The Fundamental Triad System

A chord-first approach to jazz theory and practice

Guitar Player's Edition

VOLUME TWO

Chord Studies for Guitar

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Introduction The Fundamental Triad System

Whether it's playing with a rhythm section or performing in a solo setting, having an extensive chord vocabulary is essential for any jazz guitarist. The challenge is finding an effective and time-efficient method to go about learning and incorporating that vocabulary into one's playing.

There are many chord dictionaries available in the marketplace, and while these books can be useful as reference sources, they rarely explore the individual components which make up the chord voicings or the possible functionality of any given chord structure. It therefore becomes the task of the player to memorize as many chords voicings as possible and to somehow find appropriate uses for those voicings through trial and error.

This book, *Volume 2, Chord Studies for Guitar*, reflects a different approach. At the center of every chord structure presented here will be one of six fundamental triad voicings. Extensions and modifications to these voicings will be determined by the player based on the chord theory covered in this book and in *Volume 1, Creating Improvised Lines.*

Furthermore, this book will track many of the chapters *Volume 1,* prompting the player to create appropriate voicings based on functionality and the chord scale application discussed in those chapters. Also, a lead note system will be introduced whereby one will learn to harmonize notes designated as the top note of the voicing thus gaining an essential tool for creating chord melodies and chord-supported improvised lines.

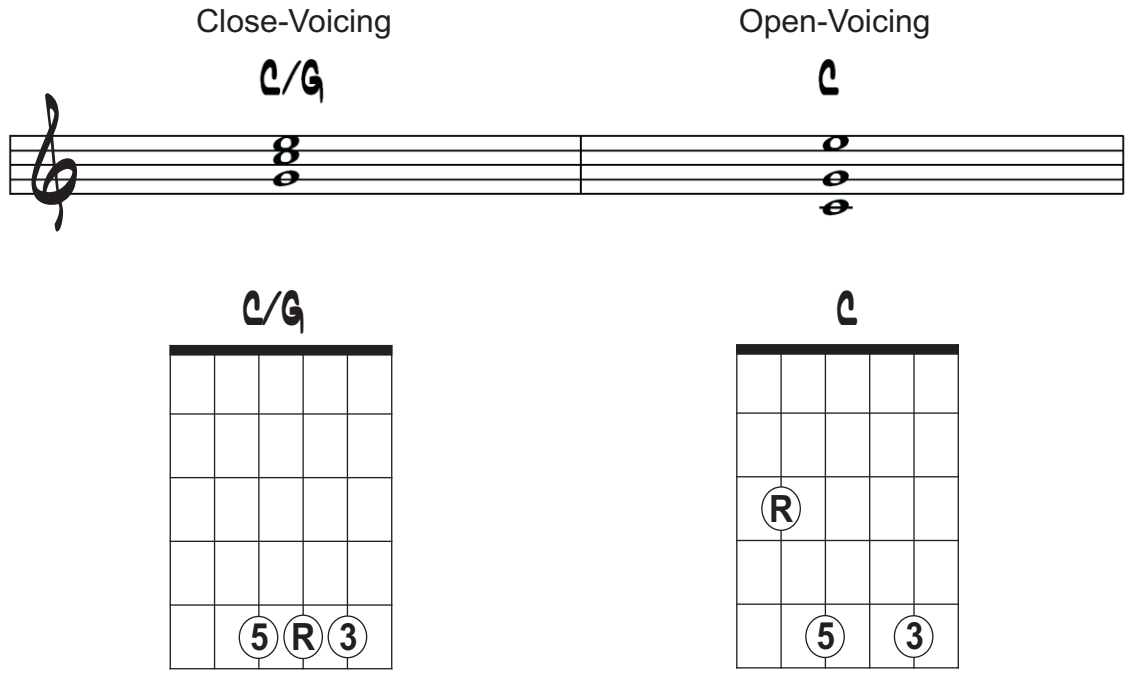
To summarize, it seems that there are two distinct learning protocols for gaining a chord vocabulary: memorizing as many individual chord forms as possible or learning a few voicings that can be the source for many others. It's my belief that by having a complete understanding of a few fundamental chord voicings we can realize many variations and applications and become more creative jazz guitarists.

