

PIANO CHORD VOICINGS FOR JAZZ COMBO

The pianist has a few functions in a jazz combo.

First, he comps for, and interacts with, other players as they solo.

Secondly, he acts as a soloist himself.

Therefore, he needs two different types of voicings.

#1: TWO HANDED VOICINGS are used when other players solo and during the melody (often called the "Head").

#2: ONE HANDED VOICINGS are played in the left hand, while the right hand solos.



We are going to start with voicings for three types of chords: Major, minor, and dominant 7th.

Let's look at scale degrees for these three types of chords so that we can create voicings.

UNDERSTANDING SCALE DEGREES

Lets look at the C Major scale.

We are going to number each note. We'll get the numbers 1-8.



When we change to C Dominant scale, we change the 7th to a b7.



Now, we are going to construct the scale for C minor 7th.

Minor scales have b3 and b7.



Throughout this packet, we will show you voicings in two categories: Category A and Category B.

We will call voicings with the 3rd of the chord on the bottom CATEGORY A.

We will call voicings with the 7th of the chord on the bottom CATEGORY B.

We are going to start out with Major 7th voicings. For C Major, our two handed voicing looks like this:

MAJOR 7TH TWO HANDED VOICING Category A

The image shows two staves of musical notation for C Major 7th. The treble clef staff contains the notes C4, E4, G4, and B4. The bass clef staff contains the notes C3, E3, G3, and B3. To the right is a piano keyboard diagram with the keys C3, E3, G3, and B3 highlighted in red, representing the voicing for Category A.

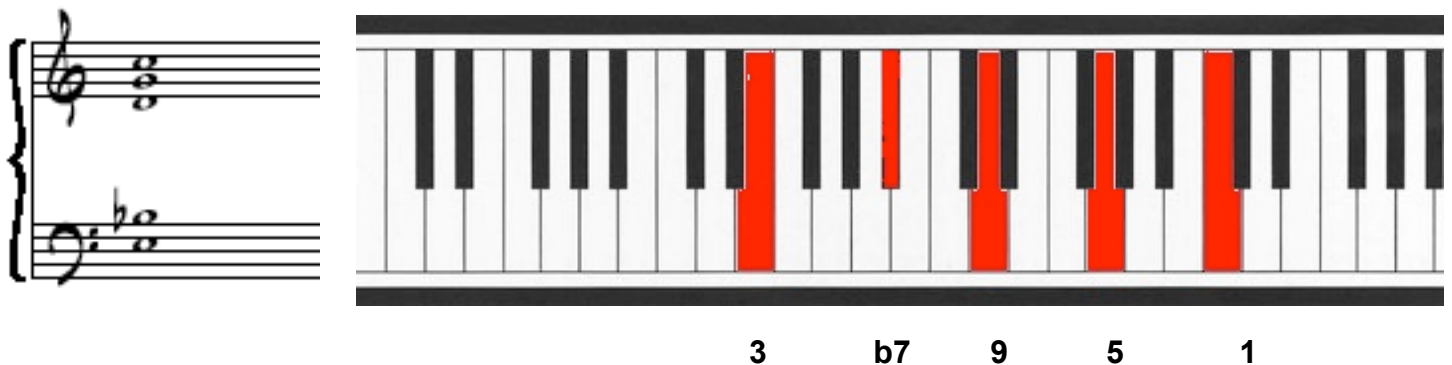
Tricks of the Trade
Put your right hand pinky on the root of the chord and continue DOWN in 4ths.
Or..
Put your left hand pinky on the 3rd of the chord, and continue UP in 4ths

Let's try the Major 7th voicing in one other key. Here is the voicing for FMaj7:

The image shows two staves of musical notation for F Major 7th. The treble clef staff contains the notes F4, A4, C5, and E5. The bass clef staff contains the notes F3, A3, C4, and E4. To the right is a piano keyboard diagram with the keys F3, A3, C4, and E4 highlighted in red. Below the keyboard diagram are the numbers 3, 6, 9, 5, and 1, which correspond to the fingerings for the right hand (pinky, ring, middle, index, thumb) on the notes F, A, C, E, and F respectively.

DOMINANT 7TH**TWO HANDED VOICING****Category A**

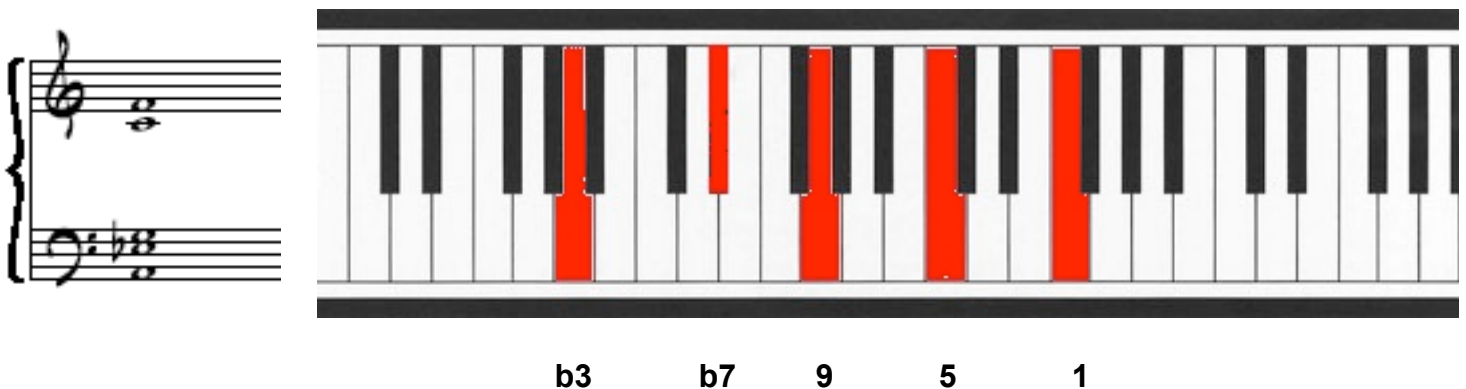
To make a C dominant 7th voicing, or C7, we are going to change ONE note from the major 7th voicing: The b7.



The diagram shows a two-handed voicing for C7. On the left, a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) shows the notes: C4 (root), E4 (3rd), G4 (5th), Bb4 (b7th), and C5 (1st). To the right, a piano keyboard diagram highlights these notes in red. Below the keyboard, the notes are labeled: 3, b7, 9, 5, 1.

Notice that the only difference between the C7 and CMaj7 is that we replace the 6th (A) with a b7 (Bb).

Lets look at the dominant 7th voicing in one other key.
Here is the voicing for F7:



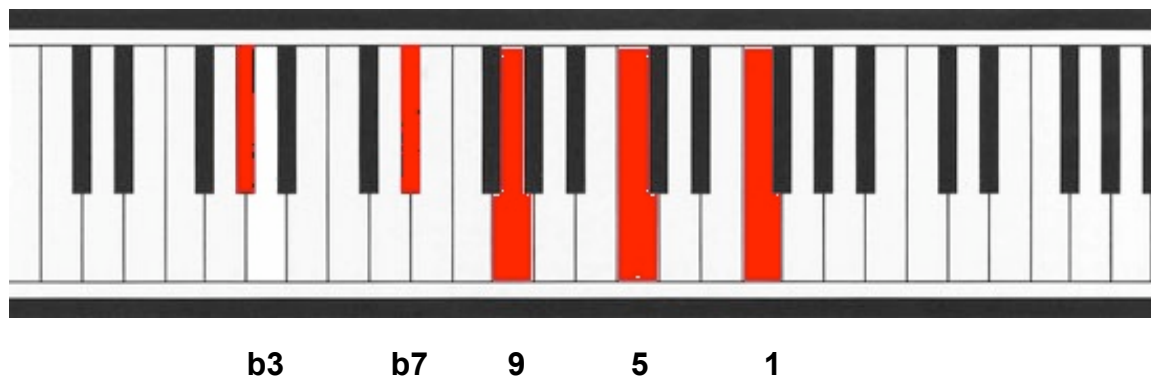
The diagram shows a two-handed voicing for F7. On the left, a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) shows the notes: F4 (root), Ab4 (b3rd), C5 (5th), Eb5 (b7th), and F5 (1st). To the right, a piano keyboard diagram highlights these notes in red. Below the keyboard, the notes are labeled: b3, b7, 9, 5, 1.

MINOR 7TH**TWO HANDED VOICING****Category A**

To turn a Major 7th chord into a minor 7th chord, add a b3 and b7.
To turn a Dominant 7th chord into a minor 7th chord, just add a b3.
C minor 7th, also spelled Cm7 or C-7 looks like this:



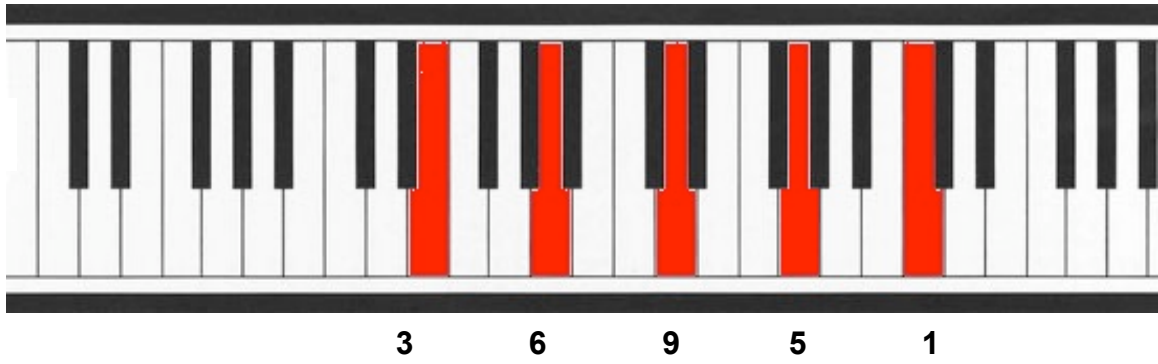
Here is this same voicing for F-7



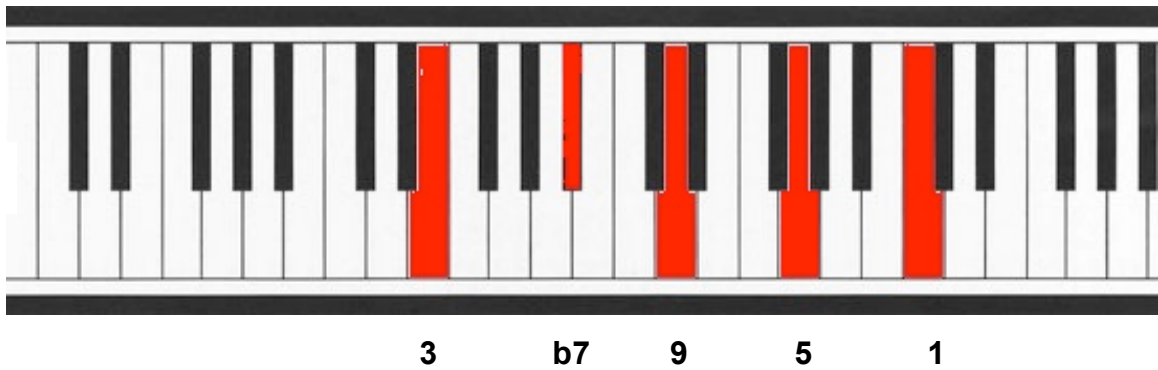
REVIEW

Comparing the three types of two-handed CATEGORY A voicings.

