TRIADS

A chord is a simultaneous sounding of more than 2 notes.
A triad is a chord that contains 3 notes and is a tertian chord -- a chord built in thirds.

Chords Triads
\[\text{G, B, D} \quad b3 \quad \text{C, E, G} \quad b7\]

QUALITIES:
Any triad is one of 4 qualities -- major, minor, diminished, augmented.

Major minor diminished augmented

Each quality triad contains a unique set of intervals.
Triads occur in root position, first and second inversion, depending on what note of the chord is in the bass – the bottom-most voice.

ROOT POSITION:
A triad is said to be in root position when the root of the chord is in the bass.

Root position is also known as \(5\ 3\) position, since there is always an interval of a third and 5th above the root.

Major minor diminished augmented
**INVERSION:**
A triad is said to be inverted if the bottom-most note -- the bass -- is not the root of the chord.

![Inversion Diagram](image1)

**FIRST INVERSION:**
A triad is said to be in first inversion if the third of the chord is in the bass (the bottom-most voice).

![First Inversion Diagram](image2)

Each quality triad may occur in first inversion.
In first inversion all triads will contain the interval of a 3rd and a 6th above the bass.
Therefore, a first inversion chord is said to be in $6_3$ position.
The quality of the 3rds and 6ths will be different for each quality of chord.

![First Inversion Chords](image3)

$M_3^6$, $m_3^6$, $d_3^6$, $A_3^6$

contains:

- m6
- M6
- M6
- m6
- m3
- M3
- m3
- M3
SECOND INVERSION:

A triad is said to be in second inversion if the fifth of the chord is in the bass (the bottom-most voice).

Each quality triad may occur in second inversion.

In second inversion all triads will contain the interval of a 4th and a 6th above the bass.

Therefore, a first inversion chord is said to be in $6_4$ position.

The quality of the 4ths and 6ths will be different for each quality of chord.
**TRIADS IN KEYS:**

A triad can be built on each note of a scale. The resulting triads will have particular qualities and these qualities will differ according to the type of scale used.

Example: In G major:

![Chord Diagram]

**CHORD DESIGNATIONS:**

Chords are designated by **Roman and Arabic numerals**.

**ROMAN NUMERALS:**

The Roman numeral tells the root of the chord (what scale degree it is)

You may also see different types of Roman numeral designations such as:

- upper case = major (V, I)
- lower case = minor (ii, vi)
- upper case with + = augmented (III+)
- lower case with o = diminished (vii\(\flat\), ii\(\flat\))

**ARABIC NUMERAL**

The Arabic numeral tells you the position or inversion of the chord:

\[
\begin{align*}
5 \quad \text{= root position} \\
3 \quad \text{= first inversion} \\
4 \quad \text{= second inversion}
\end{align*}
\]
**TRIADS IN A MAJOR KEY:**

Triads built on the degrees of a major scale will have the following qualities and designations:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 \\
M & m & m & M & M & m & d \\
I & ii & iii & IV & V & vi & vii^o \\
\end{array}
\]

**TRIADS IN MINOR KEYS**

Triads built on the notes of a natural minor scale will have the following qualities and designations:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 \\
m & d & M & m & m & M & M \\
i & iio & III & iv & v & VI & VII \\
\end{array}
\]

If you use the chords of a natural minor scale, the i-v-i progression will sound incomplete.

To make this progression sound more ‘natural’ [i-V-i], always use the leading tone in the scale -- use a harmonic minor scale.
The triads built from the notes of a **harmonic minor scale** will have the following qualities and designations:

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<tr>
<td>m</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>ii</td>
<td>III+</td>
<td>iv</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>VI</td>
<td>vii</td>
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We can also use the triads built from the notes of a **melodic minor scale**. These triads will have the following qualities and designations:

**Ascending:**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>d</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>ii</td>
<td>III+</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>vii</td>
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**Descending:** (same as natural minor)

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<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>ii</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>iv</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>VI</td>
<td>VII</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In minor keys the most commonly used chords (and the ones you should memorize) are:

\[ \text{i} \quad \text{ii}^o \quad \text{III} \quad \text{iv} \quad \text{V} \quad \text{VI} \quad \text{vii}^o \quad \text{III}^+ \quad \text{VII} \]