

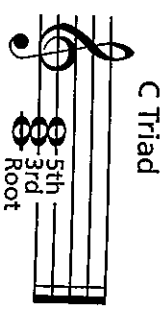
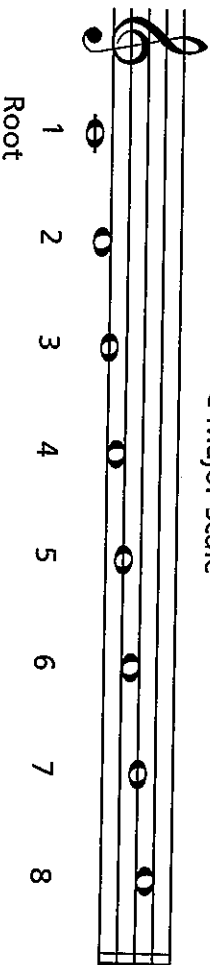
# Triads

When three or more notes are sounded together, the combination is called a **CHORD**. When a 3-note chord consists of a **ROOT**, a **3rd** and a **5th**, it is called a **TRIAD**.



The root is the note from which the triad gets its name. To build a triad, measure the 3rd and the 5th upward from the root.

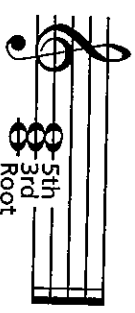
C Major Scale



C Triad



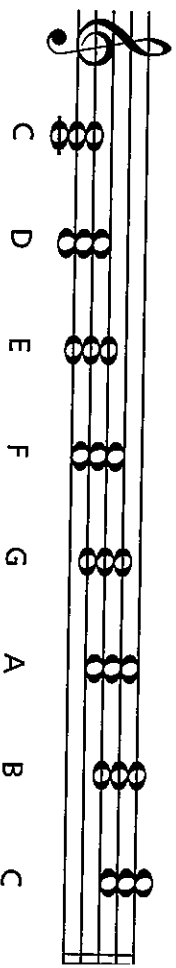
C Triad



The root of a C triad is C. When a triad is in **ROOT POSITION**, it will include every other note (C-E-G, D-F-A, E-G-B, etc.). All the notes will be on lines or all the notes will be in spaces.

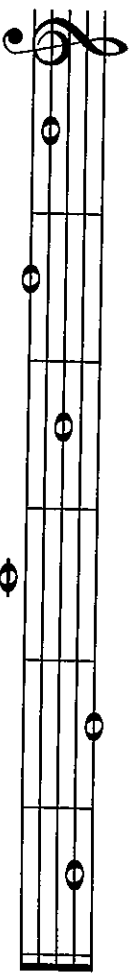
Triads may be built on any note of the scale.

In the C major scale, the root position triads are:

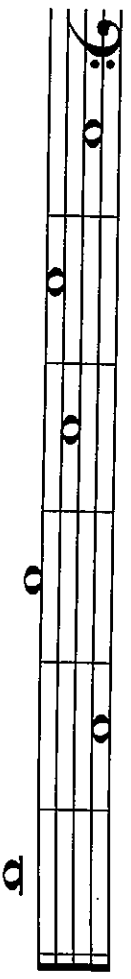


## Exercises

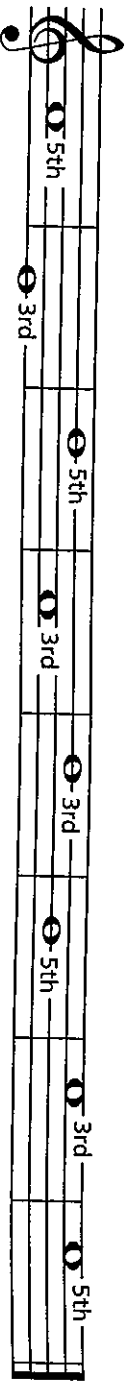
- Build triads using each of the following line notes as the root. Name the root note.



- Build triads using each of the following space notes as the root. Name the root note.



- Add two notes (above or below) to create a triad in root position from the given 3rd or 5th. Name the root note.



# Primary and Major Triads

The most important triads of a key are built on the 1st, 4th and 5th scale degrees of the major scale. They are called the PRIMARY TRIADS or PRIMARY CHORDS of the key and are identified by the ROMAN NUMERALS I (1), IV (4) and V (5). These three triads contain every tone in the major scale.

The primary triads are MAJOR TRIADS because they consist of the root, a major 3rd and a perfect 5th (see page 56).

Major 3rd + Perfect 5th = Major Triad

There are two other ways of forming a major triad: 1. select the 1st, 3rd and 5th notes of a major scale. 2. add the interval of a minor 3rd (see page 57) on top of a major 3rd.

