

Lead-Sheet Symbols

The chord symbols that appear above the staff in a lead sheet (see Example 1) are called *lead-sheet symbols*. These harmonic symbols are introduced in the following chapter of *Open Music Theory*, Version 2:¹

Megan Lavengood, *Chord Symbols*

<https://viva.pressbooks.pub/openmusictheory/chapter/chord-symbols/>

1. *Triad Qualities* See Lavengood, *Example 2. Chord symbols for triads*
2. *Seventh Chord Qualities* See Lavengood, *Example 3. Chord symbols for seventh chords*

The 4 triad and 5 common seventh chord symbols on root C are listed below. These 9 chord types may be *transposed* to any root. Always keep in mind that lead-sheet symbols are not standardized and the use of superscripts in a chord's suffix is optional. So Cm⁷, Cm7, Cmi7, Cmin7, and C-7 are all valid representations of the same chord.

TRIADS

Chord type	Lead-sheet symbol	Chord spelling [†]
M	C	C, E, G
m	Cm or C-	C, E \flat , G
A	C+ or C ^{aug}	C, E, G \sharp
d	C ^o or Cdim	C, E \flat , G \flat

COMMON SEVENTH CHORDS

Chord type ²	Lead-sheet symbol	Chord spelling [†]
Mm	C ⁷	C, E, G, B \flat
MM	C ^{maj7}	C, E, G, B
mm	Cm ⁷ or C- ⁷	C, E \flat , G, B \flat
dm	C ^{o7} or Cm ^{7(b5)}	C, E \flat , G \flat , B \flat
dd	C ^{o7} or Cdim ⁷	C, E \flat , G \flat , B $\flat\flat$

[†] - Chord spellings are given using *list notation*

Slash Chords

The bass of a lead-sheet symbol is assumed to be the root unless otherwise specified. An alternate bass note may be specified using **slash chord** notation: e.g., C/G, C/E, C/F \sharp , Cm⁷/B \flat , etc. The alternate bass note need not be a member of the chord.

Example 1. *My Country, 'Tis of Thee*, American patriotic song, lead-sheet notation

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the song 'My Country, 'Tis of Thee'. The first staff contains the first line of music with chord symbols F, C, F, B \flat , F, C, F, Gm, F/C, C, and F. The second staff contains the second line of music with chord symbols F, C⁷, F, B \flat , F, B \flat , F/C, C⁷, and F. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B \flat), and a 4/4 time signature.

¹ Gotham, Mark, et al. 2023. *Open Music Theory*, Version 2 (OMT2). Viva Press Publishing. Available online at: <https://viva.pressbooks.pub/openmusictheory/>.

² Other seventh chord types are possible including: mM, AM, Am, etc.