

Decoding Chord Intervals

It can be overwhelming to decode chord changes, especially with how many different ways to write out a chord change there are. This page gives you a rundown chromatically of each interval and how you might see it read on a lead sheet verses classical music theory notation.

Pitch	Twelve Tone	Major Scale	Theory Interval	Jazz Chord Numbers
C	0	root	Perfect Prime (PP)	1
C#/Db	1	x	Minor Second (m2)	b9
D	2	second	Major Second (M2)	9
D#/Eb	3	x	Minor Third (m3)	#9/b3
E	4	third	Major Third (M3)	3
F	5	fourth	Perfect Fourth (P4)	11
F#/Gb	6	x	Tritone (TT)	#11/b5
G	7	fifth	Perfect Fifth (P5)	5
G#/Ab	8	x	Minor Sixth (m6)	#5/b13
A	9	sixth	Major Sixth (M6)	13
A#/Bb	10	x	Minor Seventh (m7)	b7
B	11	seventh	Major Seventh (M7)	7
C	12	root	Perfect Octave (PO)	1

To build a “major seventh chord,” use the root, third, fifth, and seventh from the major scale...

CMaj7	Major Seventh Chord =	1	3	5	7	
C7	Dominant Seventh Chord	=	1	3	5	b7
Cmin7	Minor Seventh Chord	=	1	b3	5	b7
Cmin7(b5)	Half-Diminished Chord	=	1	b3	b5	b7

There are 48 chord changes using these four formulas. Memorize them as soon as you can!

In a chord change, the notation gives what the root, third, fifth, and seventh will be. Some chord changes are clear-cut on the second, fourth, and sixth -- others are not...this is where it is important to know 2=9, 4=11, and 6=13. For example...C7(b9) or CMaj7(#11) or C7(b13).