

## Lead-Sheet Symbols

The chord symbols that appear above the staff in a lead sheet (see Example 1 below) are called *lead-sheet symbols*. These harmonic symbols are introduced in the following chapter of *Open Music Theory*, v2 (Gotham et al. 2020):

Megan Lavengood, *Chord Symbols*

<https://viva.pressbooks.pub/openmusictheory/chapter/chord-symbols/>

1. *Triad Qualities* See Example 2. *Chord symbols for triads*
2. *Seventh Chord Qualities* See Example 3. *Chord symbols for seventh chords*

The four basic triad and five basic seventh chord symbols are given below on root C. These nine chord types may be *transposed* to any root. It is also important to be aware that lead-sheet symbols are not standardized and the use of superscripts in a chord's *suffix* is optional; e.g., Cm<sup>7</sup>, Cm7, Cmi7, Cmin7, and C-7 are all valid representations of the same chord.

### TRIADS

Chord type	Lead-sheet symbol	Chord spelling <sup>†</sup>
M	C	C, E, G
m	Cm or C-	C, E $\flat$ , G
A	C+ or C $\text{aug}$	C, E, G $\sharp$
d	C $\circ$ or Cdim	C, E $\flat$ , G $\flat$

### COMMON SEVENTH CHORDS

Chord type <sup>1</sup>	Lead-sheet symbol	Chord spelling <sup>†</sup>
Mm	C <sup>7</sup>	C, E, G, B $\flat$
MM	C $\text{maj}^7$	C, E, G, B
mm	Cm <sup>7</sup> or C- <sup>7</sup>	C, E $\flat$ , G, B $\flat$
dm	C $\circ^7$ or Cm <sup>7(b5)</sup>	C, E $\flat$ , G $\flat$ , B $\flat$
dd	C $\circ^7$ or Cdim <sup>7</sup>	C, E $\flat$ , G $\flat$ , B $\flat\flat$

† - Chord spellings are given using *list notation*

### Slash Chords

The bass of a lead-sheet symbol is assumed to be the root unless otherwise specified. An alternate bass note may be specified using **slash chord** notation: e.g., C/G, C/E, C/F $\sharp$ , Cm<sup>7</sup>/B $\flat$ , etc. The alternate bass note need not be a member of the chord.

**Example 1.** *My Country, 'Tis of Thee*, American patriotic song, lead-sheet notation

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the song 'My Country, 'Tis of Thee'. The first staff contains the first six measures of the melody, with chord symbols F, C, F, B $\flat$ , F, C, F, Gm, F/C, C, F written above the notes. The second staff contains the next six measures, starting with a measure rest (7) and chord symbols F, C<sup>7</sup>, F, B $\flat$ , F, B $\flat$ , F/C, C<sup>7</sup>, F written above the notes.

<sup>1</sup> Other seventh chord types are possible including: mM, AM, Am, etc.