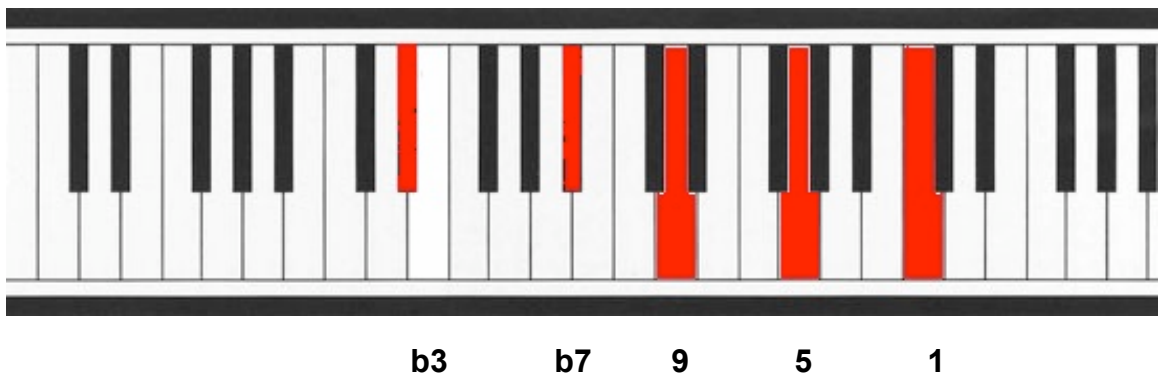
CMaj7



C7



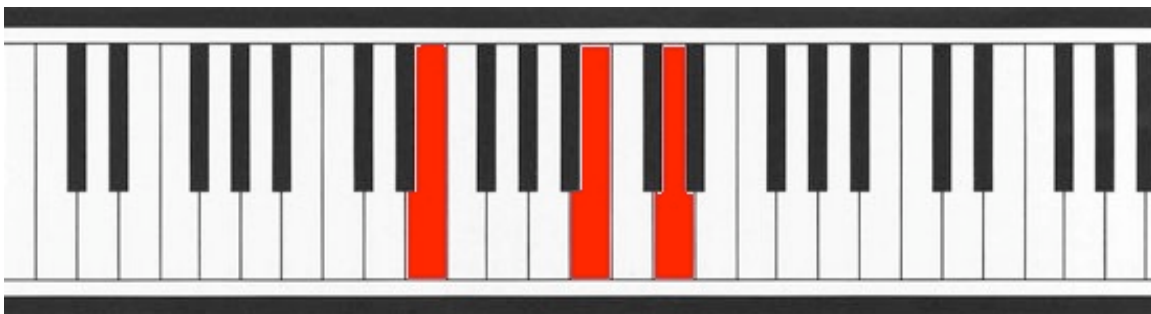
C-7



MAJOR 7TH**ONE HANDED VOICING****Category A**

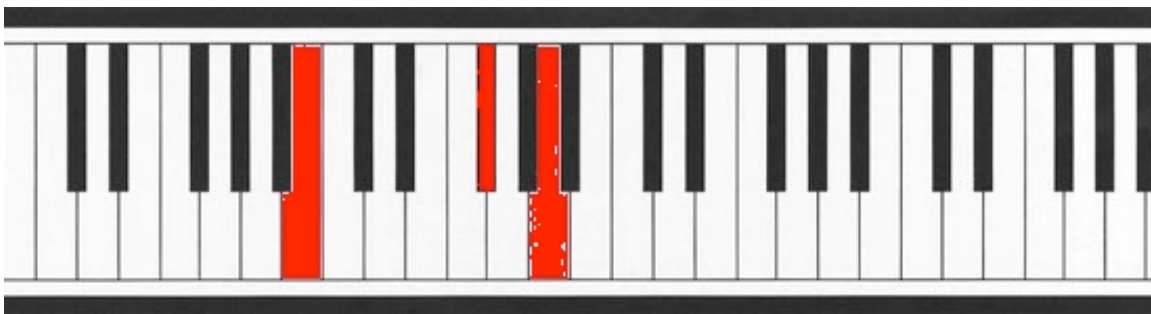
Remember, one handed voicings are played with the LEFT hand, while the right hand solos. Like our first set of two-handed voicings, these one-handed voicings will all have the 3rd on the bottom. These voicings can be played in multiple octaves. We showed it in treble clef below.

For C Major, our one-handed voicing looks like this:



3 6 9

Lets try it in one more key, G Major:

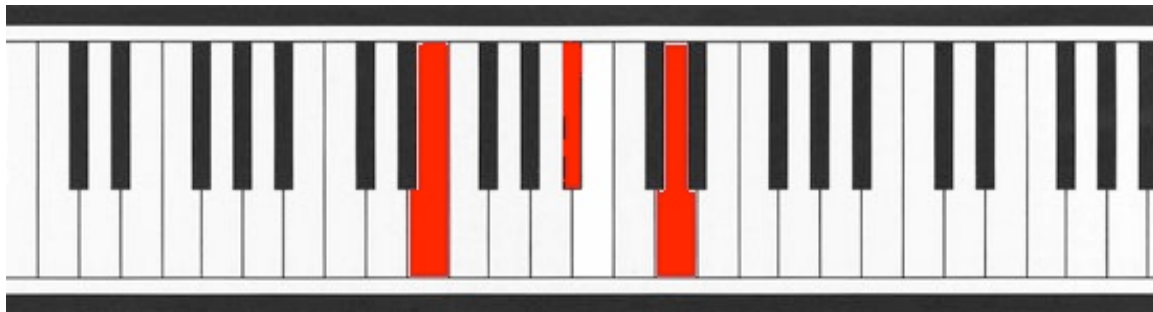


3 6 9

DOMINANT 7TH**ONE HANDED VOICING****Category A**

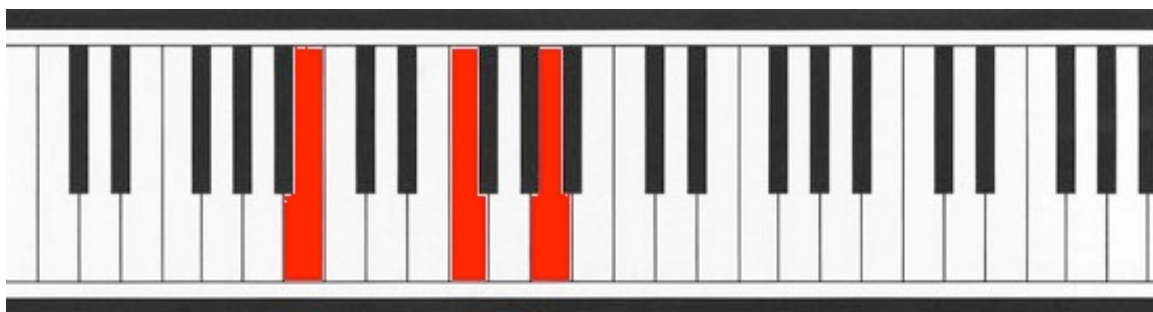
Remember, to change any set of notes from major to dominant, we only need to change the 7th to a **flat** 7th.

Our one-handed C7 voicing looks like this:



3 b7 9

Our one-handed G7 voicing looks like this:

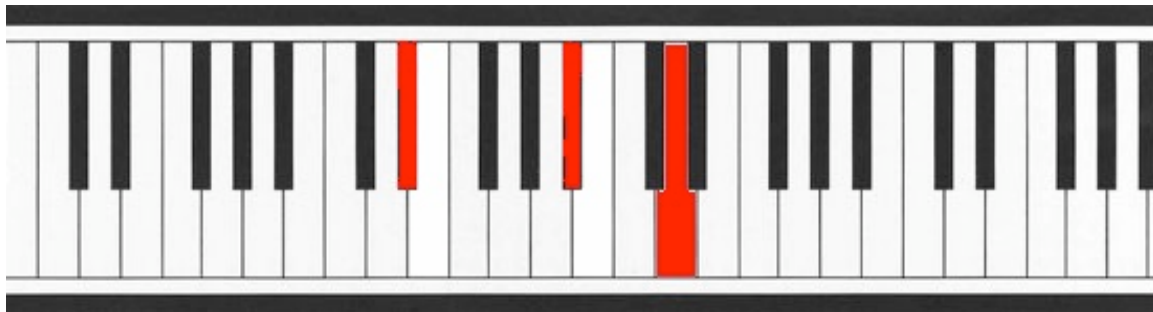


3 b7 9

MINOR 7TH**ONE HANDED VOICING****Category A**

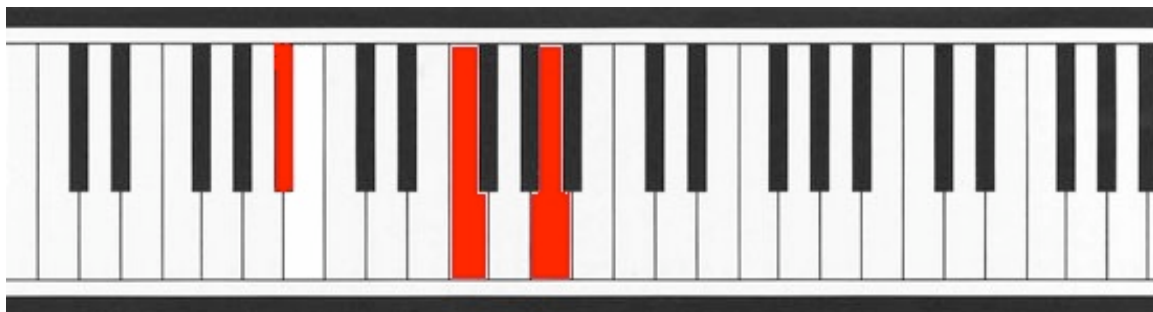
Remember, to go from major to minor, we need to flat both the 3rd and the 7th.

Our one-handed C-7 voicing looks like this:



b3 b7 9

Our one-handed G-7 voicing looks like this:

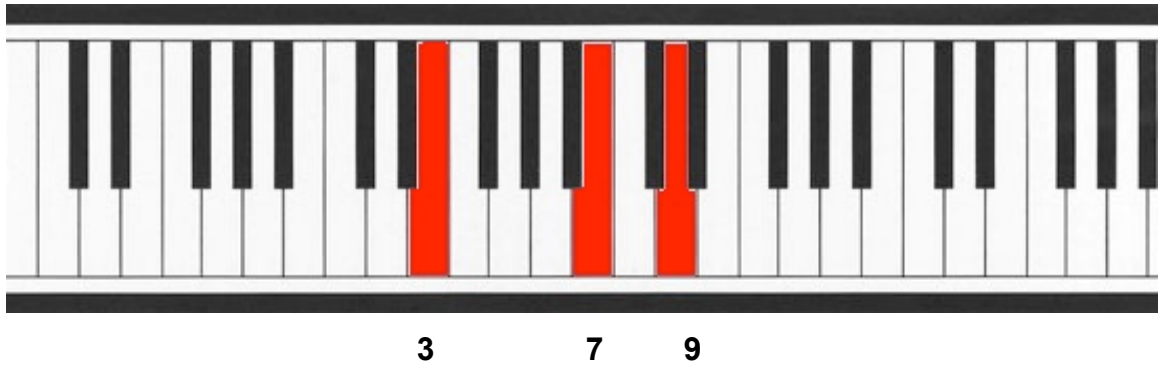


b3 b7 9

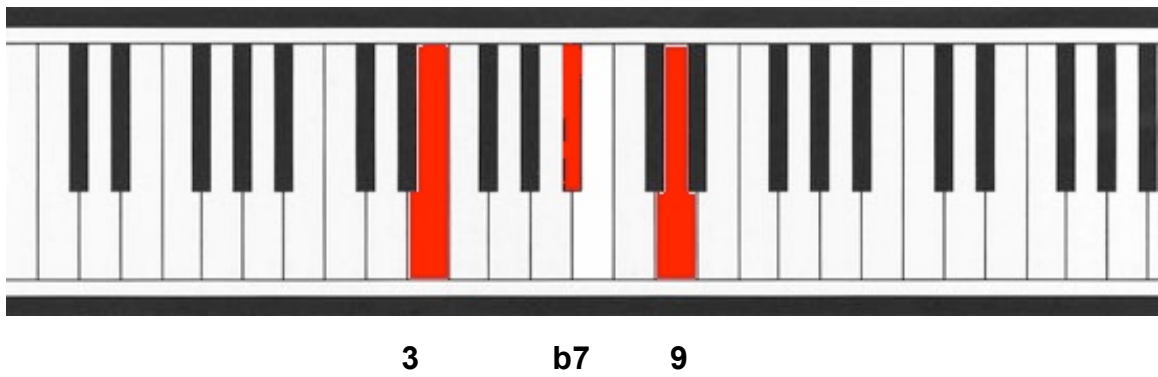
REVIEW

Comparing the three types of CATEGORY A one-handed voicings

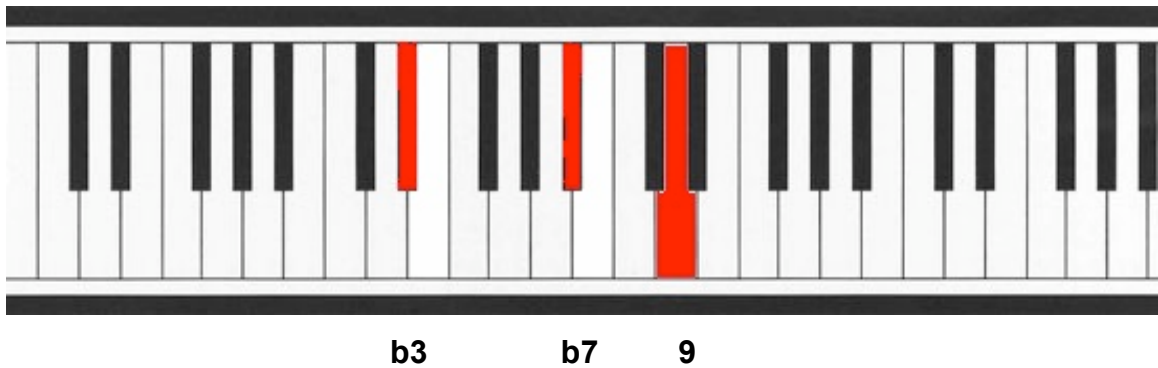
CMaj7



C7



C-7



Category B Voicings

Next, we are going to move on to voicings with the 7th on the bottom. We are going to call these voicings **CATEGORY B**.

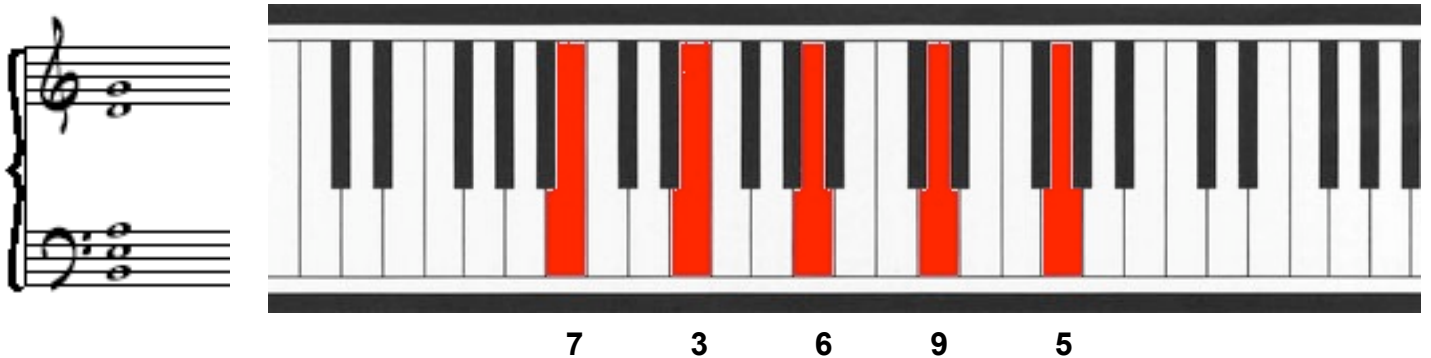
MAJOR 7TH

TWO HANDED VOICING

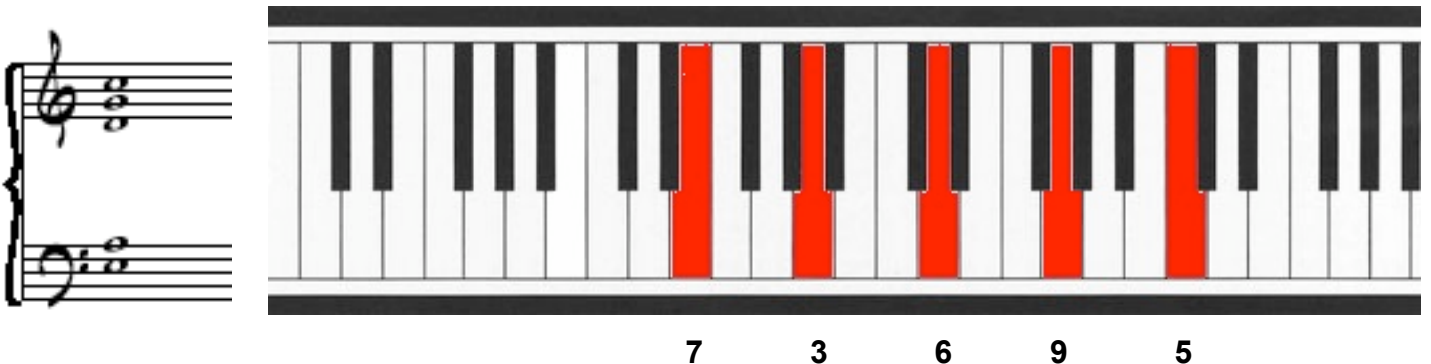
Category A

Like our Category "A" voicing, this voicing is all fourths.

For C Major, our two handed voicing looks like this:



Here is this voicing for FMaj7:



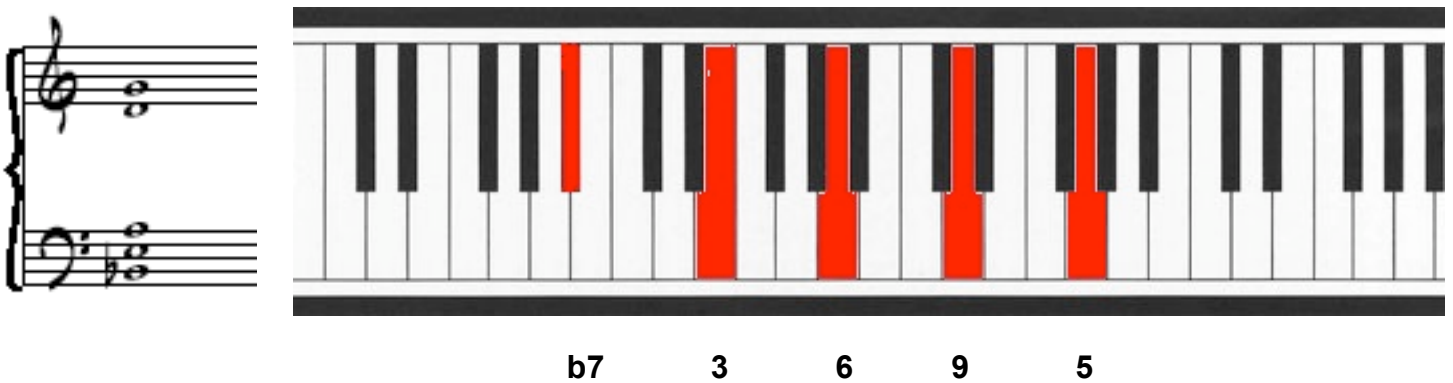
Tricks of the Trade

Notice that this voicing descends and ascends in fourths. Put your Right hand pinky on the ROOT, and descend in fourths. Or, Put your Left hand pinky on the seventh, and ascend in fourths.

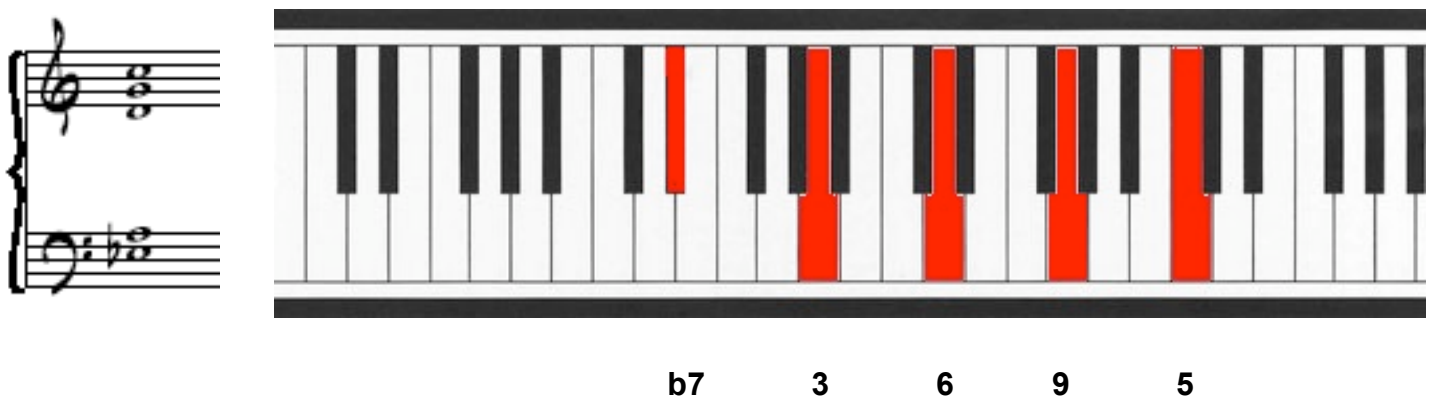
DOMINANT 7TH TWO HANDED VOICING Category B

Remember, to make a C dominant 7th voicing, or C7, we are going to change ONE note from the major 7th voicing: The b7.

Look at our C7 voicing.



Let's look at this same voicing for F7.



Tricks of the Trade

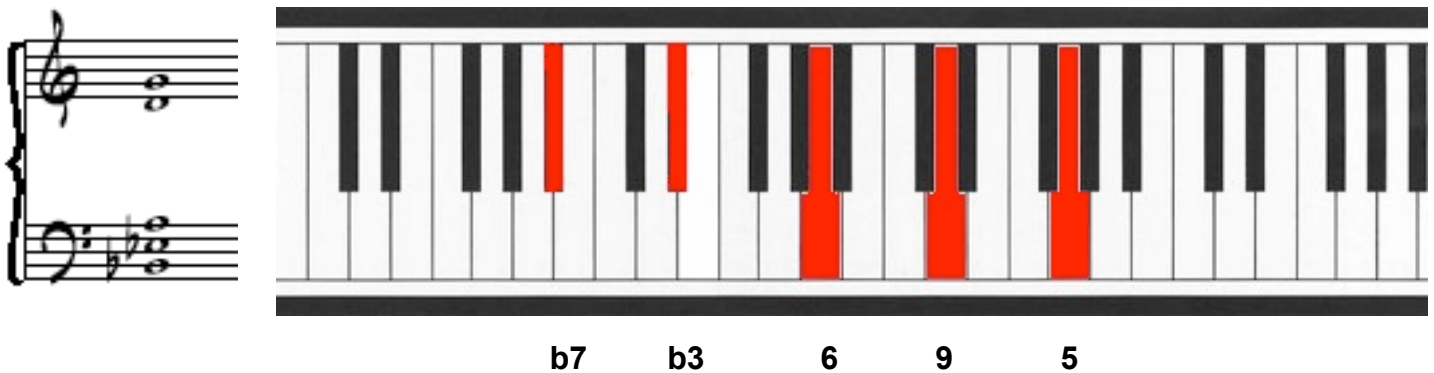
The right hand of this voicing is in still 4ths.
The left hand is on the 3rd and b7th.