In the key of C major, the

- I triad (or chord) is the C triad (C-E-G).
- IV triad (or chord) is the F triad (F-A-C).
- V triad (or chord) is the G triad (G-B-D).

The primary triads in the key of C major:

1 C Major 2 F Major 3 G Major 4 IV 5 V 6 7 8

1 C Major 2 F Major 3 G Major 4 IV 5 V 6 7 8

## Exercises

**1** Build the primary triads in root position for each scale by adding two notes to the 1st, 4th and 5th notes of each scale to complete the triad. Name each triad.

a. 1 2 3 IV V 6 7 8

b. 1 2 3 IV V 6 7 8

c. 1 2 3 IV V 6 7 8

d. 1 2 3 IV V 6 7 8

**2** Write the primary triads in root position for each key. Name each triad.

a. 1 IV V

b. 1 IV V

c. 1 IV V

d. 1 IV V

## Scale Degree Names

Each tone of a scale can be identified by a name as well as by a **numbered** scale degree (see page 43). The most important scale degrees are the same as those on which the primary chords are built: 1, 4 and 5. The three most important scale degree names are the **Tonic (I)**, **Subdominant (IV)** and **Dominant (V)**.

### TONIC (I)

The keynote of a scale is called the **TONIC**. It is the lowest *and* highest tone of the scale. Since the tonic is the **1st** scale degree, it is given the Roman numeral **I**. In C major, C is the tonic note or chord.

### DOMINANT (V) and SUBDOMINANT (IV)

The tone a **5th above** the tonic is called the **DOMINANT**. Since the dominant is the **5th** scale degree, it is given the Roman numeral **V**. In C major, G is the dominant note or chord.

The tone a **5th below** the tonic is called the **SUBDOMINANT**. Since the subdominant is the **4th** scale degree, it is given the Roman numeral **IV**. In C major, F is the subdominant note or chord. The prefix “sub” means under or below.

### Important!

The names of scale degrees were derived from an arrangement in which the tonic was the central tone. The subdominant was given its name because it is the same distance **below** the tonic as the dominant is above the tonic. It is not called subdominant because it is just below the dominant. See bottom staff.

### MEDIANT (iii) and SUBMEDIANT (vi)\*

The tone a **3rd degree above** the tonic (midway between the tonic and the dominant) is called the **MEDIANT** (a Latin word meaning “in the middle”). Since the mediant is the **3rd** scale degree, it is given the Roman numeral **iii**. In C major, E is the mediant note or chord.

The tone a **3rd degree below** the tonic (midway between the tonic and the subdominant) is called the **SUBMEDIANT**. Since the submediant is the **6th** scale degree, it is given the Roman numeral **vi**. In C major, A is the submediant note or chord.

### SUPERTONIC (ii) and LEADING TONE (vii)

The tone a **2nd degree above** the tonic is called the **SUPERTONIC**. Since the supertonic is the **2nd** scale degree, it is given the Roman numeral **ii**. In C major, D is the supertonic note or chord. The prefix “super” means over or above.

The tone a **2nd degree below** the tonic is called the **LEADING TONE** - sometimes called the **SUBTONIC**. Leading tone is most often used since the note has a strong tendency to “lead” to the tonic, as it does in an ascending scale. Since the leading tone is the **7th** scale degree, it is given the Roman numeral **vii**. In C major, B is the leading tone or chord.

In scale degree order, the name and Roman numeral of each scale tone is:

TONIC (I)    SUPERTONIC (ii)    MEDIANT (iii)    SUBDOMINANT (IV)    DOMINANT (V)    SUBMEDIANT (vi)    LEADING TONE (vii)    TONIC (I)

With the tonic being the central tone, the name and Roman numeral of each scale tone is:

SUBDOMINANT (IV)    SUBMEDIANT (vi)    LEADING TONE (vii)    TONIC (I)    SUPERTONIC (ii)    MEDIANT (iii)    DOMINANT (V)

\*The reason for upper and lower case Roman numerals is explained in Unit 14, Lesson 58.

# Triads — 1st Inversion

Any root position triad may be changed by moving the root (bottom note) of the chord to another position. This is called an **INVERSION**—it means the notes are rearranged and a tone other than the root is the bottom note of the chord.

The first inversion can be made from a C triad by moving the root (C) to the top of the chord.

Root Position                      1st Inversion

C E G    becomes    E G C

All letter names are the same, but the 3rd (E) is now on the bottom, and the root (C) is now on top. This is called **1st INVERSION**.

1st Inversion Triads in C major  
(3rd is on the bottom).

