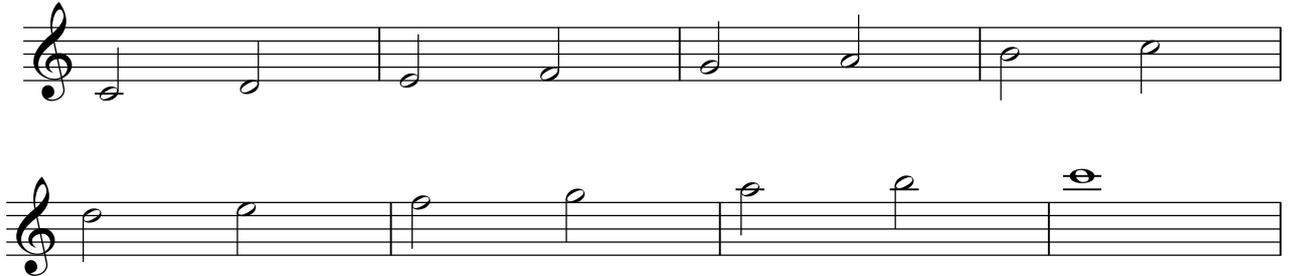


# Building 7th Chords - Part 1

<http://ashdownguitarlessons.wordpress.com/>

Andy Evans - Ashdown Guitar Lessons

Many jazz chords are derived from the major scale. Below are the notes of the C major scale:



You can easily build seventh chords using any of the notes of the scale as the root. (NB the 'notes of the scale' are often called 'degrees of the scale' - in this case C is the 1st degree, D is the 2nd degree, E is the third degree etc.) Taking any of the degrees of the scale, you can build a 7th chord (the basic chord type in jazz) by adding the note a third above it, a third above that, and another third above that.



7th Chord built on the 5th degree G<sup>7</sup>

7th Chord built on the 6th degree Amin<sup>7</sup> (Am<sup>7</sup>) (A-<sup>7</sup>)

For now I'm going to leave the chord built on the 7th degree of the scale, which is a 'special case' that will need some more consideration.

There is a standard 'formula' in jazz (and most other western music) that's used regularly, because it expresses the key of the music (also called its 'tonality') unambiguously.

The formula is to use the chord built on the 2nd degree, followed by the chord built on the 5th degree, followed by the chord built on the 1st degree. This is often referred to as a ii-V-I ("two-five-one") progression.

ii-V-I in C major

D<sup>-7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> C<sup>Δ</sup>

It doesn't sound particularly musical to move these blocks of notes around in parallel like that.

The aim is now to find ways of connecting these chords on the guitar so that the movement is smooth and flowing.

We don't actually need all the notes. If you count up from the root note, the next note we come to in the chords shown above is an interval of a 3rd higher, the next is an interval of a 5th higher than the root. If you omit the note that's a 5th higher the chord will still function in a way that expresses all the main things your ear needs to know (What's the root? Is it a major chord or a minor chord? What kind of 7th does it have?). That leaves us with just three notes to connect together.

There are a number of ways to do this. It's worth learning the common ones, so they become part of your language on the guitar. Here's the first:

Guit.

D<sup>-7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> C<sup>Δ</sup>