MINOR 7TH**TWO HANDED VOICING****Category B**

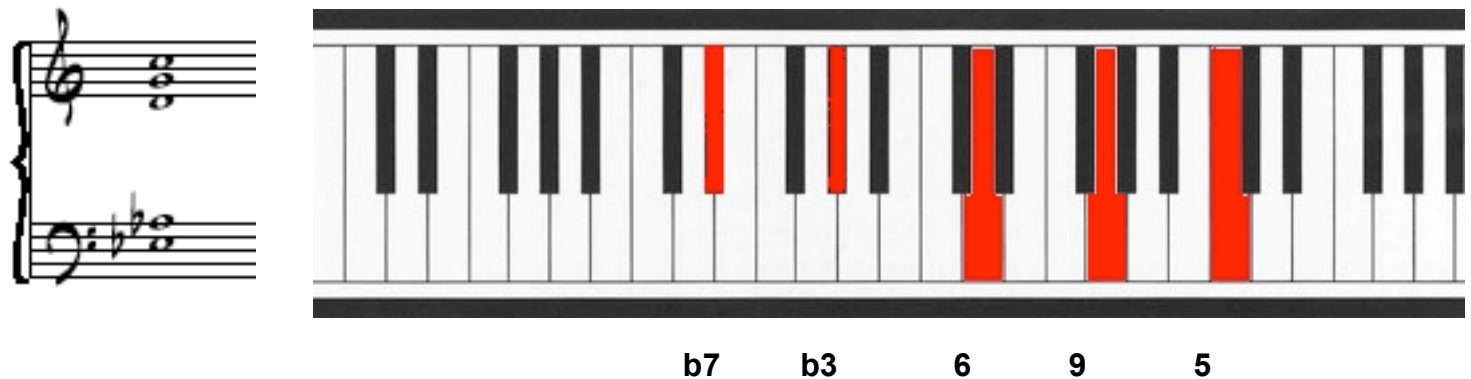
To turn a Major 7th chord into a minor 7th chord, add a b3 and b7

To turn a Dominant 7th chord into a minor 7th chord, just add a b3

Here is the minor 7th voicing for C-7



Here's this same voicing for F-7

**Tricks of the Trade**

The right hand of this voicing is still 4ths. The left hand is on the b3rd and b7th.

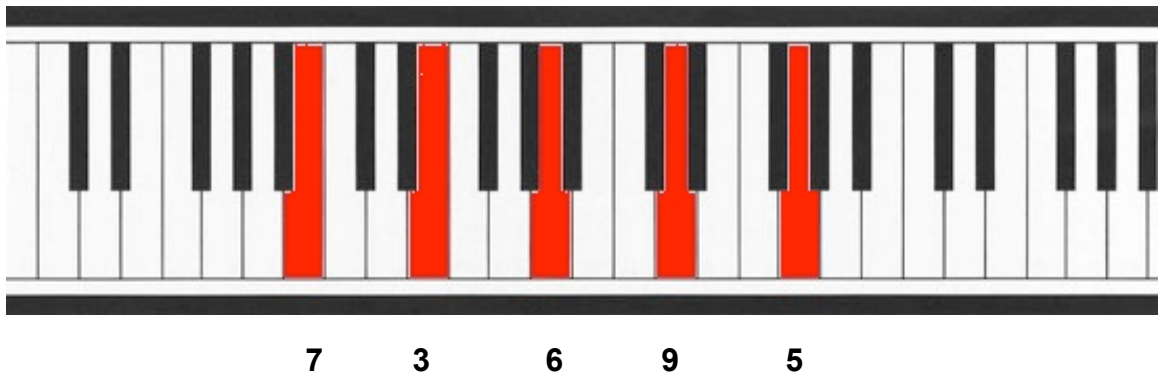
Practice Tip

Practice going from C Major 7 to C7 to C-7.
Notice that **ONLY YOUR LEFT HAND** will change. Do this in all the keys.
This is a great ear-training exercise.

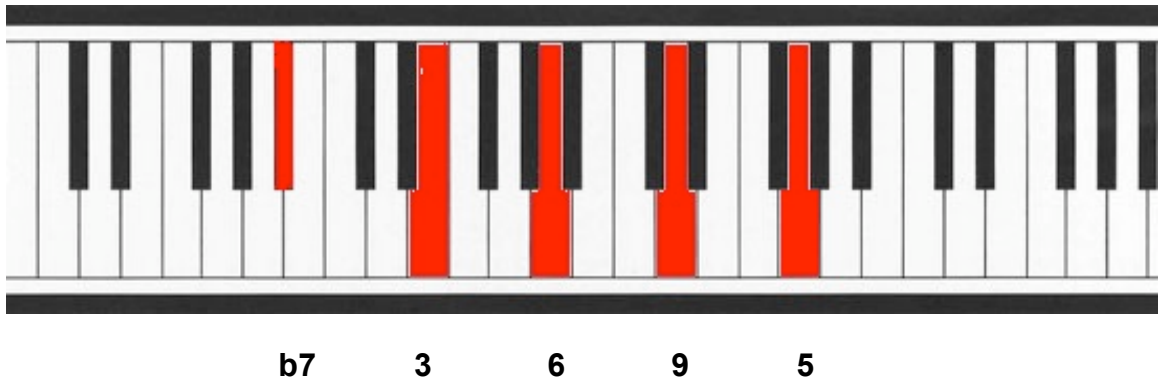
REVIEW

Comparing the three types of one-handed voicings: category B.

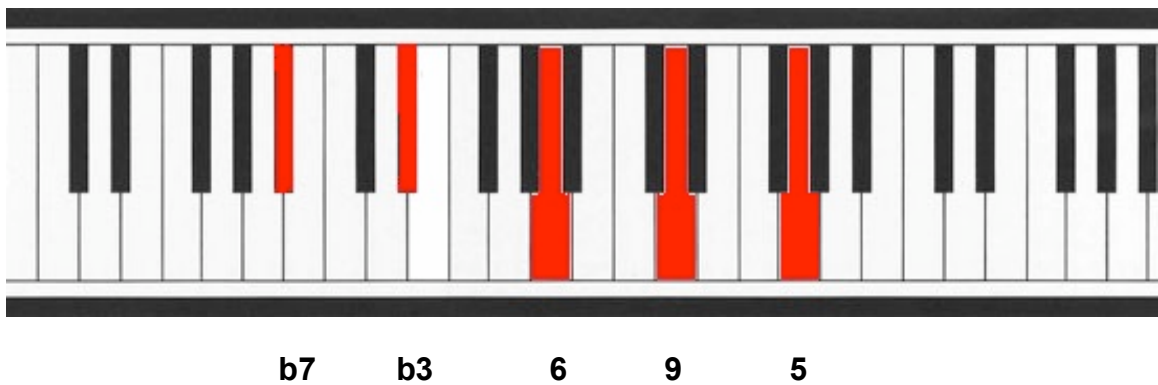
CMaj7



C7



C-7



Now, let's look at our Category B one handed voicings.

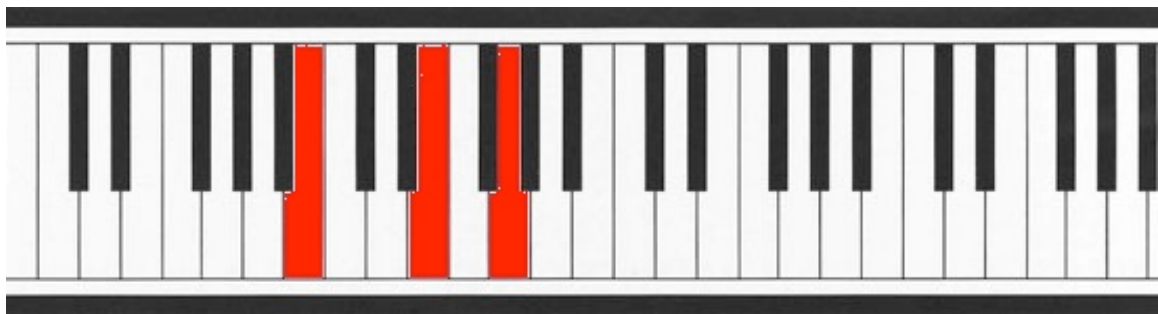
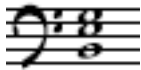
Our Category B Voicings have the 7th on the bottom.

MAJOR 7TH

ONE HANDED VOICING

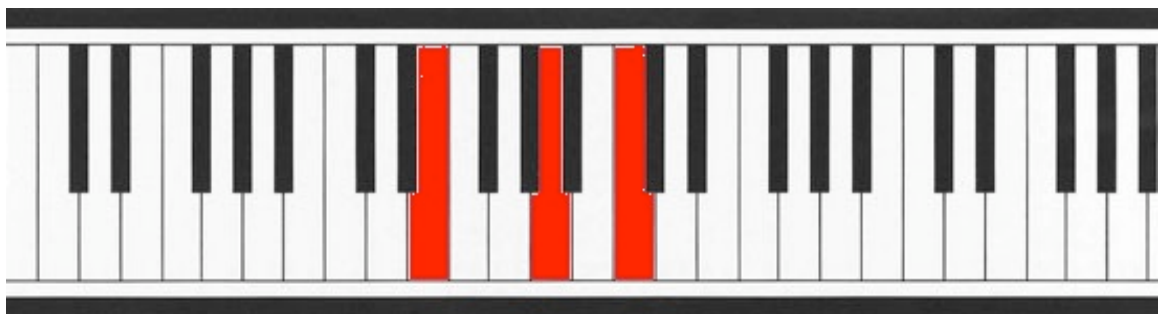
Category B

Major 7th one handed



7 3 5

Here is this same voicing for FMaj7



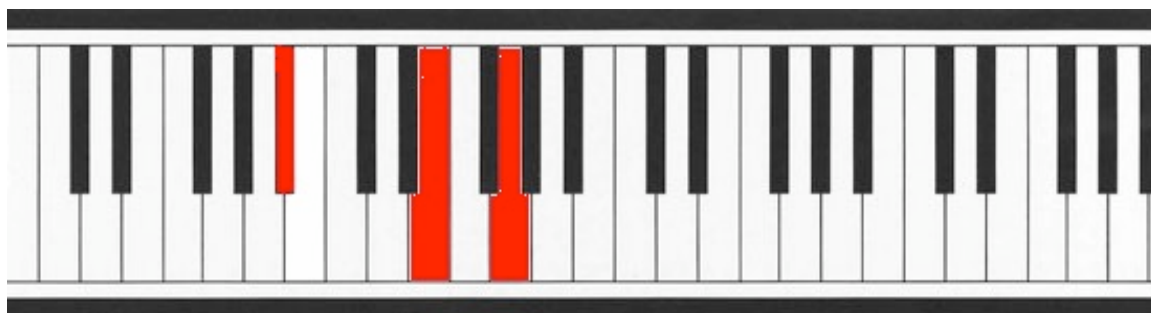
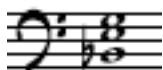
7 3 5

