

PLAYING CHORDS
ALL OVER THE NECK

By Claude Johnson

You've probably learned your basic chords already in the open position. In this ebook, I'd like to introduce the concept of learning chords all over the neck.

I will be showing you examples in the key of C. However, you can move them either up the fretboard or down the fretboard any number of frets you want, in order to produce these same chords in other keys.

There are many advantages to learning and memorizing these kinds of shapes. Here's 4 important ones I can think of:

1. They will give you fun, different ways to play chords that you can substitute for the more traditional voicings, thus creating more variety in your sound.
2. They will help you when you are improvising a lead guitar over a chord progression because you can reinforce your leads with chord punches anywhere on the neck.
3. You will save time when trying to compose chord melody arrangements because you'll already know where all the chords are.
4. They will help your overall fretboard knowledge as you see more clearly how the entire neck fits together.

We will go over several chord types here, and for each chord type, we will show the chord in various inversions and in different chord families.

What are inversions? Inversions refers to how the notes are stacked. For example, a C major chord is comprised of the notes C, E, and G. The so-called “root” position will literally have the C as the lowest note, then E above it, then G above that. An inversion of C major will start with E or G as the lowest note, and the other notes above it.

What are chord families?

A chord family refers to all the specific inversions of a particular chord on a particular group of strings.

For example, the first chord family I will show you is the Major triads on the bottom 3 strings.

For a 4-note chord, such as Dominant 7, we will need 4 strings instead of 3.

There are many combinations of strings and we don't have the time to cover them all here in this book. We will simply focus on the most straightforward ones where all the strings are together:

For triads – Strings E,A,D (3 lowest strings) form one chord family. Then, strings A,D,G form another. The next is D,G,B, and finally the highest three strings G,B, high E form the next.

For four-note chords, we simply have the 4 lowest strings, the 4 middle strings, and the 4 highest strings.

Just to repeat, there are other chord families available and feel free to experiment if you have the time. One commonly used one that is not shown here is the 4 note chords using the low E string, and strings D,G, and B.

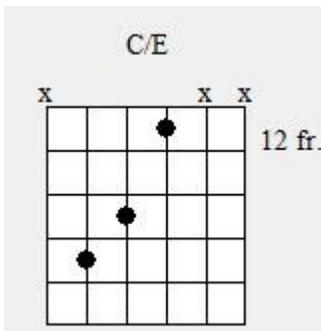
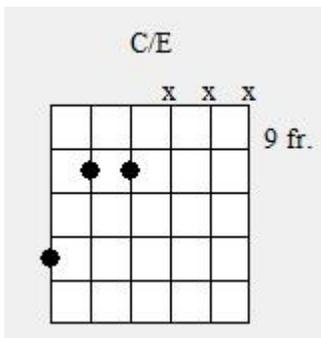
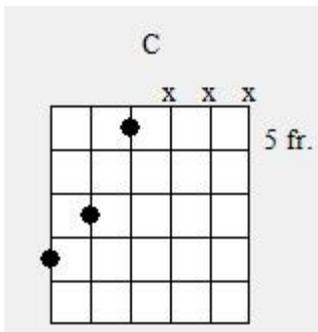
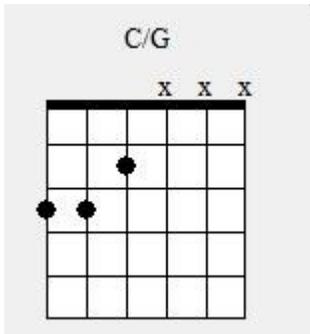
Let's start with the major triad, and just cycle through the various inversions in each of our 4 chord families for triads.

All 12 of the following chord are C major, but they have different voicings. Try moving them to other frets to get major chords of different keys!

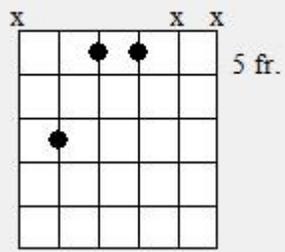
Also, be aware of the “slash chord” designations. When you see a chord with a slash symbol (/) it means the note after the slash designates the lowest note, or bass note in that chord. For example, a C/G means C major with a G in the bass.

