

Seventh Chords

Seventh chords are extensions of the basic three notes chords you already know. They are like enhanced version of your basic chords ! They are composed of a root, third, fifth and seventh. **The only thing that changes between your basic chord and a seventh chord is the added seventh note.**

Seventh chords are used in a wide variety of contexts. **They are the very first step to the *lounge sounding musics* like jazz, soul, neo-soul, bossa nova etc...**

If you wish to play more advanced types of music and not only pop or rock music, you will definitely have to learn your seventh chords.

There exists seventh chords of multiple types, based on either the basic major / minor chords or even based on diminished chords.

Here are the six types of seventh chords we are going to explore. They are ordered by their commonness :

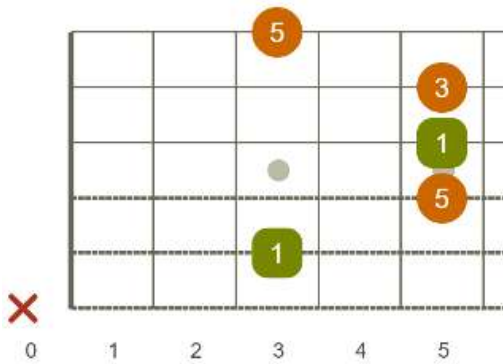
1. a major chord with an added major seventh - really common - notation " Δ "
2. a minor chord with an added minor seventh - really common - notation " $m7$ "
3. a major chord with an added minor seventh - common - notation " 7 " - also called **dominant chord**
4. a diminished chord with a minor seventh - uncommon - notation " $m7b5$ " - also called **half-diminished chord**
5. a diminished chord with a diminished seventh - rare - notation " $dim7$ " - also called **fully diminished** or simply *diminished seventh* chord
6. a minor chord with an added major seventh - really rare - notation " $mM7$ " - I like to call it the *detective chord* because of its suspenseful and mysterious sound

The types 1, 2, 3 and 4 are the most common types of seventh chords and thus are the ones we are going to focus on in this lesson. Why ? Because these four forms are naturally found in the harmonic content (chords material) of the Major Scale. This implies that we encounter these chords quite often in a lot of musics and songs.