DOMINANT 7TH

ONE HANDED VOICING

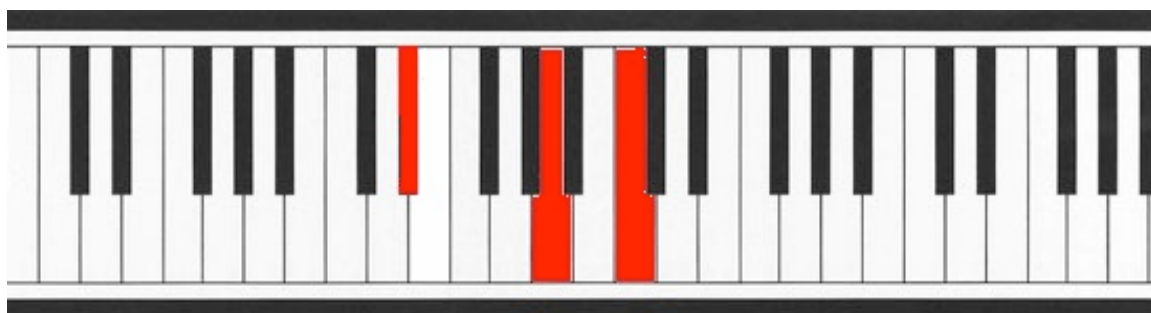
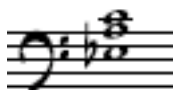
Category B

C7



b7 3 5

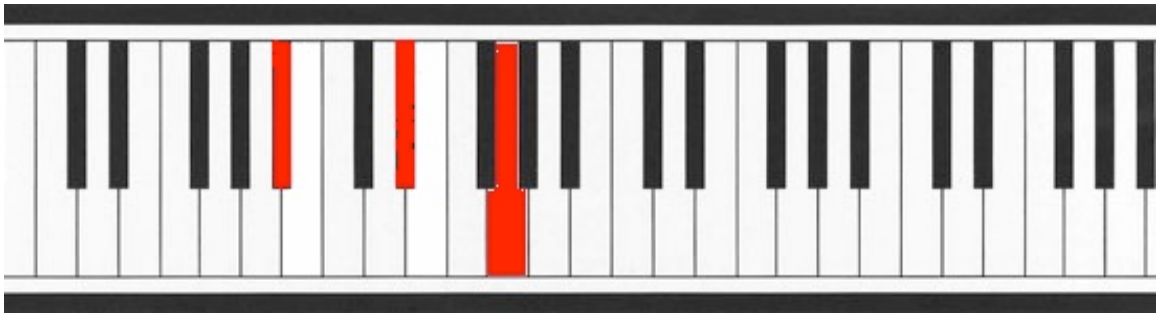
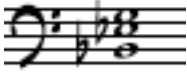
F7



b7 3 5

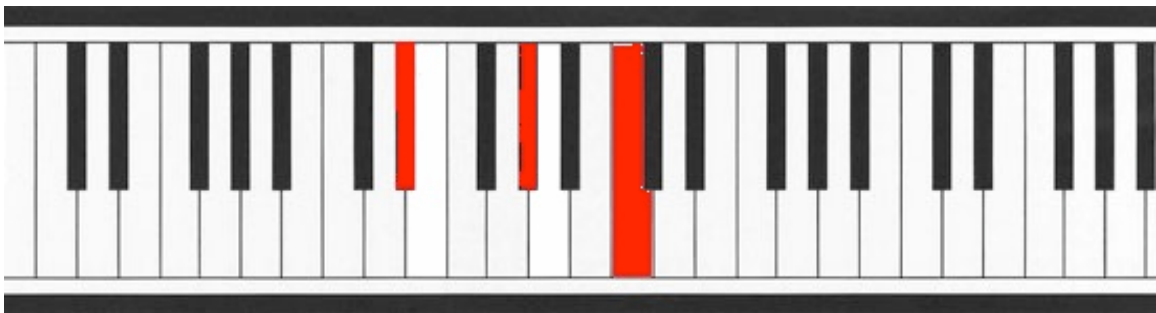
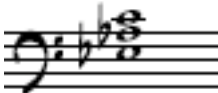
MINOR 7TH ONE HANDED VOICING Category B

C-7



b7 b3 5

F-7

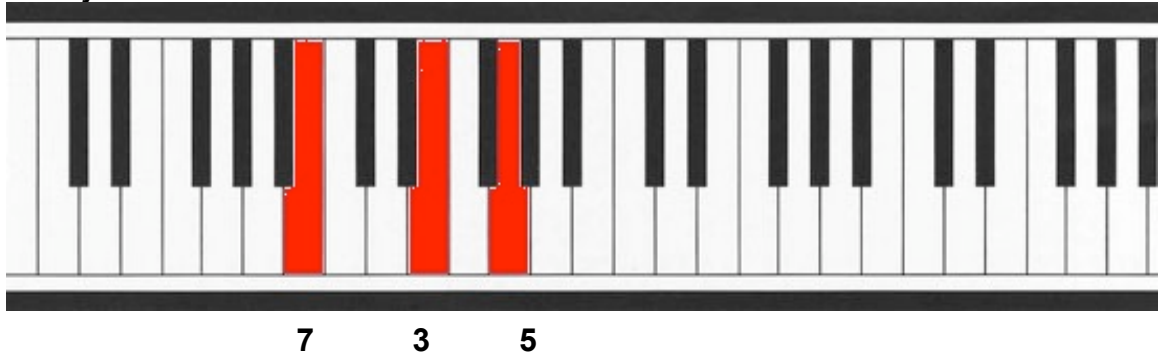


b7 b3 5

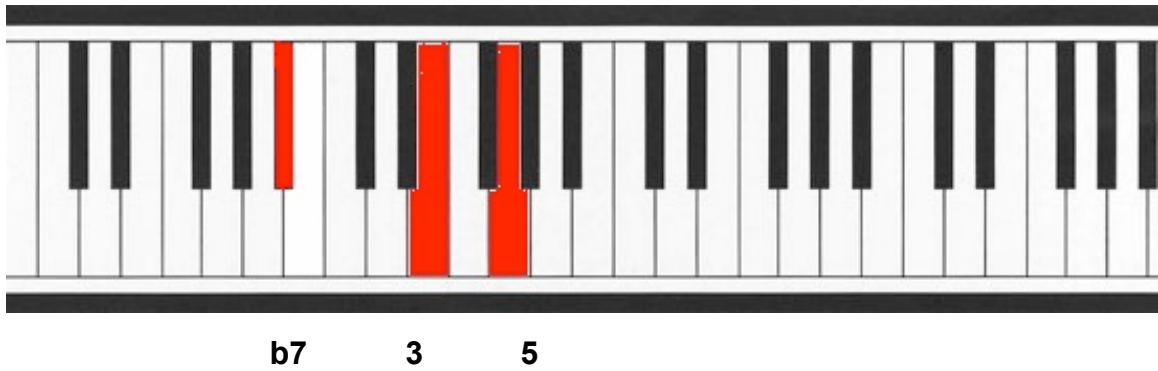
REVIEW

Comparing the one handed voicings: Category B

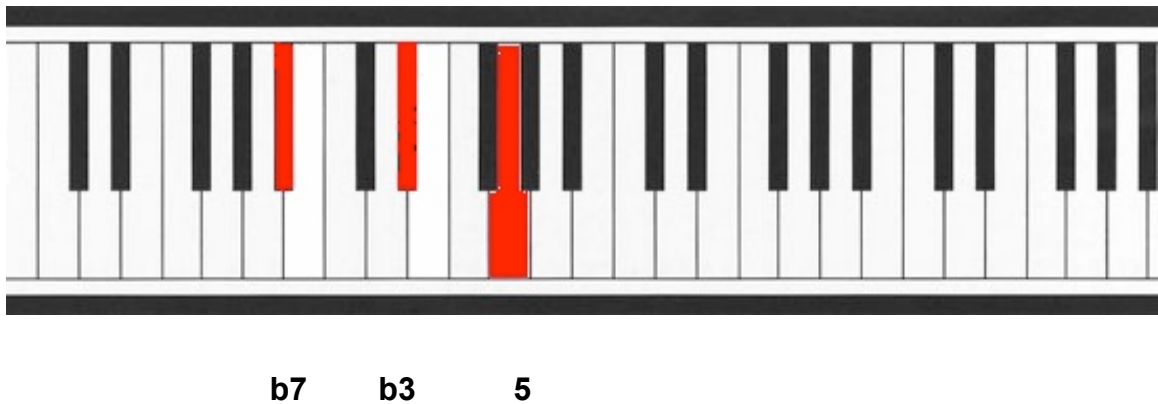
CMaj7



C7



C-7



The Major ii V I

You will learn in combo that the Major ii V I is one of the most important progressions in jazz tunes.

Now that you know your category “A” and “B” voicings, these ii V I’s are simple.

**In a ii V I, the ii chord is always a minor 7th chord
The V chord is always a dominant 7th chord
The I chord is always a major 7th chord.**

The trick to playing these ii V’s is that we will always go from category **A to B to A**, or from category **B to A to B**.

You will also notice that when we move from a minor 7th chord to a dominant 7th chord, the 7th of the minor chord moves **DOWN A HALF STEP**.

ii V I TWO HANDED VOICING CATEGORY A to B to A

Musical notation for a ii V I progression in C Major. The progression is D-7, G7, CMaj7. The notation shows the right hand (treble clef) and left hand (bass clef) voicings. Annotations include: "RIGHT HAND REMAINS THE SAME" above the treble clef, "WHOLE VOICING SHIFTS DOWN" between the staves, and "---C MOVES TO B--->" with an arrow pointing from the C note in the D-7 chord to the B note in the G7 chord in the bass clef.

Let's look at a ii V I in F Major:

Musical notation for a ii V I progression in F Major. The progression is G-7, C7, FMaj7. The notation shows the right hand (treble clef) and left hand (bass clef) voicings. Annotations include: "RIGHT HAND REMAINS THE SAME" above the treble clef, "WHOLE VOICING SHIFTS DOWN" between the staves, and "---F MOVES TO E--->" with an arrow pointing from the F note in the G-7 chord to the E note in the C7 chord in the bass clef.

Now let's look at the ii V I again, going from category B to A to B in C Major.

ii V I TWO HANDED VOICING CATEGORY B to A to B

Musical notation for a ii V I progression in C Major. The progression is D-7, G7, and CMaj7. The right hand remains the same across all three chords, while the left hand changes. A note F in the left hand of the G7 chord moves to E in the left hand of the CMaj7 chord.

Here is this same progression in F Major.

Musical notation for a ii V I progression in F Major. The progression is G-7, C7, and FMaj7. The right hand remains the same across all three chords, while the left hand changes. A note Bb in the left hand of the C7 chord moves to A in the left hand of the FMaj7 chord.

Finally, we'll look at one-handed voicings for the ii V I

ii V I ONE HANDED VOICING CATEGORY A to B to A

Here is the progression in C Major.

Musical notation for the ii V I progression in C Major. The bass clef is shown. The first measure is D-7 (D, F, A, C), the second is G7 (G, B, D, F), and the third is C Major7 (C, E, G, B). The notes are written as whole notes on a five-line staff.

Here is the progression in F Major.

Musical notation for the ii V I progression in F Major. The bass clef is shown. The first measure is G-7 (G, Bb, D, F), the second is C7 (C, Eb, G, Bb), and the third is F Major7 (F, Ab, C, Eb). The notes are written as whole notes on a five-line staff.

ii V I ONE HANDED VOICING CATEGORY A to B to A

Here is the one-handed voicing from Category B to A to B.

Musical notation for the one-handed voicing of the ii V I progression in C Major. The bass clef is shown. The first measure is D-7 (D, F, A, C), the second is G7 (G, B, D, F), and the third is C Major7 (C, E, G, B). The notes are written as whole notes on a five-line staff.

