

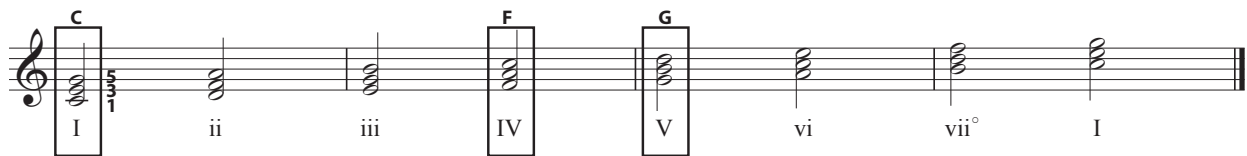
How to Play From a Lead Sheet: Major Chords

Understanding basic chords follows the knowledge of scales. Major or minor scales are set patterns of seven notes played consecutively, with note 1, the octave, being repeated at the end. We assign each note with a scale degree number. For example, in the C major scale: C=1, D=2, E=3, F=4, G=5, A=6, B=7, C=1. This will be important later.



In discussing harmonic practice, the scale degree numbers (1-7) are converted to Roman numerals (I, ii, iii, etc) using upper case for major triads (I, IV, V) and lower case for others (ii, iii, vi, vii°). A basic chord is commonly called a triad. A triad is a chord that has three distinct notes, usually 1, 3, and 5, built on each note of the scale.

The first basic chord that we will cover is the major triad, which is the basic building block of all the other chords. Major triads are built on the first (I), fourth (IV), and fifth (V) degrees of the scale, by adding the third and fifth scale degrees to each root tone. In the C scale, C (I), F (IV), and G (V) form major triads.



In a C major triad the notes are C, E, and G (1, 3, and 5). In most standard lead sheets, this will be indicated by simply labeling the letter above a particular note "C." Occasionally, the chord will be written as "Cmaj" (for a C Major chord) with C being the root: counting up 1, 2, 3 to E, and then up 4, 5 to G.

On a typical lead sheet, the chords are labeled above the melody line. For instance, here are the last four measures of *God Is So Good* in lead sheet format in the key of C, using the C (I), F (IV), and G (V) chords.



For basic lead sheet playing there are three approaches. The first is to play the melody in the right hand and the chords in the left. When playing chords with the left hand, we use chord inversions to keep the hand close to one position on the keyboard. Notice in this example how the F chord uses the notes F, A, and C, however the 5th (C) is on the bottom of the chord. Also, the G chord has both the 3rd (B) and 5th (D) on the bottom of the chord. These are called chord inversion - when the note on the bottom of the chord is not the root (1).

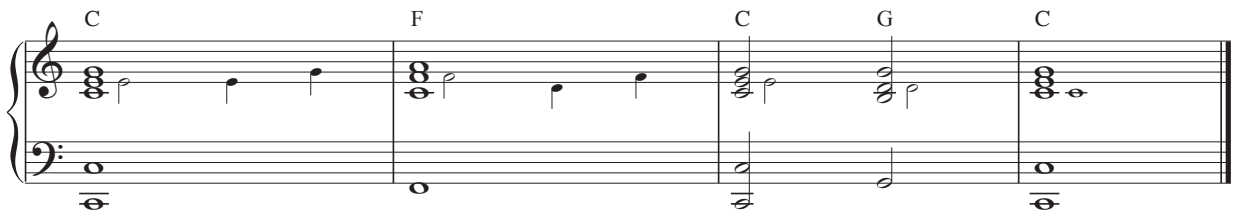


How to Play From a Lead Sheet: Major Chords

Another approach is to play the melody with chords under the melody in the right hand while playing the root of the chord (the chord name) in the left hand. The root can be played as a single note or in octaves.



When there are confident vocalists, it is not necessary to play the melody. In this approach the chords are played in the right hand while playing the root of the chord in the left hand. The root can be played as a single note or in octaves. While playing the chords, imagine or sing the melody of *God Is So Good*, indicated here in cued smaller notes:



There are more suggested choruses on the MAP Piano Level TWO form. Other choruses that use just I, IV, & V chords are *Jesus Loves Me*, *Deep and Wide*, and *This Is the Day*. Give these a try!

How to Play From a Lead Sheet: Adding Rhythm in the Left Hand

In Level TWO we learned two basic methods of playing from a lead sheet. The first method was to play the melody with the right hand and block chords with the left. The second was to play block chords with the right hand and the root in octaves with the left.

