

# Bass Tone Inversions

In 4-part voicing (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) the bass tone inversion plays an important factor and determines the character of the chord. We earlier learned about chord inversions. In a triad we only have 3 tones. In 4-part voicing we have to double one of the tones, e.g. the C the C-Chord (CEGC).

## Root Chord

The root chord has its root tone in the bass. In the C-chord this is a C. This chord is stable and if it is the Tonic (I) gives us a good ending of a piece. Most stable would be reached, if both, Bass and Soprano are Cs.

The image shows three musical staves in 4/4 time, illustrating different bass tone inversions of the C-chord. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The first voicing has a C in the bass and a C in the soprano, labeled "Best and stable ending." The second voicing has a C in the bass and a G in the soprano, labeled "Ending but lesser final." The third voicing has a C in the bass and an E in the soprano, labeled "Ending but is not final and creates question mark."

## Sixth-Chord

The sixth has the third in the bass. In our example the E. It is called the sixth-chord because the interval from the bass E to the root is a sixth. Sometimes this chord is also referred to the sext-chord to not confuse it with a C6 chord (CEGA).

The sixth chord is not stable and has an unique sound characteristic. Since the

bass is the third (E) and has a more pronounced tonal weight, this note is often omitted in the higher voice region and the fifth (G) or octave (C) is doubled.

C sixth chord with C doubled

C sixth chord with G doubled

C F sixth-chord sequence

G C root Chord

### Quart-sixth Chord

This chord has the fifth (G) in the bass and is unstable. It wants to resolve to V and then one. This gives us a common cadence. It is called quart-sext because the intervals from the bass tone (G) are a 4<sup>th</sup> to the C and a sixth to the E.

quart-sixth C Chord

root G Chord

root C-Chord

The quadrad bass-inversions work similarly as the triads. while the first two inversions work analogue to the triads, the third inversion is kind of special. In regards to the dominant seventh chord (e.g. G7) the F is no in the bass.

**Second-Chord** is an unstable chord and wants to resolve to the sixth-chord of the root-chord (C)

The image shows a musical score in 4/4 time, consisting of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. A blue brace on the left side groups both staves. The first measure contains a G7 chord, with notes G4 (treble), B4 (treble), D5 (treble), and G3 (bass). The second measure contains a C Sixth-Chord, with notes C4 (bass), E4 (treble), G4 (treble), and Bb4 (treble). The notes are written as whole notes. The time signature 4/4 is shown in both staves. The labels 'G7 Second-Chord' and 'C Sixth-Chord' are written in red text below the notes in their respective measures.

Please also read the help sheet about 4-part voicing in the advanced section.