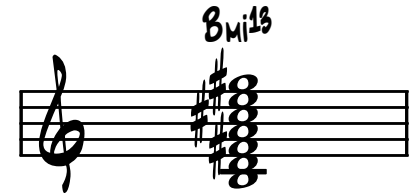


How to spell "pop" chord symbols

It is easiest to learn how to spell pop chord symbols by starting with the "tallest" chords, which are 13th chords. To construct an Eb13 chord, a) stack thirds above the note Eb until you have a stack of seven notes; b) then apply the key signature of Eb Major, c) finally - lower the seventh of the chord (Db) one half step.



Minor 13th chords are created in the same way, but lower the third of the chord as well as the 7th in step 'c'



Major 13th chords are created by omitting step 'c' and not lowering anything from the key signature.



Most other chords are created by leaving out whatever notes aren't needed and following any alterations given in the chord symbol, e.g.:



Special Cases

- the letters "sus" following a chord mean replace the third of the chord with a note a P4th above the root.
- the number 6 in chord symbol is not a first inversion chord. It means to replace the seventh of the chord with a note a Major 6th above the root.
- a plus sign in a chord symbol means to raise the 5th a half step
- a chord symbol with a slash followed by a note name means that the note on the right side of the slash should be used as the bass note for the chord.
- the term "add" means simply add the following scale tone to the chord, usually 2 or 9, if 9 don't add the seventh as well, just the ninth.
- sometimes a triangle is used to substitute for the letters "Ma", so a triangle indicates that a chord has a major 7th, not a minor 7th



Voicing "Pop" Chords

Although a 13th chord, for example, has seven notes in it, almost no arranger would expect or want all 7 notes to actually be played. On piano this is especially important because we only have 5 fingers on the right hand to play the chord. So the following suggestions are not only practical, but also make the chords sound much better than if all possible notes are played together.

- a) In a ninth chord, let the 9th replace the root
- b) In an 11th chord, let the 11th replace the third
- c) In a 13th chord, let the 13th replace the fifth of the chord.

d) Also, 11ths should only be added to a chord if the chord symbol specifically indicates the 11th. So, a 13th chord does not include an 11th, but it would include the 9th.

As far as connecting these "reduced" voicings, simply move the notes as little as necessary from one chord to the next. Also, where possible avoid having a half-step interval between the highest two notes in the chord voicing.

Below is an example of extended chords reduced to four notes with the root in the bass.

The image shows a musical score with two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The chords and their reduced voicings are as follows:

- Fmaj9:** Treble clef: F4, A4, C5, E5. Bass clef: F3.
- D7(b9):** Treble clef: D4, F#4, A4, Bb4. Bass clef: D3.
- G13:** Treble clef: G4, Bb4, D5, F5. Bass clef: G3.
- C+7(#9):** Treble clef: C4, E4, G4, Bb4, D5. Bass clef: C3.
- Ab11:** Treble clef: Ab4, Bb4, Db5, Eb5. Bass clef: Ab3.
- Bb13sus:** Treble clef: Bb4, D5, F5, Ab5. Bass clef: Bb3.
- Cm11b9:** Treble clef: C4, Eb4, G4, Bb4, D5. Bass clef: C3.