

CHORDS

One of the distinctive characteristics of jazz is its harmony, or chords. In contrast to most pop, rock, folk, and country songs (which use mainly three-note chords, such as major and minor triads), virtually all forms of jazz use chords that contain four or more different notes (seventh chords, extended chords, and altered chords). In addition, jazz progressions frequently contain many different chords, and often travel through multiple key centers.

SEVENTH CHORDS

A seventh chord is comprised of four notes: the three notes of a triad plus a major, minor, or diminished seventh. For instance, if you begin with the C major triad and add a major seventh (B), a C major seventh chord is formed. Likewise, if you substitute the minor (or flatted) seventh (B \flat) for the B, you have a new seventh chord, C7, also known as a C dominant seventh chord.

pitch: C D E F G A B C
scale degree: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1

C Cmaj7 C7
1-3-5 1-3-5-7 1-3-5- \flat 7

As with triads, seventh chords come in many types, including major, minor, diminished, augmented, suspended, and others. Following is a list of seventh-chord types and their constructions.

CHORD TYPE	FORMULA	NOTES (C AS ROOT)	CHORD NAME
major seventh	1-3-5-7	C-E-G-B	Cmaj7, CM7, Cma7, C Δ 7
dominant seventh	1-3-5- \flat 7	C-E-G-B \flat	C7, Cdom7
minor seventh	1- \flat 3-5-7	C-E \flat -G-B	Cm7, Cmin7, C-7
minor seven flat five (half-diminished seventh)	1- \flat 3- \flat 5-7	C-E \flat -G \flat -B	Cm7 \flat 5, C \circ 7
diminished seventh	1- \flat 3- \flat 5- \flat 7	C-E \flat -G \flat -B \flat (A)	C \circ 7, Cdim7
augmented seventh	1-3- \sharp 5-7	C-E-G \sharp -B	C+7, C7 \sharp 5, Caug7
dominant seven flat five	1-3- \flat 5-7	C-E-G \flat -B	C7 \flat 5, C7(-5)
minor/major seventh	1- \flat 3-5-7	C-E \flat -G-B	Cm(maj7), C-(maj7)

The following exercises will help you become more familiar with the five most common chord types. Practice each pattern in multiple keys.

Exercise 3 takes you through the major seventh, dominant seventh, minor seventh, minor seventh/flatted fifth, and diminished seventh by changing one note at a time. Exercise 4 stretches the previous pattern over two octaves. Exercise 5 begins each chord with its third; Exercise 6 begins each chord with its fifth; and Exercise 7 begins each chord with its seventh.

Ex. 3

Fmaj7 F7
Fm7 Fm7 \flat 5

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