

## Jazz Chords and Voicings

Jazz chords for piano are an essential component of the jazz piano vocabulary. They add richness, colour, and harmonic interest to your playing.

Jazz chords often go beyond the basic triads and include upper extensions and complex voicings. Let's explore them in more detail:

### 1. Basic Jazz Chords:

- Major 7th (Maj7): Consists of the root, major third, perfect fifth, and major seventh. For example, Cmaj7 (C E G B).
- Dominant 7th (7): Consists of the root, major third, perfect fifth, and minor seventh. For example, C7 (C E G B $\flat$ ).
- Minor 7th (m7): Consists of the root, minor third, perfect fifth, and minor seventh. For example, Cm7 (C E $\flat$  G B $\flat$ ).
- Half-Diminished 7th (m7 $\flat$ 5): Consists of the root, minor third, diminished fifth, and minor seventh. For example, Cm7 $\flat$ 5 (C E $\flat$  G $\flat$  B $\flat$ ).
- Diminished 7th (dim7): Consists of the root, minor third, diminished fifth, and diminished seventh. For example, Cdim7 (C E $\flat$  G $\flat$  B $\flat\flat$ ).

### 2. Upper Extensions:

- 9th: Adds the second note above the root. For example, C9 (C E G B $\flat$  D).
- 11th: Adds the fourth note above the root. For example, C11 (C E G B $\flat$  F).
- 13th: Adds the sixth note above the root. For example, C13 (C E G B $\flat$  A).

### 3. Complex Chords:

- Suspended 4th (sus4): Replaces the third with a fourth, creating a suspended sound. For example, Csus4 (C F G).
- Altered Dominant (7alt): Adds altered tensions to a dominant 7th chord, such as  $\flat$ 9, #9,  $\flat$ 5, or #5. For example, C7alt (C E G B $\flat$  D#).

### 4. Voicings:

- Rootless Voicings: These voicings omit the root and include the third, seventh, and extensions. They are commonly used in jazz to free up the bass player's role. For example, instead of playing C7 (C E G B $\flat$ ), you can play E G B $\flat$ , which highlights the chord's essential tones.

- Drop 2 Voicings: In a four-note chord, the second-highest note (G) is dropped down by an octave. For example, a Cmaj7 chord in root position C E G B becomes a Cmaj7 in drop 2 voicing G C E B.
- Drop 2 4 Voicings: In a four-note chord, the second-highest note (G) and fourth note (B) is dropped down by an octave. This means C E G B becomes C G E B.
- Drop 3 Voicings: In a four-note chord, the third-highest note (E) is dropped down by an octave. For example, a Cmaj7 chord in root position C E G B becomes a Cmaj7 in drop 3 voicing E C G B.
- Upper Structure Voicings (USV): These voicings combine 2 chords played over the top of each other to create upper structures. Cmaj C E G is played in the left hand and Bmin B D F# is played in the right hand. This creates a Cmaj9 #11 sound and structure - C E G B D F#.

Remember that jazz chords offer room for experimentation and personal interpretation. The examples provided are just starting points, and you can explore different inversions, voicings, and alterations to develop your own unique sound and style.