Musical notation for the one-handed voicing of the ii V I progression in F Major. The bass clef is shown. The first measure is G-7 (G, Bb, D, F), the second is C7 (C, Eb, G, Bb), and the third is F Major7 (F, Ab, C, Eb). The notes are written as whole notes on a five-line staff.

Part Two: Half-diminished and Altered Dominant Chords

Now it's time to look at some other types of chords. These two types of chords are part of the minor ii V i.

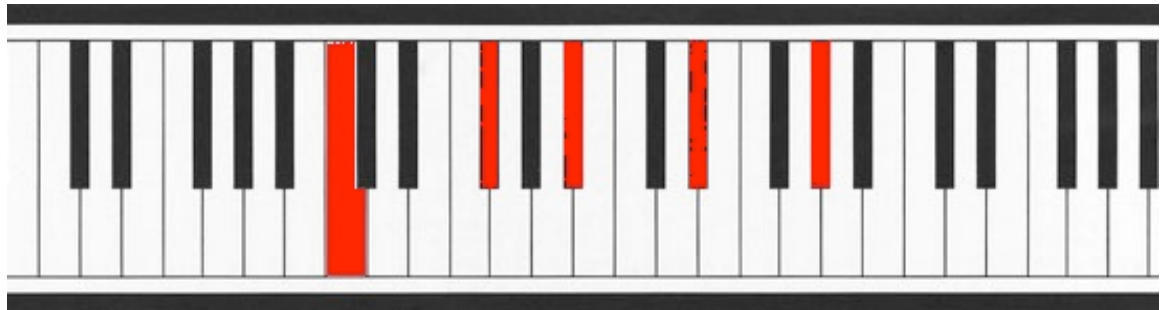
In the Minor ii V I, the ii chord will be a m7b5 chord. This type of chord is often called a "half-diminished" chord.

Let's start with the two handed m7b5 chord. We are again going to look at two different half-diminished voicings.

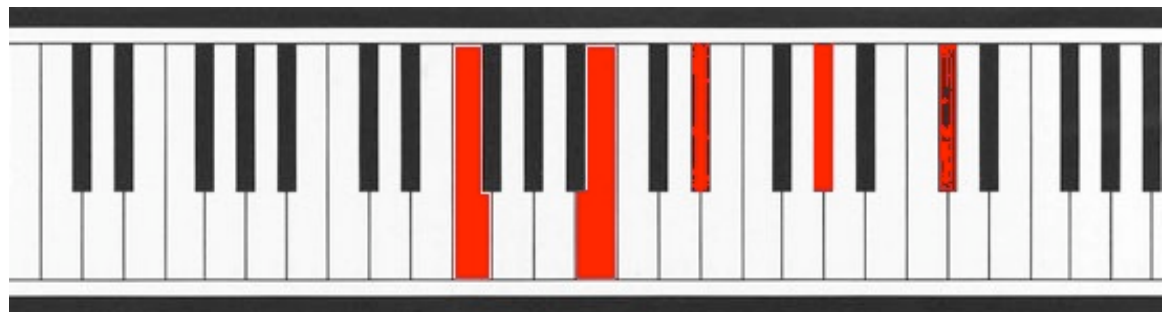
MINOR 7 b5 TWO HANDED VOICING

The first set of voicings has the root on the bottom:

C-7b5



F-7b5



R b5 b7 b3 b6

Tricks of the Trade

Notice that this voicing is the same as the "Category A" dominant voicing a raised 5th up.

For instance:

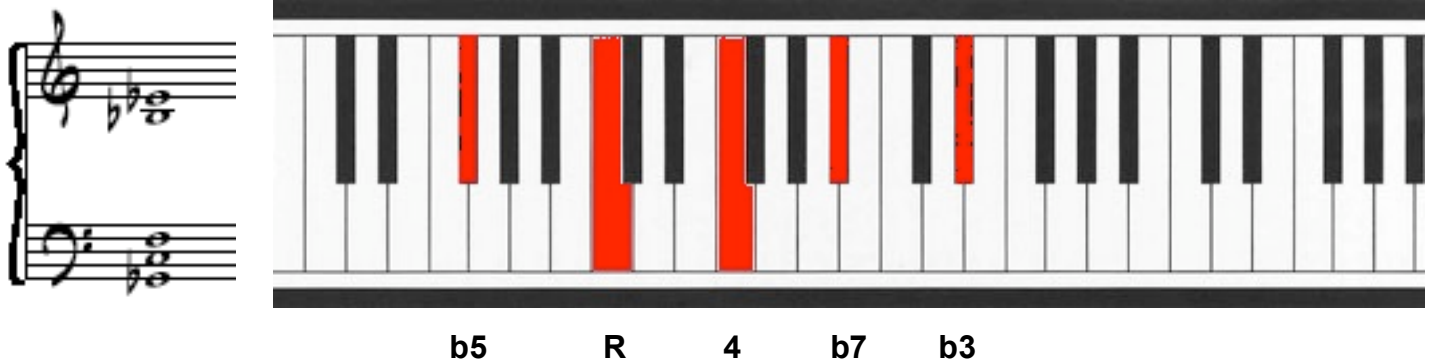
Our C half-diminished chord is the same as the voicing for G#7

Here is the second set of half-diminished voicings.

MINOR 7 b5

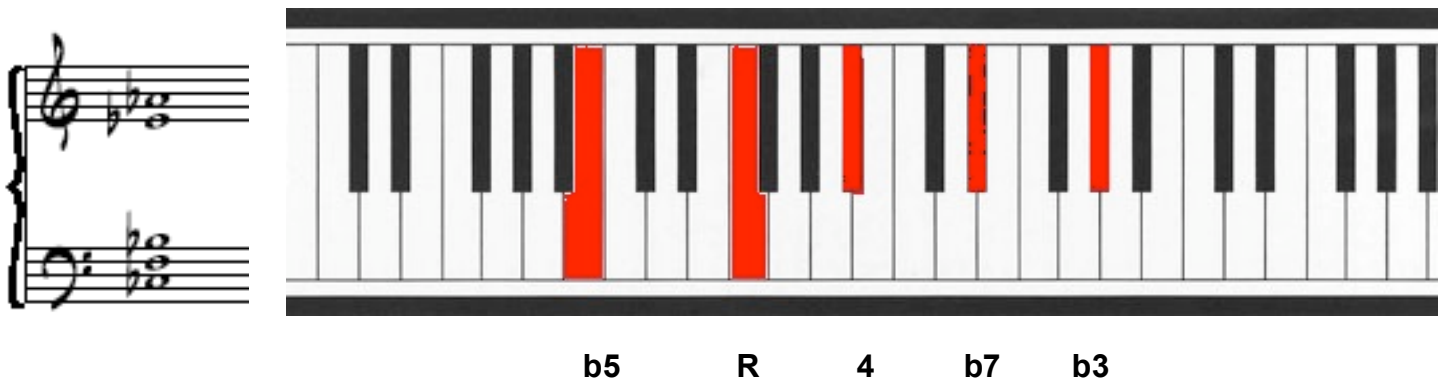
TWO HANDED VOICING

Let's look at the voicing for **C-7b5**



The diagram shows a piano keyboard with five red keys highlighted: Bb, C, D, Eb, and F. To the left, a musical staff shows the chord C-7b5 in G major (one sharp) with a key signature of one flat. The notes are Bb, C, D, Eb, and F. Below the keyboard, the notes are labeled: b5, R, 4, b7, b3.

Here is the same voicing for **F-7b5**



The diagram shows a piano keyboard with five red keys highlighted: Bb, C, D, Eb, and F. To the left, a musical staff shows the chord F-7b5 in G major (one sharp) with a key signature of one flat. The notes are Bb, C, D, Eb, and F. Below the keyboard, the notes are labeled: b5, R, 4, b7, b3.

Tricks of the Trade

Notice that this voicing is the same as the "Category B" dominant voicing a raised 5th up.

For instance:

- Our C half-diminished chord is the same as the voicing for G#7
- Our F half-diminished voicing is the same as the voicing for C#7

Altered Chords

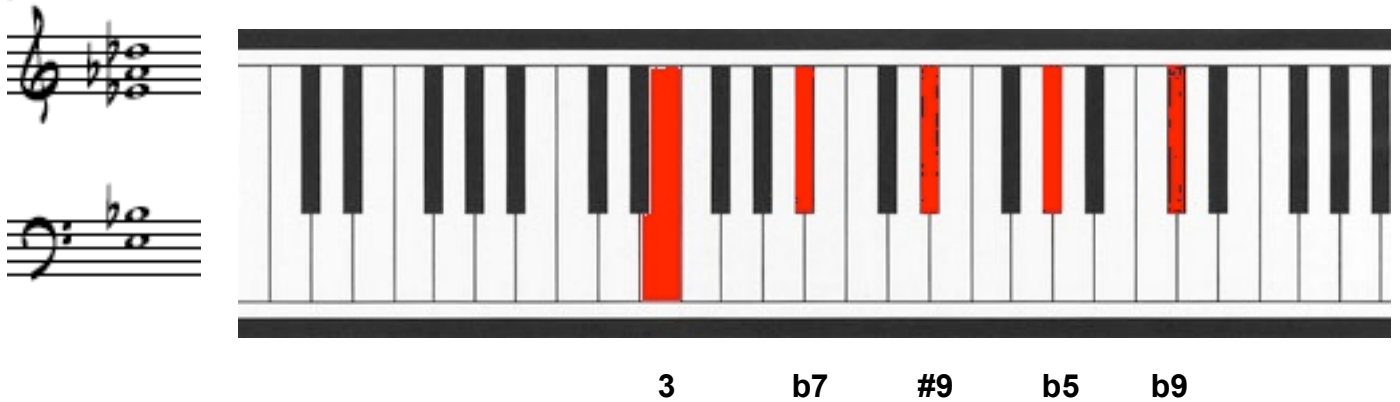
Next we are going to look at the voicings for altered chords. You can play these voicings when you see the symbols C7alt, C7#9, C7#9#5

ALTERED DOMINANT

TWO HANDED VOICING

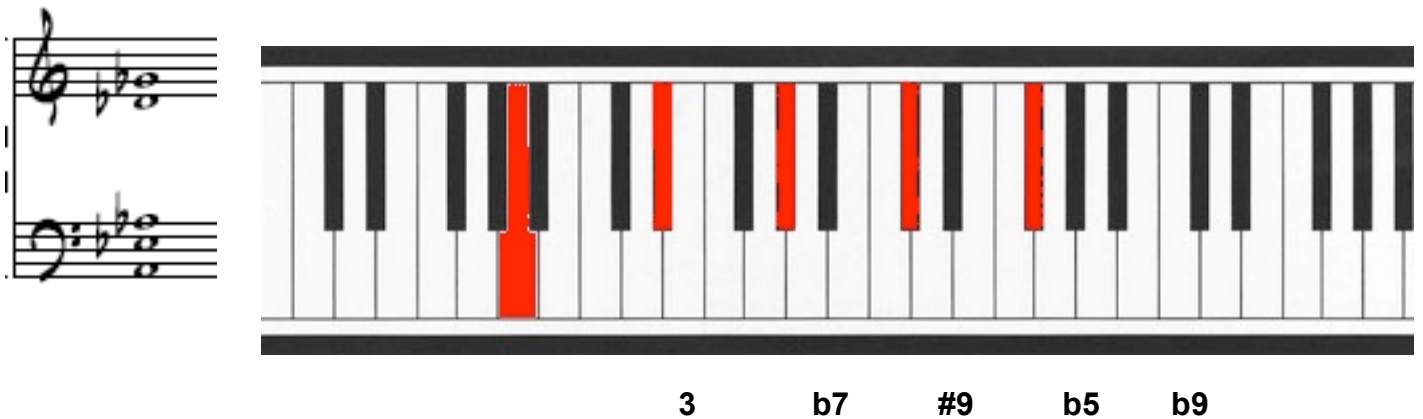
CATEGORY A

Here is the voicing for C7alt



The diagram shows the C7alt voicing on a piano keyboard. The treble clef staff shows the notes G4, Bb4, D5, and Eb5. The bass clef staff shows the notes C3, Eb3, and G3. The keyboard diagram highlights the notes C3, Eb3, G3, Bb4, D5, and Eb5 in red. Below the keyboard, the notes are labeled: 3, b7, #9, b5, b9.

