Top 10 Chord Types Commonly Used In Gospel Music

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A Gospel Music Training Center Resource

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Rank #10 - Dom13 [sus4] & Dom13 [add9]

G dom13 [sus4] chord:

G dom13 [add9] chord:

Chord Analysis

The dominant thirteenth suspended fourth (dom13 [sus4]) chord and the dominant thirteenth add nine (dom13 [add9]) chord are related.

They’re basically formed on the fifth tone of the scale; however, they can be transposed to other tones of the scale.

The dom13 [sus4] chord can be formed by playing a major seventh chord a whole step below any given note, while the dom13 [add9] chord can be formed by playing a major seventh [flat five] chord a whole step below any given note.

For example, in the formation of the C dom13 [sus4]:

The root (which is C) is played on the left hand:

...while a maj7 chord a whole step below C (which is the Bb maj7 chord) is played on the right hand:
In the formation of the C dom13 [add9]:

...the root (which is C) is played on the left hand:

...while a maj7 [b5] chord a whole step below C (which is the Bb maj7 b5 chord) is played on the right hand:

**Application**

In traditional gospel styles, the dom13 [sus4] chord and the dom13 [add9] chord are used as chord 1, 4, and 5 (aka – “primary chords”).

Beyond that, the dom13 [sus4] chord and the dom13 [add9] chord are important because they are used as passing chords to any major or dominant chord.
**Rank #9 - Dom7 [#9,#5]**

E dom7 [#9,#5] chord:

Chord Analysis

The dom7 [#9,#5] chord can be formed by playing a major seventh [flat five] chord a major third above any given note.

**Attention:** A major third is simply the relationship between the first and third tones of the major scale. So, the major third of any given note can be derived by determining the third tone of the major scale of the root note.

For example, in the formation of the C dom7 [#9,#5] chord, the root (which is C) is played on the left hand:

...while a maj7[b5] chord that’s a major third above C (which is the E maj7[b5] chord) is played on the right hand:

This produces the C dom7 [#9,#5]:
Application

The dom7 [#9,#5] chord is important because it is commonly used as a passing chord to minor chords of the second, third, and sixth tone.

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Rank # 8 - Half-dim7

B half-dim7 chord:

Chord Analysis

The half-dim7 chord can be formed by playing a minor triad a minor third above any given note.

**Attention:** A minor third can be derived by lowering the major third interval by a half-step. So, the minor third of any given note can be derived by determining the major third we covered previously and lowering it by a half-step.

For example, in the formation of the C half-dim7 chord, the root (which is C) is played on the left hand:

...while a minor triad a minor third above C (which is the Eb minor triad) is played on the right hand:

This produces the C half-dim7 chord:
**Application**

The half-dim7 chord is important because it is commonly used while playing the 7-3-6 progression, the 3-6-2 progression, and any other minor 2-5-1 chord progression.

Additionally, it can be used as chord 2 in traditional gospel styles.
**Rank #7 - Dim7**

C# dim7 chord:

![C# Dim7 Chord Diagram](image)

**Chord Analysis**

The dim7 chord can be formed by adding a minor third interval to an existing diminished triad.

For example, in the formation of the C dim7 chord, we’ll need a basic C diminished triad:

![C Diminished Triad Diagram](image)

...then we’ll add another tone that is a minor third on top of the highest note.

Therefore, adding “A” to the C diminished triad produces the C diminished seventh chord (technically the “A” should be called “Bbb” but allow us to use “A” in its replacement):

![C Diminished Seventh Chord Diagram](image)

**Application**

The dim7 chord is important because it is commonly used as a passing chord. You might find it on the b5 degree in traditional and praise gospel music following the 4-chord. You might also find it played before any minor chord (b2, b3, b6). Also, it’s important to note that there are two tritones in every diminished seventh chord.
Rank #6 - Min7, Min9 & Min11

D min7 chord:

A min9 chord:

E min11 chord:

Chord Analysis

All three chords -- the minor seventh, minor ninth, and minor eleventh -- are practically the same chord type. Although they differ in size and sophistication, they can fit into the same harmonic picture.

