



Chord Inversions

Same notes, different order

An inversion is simply a chord with a note other than the root at the bottom. The notes stay the same — only the lowest note changes. This makes chords smoother to move between and changes their character slightly.

C major triad in all three positions

The same three notes (C, E, G) arranged with a different note at the bottom.

G	5
E	3
C	1

Root position
C in the bass
1 3 5

C	1
G	5
E	3

1st inversion
E in the bass
3 5 1

E	3
C	1
G	5

2nd inversion
G in the bass
5 1 3

How inversions are written

Position	Bass note	Symbol (C major)	Written as
Root position	Root (C)	C	C or C/C
1st inversion	3rd (E)	C/E	C over E
2nd inversion	5th (G)	C/G	C over G

Why inversions matter

- Smoother voice leading — the bass moves by smaller steps
- Different emotional weight — root position feels stable, inversions feel more open or tense
- Easier on piano and guitar — less jumping around
- Essential for understanding slash chords (C/E, G/B, etc.)

Once you can recognise slash chords (C/E, G/B, Am/C...), you can read almost any modern chord chart.