

1.9 | Voicing and modifying triads

When we played through different chord shapes, both triads (3 notes) and 7th chords (4 notes), you likely noticed that they were initially built by stacking notes on top of one another in 3rds. But while these shapes might be a simple way to play the chord you need... you shouldn't use them. Here's a very important principle to remember:

Don't stack consecutive thirds.



Thirds can be thick, muddy, and insistent. They saturate whatever space they occupy. You can break rules sometimes, but this one is generally pretty firm: you can stack a 3rd on a 4th, but never put a 3rd next to another 3rd. You should remove the triad shape (1-3-5) from your muscle memory!

Instead, let's look at some ways we can modify basic triads. *Usually these chords will be written as just a simple chord* (C, for example), but there are several ways you can modify the chord. I'll demonstrate using a verse of "Jesus Paid It All."

C5 (or Cno3)

The simplest way to modify the 3rd is to simply remove it! The resulting sound is open, sparse, and clean. You might see this indicated with chord symbols as "C5" or "Cno3," but usually it's just written as a standard chord. A no3 chord is great when you're playing with guitar.

C2 (or Csus2)

If the C5 sounds *too* sparse and empty, try playing a Csus2. Just like the Csus4 uses the 4th as a suspension instead of the 3rd, a Csus2 (sometimes written as C2) uses a 2nd instead of a 3rd:

Note in this example and the previous one that I'm using a different shape for some chords. Remember, you can use whatever shape sounds the best to your ear!

Cadd2

If you want a richer, more emotive sound, start with the standard triad and *add* the 2nd (here I've written just the standard chord symbols; you can make the alteration in your mind!):

Note the voicing I used here, in which the soprano (the highest note) is always on scale degree 5. We'll talk about this in the next section.

C (add7)

Here's another alteration I call "add7," but the 7th here is present inside the chord, not on top, and the 3rd is omitted. The 7th gives richness and color without the saturation of the 3rd. Note that it really only works best when the 7th of the chord is a half-step below the root. Here again I've just shown the standard chord symbols. Can you find and identify the alterations?:

C (add4)

There's one more common alteration to learn about, but this one is used a little less frequently. If you're playing a sus chord (like a Gsus in the key of C), you can play both the 3rd *and* the 4th of the chord together. Here I've written out all alterations to describe what the chord really is (but remember, usually you won't see these alterations written out—they're up to you!):

Next, let's look at some ways we could change the soprano slightly. Here, I changed the soprano to create some step-wise movement. Pay attention to the resolution of scale degree 4 to 3:

Here's a variation on the same section, beginning with static-soprano voicings and adding melodic material in step-wise motion. While scale degree 7 usually resolved up to 1, here it's part of a descending motion from 1 to 5:

As with every device we've looked at so far, one-to-one countermelodies aren't going to be the *only* thing you use. But you will use them constantly, and they're an important stepping stone to other melodic material.

Here's another example of a one-to-one countermelody, using the chorus of "Jesus, Thank You." I didn't make note of the melodic resolutions this time, but you can play and hear them yourself.

2.5 | Guided practice for one-to-one melodies

Here are several examples for you to play using one-to-one counter-melodies (the first four are the same examples used in section 1.11). Suggested harmonizations are on the following page.

1. "Be Thou My Vision"

2. "There Is a Fountain"

3. "Yet Not I, But Through Christ in Me"

4. "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty"

5. "Take My Life, and Let It Be"

Although it's not immediately obvious on the page, this expanded push groups the subdivision of the beat (the eighth note) into 3's (and 2's), not 4's. This 3-grouping will come up again later:

Here's an extended example of that expanded push (with some other figured), used for an upbeat syncopation: "Come, People of the Risen King" (♩ = 114)

Come, peo - ple of the ris - en King who de - light to bring Him praise; come

all, and tune your hearts to sing to the Morn - ing Star of grace. From the

shift - ing shad - ows of the earth we will lift our eyes to Him, as

stead - y arms of mer - cy reach to gath - er child - ren in.

3.5 | Syncopated rhythms: the divided push and the expanded push

I said in the last lesson that the push was the building block for all syncopation. Start with a push rhythm and divide the first note in half:

You can see that the first two notes have a rhythmic value of *three sixteenth notes*. This rhythmic figure we can call the "divided push."

