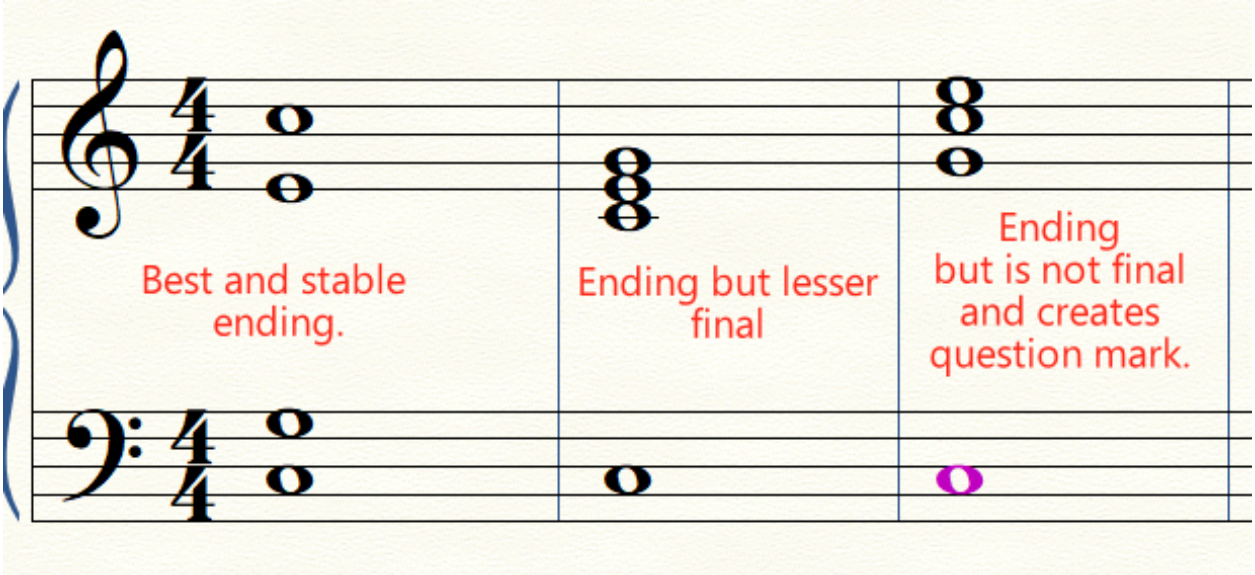
Bass Tone Inversions

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.

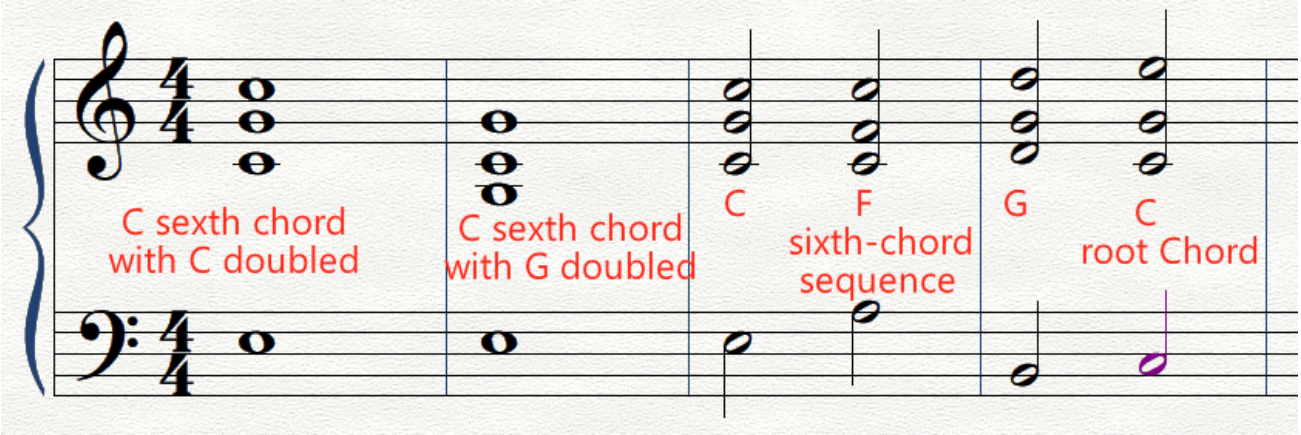


Sixth-Chord

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).