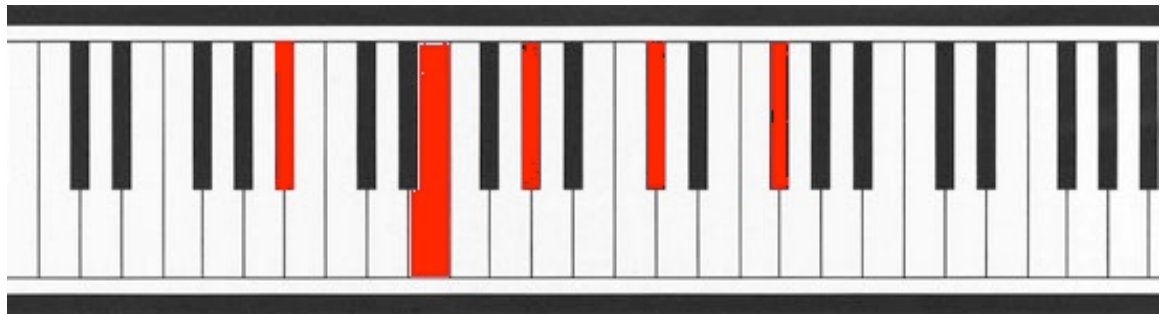
Here is this same voicing for F7alt:



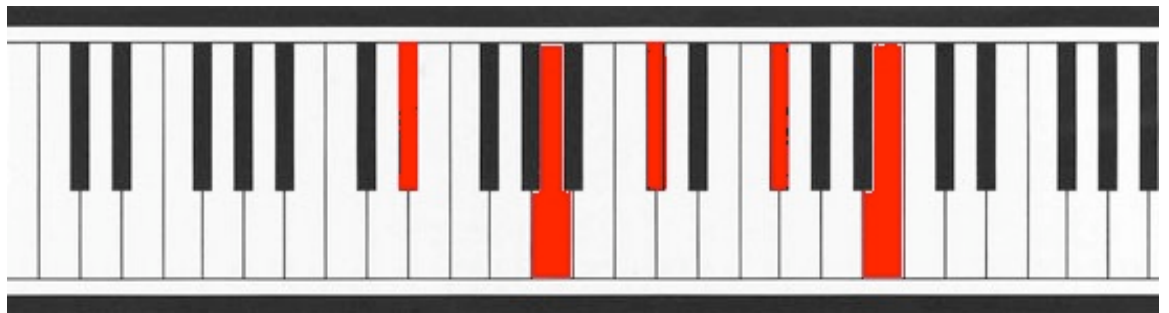
The diagram shows the F7alt voicing on a piano keyboard. The treble clef staff shows the notes Ab4, Bb4, D5, and Eb5. The bass clef staff shows the notes F3, Ab3, and Bb3. The keyboard diagram highlights the notes F3, Ab3, Bb3, Ab4, Bb4, D5, and Eb5 in red. Below the keyboard, the notes are labeled: 3, b7, #9, b5, b9.

Tricks of the Trade

To form C7alt, play a C dominant 7th "CATEGORY A" voicing. Then, raise the right hand (top three notes) up 1/2 a step.

ALTERED DOMINANT**TWO HANDED VOICING****CATEGORY B****C7alt**

b7 3 #5 b9 b5

F7alt

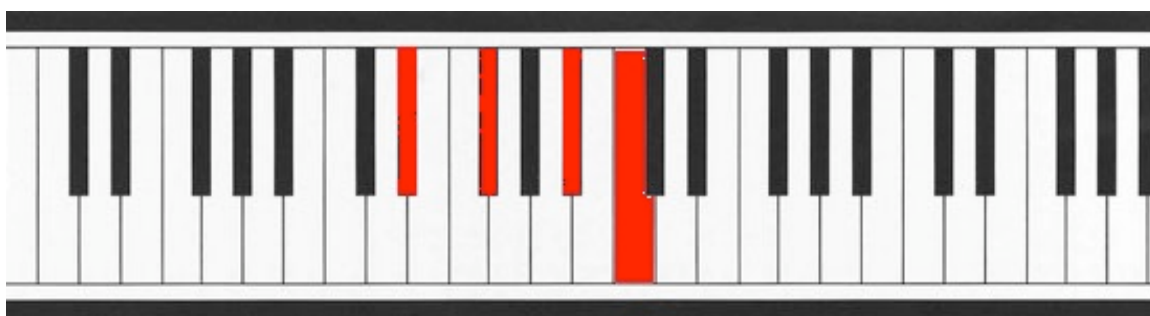
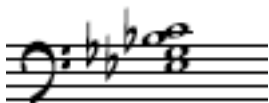
b7 3 #5 b9 b5

Tricks of the Trade

To form C7alt, play a C dominant 7th "Category B" voicing. Then, LOWER the right hand (top three notes) by ½ a step.

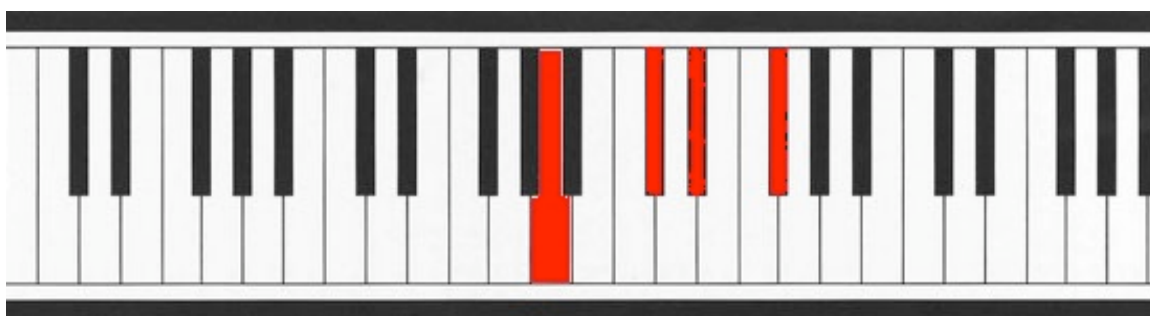
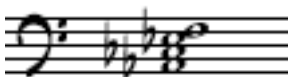
MINOR 7 b5 ONE HANDED VOICING CATEGORY A

C-7b5



b3 b5 b7 R

F-7b5



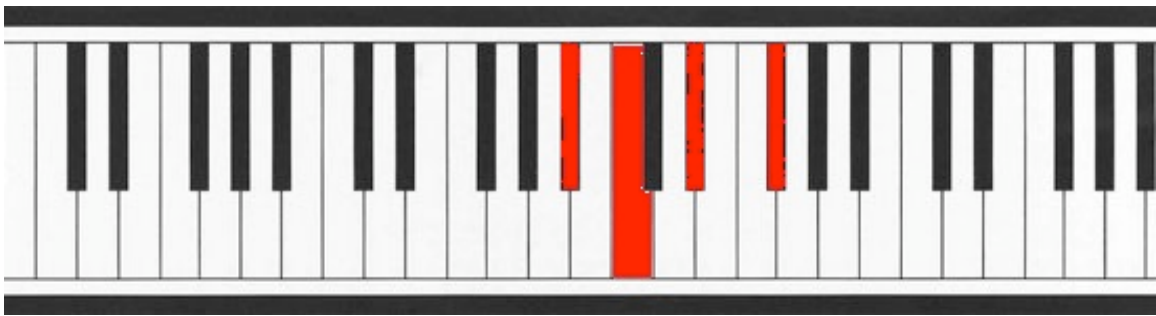
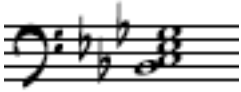
b3 b5 b7 R

MINOR 7 b5

ONE HANDED VOICING

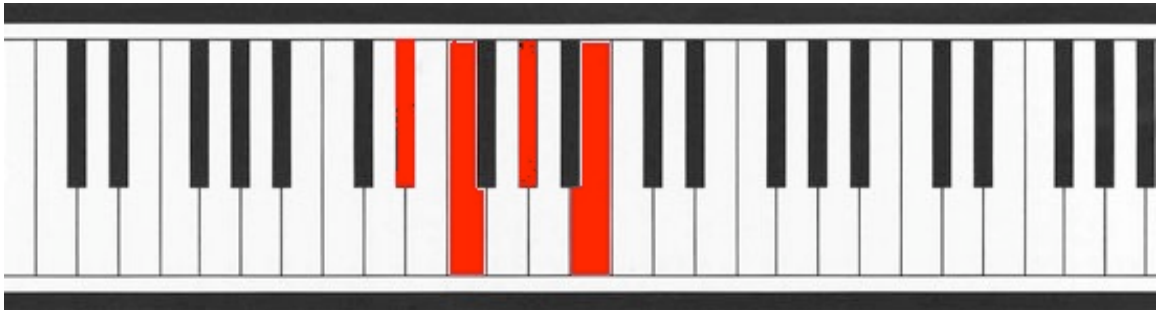
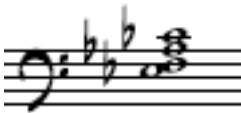
CATEGORY B

C-7b5



b7 R b3 b5

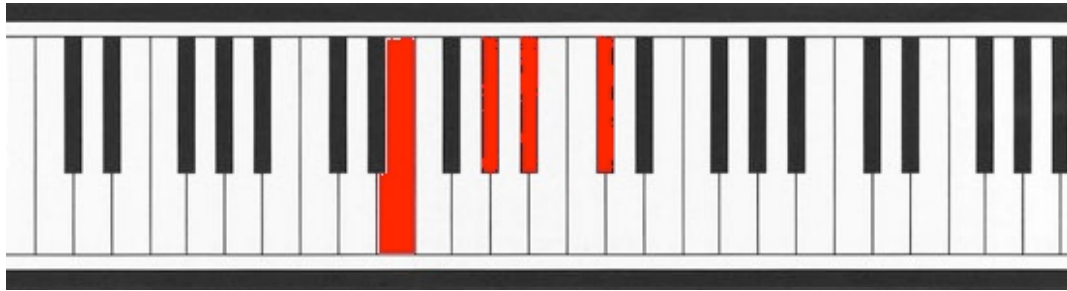
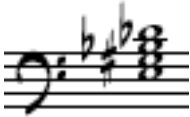
F-7b5



b7 R b3 b5

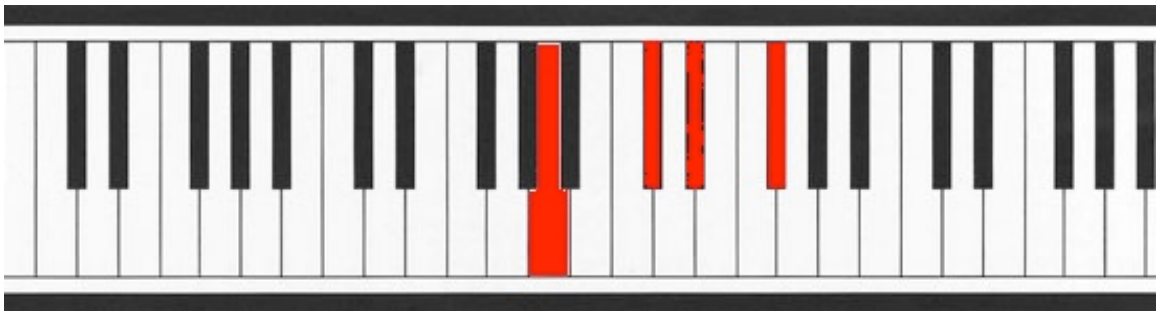
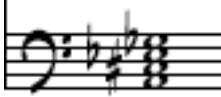
ALTERED DOMINANT ONE HANDED VOICING CATEGORY A

