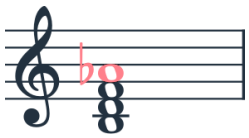The half-diminished 7th

Same diminished triad underneath, **one note different on top** — and that single half step turns the most restless chord in music into one of the most beautiful. Written **Bø7** or **Bm7♭5**.

ONLY THE 7TH CHANGES

B°7 — fully diminished
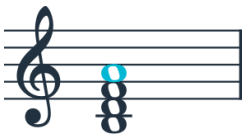
B – D – F – A♭



A **diminished** 7th on top: three half steps above F. Every gap equal, no home key, maximum tension.

Bø7 — half-diminished

B – D – F – A
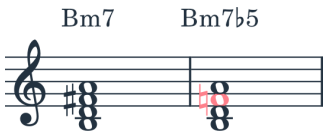


A **minor** 7th on top: four half steps above F. The top note lifts by a half step and the chord softens.

Half-diminished because only the triad underneath is diminished — the 7th is not.

TWO NAMES, ONE CHORD

There is a second way in. Start from a **minor 7th** chord — B–D–F♯–A — and **flatten the 5th**. F♯ becomes F, and you have the same four notes.

That is why the chord has two names for one sound. Classical scores write **Bø7**; lead sheets and jazz charts usually write **Bm7♭5**. Read either as "B half-diminished".
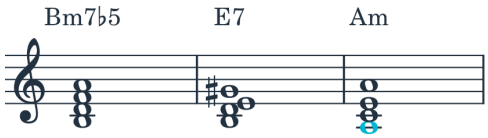


Lower the 5th and the chord changes name.

Bø7 = **Bm7♭5**

ITS DAY JOB: THE DOOR INTO A MINOR KEY

Build a seventh chord on the **second note of a minor scale** and this is what you get. In A minor that is **Bø7**, and it is the standard way to set up the dominant and come home: **iiø7 → V7 → i**.



Bø7 → E7 → Am. Barely anything moves: B and D stay put into E7, then E stays while the other notes each move one step.

Listen for it in slow minor-key music of every century — it is the chord that makes a minor ending sound inevitable rather than merely sad.

Try it Play **B–D–F–A♭**, then lift only your top finger a half step to **A**. Play them back to back a few times and listen: the same triad underneath, but one is a slammed door and the other is an open one. Then play the whole cadence **Bø7 → E7 → Am** and let the last chord ring.

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