Pete Pancrazi

Chapter 2 Six Triad Voicings

With a few exceptions, every chord in this book will be a variation or extension of one of six major triad voicings: two root position forms, two 1st inversion forms and two 2nd inversion forms. We'll learn that each of these forms can be stated on multiple string sets, transposed to any root and converted to minor, diminished or augmented.

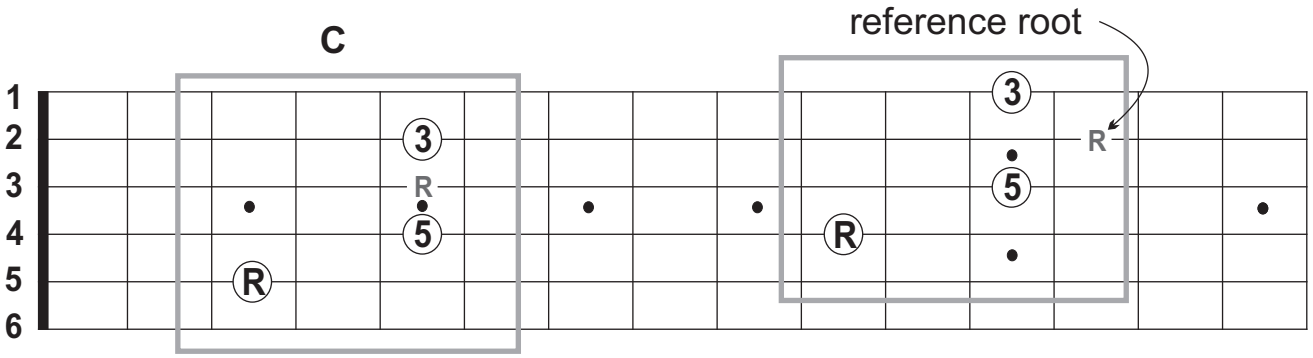
There will be four open-voicing forms (voicings spanning greater than an octave) and two close-voicing forms (voicings spanning less than an octave). It's vital that the component parts of these voicings be understood and that you're able to perform them in real time. Here's an example of an open- and close-voicing major triad and how they can be stated on the guitar.

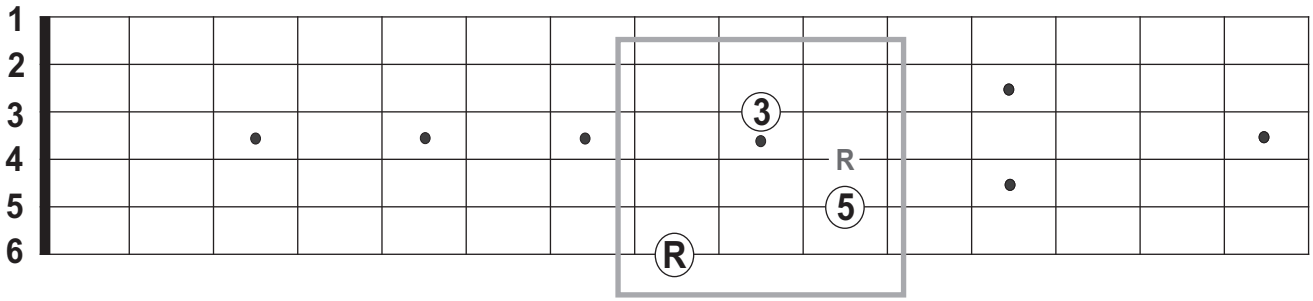


To gain a more complete understanding of how close-voicing triads can be viewed on the guitar, see *Chapter 4* in *Volume 1*.