C7alt



3 #5 b7 b9

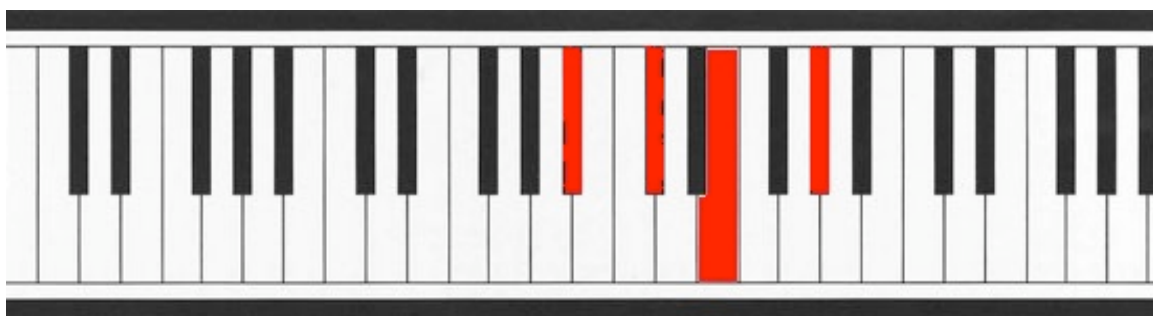
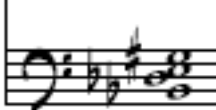
F7alt



3 #5 b7 b9

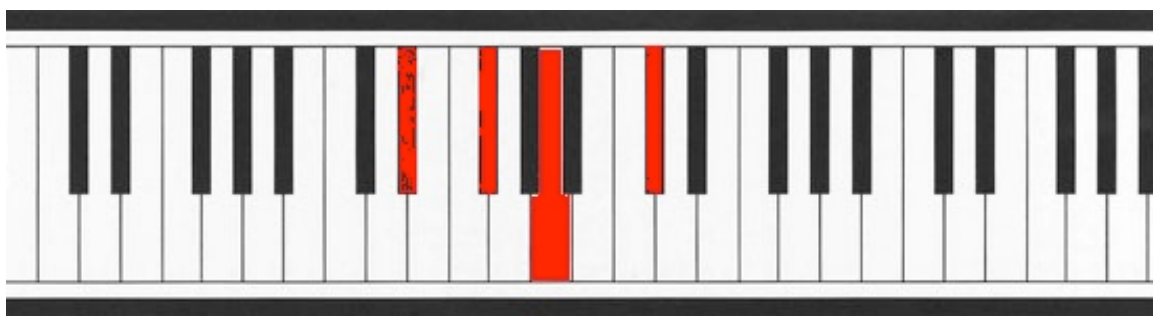
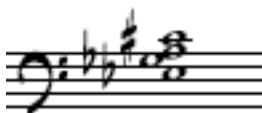
ALTERED DOMINANT ONE HANDED VOICING CATEGORY B

C7alt



b7 b9 3 #5

F7alt



b7 b9 3 #5

The minor ii V i

Let's put these voicings to use!

In two handed voicings, you will have to jump from the ii chord to the V chord.

The minor ii V i in c minor:

Handwritten musical notation for the minor ii V i progression in C minor. The notation is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and consists of three measures. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: Dm7(b9), G7ALT, and C-7. The first measure shows Dm7(b9) in the bass clef (F, A, Bb, C) and Dm7(b9) in the treble clef (D, F, Ab, G). The second measure shows G7ALT in the bass clef (B, D, F#, G) and G7ALT in the treble clef (G, Bb, D, F). The third measure shows C-7 in the bass clef (F, Ab, Bb, C) and C-7 in the treble clef (C, Eb, G, Bb).

The minor ii V I in f minor.

Handwritten musical notation for the minor ii V I progression in F minor. The notation is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and consists of three measures. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: Dm7(b9), G7ALT, and C-7. The first measure shows Dm7(b9) in the bass clef (F, A, Bb, C) and Dm7(b9) in the treble clef (D, F, Ab, G). The second measure shows G7ALT in the bass clef (B, D, F#, G) and G7ALT in the treble clef (G, Bb, D, F). The third measure shows C-7 in the bass clef (F, Ab, Bb, C) and C-7 in the treble clef (C, Eb, G, Bb).

For one handed minor ii V I voicings, we are again either going to go from category A to B to A, or from B to A to B.

You can think of sliding your forefinger and thumb each out a half of step when moving from the ii chord to the altered dominant chord.

Here is a minor ii V I in c minor.

Handwritten musical notation for a minor ii V I progression in C minor, first voicing. The notation is on a single bass clef staff. It consists of three measures separated by a bar line. The first measure is labeled $Dm7(b9)$ and contains a chord with notes Bb, C, Eb, and F. The second measure is labeled $G7ALT$ and contains a chord with notes G, Ab, Bb, and C. The third measure is labeled $C-7$ and contains a chord with notes Bb, C, Eb, and F.

Handwritten musical notation for a minor ii V I progression in C minor, second voicing. The notation is on a single bass clef staff. It consists of three measures separated by a bar line. The first measure is labeled $Dm7(b9)$ and contains a chord with notes Bb, C, Eb, and F. The second measure is labeled $G7ALT$ and contains a chord with notes G, Ab, Bb, and C. The third measure is labeled $C-7$ and contains a chord with notes Bb, C, Eb, and F.

Other Voicings

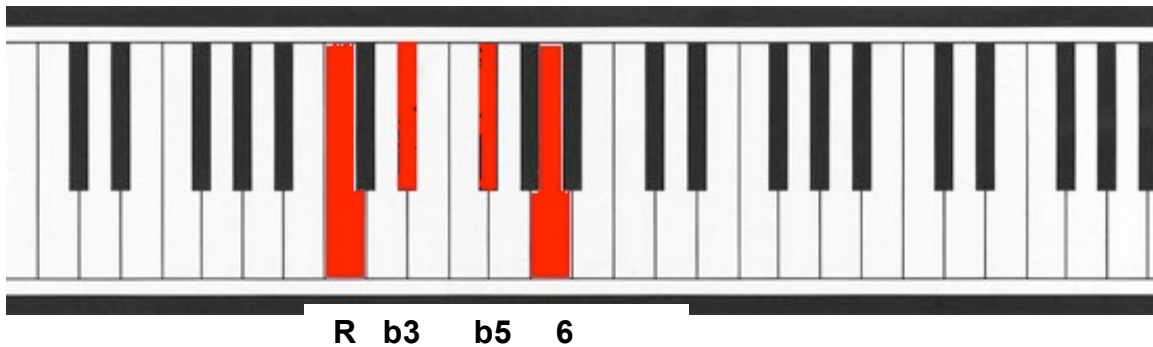
Finally, we are going to look at some other chord voicings.

Diminished Chord (Co or Do)

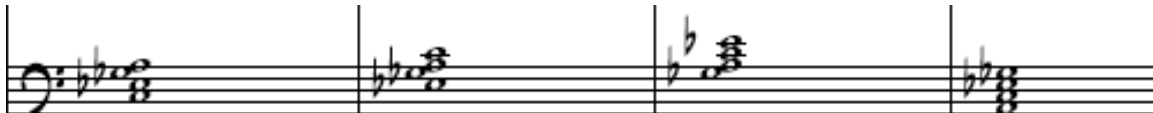
Diminished chords are made out of all minor thirds.

The one-handed voicing for a diminished chord, is just this: all minor thirds.

Here is one possibly C dim voicing.

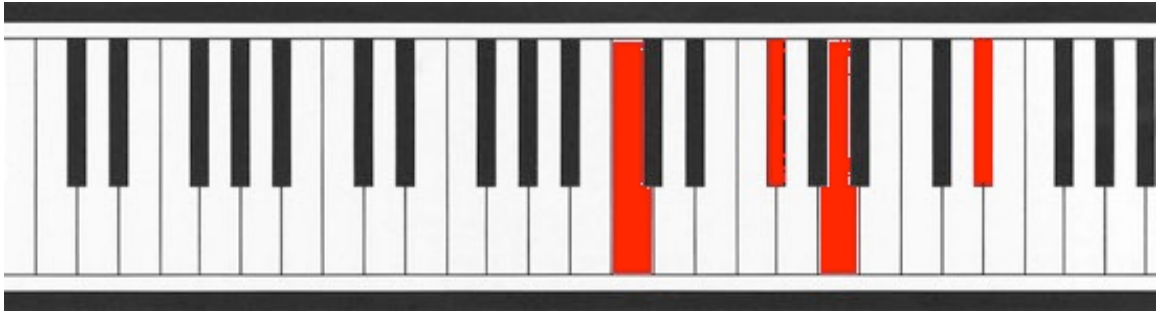


This same voicing can be played in any inversion. Here are all the inversions for C diminished:



Two Handed Diminished Voicing

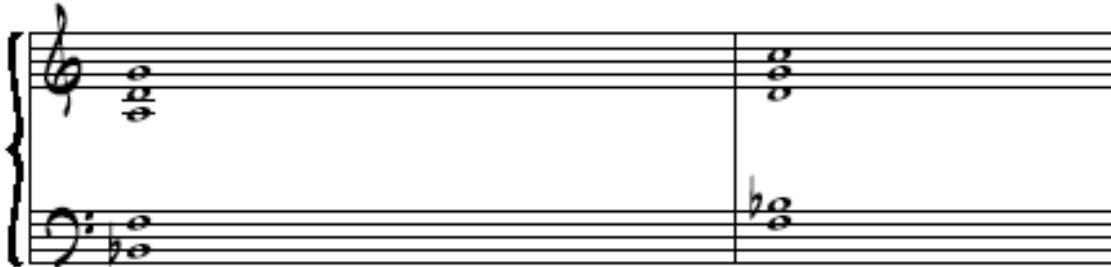
To make a two handed diminished voicing, put the root on the bottom. You'll have a tri-tone in each hand, with a minor 3rd in between hands.



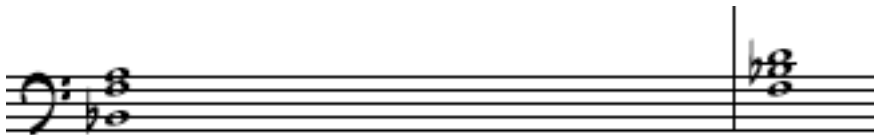
R b5 6 #9

Sus Chords

For sus chords, we don't need any more voicings. Instead, play the minor 7th chord a 5th up. So, for C7sus, play a G-7 chord, and for F7sus, play a C-7 chord. Here are the voicings for C7sus and F7sus.



Here are two one-handed voicings for C7sus. These are the same as our G-7 one-handed voicings.



Dominant 7b9 Chords

For Dominant 7 b9 chords, use a diminished voicing from any chord tone but the root.

So, for C7b9, you can play a diminished voicing from either E, G, Bb or Db (b9). These voicings work for both one-handed and two-handed voicings.

Here are four possibilities for C7b9:

