

The Five Basic Thirteenth Chords

Here are five basic thirteenth chords where the thirteenth is added to each of the five basic seventh chords. The thirteenth is the sixth note in the major scale of the chord's root. A thirteenth chord is created when a sixth is added to a seventh chord. When a sixth is added to a chord without a seventh, it is defined as a *sixth* chord.

Keep in mind that ninths are *almost always* included in thirteenth chords. The inclusion of a ninth may or may not be indicated by a chord symbol. If a ninth is to be added, the chord symbol may be written to show that. Notice, as well, that it is the *flatted-thirteenth* that is added to the half-diminished and diminished-seventh chords; not the natural, unaltered thirteenth.

The Major-Thirteenth is formed by the root, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 13th of the major scale. This is a major-seventh chord with a thirteenth. The chord symbols are CMaj13, CMa13, CM13, and CΔ13. If the ninth D is included, the chord symbol may be written as CMaj9add13, etc.

The Dominant-Thirteenth is formed by the root, 3rd, 5th, b7th, and 13th of the major scale. This is a dominant-seventh chord with a thirteenth. The chord symbol is C13. If the ninth D is included, the chord symbol may be written as C9add13, etc.*

The Minor-Thirteenth is formed by the root, b3rd, 5th, b7th, and 13th of the major scale. This is a minor-seventh chord with a thirteenth. The chord symbols are Cmin13, Cmi13, Cm13, and C-13. If the ninth D is included, the chord symbol may be written as Cmin9add13, etc.

The Minor-Seventh Flat-Five Flat-Thirteenth or Half-Diminished Flat-Thirteenth is formed by the root, b3rd, b5th, b7th, and b13th of the major scale. This is a minor-seventh flatted-fifth chord with a *flatted-thirteenth*. The chord symbols are Cmin7b5b13, Cmi7b5b13, Cm7b5b13, C-7b5b13 and Cøb13. If the ninth D is included, the chord symbol may be written as Cmin9b5b13, etc.

The Diminished-Seventh Add Flat-Thirteenth is formed by the root, b3rd, b5th, bb7th, and b13th of the major scale. This is a diminished seventh chord with a thirteenth. For clarity, this chord symbol is sometimes written as Co7addb13, otherwise it might be interpreted as a diminished triad with a thirteenth. The chord symbols for this chord are Co7addb13 and Cdim7addb13. If the ninth D is included, the chord symbol may be written as Co7add9addb13, etc.

CMaj13 C13 Cmin13 Cmin7b5b13 Co7addb13

The image shows five musical staves, each representing a different thirteenth chord. The chords are labeled above the staves: CMaj13, C13, Cmin13, Cmin7b5b13, and Co7addb13. Each staff shows a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (Bb), and a chord structure. The CMaj13 chord consists of notes C, E, G, Bb, and D. The C13 chord consists of notes C, Eb, G, Bb, and D. The Cmin13 chord consists of notes C, Eb, G, Bb, and D. The Cmin7b5b13 chord consists of notes C, Eb, Fb, Bb, and D. The Co7addb13 chord consists of notes C, Eb, Fb, Bb, and D.

Here are the five basic thirteenth chords with the ninth included:

CMaj9add13 C9add13 Cmin9add13 Cminb5b9b13 Co7add9addb13

*One additional thirteenth chord that must be included here is an additional dominant function thirteenth chord. This chord is formed by the root, 4th, 5th, b7th, and 13th of the major scale. The chord has no third, but rather the fourth (a.k.a., the 11th), *replaces* the third.¹ The chord symbol for this chord is C13sus4. The chord symbol is often written as C7sus4. This chord, moreover, will often include the ninth. This chord can also be written as BbMaj7/C. This would indicate the inclusion of the ninth.

C13sus4 C13sus4 C13sus4 (BbMaj7/C)

(Without the 9th) (With the 9th) (Without the 5th)

¹ A good rule to keep in mind is that a major third and a perfect fourth (or eleventh) will rarely appear together in the same chord. When they occasionally do, the third appears *above* the fourth/eleventh in the chord voicing.