The min7 chord can be formed by playing a major triad a minor third above any given note. The min9 chord can be formed by playing a major seventh chord a minor third above any given note. Finally, the min11 chord can be formed by playing two triads -- a minor triad on the left hand and a major triad (a whole step below the root of the minor triad) on the right hand.

In the formation of the C min7 chord, the root (which is C) is played on the left hand:

...while a major triad a minor third above C (which is the Eb major triad) is played on the right hand:
This produces the Cmin7 chord:

Playing the Eb maj7 chord (instead of the Eb major triad):

...produces the C min9 chord:

The C min11 chord can be formed using the C minor triad (on the left):

and a major triad that is a whole step below C (which is the Bb major triad). This produces the C min11 chord:

**Application**

These minor chords are designed to be played on the second, third, and sixth tones of the major scale. However, they can be used chromatically at the discretion of the pianist/keyboardist.
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Rank #5 - Maj7 & Maj 9

C major seventh chord:

F major ninth chord:

Chord Analysis

The major seventh and major ninth chords are advanced major chord types that are formed on the first and fourth tones of the scale; however, they can be transposed to other tones of the scale as well.

The **maj7 chord** can be formed by playing a minor triad a major third above any given note, while the **maj9 chord** can be formed by playing a minor seventh chord a major third above any given note.

For example, in the formation of the C maj7 chord, the root (which is C) is played on the left hand:

...while a minor triad a major third above C (which is the E minor triad) is played on the right hand:
This produces the C maj7 chord:

![ Piano keyboard with C maj7 chord highlighted ]

In the formation of the C maj9 chord, the root (which is C) is played on the left hand:

![ Piano keyboard with C maj9 chord highlighted ]

...while a minor seventh chord a major third above C (which is the E minor seventh chord) is played on the right hand:

![ Piano keyboard with minor seventh chord highlighted ]

This produces the C maj9 chord:

![ Piano keyboard with C maj9 chord highlighted ]

**Application**

These major chords are intermediate and are designed to be played on the first and fourth tones of the major scale. However, they can be used chromatically at the discretion of the pianist/keyboardist.

These are some advanced major chords every serious gospel musician must not be without.
Rank #4 - Dom7 & Dom7 [b9]

D dominant seventh chord:

G dominant seventh [flat ninth] chord:

Chord Analysis

The dominant seventh and dominant seventh [flat ninth] chords are advanced dominant chord types that are formed on the fifth tone of the scale, however, they can be transposed to other tones of the scale as well.

The dom7 chord can be formed by playing a diminished triad a major third above any given note, while the dom7 [b9] chord can be formed by playing a diminished seventh chord a major third above any given note.

For example, in the formation of the C dom7 chord, the root (which is C) is played on the left hand:

...while a diminished triad a major third above C (which is the E diminished triad) is played on the right hand:
This produces the C dom7 chord:

In the formation of the C dom7 [b9] chord, the root (which is C) is played on the left hand:

...while a diminished seventh chord a major third above C (which is the E diminished seventh chord) is played on the right hand:

This produces the C dom7 [b9] chord:

**Application**

These dominant chords are to be played on fifth tone of the major scale. They can also be played on the 2nd, 3rd, and 6th tones in traditional gospel music.

They can also be used chromatically at the discretion of the pianist/keyboardist.
**Rank #3 - Suspended Chords – Sus2 & Sus4**

F suspended 2nd chord:

G suspended 4th chord:

**Chord Analysis**

The suspended 2nd and suspended 4th chords are neutral chord types that may neither be classified as major or minor chords; however, they have a common place in gospel music; especially in CCM styles.

The **sus2 chord** can be formed by lowering the third degree of any given major triad to the second degree, while the **sus4 chord** can be formed by raising the third degree of any given major triad to the fourth degree.

