

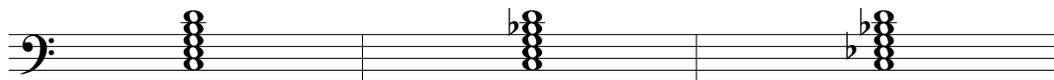
Chord Extensions and other alterations

In the same way a 7th chord is an extension of a triad (by adding another 3rd to the stack), 7th chords can be extended by stacking additional 3rds on to the structure. By adding more 3rds, we get higher, odd-numbered chords: 9ths, 11ths and 13ths.

This process is not as simple as it sounds; depending on what kind of 7th chord one is starting with, the types of extensions vary in their allowances and permutations (not all sound good, some sound great in a variety of interval qualities). For now we will focus on adding one more 3rd to the structure: allowing for the 9th chord.

The 9th Chord

Adding a 3rd on top of a 7th chord makes that a 9th chord, since the interval from the root to the top note is a 9th.



The image shows three musical staves in bass clef, each containing a chord. The first staff is Cmaj9, the second is C9, and the third is C-9. Each chord is represented by a stack of notes on the staff.

Chord	Description
Cmaj9	a major 7th chord with a major 9th above the root
C9	a dominant 7th chord with a major 9th above the root
C-9	a minor 7th chord with a major 9th above the root

Of the five most commonly-encountered 7th chords, the m7b5 the °7 do not usually have 9ths added to their structures.

The Altered 9th

It is also common to have an altered 9th chord. This happens within the V chord, or any chord that has a dominant 7th structure. The 9th can be lowered a half step (a "flat 9") or raised a half step (a "sharp 9").



The image shows three musical staves in bass clef, each containing a chord. The first staff is G9, the second is G7(b9), and the third is G7(#9). Each chord is represented by a stack of notes on the staff.

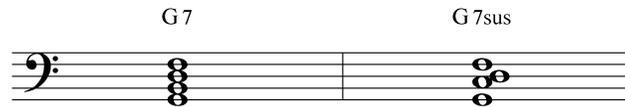
Notice that the notation for the altered 9th chords, the "7" notation is still included, followed by the sharp or flat 9 in parentheses.

Applications

Using 9ths and altered 9ths is a mainstay technique for spicing up a chords. There are times where a 9th is indicated in an instruction, but more often than not, when a player sees a 7th chord instructed, she or he knows that adding a 9th will sound great. When there is a dominant 7th chord asked for, she or he knows that an altered 9th will likely sound great as well.

The suspended 4th (sus)

Another way to modify a chord (7th or possibly a 9th) is to replace its 3rd with a 4th (a P4th). This works best with dominant 7th chords. As with other alterations, the specific noted in the melody can make a difference as to how good it sounds.



In the first measure is a standard G7. The G7sus (sometimes called a "sus4") has taken its 3rd (the B) and moved it up to a 4th (the C).

The term "suspended" is used for this chord because the "raised" 4th creates a mild feeling of tension in that the ear wants the 4th to fall down to its ordinary (3rd) position. The 4th is heard as being held up (i.e. suspended). In some cases, a sus chord might be followed by the standard version of the chord, but more often a new chord will follow.