

The V7 (Dominant 7th) Chord

In many pieces, a V⁷ (dominant 7th) chord is used instead of a V (dominant) triad. To build a V⁷ chord, add a minor 7th above the root of the V triad (or a minor 3rd above the 5th). The V⁷ is a chord and not a triad because it has 4 notes rather than 3.

Dominant + minor 7th = Dominant 7th Dominant + minor 3rd = Dominant 7th

Often, the 5th of the V⁷ chord is omitted. The V⁷ chord then would have the same number of tones as the I and IV chords while still retaining the quality of a 7th chord. This also allows the music to be sung or performed by as few as three singers or instrumentalists.

The three primary chords are now I, IV and V⁷.

Exercises

1 Write the V⁷ chord for each key. Write the key name and letter name of each chord.

Key of: C Major G Major A Major E Major D Major