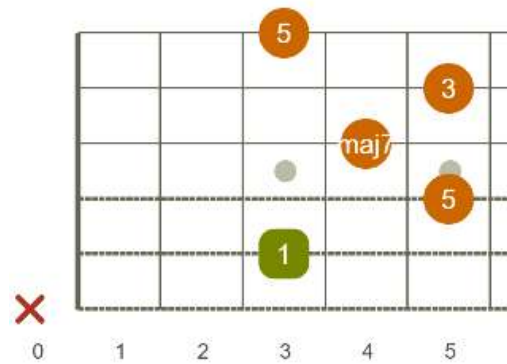
Basic Seventh Chords Types

Major VS Major 7th chords

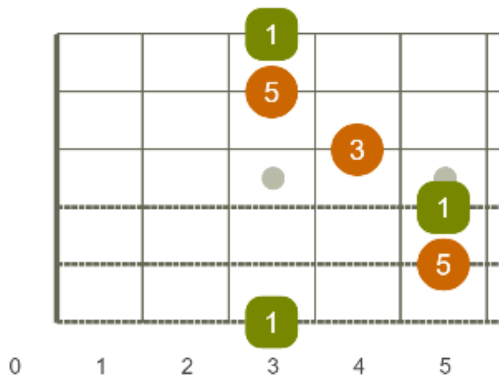
C



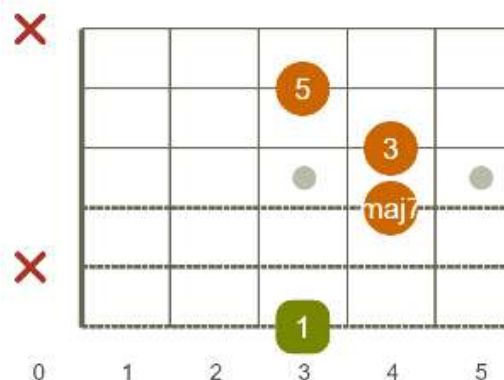
C^{maj7}



G

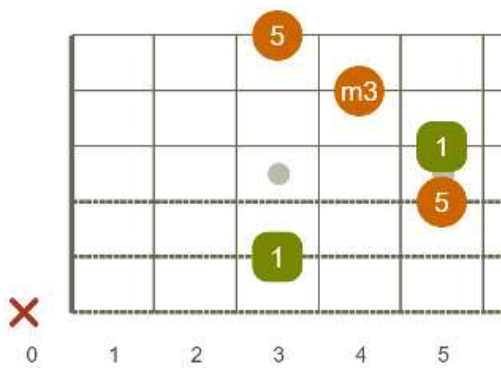


G^{maj7}

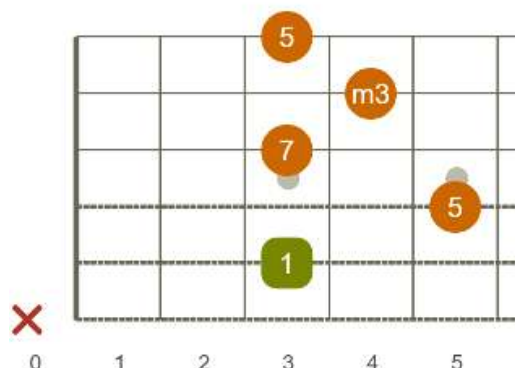


Minor VS Minor 7th chords

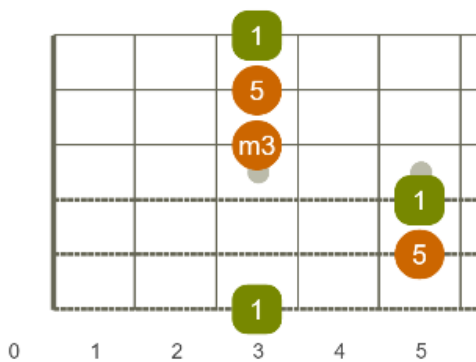
Cm



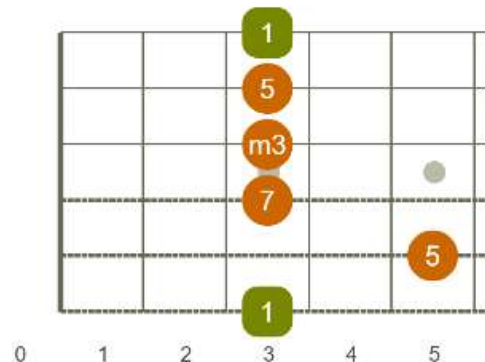
Cm⁷



Gm



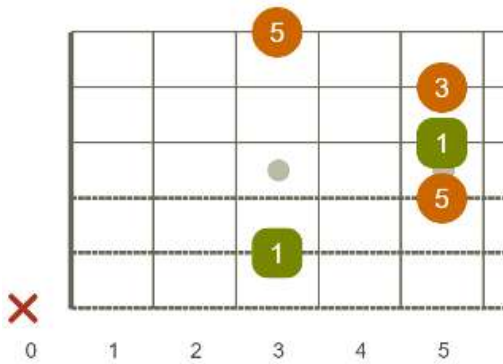
Gm⁷



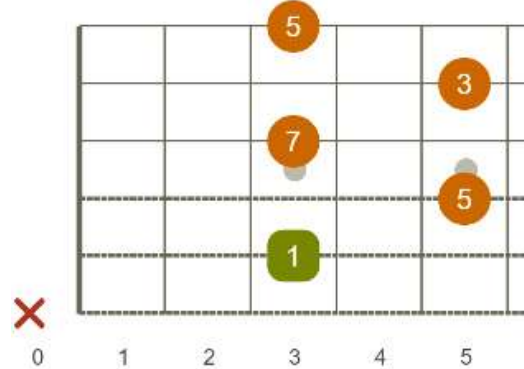
Common Seventh Chords Types

Major VS Major Minor 7th chords

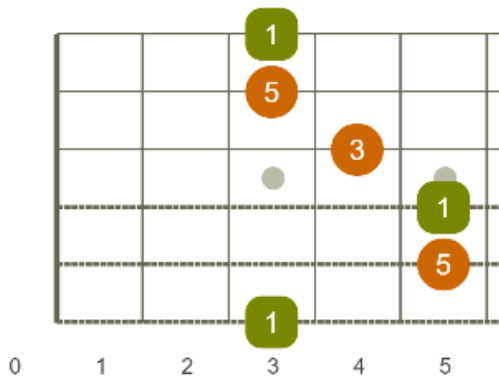
C



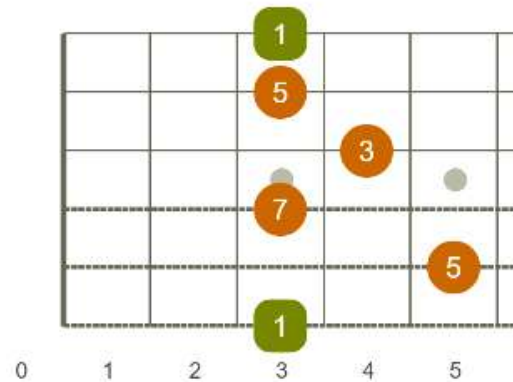
C⁷



G

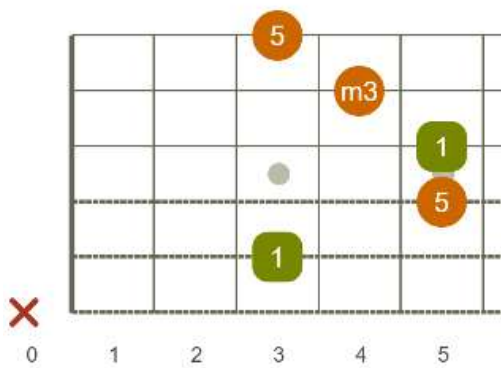


G⁷

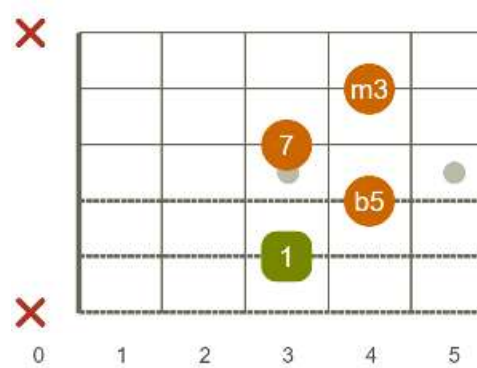


Minor VS Half-Diminished chords

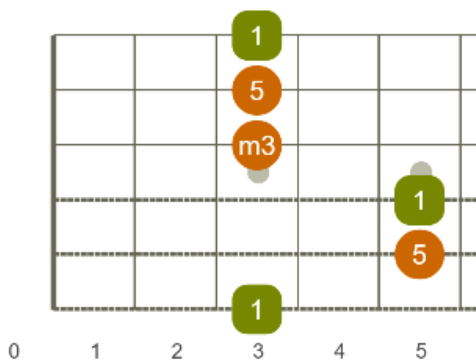
Cm



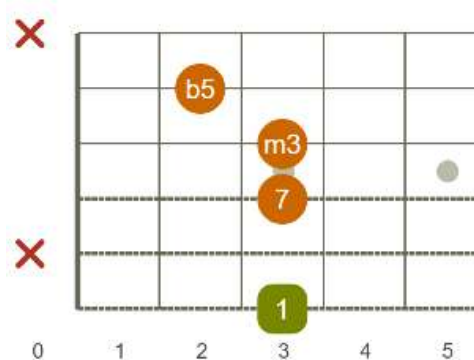
Cm^{7(b5)}



Gm



Gm^{7(b5)}



Seventh chords in the Major scale

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|----|------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| | | | ^ | | | | ^ |
| I | ii | iii | IV | V | vi | vii ^o | |
| R | M2 | M3 | P4 | P5 | M6 | M7 | |
| <i>G Major Scale</i> | | | | | | | |
| G | A ^m | B ^m | C | D | E ^m | F [#] ^o | |
| G ^Δ | A ^m 7 | B ^m 7 | C ^Δ | D7 | E ^m 7 | F ^m 7b5 | |

If you follow the same rule to construct chords that belongs in the Major Scale but not only with three notes but with four, you end up generating all the seventh chords of any Major Scale.

My advice would be to remember the basic chord quality (major, minor, diminished) associated with each degree of the Major Scale.

