

Lead Sheet Chord Symbols

For an introduction to *lead sheet chord symbols*, see the following pages in Burstein and Straus *Concise 2/e*:¹

1. *Triad Qualities* p. 34: Examples 3.2-3.4
2. *Seventh Chord Qualities* pp. 38-39: Examples 3.13-3.15

TRIADS

Chord Type	Lead sheet chord symbol [†] ‡	Chord Spelling [†]
M	C	C, E, G
m	C _m or C ⁻	C, E _b , G
A	C ⁺ or C _{aug}	C, E, G [#]
d	C ^o or C _{dim}	C, E _b , G _b

COMMON SEVENTH CHORDS

Chord Type ²	Lead Sheet Chord Symbol [†] ‡	Chord Spelling [†]
Mm	C ⁷	C, E, G, B _b
MM	C _{maj} ⁷	C, E, G, B
mm	C _m ⁷ or C ⁻⁷	C, E _b , G, B _b
dm	C ^{o7} or C _m ⁷⁽⁶⁵⁾	C, E _b , G _b , B _b
dd	C ^{o7} or C _{dim} ⁷	C, E _b , G _b , B _{bb}

[†] - Example for a chord whose root is C.³
[‡] - The use of superscripts is optional.

Slash Chords

The bass of a lead sheet chord symbol is assumed to be the root unless otherwise specified. An alternate bass note may be specified using a **slash chord**: e.g., C/G, C/E, C/F[#], C_m⁷/B_b, etc. The alternate bass note need not be a member of the chord.

Example. *My Country, 'Tis of Thee*, American patriotic song

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the song "My Country, 'Tis of Thee". The first staff contains the melody with the following chord symbols above it: F, C, F, B^b, F, C, F, G_m, F/C, C, F. The second staff continues the melody with the following chord symbols above it: F, C⁷, F, B^b, F, B^b, F/C, C⁷, F. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4.

¹ L. Poundie Burstein and Joseph N. Straus, *Concise Introduction to Tonal Harmony*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 2020).

² Other seventh chord types include: mM, AM, Am, etc.

³ These chord types may be *transposed* to any root.