The major chord has the root, third, and fifth. In the key of C, that would be C, E, G.

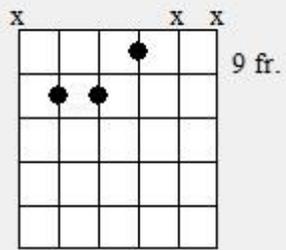
Major triads: C major



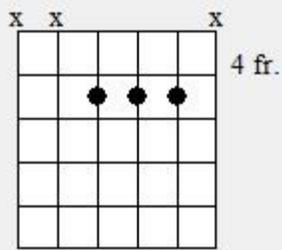
C/E



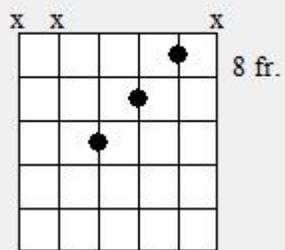
C/G

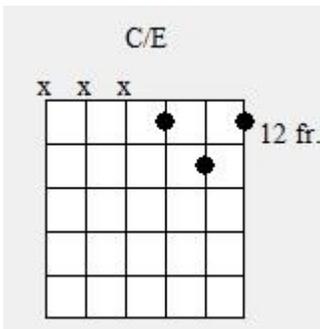
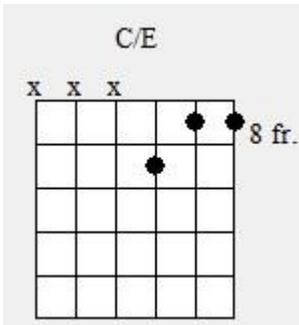
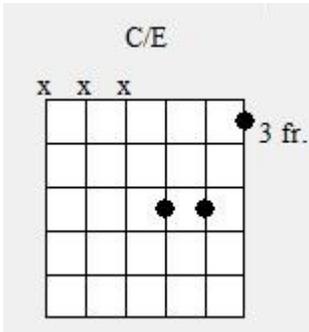
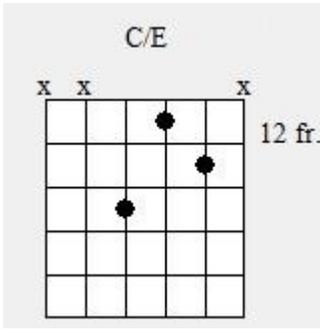


C



C

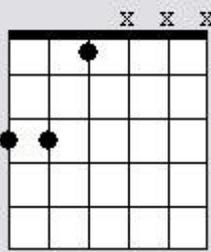




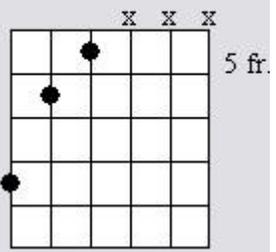
Now, let's continue to the minor triads. The minor chord has the root, minor third, and fifth. In the key of C, its C, Eb, G.