In 1st inversion, the 3rd is *always* the bottom note.

## OPEN and CLOSE POSITIONS

When the notes of a chord are spaced within an octave, it is in **CLOSE POSITION**.  
When the notes of a chord are spaced larger than an octave, it is in **OPEN POSITION**.

Close Position	Open Position	Close Position	Open Position
Root Position	Root Position	1st Inversion	1st Inversion

## Exercises

- 1 Rewrite the following root position triads in open position.
- 2 Using the given notes as the root, add the 3rd and 5th below each note to make 1st inversion triads in the key of C.
- 3 Using the given notes as the 3rd, add the 5th and root above each note to make 1st inversion triads in the key of C (close position).

## Triads — 2nd Inversion

Any 1st inversion triad may be inverted again by moving the lowest note (3rd) to the top.

The second inversion can be made from a 1st inversion C triad by moving the 3rd (E) to the top of the chord.

E G C becomes G C E

All letter names are the same, but the 5th (G) is now on the bottom, and the root (C) is now in the middle. This is called 2nd INVERSION.

2nd Inversion Triads in C Major  
(5th is on the bottom).

In 2nd Inversion, the 5th is always the bottom note.

Close Position

Open Position

Triads in all Positions (close).

Root Position

1st Inversion

2nd Inversion

Root Position

Root position: root is on the bottom.

1st inversion: 3rd is on the bottom.

2nd inversion: 5th is on the bottom.

Both inversions: In close

position, the root is always

the upper note of the

interval of a 4th.

1st Inversion

2nd Inversion

## Exercises

- 1 Rewrite the following close position 2nd inversion triads in open position.

- 2 Rewrite the following root position triads in 2nd inversion (close position).

- 3 Using the given notes as the root, add the 5th below and the 3rd above to make 2nd inversion triads in the key of C.

## Minor Triads

Just as a major triad can be built from the 1st, 3rd and 5th scale degrees of a major scale, a MINOR TRIAD can be built from the 1st, 3rd and 5th scale degrees of a minor scale.

Major triads consist of a root, major 3rd and a perfect 5th.

C Major Triad

Perfect 5th  
Major 3rd  
Root

Build a major triad by adding a minor 3rd on top of a major 3rd.

Minor 3rd  
Major 3rd

Minor triads consist of a root, minor 3rd and a perfect 5th.

C Minor Triad

Perfect 5th  
Minor 3rd  
Root

Build a minor triad by adding a major 3rd on top of a minor 3rd.

Major 3rd  
Minor 3rd

Any major triad may be changed to a minor triad by lowering the 3rd by 1/2 step.

C	Cm	F	Fm	G	Gm
Major Triad	Minor Triad				

## MAJOR and MINOR TRIADS IN THE MAJOR SCALE

In a major scale, only triads with the root on the 1st, 4th and 5th scale degrees are *major triads*. Triads with the root on the 2nd, 3rd and 6th scale degrees are *minor triads*.

Major Triads\*      Minor Triads\*

I    IV    V      ii    iii    vi

Major Triads      Minor Triads

I    IV    V      ii    iii    vi

\*Major triads are numbered with upper case Roman numerals (I), minor triads with lower case Roman numerals (ii).

## Exercises

- Build minor triads (adding accidentals where necessary) using each of the following notes as the root. Name the triad.

Fm1

- Label each triad in the keys of F and G major using upper and lower case Roman numerals.

V

I

# Augmented and Diminished Triads

Major and minor triads can each be altered. Major triads may be made *larger* (augmented) and minor triads may be made *smaller* (diminished).

An **AUGMENTED TRIAD** is a major triad that has been made larger by *raising* the 5th by ½ step.

A **DIMINISHED TRIAD** is a minor triad that has been made smaller by *lowering* the 5th by ½ step.

Major Triad

Aug. Triad

Minor Triad

Dim. Triad

Aug. Triad

Build an augmented triad by adding a major 3rd on top of a major 3rd.

Build a diminished triad by adding a minor 3rd on top of a minor 3rd.

Dim. Triad

## SUMMARY OF MAJOR, MINOR, AUGMENTED AND DIMINISHED TRIADS

Major = major 3rd + minor 3rd  
 Minor = minor 3rd + major 3rd  
 Augmented = both 3rds are major  
 Diminished = both 3rds are minor

Triads and chords may be indicated by letters and symbols:  
 Chord letter only = major, m = minor, + = augmented, ° = diminished

### MAJOR TRIAD SCALE

In the major scale, triads built on the:

- 1st, 4th, and 5th scale degrees are major triads,
- 2nd, 3rd and 6th scale degrees are minor triads,
- 7th scale degree is a diminished triad.

