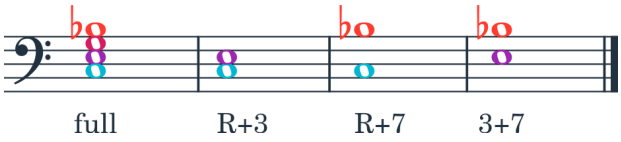
Shell Voicings

Jazz and pop pianists rarely play every note of a 7th chord in the left hand. They play a **shell**: the **root** plus just one color note, the **3rd** or the **7th**. Two notes that sound clear down low and leave the right hand free for the melody.

ROOT PLUS ONE COLOR NOTE

Start from a full **C7**: **C**–**E**–**G**–**B♭**. Keep the **root**, which tells you *which* chord it is. Then keep the **3rd** *or* the **7th**: these two decide *what kind* of chord it is (major or minor, maj7 or 7). They are the chord's **guide tones**.

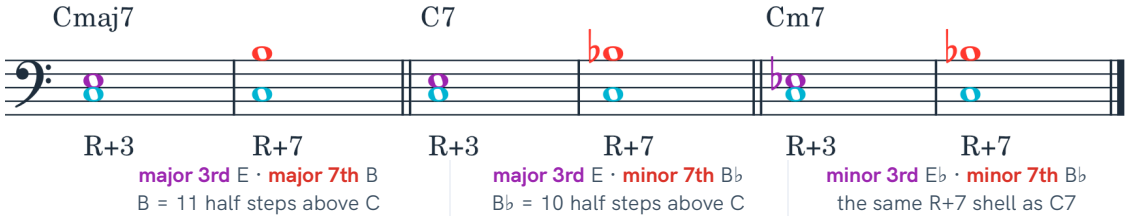
Why drop the 5th? It is a perfect 5th in maj7, 7 and m7 alike, so it adds no color. Low in the bass, four close notes also blur into mud. Fingers: **5** on the root, **1** on a 7th, **3** on a 3rd.



3+7 is a preview: when a bass player has the root, pianists drop it too and keep only the guide tones.

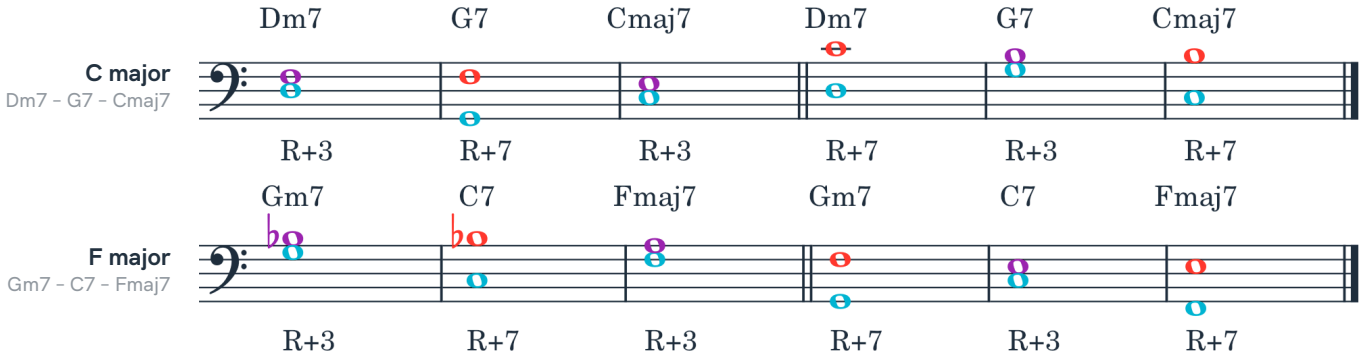
THE SHELLS ON C

Each shell carries **one** guide tone. Compare the pairs: **Cmaj7** and **C7** share the root+3rd shell and differ only in the 7th (B or B♭). **C7** and **Cm7** share the root+7th shell and differ only in the 3rd (E or E♭).



II–V–I IN SHELLS

The ii–V–I (Handouts 293–318) is where shells shine. **Alternate** the two kinds: if ii is root+3rd, V is root+7th and I is root+3rd again. Now the top note barely moves: it **holds** or **slips down a half step**, while the root jumps by a 4th or 5th. Watch the colors on top trade places, **3rd** → **7th** → **3rd**, or the other way round.



Pattern 3–7–3
Top notes in C: **F–F–E**. The F is the 3rd of Dm7 and stays put as the 7th of G7, then slips to E, the 3rd of Cmaj7.

Pattern 7–3–7
Top notes in C: **C–B–B**. The 7th of Dm7 slips to the 3rd of G7, which stays put as the 7th of Cmaj7.

Try it Loop both patterns in C and F, slowly, without looking down: the hand only shifts a little. Then play a lead sheet (Handout 229) with shells in the left hand and the melody in the right. Last, try ii–V–I in **G** (Am7–D7–Gmaj7): find the 3rd and 7th of each chord first (Handouts 223, 224, 212), then build both patterns yourself.

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