Minor triads: C minor

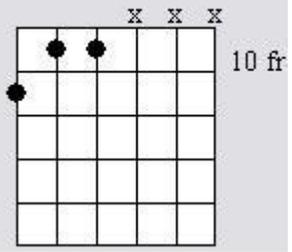
Cm/G



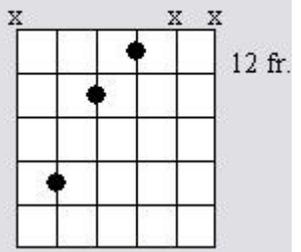
Cm



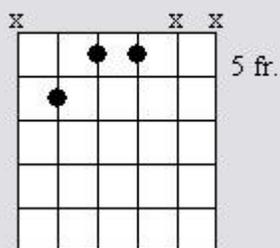
Cm/E♭



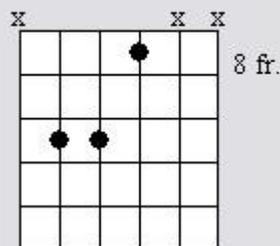
Cm



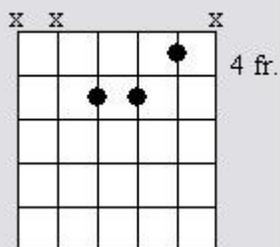
Cm/E^b



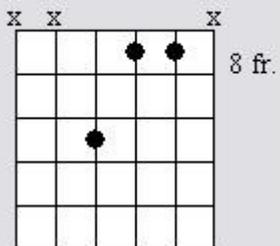
Cm/G

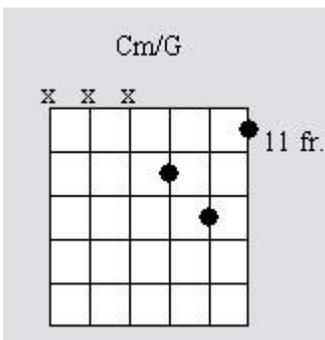
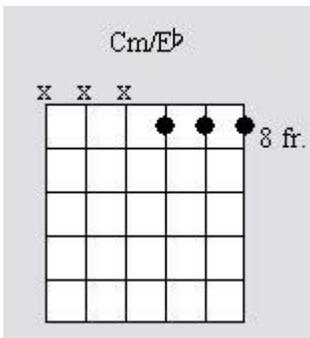
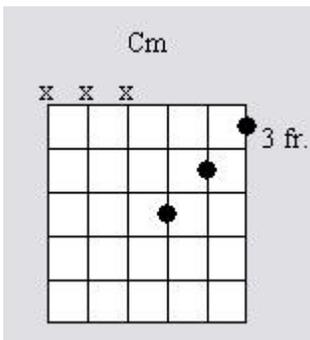
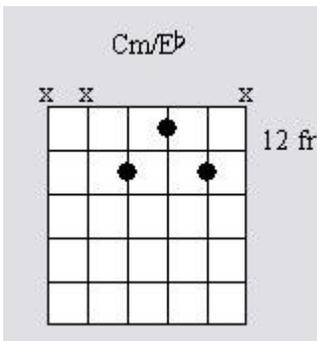


Cm/G



Cm

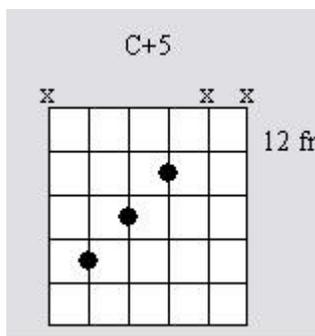
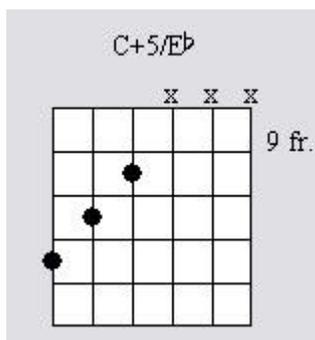
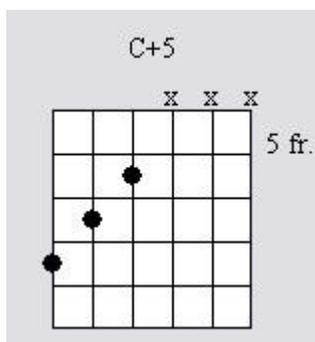
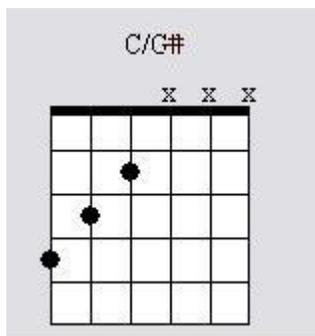




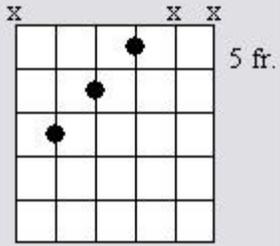
Now lets take a look at the augmented chord. This is like a major triad, but the 5th is sharpened. So we have root, third, sharp fifth.

In the key of C, that's C , E, G#.