For example, in the formation of the C sus2 chord, the third degree of the C major triad:

...(which is E) is lowered to the second tone (which is D):
This produces the C sus2 chord:

In the formation of the C sus4 chord, the third degree of the C major triad:

...(which is E) is raised to the fourth tone (which is F):

This produces the C sus4 chord:

**Application**

Suspended chords are very important because they can be played over a variety of bass notes. For example, in the key of C major, the C sus2 chord can be played over the following bass notes:

C, E, F, G, and A

You will do well to learn and master suspended chords because they have a common place in gospel music, especially during worship and CCM-style songs.
**Rank #2 - Minor triad**

D minor triad:

![D minor triad keyboard](image)

A minor triad:

![A minor triad keyboard](image)

**Chord Analysis**

The minor triad is the chord of the first tone in the minor key. Therefore, the minor triad can be formed using the first, third, and fifth tones of the minor scale.

For example, in the formation of the C minor triad, we’ll need to make reference to the C minor scale:

![C minor scale keyboard](image)

Playing the first (C), third (Eb), and fifth (G) tones of the C minor scale produces the C minor triad:

![C minor triad keyboard](image)

**Application**

Although minor triads are applied on the second, third, and sixth tones in the major key, they can be transposed and played on other tones as well.

Minor triads function as subsidiary chords to major chords. For example, the minor chord of the second tone functions as a subsidiary chord to the major chord of the fourth tone.
**Rank #1 - Major triad & Major (add 9)**

C major triad:

![C major triad on a piano keyboard](image)

F major [add9]:

![F major add9 on a piano keyboard](image)

**Chord Analysis**

The major triad and the major [add9] chord are the chords of the first tone in the major key.

The **major triad** can be formed using the first, third, and fifth tones of the major scale. While the **major [add9] chord** has an additional chord tone – the *ninth* – added to it.

For example, in the formation of the C major triad, we’ll need to make reference to the C major scale:

![C major scale on a piano keyboard](image)

Playing the first (C), third (E), and fifth (G) tones of the C major scale produces the C major triad:

![Playing C major triad on a piano keyboard](image)
In the formation of the C major [add9] chord, we’re basically adding the second tone (D) of the C major scale (which is the same as the 9th tone of the scale; C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C):

![Piano Diagram](image1)

...to the C major triad:

![Piano Diagram](image2)

...and this produces the C major [add9] chord:

![Piano Diagram](image3)

**Application**

Although major triads are applied on the first and fourth tones in the major key, they can be transposed and played on other tones as well.
Section B
Real Life Examples
Example #1 – “Thank You Lord”

Our first example in this segment focuses on the song, “Thank You Lord” in the key of C major. The good news is that most of the chords we covered in this booklet are utilized in this song.

Enjoy!

Thank (maj7):

...you (dominant seventh [#9,#5]):

...Lord (min7):

Thank (maj9):
...you (min9):

...Lord (sus4):

Thank (maj7):

...you (dominant seventh [#9,#5]):

...Lord (min7):
I just want to (min7):

...thank (dom7)):

...you (dom7 [b9]):

...Lord (major triad [add9]):
Our final example in this segment is another gospel song, “As the Deer” and it’s in the key of C major. Just like the first example, most of the chords used in the previous example and more are applied here. Enjoy!

As the (maj9):

… deer (half-dim7):

…panteth (dominant seventh [#9,#5]):

…for the (min7):
...water (min9):

So my (dom13[add9]):

...soul longeth (maj9):

...af (min9):

...ter (dom7[b9]):
...thee (maj7):

Turnaround chord (dom13 [sus4]):

Thou a (maj9):

...lone (half-dim7):

...are my (dominant seventh [#9,#5]):

...heart's de (min7):
…sire (min9):
…And I (dom13[add9]):

…long to (maj9):

…worship (dom13[sus4]):

…thee (maj [add9]):

Turnaround chord (dom13 [sus4]):
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