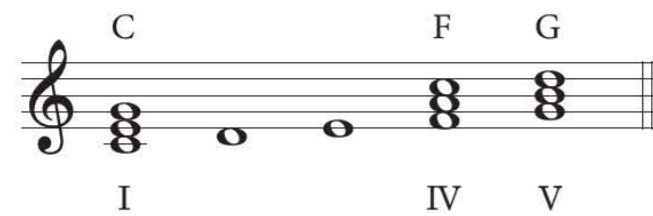
The divided push can be played with either hand:

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" (♩ = 100)

Or it can be played entirely by the RH, with sparse rhythms in the LH. In this case, I'll usually play a repeated pattern that doesn't take on a melodic function:

"Take My Life, and Let It Be" (♩ = 90)

So in the key of C, a C chord would be a I chord, F would be a IV chord, and G would be a V chord:

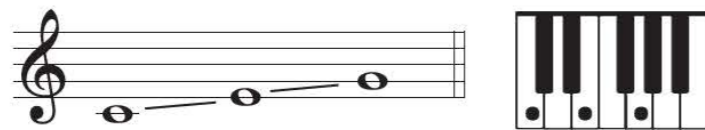


You can think of I, IV, and V as the primary chords, like primary colors. And just like primary colors, you'll find these chords everywhere!

These chords are major chords. Hear where the middle note of the chord sits? These chords sound bright (or happy) because the middle note is a major third above the root.

A bit more about major and minor 3rds

The middle note of the triad is what gives it its essential identity as major or minor. The distance from the root of the chord (C) to the third (E) is a distance of four half-steps, which we call an *interval* of a *major 3rd*. Compare that with the distance from the third of the chord (E) to the fifth (G), which is three half steps. That interval we call a *minor 3rd*:



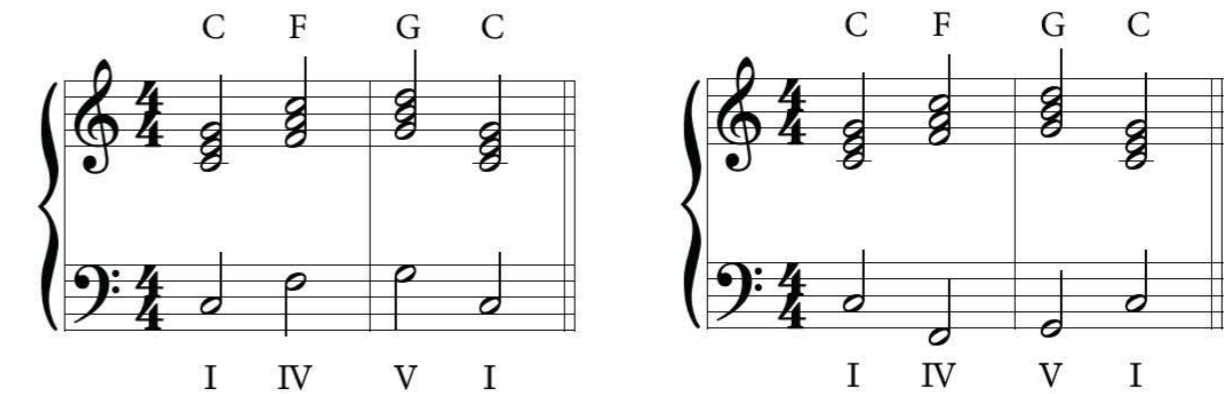
It's important enough to say again: what makes these chords *major* is the interval of a major 3rd between the root and the third.

In the next guided practice section, we'll use these primary chords to build some basic chord progressions in different keys.

2.2 | Guided Practice for I, IV, and V

Play each of the following progressions at least twice. Say the chord numbers out loud as you play (I, IV, etc.), then say the chord names out loud as you play.

1. In the key of C, play I—IV—V—I using these two forms of the bass line, with simple triads in the RH.



2. Key of G: I—IV—V, moving *up* from I to IV, then *down* from I to IV. You can play the first five notes of the scale in the LH to find the roots of the chords, if that's helpful: 1–2–3–4–5, then 1–4–5–1, then add RH chords.