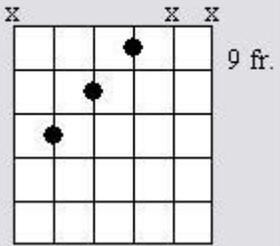
Augmented triads: Caug



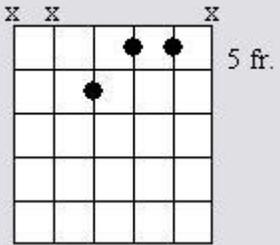
C+5/E



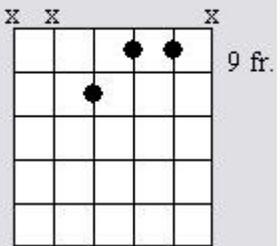
C+5/G#



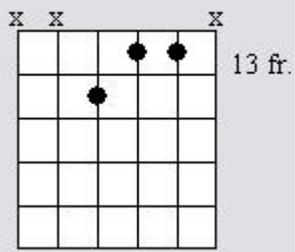
C+5/G#



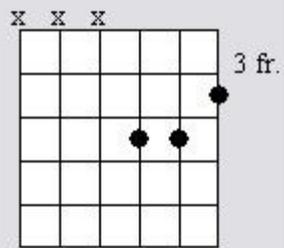
C+5



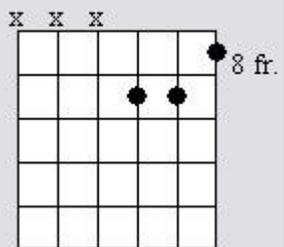
C+5/E



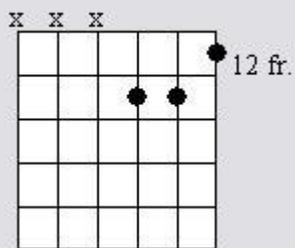
C+5



C+5/E

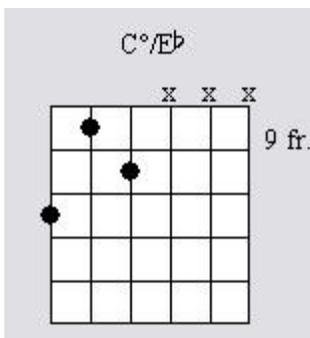
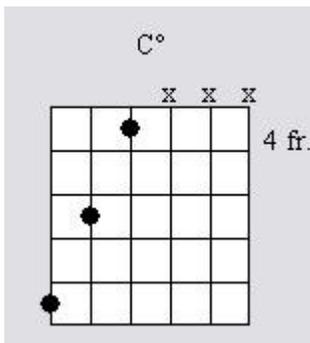
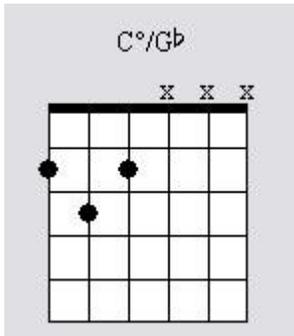


C+5/G#

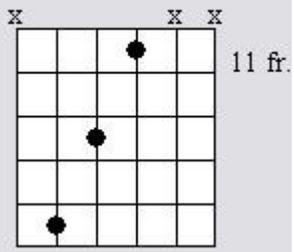


Diminished triads: C dim (or C^o)

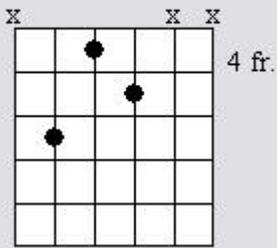
The diminished chord is like a minor chord with a flatted fifth. It's root, flat third, flat fifth. In C, that's C, Eb, Gb.



