Intervallic structure of Triads

Another name of an interval is a “dyad” (two pitches). If two successive intervals (3 notes) happen simultaneously, we now have what is referred to as a chord or a “triad” (three pitches).

Major and Minor Triads

- A Major triad consists of a M3 and a P5 interval from the root.
- A minor triad consists of a m3 and a P5 interval from the root.

![Intervallic structure of Major and Minor Triads](image)

Diminished and Augmented Triads

- A diminished triad consists of a m3 and a dim 5th interval from the root.
- An augmented triad consists of a M3 and an Aug 5th interval from the root.

![Intervallic structure of Diminished and Augmented Triads](image)

The augmented triad has a major third interval and an augmented fifth interval from the root. An augmented triad differs from a major triad because the “5th” interval is a half-step higher than it is in the major triad. The diminished triad differs from minor triad because the “5th” interval is a half-step lower than it is in the minor triad.

Recommended process:

1. Memorize your Perfect 5th intervals from most root pitches (ex. A-E, B-F#, C-G, D-A, etc...)
2. Know that a Major 3rd interval is two whole steps from a root pitch

If you can identify a M3 and P5 from a root, you will be able to correctly spell your Major Triads.

3. If you need to know a minor triad, adjust the 3rd of the major triad down a half step to make it minor.
4. If you need to know an Augmented triad, adjust the 5th of the chord up a half step from the MAJOR triad. (Augmented chords are adjustments from Major)
5. If you need to know a diminished triad, adjust the 5th of the chord down a half step from the MINOR triad. (diminished chords are adjustments from minor)
FOUR PART CHORD WRITING IN KEYBOARD SCORING:

Chord terminology

The tones of a chord can be referred to by vocal part (always from top-bottom, SATB)
or you can refer to the specific tone’s placement in the triad, using the terms Root, Third, or Fifth.

Using the Grand Staff

While there are only 3 different notes in a triad, we will be writing 4 notes in most chords. Later on there will be rules and guidelines as to which note gets doubled, but until new rules are introduced, we will always double the ROOT of the chord (in the bass voice) and have a complete triad in the upper three parts.

Keyboard Scoring

One acceptable method of writing 4-part chords is to use keyboard scoring. This places the upper three parts of the chord in the right hand (treble clef) and the bass in the left hand (Bass clef). It is a rule to keep the range of the upper three voices within an octave since this is the comfortable single hand reach on the piano. The Bass note can be placed anywhere below.

Different Chord Positions

Always keeping the upper three voices in the same order would eventually get boring and will cause many voice leading problems down the line. We have 3 options or “positions” in keyboard scoring for any given triad.
**BASIC VOICE LEADING GUIDELINES:**

When chords progress from one to another, there is almost always a most natural way that each of the voices moves from the note it is on to the note it should move to in the next chord.

When root position triads (when the root of the chord is in the bass part) moves to another root position triad, we can label the progression by the interval the bass part moves.

As an example, if a C Major chord moves to an F major chord, the bass part would move either the interval of a 4\(^{th}\) or 5\(^{th}\) from the note C to an F (depending on whether it goes up or down). We would call this a “Progression by 4\(^{th}\) or 5\(^{th}\)”.

Each rule for basic voice leading is based on what type of progression exists between the two chords.

**PROGRESSIONS by 4\(^{th}\) or 5\(^{th}\)**

Rule:

1. Move the Bass note up or down by 4\(^{th}\) or 5\(^{th}\).
2. Keep the Common tone (a note that is in the spelling of both chords) in the same voice part (ex. if the common tone was in the alto in the first chord, it should be the alto note in the second chord).
3. Move the other voices by step to the notes you haven’t filled in the second chord.

**PROGRESSIONS by 3\(^{rd}\) or 6\(^{th}\)**

Rule:

1. Move the Bass note up or down by 3\(^{rd}\) or 6\(^{th}\).
2. Keep the Common tones (there will be two) in the same voice parts
3. Move the other voice by step to the note you haven’t filled in the second chord.
PROGRESSIONS by 2\textsuperscript{nd} (no progressing by 7\textsuperscript{th})

Rule:

1. Move the Bass either up or down by 2\textsuperscript{nd} to the new chord tone (do NOT move the bass by 7\textsuperscript{th})
2. The three upper voices must move in contrary motion to the bass part
   a. If the bass note went up, the other three voices must move down
   b. If the bass note went down, the other three voices must move up
3. There are NO common tones in progressions by 2\textsuperscript{nd}. 

\[ \text{C: C d min} \]