

Advanced Higher Music – Key signatures & chords

Diagram showing musical staves with key signatures and their corresponding major and minor chords:

- C Major / A Minor
- G Major / E Minor
- F Major / D Minor
- Bb Major
- D Major

In higher literacy, you were required to recognise chords I, IV, V and VI.

In advanced higher, you are required to be able to identify chords **I, II, IV, V, and VI**, as well as write **4-part chords**, in different **inversions**.

In higher, you were taught to write out the notes of the scale of the key you're in, and then identify the notes of each chord from that.

In C major, that would look like this:

5th	G	A	B	C	D	E	F
3rd	E	F	G	A	B	C	D
root	C	D	E	F	G	A	B
CHORD	I	II (m)	III (m)	IV	V	VI (m)	VII

The workbook for Higher Music deals with **triads** – 3 note chords. Until now we have always dealt with triads in **root position**. This means the **root** is the lowest note (the letter-name of the triad)

C major,
Root position

Diagram showing the C major triad in root position on a musical staff. The notes are C (Root), E (3rd), and G (5th).

C major scale

Diagram showing the C major scale on a musical staff. The notes are C, D, E, F, G, A. The chord symbols below the notes are I, ii, IV, V, and vi.

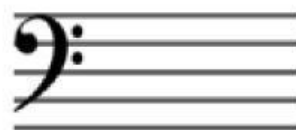
Root position chords in C major (I ii IV V vi)

Diagram showing the root position chords in C major on a musical staff. The chords are I (C), ii (Dm), IV (F), V (G), and vi (Am).

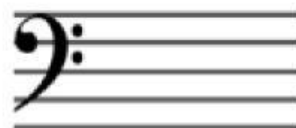
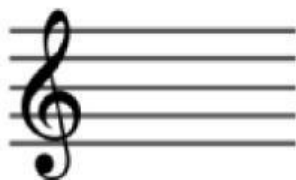
Key Signatures for Advanced Higher

Fill in the correct accidentals for each key signature.

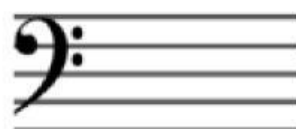
C Major & A Minor



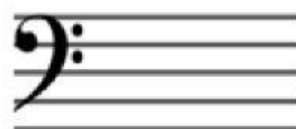
G Major & E Minor



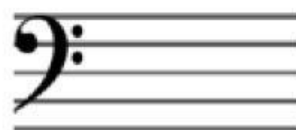
F Major & D Minor



Bb Major



D Major



Identify the key signatures in the following examples.

Key:



Key:



Key:



Inversions

An inversion is a chord in a different order! We have learned all our chords in **root position**, where the **root** of the chord is the lowest note.

In C major, the notes are **C (root), E (3rd), and G (5th)**

If the **3rd** of the chord is the lowest note, the chord is in **1st inversion**.

If the **5th** of the chord is the lowest note, the chord is in **2nd inversion**.

5th (2nd inv)	G	A	B	C	D	E	F
3rd (1st inv)	E	F	G	A	B	C	D
root	C	D	E	F	G	A	B
CHORD	I	II (m)	III (m)	IV	V	VI (m)	VII

ROOT position

*Line-line-line
(or space-space-space)*



C is the lowest note,
making this a root
position chord of C

1st INVERSION

*gap between
top 2 notes*



E is the lowest note,
making this a 1st
inversion chord of C

2nd INVERSION

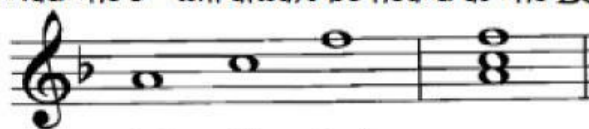
*gap between
bottom 2 notes*



G is the lowest note,
making this a 2nd
inversion chord of C

In the **first inversion** of any triad the 3rd will always be heard as the **LOWEST** note:

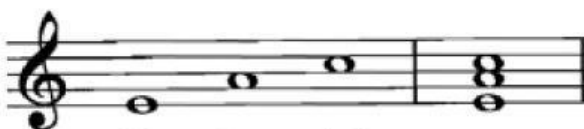
F major,
First inversion



3rd 5th Root

In the **second inversion** of any triad the 5th will always be heard as the **LOWEST** note:

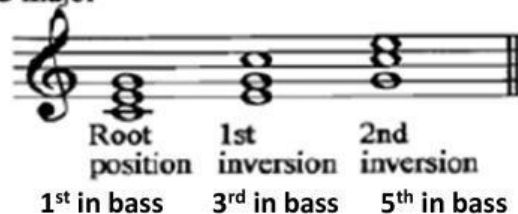
A minor,
Second inversion



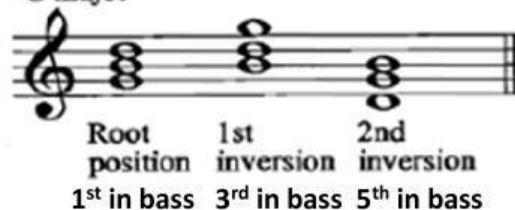
5th Root 3rd

Any triad can be treated in this way. Here is a chart of some familiar triads showing the root position, 1st inversion and 2nd inversion of each:

C major



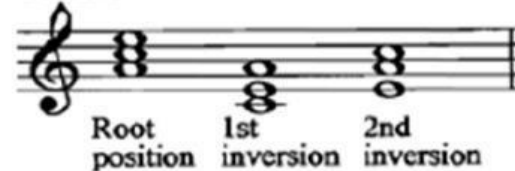
G major



F major



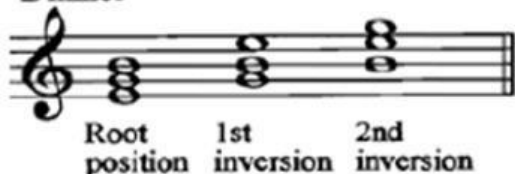
A minor



D minor



E minor



EXERCISE 1 Identifying positions of triads

Are these triads in root position, 1st inversion or 2nd inversion ?

Write your answer in the box below each triad.

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)

(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)

EXERCISE 2

Draw the requested notes on the stave below these triads:

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Draw the 3rd	Draw the root	Draw the 3rd	Draw the 5th

Answers :-

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)

- Name the following TONIC chords (i.e. chord I) and, for each, name the key and the inversion. (I, Ib, Ic)

If the lowest note is the 1st of the chord, it is a **ROOT** position chord.

*Root position chords do not need to be identified by a letter (**I**)*

If the lowest note is the 3rd of the chord, it is a **1ST INVERSION** chord.

*This is indicated by the letter b (i.e. chord I 1st inversion = **Ib**)*

If the lowest note is the 5th of the chord, it is a **2nd INVERSION** chord.

*This is indicated by the letter c (i.e. chord I 2nd inversion = **Ic**)*

Major keys

Key _____ Key _____

Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____

Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____

CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____

Key _____ Key _____

Minor keys

Key _____ Key _____

Key _____

As well as the TONIC chord of the key, you need to be able to tell chords II, IV, V, VI in root position, 1st inversion and 2nd inversion. These can be in any of the keys that you need to know for Advanced Higher. These are:

		
C Major A Minor	G Major E Minor	F Major D Minor
		
Bb Major	D Major	

In order to work out the chords for each key, write the scale out with correct accidentals as appropriate and label chords I, II, IV, V, VI

e.g. F major

F	G	A	Bb	C	D
I	II		IV	V	VI

Next, write in the notes of the chord above these notes:

2 ND inv	→	C	D		F	G	A
1 st inv	→	A	Bb		D	E	F
root	→	F	G	A	Bb	C	D
		I	II		IV	V	VI

Remember, the inversion of a chord is dictated by which note is lowest!

Work out your **key signature** first, then work out what **chord** is being created from all the notes, then look at the lowest note to work out the inversion!

If the lowest note is the 1st of the chord, it is a **ROOT** position chord.

*Root position chords do not need to be identified by a letter (**I**)*

If the lowest note is the 3rd of the chord, it is a **1ST INVERSION** chord.

*This is indicated by the letter b (i.e. chord I 1st inversion = **Ib**)*

If the lowest note is the 5th of the chord, it is a **2ND INVERSION** chord.

*This is indicated by the letter c (i.e. chord I 2nd inversion = **Ic**)*

Exercise on chords and inversions

- Using the same method as on previous page, write out the scales for the following keys (including relevant accidentals) and complete the notes for chords I, II, IV, V, VI. Remember, in the minor keys, the 7th note is sharpened. This will affect chord V, as the 7th note of the scale appears in this chord.

G major

2ND inv →

1st inv →

root →

I	II		IV	V	VI

← c

← b

← (a)

D major

2 →

1 →

R →

I	II		IV	V	VI

← c

← b

← (a)

Bb major

2 →

1 →

R →

I	II		IV	V	VI

← c

← b

← (a)

- Now work out the following chords of these major keys:

Key _____

Key _____



Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____

Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____

CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____

Key _____

Key _____



Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____

Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____

CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____

Now work out the following chords of these **MINOR** keys:

A minor

What accidental is there for the raised 7th of the scale? _____

2	→							←	c
1	→							←	b
R	→							←	(a)
		I	II		IV	V	VI		

D minor

What accidental is there for the raised 7th of the scale? _____

2	→							←	c
1	→							←	b
R	→							←	(a)
		I	II		IV	V	VI		

E minor

What accidental is there for the raised 7th of the scale? _____

2	→							←	c
1	→							←	b
R	→							←	(a)
		I	II		IV	V	VI		

Key _____ Key _____

Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____
 Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____
 CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____

Key _____ Key _____

Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____ Notes: _____
 Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____ Lowest: _____
 CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____ CHORD: _____