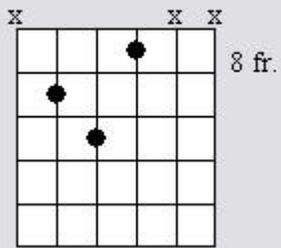
C°



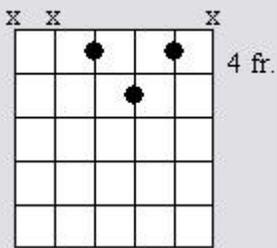
C°/E♭



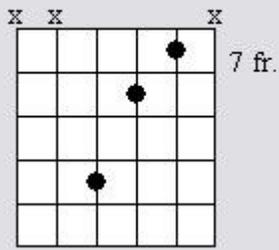
C°/G♭



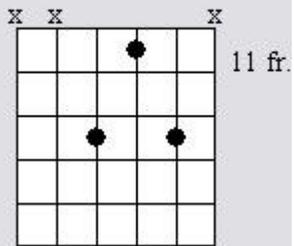
C°/G♭



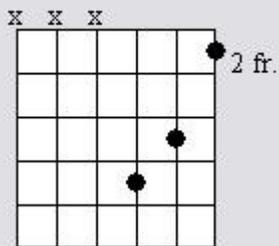
C°



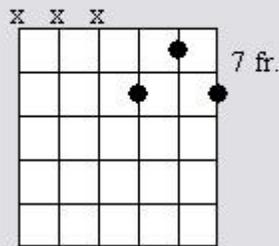
C°/E♭

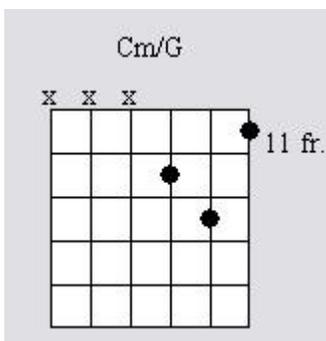
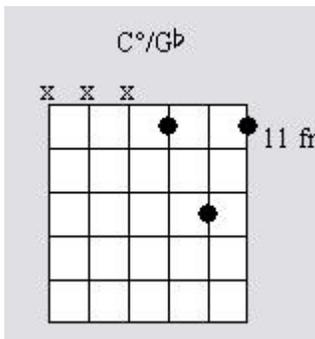


C°



C°/E♭





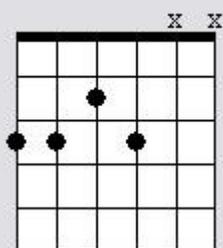
That wraps up the 4 kinds of triads – major, minor, augmented, and diminished. Let's move onto the 4 note chords, starting with Dominant 7, or simply “7”. Unlike the triads, we have 4 notes per chord, and 3 chord families.

But we still have 12 basic shapes for each chord type.

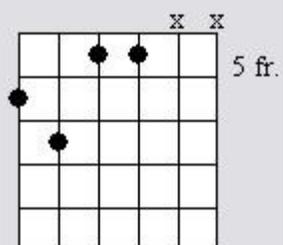
The first chord type here is Dominant 7. This contains the root, third, fifth, and flat 7 interval. In the key of C, its spelled C, E, G, Bb.