Once you feel like you fully understand and master this, I suggest you start remembering the seventh quality (major 7th, minor 7th, dominant, half-diminished) associated with each degree of the Major Scale.

As a next step, you can work on the same notions in other scales, like the Natural Minor Scale or the Harmonic Minor Scale for example.

Songs that use Seventh Chords

Here are some examples of songs that use seventh chords. Thank to these example you will be able to better understand their use in a real musical context, in an achieved piece of music.

- **Bob Marley - I shot the Sheriff** : This music is a perfect example to demonstrate that seventh chords are used in a great variety of musics, even reggae. This music is particularly interesting when studying seventh chords because it shows that generally, seventh chords are used in conjunction with our basic minor / major chords.

The chord progression goes like this :
Below the chords are the chord degrees.

Verse : Gm - Cm - Gm - Gm
 i iv i i

Chorus : Ebmaj7 - Dm7 - Gm - Gm
 VI v i i

This music shows the use of a major 7th chord and a minor 7th chord in a Minor Scale context.

- **Los Enanitos Verdes - Lamento Boliviano** : This song shows the basic use of the dominant chord - major minor 7th - in a musical context. We can also see the use of the dominant as a perfect cadence here. This music is interesting because we can find within the chord progression at the same time the natural 5th chord from the natural minor scale and the dominant 5th chord borrowed from the harmonic minor scale.

The chord progression goes like this :

Verse / Chorus : Em - Bm - Am7 - Em / B7
 i v iv7 i V