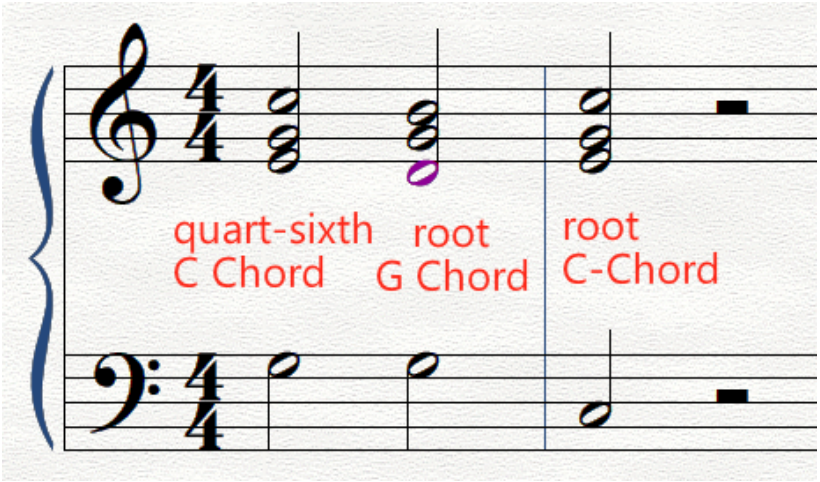
The sixth chord is not stable and has an unique sound characteristic. Since the

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.



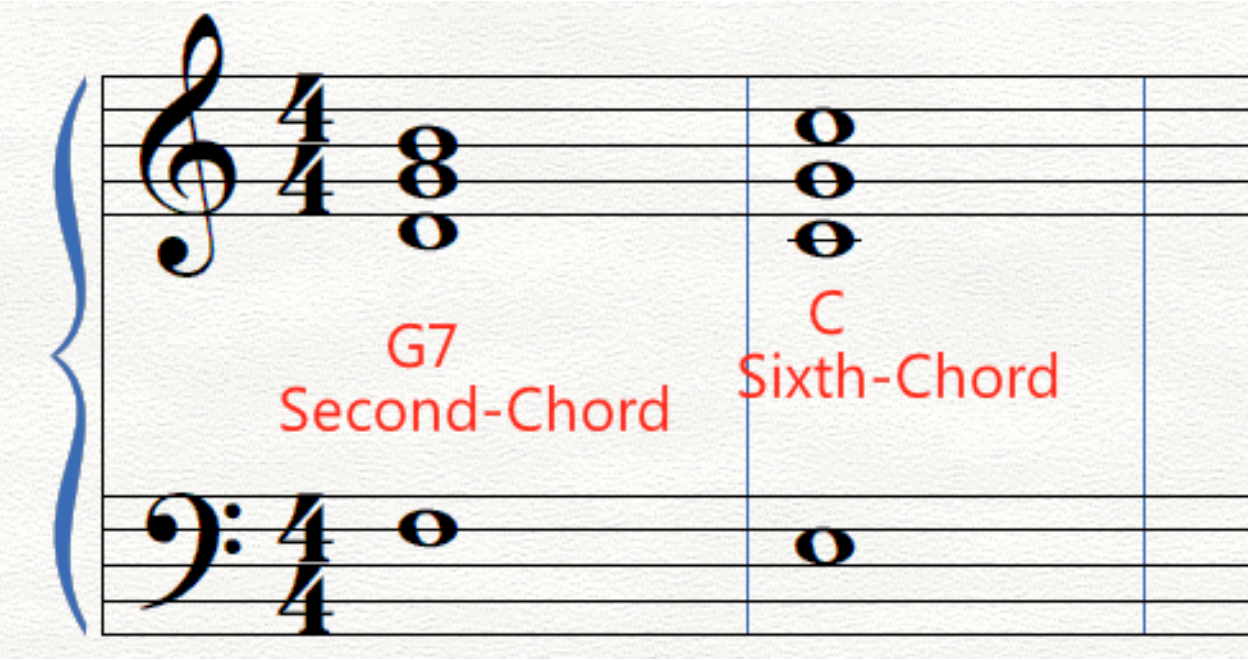
Quart-sixth Chord

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 4th to the C and a sixth to the E.



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)



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