In Level THREE we will begin to add some variety to our playing of choruses by adding rhythm in the left hand. One way to do this is to play the root of the chord in octaves, subdividing rhythm across the measure. This can be straight quarter notes or a dotted rhythm such as the one shown below.

Musical notation for a chorus in 4/4 time. The right hand plays a melody. The left hand plays the root of the chord in octaves with a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note. The chords are C, F, C, G, C.

Another left hand pattern is to play a *broken chord* based on the root, fifth, and octave.

Musical notation for a chorus in 4/4 time. The right hand plays a melody. The left hand plays a broken chord pattern based on the root, fifth, and octave. The chords are C, F, C, G, C.

Here is a hand pattern utilizing the root, third, and fifth of the indicated chord.

Musical notation for a chorus in 4/4 time. The right hand plays a melody. The left hand plays a pattern utilizing the root, third, and fifth of the indicated chord. The chords are C, F, C, G, C.

The left hand may also be played in *chordal style*, with the root note of the inverted chord on the first beat of the measure, followed by the other two notes on the remaining beats.

Musical notation for a chorus in 2/4 time. The right hand plays a melody. The left hand plays in chordal style. The chords are C, F, G7.

Musical notation for a chorus in 3/4 time. The right hand plays a melody. The left hand plays in chordal style. The chords are C, F, G7.

Try playing the Level TWO choruses you have learned with a variety of rhythms in your left hand.

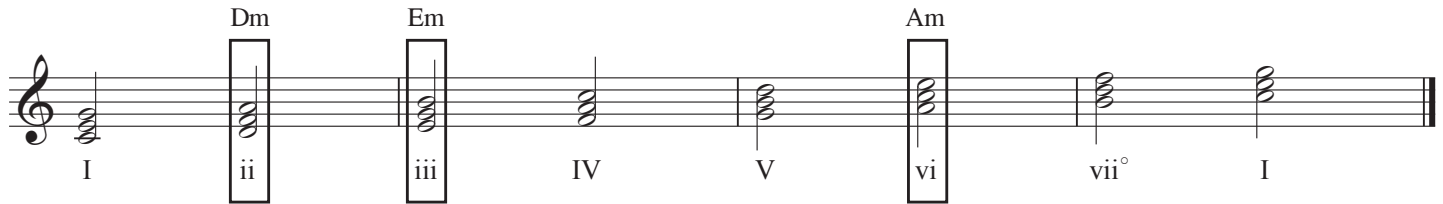
We are now going to add two more types of chords: minor and seventh chords.

MINOR TRIADS

The second-most common chords used in lead sheets are **minor triads**. Minor triads use the same letters as major triads, but with the third lowered a half step, which is a minor third. For example, a C minor triad will use the notes C, E^b, and G (1, minor-3, and 5). This triad is usually written as Cm, sometimes indicated as Cmin, or lower case c.



The naturally-occurring minor triads in a major key, such as C major, are the ii, iii, and vi chords.



SEVENTH CHORDS

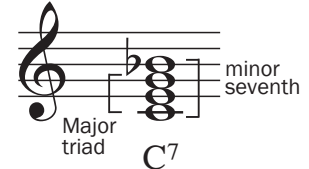
Seventh chords are created by adding an interval of a seventh above the chord's root using pitches as they appear in that major key. These are the most commonly used seventh chords:

- **Dominant seventh (V⁷) chords** are built on the fifth degree (V) of the scale, which is a major triad. On the fifth degree of the scale, the seventh is a minor seventh. *Adding a minor seventh to a major triad* builds what we call a dominant seventh (V⁷) chord. For example, in the key of F, the fifth degree of the scale is C. The "C⁷" uses the tones C, E, G, and B^b.
- **Major seventh chords** combine a major triad with a major seventh. Major seventh chords occur naturally on the first and fourth degrees of the scale and are indicated maj⁷. The C^{maj7} uses the tones C, E, G, and B.
- **Minor seventh chords** occur naturally on the second, third, and sixth degrees of the scale. They consist of a minor triad with a minor seventh added. The Cm⁷ uses the tones C, E^b, G, B^b. The Cm₇ chord occurs naturally in the keys of B^b, E^b, and A^b.