C Dm Em F G Am B° C

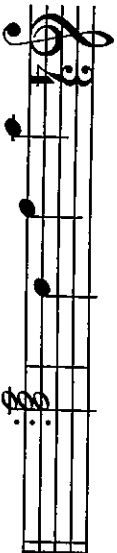
C Dm Em F G Am B° C

## Exercises

- Write the name of each triad and indicate whether it is major (chord letter), minor (m), augmented (+) or diminished (°).

Track 74

- 1** Listen to a C major triad. It will first be played one note at a time, and then as a chord (all notes together).



Write whether each example is played one note at a time (1), or as a chord (C).

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_ e. \_\_\_\_\_

Track 75

- 2** Listen to the two intervals that make up a major triad: the major 3rd and perfect 5th.



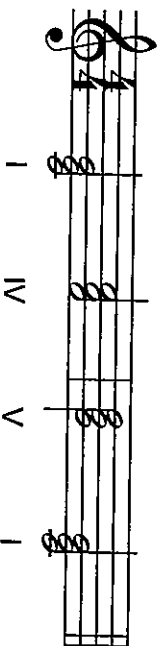
Major 3rd + perfect 5th = C major chord

Write whether each example is a major 3rd (M3) or perfect 5th (P5). Each example will be played twice.

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_ e. \_\_\_\_\_

Track 76

- 3** Listen to the C major primary triads in root position.

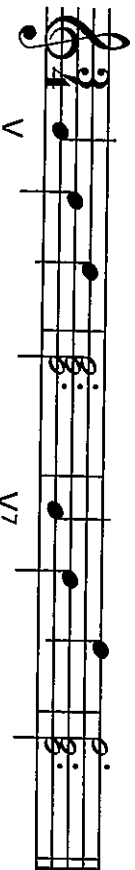


Write whether each chord is a I, IV or V chord. Each example will be played twice.

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_ e. \_\_\_\_\_

Track 77

- 4** Listen to the V and the V7 chords (with the 5th omitted), played one note at a time and as a chord.

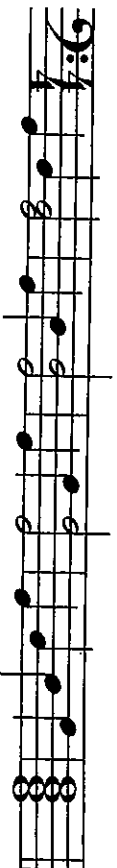


Write whether each chord is a V or V7 chord. Each example will be played twice.

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_ e. \_\_\_\_\_

Track 78

- 5** Listen to the three intervals that make up a V7 chord: the major 3rd, perfect 5th and minor 7th.



Major 3rd + perfect 5th + minor 7th = G7 Chord

Write whether each example is a major 3rd (M3), perfect 5th (P5) or minor 7th (m7). Each example will be played twice.

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_ e. \_\_\_\_\_



**1** A chord consists of \_\_\_\_\_ or more notes sounded together.

**2** A triad consists of a root, a \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_.

**3** If the root of a triad is D, the 5th is the note \_\_\_\_\_.

**4** If the 3rd of a triad is B, the root is the note \_\_\_\_\_.

**5** Primary triads are built on the following notes of the scale: (circle one)

a. I, II, V      b. I, IV, VI  
c. I, IV, V      d. II, IV, VI

**6** A major 3rd + a \_\_\_\_\_ = a major triad.

**7** In a major key, primary triads are always \_\_\_\_\_ triads.

**8** Another way to form a major triad is by adding the interval of a \_\_\_\_\_ on top of the interval of a \_\_\_\_\_.

**9** Write the primary triads in the keys of C and G major.

A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Below the staff, the Roman numerals I, IV, and V are written.

A musical staff in bass clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). Below the staff, the Roman numerals I, IV, and V are written.

**10** Write the primary triads in the keys of F and D major.

A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). Below the staff, the Roman numerals I, IV, and V are written.

A musical staff in bass clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). Below the staff, the Roman numerals I, IV, and V are written.

**11** A I chord is also called the \_\_\_\_\_ chord.

**14** A II chord is also called the \_\_\_\_\_ chord.

**16** A VI chord is also called the \_\_\_\_\_ chord.

**12** A V chord is also called the \_\_\_\_\_ chord.

**15** A III chord is also called the \_\_\_\_\_ chord.

**17** A VII chord is also called the \_\_\_\_\_ chord.

**13** A IV chord is also called the \_\_\_\_\_ chord.

Write the following V7 chords. Include the accidentals.

A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Below the staff, the following chords are listed: G7, C7, D7, F7, A7.

G7    C7    D7    F7    A7