

Chord Variations

Chord Constructor
on last page!

Composers have created an endless variety of chords in their quest to produce new sounds and emotions. It would be daunting to memorize each chord. Fortunately, nearly every variation can be derived from its Major chord by applying a simple rule. So all you need remember is the Major chord and the rule.

Apply the **C** chord variation rules shown below to the **D** chord, penciling in the fingering that works best for you. Play the **C** (change fingering if desired) and **D** variants to ensure they share the same tonal/emotional quality. Some chord types have more than one notation, for example, Cdim = C°.

3-KEY CHORDS



Sharp = up one key
Flat = down one key

Your Turn!

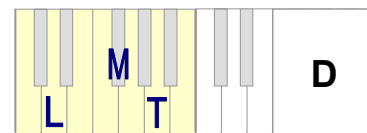
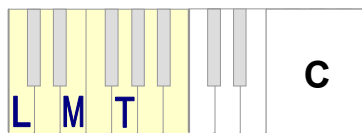


Major

Rule: 1st, 3rd, 5th

Tone: bright, cheerful*

KeyCount: (R)-4-7**

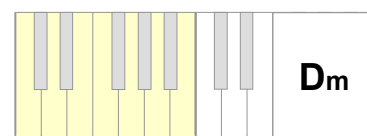
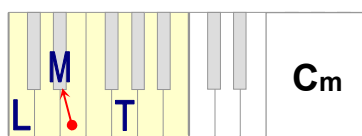


Harmonic Minor

Rule: Flat the 3rd

Tone: dark, sad

Has same Root as Major chord

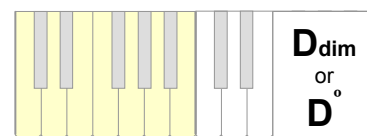
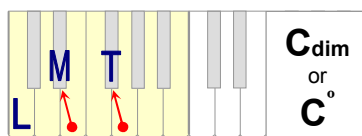


Diminished

Rule: Flat the 3rd & 5th

Tone: foreboding

Decreases the overall interval

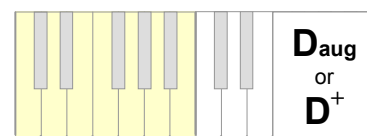
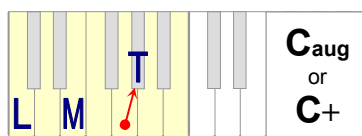


Augmented

Rule: Sharp the 5th

Tone: fretful

Increases the overall interval

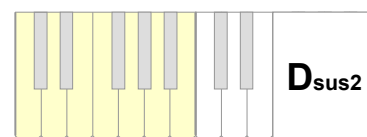
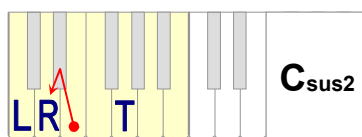


Suspended 2nd

Rule: Double-flat the 3rd (= 2nd)

Tone: anticipating

Resolved by return to Major chord

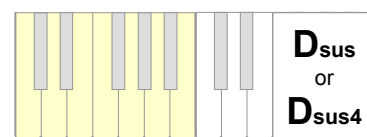
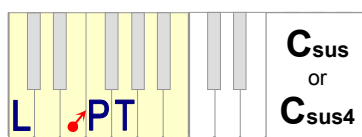


Suspended 4th

Rule: Sharp the 3rd (= 4th)

Tone: expectant

Resolved by return to Major chord

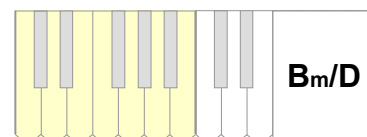
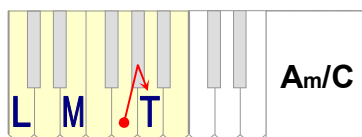


Relative Minor (shown in 1st Inversion)

Rule: Double-sharp the 5th (= 6th)

Tone: wistful

Same Key Signature as Major chord

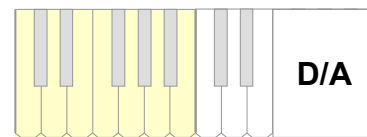
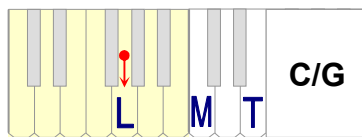


Altered Bass

Rule: Play chord with indicated /Bass

Tone: adds deeper sound

Bass = Bottom key



* Tonal emotions vary by listener and song. Also, dark chords played in higher octaves sound brighter.

** From the Root, count 4 keys up to the 3rd then 3 more keys to the 5th (7 keys from Root).

4-KEY CHORDS

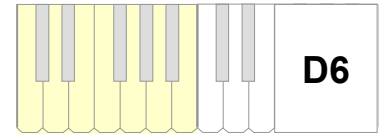
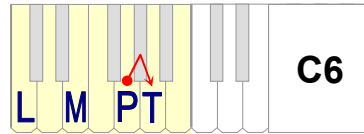
Your Turn!



Sixth

Rule: Add the 6th (2 keys above 5th)

Tone: Finality

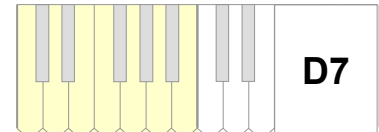
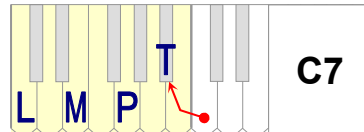


Seventh

Rule: Add dominant 7th (2 below octave)

Tone: Tense

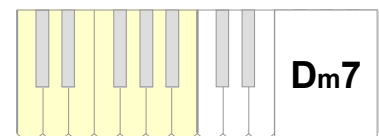
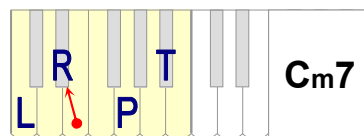
If V7 chord, resolves to I chord*



Minor Seventh

Rule: Flat 3rd of the Seventh chord

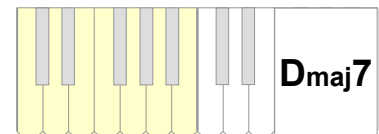
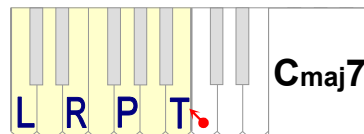
Tone: Thoughtful



Major Seventh

Rule: Add the 7th (1 key below octave)

Tone: Complex, modern



Diminished Seventh

Rule: Flat 3rd, 5th, 7th of Seventh chord

Tone: Menacing

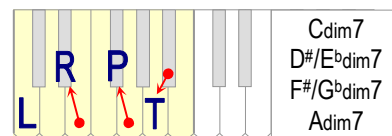
Each of the 12 Major chords can be converted to a Diminished Seventh beginning on their respective Root keys.

But rather than learning 12 distinct chords, all dim7 variations can be reduced to 3 Groups of 4 *enharmonic* chords.

Enharmonic chords have identical keys but different names. For example, in Group 1:

$$Cdim7 = D^{\#}/E^b dim7 = F^{\#}/G^b dim7 = Adim7$$

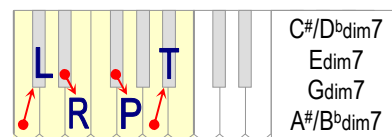
GROUP 1



Group 1: Flat 3-5-7 of C7

Cdim7
D[#]/E^bdim7
F[#]/G^bdim7
Adim7

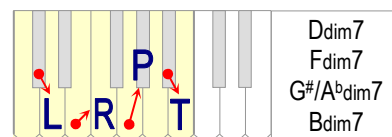
GROUP 2



Group 2: Sharp each Group 1 key

C[#]/D^bdim7
Edim7
Gdim7
A[#]/B^bdim7

GROUP 3



Group 3: Sharp each Group 2 key

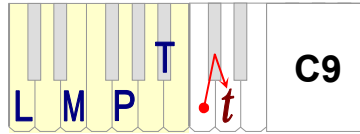
Ddim7
Fdim7
G[#]/A^bdim7
Bdim7

* See *Practical Music Theory* to learn about Chord Numerals.

2-HAND CHORDS

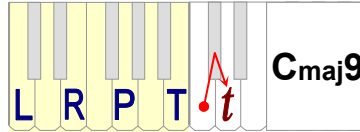
Ninth

Rule: C7 + 9th (2 keys above octave)
LH=C7 chord; RH=D key



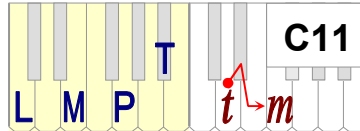
Major Ninth

Rule: Cmaj7 + 9th (2 keys above octave)
LH=Cmaj7 chord; RH=D key



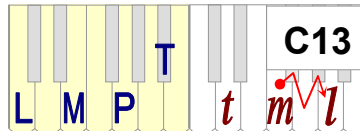
Eleventh

Rule: C9 + 11th (3 keys above 9th)
LH=C7 chord; RH=D+F keys



Thirteenth

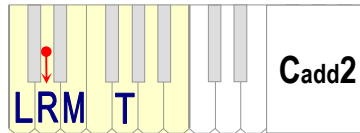
Rule: C11 + 13th (4 keys above 11th)
LH=C7 chord; RH=Dm chord



OTHER VARIATIONS

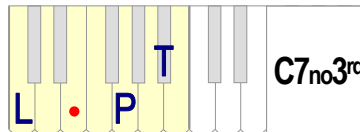
Add

Rule: Add the specified key
Cadd2 = Add the D key to C chord



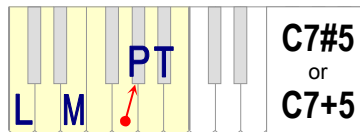
No

Rule: Omit the specified key
C7no3rd = Omit the E key from C7



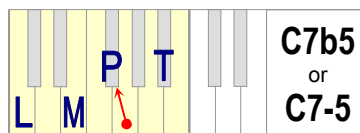
or +

Rule: Sharp the specified key
C7#5 or C7+5 = Sharp the G key in C7



b or -

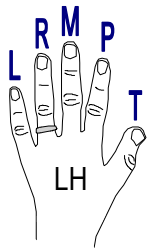
Rule: Flat the specified key
C7b5 or C7-5 = Flat the G key in C7



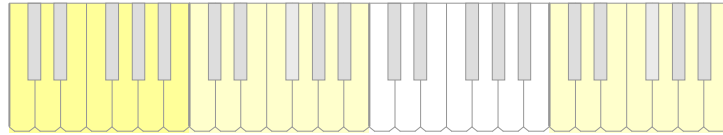
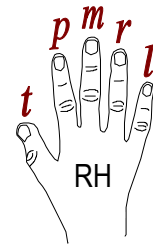
Interval KeyCounts

Keys to count from the Root or Octave to reach a particular interval. (See *Practical Music Theory*.)

Interval	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th
From Root	2	4	5	7	9	11	12					
From Octave								2	4	5	7	9

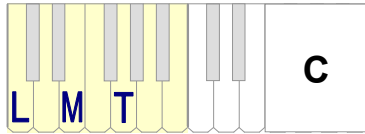


Chord Constructor

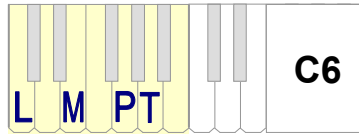


Using the **C** examples below as models, lightly pencil in the desired Major chord variation above.

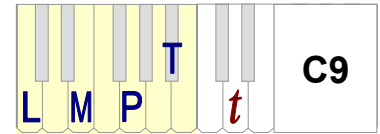
Tip: Print on cardstock then laminate this page. Use a dry-erase pen to construct chords.



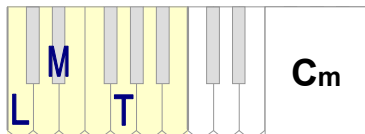
Major: 1st, 3rd, 5th. Keycount: (R)-4-7



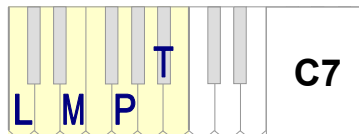
Sixth: Add the 6th (2 keys above 5th)



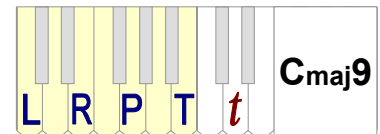
Ninth: C7 + 9th (2 above octave)



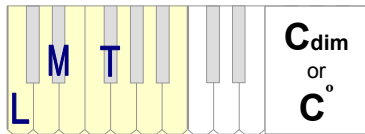
Harmonic Minor: Flat the 3rd



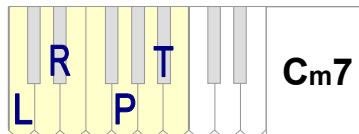
Seventh: Add dominant 7th (2 below octave)



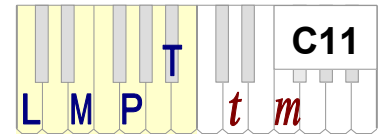
Major 9th: Cmaj7+9th (2 above octave)



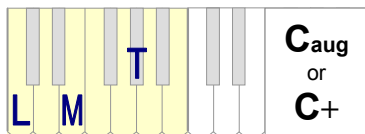
Diminished: Flat the 3rd and 5th



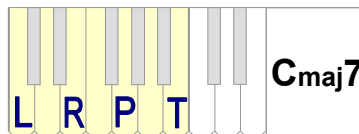
Minor 7th: Flat the 3rd of the Seventh



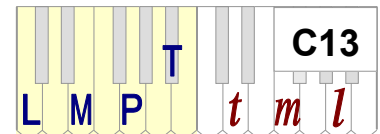
Eleventh: C9 + 11th (3 above 9th)



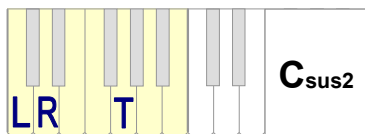
Augmented: Sharp the 5th



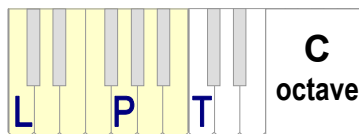
Major 7th: Add the 7th (1 below octave)



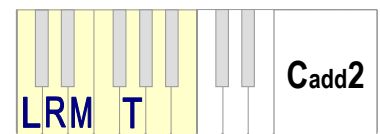
Thirteenth: C11 + 13th (4 above 11th)



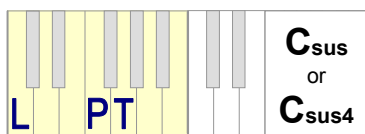
Suspended 2nd: Double-flat the 3rd



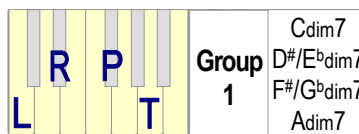
Octave Chord: Omit 3rd, Add 8th



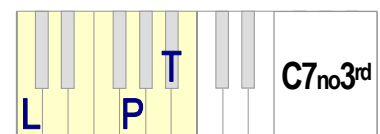
Add: Add the specified interval key



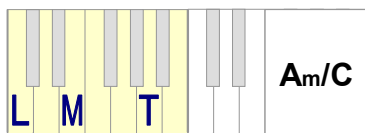
Suspended 4th: Sharp the 3rd



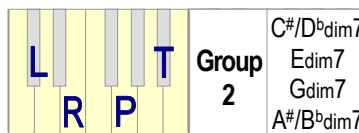
Diminished Seventh: Flat 3-5-7 of C7



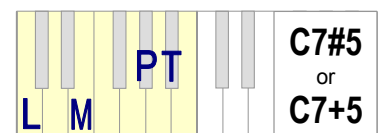
No: Omit the specified interval key



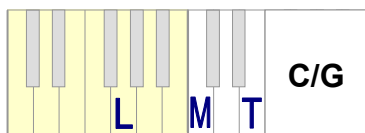
Relative Minor: Double-sharp the 5th



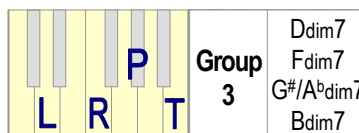
Diminished Seventh: Sharp Group 1



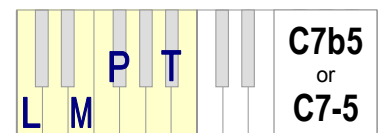
or + : Sharp the specified key



Altered Bass: Play indicated /Bass



Diminished Seventh: Sharp Group 2



b or - : Flat the specified key