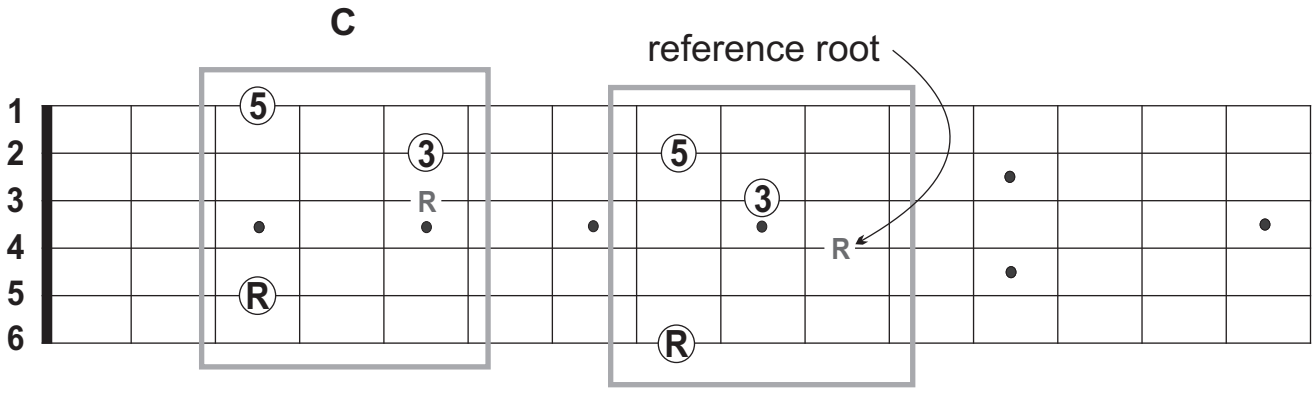
Two Root Position Triad Voicings

The following is an open-voicing, root position **C** major triad. The root can be stated on the 4th, 5th or 6th string. The voicing spans a total of four strings. A reference root is shown so that the intervals that make up the voicing can be seen more clearly.





The following is an open-voicing, root position **C** major triad that can be stated with the root on the 5th or 6th string. The voicing spans a total of five strings.

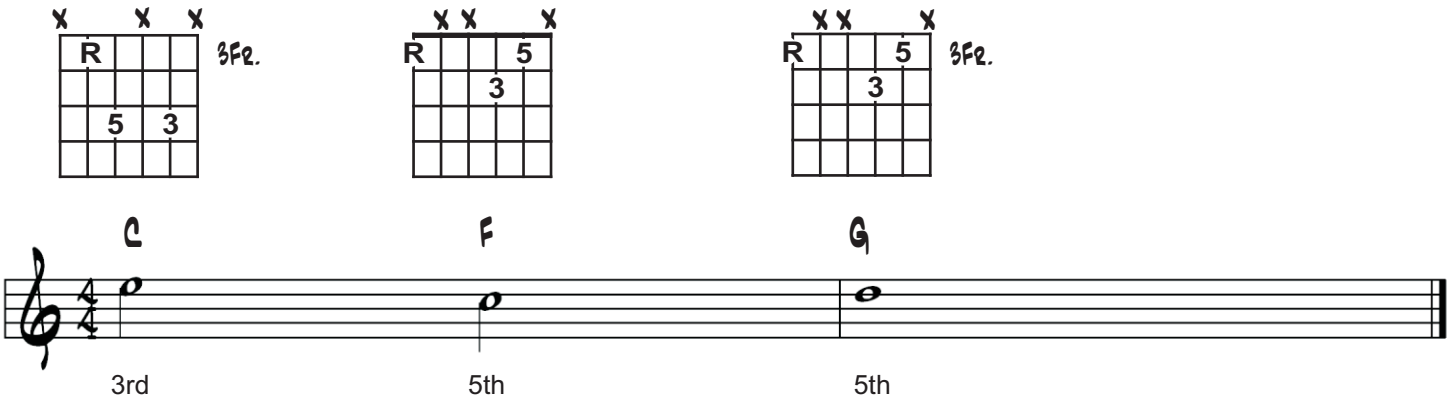


Of course, these voicings can be converted to **minor, diminished** or **augmented**.