3. Play this same figure in D major: I—IV—V—I, moving *up* from I to IV, then *down* from I to IV
4. Play in F: I—IV—V—I, moving up from I to IV, then down from I to IV
5. Play this exercise in Level 2 keys: E, A, B \flat , E \flat , A \flat
6. Play this exercise in Level 3 keys: B, F \sharp , D \flat

3.5 | P2: I – IV – I and guided practice

This second paradigm is closely related to P1 in that it uses the IV chord (the subdominant) as a means of expanding the tonic, but it acts differently enough that it gets its own paradigm. In some ways, it's an even simpler paradigm than P1—simple enough that this lesson will present the paradigm and the guided practice together.

Let's take a look at a short example in the key of F:

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that's with-in me praise Him.

In the key of F, it's just moving back and forth between I and IV in root position:

I IV I IV

Note how this paradigm is different than the last one: rather than a pedal, *the bass moves*. For this paradigm, we're going to cheat a little on the IV chord and play it like this:

I IV I IV

Here the soprano is static, which is a change (we'll talk about static-soprano voicings in Chapter 8). Also, this Bb chord omits the 3rd (the D) and instead plays the 2nd (the C). This is called a sus2 chord, sometimes written as simply "2" (so here, Bb2).

Play this example in as many keys as you can. For this paradigm, it's important that you *sing the bass line as you play!* Sing the analysis ("One, four..."). You need to be able to hear the jump to IV in the bass so you can distinguish it from the jump to V in later lessons.

1. Level 1: C, G, D, F
2. Level 2: E, A, Bb, Eb, Ab
3. Level 3: B, F#, Db

3.6 | P3: I – V – I and guided practice

Like P2, this next paradigm is a simple expansion of the tonic using a second chord in root position, but it's now the V (the dominant). We'll look at a longer example this time, "Nothing but the Blood of Jesus" (also in the key of F), and use it for our guided practice.

What can wash a - way my sin? Noth-ing but the blood of Je - sus.
 O, pre-cious is the flow that makes me white as snow.
 No oth - er fount I know, noth-ing but the blood of Je - sus.

The analysis should be simple enough: just I and V! There are several ways you could play this progression, but here's the best one to start with:

I V I

Play the entire stanza of this song in as many keys as you can. For this paradigm, as with the previous one, it's essential that you sing the bass line with the analysis as you play. In the next lesson, you'll combine the IV and V, and you'll want to take time to hear the differences between them.

1. Level 1: C, G, D, F
2. Level 2: E, A, Bb, Eb, Ab
3. Level 3: B, F#, Db

Note that, in the progression on the right above, the $vii^{\circ 7}/vi$ is preceded by the I_4^6 . That's the most typical setup chord used for the $vii^{\circ 7}/vi$ (or the V^6/vi), since you can see the bass moves up by half-step.

Let's look at several examples of the tonic vi. First, here's "This Is My Father's World" (key of D), which is using the simple $V/vi-vi$:

Next, here's an example of $I_4^6-V^6/vi-vi$, "The King of Love My Shepherd Is" (key of C):

Analyze and play these examples, noting in the second one the rising bass line. Next, here's an example that uses *both* the tonic V and tonic vi: "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" (key of G):

Here's the analysis, along with a simple written part. Play this progression, paying careful attention to the rising bass line:

We saw the first four chords of this progression in the previous lesson, tonicizing the V. This progression just continues that motion to tonicize the vi.

In the key of G, the chromatic tone for the V/vi is a $D\sharp$ (the raised 5), the chord is a B, and it resolves to Em (the vi in the key of G).

Finally, we'll look at two examples using the $vii^{\circ 7}/vi$ as a substitution chord for $V-vi$. Here's "Jesus Strong and Kind" (key of C):

First, play it using the $G-Am$, then use the substitution in parentheses:

For the second example, here's "Christ Is Mine Forevermore" (key of $B\flat$), first using I_4^6-V-vi , then substituting the $vii^{\circ 7}$ to tonicize the vi:

You can see the $vii^{\circ 7}/vi$ is being used here to set up the *deceptive cadence*. This is one of the most common substitutions you can use at the cadence.

A final word about voicing fully-diminished 7th chords: although there are a few ways you can play it, the $vii^{\circ 7}$ is really best played using the open voicings shown below (in the keys of C, F, D):