

Building 7th Chords

But First! A quick review of building Triads...

- Triads are 3-note chords
- They consist of a Root (R) a 3rd (3) and a 5th (5).
- Every triad has two important **intervals**
 - Between the R and 3
 - Between the 3 and 5
- Depending on what type of interval each one is (either a Major 3rd or a minor 3rd) you'll get a specific chord type, also known as chord 'quality.' (aka major chords, minor chords, diminished chords)

-And a reminder of what those two intervals are:

Major 3rd (M3)

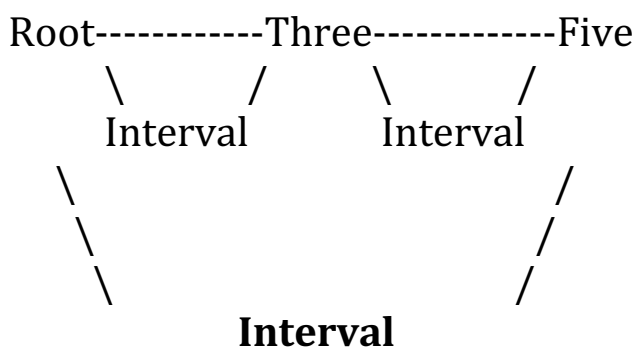
Two notes that are 4 half steps from each other
(or 2 whole steps if that's helpful!)

Example: C to E, D to F#, E to G#

minor 3rd (m3)

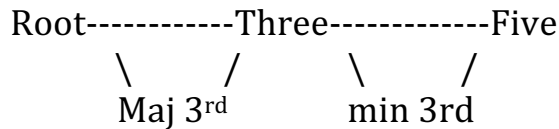
Two notes that are 3 half steps from each other
(or a whole step plus a half step if that's helpful!)

Example: C to Eb, D to F, E to G

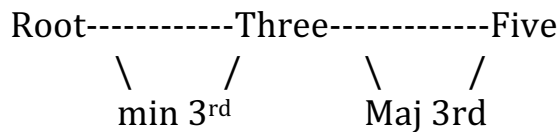


The 3 types of Diatonic triads

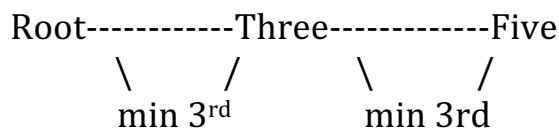
Major Triad:



minor Triad:



diminished Triad:



(Note: For Major and minor, the interval from the Root to the five is a Perfect 5th. In a diminished chord it isn't a perfect 5th, but don't worry about that for now.)

-Every Major key has the same set of seven triads.

I Major

ii minor (ii-, ii min)

iii minor

IV Major

V Major

vi minor

vii diminished (vii dim, vii °)

So if you know the notes in a key, you can plug in the note names to the chords above and find all the diatonic chords.

For example:

We know the key of E has four sharps in it. (Which four sharps? Use "Father Charles Goes Down And Ends Battle" to figure out that the sharps are F, C, G and D. Everything else is a natural)

So the notes of an E Major scale are:

E

F#

G#

A

B

C#

D#

Let's plug those into our chords from the previous page:

I Major = E Major

ii minor = f# minor

iii minor = g# minor

IV Major = A Major

V Major = B Major

vi minor = c# minor

vii diminished = d# diminished

So the diatonic triads in the key of E major are:

E Major

f# minor

g# minor

A Major

B Major

c# minor

d# diminished

When you write a diatonic song in E major, use only those 7 chords and a melody that uses only the notes in E Major.

Adding that 4th note!

When we take triads and add on a 4th note to them, we get 7th chords.

So now we have R—3—5—7

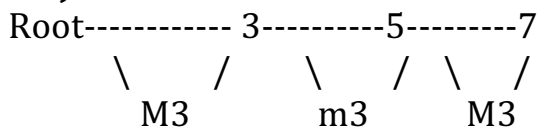
Like with the diatonic triads above, it's all about noticing the intervals. Only now we start to also pay attention to the largest interval, which is the distance from the Root to the 7th note.

That's a good indicator of what kind of 7th chord it is. It will always be either a major 7th interval (11 half steps) or a minor 7th interval (10 half steps). More on those below!

The 4 types of Diatonic 7th chords:

-Major 7th, minor 7th, Dominant 7th, minor 7th b5

Major 7th:



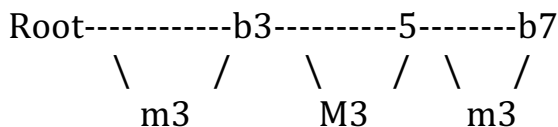
-Or, you can think of it as a **Major Triad**, with a **M7** on top.

Aka - the interval from Root to 7th is a **Major 7th** interval.

(This is also more easily thought of as being one half step less than a full octave. So if you ever want to find a Major 7th above a note, play the note an octave up, and then go back down one half step.)

-We notate a Major 7th with: **R 3 5 7**

minor 7th:



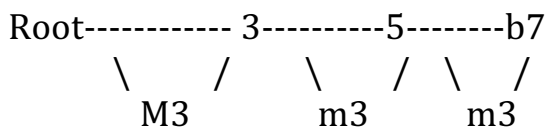
-Or, you can think of it as a **minor triad**, with a **m7** on top.

Aka - the interval from Root to the 7th is a **minor 7th** interval.

(This is also more easily thought of as being **TWO** half steps less than a full octave. So if you ever want to find a minor 7th above a note, play the note an octave up, and then go back down TWO half step.)

-We notate a minor 7th with: **R b3 5 b7**

Dominant 7th:

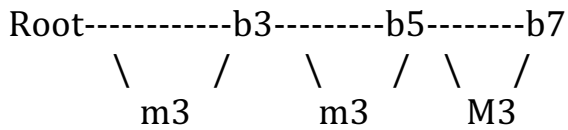


-Or, you can think of it as a **Major Triad**, with a **m7** on top.

Aka - the interval from Root to the 7th is a **minor 7th** interval.

We notate a dominant 7th as: **R 3 5 b7**

Minor 7 flat 5:



-Or, you can think of it as a **diminished triad**, with a **m7** on top.

Aka - the interval from Root to the 7th is a **minor 7th** interval.

-We notate a minor 7 flat 5 with: **R b3 b5 b7**

-Every Major key has the same set of seven 7th chords.

I Major 7

ii minor 7 (most commonly written as a dash: ii-7)

iii -7

IV Major 7

V7 (aka V dominant 7th)

vi -7

vii -7b5

So if you know the notes in a key, you can plug in the note names to the chords above and find all the diatonic chords.

So the diatonic triads in the key of E major are:

E Major 7

f# -7

g# -7

A Major 7

B7

c# -7

d# -7b5

When you write a diatonic song in E major, use only that set of 7th chords and a melody that uses only the notes in E Major.