Tissimo

LISTEN
Scan to hear every example
tissimo.co/worksheets/dominant-seventh

The dominant 7th

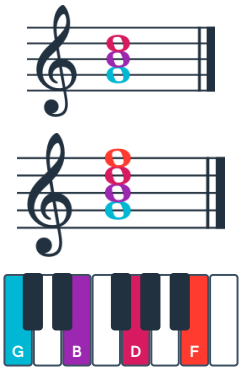
Take a **major triad** and stack one more third on top. In C major the chord lands on **G–B–D–F**, written **G7**. It is the least contented chord in tonal music — and that restlessness is the whole reason an ending sounds like an ending.

A MAJOR TRIAD, PLUS ONE MORE THIRD

Start with the **G major triad**, G–B–D. Add a third above the D and you land on **F** — the seventh letter up from G, and a **minor** 7th above the root.

That minor 7th is the whole distinction. F♯ would make Gmaj7, the dreamy chord of Satie's *Gymnopédie* (Handout 75); plain **F** makes G7, which cannot sit still. One half step apart, opposite temperaments.

G → B major 3rd | B → D minor 3rd | D → F minor 3rd

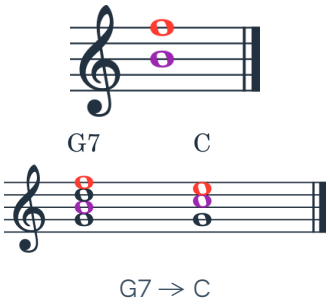


THE ENGINE — A TRITONE INSIDE THE CHORD

Look only at the **3rd and the 7th**: B and F. Three whole steps apart — a **tritone**, the same restless interval that unsettles the diminished triad (Handout 209). Every dominant 7th has one, and it is the engine of the chord.

Both notes lean. **B is the leading tone**, a half step under C, pulling *up*; **F** sits a half step over E, pulling *down*. Let both go and the chord that catches them is **C major**.

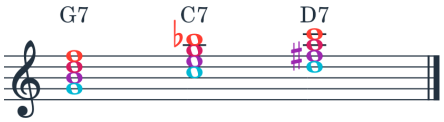
In this figure the two colors track the two **voices**, not their roles: purple climbs, red steps down.



G7 → C

ITS NAME IS V7 — ONE PER KEY

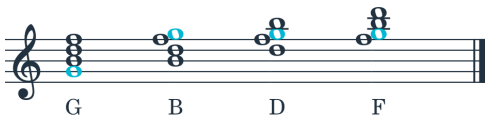
Build it on the **5th degree** of a major scale and the 7th arrives on its own, straight out of the key — no accidental needed. So every major key owns **exactly one** dominant 7th, and hearing it is how your ear knows which key it is in.



the V7 of C major, of F major, of G major — same shape, three homes

FOUR NOTES, FOUR POSITIONS

Any of the four can sit in the bass, and the bass note names the position. Follow the cyan G: root position, then **1st**, **2nd**, **3rd inversion**. The last is a favorite — that bass F falls a half step to E and hands you C major in first inversion.



Figured bass: 7, 6/5, 4/3, 4/2 (Handout 388)

You play it constantly already: the **V7** of every I–IV–V7–I (Handout 22), the D7–G7 that shuts Joplin's turnaround (Handout 208), and in the blues **every** chord is one (Handout 53).

Try it Play **G7**, then **C**, listening for the two notes that move: B up to C, F down to E. Then play **just B and F** and resolve them alone — the whole cadence in two notes. Finally play G7 and *stop*, and notice how badly it wants the next chord. Find V7 in F major (C7) and G major (D7), and end every scale you practice with it.

© 2026 Tissimo. All rights reserved.