

# Seventh chords – in practice

## Finding the seventh notes fast

The sequence of intervals for the seventh intervals is: **Minor 7th – major 7th – root**

The **major 7th note** is the note just before the root. On the guitar, it is the note on the fret immediately to the left of the root. On the keyboard it is the note immediately to the left of the root key.

You don't have to count from the root all the way to the major 7th interval. **Just look for the note just before the root.**

The **minor 7th** note is two notes before the root.

**To get the minor 7th note, just count two notes backwards from the root.**

## Examples

If the **root of your chord is C**,

- the **major 7th** note will be C<sub>b</sub> (same as B) - the note just before C.
- the **minor 7th** note will be B<sub>b</sub> - two notes before C. ( (B<sub>b</sub>-B-C: min 7th – maj 7th - root))

If your **root is D#**,

- the **major 7th** note will be D.
- the **minor 7th** note will be D<sub>b</sub>, the note to the left of D, the major 7th note (or two times to the left of D#, the root)

If the **root is B<sub>b</sub>**,

- the **major 7th** note will be A, one note to the left of the root. (B<sub>b</sub> is same as A#. A is note before A# in the sequence of notes: ...F F#G<sub>b</sub> G G#/A<sub>b</sub> A A#/B<sub>b</sub> B C...)

- the **minor 7th** note will be **Ab**, two notes to the left of the root, one note to the left of the major 7th note (A).

**This understanding is useful while playing an instrument** to find the 7th chords and other chords that have the 7th notes fast.

Also, remember that **the minor 3rd note is the note just before major 3rd.**

## Minor and minor major 7th chords

Starting with **the minor chord triad**,

- add the major 7th note to get the **minor major7th chord**.
- add the minor 7th note to get the **minor 7th chord**.

## Major7th and dominant seventh (seventh) chords

Start with the **major chord triad**,

- add the **major 7th** note to get the **major seventh chord**
- add the **minor 7th** note to get the **dominant seventh chord**, usually referred to as just 'seventh chord'

same 7th different 3rds					same 3rd different 7ths				
Chord	Root	5 <sup>th</sup>	3rd	7th	Chord	Root	5 <sup>th</sup>	3rd	7th
minor7	Root	5 <sup>th</sup>	m3	m7	minor7	Root	5 <sup>th</sup>	m3	m7
Dominant7	Root	5 <sup>th</sup>	M3	m7	mM7	Root	5 <sup>th</sup>	m3	M7
Major7	Root	5 <sup>th</sup>	M3	M7	Major7	Root	5 <sup>th</sup>	M3	M7
mM7	Root	5 <sup>th</sup>	m3	M7	Dominant7	Root	5 <sup>th</sup>	M3	m7

# Changing between the 4 seventh chords

## Using the seventh chords of C as example

C major seventh **chord** = C major **triad** + the major seventh **note**

= C E G (major triad) + B (major seventh note)

= C E G B [root - major third - fifth - major 7th]

C minor 7th **chord** = C minor **triad** + minor 7th **note**

= C Eb G Bb [root - minor third - fifth - minor 7th]

## Minor major 7th and dominant 7th from the major 7th chord

C major 7th chord: C E G Bb [root - major third - fifth - major 7th]

- change the major 3rd (E) to minor 3rd (Eb) : C Eb G B: C **minor major 7th chord**
- change the major 7th (B) to minor 7th (Bb) : C E G Bb: C **dominant 7th**

## Dominant 7th and minor major 7th from the minor 7th chord

C minor 7th chord: C Eb G Bb [root - minor third - fifth - minor 7th]

- change the minor 3rd note (Eb) to major 3rd note (E) : C E G Bb: C **dominant 7th chord**
- change the minor 7th note (Bb) to major 7th note (B) : C Eb G B : C **minor major 7th chord**

## Minor 7th chord from the major 7th chord

C major 7th chord: C E G Bb [root - major third - fifth - major 7th]

Change the following notes:

- major 3rd to minor 3rd (E to Eb)
- major 7th to minor 7th (B to Bb)

C minor 7th: C Eb G Bb

# Playing seventh chords on an instrument

## Seventh chords on the guitar

If we want to play the seventh chords on the guitar, we can use the same techniques as above.

If you want to play the C major 7th, start with the C major chord. Play the chord as a triad, then repeat the root on another string which is not played now. Now we can shift one of the root notes to a minor 7th (2 frets to the left on same string) or major 7th (one fret to the left on same string) note to **play the dominant 7th or major 7th** chords respectively.

Similarly, start with a minor chord, find the root in one more string. Shift one of the roots to major 7th or minor 7th note to get the **minor major 7th or minor 7th** respectively.

**Higher or lower octave seventh note** When shifting the root to one of the sevenths, you can choose to shift from the root on the higher octave or lower, depending on the kind of sound we want. Usually keeping the 7th note on the higher frequency string gives a characteristic sound of the 7th chord.

## Seventh chords on the keyboard

On the keyboard, to play the C major chord, play two Cs on two octaves. C E G C. Now shift the finger on the higher C note to the left, to play the B note instead – the key immediately to the left of C is the B note, the major seventh note, which along with the major chord notes that remain unchanged, gives us the major 7th chord.

Shift from the major 7th note one more to the left to play the minor 7th note. Together with the major chord triad notes, the minor 7th note gives us the minor 7th chord.

## Many roads lead to...

You can play chords on the keyboard or guitar in different ways, arranging the same notes in different positions. Learning them is a part of learning the instrument, but how the notes relate to each other, how you can find the major 7th from the root note etc, are valid for any fingering or chord position.