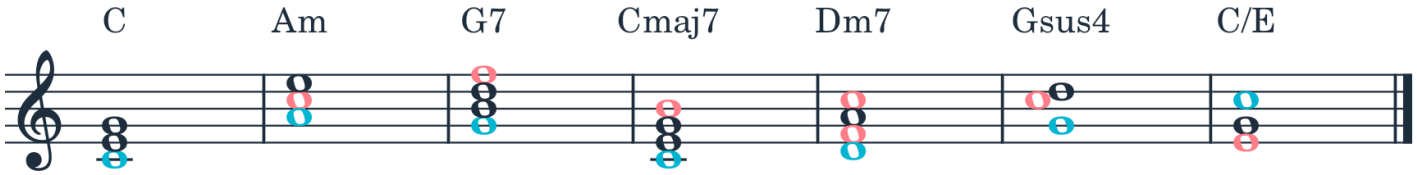
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Reading a lead sheet

A **lead sheet** is music's shorthand: one line of **melody** with **chord symbols** above it. It tells you *what* to play, not exactly *how* — you build the left hand yourself.

READ A CHORD SYMBOL FROM LEFT TO RIGHT



C
The **root letter** alone means a **major** triad: C-E-G.

Am
m = minor: the 3rd is a half step lower. A-**C**-E.

G7
7 adds a **minor 7th**: G-B-D-**F** (Handout 212).

Cmaj7
maj7 adds a **major 7th**, a half step under the root: C-E-G-**B** (Handout 223).

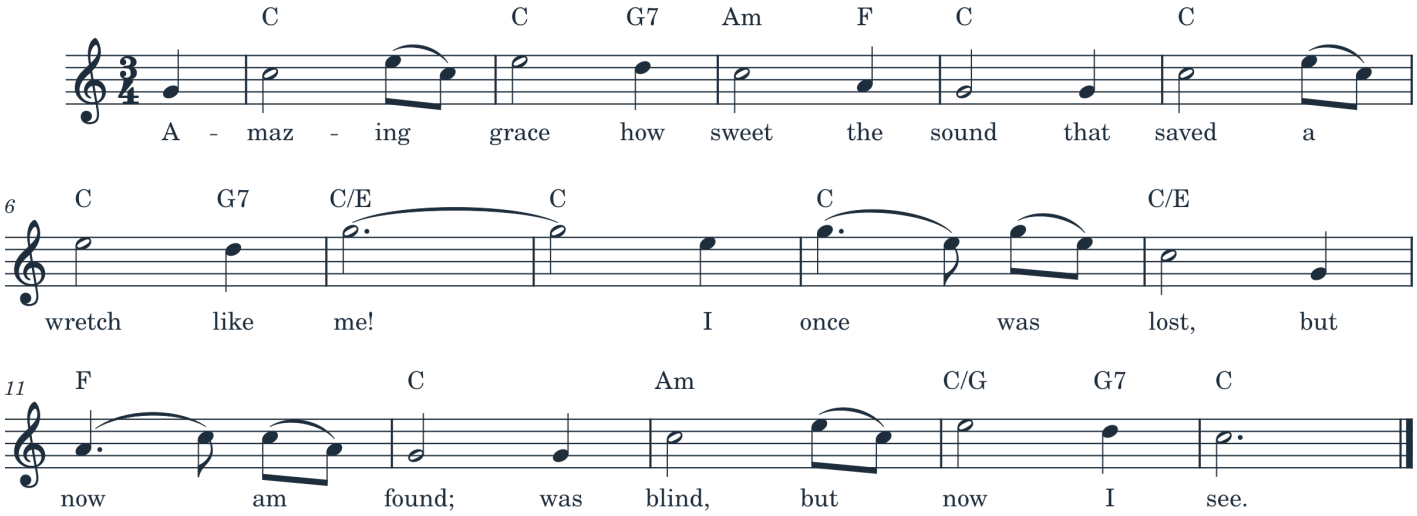
Dm7
Both at once: minor triad + minor 7th. D-**F**-A-**C** (Handout 224).

Gsus4
sus4 swaps the 3rd for the 4th: G-**C**-D (Handout 226).

C/E
A **slash** names the **bass**: a C chord with **E** as the lowest note.

Read **root** first, then the **suffix**. Notes in the figure: **cyan** = root, **coral** = what the suffix changes.

A LEAD SHEET — "AMAZING GRACE" IN C



Tune NEW BRITAIN (first printed 1829), public domain. A symbol lasts until the next one — in bar 2 you play C for two beats, then G7.

THREE STEPS FROM SYMBOLS TO MUSIC

1. **Left hand plays the root.** Just the root letter, held for as long as the symbol lasts (on a slash chord, the letter after the slash). Sing or hum the tune on top.

2. **Left hand plays a shell, right hand the melody.** Root plus 5th (or root plus 7th on a **7** chord). Now it is a real duet.

3. **Fill in the chord tones.** Use the closest shapes, so each change moves your fingers as little as possible (Handout 42).



Try it Play the whole tune with step 1, then step 2, then step 3 — only move on when the step before feels easy. On a slash chord (bars 7, 10, 14) put the **bass letter** at the bottom: E under C/E, G under C/G. In bar 14, C/G before G7 is a cadential 6/4 (Handout 383). Then write chord symbols over a song you know (Handout 358).

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