

Reading chord Symbols

From the root to the 5th

The recipe is shown as degrees the major scale of the root, followed by the number of frets=semitones=half-steps above the root in italics. In these examples the note C is used as a the root.

<i>shorthand</i>	<i>major scale</i>	<i>frets</i>	<i>name</i>	<i>alternatives & comments</i>
C	3,5	4,7	major (triad)	
C 5	5	7	bare 5th , power chord	
C m	\flat 3,5	3,7	minor (triad)	C -
C sus4	4,5	5,7	sus chord	C sus, C4
C sus2	2,5	2,7	sus2	C2
C +	3, #5	4,8	augmented(triad)	Caug, C(#5)
Cm+	\flat 3, #5	3,8	minor augmented 5th	C-+, C-(#5), A \flat /C meaning A \flat with C bass,
C m \flat 5	\flat 3, \flat 5	3,6	diminished triad	C- \flat 5

The diminished triad is rare in jazz and pop music though more common in early classical music where its short hand is R o . This has a different meaning in jazz, see Section Two.

C(add4)	3,4,5	4,5,7	
C(add2)	2,3,5	2,5,7	
C (add \flat 2)	\flat 2,3 5	1,4,7	rare

The 6th and 7th

C 6	3,5,6	4,7,9	6th
C m 6	\flat 3,5,6	3,7,9	minor 6th R - 6

Note that in the chord symbol shorthand the 7 is lowered by default to be 10 frets above the root (2 frets below the octave of the root). To raise it again the word “major” is used.

The word **major** always refers to the **7th**.

The word **minor** is used it always refers to the **3rd**.

C 7	3,5, \flat 7	4,7,10	7th
Cm 7	\flat 3,5, \flat 7	3,7,10	minor 7th C-7
Cdim 7	\flat 3,5,6	3,6,9	diminished 7th Co, Co7, C dim,
Cm7 \flat 5	\flat 3, \flat 5, \flat 7	3,6,10	half diminished CØ
C7+	3,#5,7	4,8,10	augmented seventh C 7 #5, C7aug, Caug7

<i>shorthand</i>	<i>major scale frets</i>		<i>name</i>	<i>alternatives & comments</i>
Cmaj 7	3,5,7	4,7,11	major 7th	CΔ, CΔ7
Cm maj 7th	\flat 3,5, 7	3,7,11	minor major 7th	CmΔ, CmΔ7, C-Δ, C-Δ7

The Octave

C8	8	12	just octaves	similar to C5, the bare 5th
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The 9th

C69	3,5,6,9	4,7,9,14	6 9	
Cm69	\flat 3,5,6,9	3,7,9,14,	minor 69	C- 69

If 6 is not mentioned, chords with 9, 11 and 13 are assumed to contain the lowered 7th. However if the 9th, 11th or 13 is raised or lowered the 7th is mentioned.

Cm9	\flat 3,5, \flat 7,9	3,7,10,14	minor 9th	C-9
C9	3,5, \flat 7,9	4,7,10,14	9th	
C9+	3,#5, \flat 7,9	4,8,10,14	9th augmented 5th	C9 #5
Cmaj 9	3, 5,7,9	4,7,11,14	major 9th	C Δ 9
C7 \flat 9	3,5, \flat 7, \flat 9	4,7,10,13	flat 9th	Eo/C
C7 #9	3,5, \flat 7,#9	4,7,10,15	sharp 9th	
C7 #9+	3,#5, \flat 7,#9	4,8,10,15	sharp 9th augmented	

The 11th

C11	5, \flat 7,9,11	7,10,14,17	the 11th	Gm7/C, G-7/C
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Note the major third is not usually included in the 11th chord as it clashes with the 11th, making the interval of 13 frets . However it is included in the minor 11 as the interval, 14 frets, is less discordant and pile of 3rds and 5ths gives the chord a rich character.

Cm11	\flat 3,5, \flat 7,9,11	3,7,10,14,17	minor 11th	C-11
C9 #11	3,5, \flat 7,9,#11	4,7,10,14,18	the 9th with raised 11	

<i>shorthand</i>	<i>major scale</i>	<i>frets</i>	<i>name</i>	<i>alternatives & comments</i>
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The #11th can coexist with the major 3rd as it makes the wider interval of 14 frets. The #11 is often heard with the flat or sharp 9th.

C7 ^b 9 #11	3,5, ^b 7, ^b 9,#11	4,7,10,13,18	flat 9th	
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C7 #9 #11	3,5, ^b 7,#9,#11	4,7,10,15,18	sharp 9th	
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The 13th

C13	5, ^b 7,10,13	7,10,16,21	13th	
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This is the classic voicing with the 3rd raised an octave to become the 10th, spaced midway between the ^b7th and the 13th. In a jazz context the 9th is often added for richness. A striking variation of the classic voicing is found using the minor 3rd raised to become the minor 10th.

Cm13	5, ^b 7, ^b 10,13	7,10,15,21	minor 13th	
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C13sus	5, ^b 7,9,11,13	7,10,14,17,21	13th sus	C13sus4
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C13 #11	3,5, ^b 7,9,#11,13	4,7,10,14,17,21	13th sharp11	
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C13 ^b 9	5, ^b 7, ^b 9,10,13	7,10,13,16,21	13th flattened 9th	
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The 9th, 11th and 13 are often referred to as *extensions*.