Tissimo

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The major 7th

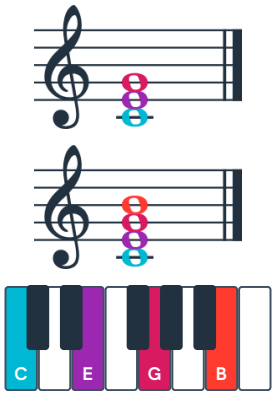
Take a **major triad** and stack one more **major** third on top. On C the chord is **C–E–G–B**, written **Cmaj7**. Where the dominant 7th (Handout 212) pulls hard toward the next chord, this one is happy to float right where it is.

A MAJOR TRIAD, PLUS A MAJOR 7TH

Start with the **C major triad**, C–E–G. Add a third above the G and you land on **B**: the seventh letter up from C, and a **major** 7th above the root — 11 half steps.

Quick way to find it: the major 7th is **one half step below the root's octave**. Play the C an octave up, step down one key, and you are on the 7th.

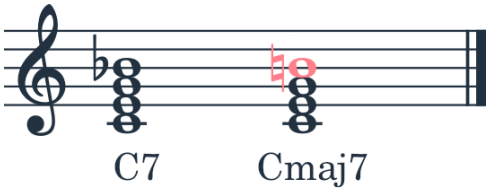
C → E major 3rd | E → G minor 3rd | G → B major 3rd



ONE HALF STEP FROM C7 — A WHOLE NEW MOOD

Put **C7** and **Cmaj7** side by side. Three notes are the same; only the top one moves, **B♭ up to B**. In C7 that B♭ is a **minor** 7th and makes the chord lean forward. Raise it and the lean is gone. The B sits a half step under the C an octave up and just glows there.

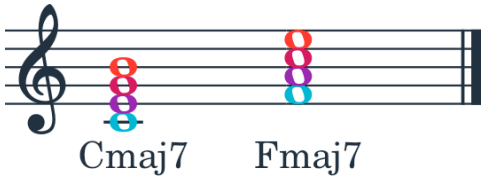
That is the major 7th's sound: **dreamy, soft, unfinished in a pleasant way**. Jazz ballads and pop songs use it for a warm, open color. Satie's *Gymnopédie No. 1* opens by rocking between **Gmaj7** and **Dmaj7** (Handout 75).



Coral marks the note that changed.

WHERE IT LIVES IN A KEY — AND ITS FOUR POSITIONS

Stack a 7th chord on every note of C major, using only white keys, and just **two** come out as major 7ths: on the **1st** and the **4th** degree. Their names are **Imaj7** (Cmaj7) and **IVmaj7** (Fmaj7). Every major key has this same pair.



Imaj7 · IVmaj7 in C major

Any of the four notes can sit in the bass, and the bass note names the position. Follow the cyan C: root position, then **1st**, **2nd**, **3rd inversion**. Once the chord is inverted, B and C end up side by side — a half-step rub. That gentle crunch is part of the color.



Try it Play **C7**, then **Cmaj7**, moving only your top finger: B♭ up to B. Say which one wants to move on and which one could ring forever. Then rock slowly between **Gmaj7** (G–B–D–F♯) and **Dmaj7** (D–F♯–A–C♯) like the opening of the *Gymnopédie*. Last, find Imaj7 and IVmaj7 in G major.

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