Dominant 7 Chords: C7

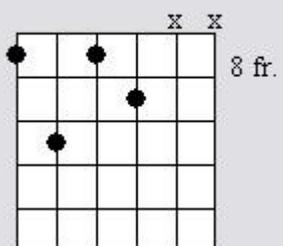
C7/G



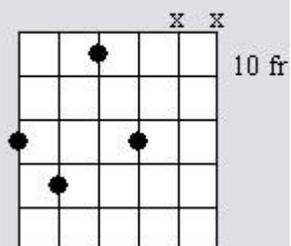
C7/B \flat



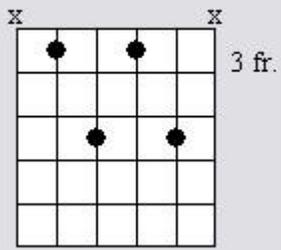
C7



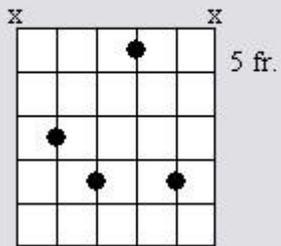
C7/E



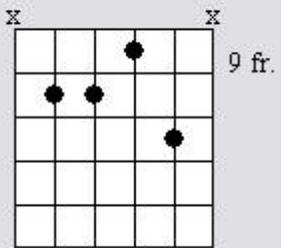
C7



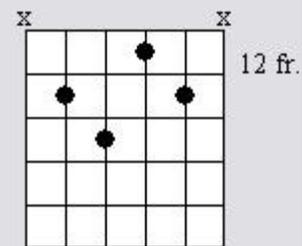
C7/E

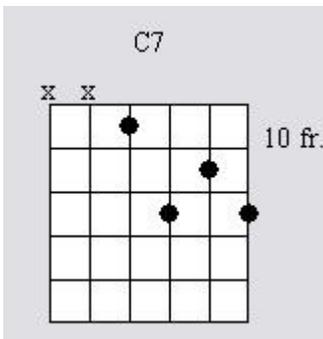
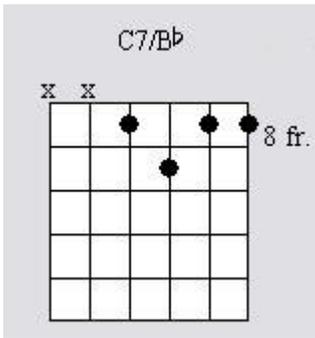
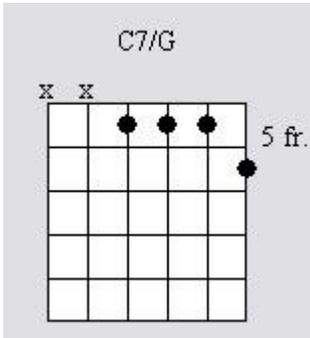
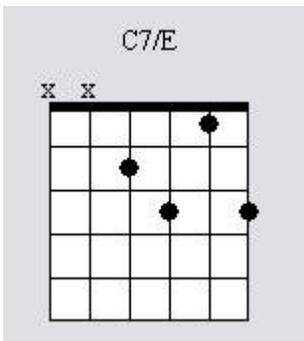


C7/G



C7/Bb

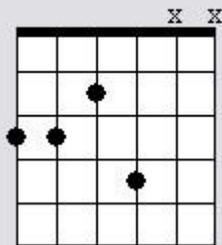




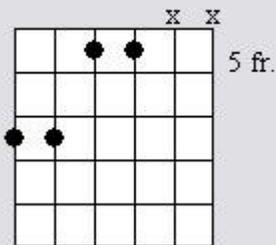
Next we have the Major 7 chord, which has the root, third, fifth, and major 7th interval. In the key of C, its spelled C, E, G, B.

