

CHORD CONSTRUCTION

Using the major scale (“do-re-me”) to build C chords:

Major chords C major	1 -- 3 -- 5 C – E – G	<i>first, third and fifth note in the scale</i> “do mi so”
7 th chords C7	1 -- 3 -- 5 -- 7 ^b C – E – G – B ^b	<i>add the flatted 7th note of the scale</i>
Minor chords C minor	1 -- 3 ^b -- 5 C – E ^b – G	<i>flat the third note of the scale by one-half step</i>

Hint: What we normally call a 7th chord actually uses a *flatted* 7th note, two half steps down from the octave or “eight” note. This is also sometimes called the *dominant seventh* and written as a plain G7.

Chords using the normal “unflatted” 7th note (one half step down) are called the **major 7th** chord, most often written as Gmaj7 or GΔ7. Major sevenths have a different tonal character or “color”, compared to a normal 7th chord.

Guitar chords are sometimes referred to as “broken chords” because they don’t always stack the notes in a standard 1 - 3 - 5 order, and usually double certain notes. Stacking the notes in a 3 – 5 -- 1 order is equally valid, and has a fancy musical name -- an inversion. For example, a first position open A chord and a barred fifth fret A chord use the same notes, but they are stacked a little differently and go higher up the scale. The two forms have a slightly different character or texture, but are really the same chord.

Suspended, Augmented, Diminished and Demented chords

These special chords have different textures to them since they do not have the major chord’s standard 1st – 3rd – 5th note construction. Instead they drop out some notes, add other notes, and even sharp or flat the added note.

Suspended chords have no third, instead using the fourth note on the scale, spelled out as: 1st – 4th – 5th. “SUS” chords give a mysterious or ambiguous feeling like a minor chord, only more pronounced. You can have Sus2 and Sus4 chords, adding either the second note or the fourth note of the scale.

Diminished chords flat the third, fifth, and seventh notes of the scale. “DIM” chords have a tense edgy sound, and strongly lead you back toward a resolved major chord. Diminished chords are often used as passing tones, to get back to the “I” chord or the “V” chord in a jazzy or melodic way.

Augmented chords sharp the third, fifth or 7th notes of the scale.

OK, there isn’t really such a thing as a demented chord. But try to finger a G13 and you might not be so sure about that.