

Some Basic Chord Symbols Explained

Chord symbols are simply a code that describes the structure of any given chord.

A few basics:

- The letter name describes the bass note.
- The ‘m’ symbol, such as in the chord symbol ‘Cm7’ refers only to the 3rd of the chord.
- A ‘7’ in the chord symbol means a m7 interval, ‘M7’ (or other designation for major 7, as noted in the CM7 chord below) means a major 7 interval.
- The numbers ‘2’, ‘4’, ‘5’, and ‘6’ in the chord symbol refer to major or perfect intervals unless otherwise noted.

Noteworthy: By knowing where all the intervals of the chord structure lie in any given chord fingering, it is possible to alter fingering of known chords to accommodate new chord types.

| <u>Symbol</u> | - | <u>Structure</u> | |
|---------------|---|------------------|---|
| C | - | T, M3, 5 | |
| Cm | - | T, m3, 5 | |
| C7 | - | T, M3, 5, m7 | 7 th is minor, or dominant 7 th |
| Cm7 | - | T, m3, 5, m7 | m refers to 3 rd , NOT 7 th |
| CM7 | - | T, M3, 5, M7 | May be written as Cmaj7, Cma7, CΔ7 |
| C7b5 | - | T, M3, b5, m7 | |
| Cm7b5 | - | T, m3, b5, m7 | Also called half diminished (C ^ø) |
| Csus4 | - | T, 4, 5 | 4 th is ‘suspended’ in place of M3 |
| C7sus4 | - | T, 4, 5, m7 | |
| C5 | - | T, 5 | Power chord |
| C6 | - | T, M3, M6 | |
| Cadd2 | - | T, M2, M3, 5 | |
| CM6 | - | T, M3, 5, M6 | |
| Cm6 | - | T, m3, 5, M6 | |