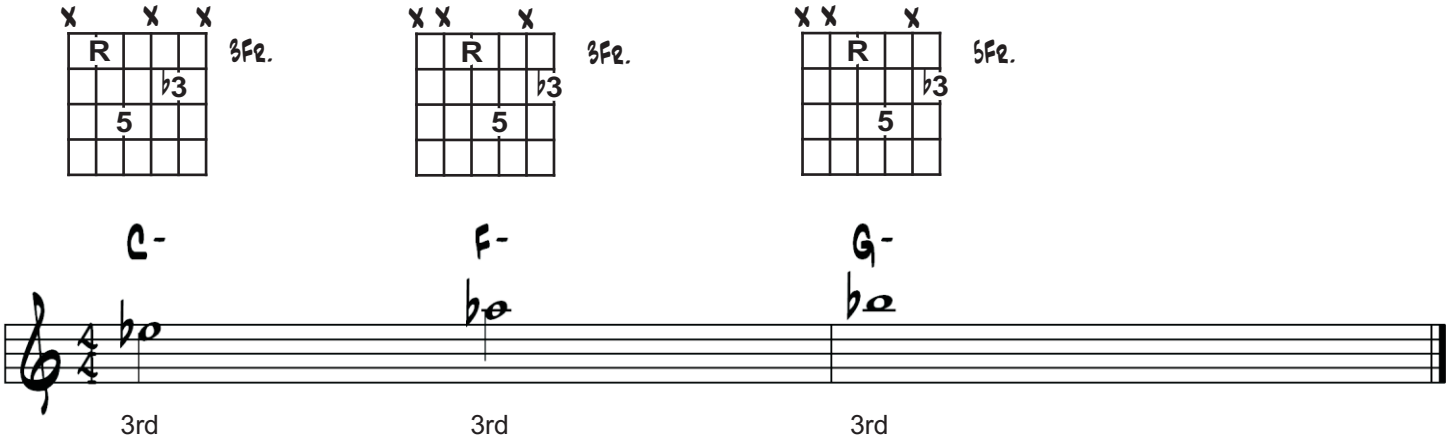
The Lead Note System

Sometimes a note is designated along with a chord symbol that tells the player which note to place at the top of the voicing. This is called a lead note. In this book, we'll use lead note designations to help us learn how to use specific chord voicings to harmonize melodies. Below are examples of progressions using lead note designations.

In the first example, the chord **C major** has the note (E) designated as the lead note. Since (E) is the 3rd of the chord, the voicing which yields the 3rd at the top is used. Another way express this is to say that the C major is voiced with the 3rd *in the lead*. For the second chord, **F major**, (C) is designated as the lead note. Since (C) is the 5th of the chord, the voicing which yields the 5th in the lead is used. The next chord, **G major,** is also voiced with the 5th in the lead.

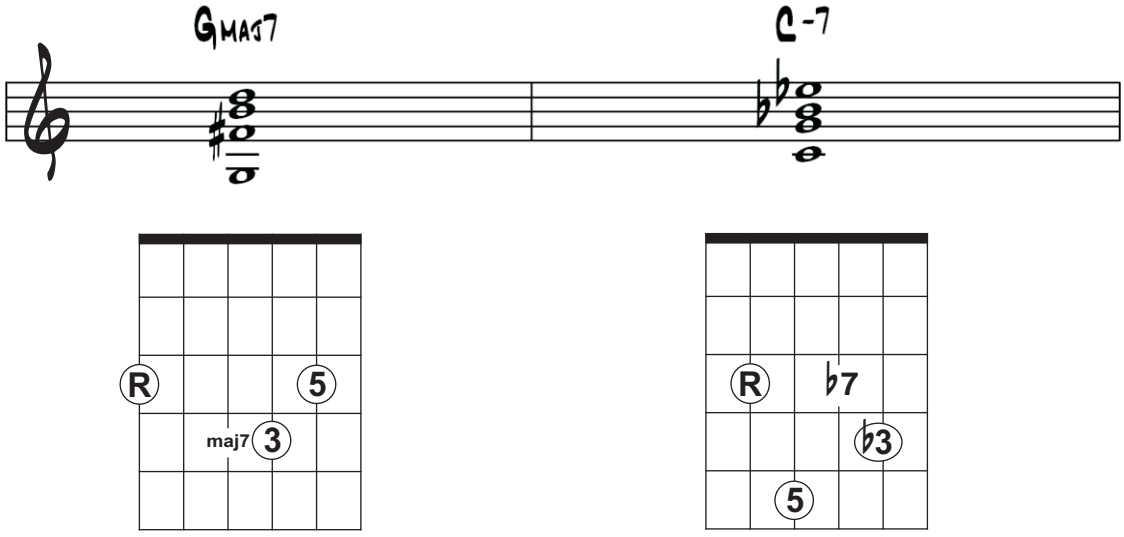


Here's a lead note example using root position minor triad voicings.