Learn new choruses that contain minor and seventh chords using the methods you have learned previously. Suggested choruses are on the M.A.P. Piano Level THREE form.

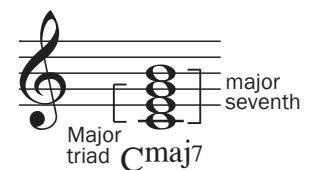
Dominant Seventh Chord (V⁷)

Major triad with a minor seventh



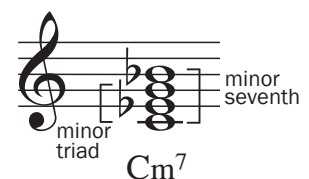
Major Seventh Chord (maj⁷)

Major triad with a major seventh



Minor Seventh Chord (m⁷)

Minor triad with a minor seventh



How to Play From a Lead Sheet: Altered Chords

SUSPENDED CHORDS

In the **suspended chord**, a particular note is replaced by a note on either side of it. There are two common types of suspended chords, the suspended 4th and the suspended 6th. The suspended 4th is the most common, with the 4th degree of the scale “suspended” in place of the 3rd. For example, the C-E-G (1,3,5) of the C triad becomes C, F, G (1, 4, and 5) as a C^{sus} chord. The suspended 4th chord can be written in two ways: C^{sus} and C^{sus4}. In the suspended 6th chord, the 5th of the chord is replaced with the 6th degree of the scale. C^{sus6} is played C, E, A (1, 3, 6).

SLASH CHORDS

A chord, such as C/E, uses what we call **slash notation** (/), where the first letter (or everything before the slash) is an indication of what chord you are to play. The second letter (after the slash) indicates what note is to be played in the **bass**, regardless of whether or not the second letter is in that chord. Here is an example based on an exercise from Level THREE. A number of chords were altered utilizing slash chords.

DIMINISHED TRIADS

Less common is the **diminished triad**. If we take a minor triad (remember, C, E^b, and G or 1, minor-3, and 5) and flatten the fifth one half-step, the result is a diminished triad. For example, C, E^b, G^b (1, minor-3, minor-5). A diminished triad is generally written as C^{dim}, although it is sometimes indicated as C^o. A diminished triad can also have an added 7th, which is a minor 3rd above the diminished 5th.

AUGMENTED TRIADS

The least common triad is the **augmented triad**. An augmented triad is a major triad with a raised (sharpened) fifth. For example, C, E, G[#] (1, 3, sharp-5). This is commonly written as C^{aug} or sometimes as C⁺.

How to Play From a Lead Sheet: Adding Arpeggiation

Another way to add variety is to play **arpeggiated or broken chords** in either the left or right hand. In Level THREE, we broke up the chord using quarter notes in the left hand.

Changing the beat or style of the broken chords will alter the style of the song. The example below is based on the same song, but uses eighth notes in the left hand. After learning the eighth note form, experiment with other styles.

The broken chord format is not limited to the left hand. We can use a simple beat or pattern in the left hand while playing broken chords with the right hand, such as in the example below.

The arpeggiation, or broken chord, can also cross between hands.

When the congregation is familiar with the tune, it is not necessary to play the melody for the entire piece. As long as the chord structure and meter are maintained you can add embellishments. In Level FIVE we introduce more ideas for adding color and variety to chorus accompaniments. Until then, review the choruses learned so far and see what you can add on your own.

How to Play From a Lead Sheet: Adding Fills

To add color and variety to our playing, we can add **fills** at the end of the song or to measures with notes with long duration. In Level FOUR, we learned one form of a fill, the **arpeggio**. In this section, we will learn that we can add notes in and outside of the chord structure to help move the music forward.

Let's begin with a simple fill on the **scale** of the key. This can be a straight ascending or descending scale.

Additional fill suggestions are included in Appendix A of this section.

