

REVIEW

As you've learned in previous lessons, an interval is a set of two notes. A chord is basically an interval with at least one more note. In other words, a chord is a set of three or more notes. In the next set of lessons you'll learn about the most foundational type of chord: The Triad.

A Triad is a specific kind of chord consisting of only three notes: root, third and fifth. There are four types of Triads: Major, Minor, Diminished, and Augmented. This lesson will focus entirely on Major Triads. Once you get familiar with Major Triads, the other three types of Triads will be easier to grasp.

One way to build a Major Triad is to take the 1st, 3rd, and 5th note of a Major Scale. Like this:

Major Triad recipe:

First, make a Major Scale. I've chosen G Major

G w A w B h C w D w E w F# h G

Take just the 1st, 3rd, and 5th notes of the scale:

G B D

Together, G, B, and D make a Major Triad!

GBD = Major Triad

The G is called "the root" of the triad, the B is called "the third" of the triad and the D is called "the fifth" of the triad

The orange bubble above is critical. You're already familiar with intervals and the language of "a major third" or "a fifth." Now we have language that says "the third" and "the fifth." Here is one ridiculous way to think about it:

"That is Bob's foot."

vs. *"Bob's foot is a foot away from me."*

The word "foot" here is describing part of Bob. We could rephrase this to say *"That is the foot of Bob."* When discussing parts of a Triad, structure the language like this:

This phrase has two uses of the word "foot." "Bob's foot" describes part of Bob's body, but "a foot" is used to describe a *measurement*. Music theory uses *"the"* when describing part of a triad and *"a"* when describing the distance between parts.

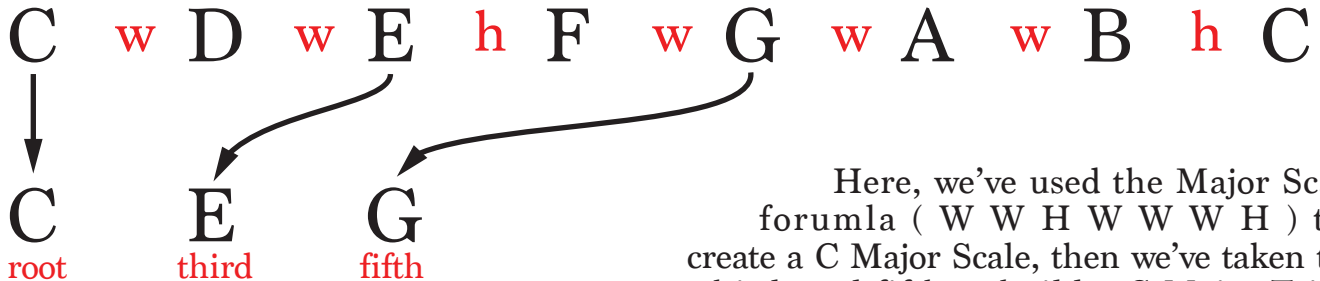
- "B is the third of a G Major Triad"*
- "D is the fifth of a G Major Triad"*
- "G is the root of a G Major Triad"*

- "The foot of Bob is a foot away from me."*
- "The fifth of a Major Triad is a minor third away from the third."*

This will make more sense on page two →

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Let this language sink in while we make another Major Triad by taking the 1st, 3rd, and 5th notes of a C Major Scale.



Here, we've used the Major Scale formula (W W H W W W H) to create a C Major Scale, then we've taken the root, third, and fifth to build a C Major Triad.

This is a very important thing to remember: The parts of a Major Triad are named for the Major Scale they are taken from. In other words, "E" is the third note of a C Major Scale, so it is also called "the third" of a C Major Triad. "G" is the fifth note of a C Major Scale, so it is also called "the fifth" of a C Major Triad.

Even though a triad contains only three notes, we NEVER call "E" the second note of the C Major Triad. It is called "the third." And in the same sense, we would never call "G" the third note of the triad, it is called "The fifth." A Triad contains three notes: Root, third, and fifth.