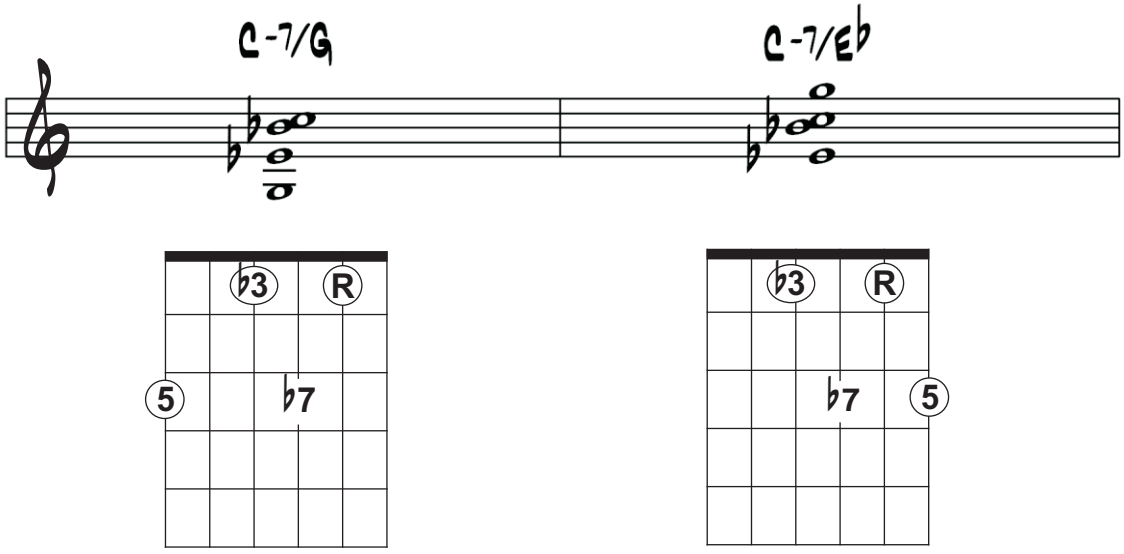


Chapter 4 Adding a 7th or 6th to the Six Triad Voicings

In *Chapter 3,* we saw that the major 7th, minor 7th or major 6th can be added to any of the fundamental triads. Now we'll add the 7ths and 6th to the six triad voicings covered in *Chapter 2*. Here are some examples of how those extended voicings will look. In the first two examples, 7ths have been added to the root position triad voicings.