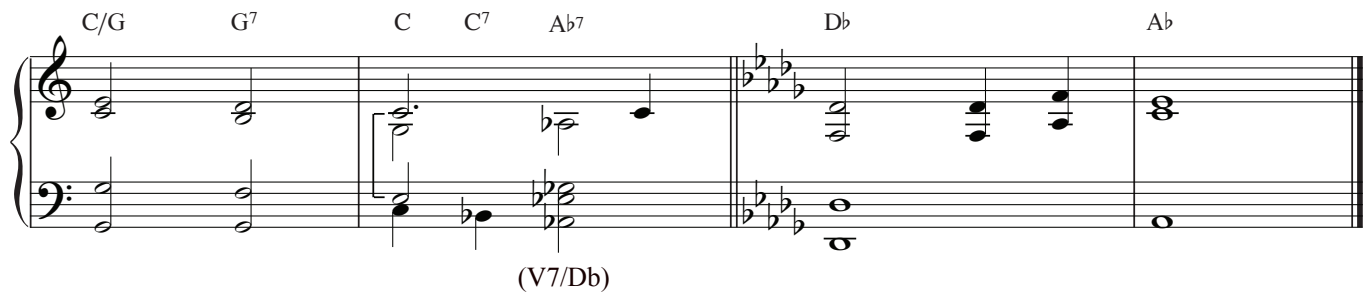
There is no right or wrong way to use fills. Be sure to take time in the practice room to experiment and see what sounds good. You may find something you try that is not suitable for the song you are working on, but it is possible that it will fit in another song. You are only limited by your imagination!

How to Play From a Lead Sheet: Modulation

When playing two or more songs consecutively, or to add freshness when repeating verses of a single song, a well-rendered modulation to a new key allows for a seamless transition. For Level FIVE Worship Prep the student is required to play three choruses utilizing modulation. When modulating to a new key be aware of the range of the melody. You do not want to modulate to a key in which the melody will be too high or low for the average singer in the congregation. The generally acceptable range for congregational singing is treble clef middle C to fourth space E.

The simplest way to modulate between keys is to use a **common note** in both keys. The V^7 chord of the destination key is often used to make the transition. The measure before the modulation will start with the I of the original key as the bass note. The bass part will “walk down” to the new key, the notes dependent on the destination key.

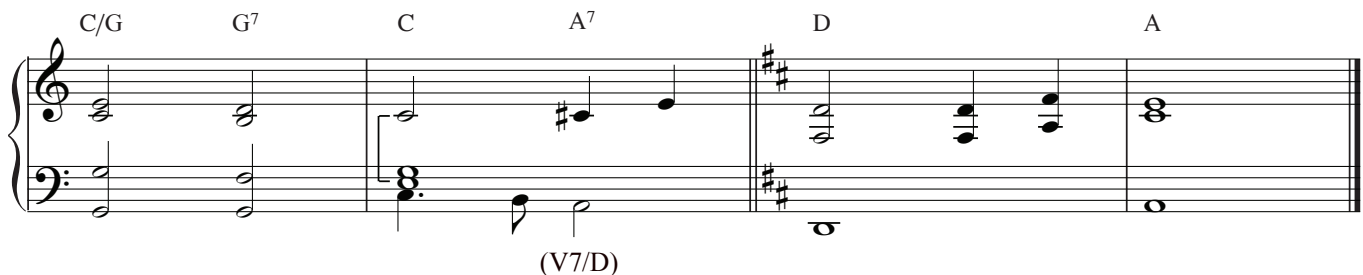
To **modulate by half step**, the bass note will descend in whole steps from the root of the original key (C), to the flat-7 (B^b), to the root of the V^7 chord (A^b) of the destination key (D^b). The upper voices will aid in the modulation by moving from the root of the original key (C) to the V^7 chord (A^b7) of the destination key when reaching the root of the V^7 in the bass.



C/G G⁷ C C⁷ A^b7 D^b A^b

(V⁷/D^b)

To **modulate by whole step**, the bass note will descend from the root of the original key (C), through the 7th (B), to the 6th (A), which is the root of the V^7 chord of the destination key (D). The upper voices will aid in the modulation by moving from the root of the original key (C) to the V^7 chord (A^7) of the destination key (D) when reaching the root of the V^7 (A) in the bass. This is best done by moving one-half step from the root (C) to the 3rd of the chord (C^\sharp) and outlining the 5th of the chord (E), which leads to the root (D) of the new key.



C/G G⁷ C A⁷ D A

(V⁷/D)

To **modulate up a fourth** (for instance from C to F) we can use the V^7 chord of the destination key as the transition chord (in this case, C^7). In the last measure before the modulation, we “walk” the bass note down from the root (C) of the original key, to the 7th (B^b) which for us is a third inversion V^7 chord to our destination key (F). We can continue our bass descent, skipping down a minor third (G), which logically lands on the root (F) of the destination key on the first beat of the measure in the new key. No change is needed in the right hand.



