

## ***OPEN VOICINGS - Basic Formulas***

The formulas work well for all the basic chord types: Maj7, Dom7, Min7, Maj6, Min6, Min7b5, Min-Maj7, Aug7, Dim7,

Substitute 6 for 7 in the formulas for Maj6 and Min6 chords.

The ***italicized*** number is the melody note ( top note of the chord)

Practice all nine chord types with all 4 formulas in 12 keys.

That's 9 x 4 x 12 or 432 chords. It's a big job !.

Practice the chords through the cycle of fifths, diatonically, chromatically and using random drill sheets.

Left Hand	Right Hand	
1-7	3-5- <b><i>1</i></b>	The root (1) is the top note, the melody note being harmonized
1-5	3-7- <b><i>3</i></b>	The third is the melody
1-5	7-3- <b><i>5</i></b>	The fifth is the melody
1-5	7-3- <b><i>7</i></b>	The seventh is the melody

## ***HOW TO USE THE OPEN VOICING FORMULAS***

Lead sheets only give you the melody and the harmony (chord symbols). Beginners often start by playing the melody with the right hand and the chords with their left. Open voicings allow the chord to be played by sharing the notes of the chord with both hands. The result is better sounding chords and more flexibility to add/alter tones to provide a richer harmonic palette. To use the formulas:

1. Select the melody notes to be harmonized. Typically these are notes on strong beats.
2. Determine if the melody note is part of the chord (root(1), 3rd, 5th, 7th), or a non-chord tone.

If the note is part of the chord -

Play the note as written with the appropriate formula filling in the chord underneath. In Fig. 1, the melody note is C and the chord is C7. Use the 1st formula since the melody is the 1 (root)

## Examples:

(Example A) The melody note is C and the chord is C7.

Use the first formula 1-7 3-5-1 since the melody is the 1.

See Fig.1

Fig. 1



(Example B).Bb major seventh chord with the 3rd (D) on top.

Use the second formula. Bbmaj7 would be played:

Left hand: Bb-A (1-7) and Right hand  
D-A-D (3-7-3)

(Example C). Major 6 chord with 5th on top.

Use the 3rd formula. Eb6 would be played

Left hand Eb-Bb (1-5) and Right hand  
C-G-Bb (6-3-5)

3. Avoid any interval that exceeds a 6th. EXCEPT for the bottom note (root) and the rest of the chord.

4. Sometimes the melody note (top note) results in the open voicing being too low on the keyboard. When chords are placed too low on the keyboard, the chord is muddy and bad sounding. The Open Voicing formula can be changed to make the chord smaller so that it is placed in a more acceptable range.

Example:

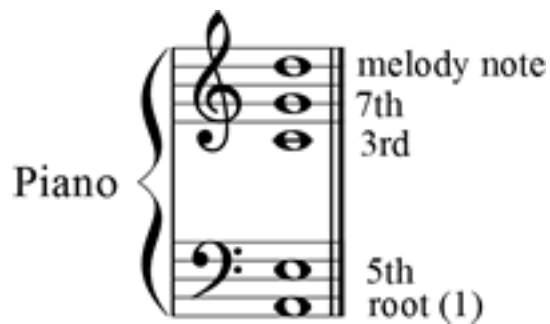
A song calls for a Ab7 chord and the melody note is middle C. Following the formula gives an acceptable chord but to some pianists, the chord will not have a pleasing sound. The chord can be made smaller by eliminating the doubled note and moving the left hand up an octave.

Left hand: Ab-Eb (1-5) up an octave, and Right Hand: Gb-C (7-3) not 3-7-3.

5 Many times, the melody note will not be a chord tone and can be dealt with several ways.

A. Find a chord formula where the top note is close to the melody note. Using the formula adjust the top note to make it the melody note. Example: Melody note is D and chord is Am7. Since the melody note D is near the chord tone C (3rd of the chord Am7), select the 2nd formula and adjust the top note to D.

Left hand A-E (1-5); ----- Right hand C-G-D. (3-7- melody note)



B. If the melody note is a tension (and it usually is), refer to the [formulas for tensions](#).

C. Construct your own voicing.