

Major 6th and Minor 6th chords

Here is the general 'formula' for a 6th chord: Root - 3rd - 5th - 6th

The major and minor 6th chords have the same 6th note – the major 6th note.

The difference between major 6th and minor 6th chords is the third note.

If the 3rd note is the minor 3rd, we get the minor 6th chord

If the 3rd note is the major 3rd note, we get the major 6th chord

Major 6th chord : Root – major 3rd – fifth – major 6th

Minor 6th chord : Root – minor 3rd – fifth – major 6th

So, remember, the 6th chord is a major 6th or a minor 6th based on the kind of 3rd note and not the 6th note used.

Adding the major 6th note to a major or minor chord gives us the major 6th or minor 6th chord respectively.

Starting from the major or minor chord

Major 6th chord: major chord triad + major 6th note

Minor 6th chord: minor chord triad + minor 6th note

Adding major 6th note to a major chord triad gives major 6th chord.

Adding minor 6th note to a minor chord triad gives the minor 6th chord.

Example: D major 6th and D minor 6th chords

To find the major 6th or minor 6th note, we need to add the same major 6th note to the D major chord or D minor chord respectively. It is the same 6th note - the major 6th note. The 6th chord becomes a minor 6th or major 6th based on the triad we start with - Dmajor or Dminor.

What are the notes of the D major chord?

D major chord: D F# A (root - major 3rd - fifth starting from D as the root)

What are the notes of the D minor chord?

Change the major 3rd note in a major chord to get the corresponding minor 3rd note.

In the case of D chord, F# is the 3rd, the major 3rd note. Minor 3rd note is one note before the major 3rd note. F note (one note before F#) is the minor 3rd note.

D minor chord has the notes D F A.

What is the major 6th note of D?

Sequence of intervals: ... minor 6th - major 6th - minor 7th - major 7th - root ...

One note before the root is the major 7th note. Two notes before is the minor 7th note.

Three notes before is the **major 6th note**.

D(root), Db(major 7th), C(minor7th), Cb same as B (major 6th note)

Major 6th note of D is B.

Add B to the D major chord to get D6/Dmajor6th

Add B to the D minor chord to get Dm6/Dminor6

D6: D F# A B

Dm6: D F A B

#5 or b6 – the minor 6th note

When we find '6th' in a chord name, it usually refers to the **major 6th note**.

The minor 6th note when used in chords, is usually named as #5 or b6 and is present in chords like augmented, major #5, b13 etc.

Augmented chord (triad) has the flat five note along with the root and major third notes.

6th and 13th note

13th note and the 6th note are the same note. With C as root, the 13th note is A, which is same as the 6th note.

13th note : 6th note + 7

For example, the 13th chord is a dominant 7th chord + the 6th note. (more about chords with numbers above seven in later chapters)

b13th (flat 13th) note is same as the b6th (flat 6th note), the minor 6th note.

6th chords from similar chords

Diminished seventh and minor 6th chords

C minor 6th : C Eb G A (root - minor 3rd - fifth - major 6th)

C diminished seventh : C Eb Gb A (root - minor 3rd - flat fifth - major 6th)

Flattening the fifth note of a minor 6th chord gives us the diminished seventh chord from the same root.

Major 6th and minor 7th

A minor 7th has the notes : A C E G

C major 6th has the notes : C E G A

- Minor 7th chord has the same notes as the major 6th chord starting from the note a minor third in front.
- Major 6th chord has the same notes as the minor 7th chord of its relative. (A minor is the relative minor of C major)

Minor 6th and minor 7th flat five

C minor 6th (C Eb G A) and A minor 7th flat five (A C Eb G) have the same notes.

- Minor 7th flat five chord has the same notes as the minor 6th chord starting from the note a minor third in front.
- Minor 6th chord has the same notes as the minor 7th flat five chord of its relative. (A minor is the relative minor of C major)

(Minor 7th flat five chord is another descriptive name for the half diminished 7th chord)

Major, major 7th, minor 7th, major 6th chords

From a major chord, by changing one of the doubled roots down through the sequence of notes, we get each of the above chords. When playing an instrument, this understanding immediately opens up understanding of how the chords are related between each other and how to play them with reference to each other.

Doubling the root

The notes of C major chord are: C E G

Doubling the root means **playing one more C (root), an octave higher**

Example of changing the root note to get different chords:

- C major chord: C(root) E(major 3rd) G(fifth) C (root one octave higher.)
- C major 7th: C(root) E(major 3rd) G(fifth) **B**(major 7th)
- C minor 7th: C(root) E(major 3rd) G(fifth) **Bb**(minor 7th)
- C6: C(root) E(major 3rd) G(fifth) **A** (major 6th)

Changing one of the root notes **C to B, Bb and A** (root - major 7th - minor 7th - major 6th) gives three prominently used chords.

On an instrument, to play or change between major, major 7th, minor 7th and major 6th chords, we just have to change one of the two root notes to nearby notes.

Root note - major 7thnote (major 7th chord) - minor 7th note (minor 7th chord) - major 6th note (major 6th chord).