C/G G⁷ C C⁷/B^b F C

(V⁷/F)

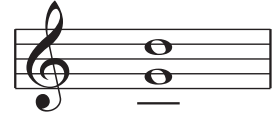
How to Play From a Lead Sheet: More Altered Chords

There are often altered or extended chords found in a lead sheet that vary from one of the chords we've already learned.

Altered Chords

The first altered chord we will discuss is the **No-Third Chord**. This chord is exactly as it sounds, a "chord" containing only the root and fifth. The open 5th chord, such as C and G (1 and 5), is sometimes known to rock musicians as a **power chord**. This chord is generally written as $C^{(omit3)}$, although it can also be written as $C^{(open)}$ or C^5 .

$C^{(omit3)}$



A second altered chord is the **Add Chord**. This chord is whatever the basic chord requires (1, 3, and 5) plus whatever number is indicated. If you are playing a C^{add2} you would play a C major triad plus a D (C, D, E, and G or 1, 2, 3, and 5). This is generally written as $C^{(add2)}$ or C^2 . Another option is add6 .

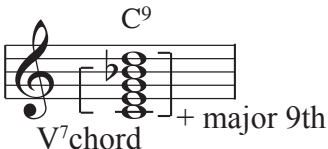
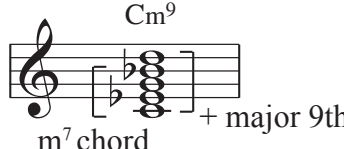
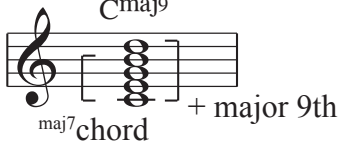
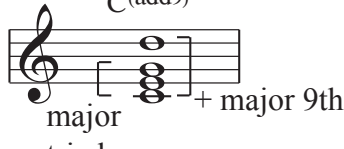
$C^{(add2)}$



Extended Chords

Extended Chords are chords that "extend" or use tones beyond the seventh chords we have already discussed. To begin, let us return to the scale number system. The scale has 7 different notes, but by repeating the scale you can have up to 14. Another way to look at it is: in the key of C, B=7. If we continue from there, by extension: C=8, D=9, E=10, F=11, G=12, A=13, and B=14. Since C, E, G, and B are accounted for in the first octave, this leaves D=9, F=11, and A=13 to us as extensions in the higher numbers.

Any chord that is followed by a 9 adds both a seventh and ninth degree of the scale to the basic triad. The 9th itself remains unchanged (unless specifically indicated), but the 7th can be major or minor as shown below.

<p>For example, a C^9 chord follows the pattern of the C^7 chord and uses the flat-7th and the 9th of the basic 1-3-5 triad, C, E, G, B^b, and D (1, 3, 5, flat-7, and 9).</p>  <p>C^9 V⁷chord + major 9th</p>	<p>A Cm^9 chord would add the 9th to the Cm^7 chord.</p>  <p>Cm^9 m⁷chord + major 9th</p>
<p>A C^{maj9} chord follows the pattern of the C^{maj7} chord and uses the natural 7th and the 9th of the basic 1-3-5 triad, C, E, G, B, and D (1, 3, 5, 7, and 9).</p>  <p>C^{maj9} maj⁷chord + major 9th</p>	<p>If, however, the chord says C^{add9} then the 7th is not included and you would play the 1-3-5 triad with an added 9th (1-3-5-9). This would sound similar to C^{add2}.</p>  <p>$C^{(add9)}$ major triad + major 9th</p>













Eleventh and thirteenth chords are built in the same manner as 9th chords. Note that the fifth of the chord is usually left out to allow the chord to fit under the right hand, with the bass note in the left.

Gospel and jazz musicians choose to alter other notes in extended chords for expressive effect. For example, a C^9 can be altered, by flattening the 9th (C^{7b9}) or raising the 9th ($C^{7\#9}$).

How to Play From a Lead Sheet: Appendix A - More Fills

Here are other examples of fills based on the primary chords in the key of C (C, F, G).

Example 1:

I (C Major)	IV (F Major)	V (G Major)
		
		
		
		

Example 2:

I (C Major)	IV (F Major)	V (G Major)
