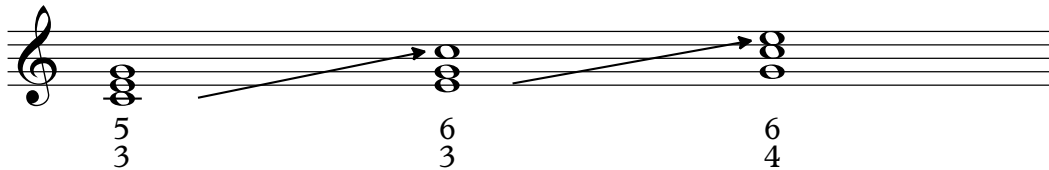


MU 009 (Feurzeig) Keyboard Lab Handout #2 Triads

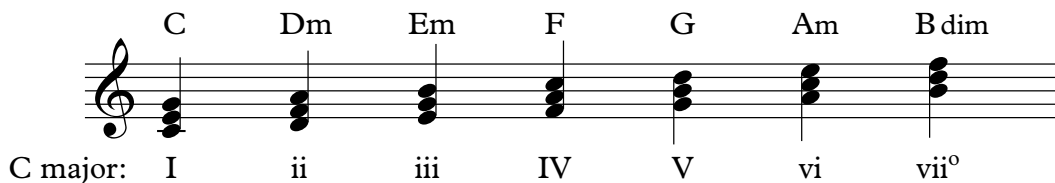
Play a C major triad in root position. Invert it by taking the lowest note up an octave, leaving the others where they are. It is now in **first inversion**.



Invert it again by taking the current bottom note (the third) up an octave, leaving the others where they are. It is now in **second inversion**.

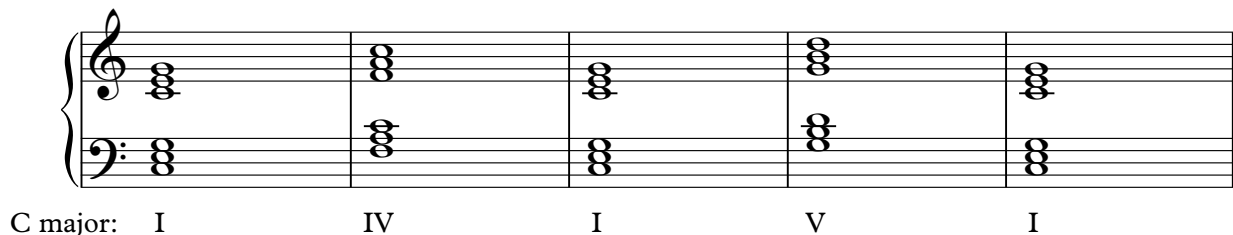
Count from the bottom note by steps to the upper notes, in each inversion. Note that the standard figured-bass labels for the inversions simply describe the intervallic distance of each upper note above the bass note. (Remember, **bass note** and **root** are not synonymous.)

Play the triads of the C major scale in root position. Listen as you play. Arpeggiate each triad and sing the notes using solfege (do-mi-so-mi-do, etc.). Then play the triad as a chord again and listen to its quality.



In reference to a key, triads can be labeled with roman numerals corresponding to the scale degree of the root. Unlike the letters that indicate the chord root in popular (leadsheet) chord symbols, roman numerals **change case** according to the **triad quality**.

Play the I, IV, and V chords in C major. Practice both LH and RH, separately.



Chords are built on **skips** (thirds), and in harmonic progression chord roots often **jump** from one chord to the next, as in most chord changes in the blues progression, for example: I to IV, IV to I, I to V, V to I. Yet skips and leaps are hard to sing and to play, as you may have noticed just now when you played the I-IV-I-V-I progression. So melodies favor close motion: mostly steps, with some skips. Chords are often **voiced** (arranged) so that motion from one note to the next is smooth (close) rather than jumpy, at least in the upper parts. (Bass lines tend to be jumpier.) The way notes move from chord to chord is called **voice leading**, and when this motion is mostly stepwise, we say the music uses **close**, or **smooth**, or **conjunct voice leading**.

Here is the same progression with conjunct voice leading.

fingering for RH chords:

5 4 5 5 4 5 5
 3 or 2 3 3 or 2 2 3
 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

fingering for LH chords:

1 1 1 1 1
 3 2 3 3 3
 5 5 5 5 5

I IV I V I I IV⁶/₄ I V⁶/₃ I

Many tunes can be harmonized effectively using only the three primary triads (I, IV, V) of the key.

When The Saints Go Marching In

1 3 4 5 5 3 1 3 2 3

C major: I V⁶/₃

I IV⁶/₄ I V⁶/₃ I

Ode to Joy

3 3 4 5

D major: I V⁶/₃ I V⁶/₃ I V I V⁶/₃ I

Experiment!

Try harmonizing other tunes using only primary triads. Or, when you get to a place where all the primary triads would work, try another chord. Don't wait for me or the textbook or your overall theory knowledge to give you "permission" to fool around.

Practice, Practice, Practice

The only way to absorb music theory knowledge **meaningfully** is to practice. If you don't have access to a keyboard at home, come to the tech lab or a practice studio in the music building. Play all the material on these pages. Practice it in other keys as well.