

Basic Chords

Uli Widmaier

Major Chord: root, major third, fifth (the “root” is the note for which the chord is named)

Chord Symbol: capital letter, for example C; A; F#; Eb.

Example: C has the notes C E G

Minor Chord: root, minor third, fifth

Chord Symbol: capital letter and lowercase “m,” for example Cm; Am; F#m Ebm.

Example: Cm has the notes C Eb G

Augmented Chord: root, major third, augmented fifth

Chord Symbol: capital letter and “aug” or “+,” for example Caug; A+; F#aug; Eb+.

Example: Caug has the notes C E G#

Dominant Seventh Chord (also simply called Seventh Chord): root, major third, fifth, minor seventh.

Chord symbol: capital letter and “7,” for example C7; A7; F#7; Eb7.

Example: C7 has the notes C E G Bb

Diminished Seventh Chord: root, minor third, diminished fifth, diminished seventh

Chord Symbol: capital letter and “dim7” or “°7,” for example Cdim7; A°7; F#dim7; Eb°7.

Example: Cdim7 has the notes C Eb Gb Bbb

There are many other chords. Here are a few examples:

- CM7 is a major chord plus a major seventh;
- Cm7 is a minor chord plus a minor seventh;
- CmM7 is a minor chord plus a major seventh;
- C7dim5 is a major chord with a diminished fifth plus a minor seventh;
- Cm7dim5 is a minor chord with a diminished fifth plus a minor seventh;
- C+7 or Caug7 is an augmented chord plus a minor seventh;
- C+M7 or CaugM7 is an augmented chord plus a major seventh.

Root and Inversions: The root of the chord is the note for which the chord is named. If the root is in the bass, the chord is in “root position.” If one of the other notes is in the bass, the chord is “inverted.”

Three-note chords have one root position and two inversions. Four-note chords have one root position and three inversions.

Examples: The C7 chord has the notes C, E, G, and Bb. If the C is in the bass, the chord is in root position. If the E is in the bass, the chord is in first inversion. If the G is in the bass, the chord is in second inversion. If the Bb is in the bass, the chord is in third inversion.