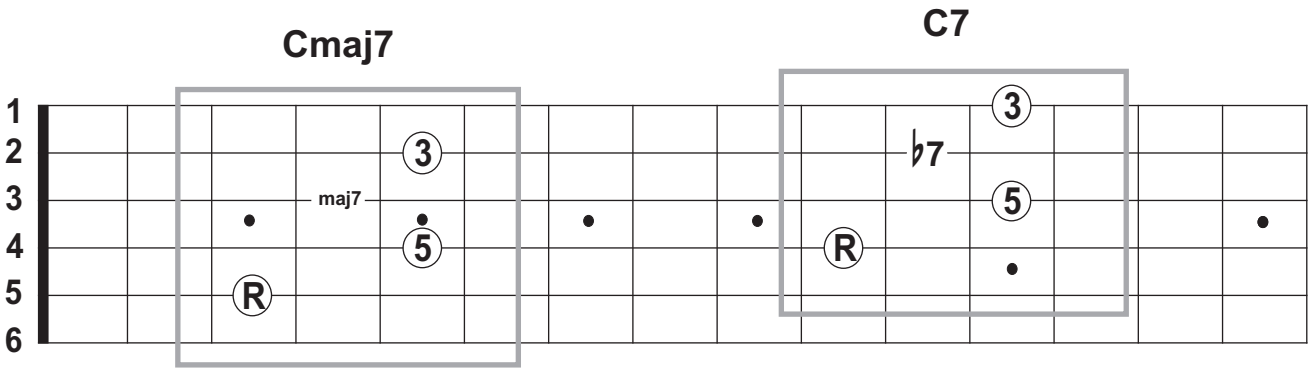


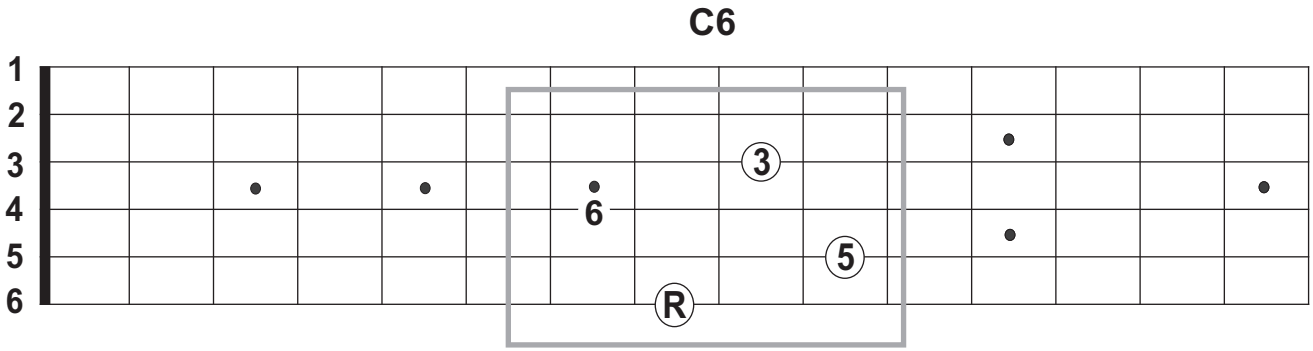
In the next two examples, 7ths have been added to a 1st and 2nd inversion triad voicing.



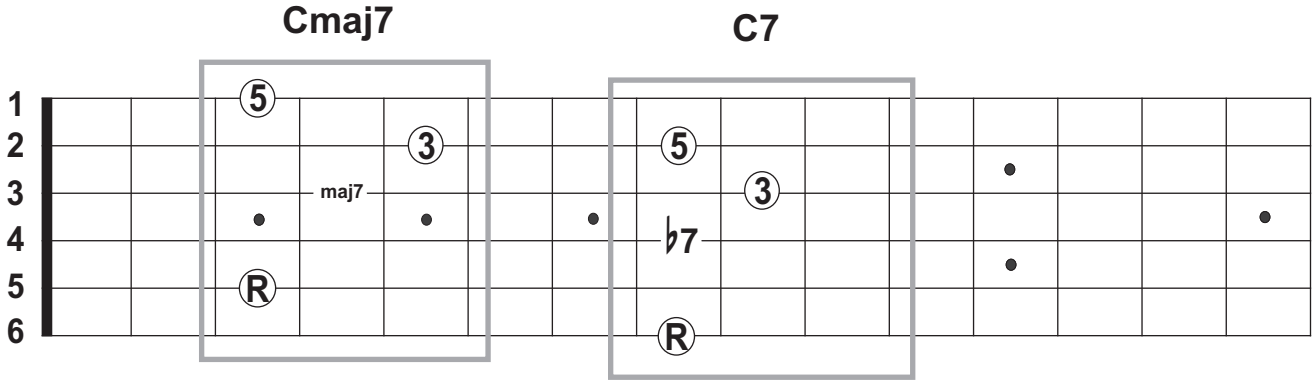
Adding a 7th or 6th to the Root Position Triad Voicings

The major 7th, minor 7th or major 6th is placed between the 5th and 3rd. Here are examples of a **Cmaj7**, **C7** and **C6**.





The major 7th, minor 7th or major 6th is placed between the root and 3rd. Here are examples of a **Cmaj7** and **C7**.



Remember, the triads can be converted to **minor, diminished** or **augmented**.

Chapter 8 Adding Extensions

Extending a chord with a 9th, 11th or 13th is explained in *Volume 1, Chapter 15*. In this chapter, we'll explore how these extensions can be applied to the drop II and drop III chord voicings. First, it's important that we understand the following interval relationships with regard to extensions:

1. The major 9th (9) is located a whole step above the root.
2. The minor 9th (♭9) is located a half step above the root.
3. The augmented 9th (♯9) is located an augmented 2nd above the root.
4. The major 13th (13) is located a whole step above the perfect 5th.
5. The minor 13th (♭13) is located a half step above perfect 5th.
6. The perfect 11th (11) is located a whole step below the perfect 5th.
7. The augmented 11th (♯11) is located a half step below the perfect 5th.

The following note substitution rules apply when adding extensions to the drop II and drop III chords:

1. Any value of the **9th** can be used in place of the **root**.
2. Any value of the **11th** or **13th** can be used in place of the **5th**.

Letting go of the root or 5th will preserve the 3rd and 7th, the guide tones, and thus preserve the chord's basic quality. In example #1, **C-7/E♭** is being extended with the major 9th and perfect 11th. The 9th is added in place of the root and the 11th has been added in place of the 5th. In example #2, **C7/E** is being extended with a major 9th and major 13th. Again, the 9th is added in place of the root and the 13th has been added in place of the 5th.