Look back at the C Major Scale at the top. Notice that there are two whole steps between C and E? That's a major third! How about from E to G? It's a half step and a whole step. That's a minor third.

In other words, if we measure the interval between *the* root and *the* third, that interval (measurement) is *a* major third. Similarly, if we measure from the third to the fifth of the triad, the musical distance traveled (the interval) is *a* minor third. Another important thing to mention is



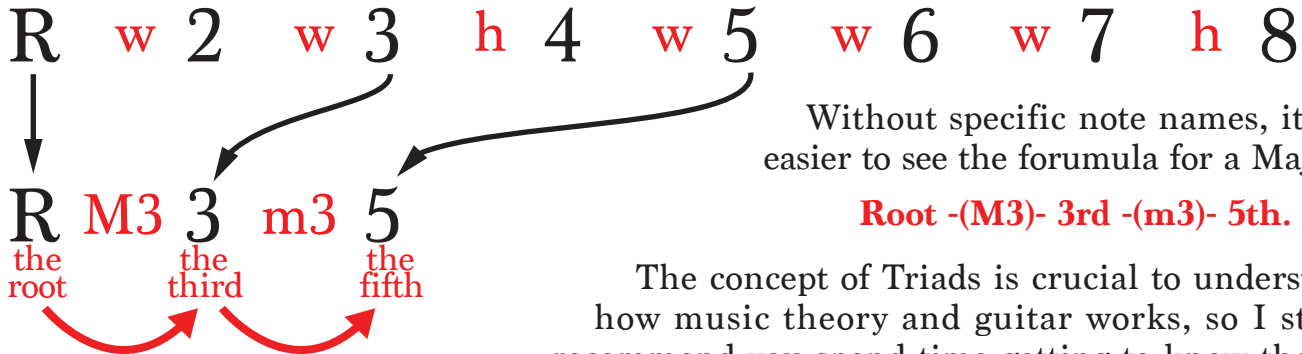
this: if we measure the interval between *the* root and *the* fifth of a Major Triad, the distance covered is *a* perfect fifth. These things are always true about Major Triads. No matter what root note you choose, if you want to make a Major Triad, it must

have a Major Third between the root and the third, and it must have a Minor Third from the third to the fifth. As a result, A Major Triad will always measure a perfect fifth from the root to the fifth.

This is a "trust the system" kind of moment. The Major Scale Formula tells us that every Major Scale will have the same relationships between notes, which means we can be sure that the relationships between the 1st, 3rd, and 5th notes of a Major Scale will always be the same.

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Look at it another way. Below, I've represented a Major Scale with numbers instead of the notes of a specific Major Scale. The Root, Third and Fifth will always make a Major Triad.

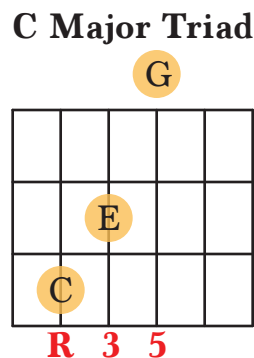
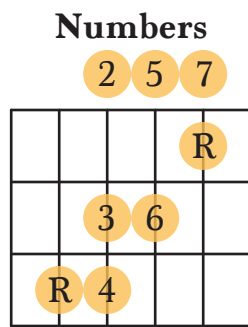
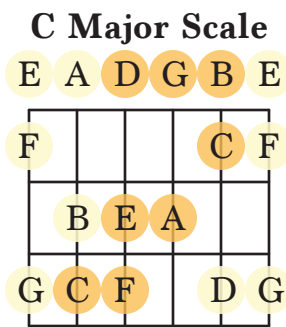


Without specific note names, its a little easier to see the formula for a Major Triad:

Root -(M3)- 3rd -(m3)- 5th.

The concept of Triads is crucial to understanding how music theory and guitar works, so I strongly recommend you spend time getting to know these concepts by doing the homework and the practice exercises.

