(Maj7)

Figure 15.12: Minor/Major Seventh Chords.

Dominant Seventh Chord

The chord formula for the dominant seventh chord is 1, 3, 5, \flat 7 of a major scale. It is indicated by a root name and 7.

$\begin{array}{c} \flat 7 \text{ B}\flat \\ 5 \text{ G} \\ 3 \text{ E} \\ 1 \text{ C} \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \flat 7 \text{ E}\flat \\ 5 \text{ C} \\ 3 \text{ A} \\ 1 \text{ F} \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \flat 7 \text{ F} \\ 5 \text{ D} \\ 3 \text{ B} \\ 1 \text{ G} \\ \hline \end{array}$
C7	F7	G7

Figure 15.13: Dominant Seventh Chords.

Minor Seventh Chord

The chord formula for the minor seventh chord is 1, \flat 3, 5, \flat 7 of a major scale. It is indicated by a root name, min, and 7.

$\begin{array}{c} \flat 7 \text{ B}\flat \\ 5 \text{ G} \\ \flat 3 \text{ E}\flat \\ 1 \text{ C} \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \flat 7 \text{ C} \\ 5 \text{ A} \\ \flat 3 \text{ F} \\ 1 \text{ D} \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \flat 7 \text{ A}\flat \\ 5 \text{ F} \\ \flat 3 \text{ D}\flat \\ 1 \text{ B}\flat \\ \hline \end{array}$
Cmin7	Dmin7	B \flat min7

Figure 15.14: Minor Seventh Chords.

Minor Seventh (Flat Five) Chord

The chord formula for the minor seventh (flat five) chord is 1, $\flat 3$, $\flat 5$, $\flat 7$ of a major scale. It is indicated by a root name, min, 7, and ($\flat 5$). This type of chord is also called a half diminished seventh chord ($\phi 7$).

$\begin{array}{l} \flat 7 \ B\flat \\ \flat 5 \ G\flat \\ \flat 3 \ E\flat \\ 1 \ C \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{l} \flat 7 \ G \\ \flat 5 \ E\flat \\ \flat 3 \ C \\ 1 \ A \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{l} \flat 7 \ F \\ \flat 5 \ D\flat \\ \flat 3 \ B\flat \\ 1 \ G \end{array}$
Cmin7($\flat 5$)	Amin7($\flat 5$)	Gmin7($\flat 5$)

Figure 15.15: Minor Seventh (flat five) Chords.

Augmented Seventh Chord

The chord formula for the augmented seventh chord is 1, 3, $\sharp 5$, $\flat 7$ of a major scale. It is indicated by a root name, Aug, and 7.

$\begin{array}{l} \flat 7 \ B\flat \\ \sharp 5 \ G\sharp \\ 3 \ E \\ 1 \ C \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{l} \flat 7 \ C \\ \sharp 5 \ A\sharp \\ 3 \ F \\ 1 \ D \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{l} \flat 7 \ A\flat \\ \sharp 5 \ F\sharp \\ 3 \ D \\ 1 \ B\flat \end{array}$
CAug7	DAug7	B \flat Aug7

Figure 15.16: Augmented Seventh Chords.

Diminished Seventh Chord

The chord formula for the diminished seventh chord is 1, $\flat 3$, $\flat 5$, $\flat 7$ of a major scale. It is indicated by a root name, dim, and 7. Notes of diminished seventh chords are often spelled enharmonically for ease of identification

$\begin{array}{l} \flat\flat 7 \ A\flat \\ \flat 5 \ F \\ \flat 3 \ D \\ 1 \ B \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{l} 6 \ A \\ \flat 5 \ G\flat \\ \flat 3 \ E\flat \\ 1 \ C \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{l} 6 \ B\flat \\ \flat 5 \ G^* \\ \flat 3 \ E^* \\ 1 \ D\flat \end{array}$
Bdim7	Cdim7	D \flat dim7

*spelled enharmonically

Figure 15.17: Diminished Seventh Chords.