Major7 chords: Cmaj7

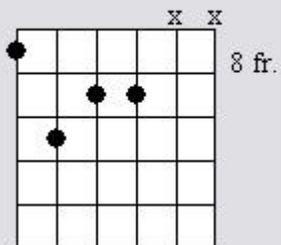
Cmaj7/G



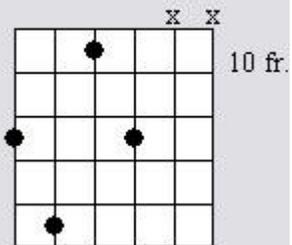
Cmaj7/B



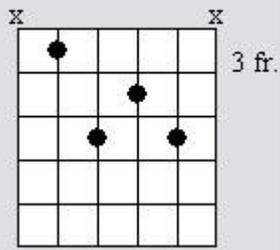
Cmaj7



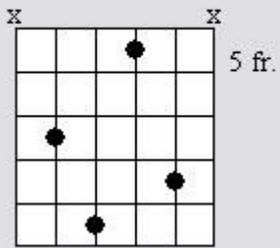
Cmaj7/E



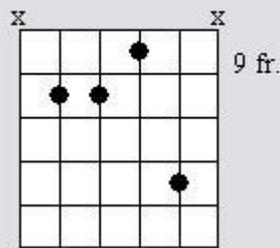
Cmaj7



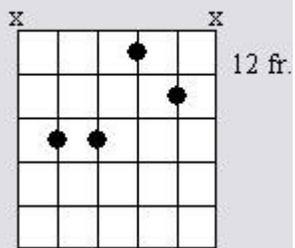
Cmaj7/E

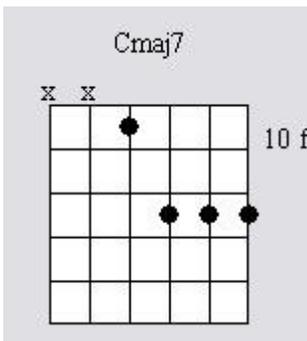
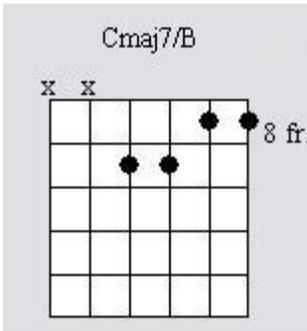
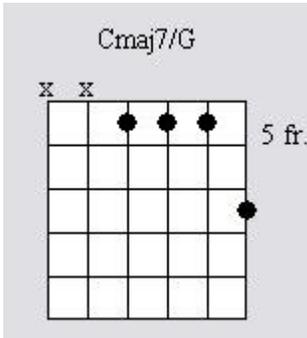
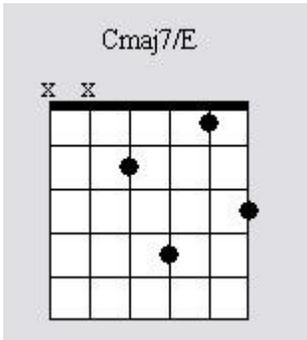


Cmaj7/G



Cmaj7/B

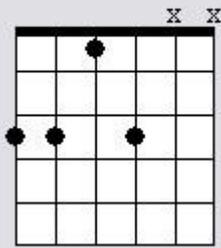




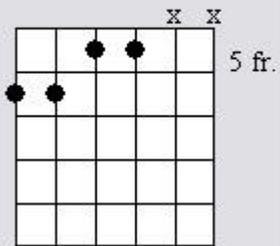
The minor 7 chord is like a minor chord with the flat 7th on top. Or, root, flat third, fifth, flat 7th. So, that's C, Eb, G, Bb.

Minor 7 chords: Cm7

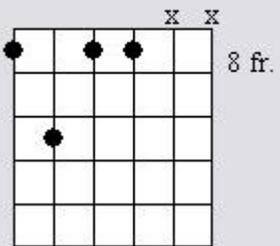
Cm7/G



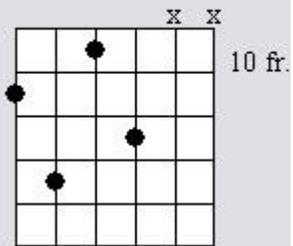
Cm7/B \flat



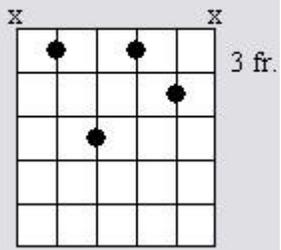
Cm7



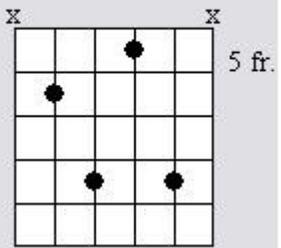
Cm7/E \flat



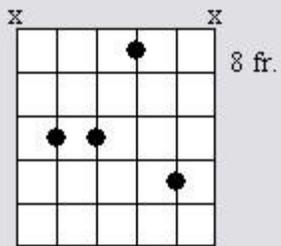
Cm7



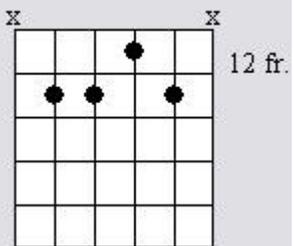
Cm7/E♭



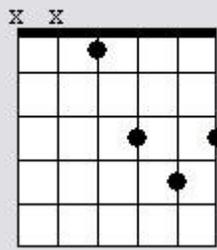
Cm7/G



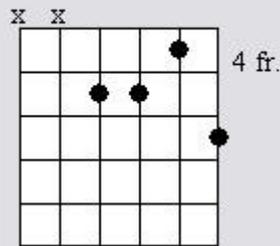
Cm7/B♭



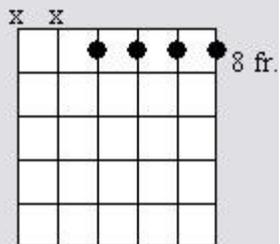
Cm7/E \flat



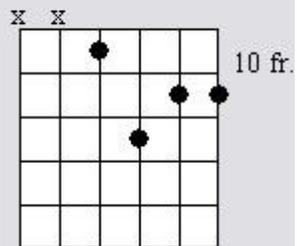
Cm7/G



Cm7/B \flat



Cm7



Memorize the chords given here, try to learn them in all your favorite keys, and then, if you want, go beyond by learning additional chord families and additional chord types on your own. Good luck!