Things get interesting when we transfer these concepts to the guitar. We use this theory to find the root, third, and fifth of specific Triads, but we don't have to perform them in order of root, third, fifth. Once you know the root, third, and fifth of a Triad you can play them in any order you like. Lets make a C Major Scale, and then make a C Major Triad with the 1st, 3rd, and 5th note of the Scale. On the far left, all the notes in a C Major Scale are in orange.



In the middle diagram, the Scale notes are converted to numbers. The final diagram shows the root, third and fifth of the C Major Triad mapped out on the guitar. As I mentioned above, we can play these Triads in any order once we

know the root, third, and fifth. In academic music theory, we have specific terms for triads depending on which note is the lowest in pitch. These terms are as follows:

Root Position

root - third - fifth

First Inversion

third - fifth - root

Second Inversion

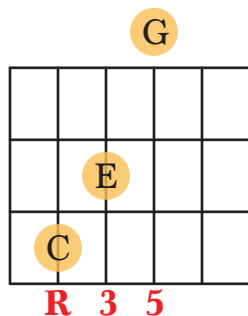
fifth - root - third

“Voicing” is an umbrella term for this concept. A voicing is a particular order of the notes in a chord. For example, 1st inversion is a chord voicing in order of 3rd, 5th, Root.

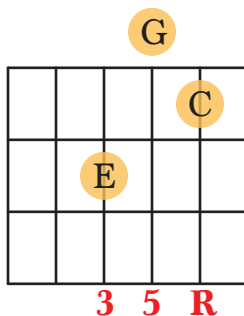
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Lets look at these voicings on the guitar. We'll start with the Root Position (R, 3, 5) voicing from the previous page, and then try 1st inversion, and 2nd inversion.

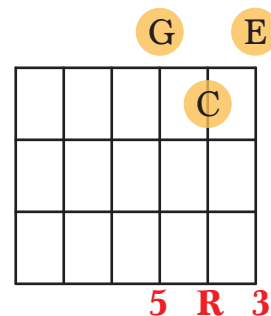
Root Position



1st Inversion



2nd Inversion

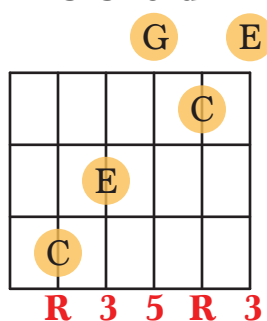


Each of these diagrams show a C Major Triad, but they are all different voicings - different arrangements of root, third and fifth. These aren't the only kinds of voicings, but they are the first voicings you might learn if you're taking a college Music Theory class.

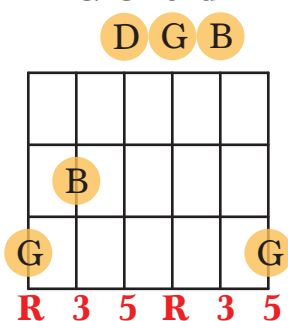
Another thing about playing around with chord voicings is that you can add octaves of roots, third, and fifths. Often the first chords you learn on guitar are voicings that make it as easy as possible to play as many roots, thirds, and fifths you can reach.

For example:

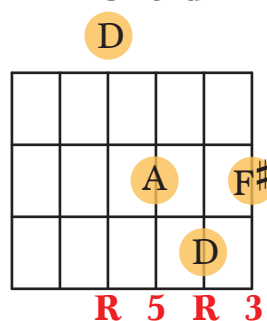
C Chord



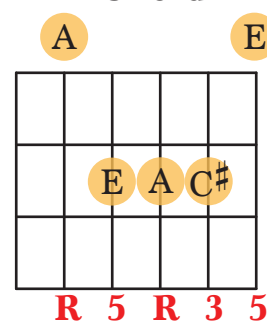
G Chord



D Chord



A Chord



All of the chords listed above are Major Triads.

Major Triads are so normal and so common in music - especially on guitar - that we just call a "C Major Triad" a "C Chord." These are not the only ways to play these Major Triads, just the most common ways.

If you want to make your own Major Triads and play around with different voicings, check out the homework lesson that accompanies this lesson. Also, check out the two practice exercises for a few ways to focus on playing different voicings.